

Introduction: Archaeology in History

Funari, P., Jones, S., & Hall, M. (1999). Introduction: Archaeology in History. In P. Funari, S. Jones, & M. Hall (Eds.), *Writing from the Edge: Historical Archaeology*. Routledge.

Ranging in geographical and temporal extent from Roman Britain and Classical Greece to colonial Africa, Brazil and the United States, the principal defining characteristic of the chapters in this book is that they are all concerned with societies for which we have some form of surviving written record. As such, this volume falls within what is broadly conceived as 'historical archaeology', an area of archaeological endeavour to which many have attempted to attribute subdisciplinary status.

There has, however, been considerable confusion over the definition of historical archaeology and much tortured debate about which specific perspectives and subject matter should characterize it. Furthermore, over the last decade there has emerged a prominent movement which advocates the conceptualization of historical archaeology as the study of the age of European colonialism, or the capitalist era, essentially excluding the study of periods prior to 1492.

How does this collection fit in with such an approach to historical archaeology? Indeed, should the study of societies with written records be a discrete area of research with its own theory and method? What makes it distinctive from prehistory? These are some of the epistemological questions that are inevitably raised by any attempt to develop a world-wide historical archaeology, and which are the starting point for this introduction.

Introduction: Archaeology in History

Pedro Paulo A. Funari, Sian Jones and Martin Hall

Ranging in geographical and temporal extent from Roman Britain and Classical Greece to colonial Africa, Brazil and the United States, the principal defining characteristic of the chapters in this book is that they are all concerned with societies for which we have some form of surviving written record. As such, this volume falls within what is broadly conceived as 'historical archaeology', an area of archaeological endeavour to which many have attempted to attribute subdisciplinary status. There has, however, been considerable confusion over the definition of historical archaeology and much tortured debate about which specific perspectives and subject matter should characterize it. Furthermore, over the last decade there has emerged a prominent movement which advocates the conceptualization of historical archaeology as the study of the age of European colonialism, or the capitalist era, essentially excluding the study of periods prior to 1492 (DeCorse 1996: 19). How does this collection fit in with such an approach to historical archaeology? Indeed, should the study of societies with written records be a discrete area of research with its own theory and method? What makes it distinctive from prehistory? These are some of the epistemological questions that are inevitably raised by any attempt to develop a world-wide historical archaeology, and which are the starting point for this introduction.

Archaeology In History: Problems Of Definition And Subject Matter

What is now often defined as historical archaeology, in the sense of the study of the material remains of societies with written records, has a long pedigree within the discipline of archaeology. A concern with the origins and history of European 'civilization' resulted in a strong tradition of archaeological research focusing on the 'Holy Land', the Greek and Roman worlds, medieval Europe and the rise of Christendom. Yet it is not with such periods or regions that the concept of historical archaeology is primarily associated.

Rather it is in the 'New World', particularly North America, that the term originates and where a distinct field of study bearing that name emerged some thirty years ago, defined in terms of written history:

Historical archaeology studies the cultural remains of literate societies that were capable of recording their own history. In this respect it contrasts directly with prehistoric archaeology, which treats all of the cultural history before the advent of writing - millions of years in duration. (Deetz 1977: 5)

The result, in theory, should be a flexible distinction between two areas of study, one being the pre-literate pre-colonial past in the hands of prehistorians, and the other focusing on literate societies from the Babylonians onwards, the domain of historical archaeologists. But in practice, the term historical archaeology was almost exclusively applied to the 'New World' (e.g. Deetz 1977), and as a result constituted a fixed, hard dichotomy, a complete disjunction between periods of human history. In contrast, archaeologists working in Europe, China and parts of Africa have not drawn such clear-cut boundaries, and the study of historical periods has been labelled according to 'civilizations', or historic periods, such as classical and medieval archaeologies in Europe, or Islamic archaeology in several countries in the Middle East and Africa. Indeed, archaeologists trained in Europe have often preferred to look at the distinction between prehistory and history as one of gradation: 'prehistory, from the neolithic colonization of Europe onward, is classified according to the degree (as we ascend the scale) in which our knowledge of it stands indebted to historical materials' (Hawkes 1951: 1). Thus, in Europe, whilst the development of literacy and the emergence of written history has still been seen in evolutionary terms moving from illiterate to literate societies, simple to complex (Rowlands 1995: 29), there has been little inclination to separate history from

prehistory in any strict sense, as for instance in North America, Australia and South Africa (see Funari, Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion).

Historical archaeology is still broadly conceived as the study of societies with written records, but over the last two or three decades its distinguishing characteristics have been subject to much debate in a desire to escape the supplementary, 'handmaiden of history' role, as well as to raise the professional standing of the field and its proponents. Emphasis has shifted away from the use of archaeological evidence to merely fill in the gaps in historical knowledge, and in its place historical archaeologists have advocated the study of past lifeways and social processes (Deagan 1996: 25-8; Little 1996: 45). Most recently, following on from this concern with the analysis of past social and cultural processes, historical archaeologists have focused on European expansion and colonialism, the mechanisms of domination and resistance involved, and the economic and political forms which were generated, in particular the spread of capitalism (e.g. Leone and Potter 1988; Johnson 1996; Orser 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). Such studies are universalizing in orientation and attempt to distinguish historical archaeology as the study of a coherent world system of one kind or another, characterized by similar forms of economic and political organization across the globe. As Orser indicates:

The theoretical basis of this perspective is the idea that the world became a different place when colonizing Europeans began to travel across the globe, meeting and interacting with diverse peoples as they went. The hybrid cultures that were subsequently created in the Americas, Asia, Africa, the South Seas, and even in Europe are the outcomes of these dramatic cultural exchanges.

(Orser 1996b: 11)

Such work represents the most comprehensive attempt to develop a worldwide historical archaeology to date. Nevertheless, attempts to define historical archaeology in these terms still dichotomize human history and bring all the problems that such a way of carving up the past inevitably raises.

