"X" never, ever, marks the spot: Archaeology and Cultural Studies

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> Archaeology is the search for fact. Not truth. . . . So forget any ideas you've got about lost cities, exotic travel, and digging up the world. We do not follow maps to buried treasure and "X" never, ever, marks the spot. Seventy percent of all archaeology is done in the library. Research. Reading. We cannot afford to take mythology at face value.
>
> Prof. Indiana Jones, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, dir. Steven Spielberg, 1989

The subject of archaeology is the investigation of the material relics of human cultures and societies of the past where there are few if any written records available.

It covers a timespan from the earliest evidence of hominid existence at least three million years ago to the recent past (e.g. indigenous, nonliterate peoples or industrial archaeology). The first written records appear around 3000 BC in western Asia and considerably later in most other parts of the world. Consequently archaeology is the only means to explore about 99 percent of human history.

The central questions of archaeology are: How was the past? How did people live? Why did they live in a certain way and why did these ways change? But these questions only matter because they are directly connected to us, the asking subject: How did the present evolve?

A modern image might illustrate the archaeologist's view: you switch to a film on TV, just a few minutes before the end. You won't be able to grasp the context of plot and conflict, which you would easily had you seen the whole film. These last minutes of a film can be compared to our conscious lifespan: The technical, economical, and social structures of today's world can be better understood if we regard the whole historic development – the whole film. In that sense archaeology tries to discover and picture developments from the very beginning onwards, to help explain problems of the present (Ziegert 1990: 55). That archaeologists are concerned about the present might appear a rather strange notion: the public picture of the archae-

ologist seems to be rather cloudy and outdated, even to members of fellow disciplines.

In the following I will therefore start with a brief view into archaeological terminology and sketch the theoretical discussions of the last decades. After that I examine in what ways archaeology is contributing to present problems, and if there are actual or possible connections to the field of cultural studies.

Archaeological Key Terms

The central concern of the archaeologist is the interpretation of *artifacts* – objects used, modified, or made by people.[1] Some of them are of material and artistic value, but the vast majority is waste, like broken stone tools or potsherds. Many of them can only be recognized or interpreted if the environment is taken into account. Therefore non-artifactual organic and environmental remains, *ecofacts*, e.g. animal bones, plant remains, or ashes, are another basic category of evidence. Archaeological structures that can't be carried, like postholes or storage pits, are called *features*. A structure of features and artifacts forms a *site*.

The digging of a site is the classic image of archaeological work. The aim of a dig is to understand its context – the finds, their *association* with other finds, and their horizontal and vertical position (*provenience*) in the surrounding sediment. Ideally an excavation would enable one to identify any possible feature, map and describe it, so that the site could be totally reconstructed, in all three dimensions. In recent decades, with the development of geophysical and geochemical survey techniques, interest in excavating a site has diminished, because it reveals and destroys archaeological evidence at the same time. There are voices demanding only to dig where absolutely necessary and to preserve as many sites as possible for future generations of archaeologists, when methods might have been developed that make it possible to answer questions we can't even think of today.

Generally, and in contrast to what museums teach us, the find itself is secondary, its context primary. The value of an artifact is less important than what its context can tell us. Connected to this is the analysis of the *formation processes* of the archaeological record. Finds do not represent the whole of past existence. They are a selection which does not show the complete picture. Faunal, floral, climatic, and chemical influences affect material in many different ways. But the archaeological record is also formed by our ability to recognize and identify it.

An important task for the excavation of a site is the recognition of the *stratigraphy*. That is valid for any excavation, whether it is a paleolithic cave or the underwater remnants of a lake dwelling. Identifying stratigraphy implies a temporal relation of the finds: lower layers mean older finds. That allows the creation of an age scale, the *relative dating* of objects or events, according to their

stratigraphic position, to describe evolutions or developments. The basic achievement in relative dating was the establishment of the three-part organization for the Old World into stone, bronze, and iron ages. This establishes a hierarchy of tools as well as an evolution of cultures. This categorization has proved to work quite well, but it is misleading when considered as a description of past reality.

