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SPRING SCHOOL 2021

“The Impact of the Political on Archaeological Research”

WORKSHOP

on

“The archaeology of ethnic phenomena and the pervasiveness of methodological nationalism”

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PARTICIPANTS AND ABSTRACTS

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The ethnicization of the past through tacit understandings and explicit definitions

Archaeological research on ethnic phenomena depends on knowledge about them that does not come from the finds, despite the empiricism favored by most archaeologists. Frequently, our understandings are shaped by common knowledge, which seems obvious and beyond examination. Attempts to replace them with knowledge produced by the social sciences share a lack of interest for showing how archaeologists made their way through different ways of thinking about the social

and how what is used was selected as viable and useful from the huge output of the social sciences on matters that are relevant for the understanding of ethnic phenomena. Usually, the main capture is a definition, one that makes sense to archaeologists who do not disclose their reasons for adopting it and tend to ignore both the conditions which made that definition possible and the functions a definition might have in scientific research. Another way of doing this kind of research would be one that starts by inquiring about the relevance of social research for the distant past and by examining in what ways the social entities which populate it are real. These tasks, difficult for any kind of researcher, would be meaningful only for archaeologists with a comprehensive training in the social sciences, but the current difficulties most higher education institutions have in preserving their humanistic research leave little hope that many will engage in this direction. What archaeologists know about the social sciences will probably remain mostly a matter of personal choice and risk.

Gheorghe Alexandru Niculescu (alec.niculescu@yahoo.com) is a senior researcher at the Vasile Pârvan Institute of Archaeology; educated at the University of Bucharest (1974-1978), Ph.D. in history (2000), archaeological training and research at the aforementioned institute (since 1985); teaches archaeological theory at the University of Bucharest; published research on ancient ethnic phenomena and on the impact of nationalism on archaeological research; published research on the politics of cultural heritage in Romania and its impact on the conservation and visibility of the artifacts; currently working on the global asymmetries of archaeological research and on the properties of typological thinking and its flattening consequences on the perception of the artifacts (preliminary findings presented at conferences held in 2016 and 2017).

Stefan Burmeister / Museum und Park Kalkriese (Germany)

The culture concept as a Trojan horse of a nationalistic agenda?

»Culture« is a key concept of various sciences. But even after more than 100 years of established cultural studies, there is no consensus on a general definition of the term. So what is culture? How can the concept help to understand societies and how can it help to understand historical processes? Do we see cultures as closed systems, for which reason culture is rather a straitjacket that does not advance our understanding of group relations and ultimately serves only the hierarchical separation of the others? From order to subordination? But is culture really so static and suppressive? Culture is in constant change. It is created, conveyed, appropriated, and adapted and changed according to social requirements. In lived social practice it is a creative negotiation that runs counter to the homogeneity model.

The culture concept has the potential to analyse social change and social interaction, especially in multicultural societies. However, this potential has been put at a standstill in political as well as in large parts of scientific discourse. Our modern understanding of culture stems from the national discourse of the 18th and 19th centuries. Here a concept was developed that had a clear nationalistic and essentialist agenda that was inscribed into the scientific DNA of history and later archaeology – and is still determining the discourse today.

Stefan Burmeister (burmeister@kalkriese-varusschlacht.de) studied Prehistoric Archaeology, Cultural Anthropology and Geography at the University of Hamburg. In 1999 he received his doctorate on age, gender and power in the Hallstatt period in southern Germany. He worked for many years in rescue archaeology and at the University of Hamburg in an international research project on Anglo-Saxon migration. Since 2000 he has been working in museums as exhibition curator; since 2007 at the Varus Battle Museum in Kalkriese. Since 2017 he is in Kalkriese head of the archaeological department, since 2020 director of Museum und Park Kalkriese. He has published numerous books and scientific articles on topics such as migration, technology and innovation, war and conflict, and theories in archaeology.