Dislocation And Continuity: Historical Archaeology And The Construction Of Identity

A focus on people with history highlights Europeans' history in relation to that of other peoples, creating an archaeology of the Age of Discovery, colonization, and the development of the modern world system. (Little 1996: 42)

A focus on written history, as Little (1996: 42) points out, has always highlighted the history of European societies ('our' type of society) in opposition to that of others ('their' type of society). The distinction between societies with writing and those without has played an important role in the humanities, tying in with dichotomies such as myth:history, barbarism:civilization, primitive:advanced (see Johnson, Chapter 2, for a slightly different perspective on the dualities which are inherent in historical archaeology). These dichotomies have framed our understanding of social evolution and the history of humanity since at least the eighteenth century, and such is their power that they continued to dominate the ahistorical, functionalist and structuralist traditions of the early to mid-twentieth century. Within a historical or evolutionary framework these binary oppositions have led to the search for 'a single breaking point, a Great Divide, though whether this jump occurred in Western Europe in the sixteenth century, or Greece in the fifth century BC, or in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium, is never very clear' (Goody 1977: 3).

The imposition of such binary categorizations on a historical framework is intricately bound up in the construction of power and identity, and attempts to distinguish historical archaeology as a distinct field of study exemplify this process. On the one hand, it is no coincidence that in Europe, where most modern nation-states trace their histories back over long periods, often well into prehistory (see contributions to Graves-Brown et al. 1996), there has been little inclination to construct a sharp boundary between prehistory

and history. Such a disjunction would only sever modern European societies from the (pre)histories which they wish to claim for themselves. Furthermore, the Old World emphasis on writing and the succession of 'high' civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, Greece, Rome, medieval Europe, renaissance Europe, modern Europe) betrays a teleological approach to the past, with history appearing to naturally converge on Europe. On the other hand, it is not by chance that the dominant groups in countries such as the United States have drawn a distinction between historical archaeology, which addresses aspects of their own history (even if some of these, such as slavery, are not so palatable), and pre-colonial prehistory, which is perceived by many as 'dead' and unrelated to the present. That historical archaeology is perceived as pertaining to the history of immigrant Americans is evident from the following statement by one of the leading proponents in the field:

America today, as the cultural heir of the Anglo-American tradition that began in North America in 1607, is studied by folklorists, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists. Historical archaeology can add to our understanding of the American experience. (Deetz 1977: 4-5, our emphasis; see also Orser and Fagan 1995: 6)

However, for minority and indigenous groups in the United States and in many other countries in Africa, the Americas and Oceania, such an approach serves to cut them off from their pre-colonial histories and ignores frames of meaning which are important for their own cultural self-expression (Ucko 1994; Andah 1995; Schmidt and Patterson 1995: 13-14). So, for instance, Pikirayi (Chapter 4, p. 72) notes that in Zimbabwe the entire conceptual framework within which historical archaeology is practised is limited to historical concerns that are predominantly derived from European and Arabic sources and their spheres of interest, rather than indigenous histories.

Recent approaches, focusing on social processes such as colonialism and the spread of a capitalist world economy, serve to incorporate non-European societies as active agents within history. As one of the key figures in the development of such a perspective across the human sciences states, 'The global processes set in motion by European expansion constitute their [i.e. non-European] history as well' (Wolf 1982: 385). Nevertheless, groundbreaking though such studies have been, they still result in a one-sided picture, a history that is not equally shared in by European and non-European societies (Little 1996: 52; Asad 1987: 604). The story of world capitalism is the history of the dominant world order within which diverse societies exist. But there are also histories (some written, some yet to be written) of the diverse traditions and practices that once shaped people's lives and that cannot be reduced to ways of generating surplus or of conquering and ruling others. (Asad 1987: 604)

Theoretical And Methodological Problems

The use of ethnocentric dichotomies, such as non-literate:literate, myth: history, primitive:advanced, in the structuring of historical analysis hinders the production of the alternative histories that Asad demands. As Goody (1977: 3-4, 9) has shown with relation to literacy, the use of such dichotomies has reduced diverse technologies of communication, and their effects on social organization and modes of thought, to gross de-contextualized categories, typologies which are accepted as a substitute for explanation. Whilst historical archaeology is rarely specifically concerned with the invention or spread of literacy, broad definitions of the field implicitly rely on a distinction between non-literate and literate societies. Here it is worth remembering that written documentation and its use in society takes diverse forms and that literacy was limited, and to some extent still is, to, certain sections of society, (historically, these often consisted of elites or specialist groups) (see Goody 1977). Few historical archaeologists would disagree with these points, and yet the literature continues to be dominated" by definitions intent on identifying an absolute boundary between history and prehistory. The result, as Schmidt and Patterson (1995: 13-14) point out, is that innovative approaches combining historical, archaeological, ethnographic and 'mythical' oral information are often

ignored or dismissed as methodologically unsound. As Parker-Pearson et al. (Chapter 15) convincingly demonstrate, the critical use of oral history, traveller's tales and archaeology in conjunction with one another can substantially increase our understanding of the history of a particular region, in this case southern Madagascar, where reliance on one of these sources alone would be detrimental (see also Pikirayi, Chapter 4; Funari, Chapter 18; Rowlands, Chapter 19).

Furthermore, studies transcending the pre-colonial/colonial boundary are undermined by implicit expectations regarding appropriate subject matter and methodological and theoretical distinctions between prehistoric and historical archaeology (see Lightfoot 1995; Colley and Bickford 1996). As Colley and Bickford point out with relation to Aboriginal sites in Australia, expectations relating to subject matter mean that many indigenous 'historic period sites' go unrecognized:

Even today, Aboriginal people sometimes use 'traditional' places (e.g. rock shelters, waterholes, campsites) without leaving any 'European' materials behind. To label these Aboriginal sites 'prehistoric' because they contain no obvious exotic materials is to render post-contact Aboriginal places, and the people who used them, invisible.

