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## Save the Date for Future Mourning: Prefiguration and Heritage

**Colleen Morgan**

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## Save the Date for Future Mourning: Prefiguration and Heritage

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### **Keywords**

climate change, prefiguration, cultural heritage, anarchism, mourning

### **Schlagwörter**

Klimawandel, Präfiguration, Kulturerbe, Anarchismus, Trauer

At play within Lewis Borck's "Constructing the Future History: Prefiguration as Historical Epistemology and the Chronopolitics of Archaeology" (2019) and Cornelius Holtorf's response, "Heritage Futures, Prefiguration and World Heritage" (2020) are ways to understand the future through our actions in the present. A response to these articles that considers heritage, climate change and the future should probably begin with impending doom, rising tides, shattering storms, a recent, heartfelt loss of cultural heritage. How do we understand a future that extends from this excruciating present without incorporating mechanisms for mourning? Let me, instead, draw very large parentheses around and an underline beneath climate change (climate change). Perhaps bold too? (**climate change**) This is our catastrophe, our great challenge, the change that changes everything. It is happening, and then...?

As archaeologists we should be well-versed in the "and then." As archaeologists we know that all is change, everything is always changing, endless battleships of seriation diagrams dancing like sugar plum fairies around our heads. I always wondered if, at that last, pointy tip of the diagram, there was a sound like a slow exhale and a small puff of smoke as the artefact transforms into archaeology. The breathy sighs of material culture as they pass from memory. At least, from the memory of antiquity, as they become *archaeological*. And climate change has that very pointy tip at our throats. Well, to be honest, at the throats of our children. Or perhaps the throats of children far away in other countries where they don't have a fat buffer of colonial treasure and can't afford turrets at the coastlines and military flights with payloads of vaccinations. But even tucked inside these bastions of wealth and privilege, we are shedding what we call "cultural heritage" in polite society at a fairly remarkable rate. Of course, this loss does not compare to the great ravening mouth of development-concrete-fast-capitalism which pays the bills for many of our students, friends, colleagues. In the Great Concerns of capitalism and climate change, archaeology's rank is debatable.

It has been argued that these kinds of loss/rescue narratives do not enchant (Perry 2019), that such attitudes are cliché and that archaeology is a renewable resource (Holtorf 2001), but I can't quite manage the ambivalence that these stances seem to encourage. As Borck notes, continual production does not balance continual loss in a zero-sum game (pers. comm. December 21, 2020). I am not sure I could keep a straight face explaining to local people that their beloved landmark was going to crash into the sea in the next 5–10 years, but no big deal, right? *It's all heritage anyway.*

The question remains—are we able to manoeuvre our expertise into meaningful discussions of "and then...?" Borck (2019) discusses the management of cultural heritage and the construction of "future history" in terms of the preservation and inscription of UNESCO World Heritage sites and prefigurative action within archaeology. He and other anarchist members of the Black Trowel Collective (including myself) argue that we must attend to present practice to understand what kinds of futures we are forming by reinforcing narratives that support nationalism and the state. Our "and then" is actively being forged in present action, and archaeology has made a study of state societies while remaining relatively silent regarding heterarchies and egalitarianism in the past. Further, we have run our excavations as colonialist military incursions and our rescue operations as extractive, capitalist businesses. James Flexner (2020) substantiates prefiguration by arguing for a degrowth movement within archaeology, offering a way out of modes of archaeology that are complicit with increasing the instrumentalization of our discipline, stratification within society, and environmental destruction.

In his response to Borck's (2019) article, Holtorf aptly summarises prefigurative practice in that "it does not only matter what we decide today in relation to heritage but also how we reach these decisions" (2020, 3). Many archaeologists already incorporate elements of anarchism within their thought and practice. Terms such as "prefiguration" can connect these practices to a wider critical literature and to helpful praxis to improve methodologies. Though Holtorf agrees in principle with Borck's argument, he disputes the inscription of UNESCO World Heritage sites as a case study. He downplays their influence in prefiguring future history, instead pointing to individual experiences with social and experiential technologies as more impactful regarding the construction of future histories. Of note, Holtorf cites VR and immersive experiences as key to this impact. As a digital archaeologist I concur, but I wonder about the telescoping of perceived responsibility and impact between individual agency and national institutions. This is usually a strategy within neoliberalism, to ascribe personal responsibility to deflect from structural change and has been particularly pernicious within climate change arguments. Other liberal components of Holtorf's argument are meaningfully critiqued by Borck (2020), such as the invocation of identity politics and that inscribing egalitarian sites would homogenize their meaning.

Finally, Holtorf (2020) describes the positives regarding the World Heritage Convention, and undoubtably there are many. My experiences with regard to the inscription of the World Heritage site of Al Zubarah in Qatar have led to my ambivalence regarding the process, some of which has resonance in work by Karen Exell and Trinidad Rico (2013; Rico 2017). As an archaeologist employed by the Qatar Islamic Archaeology and Heritage Project (QIAH), I worked to further a nationalistic narrative that naturalised and inscribed the monarchy, used exploitative labour practices that employed large teams of men from war-torn and economically deprived countries, and contributed to the heritage-washing of a country with a problematic international reputation in support of a World Heritage inscription. These issues are too complex to fully unpack within the space of a response article, but I remain sceptical of the power of UNESCO inscriptions as anything but nation-building. The contrast was particularly acute when compared to working with the Origins of Doha and Qatar project funded by the Qatar Foundation, which was more involved with local stakeholders, outreach, training archaeology students, creating Arabic translations of the research, developing school materials that acted against colonialism, and attempting to record heritage before intensive urban construction destroyed the remains (Morgan et al. forthcoming). Yet I am less interested in debating the merits of the World Heritage Convention than of furthering the conversation regarding the use of anarchist concepts within archaeology and heritage to reconfigure the discipline and ourselves.

Borck's original article was a much-needed anarchist intervention into the realm of cultural heritage management. That it was met by a liberal stance is unsurprising; in the past this likely would have been my response as well. We are trained in an archaeology in and of *Empire*, the organised destruction under which we all live (Bergman and Montgomery 2017; Hardt and Negri 2000). This regime can also be called "capitalist realism" wherein "capitalism seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable" (Fisher 2009). Unlearning liberalism and capitalist realism is a highly unsettling but joyful personal and professional reconfiguration, a lifelong process with no endpoint and arguably few academic rewards. It is difficult for archaeologists to think about the past in non-neoliberal terms, and to organise our work in prefigurative ways that prioritise egalitarian modes of working (but see Eddisford and Morgan 2018). Yet archaeologists are critical in lifting the veil of capitalist realism—we know that we have not always lived in societies organised by neoliberal principles; this knowledge is crucial to those who have been trying to imagine new ways to live in the shadow of Empire. As previously mentioned, many archaeologists are already thinking and working in anarchist ways (*sensu* Graeber 2009) and may be interested in being connected to the growing critical literature that draws from anarchism in practice and interpretation. For a short example of this, I will discuss a theme within the recent *Heritage Futures* (Harrison et al. 2020), that of loss.

First, it might be worth considering some defining characteristics of heritage practice: that of the necessity of transmuting sites and artefacts into assets to manage, a structure to organise these assets, and the proposed necessity of managing and controlling this heritage (Carman 2005). Within the instrumentalization and commodification that seems inherent within heritage practice it is difficult to imagine anarchist interventions. This difficulty may merely reflect our larger participation in late capitalism and the reification of nationalistic narratives reinforced by funders or even local stakeholders (González-Ruibal et al. 2018). Harrison notes that heritage can be described as a "practice of caring for the future" (2020, 42). A productive example of this future care through an anarchist lens can be seen in the formation of the Museum of Care, one of the legacies of the tragic death of David Graeber in 2020. The Museum of Care is an anarchist project with the goal to "produce and maintain social relationships." From the website: "the Museum of Care wants to rethink what it is to be a museum or an artist, and to produce spaces for freedom and care rather than monuments." The Museum of Care has its genesis in joyful mourning, memorialisation through creative interventions. There are echoes of this practice in "creative destruction" as described by Penrose (2017) with regard to the ruins of capitalism and Rico (2016; 2020) in understanding the heritage of destruction.

This mode of joyful mourning can be traced through much of anarchist thinking; it is perhaps inevitable that anarchists must often mourn, as egalitarian collective action has repeatedly crashed against the apparatus of state power. As anarchist and organiser O'Donoghue states, it "is inevitable that those of us who struggle, who revolt against the crushing daily violence of the state, capital, and all existing hierarchies, will be put in the cross hairs of repression" (2017, 453). In their discussion of the global organization of militant struggles for racial, economic and environmental justice, Hart discusses a "musical march" organized and conducted by students in honour of Rekia Boyd, a twenty-two-year-old black woman killed by a police officer in Chicago. The march was energetic and joyful, as the students "sang, danced, drummed and recited chants" to honour the dead lost to state violence (Hart 2017, 27). This march was met with harassment by the police, and Hart describes the intermingling of joyful

commemoration, sorrow, anger and resistance: “Let grief be part of the movement-building process for which we allow hallowed space, and let it build within us the compassion, wisdom, and rage that propel us into new battles” (2017, 34).

In *Heritage Futures*, professionals discussed loss, and “letting go” within museum and cultural heritage settings in general and in the specific case of Orford Ness (Bartolini and DeSilvey 2020, 353). The workshop held by the Heritage Futures team produced themes regarding storytelling and communication, and there was an acknowledgement of the wishes of the Orford Ness volunteers. These volunteers understood that not everything could be preserved, but felt that there should be a record kept regarding material remains. Our expertise is to produce this record with astonishing precision, but how does this constitute care without acknowledgement of transformation? In these discussions of managed heritage loss there does not seem to be a consideration of mourning.

We return to the hammer above our heads, in bold underline parentheses. Much of the uncertainty regarding climate change is removed. While we may be able to clinically discuss the proper management of ruination, we also should acknowledge our role in this process of grieving. Archaeologists have long studied burial rituals, destruction, and ruin; we, the experts in and caretakers of death, decay, destruction. Little of this has translated into our active participation in the destruction of cultural heritage and current heritage practices surrounding loss. As Moshenska (2020) notes, archaeologists have repeatedly failed as allies and as such are sidelined in public disputes regarding preservation, even when they agree with the protestors. Regardless of our own ambivalence regarding change and the loss or retention of heritage, participating in community reception of heritage loss and active construction of joyful mourning and creative destruction rather than retreating into a perceived uncertainty or clinical management gives us power to prefigure our future. The stated commitment of the Industrial Workers of the World, an international labor union, is to “form[ing] the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.” As sites fall into the sea, dry up with a lack of ground water, are exposed as glacial ice melts away, and bulldozed and sealed with tons of concrete, our considered response should be to collect and actualize appropriate methods to process current and future loss.

So, save the date for future mourning. There will be Neolithic burial rites, a rally, and a puppet show. We will all watch together as the henge finally succumbs to the sea. We will cry, we will laugh, and we will demand accountability and change, and the end of Empire. Because the best way to mourn is, obviously, to organize.

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## Subalternität im übergeordneten Raum: Hinter den Kulissen der „Hethiter“

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## Subalternität im übergeordneten Raum: Hinter den Kulissen der „Hethiter“

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### Abstract

From the perspective of central power, a capital city is the most important city in a state. In ancient studies, whether a city is considered as a “capital” or not, influences its investigation, the research questions and thus the interest in subaltern spaces. This contribution focuses on the capital of the Hittite Empire, and I examine how modern research on ancient capital created marginal spaces and how scientific traditions did consolidate them. I analyse archival sources from the “capital of the Hittites”, which whether consciously or unconsciously silence other acting persons and I propose with examples using quantitative analyses on older excavation documentation how to identify them, their spaces and their histories.

### Keywords

Hittite, Spatial Analysis, Capital City, Subalternity

### Zusammenfassung

Aus der Perspektive der Zentralgewalt stellt eine Hauptstadt die wichtigste Stadt eines Staates dar. In den Altertumswissenschaften bestimmt die Frage, ob eine Stadt „Haupt“stadt war oder nicht die Forschungsfragen und lenkt damit oft das Interesse an subalternen Räumen. Dieser Beitrag widmet sich der Hauptstadt des hethitischen Reiches und stellt dar, wie zum einen die moderne Erforschung der antiken Hauptstadt marginale Räume geschaffen hat, zum anderen wissenschaftliche Traditionen „subalterne Räume“ verfestigt haben. Die Untersuchung von Archivquellen aus der „Hauptstadt der Hethiter“ zeigt, dass bewusst oder unbewusst bestimmte handelnde Personen unsichtbar gemacht wurden. Ich zeige anhand einiger Beispiele, wie Subalterne, ihre Räume und Geschichten mittels quantitativer und räumlicher Analysen sichtbar gemacht werden können.

### Schlagwörter

Hethiter, Raumbezogene Analyse, Hauptstadt, Subalternität

## Einleitung

Eine im Zentralstaat Frankreich aufgewachsene Person lernt implizit, dass es zwei Arten von Menschen gibt: einerseits die in der Hauptstadt Paris bzw. im Zentrum von Paris groß gewordenen Personen (sog. „parisiennes“) und andererseits alle anderen, die aus der „province“ stammen. Diese gängige, klischeehafte Unterscheidung veranschaulicht die Bedeutung der Herkunft, die unausgesprochen hierarchisiert verstanden wird. Aus der Perspektive einer Zentralgewalt bezeichnet eine Hauptstadt die wichtigste Stadt eines Staates. Diese soll „idealerweise“ die politischen, militärischen, religiösen, wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Funktionen eines Staates symbolisieren und verkörpern (Clark und Lepetit 1996; Charle und Roche 2002). Zur Inszenierung einer Hauptstadt als Sinnbild des Staates gehört die Errichtung repräsentativer Monuments. Besucher:innen werden eher den Eiffelturm, den Louvre oder Disneyland kennen und besuchen als die vielen anderen Ortschaften wie Clichy-sous-bois oder Montfermeil. Diese am Rande Paris' gelegenen Vororte werden nur im Fall radikaler Ereignisse wahrgenommen, wie bei den „Unruhen“ im Jahre 2005 (Hagedorn 2005). Diese Räume werden nicht durch ihre Monuments, sondern durch „ihre“ sozialen Probleme gesehen. Diese „problematischen“ Vororte wurden und werden durch die Wohnungspolitik des Staates geschaffen, wobei den Bewohner:innen weder die Mittel zur Verfügung stehen noch haben sie generell die Möglichkeit, ihr Wohnumfeld zu gestalten.

Der Antagonismus zwischen der Gruppe, die strategisch über Produktionsmittel des Raumes verfügt, und der, die sich weitestgehend in die bestehenden Räume einfügen muss, drückt die Subalternität solcher Räume wie den Pariser Banlieues aus. „Denn Raumplanung als hegemoniales Verfahren ist ihnen [den Subalternen; Verf.] *a priori* verwehrt, während das erzwungene Leben in unmittelbar erfahrbaren Räumen grundlegend und unhinterfragbar zu ihrer Existenz gehört. Räume können durchaus substanzIELL daran beteiligt sein, ganze Bevölkerungsteile politisch zu marginalisieren und damit subalterne Subjektivitäten (mit) zu erzeugen“ (Bernbeck und Egbers 2019: 64). Dabei müssen „subalterne Räume“ nicht zwingend von anderen Räumen geographisch getrennt sein. In einer hierarchisierten Siedlung wie einer Hauptstadt können in ein und demselben geographischen Raum mehrere Räume existieren, wobei die subalternen hier oft bzw. leicht übersehen werden. 2018 behauptete beispielsweise ein Staatssekretär Frankreichs, dass in der gesamten Pariser Region „nur rund 50 Männer auf der Straße oder in den städtischen Wäldern leben, um präzise zu sein“. Diese Zahl stieg auf mindestens 3.000, als wenige Wochen später Freiwillige in Zusammenarbeit mit Hilfswerken systematisch durch den erwähnten Bereich gingen, um die Zahl der dort auf der Straße lebenden Menschen zu erfassen (Balmer 2018). Dies verdeutlicht, wie im gleichen hierarchisch differenzierten Raum bestimmte Menschen und ihr Handeln nicht wahrgenommen oder sogar verschwiegen werden können und diese so in die Subalternität gerückt werden.

Wenn eine antike Hauptstadt bekannt und ihre Erforschung möglich ist – viele Hauptstädte sind noch bewohnt, wie z. B. Rom, Ankara, Athen, oder wurden nie gefunden, wie z. B. Akkad –, so ist diese Stadt in den Altertumswissenschaften in der Regel der am besten erforschte Ort des entsprechenden „Staates“. Provinzstädte sind hingegen weniger gut untersucht, und Dörfer bleiben oft gänzlich unerforscht. Hattuša, eine in der nördlichen Mitte des anatolischen Hochlands in der heutigen Türkei gelegene antike Stadt, ist vor allem als „Hauptstadt des hethitischen Reiches“ (ca. 1650–1180 v. u. Z.) bekannt. Sie ist die am intensivsten erforschte und durch ihre Funde, Befunde und Textüberlieferung bekannteste Stadt des hethitischen Reiches (z. B. Schachner 2011a). Hier wurden mehr als 80 Grabungs- und Aufarbeitungskampagnen durchgeführt. Die Anzahl von Publikationen über die Funde und Befunde übertrifft die der anderen ausgegrabenen Städte jenes Reiches bei weitem (Seeher u. a. 2012). Dieser Beitrag konzentriert sich auf Hattuša, da ich mich intensiv mit diesem Ort beschäftigt habe (Strupler 2016). Jedoch ist die „Hauptstadt der Hethiter:innen“, Hattuša, keine Ausnahme und wird in diesem Beitrag exemplarisch betrachtet. Ich stelle dar, wie die moderne Erforschung einer antiken Hauptstadt marginale Räume geschaffen hat und wie wissenschaftliche Traditionen „subalterne Räume“ verfestigt haben. Die Begriffszusammensetzung „subalterne Räume“ wird hier für kaum erforschte bzw. übersehene und verschwiegene Menschengruppen an archäologisch untersuchten Orten verwendet. Es werden also nicht primär „Subalterne der Vergangenheit“ untersucht (Egbers 2019: 95), sondern jene Gruppen von Menschen, die heutzutage nicht wahrgenommen und durch archäologische Feldarbeit und Geschichtsdarstellung marginalisiert wurden und so zu Subalternen werden – ohne auszuschließen, dass „Subalterne der Vergangenheit“ miterwähnt werden können.

### **Nomen est omen**

Eine erste Möglichkeit, das Ignorieren spezifischer Gruppen aufzuheben, ist es, sie zu benennen und dadurch überhaupt wieder sichtbar werden zu lassen. Nur das Benannte besitzt eine Vergangenheit, ist in die verschiedensten Wirkzusammenhänge eingebunden und nur das Benannte lenkt letztlich unser Denken.

Hattuša wurde 1834 neben dem Dorf Boğazköy „entdeckt“. Seit 1906 identifiziert man diesen Fundplatz mit der antiken Stadt, was auch durch die Entdeckung vieler Keilschrifttexte 30 Jahre später bestätigt wurde. Einige Jahre nach der Gründung der Republik der Türkei (1923) wurde 1936 der Name des Ortes von „Boğazköy“ in „Boğazkale“ geändert (wörtlich von „Dorf der Schlucht“ in „Burg der Schlucht“, s. Alaura 2006: 235 Fn. 1). 1986 wurde die archäologische Stätte in die UNESCO-Weltkulturerbe-Liste als „Hattusha: the Hittite Capital“ eingetragen (UNESCO World Heritage 2017). Hierdurch wird die Forschung jedoch einseitig gelenkt und die Vielseitigkeit des Ortes verschleiert. Der moderne Gedanke, dass eine Hauptstadt einer einzigen, einheitlichen Ethnie zuzuschreiben ist, wird in die Vergangenheit transponiert. Dabei handelt es sich bei dem Adjektiv „hethitisches“ und dem Namen „Hethiter:innen“ um irreführende Begriffe.

Im Alten Testament – das in der Erforschung des westlichen Asiens und insbesondere bei der Suche nach den Hethiter:innen (Wright 1886, Introduction) eine einflussreiche Rolle spielt(e) (Bahrani 1998; Holloway 2001), – nennt die Bibel die „Hittim“ bzw. „Hitym“ sowie verwandte Bezeichnungen (Singer 2006; Gerhards 2009). Der Begriff „Hittim“ wurde von Martin Luther als „Hethiter“ übersetzt (s. „Hittites“ im Französischen oder Englischen) und in die Forschung übernommen. Am Ende des 19. Jhs. wurde dieser Begriff bei der „Wiederentdeckung der Hethiter:innen“ *peu à peu* mit Artefakten, Sprachen und Schriftarten (Hieroglyphen und Keilschrift) angereichert. Seit der Entzifferung der Schriften durch Bedřich Hrozný (Die Sprache der Hethiter, 1917) wird die am häufigsten überlieferte Sprache „hethitisches“ genannt. Jedoch wurde innerhalb weniger Jahre klar, dass „Hethiter:innen“ keine ethnische Selbstbezeichnung ist. In den überlieferten Texten kommt die Bezeichnung „Land Hatti“ vor und anstelle des „Hethitischen“ werden verschiedene andere Sprachen wie Hattisch, Luwisch, Palaisch oder Hurritisch genannt (Güterbock 1957). Darüber hinaus wurde der Sprachterminus verwechselt: Die Sprache, die heutzutage „hethitisches“ genannt wird, war in damaliger Zeit mit einem von der Stadt Kaneš (das heutige Kültepe, Türkei) abgeleiteten Adjektiv bezeichnet: (ka)nešili. Kurzum haben (fiktive) „Hethiter:innen“ nicht „hethitisches“ gesprochen. Überspitzt formuliert wäre, falls die am häufigsten gesprochene Sprache in Hattuša kanešili war, Hattuša die Hauptstadt der „Kanesier:innen“. Trotz allem ist die Bezeichnung „hethitisches“ fest in der Wissenschaft etabliert und wird als Terminus beibehalten, „obwohl dieser Name der antiken Nomenklatur widerspricht“ (Güterbock 1973: 373). Diese anscheinend heute selten beachtete Verwechslung wirft verschiedene Fragen auf. Zunächst ist zu untersuchen, was für Auswirkungen dieser Umstand für die „Hethiter:innen“ des 1. Jts. v. u. Z. bzw. des 3. Jts. v. u. Z. hatte; zweitens, warum Forscher:innen rechtfertigt(t)en, dass dieser Widerspruch akzeptabel ist, und drittens, ob es hier überhaupt möglich ist, „Post“-Kolonialität und „subalterne Räume“ aufzuzeigen.

Wenn antike Texte ein „Land Hatti“ und eine Sprache nennen, werden diese wie selbstverständlich mit einer (einheitlichen, in sich geschlossenen) Ethnie verbunden. Um diese von den „Hethiter:innen“ abzugrenzen, da diese Bezeichnung bereits „besetzt“ ist, wurde der Terminus „Hattier“ für die hattisch sprechende Ethnie geschaffen. Zwar wurde zunächst der Begriff „Protohattier“ vorgeschlagen (s. unten), es hat sich jedoch die Bezeichnung „Hattier“ durchgesetzt (s. Laroche 1947: 68):

„Wenn also überhaupt eine Sprache den Namen ‚Hattisch‘ verdient, so ist es diese, nicht die bisher ‚Hethitisches‘ genannte. Da aber letztere schon ‚hattisch‘ genannt worden ist, empfiehlt es sich, das eigentlich Hattische Protohattisch zu nennen und die Bezeichnung Hattier und hattisch als Volks- und Sprachbezeichnung ganz auszuschalten und nur als politischen Begriff beizubehalten. Denn sonst müßte man eigentliche Hattier von uneigentlichen unterscheiden, wobei infolge des bisherigen Mißbrauchs des Hattinamens den schlimmsten Verwechselungen Tür und Tor geöffnet wäre. Es scheint mir daher am klarsten, wenn man alle Angehörigen des Hattireiches ohne Unterschied der Nationalität Hattier nennt, und unter den hattischen Völkern und Sprachen das Kanische, Harrische [Hurrische; Verf.], Protohattische, Luvische und Baläische [Paläische; Verf.] unterscheidet.“ (Forrer 1919: 1033)<sup>1</sup>

Die heute am weitesten verbreitete Auffassung lautet *grosso modo* so wie sie auch die Definition des Reallexikons der Assyriologie wiedergibt:

<sup>1</sup> Dies betrifft auch die „hethitischen ‚Hiero‘glyphen“ des 1 Jts. v. u. Z., die wir hier nicht weiter behandeln können. Dieser Umstand ist bei John David Hawkins (2000: 2-3) dargestellt.

„Die Hattier (eine moderne Volksbezeichnung, anknüpfend an die von den Hethitern überlieferte Sprachbezeichnung *hattili*, die ihrerseits zum geographischen Begriff *Hatti* gehört) waren zumindest im 3. und beginnenden 2. Jt. v. Chr. die Träger der zentralanatolischen Kultur [...]“ (Kammenhuber 1973: 159; Klinger 2006b bezeichnet „Hattier“ als einer „Bevölkerungsgruppe“)

Die philologischen Untersuchungen zeigen, dass die Sprache „*Hattili*“ für kultisch-religiöse Texte verwendet wurde, z. B. für Rezitationen und Lieder innerhalb von Ritualbeschreibungen, wobei unklar ist, ob die Sprache überhaupt oder wie lange sie gesprochen wurde (Laroche 1947; Klinger 2006b). Es ist m. E. zu hinterfragen, ob eine geographische Bezeichnung und eine Sprache auf die Existenz einer Ethnie – die aus dem gleichen Raum stammt – hinweisen. Schon der Ausdruck „Land *Hatti*“ im 1. Jt. v. u. Z. macht dies deutlich.

Zweifelsfrei hatte die Bezeichnung „Land *Hatti*“ im 1. Jt. v. u. Z. mehrere Bedeutungen. Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass der Ausdruck nicht für einen „Sprachraum“ genutzt worden ist, sondern eher ein an das Süd-Taurus-Gebirge angrenzendes Territorium bezeichnete. Es konnte gut belegt werden, dass der geographische Raum nicht in Zentralanatolien, sondern in Nordwest-Syrien zu lokalisieren ist (Hawkins 1973), und es sich hierbei um einen multilingualen Sprachraum handelte (Novák 2021). Das legt nahe, dass mit einem Ausdruck wie „Land *Hatti*“ keine direkte Verbindung zu einer Sprache oder einer Ethnie herzustellen ist. Dementsprechend wurde im 3. und 2. Jt. v. u. Z. mit den „Hattier“ eine Ethnie geschaffen, wofür wir außer indirekten Sprachzeugnissen keine Belege haben. *Mutatis mutandis* ähnelt diese Situation der „indo-germanischen“ bzw. „indo-europäischen“ Sprache, für die ein Herkunftsraum gesucht wird, der als Ausgang der weiteren Sprachausbreitung gesehen werden kann (z. B. Chang u. a. 2015; Haak u. a. 2015).

Dieser ethnischen Zuweisung liegt ein problematisches Konzept zugrunde – mit weitreichenden Konsequenzen. Die Definition eines „Urvolks“ führt leicht zu ideologischem Missbrauch, insbesondere im Falle der Konstruktion von Herkunftsmythologien. Das trifft besonders für *Hattusa* zu, da die Entstehung der Hethitologie parallel zur Gründung der Republik Türkei verlief. Es ist bekannt und gut belegt, dass bei der Gründung der Republik Türkei verschiedene Thesen aufkamen, die eine Verbindung zwischen dem geographischen Raum der heutigen Türkei, den „Türk:innen“ und dem antiken Anatolien herzustellen versuchten. Die Bezeichnungen „Hattier“, „Proto-Hattier“, „Proto-Hethiter“ oder „Hethiter“ spielten in diesen Vorstößen eine zentrale Rolle, die durch die archäologischen Forschungen auch noch unterstützt wurden. Das erklärte Ziel einiger der frühen türkischen Ausgrabungen während der Gründung der Republik war es, die Subalternität des „Türkentums“ aufzuheben (Tanyeri-Erdemir 2006; Atakuman 2008; Dinler 2018). Auch wenn jene Thesen mehrheitlich schnell in Vergessenheit gerieten, sind sie in veränderter Form bis heute sichtbar. Ein Beispiel ist die „hethitische Sonne“, die u. a. als Emblem der Universität von Ankara fungiert:

„The symbol of Ankara University is the Sun Disc. This symbol is commonly regarded as belonging to the Hittite civilization and usually connotes Ankara and Anatolia. After its discovery, it was first used as the symbol of the Faculty of Humanities, and later was adopted as the symbol of Ankara University. The Sun Disc was unearthed during the excavations started in 1935 by direct order of Atatürk.“ (Ankara University 2020; dazu s. Shaw 2004; ferner Silberman 2002: 246–247)

Dieses Phänomen ist nicht auf die Gründung der Türkischen Republik begrenzt und „Hattier:innen“ sind bis heute leichtfertig verwendete Träger jeweils gewünschter Ideologien, denn „academic discourse as an apparatus of power, with its metaphoricity and rhetoric, is a matrix in which unconscious desire also manifests itself symptomatically“ (Bahrani 1998: 163). Ein aktuelles Beispiel mag dies verdeutlichen:

„Tout comme Richelieu qui pensait que l'unification de la France devait passer par l'unification linguistique, le roi hittite a imposé le hittite-nésite comme langue officielle du nouveau royaume. Le hatti semble alors être devenu une langue morte.“ (Klock-Fontanille 2016: 349)

Soweit mir bekannt ist, wurden abgesehen von allgemeinen Äußerungen wenige Versuche unternommen, diesen Umstand zu ändern (Laroche 1947: 67). Es wurde dagegen mehrmals verteidigt, dass „hethitisch“ eine neutrale Bezeichnung sei, jeweils mit einer ähnlichen Begründung wie der oben zitierten Erklärung Emil Forsters (1919): „[Die hethitische Kultur zeigt] alle Merkmale einer starken Mischung. [...] Trotz dieser Vielfalt der Sprache und Völker darf man von einer h. Kultur sprechen, die alle diese Elemente in sich aufnahm und verarbeitete“ (Güterbock 1973); oder „‘Hittite’ as a general cultural term for the whole civilization rather than narrowly for the specific language Hittite (i.e. ‘Nesite’)“ (Hawkins 2000: 3). Wenngleich die sprachlichen Unterschiede für Philolog:innen zweifelsohne klar sind, verhält es sich schon in der Archäologie anders und umso mehr in der Wahrnehmung der

Öffentlichkeit.<sup>2</sup> Die gängige Bezeichnung erzeugt das Bild einer monolithischen „hethitischen Kultur“ mit ihren monumentalen Gebäuden, die zu besuchen und zu bewundern sind.<sup>3</sup> Mithin unterdrückt diese Sicht die Erforschung der Diversität von Kulturen, Identitäten, Sprachen und Handlungen (Meskell 2018). Wie Neil A. Silberman es formuliert hat: „the selection of ‘chosen peoples’ implicitly discredit[s] the history of people who are not chosen“ (Silberman 2002: 247; 1995).

Bei der Verfestigung des Ausdrucks „Hauptstadt (oder Land) der Hethiter“ geraten spezifische menschliche Gruppen in die Subalternität. Der Ansatz, hethitisch als „neutrale“ Bezeichnung zu benutzen, diskreditiert gleichzeitig andere Bezeichnungen. Unter dem Begriff „Hethiter“ werden Gruppen subsumiert, die sich womöglich selbst nicht als „Hethiter:innen“ verstanden. Selbstverständlich liegt eine Lösung nicht im Ersetzen eines Terminus durch einen Anderen: „Alle sprachlichen Begriffe sind nichts anderes als Konstruktionen, welche die Weltanschauung reflektieren, in der sie formuliert werden“ (Foppa 2015: 8). Vielmehr können nuancierte Erzählungen und vielfältige Einsichten Hypothesen anstelle von exklusiven Schlussfolgerungen, die leicht zu missbrauchen sind (Silberman 2013), hervorbringen:

„Vielversprechender scheint es daher, sich nicht auf Äußerungen, sondern auf Praktiken der Raumproduktionen, insbesondere die gelebten Räume des *espace vécu*, zu konzentrieren. Ausgehend von vorwiegend hegemonial geschaffenen, geplanten und wahrgenommenen Räumen ergeben sich alternative gelebte Möglichkeitsräume, die unterschiedlich gestaltet werden könnten.“ (Rees und Schreiber 2019: 130)

### **Alterität anstelle von Monumentalität**

Eine Hauptstadt dient als Emblem des Staates, das von Machthaber:innen dazu genutzt wird, ihre Macht sichtbar darzustellen. Die Hauptstadt beherbergt symbolische Monuments, die zur Repräsentation und zur Identifikation der Ideologie des Zentralstaates dienen. Hauptstädte existieren nur innerhalb eines Netzwerkes von Städten und oft wird den mit ihnen verbundenen wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen ein höherer Wert beigemessen. Diese werden, im Vergleich zu den Ergebnissen der Ausgrabung eines „bescheidenen“ Dorfs, seltener in Frage gestellt. Im Falle von Ḫattuša wird die Wissensakkumulation durch fast ein Jahrhundert fortdauernder Arbeiten von keinem anderen Ausgrabungsort übertroffen. Zum Beispiel wären Umdatierungen an diesem Ort von weitreichender Konsequenz als von einem beliebigen anderen Ort:

„[A] new chronology of the urban development of the Hittite capital has consequences for the chronology of Hittite archaeology in general and for the synchronization of the various chronological systems in the Eastern Mediterranean.“ (Müller-Karpe 2003: 391)<sup>4</sup>

Die Schaffung eines übergeordneten Raums wie dem einer Hauptstadt schafft in der modernen Wahrnehmung nicht nur eine Hierarchie und damit Subalternität anderer Orte, sondern hierarchisiert gleichzeitig auch Räume innerhalb dieses Ortes. Hauptstädte werden meistens anhand von Monumenten untersucht und verglichen, um zu verstehen, wie Macht in einer Art „Geografie der Politik“ inszeniert wurde (z. B. Fauve und Gintrac 2009). Solche Ansätze führen dazu, dass Hauptstädte kaum aus einer anderen Perspektive untersucht werden. Die Umgebungen der monumentalen Gebäude werden bis heute nur selten berücksichtigt. Dabei spielt die Entwicklung der archäologischen Forschungen eine Doppelrolle, da insbesondere Methoden zur Erforschung von großen Bauten entwickelt wurden, die kaum zu „beeindruckenden“ Ergebnissen führen, wenn sie auf kleinere, bescheidene

<sup>2</sup> Eine Lektüre des Artikels „Hethiter“ oder „Hattier“, sei es auf Deutsch, Englisch, Türkisch oder Französisch, auf der freien, kollaborativ geschriebenen Internet-Enzyklopädie Wikipedia weist darauf hin. – Anmerkung des Verfassers: Die geschlechtergerechte Schreibweise wurde gestrichen, da die Wikipedia-Community sich mehrmals bewusst gegen eine gegendere Schreibweise entschieden hat, z. B. auf Deutsch zuletzt in 2019, s. Wikipedia Contributors 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Ob bzw. inwiefern das Beharren auf dem Begriff „hethitisch“ mit den ersten wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen oder der „westlich-biblischen“ Perspektive zusammenhängt, ist zu erforschen. Es ist zu beobachten, dass *peu à peu* ab der Mitte des 20. Jhs. u. Z. in der türkischen Sprache der zuerst verwendete Begriff „Eti“ durch „hittit“ in Anlehnung an die westliche Sprache abgelöst wurde.

<sup>4</sup> Es sei hier klargestellt, dass dieses Phänomen nicht explizit Ergebnis der Intention von Ausgrabungen ist, sondern aus der allgemeinen Symbolik einer Hauptstadt resultiert. Ein identisches Phänomen findet sich auch in der vorherigen Periode mit ihrem „Hauptort“ Kültepe. Die dort gewonnenen Ergebnisse gelten für die anderen Ausgrabungen als Standard und alle Auswertungen benutzen die chronologische Angabe „Kültepe kārum level II/Ib“.

Funde angewendet werden. Auch aus diesem Grund wurde und wird sich in der Archäologie gerne mit Großbauten auseinandersetzt. Es ist auch zu vermuten, dass ein Eintrag in der UNESCO-Weltkulturerbe-Liste, die Monumentalität favorisiert (Meskell 2018) und damit bestimmte Erwartungen bei der Besichtigung einer Weltkulturerbestätte seitens verschiedener Behörden, von Archäolog:innen und des allgemeinen Publikums vorwegnimmt, eine nicht zu unterschätzende Rolle spielt. Aus der heutigen Sicht erschwert dieser Sachverhalt die Suche nach Subalternität in früheren Ausgrabungen, da die Dokumente, die auf andere Handlungen und Gruppen aufmerksam machen, oft fehlen.

### **Zahlen als möglicher Zugang zu subalternen Räumen: zwei Beispiele**

Es mag überraschen, subalte Räume mit Hilfe quantitativer Methoden sichtbar zu machen. Oft wird kritisiert, dass solche Herangehensweisen gerade die „kleinen“, feinen Unterschiede unterdrücken und dabei nur das Allgemeine zum Ausdruck kommt. In aktuellen Debatten über „künstliche Intelligenz“ bzw. „Data Mining“ wird oft angemerkt, dass nur bereits bekannte Ergebnisse gefunden werden (können). Dabei werden Methoden entwickelt, um Trends sowie Verbindungen zu erkennen, die durch die Anwendung statistischer Methoden in den Datensätzen entstehen. Oft werden bereits im Vorhinein definierte Kategorien in die Analyse übernommen und nicht weiter hinterfragt. Dies hat zur Folge, dass diese Kategorien durch die Analyse nur bestätigt werden. Wenn gleiche Kategorien immer weiter benutzt werden, führt das zur Verfestigung eines bestimmten Verständnisses der Vergangenheit (Pollock und Bernbeck 2010). Auch wenn die Datenbasis immer größer wird, kann sie daher nur zu ähnlichen Ergebnissen führen: Eine „big data analysis“ ist daher besonders dazu geeignet, gleiche Muster aufzuzeigen (Hilbert 2013: 29–31). Dennoch kann auch eine quantitative Analyse eine optimale Herangehensweise sein, um auf das Disparat und Individuelle aufmerksam zu machen. Solche quantitativen Analysen sollten sich nicht nur auf Mittelwerte konzentrieren, sondern vor allem auf die Ausreißer, die eine Ambiguität der Befunde sichtbar machen und damit auf „subalte Räume“ hinweisen könnten – ähnlich wie z. B. „Möglichkeitsräume“ (vgl. Rees und Schreiber 2019). Dabei ist es wichtig, nicht nur die „schönen“, in sicheren Kontexten vergesellschafteten Objekte und Fragmente zu analysieren und zu kartieren, sondern alle Objekte.