Ideally the stratigraphy of a site can produce stratigraphically sorted artifacts which can be arranged in a *typology*. Important as these relative methods are, the final goal of dating is achieving *absolute dates*. They tell us about the speed of developments or whether things happened at the same time or must be seen in a relation. Until the development of scientific methods (best known are radiocarbon dating, tree-ring dating) historical dating was the only way to do this. Historical dating is possible because we can link the calenders of the Romans, the Egyptians, and the Maya to our dating system. If you now find a Roman coin (absolute date) in the same context (*sealed deposit*, e.g. a grave) with a celtic pot, you can cross-date the pot with the coin. Still, you don't really know if the two artifacts have the same circulation. The coin, for example, could be far older, having been used as a lucky charm for generations, before it was laid down with the pot. The pot would then be dated older than it actually is.

As Trigger has noted, "prehistoric archaeology is the only social science that has no direct access to information about human behaviour" (1989: 357). The relics do not speak by themselves, we have to interpret them. Interpretation means asking questions. The answers vary greatly, depending on what we are looking for. A clay pot, for example, can be tested chemically to give a date of its manufacture and therefore a date for the location where it was found; the quality of the clay can indicate its origin and give clues about the range of contacts. The form of the pot can be interpreted in a typological sequence and give information about beliefs. Analysis of the shape and residues might give information about the use of the pot.

Anthropology or History?

Because of the vast field it tries to cover, and because of restrictions in the nature of its subject, archaeology has to connect to several humanities and sciences like history, ethnography, and biological anthropology as well as chemistry, geography, and others. It shares techniques and methods and needs to communicate results: Archaeology is so interdisciplinary that the scientific basis of archaeology itself has been questioned.

In the European tradition (and the former colonies that are influenced by its university traditions) archaeology is mostly linked to historical or culture-historical departments, usually called prehistory (*préhistoire* or *Vor- und Frühgeschichte*). In the United States, in contrast, archaeology is one of four subdisciplines that form the departments of anthropology (along with socio-

cultural, biological/physical, and linguistic anthropology). This disciplinary difference is far more than a mere bureaucratic procedure: it mirrors the development of quite remarkably different methods and theories in Europe and the US.

For almost the first half of the century archaeology was dominated by the culture-history paradigm, based on Gustaf Kossinna and his influential book *Die Herkunft der Germanen*, published in 1920. It sought to locate the origin of present or historically known ethnic groups by tracing them backwards and connecting them to archaeologically documented material cultures. This led to a major crisis, as his approach was misused by fascist regimes, prominently the Nazis: archaeology was used to prove that Germans were offspring of the Indo-German Aryans. Furthermore, it was argued that Poland in fact "belonged" to the nordic Aryans; archaeology thus supplied Nazi Germany with the scientific backup for the invasion of Poland and Russia (Hodder 1991: 1). Without being a Nazi himself in the literal sense Kossinna laid an important foundation for being used by this "master race ideology." As a reaction to political abuse, German archaeology became insignificant, trying to avoid any politically misusable statements (see Härke 1991).

In the sixties, a new paradigm was established by the (mainly) American "New Archaeology" or processual archaeology (see Binford & Binford 1968).[2] It tried to get rid of the old culture-historical burden by introducing mathematical purity into archaeology. The definition of ahistoric models was the new goal. If results could be empirically proven, there would be no danger of ideological misuse. Archaeology should be able to produce facts and truth, not merely hypotheses and interpretations.

Analogical models were taken from ethnography as a basis for making inferences about past societies. Processual archaeology spread widely, and led to the development of highly usable new methods and techniques, like the stronger importance of experimental procedures and ethnographic archaeology. This paradigm is still dominant in the US.

In the United Kingdom it was conquered by postprocessual archaeologies in the eighties. Postprocessual has become a collective name that emphasizes the rejection of processualist theories, but is in itself a rather incoherent bundle of structuralist (e.g. Yates 1989), poststructuralist (e.g. Hodder 1989), neo-Marxist (e.g. Miller and Tilley 1984) and feminist (e.g. Gero and Conkey 1991) approaches. Their common concern was the processualists' tendency to be scientific-positivist, evolutionist, and functionalist, and to disregard the socio-cultural relevance of archaeology.