(Colley and Bickford 1996: 8)

Such is the rigidity of the boundary that, in countries such as the United States and Australia, even demonstrably contemporary, geographically associated 'indigenous' and 'colonial' 'historic period sites' can be artificially isolated, the former often being studied by prehistorians (and thus implicitly regarded as part of prehistory), and the latter by historical archaeologists using different techniques, different temporal and geographical scales of analysis and different explanatory frameworks (Lightfoot 1995: 208-9). Typically, indigenous sites have been treated as part of the long term, and analysed with relation to ecological and neo-evolutionary models, whereas 'European' sites are situated in terms of recent historical events and individual agency and analysed in terms of socio-political relationships.

It might be argued that recent work in historical archaeology, focusing on the history of European colonialism, or capitalism and its industrial expressions, escapes at least some of the analytical problems associated with a typological distinction between literate and non-literate societies. Certainly, such work has produced a strong theoretical framework for the analysis of various societies following European conquest, looking in particular at the operation of global processes, such as colonialism, commodification, ideology and power, in specific local contexts (see below). Important case studies have been carried out demonstrating the power of such an approach, in particular in its ability to facilitate cross-cultural comparison and to address the lives of both colonizers and colonized (e.g. Orser 1996a). Nevertheless, the co-option of such a focus in the definition of historical archaeology still raises problems, not least of which, as Little (1996: 51) points out, is a Western/European-centred viewpoint that may serve to omit from 'historical archaeology' cross-culturally relevant work incorporating written documentation such as that on Old World precapitalist states, political manoeuvring between Native American groups, medieval Europe, or African cultures documented through oral history.

As Johnson (1992: 46) stresses, the 'rise of capitalism' is often seen in isolation from its medieval antecedents, and this criticism could be extended further, as there are antecedents and continuities not only in relation to the medieval period, but also with respect to other non-capitalist, non-European traditions the world over. Several concepts associated with the spread of capitalism, such as colonialism, domination and resistance, and the commodification of the material world, represent particular instances of social processes which can be observed in earlier historic periods. Colonialism, military expansion and imperialism are terms applicable to the Incas in South America and to the city-states of Mesopotamia, social and historical contexts which share at least some features with modern European expansion. Domination and resistance, although manifested in different ways in different historical and geographical contexts, characterize all societies where surplus labour is produced and appropriated (Saitta 1992: 889, 1994: 203).

Furthermore, it can also be argued that processes of commodification have occurred in several historical contexts. Even if it were accepted that the advent of modern capitalism marked a qualitative break with all forms of civilization that had gone before it as, prior to its emergence, political domination was more important than economic domination (Anderson 1990: 55), this should not set European colonialism apart in any absolute sense. The singularization of the European colonial experience as being totally different from past expansions and dominations undermines the useful comparison of diverse processes of colonial exploitation (Webster 1997; and see contributions to Webster and Cooper 1996). By the same token, the 'capitalist' civilization exported by Europeans has never been able to reduce all social relations, everywhere in the world, to economic relations. As Funari (Chapter 3) shows, processes of commodification can be observed in the Roman world, just as non-capitalist relations are evident in the modern world. Consequently, the assertion of a radical dichotomy between the archaeology of capitalism and that of precapitalism carves up history along artificial lines, and produces a simplistic understanding of both pre-modern and modern societies as relatively homogeneous entities (Chase and Chase 1996: 810; see also Johnson, Chapter 2).

The prioritization of capitalism as a focus of study situates its emergence, spread and eventual domination as an inevitable process, lying beyond the consciousness or control of social actors, particularly subordinate groups (Johnson 1992: 46). The supposed 'inexorability' of capitalism and its power to rule the minds of people, creating a disciplinary society (Burke 1995: 149), is a concept which can lead to the underestimation of resistance and heterogeneity, "flattening out" past societies by portraying them in terms of a unifying culture. Instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) should not be interpreted as the sole and unopposable way of reasoning in capitalism (Lowy 1992: 119; see also Bourdieu 1977: 177).

'Back From The Edge': Towards a World-Wide Historical Archaeology

In contrast to the dominant North American definition of historical archaeology, the contributors in this collection 'answer back' from the edge. They suggest, explicitly or implicitly, that archaeology has a central place within all forms of documentary history, that the archaeology of post-1492 America is only one of many possible historical archaeologies, including classical and medieval archaeology, and that there is much to be gained from a reunification of these fields within the wider discipline of archaeology. Within this framework, a broad and flexible definition of historical archaeology must be adopted, one which returns to an emphasis on the presence of written documents rather than European colonialism and the rise of capitalism, but advocates an interdisciplinary approach to the past combining various sources of evidence (cf. Davies 1988: 21; Small 1995: 15; Kepecs 1997: 193).

As we have discussed above, such an approach has its dangers, as does an emphasis on European expansion, for both can lead to the centring of world history on Europe, and a denial of non-western histories. However, such a Eurocentric perspective can be countered by stressing a malleable approach to historical archaeology, which does not situate literate societies in opposition to non-literate ones, but which recognizes degrees and forms of literacy and facilitates the analysis of the diverse ways in which written documents may operate as a mode of communication in society. As Funari (Chapter 3) argues, such an approach can incorporate societies ranging from ancient Babylonia to dynastic China, from the Roman Empire to sixteenth-century Africa and nineteenth-century Brazil. It also encourages wide-ranging crosscultural comparisons, and studies which transcend conventional boundaries between 'history' and 'prehistory', in an attempt to explore similarities and differences in social processes which are typical of societies with written records, such as colonialism and imperialism, domination and resistance, power and identity and relations between the 'local' and the 'global'. These may take the form of direct comparisons, such as Small's use of burial monuments in the United States as a source of analogy and comparison with classical Greek burial monuments (see Chapter 7), whilst others draw on theories devised in the study of one period as a means of interpreting other historical contexts, such as Hingley's use of post-colonial theory in the analysis of Roman Britain (see Chapter 8).

