

Archaeology and Politics in Argentina During the Last 50 Years

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss the relationship between archaeological practice and theory, on the one hand, and the political context in Argentina since 1958, on the other. The year 1958 is considered as a turning point in the history of archaeology in Argentina because of two structural changes introduced to the teaching of archaeology and to the organization of scientific research in general. The first change relates to the inception of graduate-level courses in anthropology in two main universities, the University of Buenos Aires and La Plata University, while the second one is linked to the formation of the National Council of Scientific and Technical Investigation (CONICET),¹ the key national research institution. Undoubtedly, these changes represent a context in which archaeology gained identity as an academic discipline and recognition as a scientific practice, very much like the natural sciences. Thus, 1958 highlights the starting point for our analysis with the objective of exploring the relationship between archaeological praxis and theory within a sociopolitical context. Special political circumstances existed particularly in Argentina, but also in the southern region of South America, where democratic governments (some fully while other partly democratic) alternated with strong military regimes over the past half-century and significantly influenced the development of archaeology in the region. Such context provides, in our view, interesting data to understand the political aspect underlying the origin and development of national archaeologies.

¹The creation of CONICET was modelled after the French CNRS and allowed the incorporation of many researchers who worked full time into the national scientific system. Among the first researchers were also some archaeologists.

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Despite the fact that archaeology as a scientific discipline is more than a century old, serious discussion about uses and misuses of the past emerged in the last few decades. Archaeologists not only became aware of the political implications of their works, but also started discussing issues related to the practice and uses of the past, such as ownership, authentication, nationalism, ethnicity, management, and so on (Layton 1989; Kohl and Fawcett 1995). The relationship between politics and archaeological practice dates back to the emergence and development of the discipline in the nineteenth century (Trigger 1995). There are many cases, either historic or current, where political manipulation of archaeological data was used by nation-states, and/or ethnic groups, for political gains (e.g., Hitler in Germany (Arnold 1996), and Franco in Spain (Diaz Andreu 1995)). The association between an ethnic group and its material culture has been used to legitimate national history, the emergence of national traditions, and the supremacy of a group over another (Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Jones 1997).

Close ties between archaeological work and national policies, along with the impact of socioeconomic and political contexts on archaeological practice in general, have been discussed by archaeologists since the 1980s (Madrazo 1985; Trigger 1984; Gathercole and Lowenthal 1990; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Politis 1992, 1995; Arnold 1996). Some authors (Shanks and Tilley 1992) support the idea that archaeology cannot exist outside the political and socioeconomic contexts where it is embedded and therefore all archaeological interpretations carry ideological and political constraints (Ucko 1995). Hence, factors and conditions exist that influence archaeological interpretations and they are not innocent, nor do they produce a void (Preucel and Hodder 1996).

For decades, the relationship between archaeology and the public was characterized as a “passive business” in which archaeologists produced a past to be consumed by “clients” without major controversies. This situation changed in the 1980s, and more emphatically in the 1990s, basically through a debate where “other groups” started to claim the past for particular interests. A transformation occurred within the public domain from passive clients to active claimants (Gathercole and Lowenthal 1990; Ucko 1995). Although different theoretical views have focused on this relationship and considered its ubiquity as a feature, there have been several responses stemming from each of them. In general, although processual trends with emphasis on data objectivity and neutrality recognize the existence of prejudices that affect the discipline, they have refused to assume the political dimensions of the discipline. According to this perspective, science in general and archaeology in particular should not be influenced by any political aspect (Fernández Martínez 2006; Hodder 1999). On the other hand, one of the post-processual trends sparked a debate on the nature of archaeology by considering archaeology a political discipline (Shanks and Tilley 1992). Likewise, it was also suggested that data presentations are always loaded with theory and therefore archaeology should be understood within the context of its production (Shennan 1989).

This paper is within a critical perspective (in the sense used by Fernández Martínez 2006) that sees the relationship between archaeology and politics as unavoidable and where the past is an interpretative construction dependent upon the sociopolitical context of knowledge production. Any attempt to study relationships

between archaeology and politics and between archaeology and the public cannot avoid considering some of the related issues, such as the idea of the “others”, politics of culture, modelling of the country by the ruling classes, and the position of the country in the world context.

Anglo-American hegemony in archaeological thought has definitely influenced the ways of approaching and interpreting the past in South America (Gnecco 1999; Politis 2003). Similarly, management, protection, conservation, and interpretation uses and access to archaeological resources have been basically controlled by the western-introduced politics of heritage. This situation entailed the emergence of an idea of world heritage, promoting the use of universal values without previous discussion on what matters to whom (Byrne 1991; Belli and Slavutsky 2005). In this sense, it has been suggested that the American model of cultural heritage may not fit elsewhere (Wheaton 2006).

The emergence of post-processual views in reaction to positivism and objectivism of the processual trends brought about the issue of considering multiple versions of the past. Indigenous people and representatives of other interest groups (especially powerless, such as peasants or Afro-Americans) began to take part in projects related to culture resource management, interpretation, and in the production of archaeological knowledge (Leone et al. 1995; Green et al. 2003; McNiven and Russell 2005). Consequently, multiple versions of the past and diverse positions on what matters about the past were proposed. In addition, the issue of ownership of cultural resources, especially related to human remains and land rights, was included into archaeological agendas. Theoretical developments experienced by archaeology in the last decades introduced, among other things, a concern about archaeological interpretations as well as over the ownership of the material culture. This concern can be identified as “intellectual” and “physical” control of artefacts, emphasized by the issue of who should monitor and authorize access to and uses of archaeological sites and artefacts. An interest in opinions of the “others” as alternative voices complementing archaeological interpretations started to be considered. This is an interesting phenomenon because it implies the “decentralization” of archaeological interpretation and a shift from the centre of the academic scene.

To sum up, the relationship between archaeology and politics is a complex process open to debate. It is a contemporary phenomenon that has not been deeply and widely discussed in Argentina (for exceptions see Madrazo 1985; Politis 1992; Tarragó 2003; Podgorny 2004; Nastri 2004; Soprano 2009). There are many examples when archaeology was used to justify social differences and to legitimize political powers. At present, such situation is particularly sensible with the emergence of different ethnic groups throughout the Argentinean territory. All these issues confirm that archaeology is not an innocuous discipline. For these reasons, we need more theoretical discussions of the above-mentioned topics in order to better evaluate and define the boundaries of our (archaeologists) actions. At the same time, it is necessary to develop alternative models of heritage management to avoid western-induced hegemony. Indeed, the participation of indigenous people and other groups historically neglected must be considered in its own terms. In other words, for indigenous people, their past may not be different or “other”, but rather an integral part of themselves (Preucel and Hodder 1996).

Archaeology in Argentina Before 1958

Before discussing archaeology in Argentina at the end of the 1950s, it is necessary to briefly summarize the origin of the discipline in the country. Archaeology emerged in Argentina at the end of the nineteenth century when the country was dominated by the ideas of the so-called “Generación del ‘80” (“The 1880s Generation”) (Madrazo 1985; Politis 1992). They strongly promoted European values (borrowed predominantly from France and England) as opposed to those followed by indigenous people, mestizo, and Creoles. In this context, Florentino Ameghino, Samuel Lafone Quevedo, Juan B. Ambrossetti, and others, were the first scholars interested in local archaeology (Fernández 1979/1980; Haber 1994; Podgorny 2002). The idea of “progress” at that time justified the colonization of the remaining indigenous territories and caused the extermination of many indigenous people. Archaeologists did not present a clear position against the ongoing genocide and studied the material remains they found, disassociating the artefacts from the people who had been massacred in the Patagonia, Pampa, and Chaco regions. The most important museums were created in the country at the end of the nineteenth century as part of a strategy to keep indigenous cultures in the past (e.g., Museo de La Plata and the nationalization of the Museo Bernardino Rivadavia in Buenos Aires). By exhibiting the material culture of these people, as well as their physical remains, the western-influenced society broke the cultural continuity and “froze” in the past what was full of vitality in the present (Quesada et al. 2007; Podgorny and Lopes 2008). Among the key research questions in those times were discussions on the origin of humankind (see Ameghino 1881 and review in Hrdlicka 1912) and the “American man”, both being quite distant from the issues concerning indigenous communities and their problems at that time.

