CHAPTER 10

Afterword

On Ethics, Cultural Capital and Sustainability

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Abstract

In this concluding chapter the editors provide commentary and response in relation to the previous chapters. We identify commonly emerging themes, namely ethics, cultural capital and sustainability, and draw out connections between the cases as revealed by the book's authors. We conclude by thanking the contributors to the volume once more.

Keywords: conclusions, community archaeology, ethics, cultural capital, sustainability

Introduction

Much has happened in the world in recent years. We have been through a global pandemic and continue to live in times of great political and economic instability, not only in the Middle East but in other regions as well. Some have begun to argue that in the face of accelerating climate change, the possibility of more and perhaps worse pandemics, and other wicked problems facing humanity, we should actually be looking more and more to archaeology and the past – not only as a means of social cohesion, as is often attributed to community archaeology projects (e.g., Everill and Burnell 2022; van den Dries 2021), but also as a way of discovering processes and practices that may help to mitigate the damaging effects of the drastic changes we are living through in the anthropocene (e.g., Boivin and Crowther 2021; Fisher 2020; Lane 2015). As the argument goes, our ancestors often found ingenious ways of co-existing with the environment, while the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage sites has been shown to be a positive way of helping societies to recover from trauma such as armed conflict (Giblin 2014; Matthews et al. 2020; Newson and Young 2017, 2022).

It is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the projects discussed in this book in any conventional sense. The projects covered in the respective contributions are – or were – at different stages, and they also differ in scale and funding. Furthermore, it is not necessarily our place as academics from the Global North to pass judgement regarding the 'success', 'failure' or other outcomes of such endeavours, or how they should be measured. Instead, in this concluding chapter we reflect on a number of themes that have emerged from this volume, and which are important to discuss in relation to community archaeology practices globally as well as within the Middle East. In particular, due to the need to work with communities who may have differing expectations and values with regard to cultural heritage, the ethics of community archaeology have to be discussed. Second, we also consider the Bourdieusian notion of cultural capital as it relates to community

archaeology in the Middle East. Third, the topic of sustainability has emerged in several of the chapters, and we briefly consider here what sustainability means in the context of community archaeology – sustainability of what? For whom?

In our final reflections we attempt to look ahead to what lessons can be taken from this volume for community archaeology in the future. To what extent are existing theoretical models and ways of understanding community archaeology – stemming overwhelmingly from Anglophone academia in the Global North – appropriate to regions such as the Middle East? Or are these models in fact robust enough to work in any context?

Ethics

Doing archaeology is inherently related to politics. There is no place where this is so clear as in the Middle East, where its findings and methods are so intrinsically connected to nation-building, identity suppression, colonial violence and Western identity formation (Abu El-Haj 2002; Greenberg and Hamilakis 2022; Hamilakis and Duke 2007; Meskell 1998). The tension produced by the inevitable choice of which communities are served by archaeology is constant, and is implicated by various levels of power structures, ranging through local, national and international (see also Chapter 2 in this volume).

Within this volume, these tensions are brought to the fore and discussed in the various chapters on collaborative projects between archaeologists from the Global North and local archaeologists and communities (e.g., Chapters 3, 6, 7 and 9). Achieving greater transparency on these tensions through reflection, as well as on these archaeological projects in terms of development and evaluation, is particularly emphasised (see Chapters 3 [Zaina et al.] and 9 [Buccellati and Qassar] in this volume).

Another key aspect of building a more collaborative and inclusive archaeology is multivocality (Pluciennik 1999; Richardson and Almansa-Sánchez 2015, 197–99), which highlights the different interpretations and positions of heritage among different

communities, as various chapters in this volume have noted (see Chapters 3, 4 and 9). In Chapter 8, Joudeh and Lorenzon have shown how 3D (digital) models, particularly in the case of vernacular architecture such as Qaser al-Basha in the southern Jordanian city of Tafilah, can help locals in voicing their position and interpretation in relation to local heritage and its preservation. These approaches are particularly useful in areas and countries where, due to the shaping of archaeology by foreign and state interlocutors (on this, see further below), certain more-marginalised communities and heritages beyond the capital area and off the beaten track from the main tourist destinations are under-acknowledged in terms of their voices and values (see, e.g., Al Rabady and Abu-Khafajah 2022).