Such arguments soften and blur the dichotomies between history and prehistory, literate and non-literate societies, but why maintain historical archaeology as a discrete field of study at all? Why do we need to implicate written history? Why not merely engage in a comparative archaeology, which utilizes all the sources of evidence available for a given period and area? Contributors to this volume offer a variety of perspectives, but the overall trend is in favour of a nested approach; an approach that, at a general level, stresses the common ground underlying the archaeological study of all human societies in terms of interdisciplinary theories of material culture, but also recognizes the methodological distinctiveness of studying societies with written sources, and again, at a finer level, the need to examine the diverse, historically specific roles which writing can play in communication and representation.

The importance of a common theoretical framework for the analysis of material culture bridging the study of societies with written records and those without needs to be underlined (and see Austin 1990: 30-5; Lightfoot 1995). That is not to suggest that a single unified theory must be selected among the eclectic range of perspectives which characterize archaeology today. Rather it is to suggest that theories of material culture should not be bifurcated around the prehistory:history distinction. There is no justification for arguing that some theories of material culture are more suited to prehistoric material than historic site material, and there is a need for consistent frameworks to be applied to both sets of material whether archaeologists are working within processual (e.g. Small, Chapter 7), *Annales* (e.g. see contributions to Kepecs 1997), post-processual (e.g. Austin 1990: 34-5; see also Hall, Chapter 12; Lydon, Chapter 16), or any other of the diverse frameworks which exist. For as Austin puts it, 'theory is central not just to archaeology alone but to historical study as a whole, because theory is about the nature of human behaviour [and material culture] in its contexts of space and time' (Austin 1990: 32).

At the same time, within the nested approach suggested above, there are a number of things which distinguish the study of societies with written documents from those without written documents. First, despite diversity in the role of writing in processes of communication and representation in different societies, the fact of documentation itself is an agent of transformation often associated with centralization and the appearance of early states or empires. In this respect, it can be argued that 'a society which documents itself is of its very nature a different form of society from one which does not' (Austin 1990: 30), and archaeologists engaging in the study of such societies must be alert to such differences. Second, documentary history plays a specific role in constructing the past for societies with written records. It is often argued that written accounts are created and used by the elite to organize their own understanding of social life and their own forms of remembrance, as in the case of the construction of Brazilian history in terms of the forging of a racial democracy (see Quartim de Moraes, Chapter 11; Funari, Chapter 18; Rowlands, Chapter 19). As Dyson (1995: 36) emphasizes, the dominance of written records resulted 'until recently, in the creation of a text that neglects not only the urban poor, but also rural life in general'. Whilst the new 'culture history' has extended the scope of the study of written documents into the 'everyday, the unspoken, and the material' (Johnson, Chapter 2), it is still generally acknowledged that archaeology has the power to subvert the master narratives which so often dominate written records, to 'find the spaces between words and things' (Hall, Chapter 12). But in order to do so, to bring ordinary people back into scholarly discourse, archaeologists must take written discourses and their relation to material culture into account (Ober 1995: 111). Verbal and artefactual discourses intersect with one another in diverse ways in past societies, and the development of techniques for addressing their inter-relationships remains a fundamental methodological question binding together the field of historical archaeology (Couse 1990: 57; Little 1996: 50).

In this volume, as elsewhere (see Little 1996: 50), a variety of approaches towards the combined analysis of written and material evidence are advocated. There are those who use the two sources of evidence to complement one another, to fill in where one or the other lacks detail (e.g. Pikirayi, Chapter 4; Diaz-Andreu and Tortosa, Chapter 6; Klingelhofer, Chapter 10).

Then there are those who look for contradictions between material and written evidence (e.g. Small, Chapter 7; Hingley, Chapter 8; Hall, Chapter 12; Lydon, Chapter 16). In still other cases, one source of evidence, usually the documentary, is used as a means to construct sets of expectations which are then explored with relation to other sources of evidence (e.g. Brown, Chapter 9; Parker Pearson et al., Chapter 15). This methodological diversity is due, in part, to the development of tailored approaches for the analysis of particular aspects of past societies, for instance, as in the case of Hall's (Chapter 12) study of discourse and power in colonial Cape Town, and Jones's (Chapter 14) exploration of qualitative differences in literary and material manifestations of ethnicity where she explores the relationship between discourse and practice. In other cases, however, it is due to more fundamental differences of opinion as to the relationship between material and written evidence in general, as in the case of Small's (Chapter 7) approach, where he emphasizes that material and written evidence constitute independent sets of data, produced by different social processes, and Johnson's (Chapter 2) argument that they are a product of the same social processes.

Such methodological diversity, and the debate surrounding it, should be seen as a strength and embraced by a world historical archaeology which incorporates a wide variety of geographical and historical contexts, as well as a diverse set of archaeological and historical traditions. In general there is a trend away from a rigid distinction between written and material evidence, with calls to subject material evidence to textual analysis (Hall, Chapter 12), and to undertake an archaeology of documents:

If material culture is text, text is also material culture. How, physically, were documents generated? What, for example, do different scripts tell us about the bodily discipline of writing? What of the physical production of printed books? How does the conceptual ordering of a feudal text like the Domesday Book or Boldon Book correspond (or fail to correspond) to the material ordering of the planned feudal landscapes found across much of Europe? (Johnson, Chapter 2, pp. 31-32)

Such an emphasis on materiality, and material culture as text, overcomes the distinction between written and material sources, and the tendency to try to prioritize one over another, as both can be treated as material texts, discursive constructions (see also Lydon, Chapter 16). Furthermore, the use of oral history broadens the concept of 'historical sources' and undermines the primacy attributed to written texts (see Pikirayi, Chapter 4; Parker Pearson et al., Chapter 15).