Postprocessualism is based on the idea that all truth is subjective, because every decoding of a message is inevitably another encoding (Tilley 1990: 338). Through this, relativism is seen as an absolute principle. Shanks and Tilley have concluded that the goal of research must be political (1987: 195). Archaeological discourse should help to disempower political and intellectual elites by verifying relativism, and therefore validating all explanations of the past. Especially

feminist and Marxist approaches demand that archaeological theories be connected with a specific interest in present society.

Postprocessualism still is an almost entirely British phenomenon, but derives considerable prestige from the preeminence of postmodernism in comparative literature and its dissemination throughout the humanities and social sciences (see Hunt 1989).

Archaeology Studies Culture

The strictly archaeological definition of culture is rather specific, because it is limited to material characteristics. An archaeological culture is "a constantly recurring *assemblage* of artifacts assumed to be representative of a particular set of behavioural activities carried out at a particular time and place" (Renfrew and Bahn 1991: 485). As straightforward as this appears to be, it is of course not a sufficient definition, because after all we are interested in people, not pots. In fact, all archaeological inferences about past societies hinges critically upon an understanding of the relationship between material and nonmaterial aspects of culture. The basis for this is the anthropological notion that man, in contrast to animals, is obviously inadequately fitted for survival in natural surroundings (Gehlen 1997) and, hence, has to adapt by creating tools. "Culture, however we define it, is manmade production, creative doing, by which man can overcome his dependence on his inner and outer nature" (Greverus 1987: 60).

These means, tools, values, and rules can be transmitted as cultural objectifications of a material or immaterial nature: synchronically from generation to generation, diachronically between social spaces and within groups or classes. Material culture is the primary aspect of human adaptation to environment: food, housing, clothing. To start looking at these primary aspects of staying alive can make it easier to recognize the more hidden forms of cultural objectivizations, in which the direct connection between needs and their fulfillment cannot be as easily seen.

Culture is constructing much more than mere survival would demand. The ability to symbolize and add meaning to things that they do not carry in themselves are connected issues of discussion. An example is a house: it facilitates survival and social interaction, and tells of its inhabitants' values via their aesthetics of living (Schultz and Lavenda 1990: 360ff). In that sense archaeology can make interferences about far more than just material culture.

We know that there are symbolic meanings but we can only comprehend them in a comparative way: we look for analogy, which in the case of a house, seems quite simple, because the concept is still familiar to us. But that might be misleading: different cultures might have totally different values; the range of possible human behavior exceeds our specific horizon. We have to accept this, there is no way out. That reminds us of the historic dimension of culture.

Inasmuch as there is an awareness for the broad range of possible human behavior it is necessary to use analogy: we can only perceive the past if we posit that there is a common perception between the people of the past and ourselves. But this implies the transfer of our values into the past: we automatically think that the biggest and most decorated houses belong to the rich and powerful, as in our present society – not to the poor and underprivileged. Historical imagery is always dependent on the historian's social and economic circumstances or surroundings:

> I'm convinced that history actually is the dream of a historian, and that this dream is mostly determined by the environment the historian lives in. (Duby and Lardreau 1982: 48)

Archaeology and Cultural Studies

Archaeological statements are therefore always and inevitably also statements about the culture of the archaeologist. In that sense they are political and of interest to cultural studies. The connection of the two is still far from obvious. They are both concerned with culture. But there seems to be hardly any mutual interest, none that could be proven by the printed word, after all. Seemingly the two had to travel too far to have reached each other by now. Cultural studies is traditionally concerned with the study of contemporary culture, texts, and mass media, explicitly avoiding historic dimensions that stretch before capitalism, interested in individual voices and sociopolitical investigations. None of these interests could easily be connected with archaeology. Since archaeology cannot refer to written records, it is furthest away from modern society and has been rather opposed to political inferences in the last five decades.

But there has recently been an orientation of anthropology towards cultural studies and vice versa (During 1993; Vincent 1996). This affected archaeology as well, on a small scale that is nevertheless recognizable. As shown above, post-processual archaeologists have become interested in political impact, the construction of knowledge, identity, and society. Thus archaeology moves towards the interests of cultural studies.

