The background of the cover is a dark, textured surface, likely a rock face, covered in prehistoric rock art. The art includes several animal figures, such as deer or stags with prominent antlers, and a large, stylized human figure with outstretched arms and legs, possibly a shaman or a deity. The art is rendered in a reddish-brown or ochre color against the dark rock.

Clive Gamble

Archaeology

the basics

Third Edition

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THE BASICS

Now in an updated third edition, *Archaeology: The Basics* provides a straightforward and engaging introduction to the world of archaeology. This book answers key questions about how and why we practise archaeology and examines the theories and themes underpinning the subject. Fully updated, this new edition includes a wide range of examples and new material on key growth areas including:

- evolutionary approaches in current archaeology
- the archaeology of landscape and place
- the impact and value of archaeology
- conflict archaeology and the politics of the past.

With 12 new illustrations, four new boxes and additional case studies, this text is essential reading for all those beginning to study archaeology and anyone who has ever questioned the past.

Clive Gamble is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Southampton. He is an archaeologist with a particular interest in our earliest origins and the evolution of human society.

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TO THE READER

The book you are holding is not a textbook: it makes no attempt at comprehensive coverage and it contains no exercises. Instead, it aims only to get you thinking about one of the most important and fascinating topics you could ever hope to encounter: archaeology, the investigation of the human past. Our created past surrounds us and it matters. Indeed, it is probably our most important legacy. I hope this short book will quickly persuade you of this and show you that nothing is more interesting, more stimulating or more rewarding than the study of archaeology.

My book is designed as a basic introduction to the subject. I have chosen eight aspects of archaeology and covered one in each chapter. Archaeologists do not always agree and I have set out some of the current debates as well as several of the major questions that archaeologists are tackling, whether as researchers, managers, curators, specialists or a combination of all of these aspects of the profession.

The reader I have in mind for this book is someone who has not yet entirely made up their mind about archaeology. This means that they are not sure if they want to find out more; whether ley lines and the Bermuda Triangle are more interesting (believe me they're not!) than the everyday life of a medieval peasant or the evolutionary origins of humans. I have also written the book for those who are a few steps further on. You have been bitten by the archaeology

'bug' and want to know more. You may be reading archaeology for pleasure, studying it at university, taking it in conjunction with another subject or just intrigued by a website you have browsed or a museum or monument you have visited.

What this book is not about are the techniques of field archaeology. Many excellent books already exist on that subject and I would recommend Philip Barker (1982), Jane McIntosh (1999), Kenneth Feder (2004) and Martin Carver (2009; 2011). What I hope my book will do is kick-start your archaeological imagination so that the experience of handling and studying objects, fieldwalking and surveying landscapes and buildings and arranging exhibits and presenting the past to the wider world will become even more immediate and rewarding.

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FIRST EDITION

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SECOND EDITION

This edition would never have been completed without the editorial assistance, demanding questions and organisational skills of Fiona Coward. I am very grateful for all her insights and advice. Penny Copeland drew the new figures with her customary skill and Linda Mitchell did invaluable proofreading. The text benefited from the comments of three anonymous referees and those from Ken Feder were particularly useful. Michael Balter kindly read the sections on Çatalhöyük. Several of the changes in this edition have arisen from my involvement with the British Academy Centenary Project *From Lucy to language: the archaeology of the social brain*. I would like to thank my co-directors Robin Dunbar and John Gowlett as well as all the project members for providing such an inspiring context for reflecting on what archaeology can achieve. At Royal Holloway, Department of Geography, I have particularly benefited from discussions about the roles of archaeology and geography in the study of the past and the many stimulating seminars with landscape surgeons and Quaternary scientists. I should particularly like to thank Rob Kemp, Nick Branch, Danielle Schreve, Karen Till, David Lambert, Felix Driver, Phil Crang, David Gilbert, David Simon, Tara Woodyer, Matt Grove, Dora Moutsiou, Rebecca Sheldon and Hilary Geoghegan. This edition is dedicated to Martin Dalgleish and the Social Climbers of Nevis for many thought-provoking discussions on the Upper Round Road.