Taha and van der Kooij (Chapter 6 in this volume) and Buccellati and Qassar (Chapter 9) note how multivocality can be incorporated into heritage interpretation when developing an archaeological site into a heritage park. Notably, however, the aspect of multivocality becomes most evident in those contributions that are shaped around a dialogue between the authors, as is the case in Chapters 7 (Badran et al.) and 9 (Buccellati and Qassar).

Tension around whose voices are being heard and whose are neglected have been particularly shaped by the institutionalisation of archaeology, whether as past foreign colonial powers and their current neoliberal agendas (Abu-Khafajah and Miqdadi 2019) or as state agencies (Abu El-Haj 2002; Greenberg 2015). In today's Middle East, the question arises: what role do state authorities and outside interlocutors, such as the aid industry in the Global North, play in shaping heritage interpretations and narratives through community archaeology? This matter was put forcefully on the agenda by Abu-Khafajah and Miqdadi (2019) in the case of Jordan, and is addressed strongly in this volume as well (see Chapters 2 and 7).

Moreover, archaeology's institutionalisation continues to shape the heritage landscape and its interpretation in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Ambar-Armon's chapter in this volume (Chapter 5) on Israel's northern district exhibits numerous

examples of local heritage engagement in that region that aim to reach out to various communities, including children, retirees and diverse religious communities. Yet, as Israel's northern district has the highest share of Israel's Arab population in the country, it remains clear that the elephant in the room, when it comes to marginalised communities, remains largely unaddressed. As Greenberg has lamented before, a clearly inclusive, multivocal and transparent community archaeology seems to be only slowly taking shape there, although examples of these features do exist (Greenberg 2019; Killebrew et al. 2006).

While archaeology has come a long way in foregrounding and acknowledging its colonial origins and related systemic biases as a discipline, other disciplines working with archaeological findings have done so to a considerably lesser degree. The obvious reason for this is that, historically, archaeology is *the* scientific discipline that extracts and documents material culture from foreign grounds, through which other disciplines then gain access. As such, archaeologists are the people that actually travel and come into contact with local communities.

However, this narrative is not completely accurate, because from the nineteenth century textual and historical artefacts were obtained en masse through the hands of ancient historians, biblical scholars papyrologists, Assyriologists and Egyptologists, among others. Their role in extracting heritage has come to the surface more clearly in recent years due to the involvement of scholars from these disciplines in the study and authentication of artefacts of dubious provenance (Brodie 2011; Bonnie, in press; Brodie, Kersel and Rasmussen 2023; Mazza 2019). Through their research, these disciplines have shaped the interpretation of heritage from the Middle East for decades, with little attention to its impact on local communities. While advancements have been made in recent years in some disciplines, the focus remains mostly on discussing the problematics of unprovenanced artefacts and heritage destruction, but less so on giving voices to the marginalised communities from which these objects were once taken.

Finally, as we editors are and were situated in Finland, a country which was itself a part of other countries for most of its history, it is also pertinent to address its indirect association with the colonial West. The Nordic region has often considered itself a bystander to the systemic issues created by colonisation and the Western demand-driven (illicit) antiquities market. However, this view has also come under considerable scrutiny in recent years, and research has shown how countries such as Norway and Finland relate to and have benefited from their connections with previous colonisers from other parts of Europe (Bonnie 2022, 2023; Prescott and Rasmussen 2020; Rasmussen and Viestad 2021; see also Hoegaerts et al. 2022). As such, when discussing the colonial impact on the archaeology of the Middle East and its shaping of community archaeology, it is important to look not merely to those regions directly involved but also to those that directly benefited from them but to some degree still portray themselves as passive bystanders to this discussion.

Cultural Capital

Of all the chapters, the one by Päivi Miettunen (Chapter 4) has most directly tackled and identified Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of capital, not least that of cultural capital. As Bourdieu noted in 1986 in his initial formulation of cultural capital:

> The notion of cultural capital initially presented itself to me, in the course of research, as a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success, i.e., the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions. (Bourdieu 1986, 243)

Applied since then to many situations, not least in the context of cultural heritage (e.g., Newman, Goulding and Whitehead 2013), cultural capital can be understood as a means of explaining the

differences – and sometimes advantages – brought about by one's awareness of, familiarity with and ability to behave around certain cultural norms. As Miettunen herself notes in this volume, the context and form of cultural capital can vary greatly.