In the early twentieth century when the main wave of European migration had already arrived, the profile of the Argentinean society was changing quickly as anarchist and socialist ideas permeated into society. Hence, the ruling elites promoted Creole and Spanish Catholic values and traditions. At the same time, archaeologists started to look for indigenous roots of Argentinean identity. The exegesis of the historical documents was the main source of information. Other scholars were still discussing the origin of humankind in Argentina, which was Ameghino’s legacy followed by several political fractions, specially the Socialist Party (Podgorny 1997, 2004).

In 1916, the “Radical party” (*partido Unión Cívica Radical*), which represented the middle class, gained power and introduced several democratic reforms. In consequence, the first military coup took place in the 1930s and discontinuous military-controlled governments lasted until the 1980s. At the same time, the arrival of foreign anthropologists such as José Imbelloni and Alfred Metraux was instrumental in spreading the culture-history approach represented in two main variants, one closer to the Anglo-Saxon culture-history (see for example Serrano 1955), and another related more to the Austrian–German orientation (the so-called *kulturkreise* school) (Boschin and Llamazares 1986). The researchers from the Austrian–German

school opposed the evolutionist frames and emphasized a historical approach that led them to put forward the “theory of cultural cycles” (or *kulturkreise*). These appear as related to a certain geographical area that includes areas of cultural spreading (see discussion in Kohl and Pérez Gollán 2002). In this sense, borrowings or transfers of cultural elements through cultural spreading and migrations appear to be the main mechanisms to explain the change in societies. On the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon culture-history approach focused on the definition of phases and traditions to organize the cultural change and stability (Trigger 1992). This school also put more emphasis on the regional changes and took into account local innovations, but still considered diffusion as one of the main agents of change.

In 1946, Juan Peron took office strongly supported by the working class and trade unions that represented the bases of his political party, the Partido Justicialista or Peronista. His government lasted 10 years, until 1955, and during this period, it carried out a process of social inclusion of the working class to the national life through an authoritarian populism. This government has been characterized by violation of the opposition’s political rights and the inclusion of workers’ social rights (Terán 2008). At that time universities were strictly controlled by the government² and a significant group of dissident professors were expelled (Marquez Miranda, De Aparicio, and Palavecino among the best known archaeologists). Those professors who remained at universities had to show constant loyalty and obedience to the governmental mandates (Terán 2008: 262). The newly formed Sociedad de Antropología Argentina (Argentinean Society of Anthropology, founded in 1936) lost support from the government and suffered hardships (Podestá 2008). However, many local museums were opened as part of the government-promoted revitalization of indigenous traditions. In 1950, Peron himself reedited his *Toponimia Patagónica de Etimología Araucana*, with a prologue by Jose Imbelloni (he and Eduardo Casanova were the two outstanding anthropologists who supported Perón’s government).

In 1948, Oswald Menghin arrived in Argentina. Menghin was a prestigious Austrian prehistorian, who had links with the Nazi regime in Austria during War World II (Kohl and Pérez Gollán 2002; Fontán 2006). During the same period, Marcelo Bórmida arrived from Italy and became one of the most known Menghin’s disciples. The arrival of Menghin and Bórmida at the end of the 1940s not only had a strong theoretical impact, but also opened a new field of investigations on sites related to prehistoric hunter-gatherers in Pampa and Patagonia aimed at identifying the temporal depth of human occupation there (see Politis 1988; Kohl and Pérez Gollán 2002). This new development in archaeological research ended with the methodological phase of historical exegesis marked, according to A. R. González (1985), by the work of A. Salas (1945) on *Antigüedades de la Ciénaga Grande*.

In 1951, A. R. González excavated the Intihuasi cave which represented a milestone for contemporary Argentinean archaeology (González 1960). With limited resources and not much support, since he was not close to Peron’s government,

²It means that their democratically elected authorities were removed and replaced by other imposed by the government, especially members of the Peronist party.

González proposed the first stratigraphic sequence for hunter-gatherers in Argentina and obtained the first radiocarbon dates. Following the culture-history model, the Intihuasi sequence was presented as the “type-sequence”, where the key cultural events from the past in a given region were represented.

Around the mid-1950s, three key theoretical approaches existed in the Argentinean archaeology: (a) the Austrian–German culture-history paradigm (Menghin, Bórmida, Lafón, etc.), with a strong impact on hunter-gatherers archaeology in La Pampa and Patagonia regions; (b) a historicist approach, basically used in the archaeology of the Argentinean Northwest (Márquez Miranda 1953, Canals Frau, etc.); and (c) the newfound Anglo-Saxon culture-history already established by Serrano (1955) and popularized by A. R. Gonzalez, who had returned from the US with a Ph.D. from Columbia University. At that time in Columbia, the influence of Boaz’s cultural relativism was still strong, specially through his most renowned disciples (Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict), who undoubtedly impacted Gonzalez’s work. However, as he himself states, it was Julian Steward, who then led the evolutionist and neopositivist reaction, whose influence was bigger on Gonzalez’s formative stage (Bianciotti 2005: 171–172).

1958: The Turning Point

In 1955, Peron was overthrown by the so-called “Revolución Libertadora” (Liberating Revolution), which brought about the liberal–conservative restoration (Halperin Donghi 1972). Peronism was proscribed, its activists prosecuted, counter-revolutionary attempts were stifled, and in some cases, they ended up as cruel summary executions. In February 1958, new politics on scientific development materialized in the creation of the National Council of Scientific and Technical Investigations (CONICET), which, modelled after the French CNRS, became the top research organization in Argentina and played a key role in the promotion and orientation of anthropological research in the following decades. Some liberal-oriented scholars returned to universities and museums, such as Márquez Miranda, who had been removed from his post for 10 years during the Peron’s tenure (Fig. 1).

In May 1958, Arturo Frondizi’s democratic government was established by forming an alliance with the proscribed Peronist party, and it governed under strict surveillance of international creditors (Halperin Donghi 1972). From the cultural perspective, modernizing elites burst into the Argentinean cultural horizon (Terán 2008). Frondizi’s government was overthrown by the military, which conditioned the political agenda in the country and, above all, questioned the government’s attempted approach to Peronism. During this period certain developments in the social sciences and the humanities were implemented and a series of university courses opened as a social counterpart to the projected economic development (Herrán 1985). In consequence, university majors in sociology, education, psychology, and anthropology, which later achieved academic autonomy, emerged. In 1958, the National University of La Plata introduced degrees in anthropology



Fig. 1 Meeting of the Sociedad Argentina de Antropología at the end of the 1950s. In the centre Dr. Marquez Miranda reading a presentation. First to his *right* Dr. Oswald Menghin and third Dr. Marcelo Bórmida. Third to his *left* Dr. Ciro René Lafón (Photo courtesy Sociedad Argentina de Antropología)

within the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Following the naturalist tradition of the early days of that faculty, numerous courses in biology and geology were included in the curricula. A group of professors holding different theoretical views was formed by researchers from the same institution; some of them such as F. Márquez Miranda and O. Menghin were already at the end of their careers, whereas others like E. Cigliano were just on the onset.