THIRD EDITION

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Hunt read and corrected the final manuscript, spotting a missing cake tin in the process. With great skill Iram Satti at Routledge coaxed the book over the finish line. This edition takes me back to where I started and is dedicated to the memory of Renato Perini (1924–2007) who taught me the basics of being an archaeologist over 40 years ago at the lakeside village of Fiaivé in Trentino. Saluti Maestro!

WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Archaeology is exciting. The excitement comes from using our archaeological imagination to go where we can never travel, to the past, and to think about time and objects in very different ways from those of our everyday experience; to understand better who we are by knowing where we have come from.

Humans have always had an archaeological imagination. At one level it is that taken-for-granted ability to reconstruct in our daily lives what went on from the evidence left behind; footprints in the sand point to visitors, a room littered with glasses and bottles adds up to a party. At another level this imagination has been sharpened and refined into a professional discipline over the past 300 years, and this is the sense in which I will use the phrase throughout this book. We now routinely excavate, catalogue, measure, describe and analyse the objects and monuments of the past. These standard archaeological techniques are widely accepted and understood. They have even become metaphors to investigate our inner selves. Every time we ‘dig into the subconscious’ or ‘peel back the layers of personality’ we are imitating archaeologists. Most importantly, these methods have assisted archaeologists in developing a way of thinking about things long gone.

Discovering un plundered tombs is one thing. But the ability to explore our capacity to think well beyond everyday experience and to incorporate into our lives the activities and artefacts of former people is riches indeed. This is the excitement of archaeology.

MEMORY AND SOCIETY

Archaeology is one of the ways in which we remember. We do this not just by finding out about the things that we have lost to decay, destruction and fading memories, but also by using archaeological discoveries to construct the past. This means that archaeology is a social activity involved in the creation of a memory that may be local, national or even global in scale and complexity. It is this activity that leads to my definition of the subject:

Archaeology is the study of the past through materials and material remains. It is about three things: objects, landscapes and what we make of them.

Archaeology is an activity that people become passionate about. It focuses our enthusiasm and generates excitement. From the outset an archaeologist develops a special relationship with objects, landscapes and their interpretation.

Objects are what archaeologists spend most of their time digging up, describing and ordering by the categories of time and space. This is where most of the excitement comes from, and, however hard we analyse and try to explain it away, the anticipated thrill of discovery still makes most archaeologists' hearts beat a little faster. *Landscapes* remind us that much of what archaeologists do involves space and distance. Space has at least equal weight to time because different objects are found in different places, as much as at different times.

The geography of the past starts with our investigations into what goes on in our own backyard, the prehistory and history of a village or town as revealed by archaeological discoveries, supplemented where possible by written records. Such *local* archaeologies often provide a strong sense of place and identity for those living there. As a result, local museums, keeping houses and cultural centres, combined with local Archaeological and Historical Societies, have always been the backbone of collective local memories. At the next

scale of the *region* we see the amalgamation of local memories into larger political identities. It is no accident that national museums and the creation of nation states went hand in hand in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And, finally, there is a *global* scale. Here archaeologists reflect on major historical questions, such as human origins, the settling of the Earth and the rise and fall of civilisations. Their aim is to better understand Humankind by studying the past. It is at these three scales – local, national and global – that the all-important third part of my definition above, ‘and what we make of them’, comes into play to give us the great variety of interpretations, and some fundamental disagreements, about what archaeology is and what it should be.

There is nothing unchanging about the past. The yearly crop of new data from excavations and the testing of new ideas and concepts see to that. At the same time the way in which we experience the past is changing. This has been particularly rapid in the last two decades. We now scroll the past from our phones and tablets rather than through visits to libraries. As more digital information becomes available we are discovering that museums no longer have walls.

THE END OF PREHISTORY?

Archaeology is about making history. It is a way to tell big and small histories from small and large objects. This is done by drawing out the connections between people and things, the stuff rather than the words of history. And here I must declare my perspective on archaeology and history. It is common to divide archaeology into prehistory (before texts) and the historic (text-aided) periods such as the classical civilisations of Greece and Rome. This distinction has outlived its usefulness. Invented as a term 150 years ago, prehistory has served its purpose by drawing attention to a different type of history – one based on human-made objects, the stuff of human lives (Miller 2012). However, hanging onto ‘prehistory’ now gets in the way of an exciting possibility: investigating an unbroken history of humankind. I much prefer the terms deep history and shallow history (Shryock and Smail 2011; Smail 2008; Robb and Pauketat 2013a; Gamble 2013). These terms deal with different timescales and often with different types of historical evidence (Chapter 3). But, when united, these histories form a joined-up account of what it has meant to be human: infinitely

varied, hopelessly complicated, full of opportunity yet bound by circumstances; a human past that deserves to be regarded as a whole rather than hived off into the separate branches of prehistory and history.

