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2. COLONIALISM AND EUROPEAN ARCHAEOLOGY

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Modern European colonialism affected the whole world, and its legacy is overwhelming today. From this point of view, we could almost start and finish the book with this chapter; it would be enough to review the works and thoughts of European archaeologists on other continents. However, since Said's *Orientalism* (1979), we know that colonial categories not only constructed an image of the Other, but were also fundamental in shaping European identity, science, and politics. Thus, there is a particular relationship between colonialism and European archaeology that should be explored. This chapter is divided into two parts: the first part deals with colonial times up to the mid-20th century, the second with the post-colonial period.

The Colony: Studying Others, Understanding Ourselves

The first intellectual appropriations of the Other by European states can be traced back at least to classical times, when ancient scholars created the concept of "barbarian" populations in order to build notions of "Greekness" and "Romanness" (Hall 1989; Webster 1996). The Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus, for example, saw in the Germans the longlost qualities of his own ancestors (Cro 1977: 40–45). With the expansion of Europe from the late 15th century onward, the populations that the conquerors found in their way were increasingly used to understand the remotest European past. This is most clearly exemplified by Antoine de Jussieu (1686–1758) and Father Lafiteau (1681–1746), who resorted to exotic ethnographic analogies in their interpretation of European prehistoric tools (Schnapp 1996: 267–268). This approach pioneered the methodology that would prevail during the second half of the 19th century: a blend of anthropology and archaeology, which, allied to evolutionism, provided key intellectual support to the colonial enterprise and bourgeois ideology (Trigger 1992).

Broadly speaking, two main types of colonialist/ imperialist discourses can be described in archaeology for the period between the mid-19th and the mid-20th centuries: the discourse of civilization and the discourse of origins. The discourse of civilization focused on the Mediterranean and the Middle East, while the discourse of origins focused on places like sub-Saharan Africa or Oceania. Countries such as Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Mesopotamia provided Europe with a glorious cradle of civilization. The rest of the world had a double role: it helped interpret through analogies the prehistory of Europe and served to reassure the bourgeois classes of the cultural and moral superiority of Western civilization, which was considered the only civilization that had been capable of progressing from savagery to industrialization (Trigger 1992: 109, 141–143). It is worth remembering, however, that archaeology furnished colonialism with much more than a discourse. As a field discipline, it

was crucial, along with other sciences, in producing practical knowledge of the conquerable lands (Fernández 2001: 176) and in disciplining subjects (Chadha 2002).

The Discourse of Civilization

European powers appropriated the pasts of other formerly "progressive" countries. This is especially obvious in the case of the Hellenic world, including Turkey and the Levant (Bernal 1987; Dietler 2005; Marchand 1996; Morris 1994; Shanks 1996). Here the appropriation was both spiritual and practical. On the one hand, northern Europeans considered themselves the true heirs of the Hellenic miracle (Shanks 1996: 81), as opposed to degenerate modern Greeks or Turks. Some scholars even attributed the creativity of Greek civilization to the work of Aryan invaders (Trigger 1992: 155). On the other hand, foreign institutions (museums, schools, and universities) dictated the agendas of archaeology, philology, and historiography with the utmost disregard for local needs or beliefs. As diplomatic institutions, foreign schools were often politically involved in the larger imperialist enterprise (Krings and Tassignon 2004). This twofold orientalist agenda was crudely put by a German diplomat in 1902, who, referring to Turkey, noted that "the economic will follow the intellectual conquest as a natural result, and then these two diffused phases will be naturally followed by the third stage, that of political exploitation and consolidation of the cultural values we have created" (Marchand 1996: 318). Classical Greece was fundamental in defining national and class identities in 19th-cen-tury Europe, from cultural capital (Dietler 2005; Tsignarida and Kurtz 2002) to bodily behavior (Leoussi 2001). In recent times, Eurocentric views have been contested, most notably by Martin Bernal (1987), who, in his highly controversial Black Athena, emphasizes the African and Oriental roots of Greece. In any case, modern Greeks (and Turks) lie as marginal historical subjects in a no-man's-land governed by foreign academic controversies and identity politics.