### **Architektur und Keilschriftfragmente aus Boğazkale**

Kurt Bittel, Grabungsleiter der Ausgrabungen in den 1930er bis 1960er Jahren, widmete in seinem vor 35 Jahren erschienenen Buch über Ḫattuša von ca. 200 Seiten genau eine Doppelseite dem Wohnviertel, während der Rest des Werkes ausschließlich auf die Geschichte und Monuments der Stadt und der „Hethither“ fokussierte (Bittel 1983: 60; s. Mielke 2011 für eine Übersicht über hethitische Städte). Dieses Verhältnis widerspricht jedoch den bis dahin erfolgten Ausgrabungen, bei denen während mehrerer Kampagnen (mindestens 1936–1938, 1953, 1955–1958, 1970–1978) auf einer Fläche von 20.000 m<sup>2</sup> ein Wohnviertel auf der Westterrasse ausgegraben worden war (Neve 1978). Diese nur sehr kurze Abhandlung in dem Band spiegelt die Intensität und das Interesse an der Auseinandersetzung mit nicht-monumentalen Befunden und Funden wider. Als Ausgangspunkt weiterer Überlegungen hatte und hat dies eine enorme Auswirkung auf die Wahrnehmung und Interpretation der Stadt. Bisher wurden wenige neue Ansätze vorgelegt, da die entsprechende Dokumentation fehlte (Mielke 2011: 173). Dabei spielten auf unterschiedliche Weise alle Bewohner:innen eine aktive Rolle in der Gestaltung von Stadt und Staat – unabhängig von ihrer sozialen Stellung. Dementsprechend besitzen Wohnviertel als Sitz der Bevölkerung und archäologisch gut fassbare Orte ein großes Potenzial, um ein breites Spektrum von Aktivitäten zu untersuchen. Mit Blick auf die Subalternität ist hier ein möglicher Zugang, um verschiedene Räume und ihre Ab-, Aus-, Be-, Doppel-, Eigen-, Fehl-, Fremd-, Mehrfach-, Misch-, Mit-, Nach-, Neu-, Sonder-, Teilzeit-, Über-, Um-, Wieder- oder Zwischennutzung aufzudecken, die in den Auswertungen kaum berücksichtigt worden sind. Dabei ist nicht auszuschließen, dass diese Orte auch mögliche subalte Handlungen in der Vergangenheit beleuchten können. Nicht nur Befunde (oder ihre Abwesenheit) sind Träger verschiedener subalterner Räume, auch der Zusammenhang von Artefakten birgt weiteren Interpretationsspielraum.

Unter den Funden der Hauptstadt der „Hethither:innen“ sind Keilschriftfragmente die am besten untersuchten Objekte. Als älteste Zeugnisse einer „indoeuropäischen“ Sprache haben die tausendfachen Fragmente zur Ausbildung einer eigenständigen Forschungsdisziplin geführt. Mythen, Rituale, Feste, Listen, Gebete usw. werden akribisch untersucht. Diese Kategorie von Artefakten wird traditionell in der Vorderasiatischen Archäologie als besonders

wichtig eingestuft und ist dadurch besser archäologisch dokumentiert und daher auch gut für eine erneute Analyse geeignet. Die Fertigkeit des Schreibens und Lesens von Keilschrift ist nur durch elitäre Bildung zu erlangen. Eine sichtbare Architektur in einer Hauptstadt wird oft auch eher oberen Schichten einer Gesellschaft zugeordnet. Im folgenden Beispiel wird anhand von Architektur und Keilschriftfragmenten auf verschiedene subalterne Räume und Handlungen aufmerksam gemacht und dabei beispielhaft gezeigt, wie massiv die Ausblendung nicht-hegemonialer Gesellschaftsteile in Geschichtsdarstellungen ist.

In Ḫattuša werden Keilschrifttexte meist ihrer Herkunft nach in drei Hauptensembles unterteilt: a) Schriftfunde aus dem größten Tempels im Norden der Stadt „Tempel I“; b) aus einem monumentalen Gebäudes im Osten, dem großen Tempel, das sog. „Haus am Hang“; c) aus dem „Palast“ (Klinger 2006a; van den Hout 2008). Es fehlen jedoch genaue Untersuchungen zur räumlichen Herkunft vieler Fragmente, vor allem für die seit den 1930er Jahren gefundenen Fragmente, die ungefähr räumlich zugeordnet werden können (über die Probleme zu den vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg gefundenen Texte siehe Miller 2017). Während der Ausgrabungen in der Unterstadt, aber auch an vielen anderen Orten der Stadt, kamen in erheblichem Umfang Fragmente zu Tage, die nur in seltenen Fällen einem gesicherten Fundkontext zugeordnet werden konnten.<sup>5</sup> Die nicht weiter zugeordneten Keilschriftfragmente sind eher klein und oft in einem schlechten Zustand erhalten; sie sind noch nie umfassend räumlich ausgewertet worden.<sup>6</sup> Für diese Fragmente stellt sich die Frage, woher sie stammen und ob Texte nur in Tempeln und offiziellen, großen Textsammlungen aufbewahrt waren und ob die ungeordneten Fragmente „Streufunde“ sind. Sind andere, subalterne Aufbewahrungsorte zu postulieren und zu untersuchen? Im folgenden Abschnitt analysiere ich die Textfunde, die zwischen den 1930er und 1970er Jahren auf der Westterrasse gefunden wurden (Strupler 2016).

Der Unterschied zwischen Streufunden und *in situ*-Funden ist nicht eindeutig zu klären, darüber hinaus können auch Streufunde Hinweise zu Taphonomie, Prozessen und Handlungen in der Vergangenheit geben (Binford 1981; Sommer 2012). *In situ*-Funde werden in diesem Beitrag als Funde definiert, die einem bestimmten Gebäude zugeordnet werden können. Ansatzpunkte für eine mögliche Unterscheidung beider Fundarten ist die jeweilige Objektgröße, da davon auszugehen ist, dass größere Fragmente ohne aktive menschliche Einwirkung seltener über weite Strecken verlagert worden sind und sich so wahrscheinlichen Aufbewahrungsorten zuordnen lassen. Von daher wird hier die Größe der Keilschriftfragmente zugrunde gelegt. Die daraus resultierende Punktwolke zeigt eindeutig (Abb. 1), dass nur drei Fragmente mehr als 100 cm<sup>2</sup> groß und nur ca. 20 Fragmente größer als 50 cm<sup>2</sup> sind. Die Mehrheit der Fragmente ist klein und der Medianwert von 267 Fragmenten liegt bei weniger als 15 cm<sup>2</sup> (also ca. 3 cm x 5 cm).

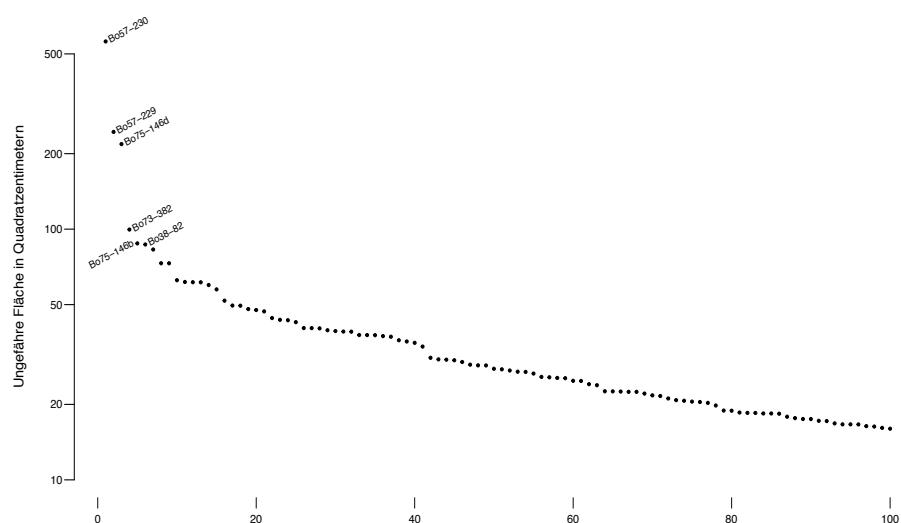


Abb. 1. Punktwolke der Größe der 100 größten auf der Westterrasse gefundenen Fragmente. Die Abszisse zeigt die Reihenfolge der Fragmente an, vom größten, Bo57–230, bis zum kleinsten Fragment des Samples.

<sup>5</sup> Das Fragment eines Briefes, der an einen Kommandeur der Leibgarde des Königs („GAL MEŠEDI“) adressiert war und einem Gebäude zugerechnet wurde und so zu der Vermutung führte, dass es sich um seine Residenz handele, bildet eine Ausnahme (Schachner 2015; 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Eine Ausnahme bildet die chronologische Auswertung der Verteilung der Texte der Oberstadt (Klinger 2006a: 15–16).

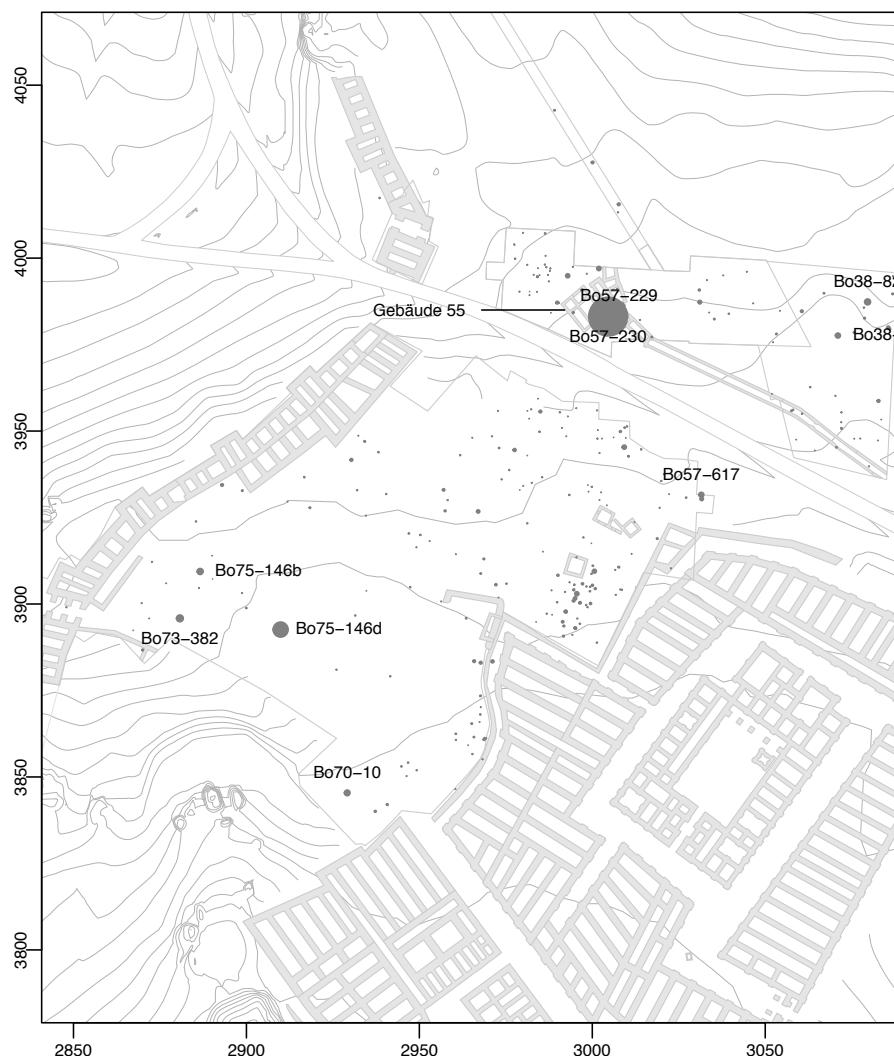


Abb. 2. Räumliche Verteilung der Keilschriftfragmente. Die Größe der Kreise ist proportional zum Zehnerlogarithmus der Tafelgröße (s. Abb. 1). In der Mitte des Bildes zeichnet sich eine Anhäufung von Punkten direkt westlich der Tempelterrasse ab, die sich vom Fragment Bo70–10 bis zum Fragment Bo57–617 erstreckt. Im Norden ist eine Ansammlung um das Gebäude 55 festzustellen.

Die räumliche Verteilung der Fragmente zeigt, dass viele kleine Fragmente im Umfeld des Tempel I gefunden wurden (Abb. 2). Allerdings zeigt die räumliche Verteilung, dass sich kleinere Fragmente um die größten zwei Fragmente im Bereich des Gebäudes 55 gruppieren. Weiter passen gefundene Fragmente zusammen und verstärken damit den Eindruck, dass im Gebäude 55 Schrifttafeln aufbewahrt wurden. Dabei handelt sich um eines der wenigen Gebäude, das chronologisch mit dem *terminus post quem* dieser Fragmente ungefähr in Einklang steht. Es handelt sich um ein kleines quadratisches Gebäude (ca. 90 m<sup>2</sup>), das aus vier Räumen besteht. Im Jahre 1957 wurde lediglich ein Plan mit der Aufnahme der Steinfundamente am Ende der Freilegung angefertigt und archiviert (Abb. 3). Außergewöhnlich ist jedoch die Beschreibung des Gebäudes im Vorbericht, da es sich um eines der wenigen späteren Gebäude der Unterstadt handelt:

„Bemerkenswert aus dieser Zeit (Schicht 1b) ist ein recht gut erhaltenes Gebäude im Nordareal der Grabung [...]. In der Raumdisposition weicht es von den bisher bekannten Hofhäusern der zeitlich vorausgehenden Schicht 2 ab. Der bei jenen Bauten zur Straße hin vorgelagerte Hof ist hier zu einer offenen, stützenlosen Vorhalle reduziert, von der aus durch einen in der Mitte gelegenen Eingang sowohl der nordöstlich anschließende Hauptaum wie auch durch einen gesonderten Zugang eine kleine seitlich gelegene Kammer erreichbar ist. Ein weiteres Gemach schließt sich nordwestlich an den Hauptaum an. Trotz der zum Teil bis 1,00 m über dem Fußbödeniveau anstehenden Mauern fehlen im Gebäude

jegliche Funde an Gebrauchsgegenständen und auch die Andeutung einer Herdstelle. Welchem Zweck die einzelnen Räume gedient haben, lässt sich jedoch aus ihrer Anordnung erschließen. In dem großen Hauptraum dürfte der Herd- und Wohnraum zu sehen sein, im seitlich beigefügten Gemach vielleicht eine Schlafkammer. Der außerhalb, direkt von der Vorhalle zu betretende kleine Raum könnte der Unterbringung einer Werkstatt gedient haben. Das Fehlen eines Treppenhauses spricht zwar für einen eingeschossigen Bau, doch könnten die massiven, in Bruchstein aufgeföhrten 0,80 m starken Erdgeschoßmauern an ein in leichterer Fachwerkbauweise konstruiertes oberes Stockwerk denken lassen, das durch eine außen frei vorgelagerte Treppe betretbar gewesen wäre. Solche Haustypen begegnen heute in Anatolien häufig; das massive Untergeschoß beherbergt dann in der Regel die Wirtschaftsräume und Stallungen. Reste von Lehmziegeln oder Holzbalken waren an dem Gebäude nicht nachweisbar. Von großer Bedeutung für die zeitliche Einordnung der Schicht 1b ist der Fund zweier Tontafeln etwa 6,00 m östlich des eben beschriebenen Bauwerkes.“ (Neve 1958: 4–5)

Inhalt und Datierung der hier genannten Tontafeln beschreibt der Grabungspaläologe Heinrich Otten:

„Bei den jüngeren, hethitischen Schichten fanden sich zum ersten Male in den Wohnvierteln der Unterstadt (Planquadrat J/20) Tafelstücke so großen Umfangs, daß sicher nicht verworfene Stücke vorliegen, sondern Tafeln hier zur Benutzung (etwa durch die Priester des benachbarten Tempels des Wettergottes von Hattusa) in den Häusern aufbewahrt waren. Die Texte sind von grauer Farbe und schwächer gebrannt als sonst üblich. Es handelt sich um zwei Festbeschreibungen und ein Ritual für den Wettergott von Halap, das mit der Nennung des Königsnamens ein Datum post Muwatalli für das Ende der Fundschicht 1b bietet.“ (Otten 1958: 76)

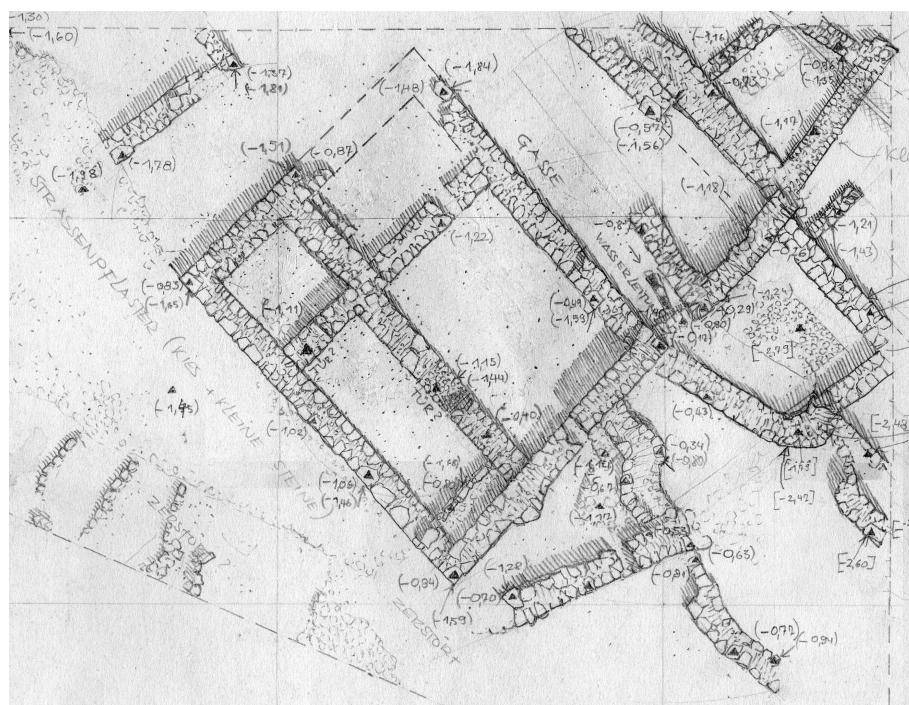


Abb. 3. Ausschnitt vom Plan des Grabungsendzustandes des Gebäudes 55, der von Peter Neve im Jahr 1957 gezeichnet wurde (s. Strupler 2021). Der Maßstab ist mit einem quadratischen Netz von 10 m auf 10 m angegeben.

Es wurde zwar kein Zusammenhang zwischen Gebäude 55 und den Textfragmenten hergestellt, jedoch gibt es keine anderen Gebäude, denen das einheitliche Keilschriftkonvolut zugeschrieben werden könnte. Darüber hinaus liegt die Bedeutung des Befundes in dem Nachweis, dass die Keilschrifttexte in Wohnhäusern aufbewahrt wurden.<sup>7</sup> Die Bedeutung dieser Entdeckung wurde bisher kaum wahrgenommen; insgesamt wurde wenig berücksichtigt, wie, wann und wie oft mit diesen Objekten agiert wurde und von wem. Ähnlich wie bei der Beschreibung des Gebäudes von Peter Neve werden einzelne Funktionen Räumen zugeschrieben, aber mögliche Handlungen

<sup>7</sup> Dabei unterscheidet sich dieser Befund stark von anderen Befunden in einzelnen Gebäuden wie in Inandiktepe, bei dem es sich um einen Regionalpalast gehandelt hat (Mielke 2006).

von Personen verschwiegen. Ist das Fehlen von „Gebrauchsgegenständen“ oder einer Herdstelle nicht ein Hinweis darauf, dass solche einheitlichen Kategorien nicht anwendbar sind, wie etwa das Argument, dass man ihnen in Anatolien „in der Regel“ begegne? Man wird eher mit einer Mehrfach-, Um-, Wieder- und Zwischennutzung des Gebäudes rechnen müssen, die vermutlich durch die angewendeten archäologischen Methoden überdeckt wurden. Die Verbreitung von Schreib- und Lesefähigkeiten sowie Mehrsprachigkeit wurden bislang nicht thematisiert. Welcher Zusammenhang bestand zwischen den Personen und den Tafeln? Könnte es sich um „Relikte“ handeln, Objekte die verehrt und „nicht gelesen“ wurden? Sind andere Praktiken dahinter zu vermuten, die weniger „akademisch“ als der offizielle Kult im nah gelegenen Großtempel waren? Keine von diesen Möglichkeiten kann positiv beantwortet werden, jedoch kann eine Auseinandersetzung mit diesem Befund – wie spekulativ sie auch sein mag – dazu führen, den undifferenzierten Bewohner:innen der Unterstadt bisher verweigerte Handlungsräume zu schaffen.

Im südwestlichen Teil der Westterrasse passen drei der größten Fragmente zusammen (Bo73–382, Bo75–146d und Bo75–146b). Diese gehören zur Tafel eines Festivals (das „KI.LAM-Festival“). Die Fundsituation ist erklärbungsbedürftig, da es in der näheren Umgebung keinen direkten Nachweis für Gebäude aus der Zeit der Niederschrift gibt. Ist es denkbar, dass diese Art von Keilschriftexten einzeln in einem „privaten Gebäude“ aufbewahrt wurde, das nicht erhalten ist? Oder ist eine ganz andere Erklärung zu suchen? Wurden diese Tafeln aussortiert und weggeworfen? Oder ist die Nähe zum Torbau ein Hinweis auf die Benutzung der Tafeln? Zerbrach die Tafel dort aus Versehen?

Generell kann eine räumliche Analyse von allen vorhandenen Tafelfragmenten Hinweise auf Orte geben, die sich nicht den Haupttextsammlungen – Tempel I, Haus am Hang, Palast – zuordnen lassen. Dabei ist zu betonen, dass Forscher:innen sich nicht nur mit kontextuell eindeutig interpretierbaren Funden auseinanderzusetzen haben, sondern mit allen Funden. Auch wenn die Personen, die hinter der „KI.LAM-Fest“-Tafel oder den Tafeln aus Gebäude 55 stehen, zur Elite gehörten, sind diese Menschen bisher unsichtbar und ihre Handlungsräume zu sehr unberücksichtigt geblieben.

### **Einwohner:innen einer Hauptstadt**

Bei der Behandlung der Geschichte des „hethitischen“ Reiches in Zentralanatolien bzw. der Stadt Ḥattuša ist kaum berücksichtigt worden, wie viele Menschen hier überhaupt lebten. Meistens konzentrieren sich die Narrationen auf die Elite, Friedensverträge und Kriegszüge sowie die Architektur der monumentalen Gebäude. Dabei nimmt die Geschichte der „großen Personen“ (d. h. Könige) den Platz der Untersuchung der Bevölkerung ein – letztlich eine Marginalisierung, die aus der Vergangenheit fortgeführt wird. Die Auswirkungen auf das tägliche Leben verschiedener Gruppierungen bleiben unsichtbar. Es stellt sich die Frage, welche Methode wir anwenden können, um subalterne Räume in der Vergangenheit zu finden. Die näherungsweise Bestimmung der Anzahl der Stadteinwohner:innen könnte hier weiterhelfen. Selbstverständlich ist es unmöglich, eine exakte Bevölkerungszahl zu ermitteln; jedes Berechnungsmodell ist notwendigerweise von bestimmten Prämissen abhängig.

Generell lassen sich Verfahren zur Populationsgrößenermittlung anhand von archäologischen „Fakten“ in drei Vorgehensweisen untergliedern: a) anhand von Hausgrößen in Verbindung mit der Segmentierung der Besiedlung; b) der Siedlungsgröße; c) des Territoriums eines Ortes, um seine Tragfähigkeit einzuschätzen (Chamberlain 2006: 126–128). Die letztgenannte Methode kann in unserem Fall nicht direkt angewendet werden, da wir es nicht mit autarken und unabhängigen Siedlungen zu tun haben. Obwohl im Allgemeinen die Größe einer Siedlung ein geeigneter Indikator sein kann, um auf die Bevölkerungszahl zu schließen, kann die zweite Methode bei dem bisherigen Untersuchungsstand in Boğazköy nicht zielführend angewendet werden, da die Topographie sehr uneben und ungleichmäßig ist und die Siedlungsgröße daher nicht mit einer einfachen Gleichung berechnet werden kann. Daher ist die erste Methode die geeignete.

Zunächst ist eine Berechnung der Fläche der Siedlung nötig (Abb. 4). Mithilfe einer GIS-Untersuchung kann die Fläche der Stadtbesiedlung in der kārum-Zeit auf ungefähr 25 ha geschätzt werden. Anhand dieses Wertes ist es möglich, einige Berechnungen zur Populationsgröße durchzuführen. Als einfaches (und sicherlich am wenigsten geeignetes) Verfahren berechnet man die Bevölkerungszahl anhand einer besiedelten Gesamtfläche von 25 ha (dies würde bedeuten, dass nur Wohnhäuser gebaut wurden). Die durchschnittliche Grundfläche der Häuser, die wir aus Boğazköy kennen, liegt bei ungefähr 175 m<sup>2</sup>. Als Besiedlungsdichte schlage ich 65 % vor, einen Wert, der

aus dem am besten erhaltenen Nordviertel belegt ist (Strupler 2016). Anhand dieser Parameter könnten 950 Häuser in Boğazköy Platz finden. Wenn wir einen Wert von acht Erwachsenen pro Haus annehmen, d. h. eine Familie mit fünf Mitgliedern und drei Bediensteten, wie Hertel es in seinem Modell für Kültepe vorgeschlagen hat (Hertel 2014), erhalten wir eine Gesamtzahl von etwa 7.500 Personen. Dieses Modell ist problematisch, da es jedem Bereich eine Wohnfunktion zuweist. Eine Population von 2.000–4.000 Personen, ungleichmäßig auf die 25 ha verteilt, scheint dagegen eine plausiblere Schätzung zu sein (Strupler 2016).

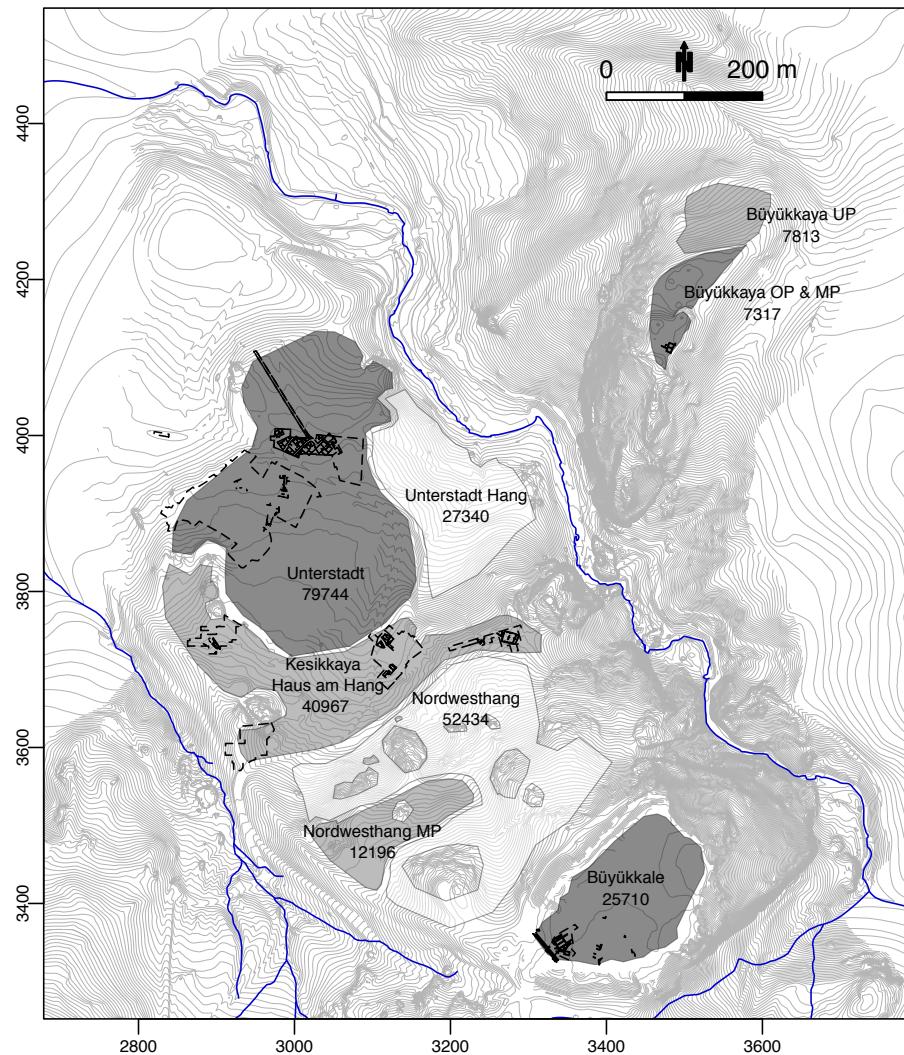


Abb. 4. Größe der Zonen von Boğazköy-Hattusa in der kārum-Zeit. Die Zonen wurden der Topographie nach in verschiedene Gruppen eingeteilt (dunkelgrau = flach; hellgrau = steil). Einige Bereiche wurden ausgelassen, weil sie nicht für den Wohnungsbau geeignet sind: die Ufer der Büyükkale deresi, die sich im April unter Wasser befinden können; die Osthänge von Büyükkale und Büyükkale-Nordwesthang sind viel zu steil; das Gleiche gilt für die Westhänge von Büyükkaya. OP steht für oberes Plateau; MP mittleres Plateau; UP unteres Plateau.

Diese Zahl gewinnt in Anbetracht der Geschichte der „Gründung der Hauptstadt“ an Bedeutung. Hattusa ist in textlichen Überlieferungen zunächst als Ḫattuš bekannt. Sie ist der Sitz eines Stadtstaates, der während der kārum-Zeit (ca. 1950–1750 v. u. Z.) eine Handelsniederlassung und einen König – die Königin wird in den Texten ignoriert – beherbergte (Barjamovic 2011: 292–297). Nach dem sog. „Text Anittas“, einem in althethitischer Sprache abgefassten Text, fing Pithana an, „seinen“ Staat auszubauen, und eroberte um 1750 v. u. Z. Kaneš (das heutige Kültepe; Barjamovic u. a. 2012). Sein Sohn Anitta setzte die militärische Expansion fort und zerstörte unter anderem Ḫattuš um 1730 v. u. Z. (Kryszat 2008). Dieser Konflikt, der die Stadt Ḫattuš involvierte, war nicht der erste,

denn der Stadtstaat Ḫattuš war anscheinend an mehreren früheren Konflikten beteiligt. Nach der Zerstörung von Ḫattuš wurde nach der textlichen Überlieferung dieser Standort für die Errichtung der „hethitischen“ Hauptstadt Ḫattuša (ca. 1650–1180 v. u. Z.) gewählt. Eine Brandzerstörung konnte in vielen Arealen archäologisch nachgewiesen werden (Nordviertel, Westterrasse, Kesikkaya Nordwest und Büyükkale, aber nicht Büyükkaya). Die verschiedenen Ausgrabungen zeigen, dass es weder einen Hiatus gab noch direkte Kontinuität. Die Architektur der kārum-Zeit, wenn nicht durch spätere tiefgründige Bauaktivitäten zerstört, ist im Brandschutt gut erhalten. Eine oder mehrere Zerstörungen scheinen gesichert. Es ist davon auszugehen, dass die Bevölkerung in dieser kriegerischen Periode – wie die Texte es vermuten lassen – auf diesen Fall vorbereitet werden musste. Es ist anzunehmen, dass ein Teil der Bevölkerung geflohen und relativ schnell nach der Zerstörung nach Ḫattuš zurückgekehrt ist. Drei Sachverhalte stützen diese Hypothese und weisen darauf hin, dass entgegen dem Bericht der Annalen die Aufgabe der Stadt nicht sehr lange gedauert haben kann. Der Stadtname wurde beibehalten (der Name Ḫattuš wurde in Ḫattuša adaptiert), die gleichen Gebiete innerhalb der Stadt wurden wieder besiedelt (wie Büyükkale, Büyükkale-Nordwesthang, Unterstadt, Büyükkaya). Als Ḫattušili sich dann dazu entschieden hatte, Ḫattuša zur Hauptstadt des entstehenden Königreichs zu machen, muss die Stadt bereits Vorteile geboten haben, wenn man nicht von einer Gründung *ex nihilo* ausgehen will (i. A. mit weiterführenden Literaturangaben Schachner 2011b; 2015; 2020). Zentral für unsere Untersuchung ist jedoch nicht die genaue Rekonstruktion der Ereignisse der Könige, unser Fokus liegt auf den Auswirkungen der Zerstörung(en) auf die Bewohner:innen.

Wenn man von einer Zerstörung der Siedlung ausgeht, wie können wir uns die Ereignisse für eine Bevölkerung von 2.000–4.000 Personen vorstellen? Die geflohenen Personen haben es dann nicht nur innerhalb kurzer Zeit geschafft, einen funktionierenden Ort zu gestalten, sondern ihn sogar attraktiv zu machen. Die Wahl von Boğazkale als Ort für eine Hauptstadt ist nicht selbstverständlich: Von den Städten dieser Zeit ist Boğazkale der einzige Ort mit einer so steilen Topographie. Vor der Zeit Ḫattušilis bzw. Labarnas, des ersten „hethitischen“ Königs, der die Hauptstadt „gründete“, ist mit vielen vorausgehenden Aktivitäten zu rechnen: etwa der Bau von neuen Häusern und Gebäuden, Ackerbau, die Einrichtung von Wasserver- und -entsorgung, die Schaffung von Wegen und Straßen sowie die Entwicklung regionaler Attraktivität und Berühmtheit (kommerzielle, soziale, religiöse, kulinarische, gesundheitliche, kulturelle, freundschaftliche usw.). Diese waren vermutlich auch mit vielen kalendarisch festgelegten Aktivitäten verbunden, wie vielleicht Erinnerungs- und Ahnenkulte, Rituale, Feste, Messen und vieles mehr.

Alle diese Aktivitäten scheinen in den Texten bewusst nicht erwähnt worden zu sein, um die Macht der Könige zu vergrößern. Im Grunde genommen ist eine Geschichte anhand der vorhandenen Quellen kaum rekonstruierbar. Die schriftlichen Quellen schweigen über die Mitglieder der Gesellschaft und ihre Tätigkeiten, die für die bis heute wirkende Entstehung der Hauptstadt notwendig gewesen sind – und die archäologischen Methoden helfen kaum, diese Fehlstelle zu füllen. Trotz einer vorwiegend auf die Spitze der Gesellschaft fokussierten Dokumentation kann die Abwesenheit von Zeugnissen Handlungsräume öffnen. Ziel einer solchen Narration soll dabei sein, die Geschichte bewusst fragmentiert zu belassen, um „zu akzeptieren, dass wir auf interpretativem Wege Möglichkeitsräume eröffnen, statt sie durch epistemologische Gewalt einer hegemonialen Archäologie zu verhindern oder zu verschließen und damit unsichtbar zu machen“ (Rees und Schreiber 2019: 130).

## Fazit

Archäologische Forschungen, deren Fluchtpunkt die Hauptstadt ist und die diese am Ende auch erschaffen, sind nicht in der Lage, nicht-diskursive, subalterne Handlungen herauszuarbeiten – dieses Erkenntnisziel können sie letztlich nicht erreichen. In Marmor gemeißelte Termini wie „Hauptstadt“ und „Hethiter“ erzeugen Kontinuitäten anstelle von Brüchen und Unsicherheiten, die dann letztlich als wissenschaftlich und historisch korrekte Darstellungen gelten. Marginale Handlungen werden in dieser Perspektive meistens ausgeblendet. Es gibt jedoch genügend Ansatzpunkte, dies zu ändern. Die räumliche Analyse von Fundverbreitungen sowie die Integration stark fragmentierter – und deshalb bislang meist unberücksichtigter – Funde kann selbst noch in der Auswertung von Altgrabungen das erfahrbare Spektrum von Aktivitäten erweitern und bislang unsichtbare Personengruppen in den Blick nehmen. Die Ermittlung von Populationsgrößen und Überlegungen zur Beteiligung der Bewohner:innen in Phasen von Stabilität und Umbrüchen hilft, das Ausmaß des blinden Flecks bisheriger archäologischer Untersuchungen einzuschätzen. Experimentelle Methoden bieten ebenfalls einen Ansatz, unsichtbares Handeln sichtbar zu machen.

Mit experimenteller Archäologie untersuchte Jürgen Seeher zusammen mit den Einwohner:innen von Boğazkale Steinmetztechniken und deren Abläufe. Hierdurch kam er zu einer Einschätzung des notwendigen Arbeitsauf-

wandes für bestimmte Tätigkeiten (Seeher 2005). Die Wiederherstellung von einem Prozent der Wehrmauer von Hattuša zielte in die gleiche Richtung (Seeher 2007). Auf diese Weise konnte jeder Arbeitsgang, die Planung und das minimal notwendige Wissen insoweit rekonstruiert werden, dass eine Schätzung der Bauzeit sowie der benötigten Materialmenge vorgenommen werden konnte (Seeher 2010). Im Hinblick auf meine Definition von Subalternität als „unsichtbare Menschengruppen“ ist diese Herangehensweise wichtig, da sie die werktätige Ausführung der Arbeiten in den Mittelpunkt rückt. Es ermöglicht Handlungen einzuschätzen, die hinter Monumenten stehen und in diesen verborgen sind. Die dezidierte Ausgrabung jüngerer Epochen als der Bronzezeit, ihre Erforschung, Restaurierung und Darstellung, wie sie durch das Grabungsteam in den letzten Jahren betrieben wird, wird auch dieses Spektrum an Geschichten weiter öffnen (u. a. Schachner 2019).

Viele andere Möglichkeiten sind noch vorhanden und müssen in der Zukunft verfolgt werden. Aus den Keilschrifttexten ist bekannt, dass Gefangene und Sklav:innen, die in die Hauptstadt gebracht wurden, für viele verschiedene Tätigkeiten „eingesetzt“ wurden. Es kann davon ausgegangen werden, dass dies insbesondere Monamente betrifft, in deren Konstruktion viel Arbeit und Zeit investiert wurde. Hinter einem Monument steht nicht nur wie üblich genannt „ein Baumeister“ bzw. König, sondern hunderte von weiteren Menschen. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit den Realien der Kriegsführung und dem Leben der Menschen, die für die Kriegszüge ausgenutzt wurden, ist ebenfalls wünschenswert, zumal wir Angaben dafür aus Texten besitzen. Sind diese nicht auch Subalterne, die eine neue Perspektive einfordern?

## Danksagungen

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## A New Perspective on Archaeological Fieldwork in Egypt: The Local Workmen of the Asyut Project

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# A New Perspective on Archaeological Fieldwork in Egypt: The Local Workmen of the Asyut Project

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## **Abstract**

This article critically reflects upon the relationship between the local workmen (all male) of the Asyut Project and the international scientific team working at the site. There are still noticeable traces of the colonial past within Egyptology. Interactions between local communities and archaeologists have only recently led to projects that focus on community engagement and multivocality. This article argues that community engagement can be a promising way not only to further decolonise Egyptology, and especially archaeological work in Egypt, but also to broaden the horizon of scholars by including other voices, methods and interpretations in their research. The local workmen have been almost invisible in published records of archaeological research. In 2011, together with the Egyptian artist Ammar Abu Bakr, I was able to study the relationship between the scholars of the Asyut Project and the local workmen by using methods from the field of social and cultural anthropology. The research comprises 21 semi-structured interviews and 56 structured questionnaires. Based on an analysis of the interviews, I conclude that the relationship between the workmen and the Asyut Project is mainly capitalistic and the workmen are alienated labourers. This is further manifested by a social distance between the international scholars and the local workmen, the language barrier, and the limited time available during fieldwork. It will be shown that the local workmen are interested in the ancient sites and in more communication concerning their meaning and interpretations.