ENCOUNTERING ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeologists are usually defined by what they do when out excavating. But digging and the subsequent analysis and reporting on what they find is only one of their activities. As the subject has grown and matured over the last 50 years, so there has been a revolution in what archaeologists study, from archaeogenetics to the Zapotecs and from zooarchaeology to A-series time. Today there is an archaeology of nearly everything.

This profusion tells you one thing: that archaeology can be whatever you want it to become. Follow your own archaeological imagination. So, what was it that fired your archaeological imagination to find out what makes the subject tick beyond the everyday, the common sense and the familiar? Was it a *Horrible history*, films such as *Night at the museum* and *Cave of forgotten dreams* or a game such as *Tomb run*? Dusk in Egypt's Valley of the Kings or dawn at Petra in Jordan? A beep from your metal detector? The stones of Stonehenge, the mounds of Moundville or the Roman baths at Bath? Was your appetite whetted by trying out a Palaeolithic diet (Marsh 2014)? Was it a visit to a special exhibition of wonderful things or – what did it for me – an artist's imaginative reconstruction in a book of life as it once was.

And never belittle that tangible thrill of discovery, that initial contact with the practice of archaeology, when you first peeled back the layers with your trowel to reveal stone tools, potsherds, bones and walls and, if luck was with you, metalwork, bodies, art or even *gold* – although of course your trench supervisor took over at that point!

HOW DID ARCHAEOLOGY GET STARTED?

UNCOVERING RICHES

The seeds from which modern archaeology grew were planted by the British antiquarians Camden and Aubrey in the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, just prior to industrialisation. In the eighteenth century, a growing fascination with the classical monuments of Greece and Italy fuelled treasure hunting in buried cities such as Pompeii and Herculaneum, and classical architecture, artefacts and literature provided an ancient authority to establish the new world order (Moser 2006; Murray 1999; Paddayya 2013; Reid 2002; Trigger 2006). But the process went further. The sand was first removed from monuments in Egypt in 1798 so that they could be recorded, while the hard task of hacking the jungle from the ruins of Borobudur in Java began in the 1810s, and from the Mayan ruins in Central America in the 1840s. At the same time, investigations began in the ancient Mesopotamian cities of Nineveh and Nimrud (Bahn 1996).

The languages of these ancient civilisations needed deciphering. This was achieved for Egyptian hieroglyphs in the 1820s and for Babylonian and Assyrian cuneiform by 1857. And, once deciphered, the lists of kings and pharaohs supplied a chronology for the wealth of discoveries that fleshed out civic and artistic achievements.

CHRISTIAN THOMSEN AND THE THREE-AGE SYSTEM

A turning point in the study of deep history came in 1819 when C.J. Thomsen classified the collections of the Museum of National Antiquities in Copenhagen using a three-age, chronological model (Rowley-Conwy 2007). Since he was dealing with artefacts alone, his scheme stretched the archaeological imagination back to a time well before texts. Thomsen, of course, had no dates either from calendars or king lists to guide him, and his chronological scheme drew from two major sources. Technology provided the first, with his division of materials into successive Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, and a technique known as seriation provided the second, though he would not have called it that. Thomsen's seriation took the finds in each collection that his museum had acquired and looked at the changing proportions of items between them. This allowed him to establish which objects repeatedly co-occurred with which others, as well as spotting any changes. These patterns among the artefact types confirmed the basic technological divisions. It is for this reason that his scheme has stood the test of time.