Bettina Arnold / University of Wisconsin Milwaukee (USA)

The Perils of a Usable Past: Archaeology's Journey from Culture History to Culture Wars

Irish historian and political thinker Liam de Paor (1926-1998) was an early proponent of the idea that presentist bias is both a persistent and a pernicious force in the interpretation of the historical and archaeological past when he stated in his 1958 publication on early Christian Ireland that nobody lived, loved or died in the 13th century to prove a point in the 20th. There is a tendency to assume that the support and selective cooption of prehistoric archaeology based on its utility in the present is limited to extreme examples such as Nazi Germany but this is a comforting fiction that can readily be refuted. Examples include the debacle surrounding the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., which culminated in the 1995-1998 controversial display at the National Air and Space Museum and the resignation of then-director Martin Harwit as well as the insistence on the part of archaeologists working in colonialist contexts such as the United States or Australia that archaeological research projects should be conceived and carried out based on their utility to indigenous communities. In the past twenty years professional archaeology has gradually shifted from a reluctance to manipulate data at the behest of particular interest groups, a legacy of the nationalist cooption of the past in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to an eager embrace of and even insistence on archaeology that is “useful” to particular groups in the present. This represents a major challenge to the discipline both at a practical and a deeper conceptual level. If we cannot find a way to remain true to the archaeological record, whether or not it

conforms to contemporary political or cultural mores and concerns, while simultaneously trying to avoid harm to living groups we will not survive as a scholarly discipline.

Bettina Arnold (barnold@uwm.edu) is a professor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Anthropology. She has a PhD in Anthropology from Harvard University and BA in Archaeology from Yale University. Prof. Arnold's area of expertise is the pre-Roman European Iron Age, but in the course of her career she has participated in archaeological projects ranging from the Middle Bronze Age through the early medieval period in Western Europe. Since 1999 she has co-directed a research project in southwest-Germany focused on the burial record of the early Iron Age Heuneburg hillfort and its environs. Finds from those excavations were featured in *Die Welt der Kelten: Zentren der Macht - Kostbarkeiten der Kunst*, a major exhibition in Stuttgart in 2012-2013. Her work has been directed toward the following research topics: the archaeological interpretation and analysis of complex societies, particularly as reflected in mortuary contexts; material culture as a symbolic system and a means of communicating social relationships; the archaeological interpretation of prehistoric gender configurations in burial contexts; and the socio-political history of archaeology and museum collecting, especially their involvement in identity construction in 19th and 20th century nationalist and ethnic movements in Europe and the United States. She published a ground-breaking article on the use and abuse of archaeology for political purposes in Nazi Germany in *Antiquity* in 1990 that has been reprinted repeatedly. In addition to being the founding Editor of the on-line peer-reviewed journal *e-Keltoi*, she is a member of numerous editorial boards, including the *History of Archaeology* series for Oxford University Press and the *History of Archaeology Commission* of the UISPP.

Hans Peter Hahn / Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main (Germany)

Power from Purity or power from Mixture? Two concepts of ethnic identity in the 19th century's humanities

The concept of ethnicity is one of the most fundamental and at the same time most effective notions of societies in the history of the sciences. Ethnicity is not only constitutive, it has also led to misunderstandings, which in turn have enabled the legitimization of violent confrontations. There are numerous notions of ethnic identity, some of which competed with each other, some of which followed each other. This lecture will explain two fundamental models from the early phase, from the time of the emergence of archaeology and ethnology. One of these concepts refers to the principle of territoriality and long duration. It states in principle that a group whose culture can be demonstrated unchanged for a comparatively long time in a particular place also has a stable ethnic identity. The other concept to be explored in this lecture assumes that ethnic groups emerge from mixing ratios and that such mixtures lead to specific configurations of historically and spatially observable

cultures. At the end of the 19th century, these two concepts were in competition with each other, with the first of the two evidently gaining greater popularity, paving the way for the devastating catastrophes of twentieth-century nation-state politics.