The case of Rome is somewhat different. Whereas the appropriation of Greece was mostly cultural, in the case of Rome it was obviously political. Rome provided theoretical and practical models of colonization and offered justifications for European colonialism (Díaz-Andreu 2004; Dietler 2005: 43–45; Hingley 2000, 2001, 2006). Just as Roman imperialism had supposedly been advantageous for the conquered, despite the violence of the process, the civilizing mission of modern European powers was equally framed in positive terms. This was clearly stated in scholarly publications: "Rome made a genuine effort to unite Liberty and Empire, and, although she ultimately failed, she offered . . . at least a highly interesting analogy to similar modern experiments. In particular the English historian is irresistibly reminded of the British Empire" (Fiddes 1906: 5). The Roman Empire played another relevant role in colonialism. The presence of ancient monuments in certain lands allowed colonial powers to lay claim over those territories. This was the case with the French in Algeria and Tunis (Cañete 2006; Mattingly 1996) and the Italians in Libya (Munzi 2004). Egypt and the Middle East have suffered manifold processes of intellectual expropriation, with repercussions in the present day (Bahrani 1998; Marchand 1996; Meskell 2003; Said 1979). They are the homeland of some of the cultural products that the West values most, such as literacy, urbanism, statehood, and Christianity. However, dominant discourse held that the true heirs of the Middle Eastern legacy were not the Arabs, but the Europeans. The ruins of ancient civilizations with no match in the present were held as proof that the modern inhabitants of the Orient had to be controlled and recivilized by the West. The Middle East provided a counterimage of the classical world as well—a land of despots and stagnation.

Even a genius like V. Gordon Childe (1944: 23) yielded to those clichés when he asserted, “It is hardly an accident of excavation that the full fruits of iron technology have come to light first in the republics of Greece and Italy and not in the despotic states of the Orient.” Far from having vanished, orientalist discourses have been revived during both Iraq wars (Pollock and Lutz 1994; Hamilakis 2005).

The Discourse of Origins

The discourse of origins has had more sinister outcomes, since it denied true humanity to a large proportion of the humankind. The move was inevitable after the 18th century’s universal declarations of human rights. Indeed, the only way to reconcile these declarations with colonial exploitation was to locate the Other on a lower stage of the evolutionary ladder—that of the inhumane, prehistoric savage. The discourse of origins created a radical divide between history and prehistory, which, in the last instance, can be attributed to Hegel. Hegel (1975) distinguished between “World-History,” a Western history of spiritual progress based on statehood, and “Prehistory,” the history of people without history (Guha 2002).
The archaeological invention of the concept of “prehistory” in the mid-19th century (Trigger 1992: 86) is somewhat independent from philosophy, although the idea is related, as it identifies “Vorzeit,” “Vorgeschichte,” or “Prehistory” as time that preceded authentic (state) history. Originally used to describe the period before the appearance of written records in Europe, it was quickly employed by other continents as a way to make sense of not only the past, but also the present (McNiven and Russell 2005). The best example of this can be found in John Lubbock’s Prehistoric Times, published in 1865, which saw several editions over the next 50 years. Despite its early use of the term “prehistory,” the book deals largely with modern “primitives.” The underlying idea of this and other books is simple: savage societies are relics from another era. The similarity of their customs and artifacts with those of prehistoric peoples is considered obvious, and they are inevitably condemned to disappear with the expansion of superior white populations, for the betterment of humankind. This notion was rarely camouflaged.

Writing in the 1910s, William Sollas considered the Tasmanians an example of the Early Palaeolithic race, whose ancestors, widely distributed over the Old World, were “displaced almost everywhere by superior races” (Sollas 1924: 125). He regrets their extermination by Europeans, given their scientific interest, but notes that “we can only hope that the replacement of a people with a cranial capacity of only about 1,200 c.c. by one with a capacity nearly one-third greater may prove ultimately of advantage in the evolution of mankind” (Sollas 1924: 127). In this way, Hegelian philosophy, Darwinism, positivism, anthropology, and archaeology came together to produce a powerful discourse that would support colonialism for over a century.

Archaeology was also useful for denying Indigenous peoples their roots and their historical rights to the land. Whenever monuments were discovered in “primitive” lands from sub-Saharan Africa (Hall 1995; Keenan 2002) to Australia (Russell and McNiven 1998), they were automatically linked to superior, white populations that had supposedly occupied the land before the arrival of their current inhabitants. This strategy was buttressed by diffusionist ideas in the early 20th century, which conceived a very restricted number of creative core areas from which cultural products spread all over the world (Harris 1968: 379–383).

Although challenged by scholars for over half a century, the discourses of origins and civilization still prevail in the cultural imagination of the West. It is the task of archaeologists to keep fighting these stereotypes and decolonizing discourses not only in academia, but also at a popular level.