Such methodological debates about the treatment of archaeological and historical sources and their inter-relationships with one another are essential, but they are also inevitably part of the 'policing' of the boundaries of scholarship and the maintenance of a western, scientific conception of history. For this reason, a number of the contributors call for a historical contextualization of historical research (e.g. Funari, Chapter 3; Hingley, Chapter 8; Rowlands, Chapter 19), and criticize the prioritization of written and symbolic representations over practical forms of knowledge (e.g. Funari, Chapter 3; Jones, Chapter 14). At a more fundamental level, Quinn (Chapter 5) shows how western academic forms of historical representation (of which historical archaeology is a part) are a product of a modern professionalized discourse of precedence and succession, which is essentially founded on a differentiation between past and present. Such a mode of historical consciousness, he argues, is incommensurable with popularist discourses which frequently involve the resurgence of the past in the present, thus breaking the temporal order established within western academic historical representations (as in the case of popular appropriations of the swastika within Aryanist myths and Hindu representations of the history of the Ayodhya site). This kind of contextualization of historical archaeology, along with other western modes of historical analysis, is an important part of any world-wide approach to this field of study, which will inevitably come up against modes of representing and experiencing the past that contrast strongly with those originating within western academic traditions.

Power And Identity: Common Themes – Diverse Contexts

Aside from these basic methodological and epistemological concerns, the chapters in this book are characterized by a number of themes which are explored in relation to diverse social and historical contexts.

The most conspicuous of these themes are those of power and identity which emerge as the central focus of analysis. Indeed, the second and third sections of the book focus on 'archaeologies of domination and resistance' and 'issues of identity, nationalism and ethnicity' respectively. Nevertheless, despite the fact that some chapters concentrate predominantly on domination and resistance, and others on various kinds of identity, one of the most important aspects of this book is the contribution many chapters make to exploring the integral relationship between power and identity. Other themes within this overarching area of concern include the specific role of material culture in the expression of power and identity, cross-cultural perspectives on colonialism, the tension between the 'global' and the 'local' and the dialectic between past and present.

Power relationships, expressed in terms of concepts such as domination and resistance, inequality, the colonizers and the colonized and so on, have been a central focus of archaeological research in general over the last decade (see, among others, Miller et al. 1995; McGuire and Paynter 1991; Bond and Gilliam 1994). To some extent, this concern is a product of first Marxist and then post-structuralist influences on archaeology (see Austin 1990: 35). However, it is not surprising that historical archaeologists have been particularly pre-occupied with the analysis of power relationships, engaged as they are with the study of societies in which writing constitutes an agent of transformation, often associated with the centralization of power and the formation of states and empires. It has been argued, here and elsewhere, that in such contexts archaeology is in a good position to study the dynamic interaction between elites and non-elites. There has been a trend in historiography away from a history of elites and institutions to a careful examination of the material conditions and culture of the lower classes (Iggers 1984: 195) and historical archaeology is in a good position to maintain a dialogue with historians in this matter. However, historical archaeologists cannot be complacent about their role as the champions of 'ordinary' people (Laurence 1995: 313), for as Hall points out:

more often than not, the collections with which we work were left by slave owners, masters, bourgeois householders and farmers. The underclasses, often so difficult to find in the documentary record, are equally elusive in their material traces as well.

(Hall, Chapter 12, p. 193)

If historical archaeology is to ironize the master narratives of power and identity which are so often represented in literary sources, then we have to develop alternative ways of looking for the archaeology of marginalized and dominated groups, and new approaches to the interpretation of multiple appropriations or 'readings' of the same material in different social contexts in the past.

Material culture, power and identity

Two of the contributors, Brown (Chapter 9) and Monks (Chapter 13), focus specifically on the use of material culture as an indicator of status or class by archaeologists. Both stress the complexity of the relationship between the nature of archaeological remains and the status of the people who used them, emphasizing the need to consider depositional processes and differential survival rates as well as social factors such as gender and ethnic background which might influence people's economic practices and modes of consumption. Nevertheless, they see material culture as directly and passively reflecting the status of the people who used it. Likewise, in her analysis of slavery in Brazilian society, Quartim de Moraes (Chapter 11) uses seventeenth- and nineteenth-century paintings by European painters as a direct source of information about the actual nature of slave life.

In contrast, several contributors emphasize the active role which the material world plays in discourses of power and identity; material culture, they suggest, both constitutes people's identity and position in the world and is drawn on by those people in the active negotiation of their identity and relationship to others. For instance, Diaz-Andreu and Tortosa (Chapter 6) argue that representations of the body in proto-historical

Iberian societies formed part of a discourse through which gender was actively constructed, and that such representations were used by women in the negotiation of their status in Iberian society. Hingley (Chapter 8), Hall (Chapter 12) and Lydon (Chapter 16) show that there is a continuous interplay between the discourses of power and identity produced by dominated groups and attempts to resist or appropriate those discourses by marginalized and subaltern groups. Consequently, rather than take material culture to be a straightforward reflection of status or identity, they argue that we need to look at how discourses of power and identity intersect with one another in order to elucidate the meaning of specific styles and forms of material culture in different social contexts. Overall, there is an emphasis on meaning and the dynamic and heterogeneous nature of relations of power and constructions of identity (see also Small, Chapter 7; Jones, Chapter 14; Parker Pearson et al., Chapter 15).

In contrast with the North American tradition of historical archaeology, material culture is not perceived primarily in terms of capitalist economics and commodification. On the contrary, most of the chapters in this book, whether explicitly (e.g. Funari, Chapter 3; Monks, Chapter 13) or implicitly (e.g. Hall, Chapter 12; Lydon, Chapter 16), warn against assuming homogeneous economic systems and the analysis of material culture purely in terms of a commodity culture. Certainly commodification has been a prominent characteristic of the modern period, but clearly continuity, tradition and non-capitalist modes of reasoning must also be considered. As Lydon's (Chapter 16) analysis of the commodification of Chinese ceramics following the development of ceramic print transfers shows, the desire for such items of material culture among white Australians was as much about the construction of an exotic but sanitized 'other' as it was about market-oriented economics and capitalist rationality. Capitalism here provided the context in which new 'mass-produced' representations of identity could be constructed and consumed, bought and sold, but nevertheless a capitalist-driven instrumental rationality did not constitute the primary motivation behind human agency in this sphere.