Also in 1958, the University of Buenos Aires opened enrollment to its anthropology program and the first courses began to be taught the following year with a small number of students identified in the first year of their studies as history majors ([Jornadas de Antropología: 30 años de la carrera en Buenos Aires 1988](#)). The initial body of professors consisted of researchers who, except E. Palavecino, A. Cortázar, and few others, supported the culture-history school of thought. Among them were M. Bórmida, O. Menghin, and C. Lafón, who discussed the theoretical trends of the time and identified the four main approaches: (1) the ethnohistorical approach; (2) the “quasi-fantastic pleased with mythographic elaborations or random speculations”; (3) the “purely descriptive and classifying, hardly hinting at summarizing”; and (4) “the truly constructive... the one that wants to reconstruct with its own methods the culture belonging to the disappeared people, the one that never forgot its condition of historical science common to archaeology... prototype of this tendency are Menghin’s works...” (Lafón 1960: 27).

Almost simultaneously two more universities incorporated archaeology to their curricula. In 1959, the National University of the Littoral (in Rosario) launched a degree in anthropology, which included several researchers. At the same time,

the University of Córdoba, through the Institute of Anthropology, began to build an important centre of anthropological research arranged not as an independent field, but as a relevant branch of history. Likewise, during this period two institutions were created which would be closely related to archaeology some years later, namely the editorial office of the University of Buenos Aires (EUDEBA) and the National Arts Fund.

In 1958, Lafón published a paper that summarized and discussed the chronology and origin of archaeological cultures in northwestern Argentina. This work stimulated a heated controversy with González, not only on specific problems, but also on the theoretical issues and the professional praxis (González 1959). Two political agendas collided as well: Lafón, a FORJA activist (Force of Radical Orientation of Argentine Youth), who shifted towards the left-wing position within the Peronist party, and González, a “reformist”³ without a definite party affiliation, but in opposition to Peronism. Paradoxically, some years later, both were accused of being left-wing-oriented and persecuted by the last Argentine military government (1976–1983).

During this period, some important changes occurred in the way archaeological research was carried out in the Argentine Northwest and Patagonia, the most studied regions in those years. As expressed by Tarragó (2003), there was a shift from a limited view of site to “area” or region as a whole; from the search of burials to the exploration of living areas and related activities (Cigliano 1961, 1962). Sites of different size and hierarchy were recorded and, for the first time, small sites or living units in the middle of agricultural fields were researched (Cigliano et al. 1960: 84). In the same way, there was an expressly stated search to connect sites with cave paintings with surrounding settlements in an attempt to determine their chronology (see Nastri 1999; Tarragó 2003).

During this period and the following decade, Argentinean intellectuals began to re-read Peronism – a political movement which they had certainly opposed – and they were dazzled by the Cuban revolution (Terán 2008). Then, Marx and Freud’s audience broadened and the psychoanalytic language permeated different social classes. Despite this progressive and modernizing atmosphere that Frondizi’s government allowed at universities and among academics, there were still representatives of some of the most anachronistic and racist positions ever exhibited by the Argentinean archaeology. For instance, in 1960 the *Annals of the newly created Commission for Scientific Research in Buenos Aires Province* surprisingly published a paper by Vignati, who in his latest writings had openly displayed his racist view about the aboriginal people of Argentina; a view which is present, in one way or another, in his whole research. In this article, Vignati discussed a high degree of “mestizaje” (mixed blood) of the very few Indians (basically Mapuche), who were living in the province, the wealthiest region of Argentina, and concluded that “Truly, the Indians exist no more in the province of Buenos Aires” (Vignati 1960: 99). In the final paragraph of the article, Vignati warned against the potential danger of a new indigenous immigration

³It means that support the ideas of the “Reforma Universitaria”, a reform promoted by young radical party students in Cordoba in 1916.

into the province, and by doing this, he sharply revealed his negative feelings against the indigenous people (Madrazo 1985; Curtoni and Politis 2006).

After a series of failed attempted coups, Frondizi's government was overthrown in 1962 by a military coup, which also dissolved the Congress and appointed José M. Guido as provisional president. This short-lived government, which lasted a year and a half, did not bring about any significant change to Argentinean archaeology.

The return of Arturo Illía's (from the Unión Cívica Radical party) democratic government (with Peronism still proscribed) in 1963 fully supported the development of anthropology, which consolidated its academic position (Madrazo 1985). Under the principles of new reforms, open selection processes returned to universities, the National Institute of Anthropology was created, and the first census of indigenous people was carried out. During this period, the first professional archaeologists graduated from the universities of La Plata and Buenos Aires. Illía's government, with an unenthusiastic social support at that time and under a strong pressure from the military, carried out a series of reforms targeted at improving individual rights and economic standing of the population. In the mid-1960s, logical empiricism, Marxism, and structuralism entered Argentina. The successful penetration of Althusser's writings prepared the path for the later strengthening of structuralism sparked by Eliseo Verón and for the Spanish translation of "Structural Anthropology" by Levi-Strauss (Terán 2008).

This phase, as previous years, was characterized by the coexistence of two culture-history trends (the Austrian-German and the Anglo-Saxon ones), the former being followed in Buenos Aires by Menghin in the final days of his career (he taught classes until 1968 and died in 1973, and had very active disciples like Bórmida, Austral, Lafón, Sanguinetti de Bormida, etc.), whereas the latter, being of a more neo-evolutionist persuasion, was popular at the universities of La Plata, Rosario, and Córdoba, where A.R. González and a group of his disciples and followers were building the chronological-cultural bases of the Argentinean Northwest. In 1965, a group of students of Anthropology at the University of Buenos Aires succeeded in asking the Faculty to intervene, unhappy with the theoretical Austrian-German culture-history orientation being taught there. They obtained irrefutable documents corroborating Menghin's links with the Nazi Party and the students' representative at the Academic Council of this institution sought immediate expulsion of Menghin from the university. However, the body of professors rejected this petition on the grounds that "they had to look ahead" (Fontán 2006).

It must be emphasized that during this government direct support was received from the president to proceed with the *XXXVII Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*, evidencing the interest of the national government in archaeology and in social sciences. President Illía supported the Congress as one of the main events to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Argentinean Independence, although several authorities had warned that the conditions in the country were not appropriate for this meeting (see *Jornadas de Antropología: 30 años de la carrera en Buenos Aires 1988*: 30–31).

Before the Congress of Americanists was held, the military coup headed by the General J.C. Onganía occurred and the new government did not pay any attention

to the event. The organizers decided to move the Congress to the city of Mar del Plata (400 km south of Buenos Aires), to avoid the participation of the new military authorities in the opening and closing ceremonies. The Congress was held without the government's participation and control and it was a significant scientific success as it generated a forum for discussion attended by 700 representatives from all over the world. Young Argentinean scholars had a unique opportunity to participate in high-level scientific sessions. The Congress' records published some time later evidence active engagement of local and foreign anthropologists (*Actas y Memorias. XXXVII Congreso Internacional de Americanistas 1968*).