Colonizing the Nation

When we think about the relationship between Europe and colonialism, we invariably consider Europe's aggressions against other regions. However, there has been a very important inner colonialism in Europe, which is linked to the consolidation of the nation-state. For the triumph of the modern nation-state, rural communities and cultural minorities had to be fully incorporated into the common project. Thus, the Bretons, Basques, and Irish were very often the target of colonial cultural policies (Bush 2006: 70–71; Hingley 2006). On the other hand, anthropologists have noted the parallels traced by 19th-century folklorists between the rural populations of Europe and the "primitives" of other continents (Hoyt 2001: 333–336). The state's behavior in relation to minorities was often comparable to that deployed in external colonies, but there was an unsolvable ambiguity: peasants were ridiculed as primitives and subjected to modernizing projects, but at the same time they were considered to be the cultural repositories of the nation's essences (Sánchez Gómez 1997: 311).

Archaeology played a pivotal role in incorporating minorities into the nation-state. Although the intellectual strategies of incorporation have been labeled nationalist (Trigger 1984), the line between nationalism and colonialism is blurred. Algeria, for example, was considered part of France, and Angola and Mozambique were perceived as Portuguese provinces (Cooper 2002: 139). Similarly, General Franco used a colonial language and policy in Catalonia and the Basque country (Díaz-Andreu 1997; Tomlison 1991: 76–77). An example of where nationalism and imperialism were more clearly conflated can be found in the case of Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. The subjugation of the Slavic neighbors of Germany was both an explicit colonial enterprise and part of the Nazi nation-build-ing. Archaeologists tried to demonstrate through material culture that the Germans had settled in most of Eastern Europe before the Slavic expansion (Arnold 1990, 2002; Gasche 2006).

The Postcolonial Paradox

By the 1970s, most countries in the world had gained independence from Western European states. If we leave places like Puerto Rico aside (Pagán-Jiménez 2004), we can say that we live in a postcolonial world today; but is this a world free of empires? We may say that we have new, postmodern empires without colonies (Bush 2006: 187–215; Hardt and Negri 2000), endowed with their own strategies of knowledge-power. Although much attention has been paid to the United States (Chomsky 2003), the European "cosmopolitan empire" should be scrutinized too (Beck and Grande 2007: 61–62). It would be interesting, for example, to study whether different neo-colonial strategies in the United States and the European Union are related to different modes of archaeological knowledge. In both cases, it has been noted that postcolonial discourses could be little more than another way of using the Other to define Western identities (Hernando 2006).

"Cooperation" is the crucial word in the European empire (Beck and Grande 2007: 67). As archaeologists, we help communities on other continents to recover their history and

presuppose that locals are unable to address their past in a proper way. This echoes colonial ideas that "subject cultures required management and regimes to articulate, map, and control resources, specifically their monumental past" (Meskell 2003: 151). However, people all over the world have been dealing with their history in manifold ways before Western knowledge arrived. The language of cooperation cannot avoid the uncomfortable fact that Euro-American scholars are still the gatekeepers of knowledge about others. This is obvious in mainstream scientific literature (Hamilakis 2005: 98). In a recent study on journal gatekeepers, it was noted that three European countries (United Kingdom, Germany, and France) had 2,555 researchers in that category, whereas Africa and Latin America together had 109 (Braun and Dióspatonyi 2005: table 1). "Cooperation" is a word used to justify archaeological projects abroad. The neocolonial nature of this cooperation is often revealed in the fact that archaeologists tend to work in their former colonies due to the support granted by former imperial powers, which have all kinds of political and economic stakes in those countries. Thus, British archaeologists control East Africa and French archaeologists their old West African colonies and the Maghreb (McEachern 1996).

The study of current archaeological projects abroad has elicited little interest, despite their relevant implications (Bray and Glover's 1987 text is a rare exception). In fact, current archaeological projects are often portrayed in celebratory nationalistic terms (e.g., Ministère des affaires etrangères 2004), and the selfpraise is sometimes extended to colonial times (La Rosa 1986). Especially remarkable is the natural smoothness with which institutions of power-knowledge in the colony have survived, without any conspicuous act of contrition or any hint of self-reflection on their former and current role. Many research institutes still bear the name they had in colonial times, with a very colonialist flair, such as the British School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS), founded in 1916 in the heyday of colonialism, or the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO), whose ancestor thrived in fascist times.
Neocolonial attitudes have also been denounced in international agencies and institutions that pay lip service to "world heritage" (Meskell 2003), but often seem to be more con-cerned with facilitating exotic playgrounds for Europeans (Bush 2006: 213). Colonial ideas appear repeatedly in academia as well, especially when it comes to the restitution of cultural property (Boardman 2000) or the categorization of past societies as more or less civilized, implying that those groups that have not developed urbanism, monuments, or writing were, or still are, savages (Hamilakis 2005: 96).