The same applies to cultural studies. During recent decades historical dimensions got more important. For example, it is seen as a problem that cultural studies has a simplified view of premodern societies. Historical research is here explicitly demanded (Lutter and Reisenleitner 1998: 63). There is also the problem of hegemonic developments, like the social evolution of popular and high culture. The inscription of certain cultural forms is a complex sociohistoric process, which might be better understood by taking archaeological perspectives into account. The growing impact of gender or race studies demands a historical or anthropological perspective as well: it adds aspects to the constitution of identities and to the range of alternatives to euro- and androcentric views.

Archaeology and cultural studies meet in the opposition to positivist and behaviorist understandings of the humanities. They meet in the perception of post-structuralist and deconstructive ideas. Cultural studies can communicate with archaeologists when they want to see the world not as naturally given, but socially and culturally constructed (Carey 1997: 12). Likewise there is the warning, that the isolated interpretation of singular cultural practices loses awareness of culture as a whole way of living (e.g. Kellner 1997).

After all, one shouldn't forget that one of the typical descriptions of cultural studies suggests that it "is a discipline constantly shifting its interests and methods, both because it is in constant and engaged interaction with its larger historical context and because it cannot be complacent about its authority" (During 1993: 20). Maybe without yet really noticing, postprocessualist archaeology and cultural studies have reached common ground.

The following examples illustrate some of the places of mutual interest.

Archaeology and Nationalism

> Archaeological sites are such potent symbols of national identity (e.g. Masada in Israel, or Zimbabwe in, significantly, Zimbabwe) that peoples today are frequently willing to fight over them. Archaeology and ancient history help define a people as distinct and occupying (or claiming) territories that were historically theirs. (Kohl and Fawcett 1995: 11)

Archaeology cannot ignore that its theories were and will be used for building a sense of nation or territory. It has been argued that there is an almost natural relationship between archaeology and nationalism, and archaeology thus may always be an unavoidably political enterprise (Silberman 1995). Moreover archaeology often appears to be a discipline that almost invites state interference. Dependent upon considerable support for their primary research, archaeologists seem peculiarly vulnerable to state pressures.

National identities are constructions, in the sense of Anderson's imagined communities (1983). The contribution of archaeology is important in the construction of cultural identity and claims on territory, because its material evidence can be used to symbolize a historical unified nation with common values. For many peoples in the world, their archaeological past is much more important than is commonly appreciated.

Not long ago the wish of the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" to name itself simply "Macedonia" led to a major political crisis, because the Greeks felt that to be an assault on their history and felt threatened by possible territorial claims connected to ancient Macedonia (Kohl and Fawcett 1995: 10). A less hostile example might be the European celebration of the Celts during the last decade. Major exhibitions like "I Celti – La prima Europa" (The Celts – The First Europe, Venice 1991) generated tremendous public

awareness – several popular books and TV documentaries – indicating interest all over Europe. This is clearly connected to the political idea of a European nation. But the notion of the Celts as the first Europeans is a modern concept. It definitely has nothing to do with anything the Celts might have been communicating.

Archaeology also plays a crucial role for countries or peoples who seek pre-colonial self-esteem or minorities looking for their history without a written record. In Australia, for example, written records do not exist before AD 1788. And they can only teach us the history of European colonists, providing a blurred image of the Aborigines, whose culture stretches more than 23,000 years beyond that point. The ''natives'' have developed a sense of their own history as a means of opposing the oppression of the colonial heritage.

Many countries claim their antiquities, many peoples object to archaeological excavation of their burial grounds or religous sites. A recent and very problematical case is that of the Kennewick Man, skeletal remains found in July 1996 on the banks of the Columbia River in Kennewick, Washington (see Thomas 2000, Downey 2000). It has been radiocarbon dated to approximately 9,400 years of age. This makes it one of the oldest human finds in North America – an archaeological sensation. But five northwestern tribes claim the body as their ancestor and demand a stop to scientific investigation, which they see as an ongoing violation of their cultural and religious beliefs. They want to bury him according to tribal rituals. In 1990 the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act was passed, and they have the legal right to do so. Theoretically a cultural connection to the remnants has to be proven, but practically all finds older than 500 years (i.e. pre-Columbian) were returned. But in the case of Kennewick Man, scientists started legal action, denying the possibility of a cultural connection bridging almost 10,000 years. In their view, the freedom of science was in danger.