Hans Peter Hahn (Hans.Hahn@em.uni-frankfurt.de) is Professor of Anthropology with special focus on Africa at Goethe University of Frankfurt/M. His research interests are oriented towards material culture, consumption and the impact of globalization on non-western societies. He edited a book on "Ethnologie und Weltkulturenmuseum" (Vergangenheitsverlag, Berlin 2017), focusing on the history of museums with ethnographic collections. He is principal investigator in a research programme on virtual interfaces on museum collections (2017-2020), where the perception of things in their digital representation is under study. Until recently, he was speaker of the research training group "Value and Equivalency" at Goethe-University. In this context, he participated in the organization of several exhibitions on human action and materiality. Other ongoing research initiatives are linked with polysemic approaches to material culture studies. HP Hahn's recent publications include an edited volumes entitled "Obstacity of Things" (Neofelis 2015) and "Things as a challenge "(transcript 2018).

**James Harland / Universität
Tübingen, Centre for Advanced
Studies (Germany)**

**"Can We Infer Ethnic Identity from Material
Culture? A Comparative Look at the Late
Antique West"**

This paper builds upon my previous work studying the inference by scholars of ethnic identity from material culture that has to date been labelled 'Anglo-Saxon'. In that work, I problematized the epistemologies and assumptions drawn upon by scholars in making such analyses in their work. In this follow up, building upon a recent project in which I have begun examining connections between the Visigothic and the Eastern Roman Courts in Late Antiquity, I extend the analyses of archaeological methodology to work done by scholars on 'Visigothic' material culture, in order to propose that the problems with this kind of scholarship are universally extendable, owing to their originating from a set of epistemological and methodological problems, rather than issues of empiricism.

James Harland (james.harland@philosophie.uni-tuebingen.de) works on the history and archaeology of late antique and early medieval Western Europe, specifically Britain and Gaul, with a focus on processes of transformation and ethnic change. His broader interests lie in ethnic identity, transformation and continuity, and military and economic history, in addition to the philosophical and ethical implications of the study of these fields and their reception and misuse in the modern day, drawing upon continental philosophy and literary theory to explore these concerns. His doctoral thesis was a critical historiography of the study of ethnic identity through archaeological means in late and post-Roman Britain, making use of ethnic sociology

and continental philosophy to examine and interrogate the epistemological foundations which underpin this subject of study.

Susanne Grunwald / Independent researcher (Germany)

History of archaeological mapping and how archaeologists simplified the past by maps

This lecture invites to discuss archaeological mapping critically as a powerful, suggestive tool of communication in archaeology. It is important to understand mapping itself as one of the most influential strategies of modern national states and national movements. On the other hand, a lot of practices are requirements for mapping in general and archaeological mapping in particular - like surveys, a market of published maps and a scientific implementation of mapping as a method. A lot of nationally and regionally different solutions for these requirements were developed between 1850 and 1950, and in this lecture I want to introduce the development of German archaeological mapping in general and of mapping of the so called expansion of the Slaves into the European West in special. In a second step we will discuss together different maps by Bulgarian archaeologists, which were published between 1850 and 1950. We will analyze different transformations (Bruno Latour) from a single find, a single grave and a single settlement to signs on maps and finally to elements of narratives.

Susanne Grunwald (mrs.susanne.grunwald@gmail.com) studied History and Pre- and Protohistory in Jena and Leipzig and finished her PhD in 2012 with an analysis of the history of the hillfort research in Saxony/Germany between 1900 and 1961. Supported by Excellence Cluster TOPOI she started in 2012 with research about archaeological mapping and organized with TOPOI the workshop „Mapping Ancient Identities. Cartographical Constructions of Identities in Classical Studies”(2014). Since a fellowship of the RGK of the DAI (2017) and her participation in the project „Fragments, Ruins and Space" at the DAI/Excellence Cluster TOPOI (2018) her current research focuses on German „Kunstschutz" during First World War in the Near East and at the Balkans, on the reorganization of Archaeology in Germany after 1945 and on cartography in Cold War Germany. Susanne works with different partners on a self-employed base in Berlin.