The military coup in 1966 forced a large group of left-wing scientists to resign from their university posts and emigrate. This, according to Madrazo (1985), led to a shift to the right in the faculties at the University of Buenos Aires, although the overall staff remained unaltered. That year, universities lost their autonomy as the government intervened during a dreadful event known as "the night of the long batons". At the University of the Littoral in the city of Rosario, where important research projects were being developed at the Institute of Anthropology under direction of Dr. Krapovickas, massive resignations in protest against repressions and loss of university's autonomy involved 90% of the staff (Tarragó 2003). The same happened in the Institute of Anthropology at the National University of Córdoba, where Víctor Nuñez Regueiro and a research team had to resign (Laguens et al. 2008). At the University of La Plata, the impact was less damaging and archaeological research continued. The faculty received new researchers, such as P. Krapovickas and A.M. Lorandi, who had resigned from the University of the Littoral in Rosario (Lorandi com. pers.). The CONICET provided support to archaeologists who suffered from ideological discrimination at universities by offering support for their research. Academic freedom and university rights lost due to the government's actions did not return for almost 20 years.

General Onganía's government, which called itself *La Revolución Argentina* (The Argentinean Revolution), was strongly supported by the US politics and economy. Social inequality and curtailment of individual rights grew significantly. After several years, deteriorating social support and sense of unease weakened the dictatorship. Relevant political events, such as the 1969 social turmoil known as "El Cordobazo", resulted in Onganía's fall. He was replaced by more pragmatic and tolerant military presidents, such as General Levingston and, subsequently, General Lanusse. In fact, universities were less pressured by the military government and in La Plata, for example, an updated and more adequate anthropological curriculum was accepted. Local research centres, such as the Institute of Anthropology Research in Olavarría city promoted by E. Palavecino, and a new faculty of anthropology at the University of Mar del Plata (1969), with two specialties – sociocultural anthropology and archaeology, were created as alternatives to the metropolitan research centres. Eventually, in 1970, the first National Congress of Archaeology at the National University of Rosario was carried out (Fig. 2).

Social turmoil and the newly formed guerrillas (who executed General Aramburu, one of the military leaders of *La Revolución Libertadora*) forced democratic



Fig. 2 Opening session of the First National Congress of Argentinean Archaeology in Rosario in 1970. The person reading the opening speech is Dr. Alberto Rex González in the presence of the military local authority (photograph courtesy of the Archives at the Ethnographic Museum “Juan B. Ambrosetti”)

elections in 1972 and brought Peronism back to power. With Peron still proscribed, his deputy Héctor Cámpora was the key candidate for office. At the onset of 1973, he won the elections with more than 50% of the votes. Campora’s government, although completely supported by the Peronist left-wing and Peronist guerrillas (*Montoneros*), lasted for less than two months. He was forced to resign in order to allow new elections in which Peron could be the candidate. Therefore, Perón briefly became the president for the third time at the end of 1973, and he died in July 1974. The time from Campora’s victory in March 1973 until Peron’s death represents a period of dramatic changes in university life and, at the same time, of profound contradictions. This is one of the least analysed and most confusing periods in the history of Argentinean anthropology.

The political atmosphere around Cámpora’s government and during the brief period immediately succeeding it favoured a major boost for the social sciences and politicization of anthropology, resulting in changes in the theoretical approach, especially visible in the field of social anthropology. The Peronist left-wing controlled universities and scientific discussions were ideologically loaded. Social anthropologists, archaeologists, and students participated as activists of left-wing political organizations. Others became members of clandestine organizations and guerrilla movements. During Cámpora-Perón’s period, there was an attempt to identify the field of social anthropology with a more practical and participative approach, as can be seen in the faculty of anthropology at the University of Mar del Plata. It was necessary and desirable that anthropology should help with solving problems of the lower classes rather than only satisfy the intellectual curiosity of a few academics. A curriculum was designed to engage not only professors of anthropology, but also anthropologists concerned with current social problems ([Jornadas de Antropología:](#)

30 años de la carrera en Buenos Aires 1988: 50–51). It was an attempt to promote applied anthropology deeply engaged with the social relevant problems of the country. These topics had already been introduced by Lafón some years earlier in relation with concrete situations in the Argentinean Northwest. As it is stated in one of his articles:

“Could it be possible that our efforts contribute to end the dramatic situation in the north-west region, in the provinces in poverty, which stems from lack of adjustment in their social and economic structures? Could it be the moment of going out to the streets, to see those communities, study them, understand them and channel their problems through real solutions, other than theoretical or ministerial ones? If the glimpse of a possible solution turns out to be real, which we believe it to be, the time has come to become activist anthropologists” (Lafón 1969–1970: 288–289).

This allowed the incorporation of social theories and issues banned during the dictatorship into class curricula. In two of the most important universities, La Plata and Buenos Aires, professors who had been engaged with pro-government activities during the previous regime were questioned by some students and graduates (e.g., Bórmida at the University of Buenos Aires), but basically there were no resignations or dismissals. On the contrary, the CONICET was less acceptable to the intended “socialist revolution” and therefore changes in that institution were less pronounced.

The planned transformations were ambitious and had convincing slogans such as “the socialist patria”, “anthropology serving the people”, and “the new man”, but theoretically and practically, they were never implemented. Perhaps there was not enough time for the revolutionary attempts of the “national socialism” to be carried out, or these desires never found a way to significantly transform archaeology. In their “cosmetic” aspects, the modifications seemed very important, but they did not affect deeply the organizational structure. For example, the Ethnographic Museum of Buenos Aires was called the “Centre of Recovery of Popular Culture José Imbelloni”, not because Imbelloni would have been worried about the “popular culture”, but because it was a recognition of his Peronist past (*Jornadas de Antropología: 30 años de la carrera en Buenos Aires 1988*: 49). The National University of Buenos Aires was then called the National and Popular University of Buenos Aires. It is difficult to know whether the University and the Museum became popular centres of research and teaching or whether they continued pursuing their own agendas in the hands of intellectuals at times of political changes.

In 1974, the Third National Congress of Archaeology in Salta was held and it turned to be a great scientific event. Most national archaeologists were present along with a generation of graduates and numerous students from different faculties interested in discussing the role of archaeology in the nation-building process turning a third world country into “national socialism” (Fig. 3). Apart from these participants, there were some well-known foreign archaeologists who were clearly left-wing-oriented: John Murra from the US (who fought as a volunteer for the Red Brigades in the Spanish Civil War), José Luis Lorenzo (a Spanish republican exiled in México), and Lautaro Núñez (a dissident archaeologist from Chile threatened by Pinochet’s government). There are several written accounts of this Congress. One in the Students Centre’s report at the UBA, recognized as an accurate report published by Aschero (1973), then a young fellow at CONICET, where conferences



Fig. 3 Opening session of the Third National Congress of Argentinean Archaeology. From *left to right*: Edagardo Garbulsky (social anthropologist), Pedro Krapovickas, Mónica de Lorenzi, Víctor Núñez Regueiro, Myriam Tarragó, unidentified member of staff, Pío Pablo Díaz (Head of the Archaeological Museum of Cachi), unidentified member of staff, Ana María Lorandi, two unidentified young people, Julia Díaz (Pío's wife), Alberto Rex González, and Héctor D'Antoni (Photo courtesy Miryam Tarragó)

and the most important discussions are summarized (see also Tarragó 2003). The other was published in a weekly magazine of the Peronist right-wing called *El Caudillo* (creating an analogy between Perón and Franco), where the Congress was shown as a “Marxist meeting” supported by the governor of the Peronist left-wing (Fig. 5). The post-Congress tour to the Museum of Cachi and its neighbouring archaeological sites (80 km southeast from Salta) was presented as a visit to the guerrillas camps for training purposes (Fig. 4). A. R. González was presented as the mastermind behind the Congress and “Marxist ideologist” followed by his disciples, at that time prominent young archaeologists (namely, Miryam Tarragó, Víctor Nuñez Regueiro, Osvaldo Heredia, Hector D'Ántoni, etc.). This groundless denunciation, along with other reactions, made them lose most of their jobs and emigrate few years later. The papers presented in the Congress were ready to be published in the proceedings of the event when, immediately after the military coup in 1976, they mysteriously disappeared (Tarragó 2003).