By high court decision a DNA test was carried out, in order to determine which Indian tribe Kennewick man may have belonged to, so that the bones could be returned to the rightful descendants. This procedure, the notion that culturally or socially constituted units like tribes or nations can be traced backwards through genetic examination or skull measurement, is a misconception that reminds one of Kossinna's attempts to link the Germans to the Arayans, with dreadful consequences.

Kennewick Man is thought not only to be more than 9,000 years old but of Caucasian origin. If this is true, then a momentous scientific and cultural discovery has been made. But such a discovery does not fit the Left's ideological view of the US. In keeping with this view, Clinton ordered the site destroyed and the bones vandalized in the hope of destroying any possibility of determining the remains' racial origins. This is a calculated Orwellian attempt by the Left, through Clinton, to try and control the present, and hence the future, by destroying historical evidence. There is no clearer evidence of the Left's power,

influence and malice, especially in the media. (James Henry: "The Left's War Against America," *New Nation News*: www.newnation.org/NNN-Kennewick-man.html)3

And here again one can see the dangers of importing anthropological reasoning into sociopolitical debates. This conflict is not about bones, but power in a present society. Perhaps what Kennewick Man can indicate after all is that the US has been an immigrant country for at least 10,000 years.

Archaeology has to take notice of the growing diversity of views and questions. An example of this is archaeological investigation of the life-conditions of African-American slaves in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Archaeologists were surprised to be told by African Americans they contacted that they were sick of hearing about slavery. Instead of that, they were interested in finds showing their ancestors' cultural connection to Africa. One can prove that the inhabitants of houses in the southeastern US were African American via finds in a specific corner, below the hearth. A similar pattern can be observed in West Africa. This issue was relevant for African Americans because it proves a cultural connection to Africa, but also cultural cohesion across a huge region of the United States: slaves were not simply desocialized workers, but had a distinct group identity, that can be traced to a particular African region (Leone 1996).

Archaeology and Gender

> Cultural studies merges into those modes of history-writing which reconnect us to the world in ways that cannot be taken for granted, and in which our given identities, our "origins" begin to seem less secure. (During 1993: 25)

This applies also to myth and ideology, inasmuch as myth is an arrangement of the past in patterns that create and reinforce archetypes so familiar that they seem like eternal truths – which in the context of Roland Barthes also means ideology, because it promotes the interests of dominant groups in society. In that sense archaeology plays a crucial role in constructing myths.

An obvious example is the question of sex and gender. Within this discussion archaeology plays a prominent role; a major argument in this context is taken from archaeology in the form of long-range hominid development and genetic distinction. In applying archaeological arguments the relevance of cultural determination for gender questions is denied.

As an example for how gender-driven stereotypes receive scientific backing I want to take some quotes from *Wir Neandertaler* (We Neanderthals), a German book from 1988, by the renowned journalist and author Wolf Schneider. It was a bestseller with a high reputation for its scientific accuracy and daring way of introducing new perspectives.

> When the men returned to the camp from hunting, laden with loot, they were greeted by the women with the fruits of job-sharing: with the nuts, berrys, roots, which the women had collected and picked. (p. 85)

It is remarkable that the author tries to find comfort in the fact that the relation of the sexes seems stable over at least 3.7 million years. Family life at the home of *homo erectus* is identical to the stereotype of the *bourgeois*, postcapitalist pattern: daddy comes home from work, mummy and the children greet him cheerfully and they sit down to have supper. Darling, how was your day?