Colonialism: cross-cultural perspectives

Aside from the development of frameworks for the analysis of power and identity from material culture, many of the chapters elaborate on the forging of power relationships and processes of identity construction in specific colonial contexts. For instance, drawing on post-colonial theory, Hingley (Chapter 8) explores the way in which the roundhouse may have been used both as a source of resistance to Roman power and identity, and as a means by which local elites imposed a lower status on others in early Roman Britain. In a more empirically-oriented account, Klingelhofer (Chapter 10) focuses on English settlement plantations of the 'proto-colonial' period in Ireland, outlining English attempts to impose new principles of order on the landscape and the possibilities for future research into relations between the Irish, the first (Catholic) English colonists and the later English colonists. Both studies provide evidence indicating that monolithic cultural categories such as 'Roman' and 'Native', 'English' and 'Irish', are not an appropriate means of characterizing the complex and dynamic role of material culture in these contexts of colonialism. It seems that the meanings attributed to the roundhouse in Roman Britain, or specific forms of settlement and landscape use in proto-colonial Ireland, were not fixed, but rather open to multiple and diverse interpretations by different groups in different social and historical contexts.

Turning to a quite different social context, Hall (Chapter 12) provides various readings of written sources and material culture, relating to food, marriage and architecture, in order to elucidate discourses of power, and the spaces through which subaltern modes of resistance can be glimpsed, in colonial Cape Town and its surrounding region. Lydon (Chapter 16) focuses on white Australian attempts to control and police Chinese identity and culture alongside Chinese modes of resistance through the perpetuation of traditional practices and the creation of social networks and modes of interaction. In both cases, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Cape Town and turn-of-the-century Sydney, the power of the dominant group is palpable, revealed in the relentless subjection of marginal and subaltern identities to a kind of critical surveillance, which is rarely turned on the dominant group's sense of 'self' (see Chapman et al. 1989: 18). But, like Hall, Lydon illustrates

the cultural spaces in which modes of resistance are mobilized, and the constant interplay between groups as they repeatedly appropriate specific aspects of material culture in the attempt to control the representation of identity to themselves and others. Parallels can also be drawn between Lydon's chapter on Chinese immigrants in Australia and that of Spencer-Wood (Chapter 17) which focuses on the maintenance of distinctive Jewish practices and the creation of social support networks in the United States, as well as the transformation of traditional Jewish culture and identity within American society. These and many other chapters in the book demonstrate the similarities and differences which characterize various contexts of colonialism and testify to the importance of a comparative framework which is at the same time attuned to the specificities of particular historical situations.

The 'local' and the 'global'

Many chapters address the issue of relations between the local and the global, and the hybrid cultures and identities which have been created in the context of rapidly expanding (and contracting) political and economic systems. 'Think globally, dig locally' (Orser 1996a: 183-204) is a slogan rightly emphasizing that even apparently isolated sites are related to a larger world, and the chapters in this book are replete with examples which endorse this. From an early medieval Jewish sink in Spain (Funari, Chapter 3), to Dutch paintings of seventeenth-century Brazil (Quartim de Moraes, Chapter 11), to the influence of Spanish colonial policies on the planting of English settlements in Ireland (Klingelhofer, Chapter 10), the interconnectedness of societies and the influence of widespread historical processes stand out as central issues in any world-wide historical archaeology.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to maintain a critical perspective on the nature of the inter-relationships between different societies and on any apparent tendencies towards cultural homogenization. The concept of 'globalization' has been increasingly prominent in recent social theory, a reaction in part to the rapid transmission of material culture, people and ideas throughout the world, which characterizes the late twentieth century, or the postmodern period as it is often known. In this context it might be tempting to merely highlight examples of globalization in early periods as a means of qualifying the distinctiveness of the modern and postmodern periods. What is needed, however, is a more critical perspective on the nature of the inter-relationships between groups and processes of acculturation or homogenization in the present and the past (cf. Friedman 1995). To do so, we need to dissect the specific cultural labels such as 'Romanization' and 'Europeanization' which are often attributed to processes of globalization. These are recent terms which must be used with caution, for instance, 'Europeanism' was first attested in English in 1828 (The Oxford Universal Dictionary, sub voce), and there was no 'Romanization' for the Romans themselves (Funari 1996: 83-6). Furthermore, concepts relating to acculturation have traditionally situated culture and identity within normative and evolutionary frameworks (and see Hingley, Chapter 8). Here, identity is considered to be a passive reflection of cultural difference, which is ameliorated through culture contact as subordinate groups adopt the supposedly superior culture of the dominant. In contrast, many of the studies in this book show that local identities are built in opposition to distant and not-so-distant 'others', and that processes of longterm change, of conquest and incorporation, are always accompanied by the construction of new discourses of difference and 'otherness', for instance as with the expansion of the Roman world (see Hingley, Chapter 8), or European colonialism and the establishment of slavery in South America (Quartim de Moraes, Chapter 11; Funari, Chapter 18; Rowlands, Chapter 19). Thus, historical archaeology must address both large-scale or global trends and the specificities of local contexts as people reacted to their global realities in an active and reflexive manner. Rowlands's analysis of the runaway slaves at Palmares in Brazil and their active engagement with the broader colonial context provides a clear demonstration of the importance of such an approach:

Whatever the details of its pluralism, Palmares seems to have inverted its slave identity and established a relationship with colonial society earning creditable testaments from visitors about the sophistication of its facilities and its overall importance in the regional politics of the captaincy of Pernambuco. There is little

doubt that this took place in the context of a colonial politics and probably saw an alliance between mercantile interests and the inhabitants of Palmares set against those of the Portuguese nobility and plantation slave owners who triumphed in the end.

