

World Archaeological Congress 4

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Symposium: THEORISING A REALM OF PRACTICE: research agendas in archaeological heritage management

Abstract Package

Session Organiser and Chair:

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Session abstract:

Archaeological heritage management (otherwise archaeological resource management or cultural resource management) is a sub-field of archaeology generally considered as a realm purely of practice. It is frequently held to be a-theoretical, parasitic upon and with little to offer 'mainstream' research archaeology. The focus is considered to be 'professional' in the narrowest sense, with an emphasis on legal and administrative procedures: its practitioners are 'trained' rather than 'educated' into their role.

Over the past few years, however, the field has emerged as one in which new and interesting research is being conducted across the globe. The establishment of the International Heritage Management Research Newsletter in 1995 put researchers in this field in touch with one another, allowing them to explore the wide range of highly original and important initiatives they collectively represent. The research these scholars are carrying out has new things to say about archaeology as a set of practices, asks new questions and contributes directly to the development of archaeological and material culture theory. Archaeological heritage management can for the first time be said to be coming of age.

This session will demonstrate the value of this kind of research and the contribution it can make and is making to archaeology as a world-wide discipline. The session aims to include participants from all of the inhabited continents and all levels of academic archaeology. The aim of the session is to reveal the research potential of the field and to encourage greater involvement in this new, vibrant and very exciting arena.

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INTRODUCTION: AHM / CRM research in context

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The deliberate conduct of research by archaeologists into aspects of AHM / CRM practices and discourses is a relatively new thing: the first PhD was completed less than six years ago and the publication of results from such research is still relatively rare. This style of research needs to be distinguished from research by AHM / CRM practitioners into how to achieve their pre-set objectives better, although there is some overlap. A further distinction also needs to be drawn between this kind of research and the publication of reviews and commentaries on the phenomenon of 'the heritage industry'. Research by archaeologists into the specific practices and discourses of CRM / AHM — and indeed of archaeology — can be considered to constitute a 'sociology of archaeology' or even (since the focus is very often also on archaeological material as material culture) a 'social archaeology of archaeology'.

The product of this kind of research has several important and interesting things to offer archaeology for the new millennium. Firstly, it works to break down the false and unnecessary distinction between CRM and academic or 'mainstream' research archaeology. Second, it breaks down the concomitant distinction between 'practical' field archaeology and 'theoretical' academic archaeology. It has the capacity to revitalise CRM practice by restoring the broken link between theory and practice and to revitalise theory by revealing the real connection between archaeology and the wider world. It challenges CRM practitioners to recognise the political nature of their work, and — much more importantly since this is already widely recognised — it provides a body of theory and a methodology by which this can be addressed. It opens the way to an understanding by archaeologists of what it is in the world they actually do — the political, social, cultural and moral implications of their day-to-day work. It can show the consequences for archaeology and for archaeologists of specifically archaeological practice.

These results are achieved by researchers who are themselves archaeologists, working from within archaeology, with a deep grounding in archaeological practice and theory.

MUSEUMS AND MUSEUM COLLECTIONS: Owners or Custodians?

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Museums in the US and in the UK increasingly are making an effort to transform their public image from one of owner to one of custodian of museum collections. This shift, in part, highlights museums' recognition of the basic principle underlying most museums' operations: museum objects are held in trust for the public. Despite this change in image, de-accessions and disposals in museums highlight the reality that museums and, specifically, museum trustees own and control museum collections. How can the changing image of the museum and the concept of public trust be

reconciled with the practicalities of collection management? Specifically, this paper examines the ways in which museums have altered their image and whether or not this alteration has inspired any changes in collection management.

'DOING ARCHAEOLOGY': Cultural Heritage Management and its role in identifying the link between archaeological practice and theory.

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Various critics have dismissed cultural heritage management (CHM) as not 'real' archaeology or have judged that its practitioners are not 'doing archaeology'. However, this paper argues that CHM offers a useful point of departure for identifying and examine the links between theory and practice within archaeology. The paper will examine the inter-relationship between the development and implementation of both processual and postprocessual theories and CHM policies and practices. It will be argued that while the practices of CHM have been determined by theoretical developments in the discipline, the policies and practices of CHM themselves play active and significant roles in influencing the intellectual development of the discipline of archaeology. Drawing on a critical reading of the governmentality literature this paper reveals the link between the bureaucratic practices of archaeology and the ways in which the discipline has conceived both itself and the value and nature of its data. These links are revealed by identifying the consequences archaeological practice has outside of the discipline and by revealing, in turn, how extra-disciplinary pressures are placed on archaeology through CHM to conform to certain perceptions and ideals about what it means to 'do archaeology'.

PROTECTION OF THE SITE AND AUTONOMY OF THE SITE NARRATIVE

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The presentation of our image of the past is a field in which competing interpretations are presented, analysed, and valued/devalued often with a political motivation. In Japan, the country which has experienced and still is experiencing an enormous surge of the destruction of archaeological sites, battle over the presentation of the image of the past has been fought among various interest groups in a subtle but intense manner. Naturally, those who are involved in the movement for the prevention of site destruction tend to emphasise the elements of a threatened site that conform the systems of taste/value-judgement of the targeted (thus, majority) group/population.