Thomsen's three-age model represents a fine example of empirical, inductive research, where a classification is built by observing patterns in the data. It is clear from his famous guidebook to the collections, published in 1836 and translated into English in 1848, that Thomsen attached great importance to the contexts and associations of finds in devising his scheme. In this respect a long-standing interest in coins may have given him the inspiration to see stylistic change in artefacts over time. However, as Bruce Trigger (1989: 84) pointed out, Thomsen did not borrow a dating device from a subject such as geology, with its interest in the fossils stratified in deep-time, but instead developed a new technique, seriation of types, which was appropriate for archaeological evidence.

PROGRESSIVELY THINKING IN THREES

Thomsen was a great classifier. He turned a muddled collection of old stuff into an historical archive with a chronological backbone. But that is as far as he went. He was not influenced by Enlightenment philosophers such as Adam Smith who conjectured in 1763 that society had progressed through well-defined stages en route to the present: an age of hunters, followed by farmers, and civilisation. If he had, then his scheme might be described as deductive, testing a hypothesis – the progressive nature of social change – with archaeological observations. Others did just that, notably Sir John Lubbock (1865), while E.B. Tylor (1865) and Lewis Henry Morgan (1877) built similar schemes by ranking the contemporary cultures of the world in ascending, and by inference ancestral, order.

It is thanks to Thomsen that archaeologists like to think in threes. His Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages are a good example. Many periods such as the European Bronze Age and the ancient Pueblo Basketmakers of the south-west United States are subdivided into an early, middle and late phase. Thinking in threes, like Adam Smith, implies a historical story with a beginning, middle and an end. To use a modern managerial phrase, here is the past 'going forward'. Traditionally such narratives relied on a belief in progress to drive history onwards through innovations in technology, economy and society. Archaeologists have now rejected such simple ideas of progress. Why? Because progress is a relative term. What was progress for some meant slavery and exploitation for others.

Table 1.1 Three centuries in the development of archaeology

<i>Centuries</i>		<i>Some salient factors that shaped the development of archaeology</i>
The Enlightenment century (Antiquaries)	1700–1815	Slavery and early European empires. The world and its peoples charted and explored. Foundations of scientific approaches. Time measured with chronometers; distances shrunk by advances in sailing and navigation. Change explained by progress and human nature.
The long nineteenth century (Antiquaries and Archaeologists)	1815–1945	Major European empires and global conflict between nation states. Growth of industrial cities. Time fixed by photography; texts sent by telegraph; rail, road and air travel shrink distance. Change explained by the science of evolution which challenged fundamentalist accounts.
The short twentieth century (Archaeologists)	1945–present day	Independence from colonial rule. Civil rights and self-determination movements. Time measured by physics; jumbo-jets and digital messaging shrink distance; trebling of world population. Understanding change broadened to include gendered as well as scientific explanations.

Thinking in threes is ingrained, as shown by my own division of the history of the subject into three centuries of different lengths (Table 1.1).

Thinking in threes, and a belief in progress, became part of the DNA of archaeology during its conception in the European Enlightenment (1700–1815). This was the period when moral philosophy and science prospered, new continents such as Australia were rediscovered by explorers such as Captain Cook and the business of classifying the peoples, fauna and flora of the world began. But these enlightened advances in science, art and philosophy

were built on the wealth which flowed from the Transatlantic slave trade and the colonial conquest of India.

It was in 1707, during the early years of the Enlightenment, that the Society of Antiquaries of London was formed. Among its exclusively male Fellowship was Sir Hans Sloane. A major figure in the Enlightenment he bequeathed his large collection to the British Museum when it opened in 1753 (Walker *et al.* 2012). His wealth was based on the sugar plantations that he owned in Jamaica. Curiosity about the world and its human past drove such antiquaries.

The second archaeological century runs from the Battle of Waterloo to the end of the Second World War (1815–1945). This was a remarkable period of industrialisation and technological change – from horse power to steam locomotives, from the quill pen to the typewriter and the letter to the telephone. This long-century saw the waxing and waning of colonial empires.