> Why did men get involved in so many duties, instead of living free like the male chimpanzees? Probably because there was a reward: sex – permanent female readiness, whereas all other animal females are only willing and fertile at distinct rutting seasons. To chain a roving hunter and involve him in the care of the brood, was achieved best by the women, who could offer him permanent pleasure, after all, three out of four weeks [*sic*!] – whereas the women who were in an animal rhythm had a smaller chance of finding a protector, and therefore diminished the chances of survival of their children. Consequently sexuality for hundred thousands of years has not only meant producing children, but likewise binding a partner and protecting the brood. (p. 87)

In what duties did men get involved? Did they care for the brood? Were they roving hunters? How could you prove any of those assumptions? What is the basis for such interpretations? Archaeology isn't alone in facing this problem, that the social context of the scientist will always be found in his answers.

It is as questionable to compare early humans with chimpanzees, as it is to compare them with indigenous peoples. The few hunter-gatherer societies that could be ethnologically described represent only a very small aspect of all the possible forms of society. The myth of the monogamous women and the promiscuous man has lately been challenged: women didn't need a protector, the social group provided all the protection they needed; you do not necessarily need a father to raise a child. But because women are fertile for only a day per month, promiscuity, gathering as many sperm as possible, proves a valuable means of reproduction – for the women. That early men were hunters is another common myth. It seems more likely that man started his meat-eating career with scavenging (Binford 1981). The picture of the proud hunter, erect king of the creatures, is so much more what we want ourselves to be than a humble scavenger, scraping bones for the bits hyenas left behind.

It's common knowledge that the first human was "Lucy," skeletal remains of an about 3.6 million-year-old ancestor in the African desert. But why did the find of almost half a skeleton (no skull) lead to the assumption that it was a female? (Did she carry a handbag?) It seems to fit into some mythological picture of the seventies, when Lucy was found, that the first human is a great-grandmother. Actually the interpretation is quite questionable: it is not at all easy to distinguish male and female skeletons just by the bones; usually it is the context that leads to

the definition of sex. And there isn't a context that could be referred to in Lucy's case.

In archaeology, gender as well as sex are theoretical constructions. The analysis of skeletal remains is not an objective procedure: often female and male characteristics can be found at the same time, and it is then a mere subjective decision: the one with the sword is male, the one with the necklace is female. Ethnography tells us about cultures of the Native Americans who knew a third gender: biologically men, culturally women. Archaeology wouldn't have been able to recognize that in the skeletal remains (Bernbeck 1997: 329)

The Past and the Present

Inasmuch as archaeology is interested in past culture, it is also part of present culture. Archaeologists are fictional heroes in films (*Indiana Jones*) and computer games (Lara Croft), and archaeological settings are the background for thrillers and love stories (Agatha Christie, Barbara Woods). Documentaries in TV and reports in print get quite considerable attention, not to forget the thousands of museums that reach a lot of visitors.

There is a tremendous gap between what is discussed inside archaeology and what is being communicated as common knowledge of the past. Let's take Indiana Jones as an example. His job is nothing less than saving the world from evil ("Nazis! I hate these guys!"), fact-izing the mythology of two major religions by finding the ark of the covenant (which Lara claims to have found as well in 1993) and the Holy Grail. In *The Temple of Doom*, his Western rationality masters the misuse of religious belief and saves an illiterate tribe. So in any case he has to deal with mythology which is of tremendous importance: "The quest for the grail is not archeology, it's a race against evil. If it is captured by the Nazis the armies of darkness will march all over the face of the earth" (Henry Jones, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*).

Without a sense of doing wrong, Indiana Jones plunders the temples of South America, India, and Egypt, searching for materially precious artifacts first hand. The undeveloped natives can't see the value of the objects. They are merely afraid because of some superstitious belief system. That the Indiana Jones trilogy is a festival of escapism is nothing surprising. It is not the adventure aspect that makes Indiana Jones so annoying (nobody wants to see a one-to-one depiction of boring archaeologists), but the hidden messages of hegemony and ideology which are very well understood by the public.[4]

Museums act very much the same way. The vast majority of exhibitions represent a merely art-historical view of the past. The famous collection from ancient Egypt in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for example, displays most of its holdings dispersed and out of context. The aim is the experience of the precious and exotic, awe at the past and the status of the museum itself. There is no possibility of getting a picture of how the society

might have worked, what their problems were. Learning in a sociocultural way is not encouraged, just gathering an unquestionable knowledge.

