
Social Movements and Archaeology

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Introduction

With the aim of presenting a contemporary and yet generalized definition of Archaeology in relation to Social Movements, it is necessary to situate both as two fields with origins that are dissimilar, but not necessarily opposing, and increasing in mutual collaboration. The first field, Archaeology, is found to be historically bound to the production of academic knowledge around the discipline of the past, usually in agreement with the political interests of the Administrators of the colonies and the modern Nation States. The second, Social Movements, is linked to emerging collective action and is about eminently practical orientations aimed at broadening the areas of participation in decisions of collective interest. And as such, it primarily contains and promotes, over all, a political meaning.

Archaeology has produced collaborative works with social movements that even gave origin to specific lines of work within the discipline; this is the case, for example, with Feminist Archaeology (e.g., Colomer et al. 1999) and Gender Archaeology (e.g., Gero & Conkey 1991; Gilchrist 1999) which were originally characterized by their questioning of the male-centered standards involved in the production of knowledge within the discipline and the cultural and politically construed character of essentialist categories employed by the discipline to approach the explanation and interpretation of the subject and data of the past. Such work renewed discussions of the subjective position of archaeologists in academic production and their political and social stakes within the social movements in their own societies.

But it was the postcolonial theorists who focused the attention of the discussions on the predicament and political role of the intellectuals starting from the subjective position of the researcher; they based the problem of discursive displacement that the new academics and professionals coming from the old colonies were beginning to produce at the interior of the Humanities and Social Sciences. As Castro Gómez & Mendieta (1998) aptly explain it, the postcolonial theories produce knowledge in a kind of “discursive translocation” starting from a crisis that is produced at the core of these theories. However, the postcolonial intellectuals’ realization of their own hegemonic position, in academia and outside of it, necessitated the review of the paper that anticolonial and Third World narratives assigned historically to “critical intellect,” a situation that also demanded the redefinition of the relation between theory and practice (Castro Gómez & Mendieta 1998). It is in this way that postcolonial theories, also in archaeology, were characterized by the appearance of these tensions of identity belonging to an era in which local knowledge interacted with global projects in a dynamic and changeable way, blurring the cultural frontiers.

Bound to political outlines of a postcolonial nature, the so-called Indigenous Archaeology, currently considered a subdiscipline within archaeology, was also developing during the last decades of the twentieth century as part of the agenda of work of various archaeologists especially in countries such as Australia, the United States, and Canada, and in response to the demands put forth by the movements of communities and nations of original inhabitants. George Nicholas (2008: 1660) has referred to Indigenous Archaeology “as a form of archaeology where the indigenous people are involved in the care and excavation of the cultural and corporal remains of their ancestors.” However, this definition does not specify a line of work, not exclusively of indigenous subjects, and that in a broader plan it hopes to be a project of decolonization of the practice of archaeology the world over. That is to say, it deals with a redesign that occurs at the interior of the discipline of the ethical and

political role assumed by archaeologists and the form in which they plan their research in relation to the communities with whom they interact (e.g., Ucko 1989; Watkins 1999, 2001, 2003; Smith & Wobst 2005; Atalay 2006a, b, 2007a, b; Endere & Curtoni 2003, 2006, 2007; Smith & Jackson 2006; Smith & Burke 2007; Burke et al. 2008; Bruchac, Hart & Wobst 2010; Jofré et al. 2010; Nicholas 2010).

The Colombian archaeologist Cristóbal Gnecco (2008) referred to Indigenous or Native Archaeologies as “archaeologies of local meaning” or “reactionary political practices” to the dominant cultural rationale. These new archaeological practices, closer to emerging social movements, promote and contribute to the construction of plural areas and are also, as Alejandro Haber (2008) sustains, displacements that the discipline carries out to rise up in its colonial relation with the local communities. Pedro Funari (2001, 2004) has for his part adhered to the denomination of “Public Archaeology” to refer to these new pluralisms that occur in the field of scientific archaeological practice. He understood them as horizontal expressions and not hierarchical in difference, in terms of political economy like interpretation, that which implicates archaeologies with publics, protagonists, and broader purposes. These collective, public, and plural archaeologies can be conceived “as a coproduction in which the involved sectors collaborate, learn and produce history together, although not without productive conflict” (Gnecco 2008: 101).