## **Keywords**

History of Egyptology, postcolonial archaeology, workmen in Egyptology, Asyut

## **Zusammenfassung**

Im Zentrum dieses Beitrages steht die Beziehung zwischen den lokalen Grabungsarbeitern und dem internationalen Forschungsteam des Asyut Project. Bis heute lassen sich Spuren des Kolonialismus in der ägyptologischen Forschung nachweisen; jedoch mehren sich Projekte mit einem Fokus auf *community archaeology* und *multivocality*. Diese Formen der archäologischen Arbeit öffnen die Archäologie für weitere Interessengruppen, was die Dekolonisation des Faches voranbringen kann. Zwar machen die lokalen Grabungsarbeiter\*innen auf einer Ausgrabung oftmals zahlenmäßig den größten Anteil des Teams aus, finden jedoch kaum einen Platz in den Publikationen. Die folgende Untersuchung basiert auf einer Studie, die ich in Zusammenarbeit mit dem ägyptischen Künstler Ammar Abu Bakr im Jahre 2011 durchführen konnte und 21 halb-strukturierte sowie 56 strukturierte Interviews mit den ausnahmslos männlichen lokalen Grabungsarbeitern des Asyut Projects umfasst. Basierend auf den Interviews wird die Aussage getroffen, dass es sich bei der Beziehung zwischen den lokalen Grabungsarbeitern und dem Asyut Project nicht nur um eine kapitalistische Beziehung, sondern auch um entfremdete Arbeit handelt. Die Zusammenarbeit ist geprägt von einer sozialen Distanz, der Sprachbarriere und der limitierten Zeit des Feldaufenthaltes. Die Untersuchung zeigt jedoch, dass die lokalen Grabungsarbeiter durchaus Interesse an den Altertümern und an einem inhaltlichen Austausch mit dem Team des Asyut Project haben und dass dieses Interesse und ein Wissensaustausch von Vorteil für alle Interessengruppen sind.

## **Schlagwörter**

Geschichte der Ägyptologie, postkoloniale Archäologie, Arbeiter in der Ägyptologie, Asyut

## Introduction

Conducting archaeological fieldwork in Egypt involves archaeologists getting in contact with local communities, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities,<sup>1</sup> the police, and sometimes even the military. Not only are archaeological sites highly protected and valued by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the responsible inspectors and *Ghafirs*,<sup>2</sup> the sites are also part of living communities. At all sites, stakeholders<sup>3</sup> who have an interest in or a relationship with the archaeological or historical site can be identified. The local work(wo)men employed by an archaeological project are, for example, one interest group. They are not only part of the local community and live among the sites; they also earn their living through archaeological fieldwork. In this paper, the local workmen (all male) of the Asyut Project will be highlighted as one of the many interest groups at the ancient necropolis of Asyut, the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi.<sup>4</sup> The following research questions will be discussed: What are the benefits of community engagement within archaeological research in Egypt? Who are the local workmen of the Asyut Project? How important is archaeological work in the lives of the local workmen? What motivates the local workmen to work with the project? How can the relationship between the local workmen and the scholars of the Asyut Project be described?

This article is based on a research project I conducted together with the Egyptian artist Ammar Abu Bakr in 2011. The results of the study were published in German in 2016, in the book *Perspektivenwechsel. Eine Reflexion archäologischen Arbeitens in Ägypten. Die lokalen Grabungsarbeiter des Asyut Project* (Beck 2016), as part of the Asyut Project series. This paper offers an English summary of that work, supplemented by current studies on the subject. The structure of this paper is twofold. In the first part, I reflect critically upon community engagement in the context of Egyptological research, whereas the second part focuses on the Asyut Project in general and the research project concerning the local workmen. In the latter part, the social and cultural anthropological methods applied in this research will be described and the local workmen will be introduced as one of the many stakeholders at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi. This is followed by a discussion of the archaeological work in Asyut that shifts the perspective to the local workmen. Lastly, the results of this study will be summarised in a concluding section.

## Community engagement and Egyptology

In the past 20 years, postcolonial approaches have become more and more widespread in the archaeologies of Northern America, Europe, New Zealand and Australia (Gosden 2012: 253). Postcolonial theory combines the criticism of the colonial past and its long-term effects with a new perception of how to write and present history by focusing on indigenous and subaltern voices. For archaeologists, this means not only reflecting on how their profession was established, shaped and instrumentalised during colonial times and by representatives of the colonial and imperial powers, but also how to deconstruct work methods or ideas that are still embedded within the old colonial mindset (Lydon and Rizvi 2010: 23; Riggs 2015: 130; Rizvi 2015: 156–157, 2020: 85; Beck 2016: 7, 12–13, 33). Postcolonial archaeology is at its best anti-racist, aims to break free from Western mind sets and introduces new voices, methods and interpretations of the past (Rizvi 2020: 85). Uzma Rizvi argues that archaeology can be decolonised “by incorporating community-based archaeology, public archaeology, and a change in the education and training of archaeologists” (Rizvi 2020: 89).

In 1922, Egypt formally gained independence from Great Britain (Botman 1998: 285) and in 1954 – after the revolution – the Ministry of Antiquities came under Egyptian leadership (Haikal 2003: 124; Wendrich 2010: 190; Beck 2016: 14). Stricter laws were passed in 1983, prohibiting any archaeological finds being taken out of Egypt. Even though the management of antiquities is now supervised by the Egyptian government, traces of the colonial

<sup>1</sup> In December 2019 the Ministry of Antiquities and the Ministry of Tourism merged into the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

<sup>2</sup> *Ghafirs* are the guards of the ancient sites that are paid by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

<sup>3</sup> For a critical reflection on and definition of the term stakeholder, see Matthews 2008: 7–8; Kleinitz, Näser and Altekamp 2013: 357; Beck 2016: 6, fn 19.

<sup>4</sup> In Egypt, mainly men work as manual labours for archaeological missions. Only in the Delta of Egypt are women also occasionally employed (Sonbol 2014: 60).

and imperial past of Egyptology are still noticeable today (Beck 2016: 12–20, esp. 18–20). Susan Pollock states:

“The conditions of archaeological fieldwork in the Middle East are set in the West. These conditions are part of the overarching structures of capitalism, imperialism, and neocolonialism, which, although global in scope and connections, continue to work principally to the advantage of Western governments, peoples, and scholars.” (Pollock 2010: 213)

In addition to Pollock, the Egyptologists Willeke Wendrich and Stephen Quirke also refer to the term neocolonialism when describing the current situation in Egyptology (Pollock 2010: 211–213; Wendrich 2010: 193; Quirke 2013: 394).<sup>5</sup> For Wendrich, neocolonialism is subliminal and unintentional but rooted in western institutions and standards of research, which exclude alternative research methods and perspectives (Wendrich 2010: 194). Similarly, this situation is described as “coloniality” by Ramón Grosfoguel (2002) and Aníbal Quijano (2000, 2007). This term “refers to the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations” (Grosfoguel 2002: 205).

A consequence of neocolonialism or coloniality is the language barrier between the local communities,<sup>6</sup> the local archaeologists, the employees of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the local workmen on the one side and the foreign scholars on the other (Wendrich 2010: 180; Beck 2016: 14–16). Furthermore, a language barrier is noticeable within the discipline, concerning the different languages of Egyptological publications. To this day, there is no consistent “language of scholarship for Egyptology.” Egyptologists still publish in their native languages, including English, German, Arabic, and French, but also in others, such as Italian, Dutch, Russian, and Japanese. Very few, if any, Egyptologists are capable of reading and understanding all these languages, which automatically leads to an exclusion of publications that one can include in one’s research. English has become the main language used in publications as well as for communication on site and for excavation documentation. But what does this mean for scholars whose mother tongue is not English? When writing in another language, one may often find it challenging to understand finer nuances, let alone to make use of sophisticated wordplay. One may be less eloquent and struggle with using the correct syntax, which may detract from the intended meaning. Proofreading and editing, which can be expensive, are often necessary to fulfil the expectations of publishers and readers of English-language publications. The result is a form of discrimination that favours researchers with specific cultural and economic capital.

Right from the beginning, Egyptology practiced in the West systematically excluded Egyptians from scientific endeavours and research results.<sup>7</sup> Fortunately, this has changed during the last decades. Many projects publish their results bilingually in English and Arabic, not only in print<sup>8</sup> but also as free downloads on project websites.<sup>9</sup> However, the language barrier remains, especially with the workmen but also with some inspectors of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as well as with Egyptian Egyptologists who cannot speak English fluently (Wendrich 2010: 180). At the same time, most foreign Egyptologists working in Egypt have only a very basic vocabulary of the Egyptian Arabic language at their disposal, a fact that prevents them from following up on the research results published by their Egyptian colleagues in Arabic (Beck 2016: 14–16). Getting access to research is not only bound to one’s ability to understand the language of publication, but also the availability of the (print) publication itself. Libraries at Middle Eastern universities are not as well-equipped as those in the West. Also, subscriptions for fee-required research websites are often not supported (Pollock 2010: 215; Beck 2016: 14). All this leads to a division of the discipline. On the one hand, there are Egyptian archaeologists who have less access to Egyptological publications, and who may not have sufficient language skills in English, German and French to keep up to date with the current state of research. On the other hand, there are the non-Arabic speaking Egyptologists, most of whom

<sup>5</sup> See also Trigger 2006: 276.

<sup>6</sup> For further information on the term “community” and its definition(s), see McDavid and Matthews 2016: 18; McDavid, Rizvi and Smith 2016: 252; al-Hadad 2020: 83–84.

<sup>7</sup> For the relationship of early foreign Egyptologists with Egyptian Egyptologists, see Reid 2002: 116–118, 211–212; Haikal 2003: 125–127; Wendrich 2010: 187–188; Beck 2016: 14.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, these three publications of the Asyut Project: Kahl 2013, 2018; Eldamaty 2012.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the Heliopolis Project: URL: <http://www.heliopolisproject.org/>; viewed 11.10.2019; the project Urban Development and Regional Identities in Middle Egypt: A Deep History of the Asyut Region: URL: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research\\_projects/all\\_current\\_projects/asyut\\_urban\\_development.aspx](https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/all_current_projects/asyut_urban_development.aspx); viewed 11.10.2019; and the Dahshur Project and the Elephantine Project by the German Archaeological Institute: URL: <https://www.dainst.org/standort/-/organization-display/ZI9STUj61zKB/14452>; viewed 11.10.2019.

are not capable of publishing in Arabic or reading the Arabic-language works of their Egyptian colleagues. This situation is frustrating for both the Egyptian Egyptologists and their foreign counterparts.

Interestingly, in her paper *The History of Archaeology through the Eyes of the Egyptian* from 2018, Wendy Doyon (2018: 183) states that after World War I, Arabic was an important language on excavations, not only to organise the labour and labourers but also to manage the finds and document the excavation process on site. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston now holds letters, registers and notebooks written in Arabic by the so-called *Quftis*<sup>10</sup> working for the Egyptian Expedition of the Harvard-University/Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, George Andrew Reisner directed this American archaeological excavation (Doyon 2018: 183). The Arabic field diaries, written by the *Quftis*, were composed in the same manner as the English ones, with a daily entry describing the work progress and going through the units, levels, and finds. Each day the diary of the foreman was translated into more formal Arabic (Doyon 2018: 183). In this way, the whole excavation process was recorded multilingually and from different perspectives. Looking at this approach from colonial times with a postcolonial viewpoint, it appears to be the first attempt at multivocality within Egyptological studies. Also, Doyon (2018: 183) mentions that Flinders Petrie himself was of the opinion that to speak Arabic when working in the field was as important, if not more so, than being proficient in Middle Egyptian. Unfortunately, in current study curricula, Egyptian Arabic classes are never part of a BA/MA programme in Egyptology, and to efficiently study Arabic ‘on the side’ is a time-consuming, individual challenge that lies far beyond the financial means of most students. Furthermore, Doyon rightfully argues that

“had the Arabic diary tradition managed to cross boundary between the field and the academic world, bringing Egyptians’ own experiences of the archaeological landscape into the writing of history alongside English, French, and German, both the practices and the public sphere of archaeology in the Middle East would look very different today.” (Doyon 2018: 190)

With this statement, Doyon also includes the local communities and, as a part of them, the local workmen as well as the *Quftis* working at the archaeological sites, most of whom are excluded from research results and discoveries.

Rizvi (2020: 89) states that a change in the education of archaeologists is one way to decolonise archaeology. In the case of Egyptology, solid Arabic language skills should be a requirement for any archaeologist working in Egypt. Egyptian Arabic classes should not only be available but also part of the study curricula. Most scholars might argue that if modern Egyptian Arabic language courses were part of the curriculum, at least one class with (ancient) Egyptological content would then be lost. However, when scholars understand that Egypt, its people and its modern language are also part of Egyptology, this argument loses its validity. At this point it becomes blatantly obvious that a change in the mindset of Egyptology as a discipline, which is necessary for its decolonisation, is only at its beginning.

Another trait of Egyptology’s neocolonialism is the fact that the local workmen are alienated labourers in Karl Marx’s sense of the word (Marx 2017 [1844]: XXII–XXVII, esp. XXIII). Moreover, the relationship between the archaeologists and the workmen is capitalistic, one that is based on wages (Steele 2005: 50; LaSalle 2010: 405–406; Pollock 2010: 205, 207–208; Beck 2016: 17–18; Mickel 2019: 185). The workmen admittedly do a substantial part of the archaeological work but have no part in the documentation and interpretation of the archaeological data. Furthermore, they are hardly ever given information about the results of an archaeological project (Steele 2005: 50–51; Pollock 2010: 206; Beck 2016: 18). Interestingly, contract labour was founded at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, simultaneously with archaeological fieldwork (Clément 2010: 81, 83). The Egyptologists Heinrich Schäfer (1903), Gaston Maspero (1914) and Georges Legrain (1914) collected and published folk songs that were sung for the workmen by performers, for motivation and comfort when working in this new and strange environment (Doyon 2018: 179). Anne Clément (2010), Doyon (2018) and Allison Mickel (2019) have recently studied these songs.<sup>11</sup> According to Doyon, the content of the songs conveys a frustrating and dark atmosphere (Doyon 2018: 180). She concludes that this alienated, capitalistic relationship was founded right at the beginning of archaeological fieldwork, and the traditional folk songs were instrumentalised to support this new kind of work organisation (Doyon 2018: 180).

<sup>10</sup> In Egyptology, *Quftis* are archaeological labourers, often in leading positions, who come from the Upper Egyptian town of Quft and are descendants of the workmen educated by Flinders Petrie. For the history of the *Quftis*, see Drower 1995: 214.

<sup>11</sup> I would like to thank my colleague Ulrike Dubiel for bringing those publications to my attention.

How can Egyptology overcome this situation? Again, Egyptologists need to rethink their work methods in order to leave neocolonialism and coloniality behind. Apart from a change in the education of archaeologists, a more open archaeology is needed. There are many ways to open up archaeological research to the public. Various forms of community engagement, which include, for example, field schools or projects concerned with cultural heritage management, provide a good first step and a profound way to open Egyptological research to those outside of the discipline, and to those who live close to or among the sites. The ancient Egyptian sites are neither isolated nor invisible; rather, they lie within modern cities or are clearly visible from them. Obviously, they are part of local traditions and oral histories, and, as José Roberto Pellini and María Bernarda Marconetto stated, these stories have so far been ignored by Egyptologists (Pellini and Marconetto 2018; Beck 2016: 69–76). Interaction with the local community at or around a site not only contributes towards decolonizing Egyptology but also helps include other interpretations of the site, in the sense of multivocality (Hodder 2003: 35; Rizvi 2008: 201, 2020: 86, 89; al-Hadad 2020: 84). With the adoption of multivocality, more than one interpretation of an ancient site or ancient phenomena becomes available, opening up scholarly discussion so that it is not only set in the West and directed by western scholarly thought.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Esraa Fathy al-Hadad (2020: 87) notes that community engagement contributes to the protection of a site and might create job opportunities for the locals. Community-based archaeological projects, which are more and more common in archaeology, are multivocal and are executed together with the local community. Here, archaeologists and the community cooperate as equal partners.<sup>13</sup> Engaging with the local community, establishing a community-based archaeological project, embracing multivocality and meeting different stakeholders on equal terms are time consuming and challenging. Each stakeholder is driven by different motivations and has a different background, including knowledge and education. Even if stakeholders form an interest group, this group is not homogenous nor are individuals part of only one specific interest group (Beck 2016: 21). It is challenging to focus on a research project while at the same time balancing the interests of the different stakeholders. There is always the risk of biased interpretations when prioritising the interests of one group, thereby potentially ignoring other perspectives. Rizvi clarifies:

“Community-based praxis is not about patronizing groups of people and claiming that your methods are the best way forward; it is very much about just the opposite – it is about having a methodology that forms and formulates around shared concerns, one that centers sociality and equity in a manner to inform process, and a discipline that recognizes that what is valued is not the end result (because really, research never ends), but that it is in the process that value is placed and understood as rigorous. And so what this really is about then is what we, as a discipline and community of peers, will review and code as valuable.” (Rizvi 2020: 92)

Even though community-based archaeological projects are rare in Egyptology, the increasing number of projects within Egyptological research that engage with the local community points to an ongoing change within the field (see Table 1). Community engagement and easy accessibility of information concerning a site is not only desired by archaeologists but also demanded by local communities. One of the results of a survey concerning public perceptions of archaeological heritage in Upper Egypt, published by Hend M. Abdel-Rahman and David Pokotylo (2017: 124), was that the people living in Deir el-Barsha wish for more information on the site and the archaeological work, in the form of brochures or lectures in a simple language.

Lately, research on workmen in Egyptian archaeology has increased noticeably. These *workmen studies* include research on workmen in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – especially the *Quftis* working for Petrie and Reisner<sup>14</sup> – as well as workmen on current excavations, as carried out by myself within the Asyut Project in 2011 (Beck 2012, 2016, 2019).<sup>15</sup> Concerning the former, the sources of research are diaries, reports and letters by the archaeologists<sup>16</sup> as well as the aforementioned folk songs sung by and for the workmen. These studies are crucial to our understanding of the relationship between the locals who were employed on archaeological sites and the foreign archaeologists at the beginning of archaeological work in Egypt, even though the material basis of research for these studies is limited, biased, and censored. The availability of these records depends on the decisions made by excavators many decades ago, who chose what information was written in their own diaries and publications and whether to keep

<sup>12</sup> For a critical reflection on multivocality in scientific research, see Beck 2016: 21; esp. fn. 123; see also Hassan 1997; Hodder 1997a, 1997b, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on community-based archaeology, see Strand et al. 2003; Atalay 2012.

<sup>14</sup> See Clément 2010; Quirke 2010; Doyon 2015, 2018; Georg 2018.

<sup>15</sup> For other projects with workmen on current excavations, see Rowland 2014.

<sup>16</sup> See, i.e. Quirke's volume *Hidden Hands* from 2010.

certain other diaries, such as the ones written by the *Quftis*. Although Doyon entitled her article *The History of Archaeology through the Eyes of Egyptians*, her database is rather one-sided, calling for a more thorough reflection on the heavily biased nature of those written records. Mickel, on the other hand, admits that by studying old diaries and reports by archaeologists, one will not get access to the emic perspectives of different workmen. She proposes that these documents should be read in order to understand the excavation practices at that time: “In doing so, the responses of the workers rise to the fore – and the ways in which they may have experienced and resisted the conditions of alienation become apparent” (Mickel 2019: 190). Reflecting upon the past of Egyptology and acknowledging its dependency on colonialism can lead to a shift in today’s research methods, which are not only rooted in colonialism but also reproduce colonial mindsets (Rizvi 2020: 85; Schneider and Hayes 2020: 130). The research on the local workmen of the Asyut Project had a similar aim. This study was conceived as a first step in engaging further with the local workmen, who are part of the local community at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi (see below). It was initiated to build a bridge between the local workmen and the international archaeologists in order to get to know each other better as well as to reflect on the archaeological work and its place in the lives of the workmen.

Year	Project	Place	Coordinators
until 2002	Community archaeology in Quseir (Red Sea)	Quseir (Red Sea)	D. Peacock, L. Blue and S. Moser
2009–2015	‘Archaeotopia: the archaeological site as focus, expression and motor of collective identities’	Carthage, Thebes, Sudan	S. Altekamp, C. Näser und C. Kleinitz
2011–2012	‘Ancient Tombs, Modern Dwellers: Investigating the Relationship of Archaeological Sites to Contemporary Communal Identity in al-Qurna, Thebes’	Qurna	G. Tully
2013–2015	‘Kulturanthropologische Fallstudie in verlassenen nubischen Dörfern in Oberägypten – kulturelle Formierungsprozesse und deren Transformation zu archäologischen Befundkontexten’	Region Aswan	I. Forstner-Müller, L. Zabrama, F. Fichtinger, L. Fliesser, C. Kurtze. Cooperation: N. El-Shohoumi
2013–2018	Initiating and managing the community archaeology component of the Mograt Island Archaeological Project	Mograt Island Sudan	G. Tully
2014–2015	‘The Archaeology of the Recent Past on Mograt Island – using Participatory GIS in mapping “living heritage”’	Mograt Island Sudan	C. Kleinitz and S. Merlo
since 2014	‘Protecting and presenting Sudan’s World Heritage: A study of tourist behaviour and experience at Musawwarat es Sufra’	Musawwarat es Sufra Sudan	C. Kleinitz
2013–2016	Ethnographic fieldwork in Sai Island (Across Borders team, Julia Budka), Dangeil (NCAM team, Julie Anderson, Salah Mohamed Ahmed and Mahmoud Suliman Bashir) and Bejrawiya (UCL Qatar team, Jane Humphris)	Sai Island, Dangeil, Bejrawiya Sudan	R. Bradshaw
since 2016	‘Urban Development and Regional Identities in Middle Egypt: A Deep History of the Asyut Region’	Shutib	I. Regulski, F. Keshk, A. Sabri, Cairo Urban Sketchers, Takween ICD
2017–2019	Facilitating community engagement and site management planning at Amarna	Amarna	G. Tully
since 2019	‘The place and the people’	Egypt	F. Keshk

Table 1: Archaeological projects in Egypt and Sudan engaging with local communities (selection).

Cooperating with different interest groups and trying to find a way to establish a well-working archaeological project with an emphasis on community engagement is, of course, even more time consuming than ‘conventional’ projects. Furthermore, it remains challenging to receive funding for such projects. Although time-consuming, community engagement does not entail any other disadvantages for Egyptological research. Unfortunately, however, time and money are correlated. However, once it becomes widely accepted that community engagement is valuable for all archaeological research, excuses become less plausible. Also, according to Sonya Atalay (2012: 5–6, 14–15, 27, 217, 220) and Stephanie Moser et al. (2002: 223, 230), archaeological projects that include co-operation with the local community have led to a decrease in looting and an increased awareness for the sites, a situation every Egyptologist wishes for.

Having now discussed some of the advantages of community engagement for Egyptology, the case study of the Asyut Project and its local workmen will be presented in the following section.

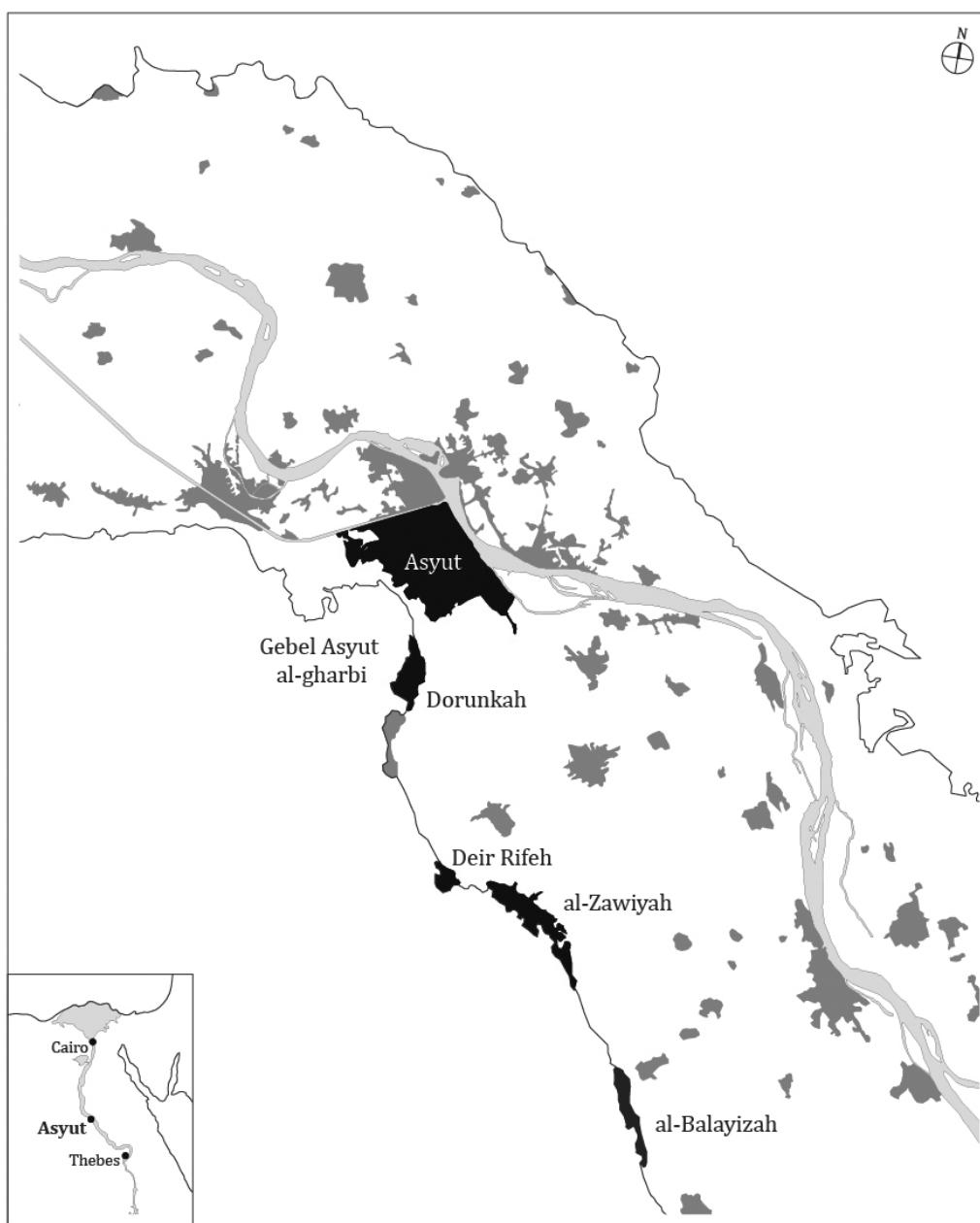


Fig. 1. Asyut and the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi. Image: Tina Beck and Oliver Hasselbach.

## The Asyut Project

### *Introduction: The Gebel Asyut al-gharbi and the Asyut Project*

The city of Asyut is located approximately 370 km south of Cairo, on the western bank of the Nile (fig. 1). In ancient times, Asyut was the capital of the 13<sup>th</sup> Upper Egyptian Nome. The ancient city as well as the temples are covered by the modern settlement. The main archaeological site at Asyut is located on the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, ‘the western mountain of Asyut’ (fig. 2). This mountain was used as a necropolis as early as the Naqada I-II period (4500–3200 BC) (Rzeuska 2014: 96, 2017: 39–41) and continues to be so used up until today, with the modern Islamic cemetery located at the foot of the mountain (Beck 2016: 25). The Gebel, or rather some of the monuments, became the destination for excursions during the New Kingdom (1539–1077 BC) as shown by the numerous graffiti found there. In later times, hermits withdrew to the mountain, and two Coptic monasteries were constructed there. In addition, the site was used as a quarry. In Egyptology, Gebel Asyut al-gharbi is mainly known for its rock-cut tombs of the nomarchs of the First Intermediate Period (2205–2020 BC) and the Middle Kingdom (2020–1630 BC). Today, a military camp is situated on the mountain, making the site inaccessible to (international) tourists (Kahl 2013: 64; Beck 2016: 25).<sup>17</sup> To conduct research at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, the Asyut Project needs a permit from the military that stipulates that all team members can work at the site daily from 8 am until 4 pm.



Fig. 2. The Gebel Asyut al-gharbi. View from the modern city Asyut towards the ancient necropolis. Image: The Asyut Project.

Table 2 gives an overview of the Egyptological missions that have worked at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, beginning with the documentation carried out by Jean Baptiste Prosper Jollois and René Édouard Develliers du Terrage for the French expedition under Napoléon Bonaparte. Gebel Asyut al-gharbi was especially popular in the first half of the 20th century, with only occasional brief surveys conducted later, the last one in 1987 (Kahl 2007: 21–29).

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed description of the history of Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, see Kahl 2012: 9–22.

Date	Scholar/researcher
1799	Jean Baptiste Prosper Jollois, René Édouard Devilliers du Terrage (French expedition)
1887, 1888	Francis L. Griffith
1889	Mohammed Halfawee
1893	Percy E. Newberry
1893	Farag?
1897	Farag Ismail, Yasser Tadros
1903	Charles Palanque, Émile Chassinat
1905–1913	Ernesto Schiaparelli
1906–1907	David G. Hogarth
1911, 1914	Pierre Montet
1913–1914	Ahmed Bey Kamal
1921–1922	Gerald A. Wainwright
1931, 1932	Moharram Kamal
1962	Ali Hassan
1986	Diana Magee
1987	Donald B. Spanel
since 2003	The Asyut Project

Table 2: Overview of archaeological fieldwork undertaken at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi.

After a hiatus of more than 15 years, the archaeological fieldwork at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi resumed with a survey by Jochem Kahl and Mahmoud El-Khadragy. In 2004, Ursula Verhoeven joined the team. The project's main objective from 2003–2019 was to study the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi as an ancient Egyptian necropolis.<sup>18</sup> This project was an Egyptian-German cooperation between the Freie Universität Berlin, the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz and the Sohag University. Kahl mentions that the mapping of the site, the documentation and reconstruction of its structures (e.g., inscriptions and architecture) as well as “[p]inpointing the Asyut traditions and cultural achievements, and thus contributing to the question of regional diversity in Ancient Egypt” (Kahl 2012: 5) were part of the research agenda of the Asyut Project. Since 2020, the Asyut Project focuses on Asyut as a centre for ancient trade. This is an Egyptian-German-Polish cooperation between the Freie Universität Berlin, the Polish Academy of Science, the Sohag University and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.<sup>19</sup>

### ***The stakeholders***

The project conducts work at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi from August until October each year. Clearly, Gebel Asyut al-gharbi is not a hidden site but rather a prominent landmark of Asyut, with the rock-cut tombs and quarries visible from the city and the presence of the modern Islamic cemetery, which continues to grow in size alongside the mountain. At Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, various stakeholders come together, each having their own claim to the site (fig. 3). The mountain is the daily workplace for the *Ghafirs*, the inspectors of the local office of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the soldiers stationed at the military camp. Once a year, the team of the Asyut Project comes to the site to study the ancient necropolis. For the archaeological fieldwork, the Asyut Project employs a foreman, Rais Ahmed Atitou from Quft; a local foreman, George from Deir Rifeh; and up to 80 local workmen (all male) from al-Balayizah, al-Zawiyah, Deir Rifeh and Dorunkah (figs. 1, 7).

<sup>18</sup> The project was financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft from 2005–2019.

<sup>19</sup> This project is also financed by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*. For more information on the Asyut Project and a list of publications, see the project's homepage: URL: <https://www.aegyptologie.uni-mainz.de/the-asyut-project-feldarbeiten-in-mittelaegyptenfieldwork-in-middle-egypt/>; viewed 07.10.2019; or Beck 2016: table 1. See also Asyut – centre of ancient trade:

URL: <https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/aegyptologie/forschung/Drittmittelprojekte/Assiut-handel/index.html>; viewed 14.02.2020.

The group of people who come together for this fieldwork, including the foreign and Egyptian scholars, *Quftis*, local workmen, inspectors, *Ghafirs*, local policemen and restorers, form a somewhat artificial world. All of these individuals come to Gebel Asyut al-gharbi at the same time to work, but with very different backgrounds and motivations. In 2010, Kahl approached me – at that time a student of Social and Cultural Anthropology and Egyptology at the Freie Universität Berlin – with the idea of getting to know the local workmen of the Asyut Project better, most of whom have been working with him since 2004. In the following sections of this paper, the research project will be described, and some of the results, which were published in 2016, will be summarised.

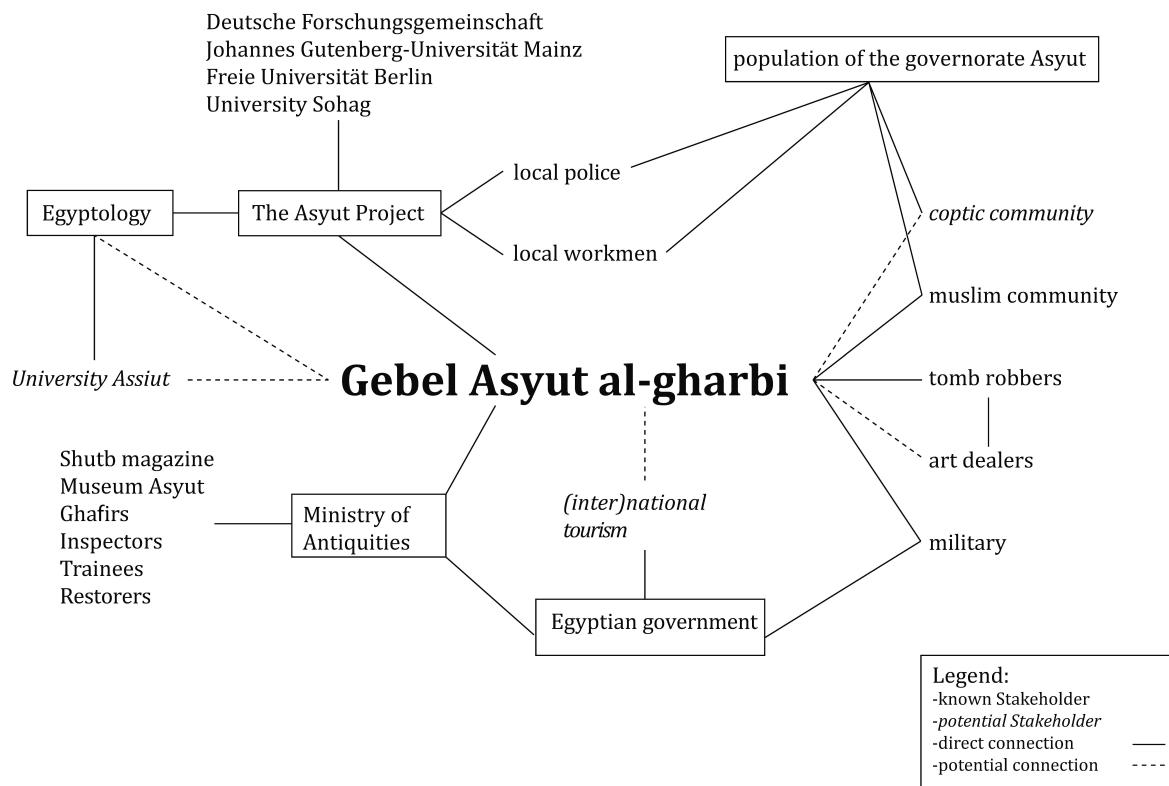


Fig. 3. The various stakeholders at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi. Image: Tina Beck and Oliver Hasselbach.

### Method of research

Clearly, this study needs to be treated as a snapshot. The results, which will be discussed below, are embedded within the social and economic situation in Asyut during the summer months of 2011. This means that the results can be compared to other excavations, but they are obviously not representative of every archaeological project or every workman or woman who is or has been working with international and Egyptian archaeologists since archaeological fieldwork began. Furthermore, the Arab spring of 2011, which was ongoing at the time of the interviews, combined with the rising prices of staple foods, undoubtedly influenced the interviews. In collaboration with Kahl, I prepared several predefined questions to guide the semi-structured interviews before the 2011 fieldwork, which focused on the subject of 'work' and especially 'working at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi'. We decided to forego a recording device for the interviews to avoid an uncomfortable situation for the dialogue partner. The advantage of a semi-structured interview is that the interviewee can take control and talk about topics he or she is comfortable with. The starting question would be simple but open and about work. For example, 'What did you work on yesterday?' The talks went off from there in different directions, but usually within the subject of fieldwork. Apart from the semi-structured interviews, 56 workmen provided answers to a structured questionnaire aimed at

obtaining a statistical overview of names, ages, and places of residence. We asked each workman for this information in person due to the high level of illiteracy. Ammar Abu Bakr, who has been working with the Asyut Project since 2006 as illustrator, not only draws archaeological finds but also the scenery of the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi and the different members of the team, including the interviewees.<sup>20</sup> His drawing was for everyone a natural part of the fieldwork, and each workman received his own portrait. With the permission of the workmen, I published the portraits anonymously in 2016.

On the very first day of the 2011 season, the aim of the project was explained to all team members of the Asyut Project, and I, as someone who had not participated in the archaeological fieldwork of the Asyut Project before, was introduced to the workmen. Ammar Abu Bakr was a familiar face to the local workmen, and the start was easy due to his existing connection with some of them. First, one of the water carriers was asked if he wanted to take part in the interviews. He agreed and afterwards suggested we interview his son, and from that point on the project was settled and accepted within the fieldwork and the group of workmen. Each interview took place at the site, either in an empty tomb where no one was working or in the shade outside. After a short while, there were more offers for interviews than we had time for. Initially, the idea was to talk to men from different villages and age groups to get a broader impression of their thoughts. However, since the interest in participating in the interviews was greater than anticipated, it was decided that no potential interview partners should be rejected in order to obtain ‘nice’ statistics, but rather to focus on interviews with the ones who were happy to participate. Some of the workmen were eager to tell their stories about the Asyut Project or share their knowledge about the ancient sites – not only Gebel Asyut al-gharbi but also the necropolis of Deir Rifeh, where they live. Also, the break from archaeological work during a normal workday was much appreciated. They enjoyed the attention and were happy as well as curious that Ammar Abu Bakr and I, as members of the Asyut team, cared about their thoughts and their lives outside the archaeological research. In addition, they used the interviews as an opportunity to ask me questions about my life, my education and about the tombs at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi and the work of the Asyut Project.