During this century there was a name change for those who studied the past. We find, thanks to Google NGRAM viewer (<https://books.google.com/ngrams/info>), which measures the frequency with which words appear in many millions of scanned books (Figure 1.1), that ‘archaeologist’ replaced ‘antiquary’ in popularity during 1916. The name change denotes a new professionalism. Notwithstanding this development and a myriad of technological advances, most archaeologists throughout this period stuck

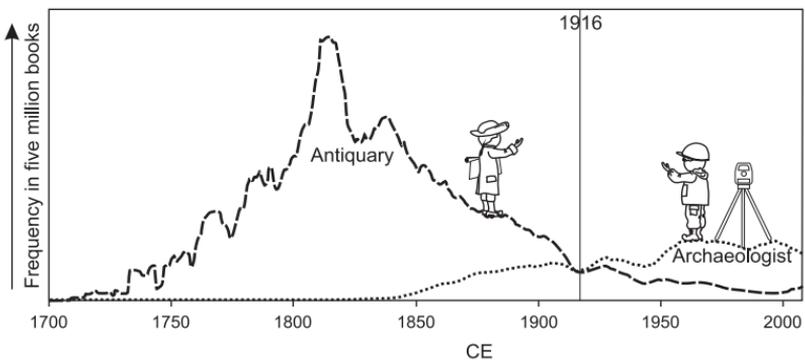


Figure 1.1 The trends in popularity of the terms antiquary and archaeologist as measured by Google NGRAM. The name change reflects the demise of the amateur passions of antiquaries and the growth of archaeology as an academic discipline and profession

diligently to their allotted three tasks: Digging up stuff, Describing it and Dodging the issue of explaining what it meant in terms of human history. Conforming to the possibilities laid down by the limits of their evidence drove these archaeologists.

My short twentieth century runs from 1945 to the present day. The changes have been momentous for archaeology. It has seen new forms of economic globalisation, the independence of former colonial nations, growth in world population from 2 to over 7 billion, more people living in cities than on the land and consequences for climate change. A digital revolution has provided a new global framework that has shrunk distance, while archaeological time is now measured by scientific techniques. The latter was ushered in by Willard Libby's radiocarbon breakthrough in 1949. This changed the worldview of archaeologists and won him the Nobel Chemistry Prize. With an independent chronology archaeologists were freed from mere description. They could now indulge in the luxury of not just asking when and where things occurred, but how they were related to each other and why change happened. Searching for connections, and explaining them, drives today's archaeologists.

HOW HAS ARCHAEOLOGY CHANGED?

To the founding fathers such as Thomsen or Lubbock the biggest changes since their day would be the application of science in archaeology. They would be amazed at our ability to derive a date from a bone, hearth or wooden building and so refine our understanding of the order in which things happened. In the last 20 years there has been another scientific upheaval involving archaeogenetics, isotope chemistry and scanning techniques such as Computed Tomography (Brothwell and Pollard 2005). This has allowed us to gain insights into what people ate, where they were born, their history of migration and what diseases they had by going directly to the human remains. These ancient bones now form an archive for enquiry at the molecular scale. The same approaches can be applied to the residues sticking to the insides of their pots, the plants and animals they consumed and even the DNA in the soils they farmed (Jones 2001). What this has done is shorten our chains of inference (Chapter 3) about diet and population history. And those same archives can be dated by extracting

ever smaller samples for radiometric dating. As a result, archaeology has become an inter-disciplinary science with infinite possibilities to investigate human history.

But it is not all down to scientific advances. Archaeological excavations and geophysical survey have increased in scale, while computer recording systems have made it possible to manage huge amounts of data. And these developments in the discipline have been swept along by changing political, social and economic climates and their intellectual underpinnings.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

A big change has been the development in the past 50 years of an anthropological archaeology. This is a broad umbrella which shelters most of the approaches discussed in Chapter 2. Some of its keywords are science, theory, relevance, quantification and interpretation. Prior to its appearance the practice of archaeology was dominated by culture history approaches driven by nineteenth-century thinking about how society evolved. These approaches emphasised progress, description, dating and ethnicity. Why change happened was rarely addressed. By contrast, Charles Orser (1999: 280–81) sums up where archaeology is today as a result of the big changes that have taken place since 1960 (Box 1.1).

This is what the archaeological imagination feeds on. Of course not everyone approves of the changes. Many archaeologists regard self-reflection as a sign of weakness. Still more find what Orser refers to as the ‘basic stuff’ of social relationships too vague. They prefer to deal in ‘hard facts’, while at the same time networking madly to raise funds, get their work noticed and be part of the professional archaeological community, as well as enjoying a life outside the subject – precisely the ‘basic stuff’ that structured the past.