Key Issues and Current Debates

International View: Archaeology and Social Movements in South America

To speak of Archaeology and Social Movements, we should refer ourselves to the type of relation initiated between this discipline and the conflicts, interests, and orientations that these social movements pose and or manifest. An always complex and delicate field is that of the processes of patrimonialization in which Archaeology is generally implicated as the controlling agent of the State. However, as suggested earlier when

I referred to the Indigenous Archaeology, there currently exists a number, fortunately ever-growing, of collaborative works between archaeologists and sectors of society historically passed over in its rights, such as the Original Inhabitants or communities of decedent indigenous population that acknowledge other types of meanings and values in the remains of the past. In these cases, the archaeological patrimonialization of the remains of the living memory of a people can become the imposition of foreign values on these communities and the exposure can become the expropriation by means of legal mechanisms of intervention operated by state agents, multilateral organizations, private companies, etc. They offer an interesting debate with respect to distinctive archaeologists of the South closely reflecting the implications of the processes of patrimonialization in different ex colonial countries of the world (Diálogos del Sur 2007). As for example, Zimmerman sustains:

Academic archaeology should learn to live in the real world and acknowledge that not everybody considers the past public heritage. Many people that are not archaeologists consider archaeological heritage as their own, not as belonging to archaeology; they want to protect it and interpret it themselves or, they strongly wish for it to be left alone. (Diálogos del Sur 2007: 14)

Patrimonialization is an “act of memory” in which the forces of political conflicts are implicated, whose finality is the production of a significant heritage for the State, and through which determined social actors try to conserve particular memories of their past. For this motivation, the processes of patrimonialization are accompanied by emerging processes that can be called contra-patrimonialization. These last processes would be something like the contra-hegemonic powers produced in and for the hegemonic conflicts for the definition and establishment of the heritage of a people or nation. From my own experience as an indigenous archaeologist working in the Republic of Argentina, I offer a case for analysis as a current debate, in which I try to demonstrate how we can think of possible relations between Archaeology and the emerging Social Movements from the

perspective of patrimonialization. The case I refer to is, of course, subject to the local peculiarities, but it serves as an example of a situation largely generalized in South American countries today.

The Political Role of Archaeological Heritage in the Demand of the Social Movements of Citizens Assemblies in Argentina

The change of the capitalist accumulation model in Latin America during the last decades of the twentieth century witnessed the expansion and intensification of a project tending toward the control, extraction, and exportation of natural goods (Svampa & Antonelli 2009). This emerged in the 1990s at the height of the era of the politics of privatization, when the majority of South American countries started a profound reform of their regulatory frameworks to benefit the establishment of transnational companies in this region of the world (*idem*). These constitutional and legislative reforms that institutionalized the self-exclusion of the State as a productive agent were stimulated and supported by international organizations (World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, among others). In this way, Argentina, as in other places in South America, awarded full exclusivity to the private sector to exploit the (inaptly named by capitalist jargon) “natural resources” (Buiteaar (Comp.) 2001; Power 2002; Schiaffini 2004; Clark & North 2006; Ortíz 2007; Bebbington 2007; Solanas 2007; Machado Aráoz 2009, 2010; Svampa & Antonelli 2009). In these conditions, the Nation State put into action, under the proposed expansion of a national development model, the suppression of the local economy, consistent in the exploitation of the so-called non-renewable “natural resources” by transnational actors and local partners (Ortíz 2007; Solanas 2007; Machado 2009; Svampa & Antonelli 2009).

Only in the province of San Juan (located in the mountainous zone of central eastern Argentina) were more than 20 mega-mining projects put into place (Giovannini et al. 2009) which can be found in different phases of work; among these, the two most important projects belong to the transnational company *Barrick Gold*

Corporation. This company possesses the Mina Veladero project, active since 2005, a deposit of gold and silver located more than 4,000 m above sea level in the Andean mountain range in the Departments of Iglesia and Pascualama; the first binational mega-mining project which is also located in the high Iglesian mountain range on the Argentinian side. Another important mega-mining project for the extraction of silver and copper, known as Gualcamayo, is located in the vicinity of the river of the same name in Jáchal. These grand-scale exploitation projects are located near the natural glacier springs and the former mountain pathway used intensely at one time by the communities for cross-mountain activity like shepherding, trafficking of products, and communication that served as local modes of social, cultural, political, and economic integration with varying levels of autonomy throughout local history. The archaeological remains of these distinct territorial occupations that were happening throughout history in this geographical space allow us to today account for the existence of multiple “places of memory” (Nora 1984), or significant spaces of the collective memory, coexisting by way of palimpsest in which they impose long-standing historic meanings.

These transnational extractive economic projects transform the state geographies of inclusion and exclusion. The city biases, and other identities subordinated to the construction of territorial sovereignties, begin to be reconfigured giving way to processes of confirmed supranational integration (that involves as many processes of inclusion as those of exclusion) for the Binational Argentine-Chilean Pact.

The symbolic conflicts that give transnational or supranational context call on forces of homogenization as well as heterogenization, and they attend to the processes of re-territorialization of the productive processes of flexible capitalism implicating, at the same time, de-territorialization of the social and cultural memory in which local identities have been constituted historically. On this point, scientific narratives like those of archaeology play a fundamental role in the installation of these true regimens in which the politics

of knowledge oriented to the details of the appropriation-expropriation of territories is imposed (Jofré et al. 2010).