In relation to the Middle East, we may usefully connect the concept of cultural capital to that of values in general, and several of the chapters note the tensions between local values (concerning what heritage is) and the influx of international teams and ideas, not least with reference to the colonial pasts of the region (e.g., Chapters 2 and 9). As others have also noted, even with good and well-meant intentions, heritage may be regarded as innately possessing a higher value by outside and international organisations, in ways that do not or cannot reflect the values held by local communities (e.g., Abu-Khafajah and Miqdadi 2019).

This naturally leads to deeper questions not unique to the Middle East: questions concerning the presence and influence of the so-called Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD, sensu Smith 2006). Within this context, and within studies of community and public archaeology more generally, a greater understanding is arriving concerning the difference and importance of alternative understandings of heritage and the past – in which arguably different forms of cultural capital, connected with local knowledge, indigenous practices and the values held by particular communities and societies (sometimes historically or contemporaneously oppressed), gain power. This may be accomplished through increasing cooperation between local communities and external projects, which may in turn increase local awareness and sense of ownership of archaeological sites, as Taha and van der Kooij (Chapter 6 in this volume) describe in Palestine. It may also bring to life projects in which the next generation gains greater capital in relation to their local archaeological heritage, while at the same time heritage professionals both in the Middle East and elsewhere have an invaluable opportunity to learn best practice from each other in a truly dialogical process (in the case of the work of Badran et al. in Amman, Chapter 7 in this volume).

Our volume therefore presents an opportunity to revisit the notion of cultural capital and to recognise its presence, form and influence in different settings. It is also instructive to reflect here on the whole notion of knowledge production through archaeology, and especially through academic archaeology as developed on the basis of a Western framework.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a key aspect of community engagement, as not only should the community be activated during fieldwork, but its involvement should also be considered from a long-term perspective. Thus, sustainability in community engagement, which involves how the community can continue with heritage engagement after archaeological fieldwork ends, should be planned ahead and should take into account ways in which the process may be rendered sustainable in both the short and the long term. Sustainable community engagement is often based on community capacity-building through training and workshops (Lorenzon 2015; see also Chapter 3 in this volume), which often provide local communities with a basis on which to build archaeological knowledge and develop it further into sustainable development opportunities. The latter can make the community self-sufficient and can guarantee a continuation of archaeological and heritage work after the end of canonical archaeological projects (Lorenzon and Zermani 2016; Moser et al. 2002).

The sustainable development of community archaeology also takes place alongside the preservation of archaeological heritage. Preservation can be physical; yet it can also be accomplished through digital means, providing different communities with the means to participate in their heritage at virtually zero carbon emissions. Digital preservation has the added benefit of accessibility worldwide to marginalised communities that do not have the economic means to travel, even though issues of intellectual property rights need careful consideration when embarking upon such projects (Pavis and Wallace 2019). Finally, in the long term,

digital and physical preservation are also guarantees for the fruition of heritage in the future (see Chapter 8 in this volume).

Our understanding of environmental sustainability in community archaeology has been severely impacted by the international lockdowns and travel restrictions that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The clear advantage of project leaders being members of a local community was made evident during the pandemic, when projects with local leaders progressed steadily even during times of social distancing and travel restrictions (Lorenzon and Miettunen 2020; see also Chapter 9 in this volume). This brings us back to our earlier discussion on ethics, and showcases how ethics, cultural capital and sustainability are concepts that are tightly interlinked and should form the basis of any real decolonial approach to Middle Eastern and community archaeology. A follow-up argument relates to the lack of a truly integrated community archaeology funding model, as traditional funding sources often exclude the possibility of developing fully collaborative research with local communities and still privilege a more academic and top-down approach to community engagement.

Looking Ahead

Community archaeology remains a sub-discipline of archaeology, a discipline that is grounded in colonialism/imperialism in terms of methods, ideas, periodisations and material interests. This becomes especially evident in an area such as the Middle East, a region named along Western conventions. Furthermore, at least until recently (although we hope this volume signifies that this is no longer entirely the case), the region has hardly had a well-known track record of community archaeology. As Morag Kersel and Meredith Chesson noted back in 2011, the Middle East and its communities are 'not always the first people or the first place that pops into your mind when you think of community archaeology' (2011, 43).

We are grateful again to the authors of these chapters, and also to each other for a successful editorial collaboration. We, along with author Päivi Miettunen, have worked or are working within the Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires at the University of Helsinki, and we acknowledge with gratitude the support and resources made available through that centre. We also thank our colleague Dr Raz Kletter, who was involved in developing the initial conference in 2019 that inspired this volume. Finally, and most importantly of all, we are grateful to the communities and their archaeologies.

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