Dimitris Plantzos / National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece)

The excavation of the Amphipolis Tomb as an exercise in Greek necropolitics

The discovery of a monumental ‘Macedonian’ tomb at Amphipolis in northern Greece in the summer of 2014 prompted a wave of enthusiasm among archaeologists, politicians and the public at large; at the same time, however, Greek nationalism was given the chance to revisit some of its favourite themes of national exception, racial

distinction, and historical determinism. In this paper, government rhetoric and actions related to Amphipolis are examined against the by now standard practice of investing plainly biopolitical experiments – such the indefinite detention of undocumented immigrants by the police – with the splendour of classical Greece. As Greece finds itself engulfed in a harsh economic as well as political and social crisis, this paper addresses the biopolitical uses of the classical past in order to examine ways in which the state deploys archaeology as a means to establish the ostensibly temporary state of exception of the crisis as the new, paradigmatic, style of government.

Dimitris Plantzos (dkplantzos@yahoo.gr) is a classical archaeologist, educated at Athens (BA, 1982-1987) and Oxford (MPhil, 1988-1990; DPhil, 1990-1993). He is the author of various papers and books on Greek art and archaeology, archaeological theory and classical reception. His Greek-language textbook on Greek Art and Archaeology, first published in 2011 by Kapon Editions, was published in 2016 in English by Lockwood Press in Atlanta, Georgia. He was also co-editor of the volume *A Singular Antiquity. Archaeology and Hellenic Identity in 20th century Greece* (published in Athens in 2008) and the Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Greek Art (2012; paperback edition 2018). His latest books are *The Recent Future*, a study of archaeological biopolitics in contemporary Greece (2016, Nefeli Editions), and a study of ancient Greek painting in 2018, also published on both sides of the Atlantic. He is co-director of the Argos Orestikon Excavation Project; he teaches classical archaeology and reception at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Giorgos Vavouranakis / National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece)

Hooked on Classics? Ethnocentrism and the methodology of prehistoric research in Greece

Aegean archaeology, a term denoting the study of prehistoric Greece and its immediate adjacent areas, has been quick to embrace most of the major paradigmatic shifts of the archaeological discipline. Research related to new or processual archaeology appeared in the early 1960s, post-processual writings were published by the late 1980s and post-humanist approaches were applied to the prehistoric record of Greece in the early 2000s. Nevertheless, several traditional methods are still employed to a significant degree in Aegean research. Indicative examples are the excavation technique of removing soil in arbitrary layers or “digging in spits”, descriptive instead of analytical approaches to architectural remains, the emphasis on artefact typology as the main method for examining and presenting field finds, and the division of the material record in archaeological cultures. The genealogy of these research tendencies may be traced to the close affiliations of many Aegeanists, both Greek and foreign, to the continental European epistemological traditions of antiquarianism and of culture history, including its abuse by Nazi archaeology. Such paradigmatic and methodological conservatism has been relatively recently coupled with a general return of empiricism. The latter is manifested in the gradual shift of

Aegean archaeological publications towards final site reports and the relative lack of theory-conscious research contributions. This combined shift runs the danger of dragging research into a rejuvenation of ethnocentric - if not nationalist - understandings of the Aegean prehistoric record.

Giorgos Vavouranakis (gvavour@arch.uoa.gr) National & Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece), was born in Athens in 1972. He holds a 4-year BA in Archaeology and History of Art from the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens (1994), an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Prehistoric Archaeology from the University of Sheffield (1998, 2002). He has worked as a post-doctoral researcher at the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens (2003- 2005); as adjunct faculty at the Universities of Crete (2004-2005) and the Peloponnese (2007- 2009) and at the Hellenic Open University (2007-today); and as a contract archaeologist at the Hellenic Ministry of Culture (2007-2008, 2011). He was appointed Lecturer in «Prehistoric Aegean: Theoretical Archaeology» at the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens in 2012 and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2019. His research interests include Minoan Crete, Cypriot Prehistory, archaeological theory and the history of archaeological research.