Over a certain period, archaeological heritage came to be integrated within the heritage of the people threatened by an eminently extractive economic model with high environmental and sociocultural impact, above all, without social license. The increasing installation of mining undertakings in the rural areas with greater archaeological sensitivity in provinces, like San Juan, Catamarca, Tucumán, Salta, Chubut, and Neuquén, generates conflicts that, in some cases, have had greater visibility for their capacity to permeate in social tactics, achieving diffusion in the public media sphere. The case of “Proyecto Navidad” in the Department of Gastre of the Province of Chubut (Claps 2010; Gómez Otero et al. 2010) is a paradigmatic example since, from being located in an Indigenous Community, it had to oppose the distinct logics of territorialization of the social and cultural memory of communities with more than a millennium in the region.

In response to this situation of territorial pillaging instigated by their own State, a heterogeneous sector of the population began to organize social movements of protest throughout the lower part of the country, a new form of assembly. The Citizens Assemblies are new self-convened forms of social organization of citizens that began to crystallize in Argentina from the year 2001. It deals with a process of collective reproduction about the current forms of emancipation; its immediate antecedent is represented by the “picketing groups” who, like the Citizens Assemblies, brought to the public table new forms of social protagonism at one time dismissed from the traditional political process (Colectivo Situaciones 2002). Currently, the self-summoned Citizens’ Assemblies of neighbors have diverse location and demands throughout the length and breadth of our country, among these stand out the Assemblies that struggle against the undertaking of agricultural businesses, paper mills, and mega-miners. In short, these social movements have been adapted through new forms of discussion, coordination, and

collective thought by all who have decided to organize themselves outside of the classical political forums. Something very interesting about these new social organizations is that they crystallize new ways of constructing social links and they are above all active in the demands for work, food, and rights. It could be said that their struggle is for justice and social change, and in this sense, the Citizens Assemblies are a place of practical research because knowledge and new forms of sociability are being created there (Colectivo Situaciones 2002).

Among the claims carried out by the new organizations of the Citizens Assemblies in Argentina, archaeological heritage was notably missing in the initial concerns of these social movements, but with the flow of these in the last few years, they began to incorporate the concern for the remains of the living memory of the people more and more in their demands for the defense of the water and the land. This currently affects the momentum of the emergence of contra-patrimonialization processes to repel scientific discourse and de-historicizing “places of memory” considered “sacred” to Original Inhabitants. This type of learning began to be more evident within the Citizens Assemblies of places such as Catamarca, San Juan, Tucumán, Neuquén, and Chubut, where these social movements began to interact and work well with the claims of Original Inhabitants that were being newly threatened and stripped of their ancestral territories.

Claims for the return of the bodies of our ancestors, taken to museums by university or state commissioned archaeologists, to the land, today reignites the struggle for the land in a broader sense of the term, as a way of reaffirming our identities in a place belonging to history. Clearly, this discourse promotes a political sense of territory, potentially performative of the social relations of domination that made the establishment of highly questioned transnational projects in the region possible, and the exacerbated concentration of lands in the hands of agricultural industry landowners in Argentina.

In the same struggle for land, only a few months ago, in the province of San Juan, the

Indigenous Community of Warpe of the Cuyum territory, in collaboration with the cosignatory of archaeologists and social organizations, presented a petition to the National University of San Juan soliciting the application of the recently regulated National Law 25.517 that protects and regulates the right of the Original Inhabitants to demand mass return of human bodies considered to be antecedents and ancestors. Today these bodies are in the hands of a museum dependent on this university, with motives of research and public exhibition in display cabinets and refrigerated coolers. This document states a demand for the return of the bodies to the land, avoiding the possibility that the State, by means of science, would implement the return of these human bodies as a hidden way of exchanging “bodies for land.” From the original world view that territory comprises of an encompassing vision of the land and the beings that inhabit it: “*We are land, the land is everything, the land is our life.*” Under this kind of statement, our indigenous leaders question not only the universities but also the President of the Nation, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, as previously done on May 20, 2010 (with motive of the Bicentenary of the Argentinian Nation). During that opportunity, the leaders that mobilized a mass protest of 20,000 people asked the President for concrete solutions for the evictions suffered by the Indigenous Communities throughout the length and breadth of the country: in short an historic reparation to meet the demands of the people dispossessed by the Nation State.

This petitionary case carried out by the warpes communities in San Juan, like other similar cases that are happening in our country, highlights the political symbolism that the bodies of ancestors acquired in the field of these social conflicts that face different ontologies of the relations between communities and their lands, at the same time that it also redefines the place that archaeology holds in these movements (Jofré 2010).