The overall public picture of archaeology is quite outdated. The setting of Indiana Jones in the 1930s is probably not a coincidence: Archaeology seems backward and preserved in history. Many archaeologists feel threatened by these escapist tendencies. The enormous popularity of magical, extraterrestrial, or other fringe perceptions of the past seems to be directed against archaeology itself. An example might be the Swiss author Erich von Däniken (*Chariots of the Gods*), who is enormously popular and spreads the thesis that all achievements in human cultural or technical development were brought to us by aliens from outer space.

Probably this is not only the fault of archaeologists: the public seems to prefer the opportunity to escape the complexity of postmodernism in the archaeological timeslot. How comforting to go to the Met and relax in a decent culture with proper hierarchy and a simple structure, easy to grasp with a few sentences attached to the show-case.

But still, archaeology could be doing the opposite: adding to our understanding of variety and giving us the opportunity to learn about sociocultural life-forms, encouraging the individual to imagine, be critical, and develop openness. This is what archaeology has to offer public culture: a playground for the practice of critical, historical thinking.

The Past and the Future

Present archaeology, as dispersed as it it is in a worldwide perspective, is generally dominated by two major positions. Processualists claim their interpretations are provable and therefore criticizable. Postprocessualists doubt the capacity for objective knowledge and demand awareness of the social and intellectual background of archaeological interpretation.

They both have a place in archaeology: processual methods cannot be substituted in the practice of field archaeology. Conducting an excavation with a clearly defined scientific vision is of great value. But the time for a wider concern with the implications of archaeological work is due: postprocessualism introduced valuable new perspectives into the range of cultural behavior – past and present. And through these new concerns, archaeology moves towards cultural studies and can benefit from its tradition of critique and disciplinary openness. Archaeology still needs encouragement to participate in and contribute to not only academic knowledge but to sociocultural reality, willingly and fearlessly.

Until now archaeology in general has been stuck with internal discussions and has only minimally been concerned with social implications. Cultural studies, on the other hand, has lately moved towards historical views and can expand its interest in anthropology towards archaeology. There is a lot archaeology can contribute: an insistent concern with cause and process and a notion of the

antiquity of human cultural development; a realization of the dynamic record of continual social and cultural change in prehistory that belies notions of static, pristine, "traditional" cultures. For people without written records, archaeology provides the possibility of gaining access to their own history. Archaeology has the potential to show the dynamics of societies before the colonial encounter. It can also contribute to the theoretical understanding of the expansion of the modern capitalist world-system.

Whether one likes it or not, archaeological argumentation plays an important role in modern politics and societies. It is used to claim territory, build identity, question the status quo. It is displayed in museums, schoolbooks, and the mass media. Its influence is quite strong because of its exotic appeal on the one hand, and its terminological complexity on the other.

Archaeology has to be challenged and questioned. It is not physics – X never, ever, marks the spot. In that sense it has to be seen as one of the humanities and treated in the same way: with critical empathy and the awareness that it is always us, being entwined in a specific social context in the present, looking for answers in the past. What we'll find will not be antique reality, but might be enriching and add new perspectives to our present.

Notes

1 I can only remark on very global aspects of archaeology. For an adequate look into techniques and methods, theories and practice see for example Renfrew and Bahn 1991; Trigger 1989.
2 In Great Britain David L. Clarke was working on similar but not identical ideas; see Clarke 1978.
3 One basic misconception in this is the confusion of "caucasian" and "caucasoid": the former being a cultural or linguistic term for peoples in eastern Europe (often racially misused), the latter being an anthropological term for south to southeastern Asian features. The skull of the Kennewick Man was labeled caucasoid by anthropologist James Chatters, who first examined the bones (at that time he was convinced he was dealing with a 100-year-old trapper).
4 "I loved this movie because it is really believable. It makes you see how cruel the Nazis really were and how they were dealt with. It also makes you believe that you have to be careful who you trust because it could be a life and death situation. I definitely give this movie a 10/10" (Comment on the messageboard in the Internet movie database for *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*).

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