BOX 1.1 THE FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF ARCHAEOLOGY TODAY

- It is multiscalar. How can we go from the single potsherd to the civilisation of which it was a part (Chapter 4)? How do we match up the micro-scale, everyday activity of

someone making a pot with the long-term macro-scale experience of the formation and collapse of the Mayan empire (Chapter 7)?

- It is mutualistic. As Orser explains, the *basic stuff* of human life in all times and places (Chapter 4) is the social relationships that people create and maintain. The best way to conceive of these is as networks (Chapter 6) that for all sorts of reasons overlap, shift and change, and hence are mutually interrelated rather than independently associated.
- It is globally focused. Although you can dig only one site at a time, the aim must be to place it within a wider world. You need to look beyond the physical boundaries of your bit of data and see its wider significance (Chapter 6).
- It is reflexive. We have come to realise that archaeological data are not just curiosities but powerful knowledge for people alive today (Chapter 8). By reflecting on what they do, and why, archaeologists think about their research and the impact it can have on other people. The most striking examples lie in the impact on indigenous, First Nation peoples, for example Native North Americans and Australian Aborigines, who until recently had no voice in the investigation and interpretation of their past. The return of cultural property under US Federal Law (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act 1990) is an example of how their cultural rights are now recognised.

(Orser 1999)

TWO BASIC CONCEPTS

Accepting the sort of archaeology that Orser describes leads to some important conclusions. As my earlier definition made clear, archaeology is what we make it, not what was made for us. The past needs us to interpret it. Without our concepts and ideas it has no significance. With them it takes on many different meanings and so contributes to modern life. This may at first seem rather confusing. Surely, you might say, the past is just about finding and describing objects. If so, then why do archaeologists disagree, and why, as we

shall see in Chapter 2, are so many different theories applied to the past? I will come back to these questions throughout this book. But to begin with we need to be very clear about two basic concepts – facts and essence – in order to appreciate where the fundamental disagreements lie.

FACTS AND STORIES

Facts, or observations of data, are never simple. Neither are they neutral or value free. Facts are theory-laden, they come with baggage. They cannot be read objectively, but arrive ready interpreted owing to such factors as the history of the subject and the way they have been incorporated into our stories about the past. As a result, the archaeologist does not so much breathe life into facts by, say, placing pots in a battleship curve to investigate the changing proportions of different types over time (Figure 3.5), or analysing animal bones as evidence of how someone butchered a carcass. Rather, her or his interpretation is already driven by theory, however implicit and unrecognised.

Facts only become meaningful when they are contained within stories. Rather than striving for a single narrative, which some archaeologists still favour, the current trend is towards a variety of stories about the past. That variety is driven by different assumptions and theories about what the past is and how the evidence is best interpreted. Now you may feel unhappy with the idea of many pasts. You may feel that your archaeological imagination requires certainty rather than a myriad of alternatives. Wouldn't life be easier with just one version of the Neolithic or the Roman Empire? Something we could all agree on. But, unless you plan to lead a very sheltered archaeological life, this won't happen. Archaeologists are now very attentive to the process by which our knowledge of the past is created. This is what it means to be questioning and reflexive (Box 1.1), and the price that is paid is the loss of some of the old certainties about how we thought the past worked.

THE NATURE OF THINGS: ESSENCE AND ESSENTIALISM

How can you spot a theory-laden fact? Easily. Just ask yourself what essences or properties you believe are involved. Consider the

biological essentialism found in so many representations of the past in books, magazines and museum dioramas that depict men as active in history, hunting and making spears, while women are shown as passive, gathering plant foods and scraping hides (Bolger 2006; Gifford-Gonzalez 1993; Moser 1998). Such essentialism is a very common approach to classification and is particularly strong in archaeology. Find a body with gold and it must be someone important because that is the status that precious metal confers. What happens is that people and things become defined by the properties, or essences, that they were expected to have in the first place. If this happens, then there will only be one version of the past: ours.