Conflicts like those on which I have commented here raise meanings that are incompatible, and sometimes juxtaposed, from the traditional, the modern, the local, and the global, resulting in disastrous consequences due to the

imposition of new forms of extreme, disproportionate, and limitless exploitation of the environment and the irreversible destruction of the local ways of life. As retaliation of this situation of extreme injustice, “Water is worth more than gold,” in the case of the Republic of Argentina, represents the current determination of the communities and people that is similar to other sectors of South America, where they are rising up against the supposedly generous promises of the extractive models of global capitalism, imposed with the compliance of the serving government.

Future Directions

Possibilities of the Collaboration Between Archaeology and Social Movements: The Right to One’s Own History

Today, the common point of intersection between Archaeology and Social Movements is a work of innovative coproduction originating in the context of decolonization projects of the archaeological discipline. In countries in South America, for example, these new collaborative works markedly began in the 1990s as a response to the profound change in global world order connected to the processes of expansion of flexible capitalism. These processes began to take shape in the 1970s, and recently, in the 1990s they acquired a social visibility, crystallized in new conditions of planetary coexistence known now as: transnationalism, globalization, situations directly related to a new type of neoliberal governability (Gordon 1991). This last condition was characterized by the “rolling back of the State” or privatization of responsibilities through the outsourcing of key social services, and with the consequent concession of regional autonomies as part of an adjustment to new dependency models.

The deep undercurrent of these new scenarios of conflict in South America is the “dispute for land.” These countries with colonial history today are threatened by tyrannical and violent endo-colonialisms supported by their own Nation State acting in service of the private transnational capitals mobilized by the economic monopoly of the global market. Disciplines like Archaeology

see themselves inevitably questioned by emerging social movements that burst, in a truly visible way, onto the public order in the twenty-first century demanding changes in the political-economic agendas of the Nation States.

In this way, in current South American contexts, and emerging from a long-standing historical conflict, the disputes for land comprises of claims for the acknowledgement of ethnic difference for the returning of lands, the reestablishment of the subjects' and Original Inhabitants' rights over their cultural and natural heritage, and the defense against the indiscriminate advancement of exploitations with high ecological and social impact carried out on the part of foreign capitals with license from the States. These conflicts generate heated discussions of interest regarding the political, social, cultural, and economic importance of archaeological heritage in these scenarios, and over all, present new reflections around the possibilities of resistance and change that the communities possess in the conflicts facing the States and the new actors in the global market. All this is exacerbated in the Bicentenary of the South American Nation States, where they celebrate their colonial "independence." Now is the time to return to focus on the unavoidable topic of National heritage and from different agreements they are called to their urgent revision. This happens in the face of local trajectories marked by the violent silencing of cultural differences, absorbed by the homogenized projects of the modern republics. This is a critical moment and as such, it is decisive to rethink the conservationist traditionalisms and strengthen the active social values that the archaeological heritage has acquired in the long histories of pillaging and expropriation (Jofré 2010).

The collaboration between a discipline with a colonial history as is Archaeology and the Social Movements of today must be submitted to necessary question and revise in an affected global political scenario; in this course, it is strategically unviable to continue defending the autonomy of the communities in terms of a cultural relativism of conservationist intervention. The right to difference in these relativist terms has promoted the perception of a substantive, stable, and permanent cultural

heritage. So in this form, culture and its heritage had to be perceived as the result of a historic process, the product of an accumulated historic experience captured like something stable through the concept of culture (Segato 2011).

Contrary to cultural relativism, the accompaniment of the social movements, and this is the challenge for a discipline like Archaeology that is accustomed to intervening from a place of power and privilege, anticipates the acceptance of historical pluralism, the right to "one's own history." Each people plot their history passing, the inconsistency of their own cultural discourse, overcoming their contradictions, and above all choosing their alternatives, interacting within the heterogeneous index of the nation. Following Rita Segato (2011), this means accepting at least two principal designs: (a) that the collective subjects of this plurality of histories are the people, and they possess the deliberative autonomy to produce their own historic process; (b) that this collective subject, this living people, is not a stable cultural heritage with fixed and unchanging contents throughout time and space, rather it is the self-perception on the part of its members of a shared history that comes from a past and is directed toward a future.

It remains to be said that this accompaniment and collaborative experience between Archaeology and Social Movements to achieve a successful association founded in common objects toward the decolonization is more and more compelled to find ways to reinforce and defend the autonomies of the people, therein lies the political and social predicament of the discipline in these times.

Cross-References

- ▶ [Decolonization in Archaeological Theory](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Archaeology](#)
- ▶ [Latin American Social Archaeology](#)
- ▶ [Public Archaeology](#)

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Social Zooarchaeology

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Introduction

Zooarchaeology, the study of animal bones from archaeological sites, began with a straightforward concern with diet, later expanded to include subsistence strategies. The postprocessual turn in archaeology eventually filtered into zooarchaeology, bringing a concern with social and symbolic aspects of human-