

## The Production of Knowledge in Archaeology

*Editorial Collective of FKA*

This issue is the first in a series of contributions that will examine the production of archaeological knowledge. In the natural sciences, the field of science studies has existed since the 1970s. At first, the ethnographic view of laboratory work stood in the center, as exemplified in Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar's *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (1986). From this approach as well as other research within the framework of the *Social Construction of Technology* (SCOT) and the *Science, Technology and Society* (STS) paradigm came long-term efforts to research the production of knowledge in archaeology. Today's growing interest in the reciprocal relationship between archaeological practice and research results has emerged from the convergence of two distinct disciplinary strands.

The first of these approaches investigates the archaeological production of knowledge in terms of networks of objects, information, and people. It involves an analytical detachment from motivations, interests, or intentions of different actors (e.g. Webmoor 2013). Neutral descriptions replace relations that were traditionally conceptualized as the result of human action and motivation. This shift amounts to a new perspective that analyzes interactions of things, institutions, people, and ideas from an external position. History, including discipline-specific history, plays at best a minor role, while direct observations of activities in the archaeological arena often lead to surprising insights, due to the detailed analysis of the role of things.

A second approach, archaeoethnography, is also concerned with the production of knowledge, but pursues it in a different way. Archaeoethnography includes the well-known "participant observation" of ethnography, but research "objects" are not "others", but rather archaeologists themselves. Matt Edgeworth (2006) as well as Yannis Hamilakis (Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009) and Ian Hodder (2002) have examined the generation of archaeological knowledge in this sense. Here, in addition to the means used to conduct research, the historical background and ambitions of the persons involved as well as financial and political differences among project participants are also of interest.

The two approaches address both banal and highly complex relationships in the daily practice of archaeology. How are decisions made about where to locate excavation units? Which tacit preconceptions act as preconditions for approaches to research and for concrete projects? What influence do specific tools, devices, and documentation methods have on the practice of excavation, including subsequent interpretations? How do mechanisms of exclusion work in terms of the (non-) participation in archaeological knowledge production? How do measuring instruments determine the classification of archaeological materials and the graphic representation of sites and non-sites?

These questions illustrate only some facets of the extremely diverse realm of archaeological knowledge production: This complex field is virtually inexhaustible, and our list could be endlessly extended. The history of archaeology is not simply an accumulation of knowledge about the past, nor is it an accumulation of ever more accurate knowledge acquired via the use of innovative methods. Rather, the methods for acquiring new knowledge and the idea of which knowledge is judged useful or legitimate stand in a dialectical relationship to one another. To give just one example, large-scale, regional and supra-regional syntheses are still seen as the main objectives of archaeological research. This understanding leads to the ever increasing use of specific analytical means such as satellite photos and the software needed to evaluate them. On the other hand, small-scale household analyses, an archaeology of daily life, or the question of intentionality in the past have had their heyday but are nowadays pushed into the background (see Robb and Pauketat 2013). What are the reasons for these changes?

The goal of the contributions under this rubric is to examine in detail the relationship between procedures involved in the production of knowledge and the types of knowledge that emerge from them. The contributions to this series will be marked with the signet „Knowledge Production in Archaeology“ and a consecutive number, so that over time the threads of the theme can be easily tracked through the journal.

We open this series with a contribution from the pen of Susanne Grunwald on the subject of cartography and its history in the field of European prehistoric archaeology. Interested readers are invited to contribute to the ongoing dialogue. Please send your suggestions to:

*post@kritischearchaeologie.de*

### **Bibliography**

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