One of the characteristics of modern empires is the neutralization of politics, in keeping with the "end of history" announced after the fall of communism (Fukuyama 1992). Politics are reduced to identity issues (Huntington 1996), a fact that is mirrored in the social sciences. Postprocessual archaeology echoes these neoliberal concerns especially well (Díaz-Andreu et al. 2005; Kane 2003; Meskell 2002). Whereas Americans, in the processual tradition, are still concerned with political economy, power structures, and statehood, Europeans, following postprocessual trends, usually focus on culture and identity. Although both lines are somehow converging (Stein 2005a: 8), the difference is still quite clear. It is illustrative to compare the way in which American archaeologists study pre-Columbian empires (Covey 2006; D'Altroy 1992; Feinman and Nicholas 2004) and how the Roman and Phoenician colonizations are currently understood in Europe (Hingley 2005; Jiménez 2008; Mattingly 1997; van Dommelen 1997; Woolf 1998). It is worth noting that the interests of scholars coincide with the foreign policies of the United States and the European Union as they are performed on the global stage; the former is harder and more interventionist, with a

strong concern for state-building, while the latter is softer and cooperative, with an alleged interest in social and cultural issues.

Postcolonial studies have indisputably produced a richer, more complex, and nuanced vision of colonial processes (Gosden 2004; Lyons and Papadopoulos 2002; Stein 2005; van Dommelen 2006). However, despite van Dommelen's reminder (2005: 115) that "cultural hegemony and economic exploitation are not two different or even opposed interpretations of colonial power, but they should rather be seen as two sides of the same coin," the truth is that the political side of colonialism tends to be ignored in current studies of the phenomenon (Gosden 2001: 243). This might be dangerous; by stressing fluid encounters, negotiation, hybridity, consumption, agency, and creative appropriation (Dietler 2005; van Dommelen 2005, 2006; Vives-Ferrándiz 2005; Webster 1996), we neglect the crudest side of colonialism—politics, including political economy (Wolf 1982), asymmetrical power relations, massacres, looting, disease, impoverishment, unequal wars, heavy taxes, and genocide. Surely, these are not always relevant, especially in ancient examples (e.g., Dietler 2005: 55–61; Vives-Ferrándiz 2005). Yet by overlooking politics, we run the risk of depriving the people without history of the history that hurts, the experience of daily humiliation and abuse by foreign masters (Given 2004: 163).

Future Directions

Colonialism and European archaeology have been close allies for a long time. Even today, the colonial sin is far from being washed away. Postcolonial archaeology has to be less self-in-dulgent and more critical in order to deconstruct the ongoing relationship with neocolonialism. Here are a few suggestions for producing a more radical archaeology. First, it is necessary to get rid of the condescending language of cooperation and progress, which simply transforms the savage of colonialism into the undeveloped native of the postcolony (González-Ruibal 2009). Second, we must take equality seriously (Rancière 1995) and stop dreaming of impossible, idealized partnerships. As Alberto Memmi (2004: 163) reminds us, "Partnership does not make sense except when both partners have a reasonably equal force." It is still Western archaeologists who study Africa's past, not the other way around. Third, it is important to embrace politics beyond identity issues, and recognize that politics is all about conflict (iek 2007). We have to be able to accept conflict in postcolonial situations. From here, we have to consider ruling out concepts that have been deeply tainted by colonial values and Eurocentricity, such as "prehistory" (McNiven and Russell 2005), which situates contemporary Indigenous communities in another time (Fabian 1983), or "historical archaeology," which only considers Western World History as "historical" (Guha 2002). Then, archaeological traditions in Europe must properly address their colonial pasts and neocolonial presents. And finally, a dichotomy has to be broken between conscious postcolonial scholars who focus on deconstructing their discipline and researchers who, without caring much about the history of the discipline, Indigenous communities, or colonialism, tell us how the past truly was (Langebaek 2006: 118).

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