The short 1973–1974 period disallows detection of any substantial changes in archaeological theory, although new approaches continued to be explored. Orquera analysed this period at the University of Buenos Aires and pointed out that he and Lafón eliminated “all the conflicting and unsustainable aspects of the culture-history school of the Menghin's approach... (trying to) give more importance to the evolutionist, cultural aspect of Childe... I turned Childe into the central theme of the program”, (*Jornadas de Antropología: 30 años de la carrera en Buenos Aires 1988*: 60).



Fig. 4 Trip post-Congress to Cachi to visit the local museum and archaeological sites. From *left* to *right*: Mónica de Lorenzi, Lautaro Nuñez, John Murra, and Miryam Tarragó (Photo courtesy Miryam Tarragó)

For Orquera, Lafón had become a theoretical referent, a *primus inter pares* ([Jornadas de Antropología: 30 años de la carrera en Buenos Aires 1988](#): 66).

The emerging theoretical proposals were clearly of Marxist orientation and in tune with the new intellectual outlook appearing in other countries, especially Peru, Mexico, and Venezuela.⁴ This current of thought stemmed mainly from Emilio Choy's work (which was taken up again by Lumbreras in his book "Archaeology as social science" in 1974); simultaneously Sanoja and Vargas (1992) in Venezuela

⁴Editor's note: see the chapter by I. Vargas and M. Sanoja in this volume.

some of which were among the disappeared Congress manuscripts, were oriented in the same direction (Tarragó 2003).

As a product of the renewed interest in the social sciences, the faculty of Anthropology was established in 1973 at the University of Salta and at the National University of Misiones. The former presented two specializations: social anthropology and archaeology, while the latter only included social anthropology. At the National University of La Plata, archaeology continued to be taught within a frame of sustained development, but only a few social anthropologists were added to the existing faculty. This university consisted of a body of qualified professors who organized a highly demanding curriculum. The students, nonetheless, were seriously affected by the political problems of the country. Due to their active engagement in politics during this period, the university became a continuous forum for political discussion.

After Peron's death in 1974 and the assumption of power by his wife Isabel Martínez de Perón, the Peronist right-wing's influence deepened. The university's authority fell in the hands of reactionary members of the government (the so-called "Mission Ivanissevich", called after the new Ministry of Education). The "ideological fight" started by setting off repressions against the social left-wing scientists. At the end of 1974, the University of La Plata was closed for several months and when it reopened the conditions for students and the faculty changed: serious restrictions of individual rights and an ideological persecution of left-wing intellectuals were imposed. During the 1974–1976 period, modifications occurred mainly in the field of social anthropology, whereas archaeology continued without significant changes. In Buenos Aires, Lafón was dismissed from his post and accused, among other things, of having carried out an archaeological display in Cuba. At times of the right-wing strengthening, a trip to Cuba was enough to be accused of being a communist responsible for attempting "national dissolution".

In March 1976, the announced military coup took place, headed by General Videla as president. He started the so-called "process of national reorganization". Hence, military repression and state violence acquired unthinkable characteristics and systematic persecutions of left-wing scientists and others who disagreed with the government began. These persecutions affected directly many Argentinean social anthropologists and archaeologists, even those who were not activists. A.R. Gonzalez, the head of the archaeology section at the Museum of La Plata and professor at that university, was dismissed from his post immediately. Nevertheless, he kept his position as researcher in the CONICET, limited to direct research without financial support for fieldworks. Due to persecutions, his disciples, namely Víctor Nuñez Regueiro, José Perez Gollán, Myriam Tarragó, Hectór D'Antoni and Osvaldo Heredia, had to leave the country to continue their scientific activities. They were not only restricted in academic activities, but also their lives were threatened. Emigration of these young archaeologists occurred when important works were being developed in the Argentinean Northwest and after they had already formed their own research teams. Some of them, especially Heredia, were exploring the theoretical foundations of the newly proposed "Latin-American Social Archaeology" (Lumbreras 1974; Lorenzo et al. 1976). Bórmida and Cigliano died during the first years of the military dictatorship. Both were heads of research teams

in archaeology and anthropology. They also held important chairmanships at universities and the CONICET. Due to a gap created by a whole generation of archaeologists who had lost their jobs for not agreeing with the regime, some young archaeologists benefited from this situation and quickly advanced toward higher positions during the almost 8 years the military government lasted. The early years of the regime were characterized by the “disappearance” of young people, many of them university students. Anthropology faculties in all universities suffered losses of many students, some of them decisively devoted to archaeology and collaborators of active research teams.

During the military dictatorship, some anthropology faculties were either definitely closed down (Mar del Plata University in 1978) or temporarily restricted (e.g., La Plata, Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Salta) and the curricula were modified in such a way as to minimize their social content. At the University of La Plata, for example, the curriculum was reversed to the times before 1958, and anthropological subjects appeared in the final stage of the specialization, after a series of seemingly endless subjects on biology. Anthropological and archaeological subjects occupied a restricted and utterly insufficient space in the university education.

During this period, a group of young archaeologists at the beginning of their careers searched for theoretical alternatives. Practically as self-taught students, young archaeologists began to study articles by Binford, Schiffer, Flannery, Clarke, etc. and applied methods, models, and concepts that derived from some of the variants of the ecological-systemic approach. The ideas of those American and British scholars were discussed in classes at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, but they were peripheral in research designs (see discussion in Farro et al. 1999). This group of young researchers represented a very diverse approach to methodology and theory, where different doses of three main trends merged: culture-history, neo-evolutionism, and elements of French archaeological methodology (borrowed especially from F. Bordes). This generation formed a significant group for theoretical-methodological discussion and studies applied in their research devoted to hunter-gatherers. In the organization of the *Jornadas de Antropología 30 años de la carrera en Buenos Aires*, this period was called “parallel formations”, referring to the research groups which had to complete their scientific training or develop their investigations outside the university or the CONICET.

1983: The Return to Democracy

The democratic government of Raúl Alfonsín formed at the end of 1983 generated conditions for the advancement of anthropology. Alfonsín's government (1983–1989) can be characterized as a social democracy with a strong support from the middle class and moderate left-wing intellectuals. He restored human rights and prosecuted the heads of the military junta. However, pressure from the military was constant and the important foreign debt (which had grown incommensurably during the military dictatorship) conditioned Alfonsín's government politically and economically. Although he tried to institute economic independence and

improve income distribution, the results were not as expected by the voters. Nevertheless, Alfonsín's greatest achievements were the recovery and consolidation of democracy, respect for human rights, and condemnation of the military juntas.

Also, during this period "repatriation" of exiled scientists was promoted and scholarships were awarded. Many archaeologists began their professional careers through scholarships and others entered tenured positions as researchers in the CONICET. Between 1984 and 1989, archaeological research was significantly subsidized by the government, allowing researchers and scholars to carry out fieldworks and to purchase the necessary equipment for expeditions. The CONICET policy allowed the incorporation of a great number of young archaeologists to conduct research through scholarships. In 1984, the Secretary of Science and Technology was created, granting the CONICET higher authority in academic research.