(Rowlands, Chapter 19, p. 342)

The present in the past, the past in the present

The dialectic between past and present has been an important focus of both social theory (e.g. Shanks and Tilley [1987] 1992; Bourdieu 1990; 1-21) and studies of identity (e.g. Chapman et al. 1989: 1-9; Jones 1997: 135-44) for the past decade or so. Likewise, in this book the interplay between past and present figures at various points, sometimes as a specific focus of analysis, at other times as an unsettling aside suggesting that our representations of the past are structured by much broader social and political interests in the present. For instance, Klingelhofer (Chapter 10) notes in passing the effect of twentieth-century Irish politics on the study of English proto-colonial settlements south of the border, where they have been neglected, and north of the border where they have been a focus of greater interest (see Woodman 1995 for further discussion). Hingley (Chapter 8) provides an in-depth analysis of the way in which the study of Romanization during the first half of the twentieth century was influenced by contemporary British perceptions of empire, particularly in the context of India, and how Roman imperialism as interpreted by historians and archaeologists was in turn used as a model for British imperial policy.

In terms of identity, Rowlands (Chapter 19) provides a detailed discussion of the contemporary politics of identity in Brazil which provides the context for any historical archaeology of slavery. Like Funari (Chapter 18), he notes that historical archaeology is regarded as an important source of evidence about the history of slave resistance in the absence of written accounts by slaves themselves, and argues that ‘there is no better justification for the importance of an archaeology of slavery than to show its role in producing a past, which demonstrates how things might have been otherwise’ (Rowlands, Chapter 19, p. 342).

An altogether more abstract approach to the question of the relationship between past and present can be found in Quinn’s (Chapter 5) analysis of the differences between scientism and traditionalism in terms of the production of historical knowledge. In showing that orthodox, western, scientific history depends on a decisive break between past and present, whereas traditionalist and popularist representations involve a resurgence of the past in the present, he relativizes and questions the entire epistemology of orthodox history underlying studies, such as those discussed here, of the relationship between past and present as ultimately discrete realms.

Fragmentation

Finally, one of the overriding impressions made by the chapters in this book is that of a fragmentation, both of the frameworks in which historical archaeologists work and of the stories we tell. There is a move away from the definition of world systems and universalizing categories (cf. Johnson 1997: 220). Recent debates within the field have attempted to define historical archaeology in terms of a coherent, universalizing system, such as European colonialism or capitalism (for further discussion see above; Funari, Chapter 3; Johnson, Chapter 2). However, this inevitably sets up all-or-nothing dichotomies, like literacy:illiteracy, history:prehistory, capitalism:feudalism, pre-colonial:colonial (and now post-colonial), which fall apart in the face of detailed studies on either side of such divides. Most people in past literate societies were illiterate, capitalism and feudalism were, and are still, enmeshed (see Funari, Chapter 3), pre-colonial peoples often continued to live in relative isolation following European contact and colonization (see Pikirayi, Chapter 4), and colonial/imperial systems can be identified prior to 1492 (see Hingley, Chapter 8). Studies focusing on the mixed features of various historical contexts with relation to specific regions and sites present a challenge to any attempt to define all-encompassing, coherent world systems. Furthermore, any

attempt to impose a single coherent definition of historical archaeology belies the diversity of theory and method evident both in this book and elsewhere (for general discussions see Funari, Chapter 3; Johnson, Chapter 2), and which is always likely to characterize the practice of historical archaeology in a world context. Such fragmentation should not be seen as a negative influence, for it has contributed to a deconstruction of master narratives concerning colonialism, slavery, the evolution of feudalism into capitalism, and so on, which have dominated and constrained historical archaeology, As Johnson argues:

‘we should recognize that by definition our work serves to ironicize master narratives. One of the key themes that does hold historical archaeology together is that we walk in a uniquely dangerous space of the human past, a space between often very powerful ‘master narratives’ of cultural and social identity and much smaller, stranger, potentially subversive narratives of archaeological material. Archaeology does not have a monopoly on the study of the voices of ordinary people, but it does have the ability to render familiar things strange, and reveal timeless things as transient.

(Johnson, Chapter 2, p. 34)

In the face of such fragmentation, we have suggested an alternative way of conceiving of historical archaeology and the contribution which archaeology makes to the study of historical periods. Overall, the chapters provide a critique of the tendency in current historical archaeology to ‘flatten out’ past societies by representing them in terms of unifying cultures. They deal with issues, like ethnicity, gender, exploitation, social conflict and identity, in different periods and areas, overcoming orthodox boundaries between classical, biblical, medieval and historical archaeologies and producing innovative results. Historical archaeology has much to gain from adopting a contextual and pluralist approach and we hope this book will contribute to building such a world-wide discipline.

Acknowledgements

We thank the following for comments and advice: C.R. DeCorse, L.F.O. Fontes, R. McGuire, K. Kristiansen, R. Laurence, K.G. Lightfoot, C.E. Orser, C.C. Richards and D.J. Saitta. We are solely responsible for the ideas presented here.

References

- Andah, B.W. 1995. Studying African societies in cultural context. In *Making Alternative Histories: the practice of archaeology*, P.R. Schmidt and T.C. Patterson (eds), 140-81. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Anderson, P. 1990. A culture in counterflow. *New Left Review* 180, 41-78.
- Asad, T. 1987. Are there histories of peoples without Europe? A review article. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, 594-607.
- Austin, D. 1990. The ‘proper study’ of medieval archaeology. In *From the Baltic to the Black Sea. Studies in Medieval archaeology*, D. Austin and L. Alcock (eds), 9-42, London: Unwin Hyman.
- Bond, G.C. and A. Gilliam (eds) 1994. *Social Construction of the Past: representation as power*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Burke, P. 1995. The invention of leisure in early modern Europe. *Past and Present* 146, 136-50.