The introduction of self-critical approach/attitude to heritage management would problematise implications of this tendency, and foreseeable problems such as promoting false sense of the continuity of local/national identity from prehistoric to present times would be checked. However, theories on self-referential reproduction of a particular field of communication suggest that once a certain framework with a certain tendency for the reproduction of communication has been established, that framework tends to be maintained without conscious maintenance. It means that it is very difficult to be self-critical about the tone of what one has once said about the value of the site. By drawing upon Niklas Luhmanns theory of self-referential reproduction of systems, I would like to show the process through which some subtle but dangerous evaluations of a threatened site has been grown to become an misleading narrative system by using a case actually took place in Japan, and would like to examine how we should deal with this type of problem.

CROSSING THE 'GREAT DIVIDE': Data Quality and Deformation Issues in Archaeological Theory and Practice

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More than 15 years ago, on the occasion of his centennial address to the Archaeological Institute of America, Colin Renfrew (1980) highlighted one of the 'Great Divides' in our discipline - i.e., between the intellectual and scholastic traditions of Archaeology as practiced in the Old versus the New Worlds. The other 'Great Divide', not addressed by Renfrew in this context, represents an equally large and arguably a more significant schism - i.e., between archaeologists engaged in heritage management and those involved in academic (or basic) research.

Although the conventional wisdom is that CRM/AHM archaeologists collect data and university based ones synthesize it, archaeologists of both types have largely failed to provide any rigorous framework for interpreting the wide variety of factors that distort the archaeological record at a regional scale. Whilst investigations of archaeological formation processes have focused attention on agencies that create and deform archaeological assemblages at a localized scale (most commonly those associated with individual sites), similar efforts have generally not been extended to a larger, regional scale of analysis. As a consequence, evaluation of large-scale phenomenon such as regional settlement patterns, site discovery trends, and vandalism - phenomena which are as important for basic research, as for heritage management - has tended to proceed without any real attempt to account for variations in the quality of archaeological data.

The aim of this discussion is illustrate how a more pragmatic and meaningful link can be forged between the responsibilities and approaches of heritage management, on the one hand, and those of basic/academic research, on the other. In order to do so, the paper will underline the value of addressing two important theoretical issues which are crucial to both: namely data quality and regional formation (or deformation) processes.

The emphasis of the discussion will be on the range of distorting factors that historically have helped to shape the archaeological record. Particularly important in this context are the set of theories and methodologies employed by archaeologists themselves - all of which have had a major effect on the shape and representativeness of the extant archaeological record. Despite their impact and importance at a regional scale, the contribution of many natural and cultural agencies has largely gone unmeasured or undetected. While there is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that one-pass surveys of an area have limited success in delineating the full range of past cultural activity, for example, little systematic work has been undertaken on a large scale to evaluate how frequently a particular region has been surveyed. The effects of one-pass, versus multiple surveys, on the number of known sites in a region are likewise poorly understood. Although factors such as survey spacing intervals, pothunting, private land holding, and a host of other variables may have a significant distorting effect on the archaeological record we perceive currently, in most areas we are in a very poor position to evaluate what their contribution may be, or to measure their possible significance. Clearly, we will always have an incomplete and somewhat distorted record of past activities. What is more troubling, however, is the widespread failure to evaluate the biases and voids that are clearly present in our data.

Using a large GIS database from northern New Mexico, including more than 10,000 archaeological sites, this paper will demonstrate how the issues of data quality and deformation processes can be evaluated at a regional scale. Similarly, our research demonstrates how an explicitly historical analysis of data quality and archaeological praxis can contribute to the advancement of archaeological method and theory generally - with respect to both basic research and heritage management. The argument offered here is that bridging the 'Great Divide' will become more of a tangible reality when substantive issues of this type are addressed in detail and to the mutual benefit of both forms of archaeological endeavour.

THE VALUE OF CATEGORIES in an ongoing programme of AHM research

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The issue of 'value' has been important in AHM / CRM since its recognition in the 1970s as a separate field of archaeological practice. Originally approached bureaucratically in its guises of 'significance' (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere) or 'importance' (UK), more recent and alternative schemes or systems of value have been put in place by academics and practitioners alike. Most recently, proponents of these different value systems have begun to openly debate their rival approaches to understanding and coping with 'archaeological value' or 'the value of archaeology'.

One such approach to value drew on the role that laws have to play in regulating and creating what we understand as 'the archaeological heritage' or 'cultural resources'. In turn, the role of schemes of categorisation which allow the identification of components of that heritage or of those resources was highlighted. Such schemes allow us to discriminate between those things that are 'archaeological' or 'historical' or 'artistic' or 'cultural' or 'traditional', and those things that fall into other non-relevant categories. The arbitrariness of such schemes is at once apparent and becomes interesting by highlighting what it tells us about our discipline and its role in the contemporary world.

Categories of things which are not quite 'archaeological' nor quite non-archaeological, and which also fall outside other neat discriminatory schemes, are also interesting in what they tell us about our norms and expectations as archaeologists and students of material culture. Historical places which are not quite archaeological sites nor quite landscapes fall into this category.

Drawing on these ideas, this paper will outline the development of a scheme of AHM research that leads from a concern with legally-endorsed schemes of value, via the types of 'property' embedded within the concept of 'cultural property', to the study of historic battlefields as archaeological places.