During Alfonsín's government, universities reclaimed autonomy based on the University Reform of 1918 and most of the professors and faculty members underwent an open and fair selection process. State universities also received funds for equipment and broadening of the academic curricula. New degrees in anthropology and archaeology appeared, especially in the Argentinean Northwest. The first was created within the Faculty of Human Sciences at the National University of Jujuy, including specializations in social anthropology and archaeology. The National University of Tucuman open a degree in archaeology within the Faculty of Natural Sciences, under the direction of V. Núñez Regueiro (who had just returned from exile), and in 1987, thanks to an initiative of N. de la Fuente, the National University of Catamarca opened a new academic unit specialized in archaeology. That year, a group of young militants of the Unión Cívica Radical party encouraged the organization of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Universidad Nacional Del Centro in Olavarría city. The first year of enrollment was 1988 and the specializations in sociocultural anthropology and archaeology were offered. During this democratic period, other universities also gained enough power to pursue degrees in anthropology, which reopened in Salta and Rosario.

In 1985, the organization of the INAI (National Institute of Indigenous Affairs) with the enactment of Law 23.302 represented the turning point in public politics for the recognition of indigenous people's rights. Politics concerning indigenous groups could be linked to the beginning of the first claims for the restitution of human remains in our country. On the other hand, the first joint works among archaeologists and representatives of local communities began at the end of the 1980s and can be regarded as expressions of recognizing state policies. For example, at the Museum of the Añelo site, founded in 1989 and located in the Confluencia department, Neuquén Province, Patagonia Region, a cemetery of indigenous people of approximately 500 years old is exhibited. Members of the Mapuche Paynemil Community, who live in the area where the cemetery was found, participated in all the stages of research and currently serve as museum guardians and managers (Biset 1989; Cúneo 2004).

Also in 1986, due democratic consolidation, the Argentinean Team of Forensic Anthropology (EAAF) – a non-governmental, non-profitable organization devoted to forensic anthropology and investigation of human rights violations – was constituted. The EAAF was a pioneer in the development of this sort of investigations and now is a prestigious international organization called upon to work in different countries of Latin-America, Europe, Africa, and Asia (Fig. 6, Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team 2007).



Fig. 6 Excavation in a massive grave of “missing” people at the cemetery San Vicente, Córdoba (Photo courtesy of the Argentinean team of forensic anthropology)

As for the theoretical context of archaeology, processual approaches were consolidated during Alfonsín’s government, especially those related to systemic ecology emphasizing the concept of adaptation (particularly in the archaeology of hunter-gatherers) (i.e., Borrero and Lanata 1988). However, there are still remnants of the culture-history approach in the Austrian–German tradition. Furthermore, the return of archaeologists exiled during the military dictatorship generated a revival of the study of complex societies in the Argentinean Northwest. These researchers followed the “lineage” initiated by A. R. González and developed their ideas embracing the North American culture-history and neo-evolutionist theoretical principles expanded by elements of chiefdoms’ economy and politics and a wide range of structuralist, semiotics, and symbolic analyses (Llamazares 1989; Kusch and Gordillo 1997). However, it must be stated that none of them continued with the incipient Marxists-based approaches that had been explored 10 years earlier (see e.g., the participation of José A. Pérez Gollán in a meeting at Teotihuacan in October 1975, Lorenzo et al. 1976, or Nuñez Regueiro 1974).

1989: Neoliberalism

This period includes the presidency of Carlos Menem (1989–1999) from the Peronista party, when a neoliberal economic model was installed, public services transferred to the private sector, and stronger relationships with the US deepened political and economic dependence. During the first years of this government, the

National Congress passed two laws, one about Economic Emergence and the other on State Reform, and implemented the Convertibility Law which, after a serious devaluation, established a false parity by which an Argentinean peso equaled one American dollar; this parity lasted the whole decade. On the international scene, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union transformed the US into a hegemonic global power. The alignment of Argentinean and US policies was expressed, among other things, in the participation of the Argentinean army in the Gulf War and in the UN-controlled missions. The internationalization of political and economic affairs encouraged by the government had undoubtedly impacted the interests, issues, and agendas of scientific research. In this sense, most of archaeological investigations in Argentina were influenced by theoretical and methodological approaches imported from North America.

The scientific practice in general and particularly anthropology were at risk because of budgetary restrictions faced by the CONICET, reduction of incomes for scholars and researchers, lack of subsidies for projects, and threats to transfer superior public education to the private sector. These facts resulted in the political mobilization of university students who organized demonstrations and strikes. However, with the ideological tolerance promoted by Alfonsín's government in the 1980s, a new phase in Argentinean archaeology started, which may be characterized as an incipient theoretical plurality. Dominated by the processual approach and the ecological-systemic perspective focused on the economic, technological, and settlement dimensions, new theoretical approaches such as the evolutionist ecology emerged (Dunnell 1989). Post-processual alternatives focused on developing and discussing other aspects of the past and archaeological practice related to the use of symbols, power relations, heritage uses, and political implications of the discipline, etc. were also put forward. Some of these developments stemmed from new centres of research formed during the tenure of the previous government. In some way, the theoretical approaches from the ex-exiled archaeologists, who predominantly were former incipient Marxists in the 1970s or early defectors from the Latin American Social Archaeology, presented a more fertile soil for the post-processual research agendas. It is also true that these post-processual developments occurred faster in the Argentinean Northwest archaeology, where processualism had not impacted research agendas as strong as in Patagonia. Furthermore, the new faculties generated graduates who, along with young professors, constituted research teams operating within distinctive theoretical frames, independent from the agendas presented at the University of La Plata and Buenos Aires, both characterized by a great deal of disparity in theoretical approaches. Among the standing centres located in the interior of the country which explored ex-central theoretical developments were Córdoba, Tucuman, Catamarca, and Olavarría (Buenos Aires Province).

In 1993, which was the International Year of the World Indigenous Population established by the United Nations, the Secretary of Culture of the Nation organized the biggest exhibition of indigenous cultures presented in the National Library. This exhibition, called "People from the Earth", was organized within the "Federal Plan of Culture", whose guidelines were oriented towards the preservation and conservation of the cultural heritage of the nation and to the projection of the Argentinean

culture in the world. The exhibition represented the history of the indigenous peopling of Argentina from the earliest archaeological settlements, beginning with the reconstruction of the archaeological site *Cueva de las Manos* (Acosta et al. 1996). The participation of indigenous people in the social, cultural, and political agendas during the 1990s was in accord with international policies and values regarding indigenous people in general. At the same time, different processes of ethnic reemergence were pursued in Argentina, with several movements of the Mapuches, Kollas, Tobas, and Wichis, as well as political actions of indigenous leaders, who sought recognition from the state (Pizarro 2006).

The Argentinean National Constitution amended in 1994 included the following paragraph:

“The Congress will recognize the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of the Argentinean Indigenous people. It will guarantee the respect to their identity; (...) recognize the legal status of their communities and the ownership and community property of the lands they have traditionally occupied; and regulate the handing over of others apt and sufficient for human development; (...) Assure their participation in management related to their natural resources” (Argentinean National Constitution 1994, paragraph 17 article 75).

In fact, in 1994 the first repatriation of indigenous human remains and their return to the community was carried out. After several years of restrictions, the remains of Cacique Inacayal, which were deposited in the Museum of Natural Sciences in La Plata, were returned to the Tehuelche descendants (Politis 1994; Endere 2002), (see Fig. 7). This case must be interpreted not just as the result of a governmental policy, but as the consequence of human rights policies promoted since the mid-1980s, and as a reflection of the newly acquired legal and constitutional recognition of the



Fig. 7 Repatriation of Inacayal's skeleton to the indigenous people of Patagonia Region (Photo Gustavo Politis)

indigenous communities. To a great extent, these actions can be seen as responses to mandates and international policies followed loyally by the Argentinean government in order to be recognized as part of the world's core and not as semi-peripheral.