Due to the open structure of the interviews, the discussion often became private and confidential. I appreciate the trust and honesty of the local workmen, therefore subjects discussed that did not concern this research were kept off the record. Furthermore, all names used in this and other publications are pseudonyms. In the following paragraphs, the local workmen will be introduced as a heterogeneous group of men. While the 2016 publication contains many citations from the interviews in order to provide a more in-depth impression of the local workmen in the study, only seven statements were translated from German to English for this paper. These statements were chosen because they represent different opinions on the work relationship between the archaeologists and the workmen and the significance of this kind of work in the lives of the workmen.

### ***The local workmen of the Asyut Project***

In this section, the group of people who are referred to as the local workmen will be further introduced. They are men between 16 and 70 years of age who live in the villages close by the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, in the governorate of Asyut, and earn their wages as day labourers. They work for the Asyut Project in a variety of positions at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi and are paid by the Asyut Project. This definition excludes the *Ghafirs*, the inspectors of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the local policemen, the drivers of the project, and the *Qufti Ahmed Atitou* (Beck 2016: 39).

In 2011, a total of 79 local workmen were employed by the Asyut Project over the course of six weeks. The following statistical overview is based on the 56 structured questionnaires.

As figure 4 shows, the workmen are day labourers, who are engaged in different areas, and some only work with the Asyut Project during the school and university holidays.

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<sup>20</sup> The portraits are also part of the 2016 publication.

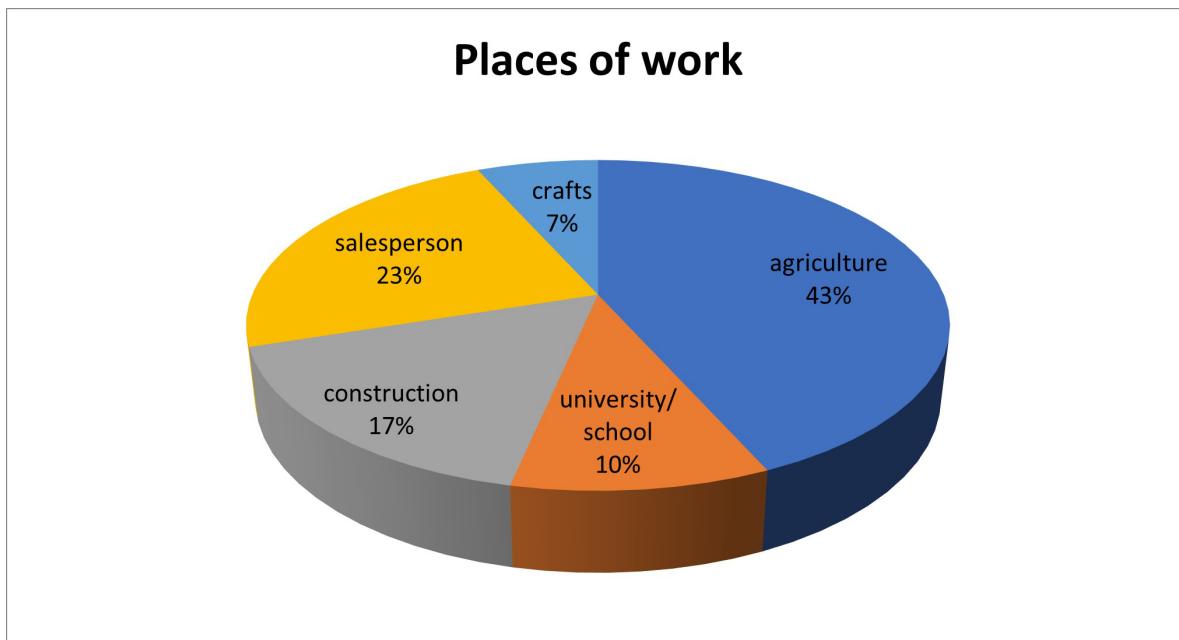


Fig. 4. The fields in which the 21 workmen work (semi-structured interviews). Image: Tina Beck.

Looking at the age distribution, most of the workmen are 16–20 years old, followed by those aged 21–30. Only four are in the 31–40 and 51–60 age groups, seven are aged 41–50 and only one person is over 60 years old (fig. 5).<sup>21</sup> This means that they are at very different stages of their lives. Some are young bachelors, others are married, married with children, or married with adult children. Some were about to leave their village to enter the military, and some had just returned from their military service. As was the case for the structured questionnaire mentioned above, the distribution of interviewees is also not balanced in the case of the semi-structured interviews. The majority of interviewees are between 16 and 20 years of age, five are 41–50 years old, three are 21–30 years old, two are 51–60 years old, and only one is 31–40 years old (fig. 6).

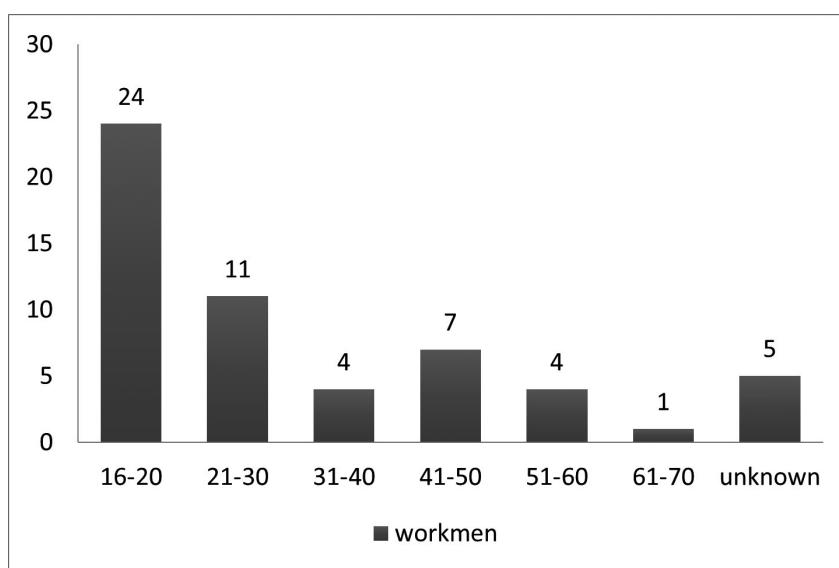


Fig. 5. Statements of age, according to the structured questionnaire. Image: Tina Beck.

<sup>21</sup> Even though not all of the men working for the project provided answers to the questionnaire, the age distribution is, nevertheless, representative. Mostly young men are needed at the site, since the majority of tasks require strength – for example, carrying the soil in baskets, pushing the wheelbarrow, working the pulley, or they must be able to climb up and down the burial shafts. For a definition of the different positions, see below.

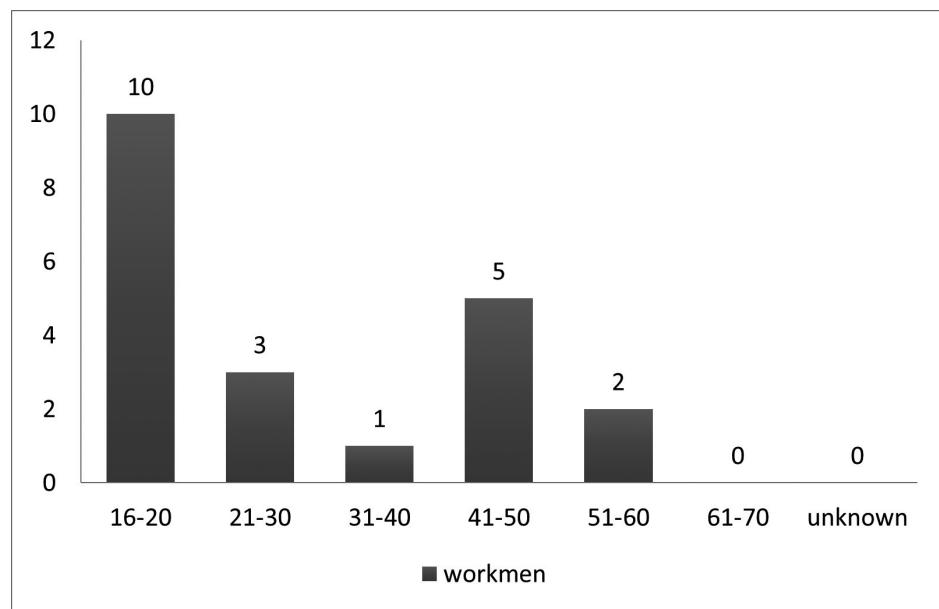


Fig. 6. Age of the 21 workmen from the semi-structured interviews. Image: Tina Beck.

The majority of the workmen – altogether 42 of the 56 who participated in the structured interviews – live in the Coptic village of Deir Rifeh (fig. 7). Concerning the interviewees, 20 workmen from Deir Rifeh participated and only one from Dorunkah. In the following, I will briefly explain why the workmen come from these four villages and why the majority of them live in Deir Rifeh.

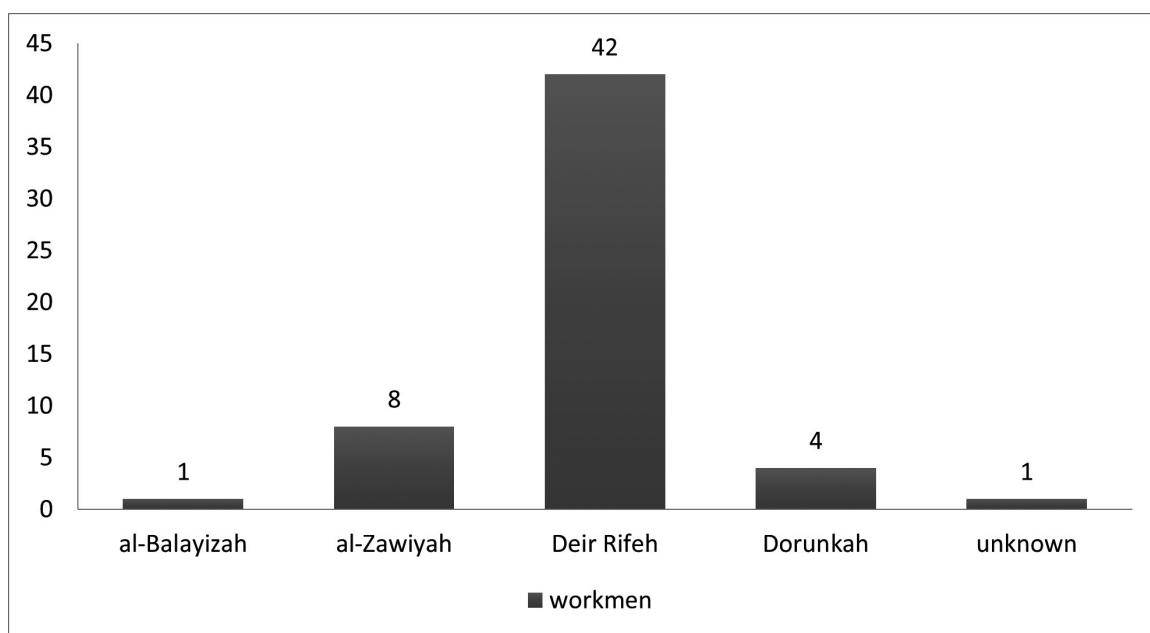


Fig. 7. The place of residence of the workmen (structured questionnaire). Image: Tina Beck.

When the Asyut Project was established and they were looking for local workmen, the local office of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities connected the Asyut Project with Akram who was at the time one of the *Ghafirs* working at the ancient necropolis at Deir Rifeh. Since he was not able to work as a *Ghafir* and for the Asyut Project at

the same time, his brother, George, was introduced to the project directors, Kahl, El-Khadragy, and Verhoeven. As George has been responsible for recruiting workmen, most of them come from his home village of Deir Rifeh. Based on this information we decided to create a family tree of George's family and found that of the 42 workmen from Deir Rifeh, only 14 are related to him. During his interview, George explained how he chose the men for the archaeological fieldwork. He focused more on each person's abilities and social situation and not on his personal relationship with them. He looked for a work group that has a balance of strength, diligence, knowledge, experience, and reliability. He also emphasised that the men he chose are used to working together as they usually worked on each other's farmland or on construction sites (Beck 2016: 41–42). The workmen from al-Balayizah, al-Zawiyah and Dorunkah, on the other hand, have familial or cordial relationships with the *Ghafirs* at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi and are Muslims. The composition of the team of workmen is thus not coincidental and involves some negotiations between George and the *Ghafirs* at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi before works starts, since only George knows the number of workmen who will be needed and the kind of work that will be done during the season. Unfortunately, it remains unknown how and when these negotiations take place as well as how the number of men coming through the *Ghafirs* is decided compared to those from Deir Rifeh. The *Qufti* Ahmed Atitou, who is in charge of supervising the workmen at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, set up each working team together with George. The collaboration between George, the *Ghafirs* and Ahmed Atitou before the season begins ensures not only a smooth start to the fieldwork each year but also balanced and well-functioning teams.

### ***Working with the Asyut Project: The perspectives of the local workmen***

In this section, the distribution of working groups will be reflected upon with the help of the interviews, alongside the question of whether there is a hierarchy between the different positions at the site. To begin, I explain the different positions:

- a) Working within an archaeological trench: The workmen who work directly with at least two archaeologists use tools such as shovels, hoes, and trowels. In this position, the workmen and the archaeologists work side-by-side, discussing how to proceed and, as a result, uncover finds and stratigraphical information. The excavated soil is carried in baskets or pushed in wheelbarrows to the sieve by several workmen, where one workman sieves the soil and sorts out further finds.
- b) Working with the architects: One workman usually accompanies the architect to assist him or her setting up the total station and the prism.
- c) Working with the ceramicists: Up to three workmen help with sorting and washing the pottery finds.
- d) Water carriers: Three to four workmen are responsible for bringing water to the site three times a day. This water is used for drinking, cooking tea, and washing the pottery.

Earlier, the archaeologists of the Asyut Project assumed that the workmen consider working with shovels, hoes, and trowels as the most important and prestigious work, because those workmen have a greater responsibility. Interestingly, the interviews showed that the workmen did not classify the different positions in the same way as the scholars. The interviews with Antonius, Victor, and Girgis (who are all 50 years or older) showed that they are proud to work in direct contact with the scholars (Beck 2016: 35–37, 44, 45, 48). They talked in detail about their importance for the fieldwork and that they are reliable and careful. However, if a job exceeds their physical ability – for example, if their team is cleaning a deep or narrow shaft – they will do other tasks (Beck 2016: 48). The distribution of positions on site is not bound to seniority; rather, it depends on the specific conditions at the site and the abilities of each workman, including their experiences with the archaeological work and their physical conditions (Beck 2016: 46). Sometimes the workmen will ask for a different position.

Sieving the excavated soil is the second most important job in the eyes of the scholars. For the workman Magdy, it is his favourite task, since he is a student of Egyptology at the Asyut University and sieving gives him the opportunity to look at all the finds coming through the sieve. However, for some of the workmen it is the most boring job, because they are sorting the dirt and crushed stones while being quite isolated from the others. Even though

the workman Joseph has been working at the sieve to the utmost satisfaction of the archaeologists for several years, he would prefer to be employed in the archaeological trench together with his friends, whose company he enjoys and which misses while at the sieve (Beck 2016: 49–50).

Altogether, this leads to the conclusion that the different positions on site do not carry prestige that may have an effect on the social life or standing of the workmen. The concept of prestigious positions for the workmen is only thought of as such by the *Qufti*, Ahmed Atitou, and the archaeologists. Since all workmen – no matter which position they have – receive the same daily salary, there is also no need for them to hierarchise the working positions in monetary terms (Beck 2016: 49–51).

Seven statements concerning the work at the Asyut Project help to represent the various perspectives of the local workmen:

“Once the fieldwork is over, I am very upset; we are all together here, and that is the best thing about it. [...] The day I am the happiest on the Gebel here is pay day. No one carries the dirt and is only because of that happy.” (Abraam)

“It is only work, just work. It is not our business; we cannot profit from it. You can see us with the barrow. We have no benefit. You just spend your day at work. Then you go home.” (Ahmed)

“We work and that is it. I know nothing, only that they brought us work and peace. The things here I don’t know anything about, but I know that they study them to be a doctor. [...] They don’t explain us, what is the subject. They say, work, and that is it.” (Makarius)

“These people come here to find gold or small statues. [...] I know nothing about this mountain. The workmen come to earn money. The foreigners come to study. Is that correct, that they come here for research? But about what?” (Jakob)

“The disadvantage with the foreigners is that we cannot understand them, and we cannot talk to them. If the Egyptians are not with us, we know nothing.” (Nuhr)

“We are here to earn our bread. It is good that the Egyptians work with us, they know how to differentiate between right or wrong. Without the Egyptians it would not work. Like Silvia, she speaks Arabic, but sometimes we don’t understand. Prof. Dr. al-Shafay then explains these words. We do our work, and then we get up and leave.” (Victor)

“We come here foremost to eat our bread. These people come here for research and to do studies. They will profit from their knowledge. That is it. They will discover things we might not know. [...] Why is this excavation not Egyptian? Now we have found a shaft and it will help NN to become a Doctor, right? Even if you mock an Egyptian doctor more, I would prefer it if the team would be only Egyptians, because it is our property and that is how I feel.” (Rimon)

The archaeological project offers a regular income for at least six weeks from August until October every year; at that time of year, there is almost no work available in the fields (Beck 2016: 54). Therefore, the work with the Asyut Project is much welcomed. Money, prices, and daily wages were regular subjects throughout the interviews (Beck 2016: 56), and, due to the revolution and the rising prices for staple foods and rates of unemployment, it was an even more emotionally charged subject (Beck 2016: 53–55). Abraam and other workmen highlighted the positive work environment, not only with their friends and relatives from their village but also with the international scholars of the Asyut Project (Beck 2016: 55). However, Abraam’s biggest motivator or happiest day of the week is Thursday, i.e. pay day. According to Ahmed and Makarius, this kind of work has no special significance in their life. It is work, and that’s that: work to earn money to support oneself and one’s family (Beck 2016: 56–58). Jacob, for example, also states that he only comes to Gebel Asyut al-gharbi for money, whereas in his opinion the scholars come for their studies. As discussed above, the different stakeholders not only have different backgrounds but also differing interests in the site. Scholars can be less driven by money but are instead motivated by their research goals and academic careers.

It is worth stressing that some of the workmen also stated that they have no information about the site, nor do they really have an understanding of the process of archaeological fieldwork, the sorting and recording of finds, or how scholars interpret their findings (Beck 2016: 56–58). Thus, the relationship between the local workmen and the scholars of the Asyut Project is mainly a capitalistic one between employer and employee. The workmen are alienated labourers with almost no access to the results of the project. This is mainly due to the structure of the fieldwork, the hierarchy within the Egyptian society, and the language barrier between international scholars and local workmen.

Some additional differences in the jobs on site are worth mentioning. Workmen who do the digging in the trenches discuss the ongoing working process and the necessary next steps with the archaeologists, whereas the workmen who push the wheelbarrows, carry the baskets, wash the pottery, and carry the water up the mountain are not included in these discussions. It is therefore not surprising that they state that they do not feel included or informed, and that, apart from the daily wage, they do not benefit from this work. This systematic alienation leads to rumours about the archaeological fieldwork. Jacob's interview, for example, shows that he has no idea why the archaeologists work at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi. He stated that archaeologists are only looking for statues or gold. It is assumptions or rumours like this that eventually attract tomb robbers (Beck 2016: 60). Jacob goes on to ask why the archaeologists come to Asyut and work on this site. Obviously, being interested in the archaeological site or having questions about the working techniques and methods not only concerns those workmen who dig or work at the sieve. In addition, the interviews showed that there is a notable social distance between the local workmen and the team of scholars – foreign and Egyptian alike. This distance is part of Egyptian society and becomes apparent through, for example, the lack of communication and information exchanged during fieldwork (Beck 2016: 69, 76). Also, the social distance is further manifested by the language barrier. Most of the workmen have no knowledge of English, and the Arabic language skills of the international scholars are in most cases not sufficient for them to explain the results and the monuments at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi in the context of ancient Egyptian history. Nuhr and Victor rightfully point out that the work with non-Arabic-speaking archaeologists is difficult and that they only understand what they are doing when the Egyptian scholars at the site translate. Lastly, the statement by Rimon reflects the issues associated with the difference in motivation between the workmen and the scholars, the alienation of labour and, interestingly, also the form of the research project as an Egyptian-German cooperation. He clearly states that he would prefer if only Egyptians did research on ancient Egyptian sites, although it remains unclear why he thinks that, since he does not elaborate further on this subject (Beck 2016: 60).

With the interviews in 2011, the scholars and workmen gained some understanding of each other's interests and opinions. At the end of the fieldwork, Ammar Abu Bakr and Kahl held a talk for all the workmen, summarising the research goals and methods of the project and giving a brief overview of the history of the ancient necropolis.

What has changed since then? Regular briefings for the workmen interested in the archaeological fieldwork are now held, and the archaeologists take more time explaining the working methods and results to their whole team instead of focussing only on those working directly with them. Unfortunately, the Asyut Project has, until now, been unable to implement other forms of community engagement with the population of Asyut or the local workmen. This is largely due to the circumstances that come with working in Asyut and on the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi. As mentioned above, the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi is military territory. One is only allowed to visit the ancient sites on the mountain with military security, and therefore the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi is neither open to (inter)national tourists nor to the population of Asyut. Another peculiarity is that the scholars of the Asyut Project are always accompanied by the local police, which means that meetings with people outside the project are neither easy nor supported by the local authorities. Before 2011, the foreigners occasionally visited the workmen – mainly in Deir Rifeh. Such occasions would usually include seeing the sights of the ancient necropolis there as well as a stopover at their church in the village. After the interviews took place, the visits to Deir Rifeh have become an integral part of the fieldwork in Asyut and constitute an important event for the foreigners and some of the workmen alike. These visits must be coordinated with the local police who always attend the meetings, while also being responsible for the protection of the foreigners. I have also witnessed a noticeable change in the work dynamic between the scholars and the workmen in the years following the interviews. More explanations are offered to everyone who is interested in order to overcome the alienation of labour; the foreign scholars try harder to learn Arabic; and, with the newly gained insight into the living conditions of the workmen, a better mutual understanding has been obtained, which makes working together easier and more comfortable for all of the different groups, as was confirmed to me by two workmen who participated in the interviews. Also, the workmen realised that if they ask about the finds and research methods, the scholars are happy to answer those questions. Although this was already the case before this study, the interviews showed that the answers given by the scholars were often short and caused more confusion than clarification (Beck 2016: 83).

The Asyut Project has produced several publications in Arabic. In 2018, the first book of the Asyut Project, which is also dedicated to 'the people of Asyut past and present' (Kahl 2007), was translated by Mohamed Abdelrahiem and published by Sohag University. With this, the Asyut Project wanted to offer not only an Arabic publication on their research but also one that is affordable for Egyptian Egyptologists. The book was presented during the

fieldwork at Gebel Asyut al-gharbi in 2018, but only a handful of workmen took one of the free books provided by the project. This might not be a result of a lack of interest, but rather based on the ability to read and/or to read a scientific book. Consequently, Kahl and I plan to continue working closely with the local workmen and focus more on their needs and expectations concerning the exchange of knowledge about the site, the fieldwork and the research results of the Asyut Project.

## Conclusion

In this paper, community engagement was introduced as a promising way not only to further decolonise Egyptology, and especially the archaeological work in Egypt, but also to broaden the horizon of scholars by including other voices, methods, and interpretations in their research. A postcolonial Egyptology is an important ideal that has not yet been reached (if it ever will be). But, if Egyptologists start to create an awareness and declare communication to be an asset of archaeological fieldwork and not a hindrance, Egyptology will eventually get closer to this goal, leaving neocolonialism and coloniality behind or at least the worst excesses thereof. The interviews with the local workmen in Asyut showed that the scholars of the Asyut Project are not the only ones interested in the site. Some of the local workmen showed an eagerness to learn more about Gebel Asyut al-gharbi. The local workmen and the foreign scholars have been working with each other for years. Their relationship has been characterised as a mainly monetary one between employer and employee that is marked by social distance between the two groups as well as the alienation of labour and a profound language barrier with non-Arabic-speaking scholars. Today, this relationship might not be as distanced as it used to be, and the foreign scholars try to address interests and questions coming from the local workmen. Nonetheless, there is still a long way to go.

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**Thomas Tews**

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# Marx ist tot, es lebe Marx! Versuch einer Skizze einer postmodernen, sozialkritischen, marxistischen Archäologie

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„Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert, es kommt drauf an, sie zu verändern.“

Karl Marx, Thesen über Feuerbach (Marx 1958 [1845]: 7)

„So viele Wörter und Sachen, über die die ‚Erben‘ („Marxisten“ oder nicht, „Marxisten“ dieser oder jener ‚Familie‘, die dieser oder jener Generation, dieser oder jener nationalen Tradition, dieser oder jener akademischen Gruppierung etc. angehören) angesichts des Eigennamens ‚Marx‘ (d. h. angesichts seines Erbes, ob es nun gespenstisch ist oder nicht, und angesichts seiner ‚Abstammung‘) eine Debatte führen würden, jedoch in derselben Sprache und im Ausgang von einer gemeinsamen Axiomatik.“

Jacques Derrida, Marx & Sons (Derrida 2004: 21)

## Abstract

In the present article, a sketch is drawn in the form of theses on how a postmodern, socially critical, Marxist archaeology could look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In accordance with postmodern traditions, the theses take shape through a collage of quotes.

## Keywords

Postmodernism, Marxism, Social Criticism

## Zusammenfassung

Im vorliegenden Artikel soll in Form von Thesen eine Skizze entworfen werden, wie eine postmoderne, sozialkritische, marxistische Archäologie im 21. Jahrhundert aussehen könnte. Dabei sollen die Thesen – in bester postmoderner Tradition – durch Collagen wörtlicher Zitate Gestalt annehmen.

## Schlagwörter

Postmodernismus, Marxismus, Sozialkritik

### **,Objektive‘ Erkenntnis von ‚Wahrheit‘ ist eine Chimäre**

Fundamentale Kritik am Begriff der ‚Wahrheit‘ übte der Philosoph Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), der dadurch zu einem Wegbereiter postmoderner philosophischer Ansätze wurde: „Wahrheit ist die Art von Irrtum, ohne welche eine bestimmte Art von lebendigen Wesen nicht leben könnte“ (Nietzsche 1956 [1885–1888]: 844). In ähnlich kritischer Weise vertrat der Archäologe Thomas Meier in seiner Heidelberger Antrittsvorlesung 2010 die Auffassung, dass „Wahrheit überhaupt nach dem epistemologischen Scheitern des Positivismus nur noch einen Platz in religiösen Systemen“ habe (Meier 2012: 15). Der US-amerikanische Historiker und Literaturwissenschaftler Hayden White (1928–2018) wies darauf hin, dass „die Historiographie das Problem [hat], Interpretationen derselben historischen Ereignisse oder desselben Abschnitts des Geschichtsverlaufs hervorzubringen, die zwar gleich legitim sind, sich aber gegenseitig ausschließen“ (White 1991: 556). Dem US-amerikanischen Philosophen Thomas Nagel zufolge ist das Streben nach ‚objektiver‘ Erkenntnis aufgrund der inhärenten Eigenperspektive letztlich zum Scheitern verurteilt: „Wie oft wir auch immer aus uns herauszutreten versuchen mögen, wird irgendetwas sich allemal noch hinter dem Objektiv befinden müssen, irgendetwas in uns selbst wird das resultierende Bild determinieren, und dies wird es dann auch sein, was uns jederzeit Grund gibt, zu zweifeln, dass wir uns der eigentlichen Realität wirklich zu nähern beginnen. [...] Dies scheint den Schluss zu erlauben, dass auch die objektivste Beschreibung, zu der wir fähig sind, noch auf einem unerforschten subjektiven Grund beruhen muss, und dass die Vorstellung, wir näherten uns mit jedem Schritt einer äußereren Realität, jeder Grundlage entbehrt, da wir unsere je eigene Perspektive niemals verlassen, sondern jeweils immer nur modifizieren können“ (Nagel 1992: 120).

Dem Einwand, dass doch die auf wissenschaftlichen Annahmen beruhenden Erfolge, beispielsweise in der Technik oder der Medizin, für die Möglichkeit ‚objektiver‘ Erkenntnis sprächen, hielt der postmoderne US-amerikanische Philosoph Richard Rorty (1931–2007) entgegen, die Erklärungen, die „etwa den auf der Annahme von Elementarteilchen beruhenden Erfolg der Technik durch die Existenz von Elementarteilchen zu erklären“ versuchten, besagten nur, „dass wir unsere erfolgreichen Handlungen in der faktisch angewandten Weise beschreiben, weil wir ebendie Theorien vertreten, die wir nun einmal vertreten“. Somit seien sie „ebenso nichtssagend wie die Erklärungen, die von früheren Generationen im Hinblick auf die Erfolge der Vergangenheit gegeben wurden“, z.B. die Erklärung der genauen Vorhersagbarkeit von Mond- und Sonnenfinsternen mit der Darstellung der astronomischen Verhältnisse im *Almagest* des Ptolemäus (Rorty 1993: 30).

Ein anderes Beispiel für Erfolge lange Zeit vor der Entstehung der heutigen ‚westlichen‘ Wissenschaft beschrieb der österreichische Philosoph Paul Feyerabend (1924–1994): „In der frühen chinesischen Medizin ist der menschliche Leib ein verehrenswerter Gegenstand, der nicht durch grobe Eingriffe entstellt werden darf. Das ist der Grund, warum Pulendiagnose und abstrakte Organtheorie anstelle einer detaillierten Anatomie entwickelt wurden“. So habe die chinesische Medizin „den menschlichen Körper analysiert, ohne ihn zu verletzen, und eine medizinische Lehre aufgebaut, von der wir heute noch lernen können“ (Feyerabend 1977: 24). Zudem wies Feyerabend darauf hin, dass auch vermeintlich ‚objektive‘ wissenschaftliche Forschungen in einem spezifischen ideologischen Rahmen erfolgen: „Wissenschaftler halten sich oft an eine spezielle Ideologie, ihre Ergebnisse sind bedingt durch die Prinzipien dieser Ideologie. Die Ideologie wird nur selten untersucht. Sie wird entweder nicht bemerkt, oder sie gilt als zweifellos richtig, oder sie ist so in die Forschung eingebaut, dass jede kritische Untersuchung zu ihrer Bestätigung führen muss“ (Feyerabend 1977: 19).

In ähnlicher Weise hatte bereits der aus Österreich-Ungarn stammende Soziologe und Philosoph Karl Mannheim (1893–1947) in seinem 1929 erschienenen Buch *Ideologie und Utopie* postuliert, dass jeder Forschung metaphysisch-ontologische Entscheidungen zugrunde liegen, die es zu erkennen und reflektieren gelten: „Dieses Sichtbarwerden einer metaphysisch-ontologischen Entscheidung, die auch dann wirkt, wenn man von ihr nichts weiß, wird nur jenen erschrecken, der sich noch immer an den Vorurteilen der vergangenen positivistischen Epoche orientiert und meint, völlig wert-, entscheidungs-, ontologie- und metaphysikfrei denken zu können. [...] Was wir also fordern, ist ein Offensein zur steten Bereitschaft, einzusehen, wie jede vollzogene Sicht stets partikular ist und worin ihre Partikularität jeweils liegt, weshalb eine bewußte Herausarbeitung der impliziten metaphysischen Voraussetzungen [...] mehr zur Bereinigung der Forschung dient, als ihr prinzipielles Leugnen und Hereinlassen bei der Hintertüre“ (Mannheim 1929: 43–45).

Für zu reflektierende Ideologien finden sich in der Archäologie zahlreiche Beispiele, z.B. in der weithin akzeptierten „Grundannahme [...], dass Befestigungen Ausdruck einer zentralisierten, hierarchisch gegliederten Gesellschaftsstruktur waren“ (Krause 2020: 13), unter der dann die Existenz von Befestigungsanlagen als Hinweis auf ‚Eliten‘ interpretiert wird: „Ein wichtiger Gesichtspunkt im Hinblick auf die Funktion von Befestigungen bestand

daher auch in der symbolischen Darstellung von Macht und Ideologie der Eliten“ (Krause 2020: 14). Genauso gut könnte man auch die Prämisse aufstellen, dass sich in Befestigungsanlagen dezentrale, herrschaftsfreie Gesellschaftsstrukturen manifestierten, wofür es tatsächlich ethnohistorische Evidenz gibt (vgl. die Befestigungen der Coast Salish [Angelbeck 2009; Angelbeck und Grier 2012]), so dass dann die Existenz von Befestigungsanlagen als Hinweis auf ‚Anarchist\*innen‘ gedeutet werden könnte. Dass dies nicht geschieht, sondern Befestigungen gemeinhin als Sitze einer an der Spitze einer hierarchischen Gesellschaft stehenden ‚Elite‘ interpretiert werden (vgl. den seit Bittel und Rieth 1951 geläufigen Terminus ‚Fürstensitz‘), könnte auf die in unserer heutigen Gesellschaft vorherrschende Ideologie zurückzuführen sein, die Hierarchie als zentrales Organisationselement erachtet, angefangen von der Hierarchie zwischen Kindern und Eltern/Erziehenden/Lehrenden über die Hierarchie zwischen Auszubildenden/Studierenden und Ausbildenden/Dozent\*innen/Professor\*innen und anschließend zwischen Arbeitnehmer\*innen und Arbeitgeber\*innen bis hin zur mit Hilfe des staatlichen Gewaltmonopols durchgesetzten Hierarchie zwischen den Bewohner\*innen eines Staatsterritoriums und der entsprechenden Staatsexekutive. So kann die in einer Gesellschaft vorherrschende Ideologie die Interpretation der Vergangenheit determinieren.

### **Geschichtswissenschaft/Archäologie konstruiert gegenwärtige Vergangenheit**

Der Philosoph Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) postulierte in seinen Überlegungen *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, dass in der Geschichtswissenschaft die Vergangenheit nicht erkannt, sondern konstruiert werde, wobei ihr ein Gegenwortsbezug immanent sei: „Vergangenes historisch artikulieren heißt nicht, es erkennen ‚wie es denn eigentlich gewesen ist‘. [...] Die Geschichte ist Gegenstand einer Konstruktion, deren Ort nicht die homogene und leere Zeit, sondern die von Jetzzeit erfüllte bildet“ (Benjamin 2010 [1935–1940]: 33; 40).

In seiner Basler Antrittsvorlesung 1968 beschrieb der Althistoriker Christian Meier die Verschränktheit von Vergangenheit und Gegenwart folgendermaßen: „Es ergibt sich jedenfalls, daß unsere Gegenwart unsere Beschäftigung mit der Vergangenheit aufs stärkste beeinflußt [...]. Diese und jene beleuchten sich gegenseitig. [...] Die Relevanz der Geschichte ergibt sich daraus, daß sie es mit Vergangenheit *und* Gegenwart zu tun hat. Ihr Stoff ist die Vergangenheit, die sie kennenlernen, verstehen und auch lieben will. Der Sinn ihrer Tätigkeit aber muß weit hin darin gesucht werden, daß sie zur Bewältigung der Gegenwart beiträgt. [...] Die Geschichte ist es also diesen Studenten und künftigen Lehrern wie allen an ihr Interessierten schuldig, die Welt, soweit es geht, begreifbar zu machen und damit auch änderbar“ (Meier 1970: 198; 219).

Die Gegenwart als Fluchtpunkt der konstruierten Vergangenheit stellte auch der Archäologe Meier in seiner bereits zitierten Antrittsvorlesung heraus: „Die identitätsstiftenden Erzählungen der Archäologie entspringen also einem Wechselspiel zwischen Gesellschaft und archäologischer Wissenschaft, an deren Schnittstelle der Archäologe gleichermaßen als Wissenschaftler und Zeitgenosse steht. Seine Erzählungen greifen gesellschaftliche Diskussionen auf und wirken, wissenschaftlich transformiert und vielleicht auch geadelt, wieder auf diese Diskussionen ein, bestätigend, widerlegend, vielleicht verändernd. [...] Wissenschaft so verstanden, ist also radikal sozialisiert. Und Wissenschaft so verstanden, kann nur eine konstruktivistische Wissenschaft sein. Denn der Wissenschaftler kann sich nun nicht mehr zum absoluten Subjekt machen, zum externen Beobachter einer objektiven Wahrheit. Er ist in seine eigenen Geschichten und in die Geschichten seiner Gesellschaft verstrickt und beobachtet aus diesem Knäuel heraus die Welt, wie sie ihm in den vielfachen Biegungen und Brechungen seiner Biographie und Kultur erscheint. [...] Logisch und auch empirisch gibt es keinen Grund anzunehmen, dass unsere Welt und ihre Geschichte durch die Brille des Wissenschaftlers nicht wenigstens ebenso konstruiert ist, wie alle anderen Weltkonstruktionen, die wir beobachten. Die Verstrickung in unsere eigenen Geschichten bedingt nicht nur die Forschungsinteressen, die wir haben, und die Fragen, die wir stellen, die Perspektiven und Winkel, mit denen wir uns diesen Fragen nähern. Sie bedingt auch die Werkzeuge, die wir wählen, und die Plausibilitätsmuster, die uns überzeugen (oder eben nicht). Und sie bedingt, das folgt schon aus der Wahl der Erkenntnisinteressen und der Werkzeuge, das historische Material, das wir für unsere Untersuchung überhaupt heranziehen. [...] An welchem Material eine Frage untersucht werden kann, was als eine Quelle gilt, und vor allem wie dieses Material auszuwerten und zu interpretieren ist, steht keineswegs fest, sondern hängt von jeder Menge Zeitgeist ab. [...] Wissenschaft und mit ihr die Geschichte [...] hat es immer und vollständig mit Konstruktionen im Jetzt zu tun, mit relationalen, von uns entworfenen historischen *Wirklichkeiten* [...], die abhängig sind von unseren Fragen, Methoden und Plausibilitäten. [...] Einen Sinn bekommt Geschichte doch erst in dem Moment, wo sie uns was angeht, wo sie einen Bezug zum Jetzt bekommt. Und genau das ist – zwangsläufig – der Fall, wenn Geschichte eine Konstruktion im Jetzt ist. In der Konstruktion

von Geschichte vergewissert sich das Jetzt nicht nur seiner selbst und staffiert sich mit historisch gedachter Identität aus, sondern im Akt des Konstruierens, in der Narration von Erinnerungen über Objekte, testet das Jetzt auch seine eigenen Fragen und Plausibilitäten aneinander. Konstruktivistisch betrachtet, ist Geschichte die Reflexionsfläche der Gegenwart, wobei auch dieser Spiegel ein Konstrukt der Gegenwart ist“ (Meier 2012: 11–16).

Der bereits zitierte Historiker und Literaturwissenschaftler White beschrieb die Konstruktionsarbeit der Geschichtsforschenden folgendermaßen: „Da sie das historische Feld in verschiedener Weise aufbauen, legen sie sich implizit auf verschiedene Strategien der Erklärung, der narrativen Modellierung und der ideologischen Implikation fest, anhand deren sie seine ‚wahre Bedeutung‘ bestimmen“ (White 1991: 560).