- Chapman, M., M. McDonald and E. Tonkin 1989, Introduction. In *History and Ethnicity*, E. Tonkin, M. McDonald and M. Chapman (eds), 1-21. London: Routledge.
- Chase, A.F. and D.Z. Chase 1996. More than kin and king. *Current Anthropology* 37, 803-10.
- Colley, S. and A. Bickford 1996. 'Real' Aborigines and 'real' archaeology: Aboriginal places and Australian historical archaeology. *World Archaeological Bulletin* 7, 5-21.
- Couse, G.S. 1990. Collingwood's detective image of the historian and the study of Hadrian's Wall. *History and Theory* 29, 57-77.
- Davies, N.Z. 1988. History's two bodies. *American Historical Review* 93, 1-30.
- Deagan, K. 1996. An avenue of inquiry in historical archaeology. In *Images of the Recent Past*, C.E. Orser (ed.), 16-41. London: Altamira.
- DeCorse, C.R. 1996. Historical archaeology. *African Archaeological Review* 13, 18-21.
- Deetz, J. 1977. In *Small Things Forgotten*. The archaeology of early American life. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- Dyson, S.L. 1995. Is there a text in site? In *Historical and Archaeological Views on Texts and Archaeology*, D. Small (ed.), 25-44. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Friedman, J. 1995. Culture, identity and world process. In *Domination and Resistance*, D. Miller, M. Rowlands and C. Tilley (eds), 246-60. London: Routledge.
- Funari, P.P.A. 1996. *Dressel 20 Inscriptions from Britain and the Consumption of Spanish Olive Oil, with a catalogue of Stamps*. Oxford: BAR.
- Goody, J. 1977. *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Graves-Brown, P., S. Jones and C. Gamble (eds) 1996. *Cultural Identity and Archaeology: the construction of European communities*. London: Routledge.
- Hawkes, C. 1951. British prehistory half-way through the century. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 17, 1-9. . Iggers, G.G. 1984. *New Directions in European Historiography*. Revised edition. Middleton: Wesleyan University Press.
- Johnson, M.H. 1992. Meaning of polite architecture in 16th century England. *Historical Archaeology* 26, 45-56. ;
- Johnson, M.H. 1996. *An Archaeology of Capitalism*. London: Blackwell.
- Johnson, M.H. 1997. Towards a world historical archaeology. *Antiquity* 71, 220-22.
- Jones, S. 1997. *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: constructing identities in the past and present*. London: Routledge.
- Kepecs, S. 1997. Introduction to new approaches to combining the archaeological and historical records. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 4, 193-8.
- Laurence, R. 1995. Review. *Journal of Roman Studies* 85, 310-13.
- Leone, M. and P. Potter, Jr 1988. Introduction: issues in historical archaeology. In *The Recovery of Meaning*, M. Leone and P. Potter, Jr (eds), 1-22. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Lightfoot, K.G. 1995. Culture contact studies: redefining the relationship between prehistoric and historical archaeology. *American Antiquity* 60, 199-217.

- Little, B.J. 1996. People with history: an update on historical archaeology in the United States. In *Images of the Recent Past*, C.E. Orser (ed.), 42-78. London: Altamira.
- Lowy, M. 1992. A escola de Frankfurt e a modernidade, Benjamin e Habermas. *Novos Estudos Cebrap* 32, 119-27.
- McGuire, R.H. and R. Paynter 1991. *The Archaeology of Inequality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Miller, D., M. Rowlands and C. Tilley (eds) 1995. *Domination and Resistance*. London: Routledge Pbk.
- Ober, J. 1995. Greek Horoi: artefactual texts and the contingency of meaning. In *Historical and Archaeological Views on Texts and Archaeology*, D. Small (ed.), 91-123. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Orser, C.E. 1996a. *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*. New York: Plenum.
- Orser, C.E. 1996b. Introduction. In *Images of the Recent Past*, C.E. Orser (ed.), 9-13. London: Altamira.
- Orser, C.E. 1996c. Historical archaeology for the world. *World Archaeological Bulletin* 7, 2-4.
- Orser, C.E. and B.M. Fagen 1995. *Historical Archaeology*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Rowlands, M. 1995. A question of complexity. In *Domination and Resistance*, D. Miller, M. Rowlands and C. Tilley (eds), 29-40. London: Routledge.
- Saitta, D.J. 1992. Radical archaeology and middle-range methodology. *Antiquity* 66, 886-97.
- Saitta, D.J. 1994. Agency, class, and archaeological interpretation. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 13, 201-27.
- Schmidt, P.R. and T.C. Patterson 1995. Introduction: from constructing to making alternative histories. In *Making Alternative Histories: the practice of archaeology*, P.R. Schmidt and T.C. Patterson (eds), 1-24. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Shanks, M. and C. Tilley [1987] 1992. *Re-constructing Archaeology: theory and practice*. London: Routledge.
- Small, D. 1995. Introduction. In *Historical and Archaeological Views on Texts and Archaeology*, D. Small (ed.), 1-14. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Ucko, P.J. 1994. Museums and sites: cultures of the past within education — Zimbabwe, some ten years on. In *The Presented Past: heritage, museums, education*, P.G. Stone and B.L. Molyneux (eds), 237-82. London: Routledge.
- Webster, J. 1997. Necessary comparisons: a post-colonial approach to religious syncretism in the Roman provinces. *World Archaeology* 28, 324-38.
- Webster, J. and N.J. Cooper (eds) 1996. *Roman Imperialism: post-colonial perspectives*. Leicester: University of Leicester.
- Wolf, E. 1982. *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Woodman, P. 1995. Who possesses Tara? Politics in archaeology in Ireland. In *Theory in Archaeology: a world perspective*, P.J. Ucko (ed.), 278-97. London: Routledge.