The Last Decade: From Crisis to Restoration

In 1999, Menem's presidency ended with the national economic situation in a dismal condition; the gross domestic product had fallen around 3.4% in relation to the previous year; unemployment was around 14%, and poverty had tripled. The country had serious problems concerning education and health, a high tax deficit, and an enormous foreign debt with annual due dates for payments. Economic globalization and deepening of the neoliberal model had caused disparity between groups with high income living in gated neighbourhoods and the middle and lower classes increasingly impoverished. In such a context, at the end of 1999 Fernando De la Rúa, from the Unión Cívica Radical party, was elected president. His economic team decided to keep the Convertibility Law and to correct the unequal incomes distribution. In order to reorganize the public debt, De la Rúa took several measures such as tax increases and international loans to reduce the pressure imposed by the foreign debt. During 2000, the government tried to control public expenses, lower interest rates, and keep financial stability. However, high international debts, the unfavourable global context, and lack of more aggressive political actions weakened De la Rúa's government.

In October 2000, the Second International Meeting of Archaeological Theory of South America (TAAS) was held in Olavarría city, Buenos Aires province. This meeting meant an important reference-point considering at least two aspects: (1) for the first time in many years a significant number of international scholars had been invited as guest lecturers, which allowed face-to-face discussions with representatives of processual and post-processual approaches (e.g., Stephen Shennan, Randall MacGuire, Cristóbal Gnecco, Almudena Hernando, Robert Layton, Antonio Gilman, Joan Gero, Sian Jones, James Steele, etc.), and (2) some local researchers presented the results from systematic research projects conceptually linked to specific post-processual trends as gender, multi-vocality, human agency, landscape archaeology, etc. (e.g., Javier Natri, Cristina Scattolin, Alejandro Haber, Irina Podgorny, etc.). Evolutionist approaches were consolidated around the discussion centre at the University of Buenos Aires (see Martínez and Lanata 2002). To Argentinean scholars, this meeting not only revealed theoretical plurality that had started in the previous decade, but also expressed the status of archaeological theory worldwide. Representatives and lecturers from the US, Canada, England, France and Spain, and from different Latin American countries stated that the theoretical harmony in this part of the world followed basically the agenda of research defined in other countries. Almost all of the presentations were published in four books (see Martínez and Lanata 2002; Curtoni and Endere 2003; Politis and Peretti 2004; Williams and Alberti 2005). These books were widely distributed among scholars and some chapters were incorporated in the university syllabi related to archaeological theory.

The same year, the National Law 25.276 was passed allowing repatriation of another indigenous human remains. The first article of the law states that “The Executive, through the Institute of Indigenous Affairs, will move the remains of the Cacique Mariano Rosas – Panghitruz Gûor, which are deposited in the Museum of Natural Sciences in La Plata, returning them to the Ranquel people in the province of La Pampa”. The repatriation of the Cacique Panghitruz to the Rankûlche community was carried out in June 2001. The remains were taken to the Leubucó Lake to be deposited in a mausoleum (Endere and Curtoni 2006; Lazzari 2007).

In 2001, the government budgetary cuts reduced public expenditure in health and education, causing adversity for the population in general, and students in particular. In this context, the XIV National Congress of Argentinean Archaeology took place in the city of Rosario. Despite the economic crisis, more than 700 scholars attended it. It was clearly seen during the discussions that the incipient theoretical plurality from the previous period was growing. The worsening of the economic situation and public distrust in the financial system resulted in a political crisis that led De la Rúa to resign from his post on 20 Dec 2001, in the middle of violent repressions where several demonstrators were killed in the Plaza de Mayo square.

On 2 January 2002, Eduardo Duhalde was elected the new president by the Legislative Assembly to complete the remainder of De la Rúa’s term. The country was in the middle of a dramatic social, political, and economic upheaval. Among the measures taken by this temporary government was devaluation, thus ending the Convertibility Law and free fluctuation of the US dollar. The government introduced an economic plan based on a strong devaluation of the Argentinean peso, which allowed the economy to grow slowly after years of recession. However, the increasing social pressure due to unsatisfied demands forced Duhalde to call national elections in May 2003.

During this two presidential periods within 4 years (1999–2003), no substantial changes were introduced to the practice of archaeology, while in relation with theoretical developments, we can argue that only some explorations and alternative questioning about the processual and evolutionist approaches were published (Martínez and Lanata 2002; *Actas Jornadas de Arqueología de Patagonia 1999*). On the other hand, some applications of the social theory began to be discussed in the field of the Argentinean and South American archaeological theory (Zarankin and Acuto 1999). Finally, in this short period, several compilations were published about Argentinean archaeology both for the academicians (Berberian and Nielsen 2001) and the public (Raffino 1999; Tarragó 2000), which crystallized the growing interest in the archaeological knowledge.

In May 2003, Néstor Kirchner, from the Peronista party, was elected president of Argentina, and during his first years of presidency, significant political and economic changes were introduced. The government applied a model of regional growth and development giving priority to issues such as the creation of jobs and social inclusion. Internationally, there were negotiations to pay off the foreign debt in order to carry out an autonomous and unconditioned policy. A sustained growth and increase in exports allowed the government to obtain an unprecedented tax surplus (historical record).

In result, the government pledged to invest up to 1% of the GDP progressively in research creating a sustained annual increase of research funds.

During Kirchner's term, the CONICET received significant financial support for scholarships to hire researchers and subsidies for research projects. This was probably one of the best periods for scientific and technological developments as numerous researchers entered the state-sponsored system, creating an impact on the social sciences in general and on archaeology in particular. In regard to scholarships and tenured research position in the last decade, an increase of about 54% (Fig. 8) can be noticed and it could be attributed to Kirchner's presidency. It must be mentioned that, except for the *Fundación Antorchas* and during relatively short periods, Argentinean archaeology has received its major economic governmental support through the Secretary of Science and Technology (CONICET, ANPCYT), as well as through National Universities.

In 2004, the XV National Congress of Archaeology in Río Cuarto, Córdoba Province, took place. This congress represented a milestone in the discipline's history in Argentina because of discussions concerning the sociopolitical consequences of archaeological research and the place of indigenous people in investigations. A year later, the discussion initiated during the Congress resulted in the "Río Cuarto Declaration", which presents an agreement between indigenous communities and professional interests (*Declaración de Río Cuarto 2005*). Among the agreements achieved, it aroused the strong recommendation of the non-exhibition of human remains; the promotion of respect to the ancestors' sacredness of indigenous sites; and the need for previous agreements of indigenous communities to do archaeological research on their cultural heritage. In Argentina, the practice of sustained participation of indigenous groups in management designs and archaeological site management is still poor, especially taking into consideration the number of indigenous communities related to places of national heritage interest (*Mamaní 2006; Zaburlin et al. 2006*).