Neben dem Aspekt der Konstruktion ist die Verbundenheit von Vergangenheit und Gegenwart zu betonen, wie sie z. B. der Soziologe Günter Dux ausführt: „Wenn die Zeit, gebunden an das, was geschieht und im Seienden dauert, aus dem Ursprung hervorgegangen ist, der das Geschehen und vorfindliche Zeitobjekt aus sich heraus gesetzt hat, dann ist sie auch in allen Erscheinungsformen identisch mit der Zeit des Ursprungs, aus dem sie hervorgegangen ist. Alle Zeit ist Ur-Zeit. Auf der Folie dieses Denkens ist die Gegenwart ebenso die gegenwärtige Vergangenheit wie die vergangene Gegenwart; die Vergangenheit ist nie wirklich vergangen“ (Dux 2017: 155–156).

Ähnlich äußert sich der französische Soziologe Didier Eribon: „Die Gegenwart, die wir erleben, ist von dem, was ihr voranging, nicht abgeschnitten, sondern bildet die natürliche Verlängerung des Gewesenen“ (Eribon 2017: 177).

Vergangene Ereignisse in eine direkte Beziehung zu gegenwärtigen zu setzen, ist ein integraler Bestandteil der Zeitkonzeption der Bewohner des Chuuk-Atolls, einer Inselgruppe Mikronesiens, wie der US-amerikanische Anthropologe Edward T. Hall (1914–2009) zu berichten wusste: „Long-past events are presented as though they have just happened, and the investigator soon learns to pinpoint unknown events in relationship to known events“ (Hall 1960: 119).

### **Aufgrund des immanenter Gegenwartsbezuges von Geschichtswissenschaft/Archäologie darf diese sozialkritisch engagiert sein**

Insbesondere in der deutschsprachigen Geschichtswissenschaft und Archäologie wirkt der Historismus, der sich zum Ziel gesetzt hat, zu „zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen“ (Ranke 1874: vii), ohne zu bewerten, nach wie vor nach. Dagegen vertrat der österreichisch-britische Philosoph Karl R. Popper (1902–1994) die Auffassung, es sei „nicht möglich, Geschichte zu schreiben, ohne Stellung zu nehmen zu den Grundproblemen der Gesellschaft, der Politik und der Sitten“ (Popper 1994: 173). In seiner bereits zitierten Antrittsvorlesung forderte der Althistoriker Meier „die Wiedereinführung des Ethischen in die Geschichtswissenschaft“ (Meier 1970: 207): „Historie wird, indem sie vom Ethischen schweigt, nicht objektiver, sondern nur einseitiger, irrelevanter, und mindestens heute macht sie sich leicht einer Komplizenschaft mit Mächtigen schuldig, die ohnehin schon kaum zu kontrollieren sind“ (Meier 1970: 209).

Auch der Archäologe Meier sah in seiner ebenfalls bereits zitierten Antrittsvorlesung eine ethische Verantwortung der Geschichtswissenschaft bzw. Archäologie für die Gesellschaft, in der sie betrieben wird: „Aus der Zeitgenossenschaft des Wissenschaftlers folgt nicht nur, dass Gültigkeitsbedingungen und Kontext seiner Forschung immer die Fragen seiner Zeit sind, sondern Zeitgenossenschaft birgt auch Verantwortung in sich, aus der der Historiker nicht entlassen werden kann. Auch dann nicht, wenn diese Verantwortung für ihn oder für die Gesellschaft unangenehm und ungefragt sein mag. [...] Denn eine in der Gesellschaft verankerte Forschung birgt immer auch gesellschaftliche Verantwortung für die Folgen dieser Forschung in sich, genauso wie unterlassene Forschungsleistung die Verantwortung für die Folgen dieser Unterlassung mit sich bringt, nicht die alleinige, aber zum mindesten eben die Mitverantwortung des Zeitgenossen, der es auf seinem Gebiet besser wissen sollte. Wer schläft, kann gerade dadurch sündigen. [...] Aus der Verantwortung, die Zeitgenossenschaft in sich birgt, folgt schließlich auch die Pflicht, sich in die Gesellschaft einzubringen. Und diese Pflicht ist mit der Unvermeidlichkeit, dass sich Forschung ohnehin an den Fragen der Gesellschaft ausrichtet, nicht abgegolten. Ich meine vielmehr die Pflicht, sich aktiv einzumischen: Der Wissenschaftler als Zeitgenosse muss die Stellungnahme zu Fragen seiner Zeit suchen, auch und gerade die unbequeme Stellungnahme, denn sie ist es, die Freiräume öffnet und neue Türen – wenn auch manchmal bei Gegenwind. Wenn wir den Schutz durch unseren Beamtenstatus und die Freiheit der Forschung, die uns das Grundgesetz zu Recht und immer noch garantiert, der Gesellschaft mit etwas vergelten können, dann damit, unbequem zu sein, Stellung zu nehmen, auch wo wir nicht gefragt sind, den Sturm auf eine Bastille anzuführen,

wo die Gedanken nicht mehr frei sind, auch wenn wir nichts anderes in der Hand halten als eine Flöte. Haben wir diesen Mut, und kämpfen wir für diese Freiheit zur Unbequemlichkeit und zur Verantwortung! Wenden wir uns über die Vergangenheit der Zukunft zu, und werden wir wesentlich!“ (Meier 2012: 25–26; 28).

Eine vergleichbare Stellungnahme liefert die ‚Rostocker Resolution‘, die von Tagungsteilnehmer\*innen des Rostocker Archäolog\*innenkongresses 1992 als Reaktion auf die rassistischen Pogrome verabschiedet wurde, die wenige Wochen vor dem Kongress in Rostock-Lichtenhagen stattgefunden hatten. Darin heißt es: „Wissenschaft findet nicht, wie es die deutsche Archäologie schmerzlich hat lernen müssen, in einem wertfreien Umfeld statt. Infolge der von Kossinna wesentlich beeinflußten, chauvinistischen und rassistischen Archäologie der Nazizeit bildete sich im westlichen Nachkriegsdeutschland eine vermeintlich wertfreie Archäologie heraus; in Ostdeutschland waren die Werte vorgegeben, sind aber mit dem Abdanken des Realsozialismus verschwunden. Die westliche hundertprozentig empirisch ausgerichtete ‚Wissenschaft‘ gibt ihre Abwehr jedes theoretischen Ansatzes als ‚kritische Haltung‘ aus, sieht aber nicht, dass Empirie genauso wenig wie andere Haltungen wertfrei ist. [...] Archäologie wirkt letzten Endes auch auf die Gesellschaft, in der sie betrieben wird, zurück. Die Chimäre einer wertfreien Wissenschaft führt zu ihrer Abschaffung. Denn wenn eine Wissenschaft, insbesondere eine Kultur- oder Geisteswissenschaft, sich absichtlich jeglicher Äußerungen von allgemeiner Relevanz enthält, so wird sie über kürzer oder länger als unnötig von der Gesellschaft und ihren Repräsentanten abgeschafft“ (Bernbeck u. a. 1993: 95).

Der slowenische Philosoph Slavoj Žižek kritisiert die Instrumentalisierung der Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus und des real existierenden Sozialismus zur Unterdrückung radikalen Engagements: „In dem Moment, in dem man auch nur minimale Anzeichen zeigt, sich in politischen Projekten zu engagieren, die ernsthaft darauf abzielen, die bestehende Ordnung zu verändern, bekommt man sogleich zur Antwort: ‚So wohlwollend das auch sein mag, es wird dennoch in einem neuen Gulag enden!‘ Die ‚Rückwendung zur Ethik‘ in der heutigen politischen Philosophie beutet schändlich die Schrecken des Gulags oder des Holocaust als ultimative Schreckgespenster aus, um uns zu erpressen, jedem ernsthaften, radikalen Engagement zu entsagen“ (Žižek 2013: 169–170).

Der bereits zitierte Soziologe Eribon erachtet Gesellschaftsanalysen als Ausgangspunkt für sozialkritisches Engagement: „Sicher bin ich mir nur, dass einzig eine immer wieder erneuerte theoretische Analyse der Herrschaftsmechanismen mit ihren unzähligen Funktionen, Registern und Dimensionen in Verbindung mit dem unverwüstlichen Willen, die Welt im Sinne einer größeren sozialen Gerechtigkeit zu verändern, uns in die Lage versetzt, den vielfältigen Kräften der Unterdrückung zu widerstehen. Nur so werden wir eine Politik schaffen können, die das Prädikat ‚demokratisch‘ tatsächlich verdient“ (Eribon 2017: 264–265).

### **Für eine sozialkritisch engagierte Geschichtswissenschaft/Archäologie haben die Ideen des Marxismus eine große Bedeutung**

Der australisch-britische marxistische Archäologe V. Gordon Childe (1892–1957) veröffentlichte 1942 in der britischen Zeitschrift *Labour Monthly* einen Aufsatz, in dem er beschrieb, worin seines Erachtens die Bedeutung der marxistisch orientierten sowjetischen Archäologie in interpretativer und didaktischer Hinsicht bestand: „The establishment of the Soviet State gave the first real opportunity [...] for the application on a large scale to prehistory of the interpretative concepts of Marxism. [...] At the same time archaeology has been popularised. [...] So a public museum [...] is not regarded primarily as a laboratory for specialists nor a gallery for connoisseurs, but as an educational institution (as in America). It is decked with models, maps and descriptive labels, and the tiresome rows of monotonously similar specimens that cumber our galleries are relegated to side cases or magazines, where experts can at leisure appreciate the inconspicuous but scientifically significant differences between them. The public cases tell a story. You may call that propaganda if you like. But the story differs from that presented in an American museum mainly in illustrating the life of the peasant as well as the landlord, of the slave as well as the citizen, and so unmasking the reality of the class conflict“ (Childe 1942: 341–342).

Dieses Interesse für soziale Beziehungen und Konflikte in Gesellschaften der Vergangenheit paarte sich bei Childe mit der Ablehnung einer universellen Teleologie menschlichen Handelns, wie der kanadische Archäologe Bruce G. Trigger (1937–2006) in seiner Monografie über Childe darlegte: „As a Marxist, however, he was committed to believing that human nature was not fixed, but that it and the rules governing society changed as society experienced fundamental alterations. Because of this, he came to view the search for universally valid laws as unacceptable teleological“ (Trigger 1980: 176).

Die Analyse der Genese von Klassengesellschaften in Verbindung mit dem Glauben an ihre Transformierbarkeit macht marxistische Theorie für jede sozialkritisch engagierte Geschichtswissenschaft/Archäologie relevant. Childe selbst zeigte sich zwar gegen Ende seines Lebens enttäuscht von der sowjetischen Archäologie, blieb aber dem Marxismus bis zuletzt treu (Trigger 1980: 177; Klejn 1997: 174–183).

Dass die Analysen von Karl Marx (1818–1883) und Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) bei einer entsprechenden Anpassung bestimmter Konzepte ihre Aktualität behalten, zeigte der bereits zu Beginn dieses Textes zitierte Philosoph Rorty in seinem Essay *Das Kommunistische Manifest 150 Jahre danach*, in dem er eine „fortschreitende Verbürgerlichung des europäischen und des nordamerikanischen Proletariats“ (Rorty 1998: 8) feststellte und daher folgenden Substitutionsvorschlag machte: „Die Unterscheidung zwischen Bourgeoisie und Proletariat mag heute so veraltet sein wie die zwischen Heiden und Christen, aber wenn man für ‚Bourgeoisie‘ den Ausdruck ‚die reichsten 20 Prozent‘ und für ‚Proletariat‘ den Ausdruck ‚die übrigen 80 Prozent‘ einsetzt, klingen die meisten Sätze des Manifests noch immer wahr“ (Rorty 1998: 20–21).

Dagegen dürfte die von Engels in seinem Werk *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats* (Engels 1962 [1884]) dargelegte evolutionistische Stufentheorie der Geschichte, die von Childe in seinem Buch *Social Evolution* (Childe 1951) übernommen wurde, in einer postmodernen marxistischen Geschichts- und Gesellschaftsanalyse keinen Platz mehr haben. Gleichermaßen gilt wohl auch für die neoevolutionistischen Modelle der amerikanischen Kulturanthropologie (Service 1962; Fried 1967).

Für die postmoderne postkoloniale Geschichtsschreibung ist eine Ablehnung der großen marxistischen Narrative bei gleichzeitiger Betonung der Bedeutung des Marx'schen Werkes charakteristisch. Letzteres artikulierte der postmoderne indische Historiker Dipesh Chakrabarty folgendermaßen: „The maxim ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his need’ runs quite contrary to the principle of ‘Equal pay for equal work,’ and this is why Marx remains [...] a relevant and fundamental critic of both capitalism and liberalism and thus central to any postcolonial postmodern project of writing history“ (Chakrabarty 1997: 267).

Im Unterschied zu vielen Marxist\*innen der Moderne hegen postmoderne Denker\*innen in der Regel nicht mehr die Hoffnung auf eine große Universallösung, die alle bestehenden gesellschaftlichen Probleme und Konflikte mit einem Male lösen werde. Als Beispiel für diese postmoderne Skepsis gegenüber den marxistischen Heilsversprechungen der Moderne, bei gleichzeitiger Feststellung des Fortbestehens innerer Widersprüche der kapitalistischen Gesellschaftsordnung sei an dieser Stelle aus dem Buch *Das postmoderne Wissen* des französischen Philosophen Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) zitiert: „Diese Logik der höheren Leistung ist ohne Zweifel in vieler Hinsicht unhaltbar, insbesondere ergibt sich ein Widerspruch im sozioökonomischen Bereich: Sie verlangt gleichzeitig weniger Arbeit (um die Produktionskosten zu senken) und mehr Arbeit (um die soziale Last der nicht-aktiven Bevölkerung zu mindern). Aber die Skepsis ist nunmehr eine solche, dass man von diesen Ungereimtheiten keinen Heilweg mehr erwartet, wie Marx es tat“ (Lyotard 1986: 15–16).

Die postmoderne Zurückweisung der traditionellen marxistischen Vorstellung, „dass nach der erfolgreichen Revolution eine nicht-antagonistische, sich selbst transparente Gesellschaft entstehen würde“, wird von Žižek geteilt. Zugleich warnt er aber vor der „Schlussfolgerung, wir müssten jeglichem Projekt einer umfassenden gesellschaftlichen Transformation entsagen und uns auf die Lösung partieller Probleme beschränken“ (Žižek 2013: 131).

Auch wenn man sich nicht mehr der Illusion einer Universallösung hingeben sollte, gerade vor dem Hintergrund des Scheiterns des realsozialistischen Experimentes von 1917–1989, das mit dem Stalinismus eines der verbrecherischsten Regime des 20. Jhs. hervorbrachte, sollte man nicht aufhören, die inneren Widersprüche unseres gesellschaftlichen und ökonomischen Systems, deren Entstehung Gegenstand von Geschichtswissenschaft und Archäologie sein kann, zu thematisieren. So ist die vor über einem Jahrhundert von der polnisch-stämmigen Marxistin Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919) gemachte Feststellung, dass „die scheinbar isolierte, selbständige Existenz der Einzelstaaten hinter ihren Staatsbarrieren [...] bei der einen und unteilbaren Weltwirtschaft nur einer der Widersprüche des Kapitalismus“ sei (Luxemburg 1972a [1906]: 6), bis heute zutreffend. Dagegen erscheint Luxemburgs Vorstellung, „dass im Sturme der revolutionären Periode [...] in wenigen Tagen und Monaten das Versäumte nachgeholt, das Ungleiche ausgeglichen, der gesamte soziale Fortschritt mit einem Ruck in Sturmschritt versetzt“ werde (Luxemburg 1972b [1906]: 153), aus postmoderner Sicht als eine realitätsferne Utopie.

Am Ende seines Buches *Gesellschaft als Urteil. Klassen, Identitäten, Wege* beschreibt Eribon m. E. sehr treffend die Aufgaben einer zeitgemäßen marxistischen Sozialkritik, zu der die Archäologie durch die Analyse der histo-

rischen Entstehungsprozesse sozialer Ungleichheit und Unterdrückung, die prinzipiell umkehr- oder zumindest in ihrem künftigen Verlauf veränderbar sind, einen wesentlichen Beitrag leisten kann: „Gewiss, ich habe keine Revolution von der Art im Sinn, wie Marx sie sich vorstellte, weder als Idee noch als Praxis. Die Formen der Unterwerfung sind vielfältig und komplex, ihre Wurzeln reichen weit zurück, und doch sind sie immer im Wandel. Es kann gut sein, dass die individuellen und kollektiven Auf- und Widerstände, die auf eine ‚Entunterwerfung‘ oder sogar auf die Befreiung und die Freiheit aus sind, nicht immer und nicht notwendig miteinander vereinbar sind. Die Geschichte ist kein großer Strom, in dem alle Bewegungen und Kämpfe schließlich zu einer allgemeinen Synthese zusammenfinden. Viel wahrscheinlicher ist doch, dass sich jede neue Stimme, die sich Gehör verschaffen möchte, gegen all die Stimmen behaupten muss, die zu einem gegebenen Zeitpunkt die Wahrnehmung der sozialen Welt konturieren. Die Divergenzen wollen oder werden die Konvergenzen, die man erreicht zu haben glaubt oder noch zu erreichen hofft, immer aufs Neue herausfordern“ (Eribon 2017: 264).

### **Eine postmoderne, sozialkritische, marxistische Geschichtswissenschaft/Archäologie beschreibt die Pluralität der Klassengesellschaft**

Im Vulgärmarxismus werden Gesellschaften oftmals auf den Antagonismus zueinander in Ausbeutungs- oder Machtbeziehungen stehender Klassen reduziert. Dass die Realität gesellschaftlicher Beziehungen komplexer als diese Metaerzählung ist, erkannte bereits Marx, wenn er beispielsweise schrieb, man dürfe „sich nur nicht die borierte Vorstellung machen, als wenn das Kleinbürgertum prinzipiell ein egoistisches Klasseninteresse durchsetzen wolle“ (Marx 1960 [1852]: 141). Ein gutes Dreivierteljahrhundert später betonte der italienische Politiker und Philosoph Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), der ein „antidogmatischer Marxist“ (Gerratana 1991: 39) war, in seinen *Gefängnisheften* die Inhomogenität von Klassen: „Die ‚Hungerleider‘ sind keine homogene Schicht und man kann bei ihrer abstrakten Identifizierung schwere Fehler begehen. Auf dem Dorf und in den kleinen städtischen Zentren gewisser ländlicher Gegenden gibt es zwei verschiedenartige Schichten von ‚Hungerleidern‘: eine ist die der ‚landwirtschaftlichen Tagelöhner‘, die andere die der kleinen Intellektuellen“ (Gramsci 1991 [1930]: 366).

Trotzdem halten sich im Marxismus hartnäckig homogenisierende Erzählungen eines simplen und geradlinigen Kampfes der Klassen. Gegen diese Art von großen Erzählungen und totalisierenden Erklärungen sind vor allem von postmodernen und postkolonialen Intellektuellen Einwände erhoben worden. So verwiesen Vertreter\*innen der postkolonialen ‚Subaltern Studies‘ darauf, „dass die Öffentlichkeit [...] längst fragmentiert sei und sich nicht durch einen Marxismus, der die vielen unterschiedlichen Unterdrückungs- und Marginalisierungserfahrungen über den einen Leisten der Klasse oder auch über die drei Leisten von Klasse, Geschlecht und Ethnizität breche, künstlich vereinigen lasse“, eine Erkenntnis, die zu einer „postmodernen Wertschätzung des Fragmentarischen in der subalternen Geschichtsschreibung“ führte (Chakrabarty 2010: 39). Als eindrückliches Beispiel sei der Aufsatz *In Defense of the Fragment* des Historikers Gyanendra Pandey (Pandey 1997), eines der Gründungsmitglieder der ‚Subaltern Studies Group‘, genannt. Chakrabarty plädierte dafür, zu lernen, „mit Heterogenitäten [zu] leben, ohne sie auf ein übergeordnetes Prinzip zu reduzieren, das Ausdruck eines bereits vorgegebenen Ganzen ist“ (Chakrabarty 2010: 80).

Dass die Entwicklungen der vergangenen Jahrzehnte viele der Annahmen der klassischen marxistischen Geschichts- und Gesellschaftsanalyse widerlegt haben, beschrieben der argentinische ‚postmarxistische‘ Theoretiker Ernesto Laclau (1935–2014) und die belgische Politikwissenschaftlerin Chantal Mouffe in der Einleitung zu ihrem Hauptwerk *Hegemonie und radikale Demokratie. Zur Dekonstruktion des Marxismus*: „In der Krise ist gegenwärtig die gesamte Konzeption des Sozialismus, die auf der ideologischen Zentralität der Arbeiterklasse, auf der Rolle der Revolution als dem begründenden Moment im Übergang von einem Gesellschaftstyp zu einem anderen sowie auf der illusorischen Erwartung eines vollkommen einheitlichen und gleichartigen kollektiven Willens, der das Moment der Politik sinnlos macht, basiert. Der plurale und mannigfaltige Charakter der zeitgenössischen sozialen Kämpfe hat endgültig die letzte Grundlage für dieses politische Imaginäre aufgelöst. Ausgestattet mit ‚universalen‘ Subjekten und begrifflich um Geschichte im Singular errichtet, hat es ‚Gesellschaft‘ als eine intelligible Struktur behauptet, die auf der Basis bestimmter Klassenpositionen intellektuell beherrscht und durch einen stiftenden Akt politischer Natur als eine rationale und transparente Ordnung wiederhergestellt werden könnte. Heute ist die Linke Zeuge des letzten Aktes der Auflösung dieses jakobinischen Imaginären“ (Laclau und Mouffe 2015: 32).

Gleichzeitig hegten Laclau und Mouffe die Hoffnung, dass „die Diskurse, die das Feld des klassischen Marxismus konstituierten, helfen, das Denken einer neuen Linken zu formen: durch Überliefern einiger ihrer Begriffe, Trans-

formieren beziehungsweise Aufgaben anderer sowie durch ein Sich-Verdünnen in jene unendliche Intertextualität emanzipatorischer Diskurse, in der die Pluralität des Sozialen Gestalt annimmt“ (Laclau und Mouffe 2015: 35).

Bei aller berechtigten postmodernen Betonung der Pluralität des Sozialen sollte jedoch die klare Ansprache gegenwärtiger und vergangener Gesellschaften als Klassengesellschaften als Ausgangspunkt sozialkritischer Analyse und transformatorischen Engagements nicht verloren gehen. Dem von manchen Soziolog\*innen vorgebrachten Zweifel an der Existenz eines Klassengegensatzes entgegnete Eribon: „Die Klassenteilung, die ich meine, wird nicht nur durch ökonomische Ungleichheiten definiert. In ihr sind noch viel tiefere Differenzierungsmechanismen am Werk, die zwischen verschiedenen Kategorien von Individuen unterscheiden, die durch sehr früh, schon in der Kindheit einsetzende Prozesse selektiert und in der sozialen Welt verteilt werden. Diese Mechanismen sind für alle erkennbar, sie sind sogar so offensichtlich, dass es mir unbegreiflich scheint, wenn gewisse ‚Soziologen‘ sie nicht nur nicht sehen, sondern sogar Ihre Existenz bezweifeln wollen“ (Eribon 2017: 182–183).

### **Eine postmoderne, sozialkritische, marxistische Geschichtswissenschaft/Archäologie ist sprachlich sensibilisiert**

In seinem Buch *Sprache ohne Herrschaft?* beschreibt der Linguist Johannes Sobetzko „die strukturelle Herrschaft durch Sprache und die subjektive Adaption dieser neuen Sprachstrukturen“ (Sobetzko 1984: 12). Dieser Zusammenhang von Sprache und Herrschaft gestaltet sich Sobetzko zufolge folgendermaßen: „Durch die Be-Herr-schung der Sprache [...] gelingt es, Menschen mehr oder weniger zu zwingen, ihre eigene Meinung aufzugeben und auf die Meinung des Sprechers einzuschwenken. Beides kann durch direkten Zwang geschehen, oder aber durch indirektere Mittel, insbesondere durch (offene) Verführung und (verdeckte) Manipulation. [...] Charakteristikum bei alledem ist, dass die Sprache ziel- und zweckgerichtet eingesetzt wird, dass mit ihr ein Effekt zu erzielen ist, dass das Medium Sprache gleich einem Instrument von dem, der die Macht hat und über das Instrument verfügt, eingesetzt wird, um einen anderen, der nicht über die Macht verfügt und das Instrument nicht beherrscht, sich gefügig zu machen. [...] Durch Sprache wird Herrschaft ausgeübt“ (Sobetzko 1984: 20).

So kann z. B. eine unkritische Verwendung des ‚Elite‘-Begriffes in der Archäologie zu einer nachträglichen Legitimierung der Hegemonie dieser ‚Eliten‘ führen, wie bereits Ulrich Veit kritisch anmerkte: „Indem Archäolog(inn)en weitgehend fiktiv bleibende ‚Eliten‘ einseitig als Garanten sozialer Ordnung und als Motoren des kulturellen Fortschritts porträtieren, tragen sie unbewusst dazu bei, den Elitebegriff zu adeln und zu entpolitisieren. Stattdessen wäre in den historischen Fächern ein ähnlich kritischer Zugang nötig, wie ihn die soziologische Elitenforschung heutigen Machteliten gegenüber einnimmt“ (Veit 2012: 129).

Ein bekannter Vertreter einer kritischen Elitesoziologie ist Michael Hartmann, der in seinen Arbeiten, z. B. in seinem Buch *Der Mythos von den Leistungseliten* (Hartmann 2002), darlegte, dass für Spitzenkarrieren noch immer die soziale Herkunft und nicht die individuelle Leistung ausschlaggebend ist. Die heutigen ‚Eliten‘ in Deutschland und Europa charakterisierte Hartmann folgendermaßen: „Die Eliten in Deutschland wie auch in den anderen Ländern sind eben keine quasi neutralen Sachwalter externer Zwänge, sie verfolgen durchaus bewusst, und das teilweise ganz massiv, eigene Interessen“ (Hartmann 2007: 16).

Der französische Soziologe Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) verwies auf die geringen Aufstiegschancen der „unteren Schichten der Bevölkerung, deren Aussichten, innerhalb von zwei Generationen in die herrschende Klasse aufzusteigen, nahezu gleich Null sind“ (Bourdieu 1981: 184). Bourdieus Terminus der ‚herrschenden Klasse‘ ist m. E. zutreffender als der euphemistische Terminus ‚Elite‘ und würde sich daher für die Klassifikationen einer postmodernen, sozialkritischen, marxistischen Archäologie anbieten. Gerade das zunehmend aus der Mode geratene Wort ‚Klasse‘ sollte als Deskriptor bewusst verwendet werden, da es eine soziale Realität der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart beschreibt, auch wenn diese von vielen negiert wird, wie bereits der französische Philosoph Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) beobachtete: „Der ‚Bourgeois‘ leugnet in der Regel, dass es Klassen gibt, die Existenz eines Proletariats schiebt er der Tätigkeit von Agitatoren in die Schuhe, bedauerlichen Zwischenfällen, Ungerechtigkeiten, die durch Einzelmaßnahmen wieder gut gemacht werden können: er behauptet die Existenz einer Interessengemeinschaft von Kapital und Arbeit; er stellt der Klassensolidarität eine größere Solidarität gegenüber, die Solidarität der Nation, in der der Arbeitnehmer und der Arbeitgeber zu einem Mitsein zusammengefügt werden, das den Konflikt beseitigt“ (Sartre 1952: 353).

## Fazit und Ausblick

Der „Willen, die Welt im Sinne einer größeren sozialen Gerechtigkeit zu verändern“ (Eribon 2017: 265) könnte zum Ausgangspunkt und zur Triebfeder einer postmodernen, sozialkritischen, marxistischen Archäologie werden. Bei diesem Unterfangen sollte man jedoch auf Gegenwind eingestellt sein: Zum einen werden die (Neo-) Positivist\*innen darauf pochen, dass Wissenschaft ‚objektiv‘ und ‚neutral‘ sein müsse (abgesehen von der in diesem Artikel postulierten Unerfüllbarkeit dieser Forderung würde sie, zu Ende gedacht, bedeuten, dass z. B. die Geschichtsschreibung die Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus oder des Stalinismus nicht mehr als Verbrechen und ihre Opfer nicht mehr als Opfer bezeichnen dürfte, sondern sich auf die anteilnahmslose Auflistung von Todesstatistiken beschränken müsste – eine Dystopie, wie der Verfasser dieses Artikels findet), und zum anderen ist bereits die Nennung von Marx oder Engels auch im zweiten Jahrhundert nach ihrem Tod immer noch in der Lage, heftige Reaktionen hervorzurufen, wie der Verfasser dieses Artikels aus eigener Erfahrung weiß. Für diese Unwegsamkeiten hat wiederum Eribon die passenden Worte gefunden, die das Schlusswort dieses Artikels bilden sollen: „Orthodox zu sein und die Orthodoxy zu verteidigen ist leicht, häretisch zu sein ungleich schwerer. Wer es versucht hat, weiß, wie verstörend und erschöpfend, ja sogar schmerhaft das Leben eines Häretikers sein kann“ (Eribon 2017: 67).

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## Pompeo in Silwan: Judeo-Christian Nationalism, Kitsch, and Empire in Ancient Jerusalem

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## Pompeo in Silwan: Judeo-Christian Nationalism, Kitsch, and Empire in Ancient Jerusalem

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### **Abstract**

Intrigued by repeated visits of Trump administration officials to the archaeological tunnels at the foot of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, I examine the extraordinary connection between American and Israeli nationalism, “Judeo-Christian values,” and Holy Land archaeology, and propose a “Pompeo premise” that equates Jewish antiquities and settlement with bedrock values of “Western civilization,” promotes a political narrative of redemption (even if accompanied by massive violence) and relegates Palestinian Muslims to an ephemeral existence. The “recovery” of a “true” Jerusalem, purified of any Islamic content, beneath the contested, chaotic surface of Palestinian and Israeli Jerusalem is delegated to archaeologists, who have for the most part accepted their task.

### **Keywords**

Ancient Jerusalem, City of David, Silwan, Judeo-Christian values, evangelicals

### **Zusammenfassung**

In Anbetracht der wiederholten Besuche von Vertreter\*innen der Trump-Administration in den archäologischen Tunneln am Fuße des Tempelbergs in Jerusalem untersuche ich die außergewöhnliche Verbindung zwischen amerikanischem und israelischem Nationalismus, „jüdisch-christlichen Werten“ und der Archäologie des Heiligen Landes. Ich nenne dies die „Pompeo-Prämisse“, die jüdische Altertümer und Siedlungen mit den Grundwerten der „westlichen Zivilisation“ gleichsetzt, ein politisches Narrativ der Erlösung fördert (auch wenn es von massiver Gewalt begleitet wird) und palästinensische Muslime in eine ephemere Existenz versetzt. Die „Wiederherstellung“ eines „wahren“, von jeglichem islamischen Inhalt gereinigten Jerusalems unter der umstrittenen, chaotischen Oberfläche des palästinensischen und israelischen Jerusalem wird an Archäolog\*innen delegiert, die diese Aufgabe größtenteils akzeptieren.

### **Schlagwörter**

Alt-Jerusalem, Davidsstadt, jüdisch-christliche Werte, Evangelikale

## Introduction

One of American Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's last acts under the Trump administration, and perhaps one of his first as an aspiring presidential candidate for the American evangelical right, was a whirlwind visit to the high-profile, settler-run antiquities site of "the City of David" in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem, in and beneath the Palestinian neighborhood of Wadi Hilweh (Silwan), less than two hundred yards away from the Temple Mount and the Al-Aqsa mosque. This dramatic act of political symbolism, which, as stated to the press, "highlighted the more than 3,000 years of Jerusalem's heritage upon which the foundations of both the US and Israel rest" (Kempinski 2020), offers a clear demonstration of a religious-political ideology that continues to reverberate in Israel and Palestine, even after the end of the Trump years. A plaque installed in the excavation tunnels by the embassy and the Commission for the Preservation of American Heritage Abroad, mere days before the end of the Trump administration, doubled down on the sentiment (fig. 1): "The spiritual bedrock of our values as a nation comes from Jerusalem. It is upon these ideals that the American Republic was founded, and the unbreakable bond between the United States and Israel was formed."

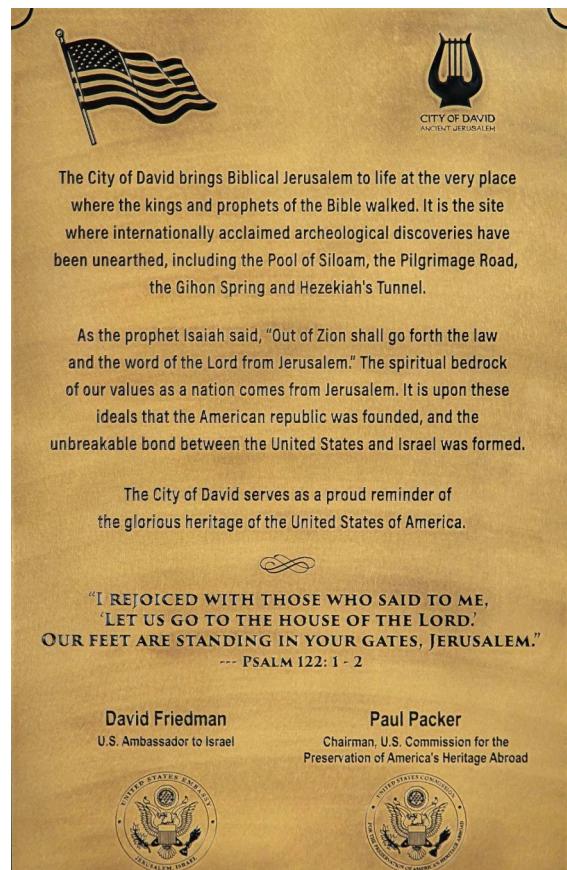


Figure 1. The plaque presented to the City of David Foundation in a tunnel beneath modern Silwan (Matty Stern, U.S. Embassy in Israel).

In dedicating the plaque, Ambassador David Friedman said: "In modern America, we are inspired by many monuments that remind us of the history of our Republic. I've often wondered, what monuments inspired our Founding Fathers. ... I suggest that those monuments are located right here, in the ancient City of Jerusalem. We have given this plaque to the City of David Foundation with the hope that it will prompt all who read it to think of the Judeo-Christian values upon which our country was founded and how those values were inspired by ancient Jerusalem and its inhabitants" (U.S. Embassy in Israel 2021).

In the following pages I would like to explore the source of the sentiments that underlie the extraordinary connection, demonstrated in these last symbolic acts of the Trump administration, between Christian nationalism, Israeli national-religious ideology, and Holy Land archaeology. I will suggest that the repeated demonstration in the “City of David” of allegiance to biblically-inspired American and Israeli exceptionalism promotes a bedrock premise of the American Christian right, a “Pompeo Premise,” that implies, (a) western (white) supremacy and the invisibility (or spectrality) of indigenous people; (b) a blanket justification of settler-colonialism; and (c) the adoption of Holy Land archaeology as an institutional feature of the civilizing project and scaffold for apocalyptic world views.

By showcasing these ideals among the antiquities of ancient Jerusalem, under the auspices of the Israeli settler right, in the heart of Palestinian Silwan, Pompeo and his envoys appropriate Jewish history as their own and assert the centrality of the biblical-apocalyptic world view to their political identity. True to their self-perception as a persecuted community, they join forces with their counterparts in the Jewish Zionist right to identify common enemies, promote a “clash of civilizations” rhetoric, and defy the dominant reality of 1400 years of Islamic presence in Jerusalem. They are aided in their quest by archaeologists, who play the role of active accomplices (albeit in a state of denial).

### **The “City of David” as a Locus of Colonial Appropriation and “Judeo-Christian” Rhetoric**

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the Israeli settler organization El’ad and their archaeological arm, the City of David Foundation, which has been awarded exclusive rights to the management and development of the archaeological remains in the heart of ancient Jerusalem, celebrated what might have been the apex of their success to date – the inauguration of the so-called Pilgrimage Road: a Roman-era stepped street, excavated in a tunnel cut several meters below the modern surface, leading from the Siloam pool to the foot of the Temple Mount (the same tunnel in which the ambassador’s plaque was later dedicated). The event, filmed and displayed on the City of David website, offers considerable insight into the aesthetic, affective, and political setting of the excavations in the heart of the nationalist politics of Netanyahu’s Israel and Trump’s America (City of David 2019).

In equal proportions a theatrical, political, and quasi-religious performance, the inauguration ceremony began with a plenary in which speeches were made and credit assigned, continued with a symbolic wall-breaking (explained below), and concluded with a tour for the most distinguished guests. In each of these three acts, the organizers successfully merged and blurred the lines between the ideological, political, and scientific actors in the pageant.

As painstakingly enumerated by the hosts of the event, the select audience included the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Friedman, the Trump-appointed ambassadors to Portugal and Denmark, GOP Senator Lindsey Graham, long-time Netanyahu and Trump billionaire donors Sheldon and Miriam Adelson, Israeli government ministers, the Director of the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Jerusalem District Archaeologist, officials of the Israel Nature and National Parks Authority, a former mayor of Jerusalem, and many other officials and local settler-friendly dignitaries. In the introductory session, conducted on the steps of an ancient pool decorated with theatrical backdrops of “ancient” masonry and “biblical” scenery, brief speeches were interspersed with video clips of archaeologists describing their work and with sentimental musical interludes based on biblical verses glorifying Jerusalem.

The speeches focused entirely on the political and affective aspects of the archaeological site, described by the host of the event – spokesman and vice-president of the City of David Foundation Doron Spielman – as “the 600 most important meters for the spirit of Israel.” In a revealing “tell” that exposes the circularity of settler logic, the *archaeological* video was edited to highlight the emotional and ideological commitment of the excavators and the sentiments evoked in them by walking in the footsteps of Temple pilgrims, whereas the political speeches insisted on the “powerful, irrefutable, undeniable evidence” imparted by “secular scientists”: a “truth” establishing both the priority of Jewish presence at the site, the direct continuity between the past and the present, and the shared biblical ethos of western democracies. Several speakers made the connection between the antiquities and the relocation of the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. (Friedman: “Were there any doubt... about the accuracy, the wisdom, the propriety of President Trump recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, I certainly think this [i.e., the archaeological evidence] lays all doubts to rest”). Most telling were the statements made by the head of El’ad, David Be’eri. In addition to appropriating the entire work of excavation (“we discovered”, “we dug”), he strikingly

framed the act of excavation and reclamation as one of historic payback for centuries of Jewish persecution in the diaspora, beginning with the Roman conquest of 70 CE, the horrors of which were said to have been witnessed by the excavated street and its drains, and ending with the Holocaust. His speech concluded with the appearance of his son, in Israel Defense Forces uniform, on stage, as the second generation of the Be'eri family to serve in one of its touted anti-terror undercover units.

The speeches were followed by a choreographed performance in an installation built by the settler group inside the subterranean excavations, beneath the houses of the Palestinian village. Here, Friedman, Sarah Netanyahu, the Adelsons, Graham, and others took turns demolishing a faux-brick wall (apparently made of sheetrock) erected across one of the excavated tunnels. This incongruous construction – red bricks have never been a feature of Jerusalem's architecture – seemed to reference Hollywood portrayals of prison or ghetto break-outs; the sledge-hammer evoked, perhaps, the picks wielded by generations of archaeologists and treasure hunters in tunnels adjacent to these, or even those of the teams of laborers who carved the rock-cut Siloam tunnels 2700 years earlier. As crude as it might appear, this set of actions is of a piece with the ceremony that preceded it, referencing the same amalgam of sentiments related to Jewish suffering and redemption and similarly striving for emotional effect.



Figure 2. June 30th 2019 tour in the El'ad tunnels beneath Silwan: Sara Netanyahu at center, flanked by Senator Lindsey Graham, Jason Greenblatt, Ambassador Friedman and his spouse, David Be'eri and IAA District Archaeologist Yuval Baruch (Haim Zach, Government Press Office).

The third act in the inaugural ceremony was an archaeological tour, recorded in a remarkable photographed tableau: staged in a large, reinforced concrete tunnel, the tableau is centered on the prime-minister's wife, in bright red, receiving instruction from IAA archaeologists and the El'ad team (fig. 2). With its interplay of light and dark, its foregrounding of engineering technology, and its focus on elite patronage, it cannot but call to mind a more modest, yet perhaps no less momentous, tableau recorded 150 years earlier, marking the inauguration of popular, crowd-funded colonialist archaeology in Palestine: In a tunnel excavated but a short distance from this one, we see the billowing white dress of a European woman touring the "galleries" excavated in 1867 by Capt. Charles Warren

along the base of the Temple Mount, illuminated by the lamp held by the gesturing archaeologist (another woman is being lowered into the shaft, at left; fig. 3–4).<sup>1</sup> “During the three years our works were open,” Warren wrote in 1871, “about four to five hundred visitors went over them.... [M]any people who went down the shafts perfectly innocent on the subject appeared to be suddenly inoculated with unlimited enthusiasm.” Unlimited enthusiasm seemed to be the order of the day for the 21st century visitors as well. “Honored to make history today with Mrs. Sara Netanyahu, [U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Senator Lindsey Graham] and other dignitaries as we opened the ancient pilgrimage road ... Bedrock (solid) proof of the Judeo-Christian heritage and values that our two countries share” tweeted Trump envoy Jason Greenblatt (@jdgreenblatt45 June 30, 2019).

There are several outstanding themes that emerge from the three-act performance of June 2019: the pathos and kitsch that anchors both the settler strategy and the Trump-Netanyahu political axis; the peculiar and repetitive use of the concept of Judeo-Christianity; and the evidence for the endurance of western imperial interests in the antiquities of Jerusalem.

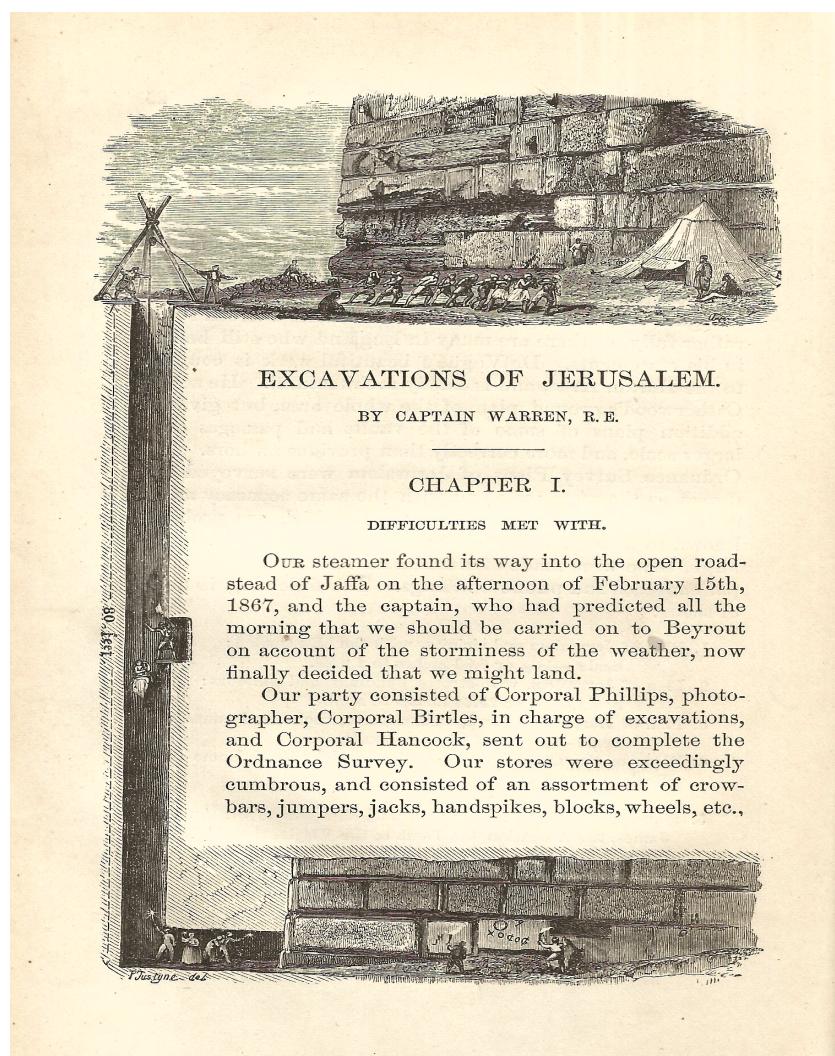


Figure 3. Charles Warren’s excavation team hosting visiting tourists in a shaft and tunnel adjacent to the Temple Mount/Haram ash-Sharif (after Wilson and Warren 1871).

<sup>1</sup> The centrality of the female figure in the tunnel group in the older tableau, I suggest, serves a twofold purpose: the first is to signal the domestication of the conquered space, after its subjugation by the pioneer excavators; the second is to highlight the superiority of Western civilization, where women are “honored as equals”. Both these motivations may well be at work in the present-day case, even if they are subordinate to the political program of the settlers and their supporters.

The deployment of national-religious pathos accompanied by kitsch – the triggering of popular sentiment through readily familiar objects, images, and sensory stimuli (“simulacra of genuine culture”, in Clement Greenberg’s [1939] formulation) – is relentless in Israeli national culture. In the ceremonies I have just described, kitsch takes various forms: the “biblical” décor serving as backdrop to the speeches, the allusions to both Jewish victimhood and to IDF military might, the sentimental musical interludes, and the demolition of the false brick wall. American kitsch, exemplified by the bombastic bronze plaque and the ambassador’s invocation of the “monuments [that] inspired our founding fathers” (resonating with the Trumpian fixation on statues and dramatic tableaus of power; Hock 2020) is also on display. Reflecting on the relations between kitsch, the political, and the past, Eli Friedlander (1997) suggests that the most troubling forms of political kitsch can be understood in terms of their presumption to the transcendent, which he terms false sublimity, or “sentimentality that does not renounce the pathos of redemption and the sense of power associated with it” (Friedlander 1997: 383). This results in political action that acquires authenticity by relating to a lost, glorious, and traumatic past. “Resolving to act in accordance with such a mythical self-consciousness thus entails the belief that a lost past can be recovered through action. This movement of recovery takes the form of repetition” (Friedlander 1997: 389); it is a repetition enacted as if in cyclical, ritual, or messianic time, but with real-world, predictably violent, results. In the “City of David,” archaeological remains and artifacts are immediately absorbed into already extant narratives and images that are easily packaged as both familiar and sublime; once the stepped street uncovered by archaeologists is seemingly identified in the writings of Flavius Josephus, once it has been populated with “prophets and kings”, Roman legionaries and Jewish victims, the task of the archaeologists, the “secular scientists” is done. They have borne witness to the presence of the transcendent that now exists not in the linear time of archaeology, but in a collapsed, cyclical time of ritual repetition and redemption.

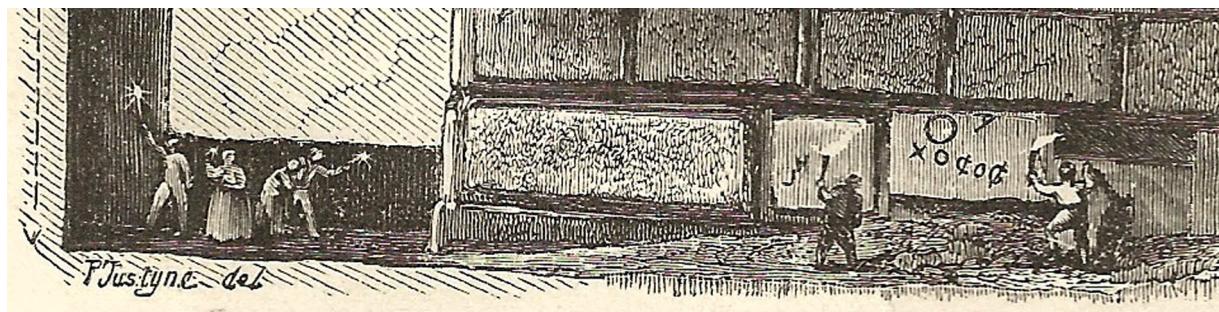


Figure 4. Detail of the tunnel in Figure 3.

As for the Judeo-Christian terminology, which crops up so frequently in the rhetoric of the American sponsors of the event: while there are grounds to ascribe the original formulation of a Judeo-Christian ethic to Protestant interest in the Hebrew Bible and the adoption of a scriptural basis for enlightenment by 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century political philosophers (Lambropoulos 1993; Nathan and Topolski 2016), the current widespread use of the term “Judeo-Christian,” particularly in American political speech, is closely aligned with post-WW II geopolitics, where it is used in an Orwellian way to define ideological allies and rivals of the moment. Mark Silk (1984) and Warren Zev Harvey (2016) show how, at first, in the 1940s and early 50s, the term was used to promote interfaith tolerance in the face of overt or covert Christian antisemitism; at the height of the Cold War and into the 1970s, it was used primarily as a counter to the atheism of the Communist bloc (this was also the context of the establishment, under the Reagan administration, of the Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad – co-sponsors of Friedman’s plaque – which was devoted to preserving Jewish heritage in Eastern Bloc countries). Notably, one of the key figures promoting the concept of Judeo-Christian heritage in Protestant circles was the famed archaeologist William F. Albright. Defending the veracity of biblical history through his scholarship, Albright found ready allies in the Israeli political and archaeological establishment of the 1950s and 60s, for whom a literal, lay (non-rabbinic) reading of the Bible was an important tool of modern nation-building (Hummel 2019). This was a marriage of interests based on widely divergent ideologies that became a model for later, less scholarly and more overtly political collaborations. Since the 1980s, and especially in recent decades, “Judeo-Christian” has been used by the American right to highlight its support of right-wing activism in Israel and its opposition to “secular liberals” and the Islamic Other. In the context of the Jerusalem tunnels, it is a most convenient euphemism, allowing Christian

nationalists to express solidarity with Jewish nationalists – and vice-versa – in their antagonism to Islam, without having to detail their widely divergent understandings of the nature of the Israel's covenant with God and of the messianic future itself (the Rapture of evangelical Christians vs. the Third Temple of the Jewish national-religious right). And while Israeli government spokespersons and Ambassador Friedman have no trouble with the term, it does seem significant that it does not appear in any El'ad texts, nor does it have an idiomatic Hebrew equivalent (Ambassador Friedman's "Judeo-Christian values" are translated in the local press as "values related to Jews and to Christians").

The political expediency of the term is underscored by its ham-fisted coupling to the archaeological setting, to the dedication of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem, and to the naturalization of American intervention across the globe. For El'ad spokesman Spielman, the branding of archaeological remains in Jerusalem as American and western heritage requires no justification or explanation: "The people of Israel have returned to Jerusalem, and the City of David has also returned as an anchor of Western civilization" (Spielman 2019). This statement resonates both with Ambassador Friedman's odd reference, cited above, to ancient Jerusalem "monuments" that "inspired" the founders of the American polity and with unapologetic 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century imperial claims by Western nations of the antiquities of the Orient as their "birthright and sacred inheritance" (James Henry Breasted, cited in Emberling 2010: 11). It also expresses a strong desire by the settler leadership to foster the perception that they are associated with "the West." In many senses, the Pompeo-El'ad paradigm can be characterized as a prime instance of "imperial durability" (Stoler 2016), where 21<sup>st</sup> century local nation-state actors cling to the legacy of 19<sup>th</sup>-century colonialism: the inevitable, scripturally and scientifically sanctioned exercise of western (white) supremacy by means of colonizing settlement. Archaeology, then, reprises its role as a prop to western historical teleology and justification for its civilizing project (Silberman 1982; Díaz-Andreu 2007).

Underpinning the settler-colonial and imperial project in Jerusalem and serving as a core precept of the Trump-Pompeo doctrine, is the persistent exclusion of the Palestinian community of Silwan, whose homes and subsurface are the backdrop to the archaeological-political performances just described. It is not merely that Palestinians were not invited to the festivities, nor even mentioned in them (except obliquely, as those who would deny Jewish continuity); they are expressly called out as the Islamic Other that is to be confronted by "the Judeo-Christian tradition." Despite making up 95% of the inhabitants of Wadi Hilweh and close to 40% of the population of greater Jerusalem, they are virtually invisible to the participants in the American-Israeli ceremonies and, by extension, to the consumers of the multiple media presentations and prospective tourists. The structural harm done to houses along the route of the tunnel excavations, including fissures and partial collapse, is, of course, ignored (Emek Shaveh 2020).

As has been the case since 1867, archaeology remains a physical and cultural threat to Palestinian Arab communities. It is used as a medium of ethnic erasure, prioritizing certain periods of history and dematerializing the rest. In terms of the Israeli project, Palestinians are place-holders (Meister 2011); Arab lives, homes, and places are to be reimaged as ruined or spectral (Leshem 2013; Mbembe 2019); something to be seen through or peeled away. This spectralization is enhanced by its contrast to the archaeological project: houses built upon ancient sites are candidates for demolition; their inhabitants are policed as trespassers; they are citizens of nowhere. They remain outside the pale of the "Judeo-Christian" messianic plan.

### **The Complicity of Archaeologists**

The progression from "archaeological" to "political" excavation in Bronze and Iron Age Jerusalem (widely known as the City of David since it was first excavated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century), has been chronicled and critiqued by numerous authors. The frequent "value-neutral" characterization of the first decades of excavations in Jerusalem has been exposed as disingenuous and steeped in assumptions of western supremacy (Greenberg 2018; Melman 2020); archaeology's more recent undisguised recruitment for the Israeli nationalist cause has been deconstructed and pilloried in academic and popular publications (e.g., Abu el-Haj 2001; Ricca 2007; Starzmann 2013; Greenberg 2014; Paz 2014; Kletter 2020). But neither this exposure nor the more direct resistance practiced by Palestinian residents and activist allies has had much of an effect on the ground or beneath it: The Israeli archaeology and heritage establishment – the Nature and National Parks Authority, the Antiquities Authority, the Heritage program in the Prime Minister's Office, the Jerusalem Municipality, and even the Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology – remains committed to the archaeological component of the Israeli settler agenda. I suspect that many of my

peers, here or abroad, are inclined to brush off any attribution of archaeologists' complicity as misguided or politically motivated; archaeologists, they might say, should be judged solely on the scientific merits of their work, not on the deplorable, but unavoidable, cherry-picking of finds by politicians or tourist organizations. Nonetheless, I suggest that in a context of structural inequality, settler violence, and enduring western "Judeo-Christian" claims to historic priority, where archaeology can either be practiced in support of the forces of oppression and destruction and under their constraints, or refused as a form of resistance to them, my colleagues in the "City of David" have chosen their side.

In fact, while politicians and settlers were most visibly cashing in on the heritage bonanza, it may reasonably be claimed that the enablers and chief architects of the scenes enacted in 2019 and 2021 were archaeologists. It was they who agreed to return to 19<sup>th</sup> century standards of tunnel-excavation in Jerusalem. It is they who, in the promotional film that preceded the tunnel ceremony, proclaimed their excitement on being awarded the opportunity to retrace the path of the ancient Jewish pilgrims. Above all, it is they who abdicated their archaeological integrity by flattening time and space to the two dimensions of the stepped stone street surface: Soil sediments above and beneath the street, the very matrix of archaeological interpretive work, barely merited attention, and by conducting their excavation in a steel and concrete tunnel sheath, they forsook its spatial context – what exists to its right or left – as well.

To illustrate the extent of this abdication, let's take a closer look at one of the central elements of the tale told by both settlers and politicians, and note how it was enabled by archaeologists' reductive, self-effacing presentation of their own evidence. In the mid-aughts, excavations were conducted at different points along the route of the stepped street, now marketed as the Pilgrims' road. The excavations were awarded brief mention in a single peer-reviewed publication (Reich et al. 2007). In that report, the excavation of a drain, climbing up the slope from a point somewhat north of the Siloam pool, is described. Said to be of "varied" dimensions, the drain is reported to have contained (at an undisclosed location) the remains of complete Roman-period cooking pots. Later excavations, which tunneled through the debris above the stepped street, uncovered several points where the paving slabs had been broken and removed, allowing access to the drain, which is, judging by a single published photograph, about 40 cm wide and perhaps as deep. Seeking a literary reference to the drains in Josephus' description of the final battle for Jerusalem, the excavators found several mentions of "caverns" or "mines", beneath and adjacent to the city, into which hundreds of rebel fighters escaped in a bid to outwait the Roman assault and re-emerge when it was completed. Josephus describes the Roman discovery of the treasure-filled caverns, "tearing up the ground" above them and discovering "upwards of two thousand dead". Setting aside the particulars of their specific excavation contexts and conflating the narrow, excavated drain with a separate system of large sewers discovered nearby, Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron established a connection between their discoveries and Josephus' "caverns," intimating – without evidence – that the slabs in their excavation are the very same as those "torn up" by the Roman soldiers. By eliminating doubt and avoiding cardinal archaeological issues such as precise measurement, sedimentation or stratification, they enabled all future narrators of the "Pilgrimage road" excavations to do the same, thus laying the groundwork for the settler tale of tragedy and redemption, "proven by archaeologists." The restored cooking pots, glibly attributed to refugees hiding out in the drains, have been placed beneath the broken slabs, and are now one of the highlights of the "Pilgrimage Road" tours, whether attended in person or online (Anonymous 2020).

### **Archaeology and the Apocalypse**

There is ample evidence that Pompeo and the Christian right viewed their political work in general, and the elevation of Donald Trump to the presidency in particular, as part of God's plan. In the words of Mike Evans, a prolific author and evangelical advisor to President Trump, "Israel has received a gift from God in an evangelical Secretary of State, an evangelical Vice President and a President who is the most pro-Israel, pro-evangelical President in American history" (RNS 2020). Pompeo himself was part of a White House bible study group that approached international affairs in the spirit of "historical evangelism" and in the belief in everyday manifestations of divine intervention (Timmons 2018; Wong 2019).

Several scholars and commentators have noted a deep connection between many of those who tried to overthrow American democracy on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and this brand of evangelical Christianity, espoused by the Trump-Pompeo administration and promoted in the tunnels of ancient Jerusalem. Thomas Edsall of the *New York Times* cites Yale sociologist Philip Gorski, who attributes to Christian nationalists a narrative about American history that postulates that “America was founded as a Christian nation; the Founding Fathers were evangelical Christians; the Nation’s laws and founding documents were indirectly based on “biblical” principles, or even directly inspired by God, Himself.” “Christian nationalists,” he continues, “use a language of blood and apocalypse. They talk about blood conquest, blood sacrifice, and blood belonging, and also about cosmic battles between good and evil. The blood talk comes from the Old Testament; the apocalyptic talk from the Book of Revelation” (Edsall 2021). These concepts apply to nationalist visions of Jerusalem as well.

Observers of evangelical involvement in the Israel conflict have pointed to the Temple Mount as the primary focus and meeting point for the Christian and Jewish-Israeli radical religious right (Gorenberg 2002; Inbari 2009). Given the violent history of the conflict around the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and al-Aqsa Mosque in the last two decades alone, it is not too much of a stretch to assume that the application of continuous pressure on the Haram by means of an ever-expanding network of “archaeological” tunnels is predicated on the belief that violence is inevitable and that a serious outbreak could be an opportunity for drastic change in the religious status quo. Violence is thus not a bug, but a feature of both the Christian right and settler movements.

The repeated visits of members of the Trump administration to the heart of ancient Jerusalem show how central the antiquities themselves are to the Christian nationalist playbook, no less than they were to the British Empire in Victorian times. But where the Victorian-era empire envisioned Jerusalem as the crucible of a proselytizing Christian civilization (Bar-Yosef 2003, 2005), contemporary Christian (and Jewish) nationalism seems to be motivated by desperation and offers (in its own terms) little beyond the prospect of conflict and apocalyptic doom.

### **Conclusion: Where Do We Go from Here?**

On his way out the State Department door, Secretary Pompeo reaffirmed that Christian Zionism and Israeli nationalism are joined at the hip, and that both are anchored in the same fundamental premise: that colonizing Jerusalem with Jewish settlers brings us closer to redemption (even if accompanied by massive violence) and that the presence of Palestinian Arabs in Palestine is ephemeral – particularly if they are Muslim. Remarkably, the repeated locus of this affirmation has been archaeological tunnels excavated in Jerusalem. The “recovery” of a “true” Jerusalem, purified of any Islamic content, beneath the contested, chaotic surface of Palestinian and Israeli Jerusalem has been delegated to archaeologists, who have for the most part accepted their task.

For many years, Christian evangelical interest and zeal in the archaeology of Jerusalem was seemingly uncontroversial, part of a multivocal chorus expressing different ways of imagining the city. Judeo-Christianity could be understood as a relatively benign expression of moral aspirations shared by Christian and Jewish Americans (and, by extension, Israelis). This fiction can now be dispelled: the evangelical program espoused by the Trump administration in Jerusalem is directly linked to a politics of moral superiority coupled with white Christian supremacy, leading to an inevitable clash of cultures. We might thank Pompeo and his envoys for making that, and the stark choices facing Jerusalem’s archaeologists, clear.

With Trump and Pompeo out of power (perhaps only temporarily), it might be tempting to think that some of the urgency has been relieved and that archaeologists might resume their scientific work under less partisan conditions. That would be dangerously naïve: the El’ad settlers have never put all their eggs in a single basket. They continue to enjoy the sponsorship of the Israeli mainstream political parties and monetary support from American Jewish and Christian conservative circles, while archaeologists build up the academic bona fides of their brand. Even as I was writing this note, an email announcing fellowships awarded by a new center for biblical archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, funded by a staunch ally of Israeli settlements and the American Trump conservatives, landed in my inbox; and as I revised it, settler and police activities instigated a new round of violence in East Jerusalem and across Israel and Palestine. These academic programs, among many others that dot the archaeological landscape, are poisoned gifts that ensure that the miseducation of young Israeli archaeologists

is not about to end and that their labor and reputation will be used to promote American and Israeli nationalist, imperial, and apocalyptic agendas. The violence that engulfs us is a tragic reminder of the real-world consequences of symbolic actions.

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## When Defense Is Not Enough: On Things, Archaeological Theory, and the Politics of Misrepresentation

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## When Defense Is Not Enough: On Things, Archaeological Theory, and the Politics of Misrepresentation

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### Abstract

This article responds to a growing tide of critique targeting select new materialist and object-oriented approaches in archaeology. Here we take a stand against this critical discourse not so much to counter actual and legitimate differences in how we conceive of archaeology and its role, but to target the exaggerations, excesses, and errors by which it increasingly is articulated and which restrict communication to the impoverishment of the field as whole. While also embracing an opportunity to clarify matters of politics and archaeological theory in light of object-oriented approaches and the material turn at large, we address a number of concerns raised by this critical discourse, which are, we contend, of relevance to all archaeologists: 1) the importance of ontology; 2) working with theory; 3) politics as first philosophy; 4) the concept of the subaltern; 5) binaries and the rhetorical desire for an enemy; and 6) the matter of misrepresentation.

### Keywords

critical discourse; weak theory; subaltern; rhetoric; hyperbole

### Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel reagiert auf eine wachsende Flut von Kritik, die sich gegen ausgewählte Ansätze des Neuen Materialismus und der Object Oriented Ontology in der Archäologie richtet. Wir beziehen hier Stellung gegen diesen kritischen Diskurs. Nicht so sehr, um tatsächlichen und legitimen Differenzen darüber zu begegnen, wie wir die Archäologie und ihre Rolle begreifen. Vielmehr nehmen wir die Übertreibungen, Exzesse und Irrtümer ins Visier, die den Diskurs zunehmend kennzeichnen, die Kommunikation einschränken und letztlich zur Verarmung des Feldes führen. Wir ergreifen dabei auch die Gelegenheit, Fragen von Politik und archäologischer Theorie im Lichte objekt-orientierter Ansätze und des *material turn* im Allgemeinen zu klären. Dazu sprechen wir eine Reihe von Punkten an, die durch diesen kritischen Diskurs aufgeworfen werden und die, wie wir meinen, für alle Archäolog\*innen von Bedeutung sind: 1) die Bedeutung der Ontologie; 2) die Arbeit mit Theorie; 3) Politik als erste Philosophie; 4) das Konzept des Subalternen; 5) Binaritäten und das rhetorische Verlangen nach einem Feind; und 6) das Problem verfälschender Darstellungen.

### Schlagwörter

kritischer Diskurs; schwache Theorie; das Subalterne; Rhetorik; rhetorische Übertreibung

## Introduction

As an academic field of study archaeology has always involved diverse groups of researchers with different and often divergent points of view. Among the many features that uphold its integrity in the midst of such heterogeneity, fair and honest representation is a key component that grounds the mutual trust that we must assume of each other's research. In this article, we air some of our concerns with a growing critical discourse that is targeting select new materialist or object-oriented approaches (e.g. object-oriented ontology and symmetrical archaeology). In our opinion, this criticism runs the risk of sacrificing sound scholarship for what appear to be self-serving political and theoretical purposes. We are specifically concerned with how a rhetoric of suspicion and political and ethical othering often occurs at the expense of reasoned argumentation. Embracing here also an opportunity for clarification on matters of politics and archaeological theorizing in light of the turn to things, we consolidate these concerns into six sections, each of which targets a key issue raised within this critical discourse: 1) the importance of ontology; 2) working with theory; 3) politics as first philosophy; 4) the concept of the subaltern; 5) binaries and the rhetorical desire for an enemy; and 6) the matter of misrepresentation.

When confronted by a situation where we find that arguments are obscured through negation and where critical commotion continues to set the agendas, one basically has three options: one can ignore it, which would be to the detriment of ideas and the communities that are enlivened by them; one can fight it directly, potentially entering into a continual exchange of wounds; or one can evaluate the grounds for these arguments with the hope that laying bare exaggerations will serve as a corrective move towards more impartial and even-handed representation. Admittedly, as will become evident, we have found it impossible to steer clear of the first two options. Due to the sheer scale and fierce rhetoric of the criticism, we have little choice but to ignore, challenge, and question. Still, it is our sincere hope that this paper eventually will contribute to visions of the third option. Though an “ideal speech situation” (Habermas 1990) probably is a futile ambition, the more modest goal of a critical dialogue characterized by more even-handed considerations and generosity is still obtainable.

## On the importance of ontology

Archaeology, as any science, must struggle to define what it regards as fundamental entities, as David Clarke observed (1968: 20); it must build into its scrutiny of them some consideration of how those entities exist. Insofar as such considerations lead thought in the direction of the ways humans, things, and natures actually exist, they fall under the rubric of ontology. In recent debates within archaeology, however, there have been attempts to turn ontology into a suspicious word which has exhausted its appeal. As an archaeologist who has profiled himself as a tireless critic of new materialist and object-oriented approaches in the field, Artur Ribeiro (e.g. 2016, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b) argues that these approaches, symmetrical archaeology included, have sacrificed epistemology and knowledge building for ontology. Here we shall examine how Ribeiro formulates this argument in one of his papers (2019a) and examine his claims that “ontology holds little value” for the field and is purportedly far removed from “the empirical record on which archaeological explanations tend to be based” (Ribeiro 2019a: 25).

While there obviously has been a new attention to ontology (Angelo 2014; Garcia-Rovira 2015; Lucas 2015; Alberti 2016; Fahlander 2017; Jones 2017; see also Preucel 2021), to argue that concern with the ways objects exist holds little value for archaeology, or is irrelevant for understanding the archaeological record, is to argue for a highly problematic disconnect between being and knowing. Their entanglement is evident in much of the epistemological and methodological debate in archaeology, for example, in the urge to bridge the gap between a static archaeological record and the dynamics of past societies (e.g. Schiffer 1976; Thomas 1979) or in the canonized disciplinary ambition of reaching “the Indian *behind* the artefact” (see Olsen et al. 2012: 7–12). The “givensness” of such static-dynamic gaps, and to think humans without things, is hard to understand outside the modern ontological opposition of things and humans, rendering interpretation “an act of reaching that which is beyond things, attending to a presumed extra-material domain devoid of objects and non-humans” (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018: 106).

While readers are indeed hard pressed to find sufficient grounds for any rejection of ontology in Ribeiro’s article (2019a), they will also struggle to find a denial of epistemology, as he so fervently contends, in what he calls the

new materialist approaches in archaeology.<sup>1</sup> Finding inspiration in actor-network-theory (ANT) and the field of science studies (e.g. Callon 1986; Latour 1987, 1992, 1993, 2005; Callon and Law 1997), early work in the turn to things was mindful of the epistemological consequences of acknowledging things as indispensable constituents of the world and, thus, as fundamentally involved also in human conducts and social trajectories. Without *a priori* assuming what capacities are exclusive to humans and what are exclusive to things and nature, such as the capacity to act, it opened the door to other epistemological possibilities (see Olsen 2010: 129–149; Olsen et al. 2012; Garcia-Rovira 2015). Epistemology, by which we mean the construction of knowledge and the criteria by which it is produced, was thereby jostled out of that narrow bandwidth of humans-among-themselves (compare Barrett 2021). The new attention brought to the *doing* of archaeology (e.g. fieldwork, museum curation, or laboratory practice), moreover, helped with realizing that archaeological knowledge is about much more than observing and analyzing processed and cleansed data. With inspiration also from phenomenology, these disciplinary practices were seen as integral to the formation of archaeological knowledge – revealing a more complex, embodied and ontologically grounded process (Garcia-Rovira 2015: 87; see e.g. Yarrow 2003; Witmore 2004, 2006, 2009; Webmoor 2005; González-Ruibal 2007; Edgeworth 2012; Olsen et al. 2012; Shanks and Webmoor 2013; Grabowski et al. 2014; Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014b). In other words, archaeologists inspired by the material turn came to better appreciate the inescapable entanglement of humans as observers with humans as ingredients in a world bristling with quadrillions of other entities – and to recognize nonhumans as mediators that play active roles in the construction of knowledge (Latour 2005: 39–40).

In what often reads as the pursuit of an “appropriate” archaeological theory, it is important to note how Ribeiro routinely foregoes more nuanced argumentation by presenting what we consider to be caricatures against which to ground his own assertions. Such critiques, however, may also manifest the inconsistencies in their own reasoning. Consider, for the sake of an example, Ribeiro’s attempt to convince the reader that the “new materialists,” due to their alleged obsession with ontology, have removed any empirical considerations from their research. Pretending to compare our work in *Archaeology: The Discipline of Things* (2012) with that of processualist and postprocessualist archaeologists who “would question whether a theory is adequate on the basis of the empirical record”, Ribeiro sets out to “analyze the ways in which ‘ontology’ is expressed and used in the new materialist literature” (2019a: 30, emphasis added). The following passage, however, contains his *full* analysis of a new materialist “theory”:

“For example, Olsen et al. state in a matter-of-fact way that archaeology ‘is the discipline of things’ (2012: 3). This statement is metaphysical in that they are making a claim concerning what archaeology is on an ontological level, not what they *believe* it is, and not what they *believe* it should be. Obviously, one cannot challenge this statement from an empirical standpoint – it is not a statement that can be falsified in the Popperian sense (Popper 2002 [1935]). So what is it that makes the statement that ‘archaeology is the discipline of things’ true? Nothing.” (Ribeiro 2019a: 30, emphasis original)

Rather than elaborating on any of the actual archaeological examples that were presented in the book, Ribeiro simply summons its title as a declarative statement and thereby claims to have revealed and analyzed the ways ontology – and theory – is expressed and used in the new materialist literature. Despite emphasizing “quality controls”, he neither finds any reason to consider what is said about this title (Olsen et al. 2012: 3–6), nor bothers to consult the rest of the book to assess whether it might provide further support. And, whatever one makes of these expectations, it is not too unreasonable to hope that any critic working with isolated statements would consider whether this expression is *empirically likely* in a sense that would not have been the case if said about, for example, history, anthropology, philosophy, sociology, or biology? Though not allowing for Popperian falsification, it is actually possible to assess the empirical likeliness of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Many commentators are right to assert that there are differences between various new materialist, object-oriented, and symmetrical approaches. Yet, from here some go on to suggest that one of us erroneously conflated these perspectives under the rubric of the new materialisms (Witmore 2014a; see Cipolla 2018, 66n2; see also Harris and Cipolla 2017: 191n74; Govier 2019). While Cipolla, for example, is correct that Witmore’s assessment “aligns more closely with the object-oriented ontology of Harman” (2018: 66n6), he is wrong to reduce new materialisms to the singular as a perspective solely, and rather formulaically, associated with Bennett and Barad, both of whom follow in the genealogical line of Deleuze and Guattari (Cipolla 2018: 52). New materialisms, as Thomas Lemke points out, “do not represent a homogeneous style of thought or a single theoretical position but encompass a plurality of different approaches and disciplinary perspectives” (2015: 490). Witmore’s 2014 paper was an attempt to reclaim the concept by arguing for a nonreductive, pluralistic materialism that begins with individual objects rather than looking past them for a purportedly deeper reality (for a fine example of this new materialism, see Bryant 2014).

One is also left to wonder what would happen if Ribeiro was to follow the Popperian standard he, quite surprisingly, flags? There are reasons to suspect that many of his statements would inevitably fall prey. Just consider one randomly chosen sentence: “Prior to the rise of the New Materialisms, most researchers in the social sciences, in general, and archaeology, in particular, subscribed to the implicit idea that understanding reality had to do partly with ontology and partly with epistemology” (Ribeiro 2019a: 27). Apart from the obvious confusion this assertion creates with respect to his fierce rejection of ontology as being of “little value”, the statement would of course prove utterly unfit for a test of falsifiability, for how can Popper’s rigid principle provide any epistemological guideline for our scholarly practices? What would have survived of archaeological statements if Popper’s neopositivist approach, where nothing can be verified only refuted, was made tenable? Adding Popper to Ribeiro’s bewildering array of presumed allies should, to be sure, cause some concern.

While Ribeiro claims his article to be “a rejection of dogmatism” (2019a: 33) it ultimately reveals itself to epitomize precisely such an overbearing declaration of opinion in its rejection of ontology. To assert that ontology and metaphysics are of little use to archaeology, means that we already know how the world is furnished and what world is common to all (Alberti 2016; Viveiros de Castro 2019; see also Harris and Robb 2012).<sup>2</sup> Such a stance would condemn archaeology to preordained taxonomies and close down the propensities and affordances of the things encountered. Actually, it is ontological considerations that provide a check against blindly deploying our objects as predefined entities. One last example will serve to illustrate this argument.

In trying to point out a logical flaw in our own reasoning, Ribeiro claims that we “admit that *there are real world differences separating living and non-living beings*. But”, he continues, “at the same time, Olsen and Witmore want archaeologists to also recognize living and non-living beings as equal. So which one is it? Are living and non-living things equal or are they not?” (2019a: 31–32, emphasis original). To pose this question Ribeiro must disregard the fact that our denial is not of differences between beings, but that those differences can be reduced to a fundamental ontological rift. Are we to assume the difference between a *Mycoplasma genitalium* and the pyramid of Khufu is *a priori* more fundamental and important than the differences between the pyramid and the Nile? As we state in the article in question (Olsen and Witmore 2015: 189), there are all kinds of differences in the world, between water and structural steel, and between “walruses [and] molds, pine trees [and] Greek *hetairai*,” but to recognize these does not in any way imply accepting living and inert as the ontological rift that subsumes all differences in being. Ribeiro claims that there is a logical flaw where none, in fact, exists. As for the question of equality, here one encounters yet another misreading, as recently reiterated by Randy McGuire (2021a), where *equally real* is translated into all beings being equal (see also Van Dyke 2021: 3).

## Working with Theory

Much of the criticism addressed above and below comes down to one’s expectations for theory, which for Ribeiro implies that it should be useful and ready to apply (see 2016: 231, 2018b: 2, 6, 2019a: 27, 29–30, 2019b: 39; Ribeiro and Wollentz 2020: 192). Accordingly, since ontology in his view is so far removed from archaeological practice, it holds little value. This expectation that theory should provide a ready-prescribed tool-box for application is common and explains the expressed frustrations when the desired manual is lacking. “All too often”, Ruth Van Dyke writes, “the archaeological reader is left wondering, ‘so just how do I operationalize these perspectives in my work?’” (2015: 6). Textbooks on archaeological theory are content to maintain this longstanding habit, as when Matthew Johnson recently claimed that “the books and articles of symmetrical archaeologists very often lack case studies” (2020: 151). While the validity of this claim hardly would pass a reality check (e.g. Witmore 2004, 2007, 2013, 2014b, 2020a; Webmoor 2005; Olsen et al. 2012; Dolwick 2012; Olsen and Witmore 2014; Farstad-voll 2019 among others; see also Van Oyen 2016; Whitridge 2005),<sup>3</sup> it is nevertheless based on such a use-value conception of theory. It also implies setting theory above, and thus apart from, things, and this very dislocation often grounds the urge for “application” (Olsen 2010: 18).

<sup>2</sup> Moreover, only by appealing to what it is that archaeologists hold in common will the possibility of any mutual ground upon which to co-construct an archaeological synthesis be found (an aspiration that we share with Ribeiro; see Olsen et al. 2012: 3–7; Rathje et al. 2013: 1–4, 396–398).

<sup>3</sup> Since it is difficult to identify who are symmetrical archaeologists, a badge also we find problematic, who to include in this list of references is a subject of debate and it is therefore kept short.

The way many critics open their accounts by taking stock of theories, rather than the object of analysis, is highly suggestive. In such instances one might well question whether without those conceptual frameworks set out in advance objects would simply remain banal, fragmented, unruly, disconnected, devoid of any integrity? On the contrary, we hold that theory and archaeological inferences should be placed at risk in light of which things and which pasts they are brought into contact with; for it is in beginning with the turf-covered embankment, the formerly buried street surface, in short, the object encountered, that we may be informed, as well-stated by Þóra Pétursdóttir (2018: 208), “of the potency” of a given theory. For us it is the object and its rapports that open the possibility of the past, not the other way around. One must be prepared to speak of a ceramic jug in-itself and a ceramic jug for us or for others with equal favor. Indeed, it would make little sense to undertake archaeological research if our objects were *a priori* entangled with the Argive assembly or festivals of Hera in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, if they already pointed beyond themselves to such erstwhile pasts. It would also be overly reductive to assume such situations could exhaust objects of their excess capacity; that is, their potential to offer something more of themselves in other contexts.