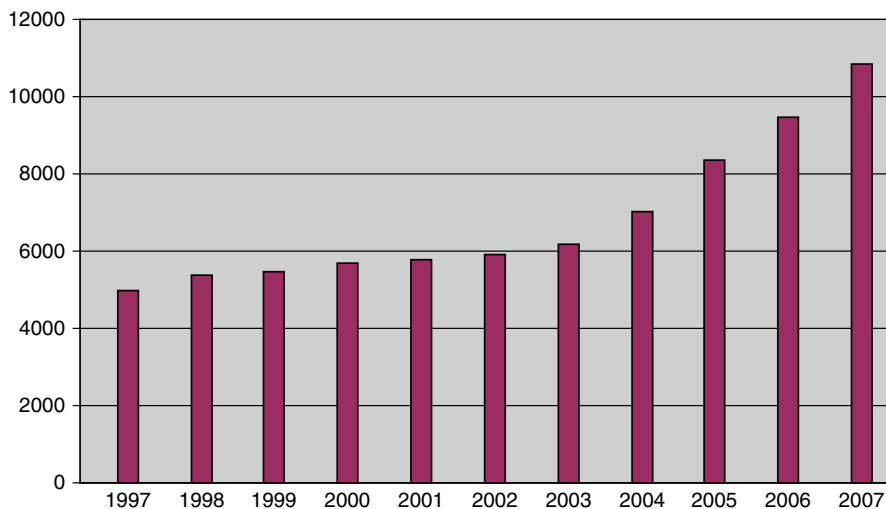


Fig. 8 Number of scholarships and tenured research position in CONICET, 1997–2007

On the other hand, this government emphasized unprecedented policies on human rights, preserving cultural memories, and cultural recognition. Undoubtedly, these significant initiatives have impacted the field of archaeology. In this regard, there have been works and approaches linked to governmental policies on human rights in the last years (Funari and Zarankin 2006). The Argentinean Team of Forensic Anthropology, which conducts its research in several regions of the country searching for evidence of atrocities committed by the military junta, is a good example of these new policies (Olmo and Salado Puerto 2008).

In 2007, two important events took place in Argentina that highlighted the development and consolidation of archaeology as a scientific discipline. One was the IV International Meeting of Archaeological Theory in South America in the city of Catamarca, considered as significant to the region as the World Archaeological Congress. The second was the XVI National Congress of Argentinean Archaeology in the city of Jujuy, with a great number of archaeologists attending and the presence of indigenous communities. Both meetings delivered discussions on theoretical issues, especially plurality emphasized in the last period, but perhaps even more significant were discussions about issues that broadened local agendas of archaeological research. Two topics dominated: issues related to indigenous communities and forensic studies related to violations of human rights. Specific subjects included indigenous lands claims, conflicts caused by miners, archaeology of state repression, and direct participation of representatives of indigenous communities and country people in creating research guidelines and new challenging research proposals.

During this period, institutional strengthening of archaeological practice is noticeable in the emergence of new centres of investigation around the country, increase of incomes, promotion of the national tenured research at CONICET, and overall dynamics and diversity observed in the academic centres and scientific events. In general, the present-day Argentinean archaeology is characterized by a critical attitude in relation to its own practice and its context of immersion. As for theory, it presents plurality of approaches, some clearly defined conceptually and methodologically (e.g., evolutionist ecology, Darwinism), and others with more blurred borders and internal structures, which do not allow a clear paradigmatic designation. The strength of processual archaeology (and derivatives) and the lack of Marxist-based approaches (not even in their Latin American Social Archaeology versions) may be the two most specific features that differ from other Latin American archaeologies.

Final Remarks

In this brief review of Argentinean archaeology, from its birth as an academic discipline to its current state, we have tried to call attention upon the relationship between the discipline's development and the wandering routes of the national politics. Surely, some important events remained unconsidered, relevant characters unmentioned, and a number of ideas not discussed. This is the risk taken and the price paid for this kind of analysis. From its origins within the natural sciences, until its consolidation closer to the social sciences within the last years, Argentinean archaeology

has mirrored key features of the national political life: a series of democratic stages, sometimes very short and confusing, interrupted by the right-wing and authoritarian military-induced rulings. During democratic periods, science was more pluralist and Argentinean academic activities advanced. Archaeology achieved academic independence, the key research institution was created, and university departments were enlarged to incorporate specialties in archaeology. Research was consolidated and important scientific events and meetings were held. During the military periods, academic freedoms declined, research centres were closed or reduced, and ideological discrimination and persecutions towards dissident scientists occurred forcing some to exile.

Furthermore, ideologies adopted by different Argentinean and other Latin American governments and their politics served as a filter for theoretical approaches. For instance, the Austrian–German-inspired culture-history approach along with its anti-evolutionism was one of a few scholarly trends tolerated by the Catholic-based Peron's government and conservative military governments. The Anglo-Saxon version of culture-history approach was adopted in the post-Peronist period (after 1955), during weak democratic governments (Frondizi and Illía) and dictatorships whose politics strongly depended on the relations with the United States. Marxists approaches had a short popularity along the first half of the 1970s, (during the Cámpora–Perón period) and they were fervently rejected during military dictatorships, especially the last one (1976–1983). The processual approach has transversed several ideologies: it was incorporated during the military dictatorship in the second half of the 1970s, was further popularized during the social democracy of Alfonsín's government, and reached its peak along with the evolutionist-inspired ecology during the neoliberal period of Menem's government. With the inception of post-processual alternatives, strong theoretical plurality (the Austrian–German culture-history approach had already disappeared) was displayed at the times of De la Rúa and Duhalde's governments. These two governments (1999–2003) may be regarded politically and economically as transitory governments when neoliberal order was disrupted and the country began to slowly lean again, as during Alfonsín's government, towards a sort of Creole-style social democracy. As a result, Argentinean archaeological theory and practice were (and may still be) immersed in discussions on alternative theoretical propositions, political transition, and search for consolidation and recognition.

During Kirchner's moderate-left-wing government (2003–2007), ethical issues dominated discussions on archaeological praxis. A critical perspective has led to the realization that views by indigenous communities must be considered in research agendas and protection policies of archaeological sites. But above all, during this period archaeology was reinforced through new policies allowing the incorporation of numerous young archaeologists into the scientific system. This government also set a policy to prioritize social and political integration to other South American countries. Unlike the previous presidencies with their economic and political dependence and alignment with the United States, the last period stands for a search of autonomy in a Latin American context. We argue that these political innovations impacted Argentinean research as a whole. A subtle shift in

issues and problems was currently discussed during academic events, as well as an incipient South Americanist agenda. These discussions seek to reflect and argue about such current situations and conflicts as the impact of mining on indigenous land, limiting access to land due to farming and tourism, and how country people and indigenous communities are dispossessed of their rights and properties.

Through this summary of the last 50 years of Argentinean archaeology, we attempted to show that theoretical and practical developments of the discipline have not been exempted from its sociopolitical context and that the conceptual frameworks also responded to the dynamics of the field. Thus, we have demonstrated how, in a historic perspective, archaeological theory and practice reflect the complexity and dynamic interrelations among politics, science, and society.

Acknowledgments We thank Ludomir Lozny, editor of this volume, for inviting us to participate in it. Marisa Scarafoni and the authorities of the Ethnographic Museum of Buenos Aires gave us permission to reproduce one of the images that illustrates this work. Several ideas in this chapter have emerged from talks with colleagues interested in the political dimension of archaeology; they encourage critical reflections partly present in this chapter. In this sense, we would like to thank Peter Ucko, José Perez Gollán, María Luz Endere, and Miryam Tarragó for their contributions during this time.

This work is part of Núcleo Consolidado INCUAPA (Archaeological and Paleontological Investigations of the Pampa Quaternary period) subsidized by the Secretary of Science and Technology at the UNCPBA, CONICET (PIP number 5424) and the ANPCYT (PICT number 04-12776).

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