Archaeologists have long advocated for a *strong theory*, that is, conceptual abstractions formulated at a general level in order to make sense of different situations. In contrast, we speak in favor of a *weak theory* (Sedgwick 1997), theory that “comes unstuck from its own line of thought to follow the objects it encounters, or becomes undone by its attention to things that don’t just add up but take on a life of their own as problems of thought” (Stewart 2008: 72; see Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018). This may involve a series of cues or guidelines (Olsen and Witmore 2015; Witmore 2020b), which has virtue as thought aids to assist with being as creative and subtle as the situation at hand. Importantly, theories in this weak conception are themselves responsive to the circumstances and beings with which they are brought in connection. As such, “(w)hile [theories] are themselves of certain weight and figure, and inimitable and irreducible in that sense, *it matters what they matter for*; it matters what things they bump into, what networks and meshworks they become entangled in” (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018: 115, emphasis original). This means working with theory is precisely that: *work*. It involves creativity, listening, and tuning. Its ends cannot be foretold; its significance cannot be established in advance, for “its actual becoming is realized only through association with things, with the world, which adds an aspect of volatility to its potential future. Any theory is more than what it is doing right now” (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018: 115). Such labors are commonly thought of as requiring too much effort; and yet, our objects, and archaeology, demand no less. By taking this commitment seriously, we should try to eschew mimesis, for each and every archaeological situation is utterly specific and, thereby, unique. Since the value of an interpretation is to be found in its inventiveness and specificity, the true significance of the turn to things should lie in an idiosyncrasy that eludes emulation (Witmore 2020a).

Against such a formulation of *weak theory*, which trusts that a possibility will arise out of the engagement (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018; see also Edgeworth 2012), it is rather presumptuous to assert that one is “blindly following trends” (Ribeiro 2019b: 42) for this may turn out as suggestive of a true blindness. Archaeologists have long donned the colors of a secondary science, which situates the field at the lower end of a chain reaction, where thought follows on theoretical innovations happening elsewhere. It is beyond common to encounter an attitude towards divisions of labor where novelty of thought within archaeology constitutes but another instance of mimesis by derivatively importing ideas from beyond. Not only does such a highhanded attitude fail to appreciate a bricoleur approach to theoretical formulation (Olsen 2010: 12–14), which abjures *strong* theoretical templates, it also proceeds into the world with imperatives of conceptual dominance (Viveiros de Castro 2019: 301). The foregoing critical sensibilities are often guided, not so much by a hermeneutics of suspicion as by a negative semantics, which chooses to see not what is there, but what is not there *for the observers*. To maintain such an attitude is to not value archaeological theory, or the philosophy of archaeology, highly enough.

## Politics as First Philosophy

Another noticeable feature in the current archaeological debate relates to how a number of archaeologists have taken to the barricades to defend people, politics, and critical thinking from the alleged dangers posed by new materialist and object-oriented approaches (of late, see McGuire 2021a, 2021b; Van Dyke 2021). Foremost among the assaults is the accusation that a turn to things inevitably and proportionally implies a turn away from people (Cipolla 2017: 226; Van Dyke 2021: 2–3; although see Cipolla 2018). Care for things has ostensibly replaced

any more palpable concerns for human phenomena (Barrett 2021: 6); in fact, “*the truth is* that things have been progressively elevated to the category of new subalterns” (González-Ruibal 2019: 56–57, emphasis added). An alternative version of this proclamation is that humans are objectified and, in so doing, all those diabolic features ascribed to things in 20<sup>th</sup> century critical theory are acutely intensified (Pollock et al. 2014: 156–157). “If ‘things are us’”, Van Dyke reasons, “then humans must also be considered things [...] a stance that would allow and even encourage us to think of humans as commodities” (2015: 19, emphasis added).

A frequent allegation leveled against our own contemporary archaeological work – because it purportedly is concerned only with the “thingness of ruins” and with letting “things speak for themselves” – is that it is apolitical and consequently devoid of any critique; that is, any critique of capitalism (e.g. Cipolla 2018: 52; Van Dyke 2019a: 216, 2021: 2, 5). According to Sefryn Penrose, Olsen and Pétursdóttir’s work on modern ruination “willfully sidesteps both broad issues of economic change and detailed understandings of the complexity of place... and a *real critique of capitalism is missed, again*” (Penrose 2017: 186, emphasis added). Living in a world “where all archaeology is surely political”, this approach strikes Van Dyke “as an abnegation of responsibility” (2019a: 220), while for Alfredo González-Ruibal it represents an imprudent agnosticism; “good for policy, but... bad for politics” (2019: 57). Adding further nuance to this contrast, González-Ruibal is worried about how “(i)n the case of archaeology, Olsen and Pétursdóttir (2016: 42) explicitly avoid the political debate surrounding marine debris... and they prefer to focus instead on the things themselves, showing “concern for their voyages” and exploring how their “gathering and entanglement underpin alternative and less anthropocentric understandings of ‘care’” (González-Ruibal 2019: 57). Our dealings with these very things themselves wreck on the shoals of ethical irresponsibility by allegedly privileging innocent and trivial things at the expense of more urgent monstrous and morally despicable concerns on the horizon (González-Ruibal 2019: 176–178; McGuire 2021a: 5–6; Van Dyke 2021: 4–5).

One thing to be noted about this criticism is precisely what González-Ruibal aptly addresses with respect to those whom he, in a different context, regards as advocates of political pluralism; that they tend “to present themselves as *the political approach par excellence* and to occupy all the space of critique” (2019: 51). From this totalizing and self-gratifying radicalness emerges a blindness for those politics, responsibilities, and concerns that don’t comply with the seemingly compulsory rules of academic political and ethical posturing. It is precisely this blindness that prevents one from seeing how a focus on things’ unruly afterlives is crucial for understanding precarious and troubling phenomena such as marine debris and raising consciousness about its entangled causes and complexities. When González-Ruibal finds it necessary to warn “those people celebrating things” to be “careful to not forget the politics that are involved in their production and the moral and political inequalities that exist within things” (2019: 57), he makes manifest the urgent need for such considerations. While Marx rightly observed that capitalism had alienated things from their context of production, what now should give further pause for thought is how we, during the last century, also have become increasingly estranged from their disposal. Directing the focus at what becomes of the masses of things we throw away, that is, on things’ action and interaction when they escape our management and end up as marine debris, for example, is something that we find to be absolutely crucial for understanding what is happening with the world today. Here, political stock phrases provide little guidance. This understanding, moreover, relates directly to the expert knowledge archaeologists have of disposals, waste, and thingly aftermaths, which holds the potential for a prime disciplinary *response-ability* (Haraway 2013; see also Reno 2014).

What we actually find insufficient and potentially problematic in the current situation is the overdrawn notion that the *monstrous* in things is predefined through human aspiration and production (González-Ruibal 2019: 171–178). From such an anthropocentric position it becomes difficult to understand how ordinary and intentionally innocent things and practices, including synthetic clothes, plastic toys, rubber granules (for artificial football-pitch turf), solar panels, internet gaming and livestock farming become radically transformed into hyper-monstrous beings such as marine debris, greenhouse gasses, and toxic pollutants. Indeed, throughout the past, things and natures have repeatedly revealed themselves to be too unruly and unpredictable to loyally follow human programs and satisfy our intentions for them, leading to many hard-felt lessons and reminders. Probably never before is this unruliness more evident than today when things in their hyper-monstrous gatherings conspicuously overflow all of our “reserve outsides,” environments where the unwanted consequences of our actions previously were kept securely out of sight (Latour 2009: 143). Given how these things currently bombard us with involuntary memories of deficient presents, how is it possible to think of politics and disciplinary responsibility without being concerned with their *afterlives* and the unforeseen agencies that may be released (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2019; Michałowska 2020; Witmore 2021)?

It is precisely these recalcitrant things, this supermodern *heritage*, that also set the very agenda for the project that González-Ruibal targets in his criticism of Olsen and Pétursdóttir (González-Ruibal 2019: 57). Strangely he neither mentions nor discusses that this project, *Unruly Heritage*,<sup>4</sup> involves a radical political rethinking of heritage, which no longer is conceived of as a sheltered niche for the favored few, but is broadened radically to embrace the very tangible legacy of obnoxious things relentlessly and ever more rapidly accumulating everywhere (e.g. Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016; Olsen and Vinogradova 2020; Pétursdóttir 2017, 2018, 2020a, 2020b; Farstad voll 2019; Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2019; Figenschau 2020). Moreover, contrary to common assumptions in “critical” heritage studies, this project works from the premise that heritage – and the past – is not an optional, willed-for, and controlled condition but a reality inevitably and involuntarily *lived with*. Understanding the articulation and impact of this legacy is of course crucial, as seen, for example, in our studies of Soviet heritage in the Russian north and how it affects memories, everyday lives, and prospects for the future for those stuck with this persistent and pervasive past (e.g. Olsen 2013a, 2013b; Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016; Olsen and Vinogradova 2020). With this in mind, it is remarkable to read González-Ruibal’s conclusion that, “(w)hile this is a fascinating project that doubtless expands our archaeological imagination, its disinterest in the politico-economic causes of marine pollution and its consequences is worrying...” (González-Ruibal 2019: 57). Needless to say, our wording will hardly pass the social critics’ conceptual litmus test to be certified as “political.” Still, how can one purport to understand and act responsibly without being concerned with how things and natures ‘care’ for the obnoxious and dangerous, with voyages of drift materials and how they gather, where they harbor, and intrude (Pétursdóttir 2017, 2020a, 2020b)?

The criticisms addressed above turn out to be rather self-serving, for to claim any turn away from the human element can only be levied through the narrowed aperture permitted by a human-centered politics. It is by upholding the Cartesian bifurcation of the world into humans and everything else that one leaves room for the taxonomic exception that is less-than human (Back Danielsson 2017: 169).<sup>5</sup> If, as McGuire (2021a) and Van Dyke (2021) suggest, we reduce everything to an impoverished choice between two sides – humans and nonhuman – we narrow political concerns and fail to grasp the nature of past collectives or the ecological stakes at play in our own catastrophic times. Meanwhile, when politics becomes an author’s first philosophy, that author may betray an archaeological obligation to resist appropriating things over to pro forma stories that happen to fit whatever political agendas and tropes they currently may subscribe to. Such critical politics risk becoming tautological, for in identifying political actors they often sacrifice the details for the known telos.

While it is important not to ignore the significant role of political engagement for scholarly conduct, it is equally important to acknowledge the difference between scholarship and activism. Activism, to be sure, has often proved instrumental in courageously directing scholarly attention to previously neglected issues and inequities, but when it becomes a default mode of research, it may easily deprive us of our advantage in the articulation of a complex and often contradictory reality. Just as an idealized sense of matter that assumes humans to be a fundamental ingredient to be found in every situation may not prove helpful in understanding present dangers, the inability to articulate a more encompassing picture of matters of political concern actually disarms academic scholarship and renders us ineffective precisely when we are needed most.

Contrary to what our critics assume, we do not see politics as something to be abandoned, but as something in need of careful recomposition. Recomposition is not the same as beginning with common matters of concern, an issue, around which various stakeholders arise, and for which the Jackpile-Paguate Uranium Mine, an erstwhile collection of open pits, may provide an example. While members of the Laguna Pueblo, the EPA, British Petroleum, environmentalists, and others are drawn to the erstwhile mine, it should be a cause for reflection that any human representatives of these collectives probably enact less power and influence in the state of New Mexico than the mine itself, which is one of the greatest emitters of radionuclides into the Rio Grande. Indeed, once listed as a Superfund site, the partially remediated mine, which weighs tragically on those Laguna peoples, fellow creatures, and plants that continue to live with it (Witmore 2021), becomes one of the larger political actors in the state. At the same time, what has become of the mine – a more-than-gigantic archaeological object, which cannot be properly

<sup>4</sup> <https://unrulyheritage.com>.

<sup>5</sup> Of late, Van Dyke seem to have changed her stance (2019b), though grudgingly, as she remains “critical of attempts to erase distinctions between people and things” (2019b: 41). As most of the work to which she refers (which must be inferred through an oblique self-reference to her 2015 edited volume) seeks to articulate distinctions without assuming oppositions or what things otherwise may be in advance, such a repudiation suggests the sustained propagation of a straw person.

comprehended by standing “in defense of anthropocentrism” (Cipolla 2017: 227; Van Dyke 2016: 18–20; 2021) – crushes politics thin with its heft and it will continue to do so for upwards of 10,000 years. “The ontological state of exception granted to *anthrōpos* in our intellectual tradition,” Eduardo Viveiros de Castro argues, “was the ultimate justification, or cosmological precondition, of the Anthropocene” (2019: S298). What nevertheless is needed is an object-oriented politics that does not assume “the world to be the same as we think it is” (Harman 2018: 142).

### The Concept of the Subaltern

An almost compulsory element to recent critiques that relates to how one of us has transformed things into the “new subaltern” permits an opportunity to explore how hyperbole proliferates within this critical discourse. Proceeding from the insight that Olsen’s work abuses and corrupts postcolonial theory through his use of the concept “subaltern,” Cipolla elaborates on the worrying consequences of such a consideration:

“At first the message appeared deceptively similar to the postcolonial critique. Bjørnar Olsen warned us that ‘archaeologists should unite in a defense of things, a defense of those subaltern members of the collective that have been silenced and ‘othered’ by the imperialist social and humanist discourses’ (2003, 100). As we hear and read more about this critique [...], it becomes strikingly clear that it actually sits on ground very different from that of postcolonialism. As the argument goes, things are now in need of liberation. We gasp to think that the medicine bundles and bottles of this book are a new type of subaltern! [...] As we work collaboratively on reservations with *actual* colonized peoples, how are we to explain that – from our perspective – the time of liberating people has passed, and it is now time to decolonize things? [...] [T]his narrative has the potential to become quite dangerous if left unchecked or adopted uncritically.” (Cipolla 2017: 226)

Just as a modest disclaimer to what is presumed with this rhetorical posturing, pitting those who work with bottles against those who collaborate with “actual colonized people” (Harris and Cipolla 2017: 199), much of Olsen’s archaeological work for the last four decades has focused on the indigenous Sámi, where postcolonial perspectives also have been deployed to address the asymmetries in global archaeological discourse and practice (e.g. Olsen 1986, 1991, 2000, 2007, 2016, 2019; Hedman and Olsen 2009, Olsen et al. 2011; Hansen and Olsen 2014). One lesson learnt from these decades of work is that one should be careful imagining oneself as the “absent nonrepresentative who lets the oppressed speak for themselves” (Spivak 1988: 292), especially when the outcome is morally and theoretically self-serving. Another, and equally important, lesson is to be careful when thinking of the term “postcolonial,” and the discourses to which it applies, as self-evidently applicable – and appropriate – to indigenous contexts that are anything but *post-colonial*. Leaving that aside, we shall restrict ourselves to select exaggerations relating to the alleged danger posed by the use of the concept “subaltern.”

Firstly, despite the formative significance it took on through Ranajit Guha and subaltern studies, and not least Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s seminal paper (1988), the concept itself is not a post-colonial one. The term comes from post-classical Latin *subalternus*, which means “subordinate”, and whatever refinement the term has been through, it still holds this meaning of being of “inferior rank.” It came into critical theory in the 1930s through the work of Antonio Gramsci for whom the subaltern was understood from a European Marxist, not colonial, perspective referring to Italian groups suffering from the domination of the ruling class: workers, peasants or any other group that were denied access to the hegemonic power (Gramsci 1971). Secondly, and more generally, while concepts emerge and are used as direct designations of phenomena in the world, they subsequently take on secondary or indirect uses as metaphors to think by (Tilley 2002). Our language and discourses are filled with such derivative or metaphorical uses, and it would be to the abysmal impoverishment of thought to do without them. One may, of course, discuss the appropriateness of these uses. To what extent, for example, would such a suitability test hold for Cipolla’s own application of the concept “consumption” in an indigenous context (Cipolla 2017)? Indeed, were we to circumscribe consumption as an *a priori* capitalist term, under what conditions would it be appropriate to apply this consumerist concept to how people disregarding time and place think, make use of, and live with things (cf. Glassie 1999: 77)? Let’s not be surprised if, by using questions so formulated, our answers turn out as expected.

For the record, the concept of subaltern, in its one sentence appearance in Olsen’s 2003 paper, was used metaphorically to address the subordination of things and matter to discourse. As it never was a plea for equivalence or replacement, as alleged in the context of other critiques (e.g. Fowles 2016; González-Ruibal 2018: 354, 2019: 99; de Liaño and Fernández-Götz 2021: 4; Preucel 2021: 4), to claim that things are the “new subalterns” is more

than a bit exorbitant. It is also beyond challenging to comprehend the excessively elastic reasoning that would assume a rather grim conflation “of human exploitation and suffering with the being of things” (McGuire 2021a: 5). Similar concerns with things’ marginalization in social and cultural studies were raised by a number of scholars (e.g. Miller 1987; Joerges 1988; Latour 1992, 1993, 2005; Serres 1995; Löfgren 1997; Schiffer 1999; Brown 2003; Trentmann 2009), as deftly captured by Karen Barad’s observation that: “Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter” (2003: 801). In this new appraisal of things, metaphors and human analogies flourished; Alfred Gell likened things and artworks to human groups (“they come in families, lineages, tribes, whole populations”) (1998: 153), and of course, to patients and actors. The latter, and thus the capacity of agency, undoubtedly became the most popular conceptual anthropomorphism (see Olsen 2013b for a criticism) and is also frequently applied by our critics. Metaphors were also used to talk about things’ subordination, “(l)ike humble servants, they live on the margins of the social doing most of the work but never allowed to be represented as such” (Latour 2005: 73, emphasis added). Bruno Latour’s works in many ways epitomize the use of metaphors to address things’ subordination (1992, 1993), and by analogy he even conceived of ANT as part of subaltern studies.<sup>6</sup> As a call for action, the turn to things was likewise frequently narrated as an act of resistance or liberation, being described as, for example, a “battle fought against mainstream social science” (Miller 1998: 3), as an opposition “to the long dictatorship of human being in philosophy” (Harman 2002: 2), or in Olsen’s case as a plea for archaeologists to “unite in the defense of things” (2003: 100).

Archaeology, however, differed. Despite having our trade seriously affected by things’ neglect in social and cultural research, archaeologists never turned their back to them, and it was in this capacity that we were urged by Olsen to take a lead role in their repatriation. Against this background, Cipolla’s insistence that this ultra-specific and limited usage of the subaltern concept should imply that *he*, as an archaeologist deeply concerned with things, suddenly would have to conceive of his familiar archaeological record as a new type of subaltern becomes an artifact of his own excess. This exaggeration is sharply intensified with the related claim, that it would impel him to explain to *actual* colonized humans that “the time of liberating people has passed, and it is now time to decolonize things.” If this fantastic scenario was the most plausible outcome for Cipolla, then we all would have cause for worry. Were one to follow this line of thought, then it would be pertinent to ask whether the common depiction of things as agents and actors likewise has spurred among critics a massive return to the field to broadcast that the time of human agency has ended? What, the critic might ask, are the logical and linking arguments behind this oppositional obsession?

This, however, is precisely what Severin Fowles insists on having discovered by attributing the turn to things to the successes of postcoloniality and politics of representation. “As it became more and more difficult for Western scholars to make authoritative claims about other people,” he conjectures, “anthropologists began to explore the advantages of treating (non-human) objects like (quasi-human) subjects” (Fowles 2016: 12). In things, object-oriented anthropologists and archaeologists found a “safer domain”, the “perfect subject” as a substitute for silenced and oppressed humans on behalf of whom they could no longer claim representational authority (2016: 24–25). Could the success of Fowles’ suspicious hermeneutics, which has become a favorite plot in the marketplace of critical reaction (see Cipolla 2017: 225, 2018: 53; González-Ruibal 2018: 354, 2019: 57, 99; Ribeiro 2018b; McGuire 2021a: 5; Van Dyke 2021: 3), result from the fact that it has itself been “left,” to borrow Cipolla’s (2017: 226) language, “unchecked or adopted uncritically”? Could such a refrain perhaps be facilitated by the self-confirming moral justification it provides?

We shall leave this aside and also avoid investigating further whether Fowles, by subsuming the turn to things to deeper, and all-too-modernist, historical processes, actually reproduces the colonial attitude he wishes to unmask in the work of others by forcibly disregarding any scholarly rationales other than his own for embracing things (Witmore 2020b). Instead, we wish to inquire into why and how nonhuman things provide a safer and more perfect domain than the world of humans. It would be unfair, given Fowles’ wider oeuvre, to reduce this to an implicit presumption of things as passive and pliable subjects sitting in silence waiting to be embodied with whatever meaning object-oriented archaeologists or anthropologists would like to impose on them. And yet, we still are baffled by

<sup>6</sup> “The voiceless that I retrieve, which were of interest to ANT, were precisely those left entirely off the [critical] radar, which were nonhumans and ... materialities of other sorts... In that way, ANT is still part of subaltern studies. It is interested in the colonial object [in the form of nonhumans]” (Latour 2017: 421; interview in Walsh et al. 2017: 421).

the “perfect” timing of this thesis’ release. For how is it possible to regard things as ideal matters of consideration precisely at a time when their “voices” are louder than ever, when they constantly assert themselves as anything but Fowles’ perfect and ready-to-be colonized “subjects” (Farstadvoll 2019: 18)? In what way are archipelagos of sea-born debris, plastic detritus in marine animals, melting glaciers, greenhouse gases, Khrushchyovka apartment blocks, still effective sections of WW2 barbed-wire and land mines, Sámi sacred places, New York City, the Jackpile-Paguate Uranium Mine or the Alta-Kautokeino River hydro-electric dam “perfect subjects”?

If things offer no resistance to such academic onslaught how can they be trusted to play any role in articulating the conditions of existence of the human subaltern? And this returns us to Cipolla’s disavowal of fighting against the ignorance and neglect of things; why should this pose a danger to subordinate peoples past or present? Is it not rather the case that being attentive to and enhancing the status of their things can be both revealing and emancipatory as shown by numerous studies (e.g. Glassie 1975; Deetz 1977; Lightfoot 2006; Burström 2007, 2015; Welinder 2007; Andreassen et al. 2010; King 2012; Voss 2018; Figenschau 2020)? As González-Ruibal rightly notes in his discussion of logocentrism and the impossibility of a true subaltern discourse:

“What I think we can do is be less concerned with discourses on discourse and pay more attention to things. I would argue that despite its traditionally secondary role, things may be the path not to the subalterns’ speech, which is an unrealisable illusion, but to appraise and manifest their conditions of existence.” (González-Ruibal 2019: 106)

To achieve this necessitates an understanding of, and reaction against, things’ othering as marginal and secondary to discourse, which not the least has affected the things of those sidelined by the dominant discourses both locally and globally. This aspiration, by the way, aligns well with Gramsci’s ambition to study those who are subordinated alongside their silenced pasts; an ambition that, in all respects, we share in our own work at Sværholt or Teriberka, on the Argive Plain or Samothrace.

### **Against Binaries? On the Rhetorical Desire for an Enemy**

If one were to determine the fundamental rationale for the turn to things on the basis of critical assessments alone then few reasons specific to the object would prove to be as strong as the rhetorical desire for an enemy. Here, again, Cipolla writes:

“For me [...], the war on binaries becomes dangerous when it forces us to lose sight of other important issues in our work and, more importantly, in our world. If we decide that intellectual binaries are our only and biggest foe, perhaps we need to stroll back to the windows of our ivory towers and look outside. Out there, it seems that people have other problems. [...] It is possible (and I would venture to say likely) that many of our indigenous colleagues and collaborators have other issues on their mind than dualisms [...] it seems that the more we wage a war against intellectual binaries in archaeological theory, the deeper we drive the wedge between us and the rest of the world.” (Cipolla 2017: 227)

If intellectual binaries were indeed our “biggest foe,” then navigating the current situation would prove to be far less stressful as one could return to well-tried habits of dialectical thought. Here, rather than assess an argument in light of the fidelity to its object and the purposes that it serves, one may always appeal to a larger contradiction. One may ignore the explanations of any text in order to draw it back into the ring of relevance that comes with division, negation, and exclusion. Still, we might question whether or not the outcome of this critique is to reproduce these binaries by being inclined to constantly repeat that any concern with things instantly involves an equal amount of forgetting people? For only by bringing humans and everything else into opposition would one be inclined to assert that a turn towards things would “run the risk of turning away from people” (Van Dyke 2016: 7; see also Barrett 2014; Pollock et al. 2014; Van Dyke 2015, 2021; Cipolla 2017; Ion 2018; González-Ruibal 2019; McGuire 2021a, 2021b).

Moreover, what are we to make of the suggestion that by looking beyond the rooms and corridors of academic institutions we will find that binaries are foreign to indigenous concerns? With what noble certainty does one know that “our indigenous colleagues and collaborators have other issues on their mind”? What are we to tell those indigenous peoples who have fallen victim to precisely this thinking which subjected them to the hierarchical dichotomies of *Kultur-* and *Naturvölker*, primitive and developed, peoples with and without history, binaries that paved the way for their colonial subjugation, and which also led to their inclusive and encompassing worldviews

being condemned as superstition and dangerous fetishism? Should we tell the Sámi, for whom this intellectual heritage is an important part of their struggle today, that the prohibition of their religion, prosecutions and executions of their *noaidies* (shamans), and destruction of their sacred sites and drums from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards were just some incidental happenings? Or, that it had nothing to do with the fact that they granted life and kinship to far more beings than humans and distributed agency more evenhandedly?

Likewise, those content to reassert the old ivory tower critique of “vainglorious academics” detached from “real-world” problems (Van Dyke 2015: 20; Cipolla 2017: 227, 2018: 53; Harris and Cipolla 2017: 198–200; see also Babic 2019: 823), may easily dismiss pleas for careful consideration by weighing an argument in its own terms. And yet, from where does the academic author speak, when he, as a Curator of North American Archaeology at the Royal Ontario Museum, claims that we are “widening the chasm between intellectual archaeology and the real world” (Cipolla 2017: 227)? From which book, journal or publishing house do we read that we will be “forced into further intellectual exile,” and by which dominant language (Wolters 2013)? Such arguments expose their authors to the trap that comes with sophistic academic hypocrisy, for in their articles not only do they assume “real-world” exploits to be less alienating and reductive than intellectual ones, but they are also careful not to scrutinize the affordances of their own cultural and academic privilege, including their positioning within the global political economy of archaeology (Olsen 1991; although see Cipolla et al. 2019).

The critique that assumes an inevitable opposition between theorizing and “plain speech” is as old as scholarly professions. However, when the media of academic speech are judged in light of contexts for plain speech, the problem is not always with the style of arguments, rather it sometimes comes down to problems of translation. And here, while no academic is free of responsibility – as better communication is always possible – it is to archaeologists that fall the obligation to negotiate the nuances of these different speech acts in different contexts, whether with other colleagues or with those communities we serve, and this is particularly pertinent given where we find ourselves in these precarious times.

### Making Meals of Crumbs: On Misrepresentation

It may be of interest to note how this critical discourse forms, gathers, and acquires strength. It commonly, but not always, starts by raising an objection to a single statement or an isolated term; it then proceeds to include references to entire works as expressions of the same; and soon, little else can, or need, be said about the targeted research beyond compulsory declarative statements: they elevate things to the “new subaltern;” they let “things speak for themselves;” they make “everything equal,” forget people, disregard ethics and shun social responsibility, and, of course, avoid any political critique – that is, of capitalism. Leaning on such a discursive – and strategic – formation, where “groups of texts acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves” (Said 1989: 20), one generally no longer feels a need to provide measured arguments beyond the repetition of stock phrases and established taxonomies. Deep reading, the careful vetting that involves looking for that which complicates or speaks against self-confirming simplifications, becomes largely redundant. The critical discourse presses forward with its habituated repertoire of concepts – i.e. ethics, care, responsibility, critique, and politics – which are mostly taken for granted as normative givens that require no explanation among partisans. The general effect is that one rarely questions what is meant by these terms or wades too deeply into the nuances of how opinions may differ. Against this self-assured discourse, moreover, there seems little reason to reflect on how these sincere concerns with ethics and responsibility may apply with respect to one’s own criticisms, scholarship, or collegiality.

To attempt any evaluation of specific examples within this critical discourse will, no matter how sober, likely strike many colleagues as ill-tempered. Still, if such an unpalatable assessment is what provides the most effective countermeasures against critical misrepresentation, as we contend, then we are willing to take the risk. Thus, we start with a recent article on social memory by Van Dyke (2019a), for, as an extensive review of current trends and concerns under the rubric of memory in archaeology, it gives us an opportunity to assess the costs of exaggeration and critical excess. Here we learn, that “(s)elf-styled ‘symmetrical archaeologists’ have followed Latour and others to elide differences between people and things, examining how things persist in the world without human knowledge or intervention (e.g. Olsen 2010, 2013a; Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014)” (Van Dyke 2019a: 216). It may be too much to ask for further elaboration on the notion of “self-styled,” or to exhibit where our colleague

and collaborator Pétursdóttir has presented herself as a “symmetrical archaeologist,” self-styled or not (see also McGuire 2021a: 3, 2021b: 24).<sup>7</sup> We can positively attest that this assertion is without grounds. What is more alarming is that Van Dyke, in the context of a review, finds it urgent to say *this* but absolutely nothing about the detailed discussions of memory in the works to which she refers. Any reader who actually engages with these discussions beyond the pages of this review will discover that, rather than following Latour, the research in question builds on the work of numerous scholars, and in particular Heidegger, Benjamin, Bergson, and Merleau-Ponty (e.g. Olsen 2010: chapter 6, 2013a).

To question whether such liberties perhaps are taken for the sake of a needed critical contrast requires further consideration. It is, therefore, equally bewildering that Van Dyke proceeds by including the following off-topic and distorted paragraph:

“Olsen and Pétursdóttir find a romanticized beauty in persistent, decaying, quasi-abandoned places such as the Soviet town of Pyramiden (abandoned in 1998), or Eyri, an Icelandic herring cannery (abandoned in 1952). They use photography and archaeological methods to lay bare the artificial divide between archaeologically acceptable, temporally distant pasts and the detritus of industrialization and capitalism.” (Van Dyke 2019a: 216)

Eyri was not a herring cannery. If such trivialities are superfluous to the critics’ ambitions to achieve “detailed understandings of the complexity of place” (Penrose 2017: 186), then it is because hyperbole demands some leeway. One-sided positions retain more flexibility when they come with fewer references, which is perhaps understandable since Pyramiden was studied with Andreassen and Bjerck (Andreassen et al. 2010). Inequitable synopses also gain in strength when they forego qualifying intransitives and aim for direct speech. Yet we are still curious to know where in this book, in the texts to which Van Dyke refers above, or in other relevant works do the named authors find such a romanticized beauty? In the absence of any example, one is left to attribute this ‘finding’ to Van Dyke’s own imagination (see also Van Dyke 2021: 2; McGuire 2021a: 4, 2021b: 26). And if *she* finds beauty, what would that amount to or exclude in terms of memory? We are equally curious to learn how the methods for recording Eyri and Pyramiden are *used to artificially separate* archaeologically acceptable and temporally distant pasts from industrialization and capitalism? Apart from more trivial factual details, such as that Pyramiden was communist and Soviet, one would perhaps have expected, given that Van Dyke is undertaking a review of social memory, some interest in what Olsen and his colleagues actually *did* find in their study of this site and for which the book’s very title – *Persistent Memories* – should be indicative: a wealth of material memories that speak to resistance and opposition in the workers’ apartments and how these numerous counter-memories blend with ‘wish images’ and memories of living, coping, and making homes in an alienating Soviet materiality (Andreassen et al. 2010; see also Olsen 2013a: 211–214 and below)?

With this question of relevance in mind, it is remarkable to read a third exaggeration by Van Dyke with respect to our work, though she here finally addresses the very issue of memory. Noting again a “strange disconnect between symmetrical archaeologists (e.g., Olsen 2010, Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014) and those engaged in practices of counter-memory,” she expresses worry that “symmetrical archaeologists generally stop short of mobilizing their materials for critique” (Van Dyke 2019a: 220). While here she actually provides two references, the strangeness of the choices warrants brief consideration. One of these (Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014) is an edited volume with 24 chapters authored by a diverse group of philosophers, geographers, artists, and archaeologists, including some (González-Ruibal and Moshenska) whom she, when assessed in light of tone and referencing, definitely trusts to be “engaged in practices of counter-memory” (Van Dyke 2019a: 220).<sup>8</sup> One way to dissolve overstatement is by providing fair contrasts, which happen to be present in the very volume Van Dyke claims to be otherwise; more specifically, this also includes the chapter authored by us (Olsen and Witmore 2014) and the introduction (Petursdóttir and Olsen 2014a: 8–13). We may call attention to further affirmative contrasts in the other cited work, the book by Olsen (2010: see e.g. chapter 8), and in numerous other works where counter-memories are crucial in discussion of ruins and discarded pasts (e.g. Andreassen et al. 2010, Olsen 2013a, 2013b; Pétursdóttir and Olsen

<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that Pétursdóttir never has described her work as part of a “symmetrical archaeology” and even has criticized it (e.g. 2012: 56), McGuire still lists her as a “principle advocate” of precisely that (McGuire 2021a, 3). We should again assert that new materialist and object-oriented approaches are more than what – rather one-dimensionally – is depicted as symmetrical archaeology.

<sup>8</sup> Van Dyke may have confused this work with another from the same year by the same authors (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014b), actually dealing with ruin photographs and aesthetics but there also she would be searching in vain for any romanticized beauty other than her own.

2014b; Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2017; Olsen and Vinogradova 2020; Witmore 2017). These examples show Van Dyke's reprimand for "abnegating responsibility" to be based less on our "preferring to 'let things speak for themselves'" (Van Dyke 2019a: 220), and more on her own exaggerations, which leaves one to question what impels this example of critical discourse to give such leeway to misrepresentation?

An even graver example of misrepresentation is found in two recent and largely identical papers by McGuire. Here he writes concerning the book, *Persistent Memories*, that "Andreassen et al.'s (2010) study of the abandoned Soviet arctic mining town of Pyramiden provides a good example of symmetrical archaeological analysis" that neither analyses "the economic, political and social processes that created the mines and that led to their demise" nor discusses "political economy," but rather presents "a descriptive history of buildings and things and of their post-human decay" (McGuire 2021a: 4). And after repeating this in the second paper, he further adds that the authors "illustrate the study with stunning artistic photographs that aestheticize the abandonment and decay to produce ruins porn. After viewing this study, I realized that my meager skills as a photographer prevent me from ever being a Symmetrical Archaeologist... Ruins porn beguiles the observer with rotting things and human absence" (McGuire 2021b: 26). We leave the reader to decide whether or not this work qualifies as "ruin porn" (for a discussion of the concept, see Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014b), but it would have been more productive if McGuire had focused on what the images actually show: material memories of human life and thus how they may inform a central objective of *Persistent Memories*: "how people lived and coped in the Soviet town" (Andreassen et al. 2010: 24). Contrary to what McGuire asserts, the book actually deals with the processes that created the mine and the town, including the political ambitions involved; it is concerned with the people who worked here, and with how the town operated when still settled (Andreassen et al. 2010: 30–52, 73–90). It also discusses Pyramiden as a project shaped by the communist ideology that governed much of Soviet architecture and city planning (Andreassen et al. 2010: 57–68). Moreover, as mentioned above, *Persistent Memories* goes into detail on how the workers used material means to negotiate and resist this ideology in often challenging ways (Andreassen et al. 2010: 111–135). Surely, the book also deals with ruins and decay but as an issue that problematizes hegemonic conceptions of heritage and the regimes of selection and othering that surround heritage practices (Andreassen et al. 2010: 138–143). And, lastly, against McGuire's general accusation of us being anti-Marxist (2021a: 4, 2021b: 19–20, 23, 25), this is a book that leans heavily on Walter Benjamin's work, especially in the discussion of ruined Pyramiden as a "dialectical image" (Andreassen et al. 2010: 152–159), but also more generally by being inspired by his conception of ruins and images, as well as the method of montage as way of showing rather than telling (e.g. Benjamin 1999). Strangely, McGuire recalls nothing of this, which actually is what this book is about.

For some, these concerns over accuracy and appropriateness may seem out of proportion with larger urgencies, but if so, why are such statements written and why do they get published? The levity of this scholarship seems to be tolerated against a background of presumed ethical superiority where correct sentimentalities probably are believed to be so self-evident that there is little need to provide a reality check. Even González-Ruibal, rather uncharacteristically, offers such an example when he ends a warning to "those celebrating things" by stating: "Pétursdóttir (2012) asks what do things deserve, but," he counters, "there might be things that do not deserve anything—smallpox, for one" (2019: 57). Apart from the fact that even smallpox may deserve something – treatment, medical care, and extinction, for example – the truth is that the question was never posed in the way González-Ruibal here insinuates. Pétursdóttir's entire paper is actually an argument *against* the well-meaning attitude embedded in its title: "What else do things deserve?" Targeting the ambiguous tendency in new materialists' studies to humanize things ("be like us and we shall include you in your difference"), Pétursdóttir criticizes the paternalist attitude of stewardship for "what they deserve and what they want" (2012: 598). As she refers to Latour: "Things in themselves lack nothing, just as Africa did not lack whites before their arrival" (Latour 1988: 193). However, in the light of the general disavowal of her thing thinking (e.g. González-Ruibal 2019: 56–57, 99, 169, 176–177), why bother with such inconvenient details? Could it be because the exaggeration far better serves the argument?

Similar biased or invalid statements are far from uncommon (see e.g. McGuire 2021a, 2021b) and are often made as seemingly "innocent" passing comments and references. In his latest book Oliver Harris, for example, qualifies his suggestion for a posthumanist archaeology by stating that "(s)ome archaeologists have taken this" [i.e. being concerned also with non-humans] "to mean we can write about things without writing about people (e.g. Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018); that will not be an aim of this book" (Harris 2021: 6). It may seem trivial, but why did this particular paper on archaeological theory end up as an example here? Does it advocate such a position? On which page? And if not, how can one explain that it still is included?

By now, it is, arguably, unnecessary to question the impulse to judge work on grounds ultimately foreign to its object, spirit, and purpose; one need only to point out how making illusory meals of fictitious crumbs impoverishes archaeology as a whole. The following and last example conveys some further measure of this misrepresentation. In a recent paper that aptly is about ethics in the practice of archaeology, Ribeiro and Wollentz set out to defend a statement by Laurajane Smith from what they describe as “attacks from some proponents of New Materialisms” (Ribeiro and Wollentz 2020: 195). The background is that we have argued against Smith’s (2006) claim that heritage is a social construct where value and attention become rather one-sided human projections (Olsen et al. 2012: 201) and which she exemplifies by stating that, “Stonehenge, for instance, is basically a collection of rocks in a field” (Smith 2006: 3). In Ribeiro and Wollentz’s creative rewriting, our argument is turned into a distorted declaration that Stonehenge is inherently heritage independent of human reception, inviting the following “thought experiment” assumed to take this mangled argument “to its logical conclusion” (Ribeiro and Wollentz 2020:195):

“To say that heritage is inherent would inevitably mean that Stonehenge would still be “heritage” even if no humans existed. Nonetheless, a dog in a post-human world would just as gladly pee against the stones of Stonehenge as it would pee against any other stone it may come across.” (Ribeiro and Wollentz 2020: 195)

We leave the reader to contemplate the relevance of this reasoning with its less-than-grandiose imagery. For the sake of balance, here is what we actually say as a response to the full context of Smith’s statement:

“While it is indisputable that many people are concerned with the things of the past, and that many do feel a strong attachment to sites and monuments, it is less evident that this attachment is just an asymmetrical product of emotive narratives and cultural habits. Actually, it may as well be that “significant” sites evoke *their own* importance. Things—monuments, topographic features, landscapes—may stand out as significant because of their unique conspicuous qualities. Stonehenge after all *is* different from other collections of rocks in the field... (its) inherent, exposed difference has played a major role in making it unique as heritage.” (Olsen et al. 2012: 201, emphasis original)

Our entire argument, which can be read in its full length in the work quoted above, is for the difference Stonehenge makes in drawing human attention to itself; that is, the affects and engagements it affords among those humans who attend to it. Nowhere do we suggest humans and their responses to be an expendable part of that heritage equation. Just as humans are indispensable to heritage, so, too, is Stonehenge with its wealth of idiosyncrasies. Why should this be deliberately omitted from Ribeiro and Wollentz’s account, who rather narrate a perverted version to fit a dream experiment of a peeing dog? Given the experiment’s logic and the remarkable ontological flair assigned to one of our companion species in a paper that is purportedly about ethics, it is tempting to ask in turn whether the incident of a dog marking human legs would mean the end to human exceptionalism?

Leaving these assessments in question is more than an act of scholarly propriety, for any assertions as to why these exaggerations continue to proliferate would demand labor in excess of what is possible in this paper. To connect such critical discourse to vindictiveness, resentment, or an urge to convince others that one has overtaken the latest trend would be equally one-sided. While our aim in bringing these exaggerations to the reader’s attention is to make a sincere stand for what is actually being said, we also recognize how a careful evaluation of self-confirming simplifications provides a vital check on the further propagation of misrepresentation and confusion.<sup>9</sup>

## Conclusion

Skeptical of the processual tendency to import theories insensitive to archaeology’s differences and specifics and the way it undermined independent archaeological thinking, David Clarke wrote that “the price of freedom is eternal vigilance” (1973: 12, see also Clark 1972). This need for perpetual vigilance and criticism was not for the sake of the criticism itself, but for our objects, for the communities we serve, and for aspiring archaeologists. Such noble intentions, however, are not well served by what Schiffer (2000) calls “redlining”, by which he designates

<sup>9</sup> One could point out numerous examples of self-serving fabrication and erroneous argumentation in Ribeiro’s oeuvre of critical insights. Why situate ANT as the meta-ontology behind Latour’s Inquiry into Modes of Existence (Ribeiro 2019a: 28-29) when he himself situates it as one among fifteen others (Latour 2013: 63–64; also <http://modesofexistence.org/>)? Why assume, for example, that a “speculative realist” can only be linked to Hegel’s speculative materialism (Ribeiro 2019a: 29n1) and not to the speculative philosophy of A. N. Whitehead? See also the shocking contrast between what he claims that speculative realists argue (Ribeiro 2019a: 32) and what they actually say (Bryant et al. 2011: 4).

an all too common way of simplifying intellectual debates. This may happen when, for example, a well-known scholar who has read a work, or a corpus of works, then writes about it in a particular way, underlining, highlighting, *redlining*, assumed key features or shortcomings. Others, in turn, may find such characterizations to be authoritative and appealing and base both their own judgement of the work and the decision of whether or not to read it on this secondary assessment. Redlining, thus, may render an original work suspect and/or subject to ignorance.

In this paper we have addressed what we consider to be examples of such redlining, though we are aware that we, by this selection and our own characterizations, may have performed some redlining as well. We therefore invite readers to enter into a sincere engagement with the works under scrutiny here and our own work, as well as those of other archaeologists engaging with new materialist or object-oriented approaches, in order to judge for themselves whether or not our response is adequate. No work, for sure, is immune to criticism, and our research makes no exception. Critical dialogue is vital both for individual scholars and the discipline as a whole. In order to facilitate this, however, it is crucial that criticism is based on honest and careful assessment of works both in light of the purposes that they serve and with respect to the fidelity to their objects, their ideas, and their readerships. In this paper we have chosen to examine an emerging selection of texts that we find to amount to the opposite. If future considerations cannot reach, as we hope, other and more productive ambitions, perhaps, at the very least, critics will hesitate a little before indulging in a one-sided game of exaggeration and misrepresentation.

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## Garbage Hunting-Gathering: The Ignored Face of Future Cities

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# Garbage Hunting-Gathering: The Ignored Face of Future Cities

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## Abstract

Imagining the future, few people think of how discrimination and poverty will affect the shape of urbanization. Comics and Sci-Fi usually speak about the advanced technological progress of human beings, climate change, and superheroes. Meanwhile, a critical look at our modern lives indicates that this image is only a small part of a big puzzle. Rapid mass production and consumption in modern society has resulted in huge mountains of dumped objects and landfills where garbage communities live or manage their daily lives by collecting garbage. The growing valley between poor and rich gives us enough evidence to predict that garbage communities will continue to exist in the future. These communities have been ignored by archaeologists for many years. In the present article, I would like to propose that we have a look at the future of garbage communities and see whether garbage collecting can be identified as a form of subsistence and studied through archaeology.

## Keywords

Garbage collecting, garbage communities, discrimination, marginalization, future cities

## Zusammenfassung

Nur wenige machen sich darüber Gedanken, wie Diskriminierung und Armut zukünftige Urbanisierungsprozesse beeinflussen wird. Comics und Science-Fiction-Werke sprechen in der Regel über den technologischen Fortschritt von Menschen, den Klimawandel und Superheld\*innen. Ein kritischer Blick auf unser modernes Leben zeigt jedoch, dass dieses Bild nur ein kleiner Teil eines großen Puzzles ist. Schnelllebige Massenproduktion und -konsum der modernen Gesellschaft erzeugen riesige Berge von weggeworfenen Objekten und Deponien, in denen Gemeinschaften von Abfallsammler\*innen ihr tägliches Leben durch das Einsammeln von Müll bestreiten. Die wachsende Kluft zwischen Arm und Reich liefert genügend Evidenz um vorhersagen zu können, dass Abfall sammelnde Gemeinschaften auch in Zukunft bestehen werden. Archäolog\*innen haben diese Gemeinschaften bis heute großteils ignoriert. Im vorliegenden Artikel möchte ich vorschlagen, sich der Zukunft dieser Gemeinschaften zuzuwenden und zu diskutieren, ob Müllsammeln als Form von Subsistenz angesehen und durch die Archäologie untersucht werden kann.

## Schlagwörter

Müllsammeln, Abfall sammelnde Gemeinschaften, Diskriminierung, Marginalisierung, Städte der Zukunft

## Introduction

The story of Sci-Fi movies usually happens in apocalyptic cities which are full of skyscrapers, huge billboards, and exude a dark atmosphere, for example, Los Angeles in *Blade Runner* (1982). This image of future cities has been repeated so many times that many of us automatically think of skyscrapers and billboards when we imagine the cities of the next centuries. The ignored fact is that many of these movies and other artworks have been made based on the image of the life of upper classes in future societies and simply neglect the lives of others. The poor usually do not experience any excitement or transformation in their daily life that is deemed worth artistic filming (see Dominelli 2019). The huge mounds created by modern garbage around many cities (Rogers 2013) stimulate few people to include dumped items in their image of future cities. Even if they are given a role, it is usually a marginalized one to explain the situation of the middle-class hero/heroine of the story (such as the dystopia in *Wall-E*).

After World War II, the face of absolute poverty transformed, and one parameter of such transformation was the existence of landfills and mass garbage. Landfills became the most popular mode of refuse disposal in the United States as well as in many other countries but with little forethought given to their long-term societal and environmental consequences (Rathje et al. 1992). The main question of this paper is whether garbage collecting can be defined as a distinctive modern source of subsistence, and if yes, how it will transform in the future.

The present article seeks to open a debate about the subsistence of one of the most ignored and unstudied communities: garbage collectors. The development of consumption habits has resulted in a rapid increase in garbage making. Even in the most developed countries, not all the garbage is recycled, but rather it is partly exported to other countries such as Ghana (Bisschop 2016) and India (Johri 2008). The unrecycled garbage shapes huge mountains of landfills around cities in most countries, from Russia to Ghana. Part of the garbage is transferred to undeveloped countries. During the last two decades, some developed countries have changed their recycling strategies and bulldozed the landfills. Homeless, unemployed, and marginalized communities live around or on the landfills and gather their daily needs from others' disposed waste. With this article, I would like to open a discussion on garbage collecting as a very recent emerging lifestyle and one that has been ignored in the studies of future societies. To justify the argument, I will also give some examples from research that my team and I conducted in Tehran.

## Who are garbage collectors?

Goud-e Zobaleh (Garbage pit, Ashraf Abad) is a landfill located southeast of Tehran. Afghan teenagers work there and live in the same place (Salarvand 2020). They work from day to night and collect still-useable garbage allegedly from different districts of the city by opening the garbage bags dumped by families. They then sell collected items to dealers in Goud (or another place called Abdul-Abad) (fig. 1). From a global perspective, these Afghan teenagers' lifestyle is not unique.

In her documentary "*Something Better to Come*" (2014), Hanna Polak has filmed 14 years of the hard life of Yula, a Russian girl who lives on garbage landfills very close to Moscow. The family of Yula tries to have a better life, but at the same time they are helpless and despair of finding a solution to get out of the terrible condition they are trapped in. They used to belong to the Russian working class but then lost their jobs and property, became homeless, and were obliged to move to one of the most marginalized areas of the city. The film shows that the community is deeply aware of their situation, criticizes the politicians and feels ignored and hated by the other citizens.

To explain the situation of Yula and her community, it is worth mentioning that the Moscow garbage collectors do not differ from the other inhabitants of the city in terms of religion, nationality, and ethnicity. They are neither refugees nor non-Russians, but they are subaltern because of their socioeconomic status and health issues. There are also communities that have been exiled to the landfills or the areas around the garbage mountains as a result of long-term subordination, for instance, the aforementioned Afghan garbage collectors in Tehran, who are refugees.

More than 260,000 people live in the Cairo garbage city, Manshiyat Nasir, where garbage collectors are poor and marginalized because of their religious beliefs as Coptic Christians (Dorman 2009). Not being able to live in the same districts the majority of Muslim citizens occupy is one of the reasons why certain members of the Christian

minority have been forced steadily to move outside the city and close to tons of garbage. The same pattern can be observed in India where the traditional caste system is still in place (see Doron 2018). The harsh hierarchical social system leads to results strikingly similar to those we observe in other places with the same social stratification such as Brazil (Millar 2018), where the people living in ghettos have no alternative but to collect their food from garbage dumps.

In most cases of garbage collecting, there are also other sorts of discrimination (Naguib Pellow 2004) that have intensified the poverty of the minority communities and later push them to continue their lives on the garbage mounds or by gathering garbage. For example, the Romanian garbage collectors under communism were actually pushed into absolute poverty mostly due to their political ideas or being ignored and alienated because of their ethnicity (Deletant 2018).

The situation of garbage collectors is complex. They are not seen as workers, despite the fact that they earn a living by collecting and selling garbage. They are not considered as part of the recycling system, although there are some attempts to do so and to consider garbage collectors as workers, for example, in Singapore, but these efforts are still in their infancy (Heng 2021). Garbage collectors have no insurance, are not members of any trade union, and even their death is not recorded.

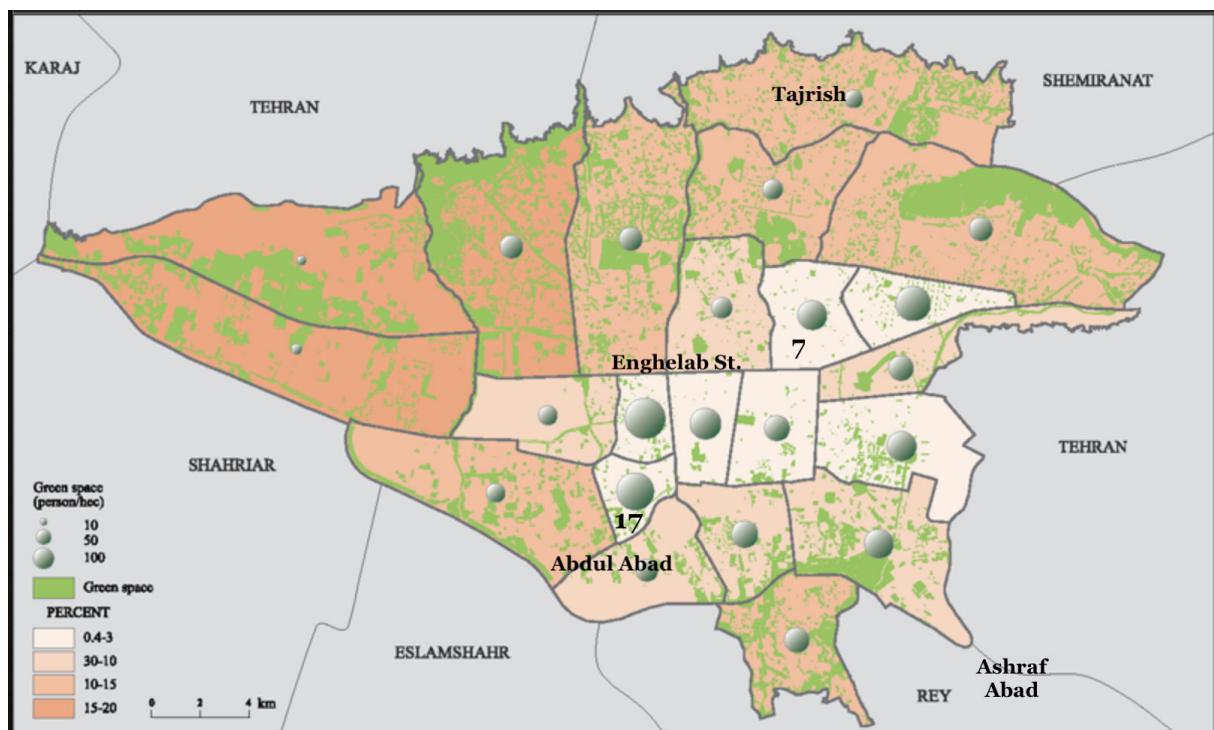


Figure 1. Map of Tehran with locations mentioned in the text and population density, Atlas of Tehran Metropolis, Tehran Municipality (<https://atlas.tehran.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=318>).

### Gathering garbage, a modern lifestyle

In his book, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, Jean Baudrillard (1998) discusses the fact that modern society is addicted to consumption and has been transformed into an entity in which socioeconomic status and agency are connected to the quality and quantity of consumption (Trigg 2001). Schor (2004) explains that modern society is so consumed by consumption and ever more consumption that even children in consumer societies are

born to consume. Based on our garbage project in Tehran, the difference between the average weight of garbage dumped by the well-off and poor classes families per day is 2.5 kg (Papoli-Yazdi 2021). The fact that rich people consume and waste more has been studied from an economic perspective in different regions of the world (O'Flaherty 2005).

The addiction of the well-off and middle classes to buy and consume (Arrow and Dasgupta 2009; Perail 2013) as well as the huge amount of industrial waste are responsible for the production of enormous mounds of garbage or landfills. During the last century, vulnerable communities in some countries moved steadily towards a life on or around landfills. These communities have transformed their lifestyle gradually in order to fit the place in which they live. Observations show that some of the garbage collectors collect their food from the garbage (Hartmann 2012). As seen by the author, there are people in the streets of Tehran who acquire their food from freshly dumped garbage bags.

Not only food but other needed items of these communities are collected from garbage. Salarvand (2020) reports that there are refugees who migrate to other countries (in her case, from Afghanistan to Iran) with the purpose of working as garbage collectors. The instability and years of war in countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan have forced people to believe that having a job as a garbage collector may open new windows and is better than remaining unemployed for years. Based on Salarvand's ethnography (2020), receiving the services offered by NGOs (for example, Sayyarak in Mashhad city, Yari network in Tehran, and Child Workers' Association in Tehran) such as educational programs is also another temptation for some garbage collectors to move to the landfills.

There is also a second category of living near or on the landfills. Garbage exported to countries such as Ghana includes used mobile phones, laptops, and other types of e-waste (Oduro-Appiah et al. 2001). These used objects are cleaned, repaired, reused, and sold by garbage communities. This happens in other countries such as Senegal where the waste management system faces many challenges (Fredericks 2018). In these societies, some of the garbage collectors classify some useful dumped items, wash them, and sell to other poor citizens.

For more than two decades new businesses have been created around the imported e-waste from developed countries in some developing countries. It has also been reported from Cairo and Beijing (Landsberger 2019). It is of note that one of the parameters that is significant for archaeologists in order to reconstruct societies is how people manage their lives through producing or gathering food. To investigate subsistence, archaeologists usually study the remains of food production and consumption; they examine whether the target community gathers food from nature, hunts, or engages in some procedures to prepare it.

According to the relation of communities to garbage, the garbage collectors can be divided into two general categories. First, there are communities of garbage collectors who live on the landfills or very close to these dumps. As mentioned above, garbage collectors communities living in Cairo, Mumbai, and Moscow are examples of this first category. The second type consists of garbage collectors who do not live on or close to the dump area, but whose diet or subsistence is based on collecting garbage from dump areas or trash cans. In some cases, the garbage-gathering lifestyle seems to be impermanent and only for a short time until the family can better handle their life (for example, the case of Yula). But, reportedly, former garbage collectors may come back to the work anytime they lose their jobs.

More research is required in order to assess the extent to which collecting waste food was also practiced in the past. Based on Rathje's garbology (Rathje and Murphy 2001), the quality and quantity of food waste have changed with the increasing popularity of refrigerators. Our studies in Tehran indicated that more than 35% of discarded food was still edible and fresh (Papoli-Yazdi 2018). Not only families but restaurants and cafes dump fresh food as well (Marthinsen et al. 2012). This dumped food is part of the diet of garbage collectors. In cities like Tehran where every street has garbage containers, the food will be retrieved by garbage collectors before the municipal trucks pick up the daily garbage. In some other contexts such as Moscow, as documented by Polak, food waste is also collected from landfills. In both cases, the community does not buy the food or produce it. They re-cook dumped food in a way that they can eat it.

In both permanent and impermanent garbage collecting, the garbage collectors rely on gathering dumped food and objects, whether for a short while or for their entire life. Garbage collecting is different from some other types of being subaltern. Garbage collectors can rarely communicate with other communities living in the city due to their appearance. They are marginalized people who have been marginalized again and in a more extreme way after being pushed to collect garbage (see Spivak 1988). They experience deeper forms of being ignored by society and even by other marginalized communities.

As archaeologists working on garbage, my team members and I experienced directly being considered as garbage collectors. During the days of our field project (in 2017–2018 in Tehran), we observed that most citizens from different social statuses avoided looking at our faces and hesitated to have eye contact with us. Later, we discovered that our gender did not catch the attention of the citizens anymore. Even in the districts which are famous for being unsafe for women, the inhabitants would avoid us. Interviewing some garbage collectors, we figured out that our experience was not unique and that they also felt that most people preferred to stay away from them and avoid having a conversation with them. Recent studies also reveal that it is much harder for people who have spent some time as garbage collectors or were homeless to find any other jobs (Zimmerman and Welch 2011; Saghafian 2020).

The subsistence and daily life of garbage collectors are very much tied to dumped objects. They eat what they find in garbage bags, wear what is discarded, and build slums from plastic bottles or bags found in the landfills. Garbage collecting is modern hunting-gathering but far away from nature in the megacities; this time, thousands of years after our Neolithic ancestors gave up gathering food.

### **Encounters: Observing garbage workers and garbage collectors in Tehran**

My team and I conducted a garbology project in two districts of Tehran in 2017–2018. The Tehran municipality has divided the city into 22 districts, named from district 1 in the northern part to 22 in the southwest of the city. Tehran is a megalopolis with roughly 9 million inhabitants and a multiculturally diverse ethnic context. Our project took place in districts 7 and 17. District 7 lies in the northeastern part of the city and is occupied mostly by people from the middle classes, except for a neighborhood called Nezam-Abad. In contrast, district 17 is officially the most marginalized district of the city where impoverished families and low-income workers live.

Based on previous studies and our observations, the garbage community in Tehran consists of two major communities (Isari and Shojaee-zand 2020). First, Afghan refugees who consist mostly of undocumented teenage immigrants and work with Afghan and Iranian dealers (Sattar et al. 2019). These young boys collect dry waste from across the city and transfer this waste to Goud-e Zobaleh, Hasan Abad, and Abdul-Abad and sell it to the dealers. The boys usually sleep in the same place every night, in temporary lodgings made of plastic bottles and other types of slums. The second group is comprised of a community that lives in a neighborhood called Kahrizak, located in the south of the city where the landfill lies (Mohajerani and Heidari 2020).

Kahrizak used to be covered by farms and gardens until the 1960s. The farms changed into residential areas after the land reform in 1963, and later the landfill of the city was established in this area. These people can be classified into two categories: the first one consists of the families who have lived in Kahrizak since before it changed into the landfill, while the second group is comprised of newcomers who moved to the area during the post-2004 economic crisis. Low-income newcomers earn money from collecting metal and plastic waste from the landfill. In recent years, the municipality has locked the landfill with security doors, but still there are people who try to access it. The people who work in the landfill are mostly Afghan refugees. They are responsible for sorting and classifying the garbage and sending it to recycling sites.

During our garbology project we met and interviewed Afghan garbage collectors. Our first encounter happened in district 17 where we interviewed 65 informants who were the inhabitants of the district as well as 10 garbage collectors who were all Afghan teenagers. Later, I interviewed 11 Afghan garbage collectors in the city center (Eng-helab Street). In our team, one of the team members who is originally from Afghanistan, Omran Garazhian, and I were responsible for interviewing the garbage collectors. The dialect of the Afghan teenagers is Dari. Because the

garbage collectors usually do not integrate with the native Iranian Persian speakers and are only in connection with Afghan dealers and roommates, they do not learn the Iranian dialect.

The subsistence of Tehran's garbage collectors is completely dependent on the dry waste collected from across the city. The garbage workers tend to gather garbage from northern districts. It is important to know that the wealthier people live in the northern neighborhoods of the city. The garbage collectors admitted that they all have better opportunities to find more valuable waste in northern districts. Moreover, there are reports that some wealthier people make friends with the younger garbage collectors and donate money or some valuable waste to them (Salarvand 2020). As part of a constant conflict, the workers who are connected to more powerful dealers have more chances to access northern areas. The newcomer Afghans and the worker boys who work independently or are connected to less powerful dealers usually collect garbage from the southern districts of the city. According to Salarvand (2020), the city has been divided into several districts by more powerful dealers who invest in the garbage of wealthier neighborhoods. The independent garbage collectors have to work in the spots outside of the surveillance of those powerful people.

In district 17, most of the inhabitants are from the working class. The average amount of daily waste is 400–600 grams per family. The people living in the district usually pack the dry waste separately to sell it to garbage collectors. Dry waste is an alternative source of income for the poor families of the district (in particular for women who classify the garbage very accurately). The garbage collectors weigh the dry waste and pay 1 cent per kilo. They recycle plastics, glass, and textiles in small workshops, but at the same time they monitor every other dumped object in the garbage bags and hope to find something of greater value inside. On some occasions, the garbage collectors exchange the plastic and metal waste for shampoo, soap, salt, or plastic bags.

There are also garbage containers placed in each street. The inhabitants discard their daily waste in the containers, which are emptied by municipality workers once or twice a day. Boys knock on the doors to buy the dry waste, which housewives collect and keep to sell to them. Also, the boys search the garbage containers to find any pieces of dry waste that have been dumped by mistake. In searching among garbage bags, they tear the bags and make the containers messy. The garbage collectors carry the dry waste in carts which are usually given to them by the dealers. District 17 is very close to Abdul-Abad where most of the garbage collectors working in the district sell their stuff to the dealers. In the evening, they walk towards Abdul-Abad and sell their gatherings. In the very first days of our project, I asked three of the garbage collectors to work for us and proposed to them the standard salary of an adult worker. They all said that they prefered to work independently with their carts but helped us to find intact garbage containers. There is no indication that if they work for other people they would be punished. In contrast, it seems that they are all in a type of competition with each other to collect more garbage (Afrakhteh and Hajipour 2017), since they apparently will earn more when they collect more.

The Afghan garbage community usually does not integrate into the middle-class communities, but they constantly meet, speak, and chat with the inhabitants in district 17 (who are from working classes). One reason is that some of these families are the ones who sell their garbage to garbage collectors. The southern neighborhoods of the districts are occupied by Afghan families, and the garbage collectors bond with these families more than the others.

The garbage collectors work from 10–11 AM till 6–7 PM. Due to their activity, almost no dry waste is dumped in the garbage containers. It is of note that there are stands run by the municipality which also purchase plastic and paper waste, but people of district 17 generally prefer to sell their dry waste to garbage collectors. We studied 10 carts of the Afghan boys. The carts weighed 30–40 kilos each (the older garbage collectors told us that some days they collect more than 100 kg) and contained plastic, paper, metal waste, bottles, glass, and pieces of wood. Metal waste can be sold to dealers at a higher price, and the boys are therefore more interested in finding discarded metal waste. It is very unusual, but occasionally they find old mobile phones and digital devices which may be reused by them or sold at a high price.

The income of these boys is completely dependent on garbage collecting. They exchange their earnings for Afghanis (Afghanistan's currency) and transfer it to Afghanistan to their families. They find their food in the waste and sometimes take the still-useable discarded items, such as shoes or clothes, for themselves. They are mostly undocumented refugees, and as reported by Salarvand (2020), they change their names to more familiar ones for Iranians after coming to Iran. Most of them have relatives who work as garbage collectors as well. They do not

have time to attend school but some of them hope that they can improve their skills by learning how to write and calculate. But also reports indicate that they collect many pieces of garbage that they do not recognize but wonder if they are valuable (Salarvand 2020). It has been observed that they keep women's clothes and cosmetic instruments without knowing anything about them (the author has observed the same thing).

During the last two years (and probably after the Kabul takeover by the Taliban), more Afghans have been deported to Afghanistan by Iranian authorities. Although they usually do not deport youth without their parents or a relative, there are reports that they have kept the young garbage collectors in detention for days. The boys who are deported accompanied by a relative will return to Iran again once they get to Afghanistan and resume their job as garbage collectors (Kumar and Noori 2020; Salarvand 2020).

It is very obvious that the Afghan garbage collectors (figs. 2–3) have been trapped in poverty. They are young boys from a country that has faced conflict and discrimination for years. One of the very few options for families is to send their young children to neighboring countries such as Iran to work. They are forced to drop out of school and busy themselves with collecting garbage while living on the landfill or very close to it. They experience deep alienation and do not integrate with other communities. Interviewing the inhabitants of district 17 showed that the community believes that garbage collectors are filthy and full of bacteria, although they feel sympathy for them because they are poor. Most of the Afghan teenagers are from the Hazara ethnic group. Hazara people have been marginalized and oppressed by the Sunni majority in Afghanistan due to their ethnicity and religious beliefs (most of them are Shia Muslims). They experience double discrimination in their homeland as well as in Iran, first for being Hazara and second for being immigrants and poor.

The municipality of Tehran intervenes in this desperate life of garbage collectors by locking the garbage containers, arresting the garbage collectors, deporting Afghan refugees, and even bulldozing their slums, but the communities return to collecting garbage.



Figure 2. Garbage collectors, Brush marker on paper and filter (Leila Papoli-Yazdi).



Figure 3. Garbage collectors, Brush marker on paper and filter (Leila Papoli-Yazdi).

## The future of garbage collecting in Tehran

With the recent political unrest in Afghanistan, it is predictable that the number of Afghan teenagers who move to Tehran to collect garbage will increase. As stated by a representative of the Tehran city council, there are more than 4000 young garbage collectors in Tehran based on the 2020 statistics (Hosseinkhah 2021).

The economic crisis of the last decade has forced people from the middle classes to move to the neighborhoods where the poor live. The factories have been privatized, and consequently, jobless workers also move to the aforementioned neighborhoods. At the same time, low-income families will be trapped even more in absolute poverty and will turn desperately to collecting garbage from garbage containers and enter this downward spiral of competition. Nowadays, the type of garbage collecting that is based on collecting the food and other material from landfills is still exceptional in Iran and limited to areas such as Kahrizak, but I predict that this lifestyle will gradually spread due to the increasing rate of extreme poverty.

## Poverty trap

In their book, *Poor Economics*, Banerjee and Duflo (2011) introduce communities that have been trapped in poverty. There are different economic and social mechanisms that lead to poverty. They are very diverse, ranging from corruption in the political system to population over-growth (Easterly 2006). Based on Banerjee and Duflo's research in 18 countries on different continents, the trapped families around the world follow similar lifestyles and suffer strikingly similar problematic issues: Even if they acquire more income, they usually cannot escape the trap and manage their own lives in a different way from that which they have experienced for years.

Sociologically, long-term discrimination and poverty push people into a situation where the concept of the future loses its meaning (Symonds 2011). An indicator of this condition is that poor communities prefer not to save money even if they can put a small amount aside. Their declining tendency to guarantee their future and the policy of banks not to loan to the poor is influential on their lifestyle.

Archaeologists have already discussed an archaeology of poverty (Orser 2011). From an archaeological perspective, the lack of some sort of material culture in a context may lead scholars to the conclusion that the people who have lived in a particular place were poor. This is also true about the poverty trap (Spencer-Wood and Matthews 2011).

As already mentioned, garbage communities gather their subsistence needs from the discarded objects of others. It is of note that this is completely different from the social norm of buying and selling "second-hand" items. Second-hand things are not discarded. In many cases, they are sold due to the economic need of the owner or because they are not needed any more but are still useable and valuable. In contrast, the things gathered by garbage communities are useless from the viewpoint of the rest of society. Garbage collectors reuse the useless. They eat expired food, wear torn-up clothes and shoes. In the absence of a healthcare system, it is assumed that the garbage collectors get sick and may die young. Consequently, their bodies transform into garbage buried among the layers of landfill or in the simple graves dug by municipalities without any gravestones, mourners, and flowers.

Cases that we see in movies such as *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) happen very rarely. Got Talents and other TV shows try to change the minds of people from middle-class statuses about poverty. They suggest that it is possible for someone trapped in poverty to climb the ladder of success based only on their God-given talents. In the shows, the producers flash back to the lives of the poor participants before being introduced as talented individuals, lives mixed with poverty, discrimination, suffering, and sickness. And suddenly, the person gets four yeses and comes out of poverty in the twinkling of an eye. In reality, this seldom happens. The poor need education, a proper healthcare system, and acceptance by society to get out of the poverty trap, a process that requires long-term programming and planning by NGOs, governments, and international institutions.

Garbage collectors are mostly subaltern not because of their current situation but because they come from already marginalized communities. Garbage collecting worsens their harsh situation. Among them are stateless groups of

people. They have no identity documents in the country they live in as refugees, or their identity has not been recorded at birth. This erases them even from the list of voters and that is one of the reasons why they are not noticed by politicians in many countries. Since they have no access to social or other media, the narrators of their very difficult lifestyle are the others, journalists, filmmakers, or scholars. To be narrated by others does not reflect the depth of their suffering but highlights that they are estranged from society.

Garbage collecting is a sign of being trapped in extreme poverty. Thus, it seems that garbage collecting will continue in developing countries. In such places as India, Egypt, and Iran, growing poverty results in an increasing number of garbage collectors. Also, conflicts and wars contribute to the continuation of this harsh lifestyle (see Bernbeck and Egbers 2019). The huge gap between poor and rich statuses along with class struggle makes the poor communities more and more alienated.

### Towards an archaeology of garbage communities

There have been very few attempts by archaeologists to document the lifestyle of garbage communities, and no advanced methodology has been developed to study these people. Many garbage collectors are stateless or simply have no identification documents or passports. Authorities are not able to provide exact statistics about them, while many of these people have not been educated and will not leave written documents behind.

One way to study the garbage collectors is to survey the neighborhoods where they live. Our observations indicate that the community is in fear of officials who usually threaten to bulldoze the slums (Papoli-Yazdi 2018). The researchers who have been successful in documenting the daily lives of garbage collectors are those who have lived for a long time with the community in order to win their trust by respecting their dignity and lifestyle. This needs a long process of integration, dialogue, and research in order to escape from the usual societal labeling of garbage collectors as criminals, prostitutes, or drug abusers.

Garbage will be gradually pressurized in landfills and form layers of waste one on top of another. It is predictable that excavation methods will be enhanced in the future. To excavate landfills, archaeologists need elaborated methods that are helpful from a documentation perspective as well as materials analysis and scientific laboratory methods. It is of note that Rathje and his team's excavations were carried out before the invention and popularity of some material culture that we use today (Rathje and Murphy 2001). These new items end up as e-waste and micro- and macroplastic waste as well as some toxic substances.

Additionally, we should consider that garbage and landfills are currently the places of settlement of subaltern communities. This should not be ignored when studying landfills. The expansion of cities will cause landfills to be encompassed by some neighborhoods. I have observed buildings that are being constructed on layers of debris and garbage in northeastern Iran. The inhabitants of the buildings still smell the garbage even though they cannot see the layers of rubbish that are located beneath their houses. In these cases, the garbage is part of the history of the neighborhood and would be accessible by excavation, but it also affects the price of the buildings and land. Governments attempt to solve the problem of garbage communities by bulldozing landfills, but later they redevelop in other parts of the city. According to my team's studies on garbage collecting in the Middle East, new forms of landfills are emerging in cities. In Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, we have witnessed markets where garbage collectors sell their findings to dealers. There is a long history of local markets in these countries, which used to be where the local inhabitants sell their products but now have been filled by modern items and recycled dumped objects. These markets are full of e-waste as well as plastic and textile refuse. The reused discarded objects are sold and brought to poor neighborhoods. They do not last long and transform again rapidly into garbage.

Predicting the future of garbage collecting, we should think of novel forms of landfills. Not only in the form of extended areas of rubbish disposal: we will also encounter markets for selling and buying waste in subaltern neighborhoods. In this situation, the landscape of the district will transform into layers of rubbish under the buildings or in the spaces around the houses where people store the waste to sell it later. The nature of the refuse may change in the future, but, predictably, the poor garbage collector community will survive due to the huge gap between poor and rich.

To study garbage and garbage communities, archaeologists should consider the diverse behaviors of societies towards waste disposal, waste management, and hoarding. In the near future, we will not be able to investigate garbage communities and waste disposal solely by studying landfills and industrial garbage, but we will need to develop our methods to understand the communities whose subsistence depends on collecting, selling, eating, and living beside or on garbage.

### **Archaeology of future garbage communities**

Landfills usually take the form of high mounds whose height distinguishes them from the general landscape of the city. If not bulldozed, they transform into dense layers of decayed objects and garbage. According to Rathje and Murphy (2001), the process of decomposition is so slow that even the materials made of paper will last for a very long time in landfills. Taphonomy is a domain of activity integral to defining new terms of the culture-nature divide, addressing perceived vulnerabilities, and working out social contradictions (Dawdy 2006). For some substances, such as food waste, the taphonomic process starts gradually and decomposes them.

Moreover, within decades, garbage creates a harmful stew called leachate, which can move into groundwater, soil, and streams, poisoning ecosystems and harming wildlife. It is predictable that the soil under landfills will not be useful later for farming or accommodation purposes. Rather, landfills will continue to be occupied by subaltern communities and predictably cannot be transformed into areas with other functions, unless novel technologies help to change the toxic compounds of water and soil around the dumps. If we imagine that these areas will be in the hands of the poor, it is expectable that they will be neglected, and it will take a long time for companies that produce anti-toxic chemicals to consider them.

It is noteworthy that the health of the individuals (such as the Afghan teenagers) who are in long-term contact with garbage will be affected by their lifestyle (Maser and Pollio 1995). These health issues may further influence the life of young garbage collectors, relegating them to more complicated types of absolute poverty.

Given the growth of cities, these layers of garbage will gradually come to be located inside cities, likely in the poor and subaltern neighborhoods. Unlike the ancient layers remaining from historical cities that are excavated by urban archaeologists and interpreted as the background of cities, these layers do not contain anything privileged – they are composed of the filthiest objects possible. They are the indicators of bad environmental policies as well as discrimination and extreme poverty (Schiller 2008) and may remain unexcavated forever. From another perspective, the mounds of garbage may shape the topography of subaltern neighborhoods of the cities.

When authorities order the bulldozing of landfills, huge holes replace the mounds, representing the fact that the piles of garbage transform the soil in a way that makes it hard to repair. The long-term effects of plastic and some other chemicals on the soil and water resources are unknown, but we can imagine that the landscape of the areas which were once used as landfills will be transformed forever.

The governments, such as in the case of Iran, destroy landfills, but garbage collecting still survives. Nonetheless, we do not know much about the “culture” of garbage collectors, their taboos and beliefs, since governments in many countries prefer to neglect garbage collecting. It happened also in the case of our project, which was stopped after two seasons when we started to dive deeper into the concept of poverty.

Different aspects of modern society, mass production, consumption, and the invention of novel non-decomposable and unrecyclable substances have influenced the creation of landfills that appeared in the world gradually after the industrial revolution. This proclaims the existence of a lifestyle that can be also archaeologically investigated in the future: garbage hunter-gatherers!

The consumption habits of wealthier groups of society lead to the creation of huge mountains of garbage especially in developing countries, which are being polluted not only due to the rapid growth of the leisure class (Veblen 1961) but also because rich countries export their garbage to them. On the other hand, other communities are becoming poorer. The inequality leaves only very few ways for the poor to survive. One way is to live on the

mounds of garbage and gather food from landfills or other citizens' trash cans. It is how modern society has taken some communities back to the Paleolithic period and their subsistence to hunting and gathering garbage, replacing nature, rural subsistence, and quality with the mountains of garbage generated by well-off classes.

Landfills are the indicators of what the future of urbanization may be, at least for part of society, the poor and subaltern. These people, the garbage collectors, are not considered as documented citizens. They are not assumed to be jobless or to be workers. They stand outside the numbers, definitions, bureaucracy, and statistics, trapped in extreme poverty which will be intensified by rapid economic changes, impermanent contracts, the huge valley between poor and rich, and political conflicts all around the world.

The existence of garbage collectors and their difficult lifestyle warn us that the complicated cities of the future depicted in the Sci-Fi movies are mostly the representative image of richer groups of society. For others, life will continue around more gigantic mounds of garbage.

But let's remain hopeful! While some archaeologists will also ignore future garbage communities, there will be a small group of future archaeologists who will get involved in the life and horrible destiny of the poor and will develop their methods, rework their theoretical frameworks and ask novel questions to study the lives and subsistence of modern hunter-gatherer communities, the garbage collectors. They will struggle to enhance the methodology of archaeology to become more influential in making the world a better place for poor people as well as garbage collectors.

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