CHANGING TIMES

There is no better way to illustrate these basic concepts and the changes that the subject has undergone than to see archaeologists in action. It is a feature of the subject that we return to famous sites not only to acquire new and more precise data but to reinterpret them for our generation. As a result there are often as many layers of different interpretations for a monument such as Stonehenge as there are stratigraphic levels within the site itself. These different campaigns of fieldwork, not to mention reinterpretations from the published evidence, serve as marker posts for the development of the subject.

CASE STUDY 1: CHANGING ANGLO-SAXONS

The developments in archaeology over the past 50 years, from culture history to anthropological archaeology, are well illustrated by the three successive major investigations of the Anglo-Saxon ship-burial site of Sutton Hoo in the county of Suffolk, eastern England (Carver 1998; Carver 2011: 18). The various campaigns, and in particular the first, uncovered fabulous objects that pointed to the burial of a king: a good example of an ideal type whose essence was inherent in the rich accoutrements.

THE SPIRIT OF PLACE

The cemetery with its mounds and earlier settlements had been hacked into by grave robbers in the seventeenth century and by

antiquaries in the nineteenth century. All we know about them are the holes they left. Our knowledge of what they missed begins when Mrs Edith Pretty, a practising spiritualist, decided in 1938 to hire a local, self-taught archaeologist, Basil Brown, to find out what was in the mounds on her land at Sutton Hoo. Brown dug trenches through several of the mounds and in 1939 returned to the largest. Here he uncovered with great skill the trace of an Anglo-Saxon longship which had been dragged up on to dry land to act as a giant coffin 1,300 years ago.

Long before the invention of 24/7 broadcasting, news of such a spectacular find spread quickly along the very small archaeological grapevine. The powers-that-be intervened. In the interests of national importance the authorities, represented by the British Museum and the Government's Office of Works, replaced Brown and his advisors at the local museum. They gave the plum job of digging the burial chamber within the ship to a Cambridge archaeologist, Charles Phillips. He in turn brought in Stuart Piggott and W.F. Grimes, who later became professors at Edinburgh and London universities, respectively.

The spectacular array of 263 objects, including silver bowls from Constantinople, exquisitely crafted gold buckles, royal insignia, a lyre and the occupant's sword and helmet, were uncovered in only 17 days during the summer that England declared war on Germany. As Martin Carver describes it:

It had been one of those magical excavations that few are given to experience: when every day brings a new discovery, and each find discovered reveals the glimmer of the next. Moments of disciplined restraint and stiff upper lip, while photography and drawing are undertaken, are followed by gasps of excitement and jubilant chatter, taking stock and racking the imagination for every eventuality before the tense commitment of raising the object from the ground.

(1998: 16)

Then, in what is still the greatest act of individual generosity in respect of excavated treasure, Mrs Pretty gave the entire collection, worth millions, to the British nation for nothing, not even an honorary title.

SUTTON HOO, SCIENCE AND SCHOLARSHIP

The second campaign, between 1965 and 1971, was slower. Led by Dr Rupert Bruce-Mitford from the British Museum, it was meticulous, scientific and very scholarly. The two watchwords in 1939 had been recovery and recording. In Bruce-Mitford's reinvestigations they became authenticity and accuracy. The ship was redug and the remaining, corroded artefacts reassessed and reassembled. Brown's spoil tips were sieved for anything that might have been missed. Parallels to the artefacts were hunted down and everything recorded in three massive volumes completed in 1983. Here was the state reporting on one of its assets.

Science-based archaeology played a key role in the second phase and made it possible to realise the goals of accuracy and authenticity. For example, a little bronze stag had originally been thought to come from the top of the helmet. But when the composition of the alloys in the stag, the helmet and the metal surrounding a great whetstone were analysed, the match showed that it should be reunited with this last object. That is how you can now see it on display in the British Museum, where it is known as the King's 'sceptre' (www.britishmuseum.org/explore/young_explorers/childrens_online_tours/sutton_hoo/sceptre.aspx).

SUTTON HOO IN A MANAGERIAL AGE

How much more remained to be discovered? The third and latest investigations, between 1983 and 1992, employed new scientific advances in prospection and excavation techniques, but most importantly the archaeologists now changed the questions (Carver 2011). The Sutton Hoo landscape, with its evidence for multi-period occupation, rather than the mounds alone, became the prime focus.

These campaigns were led by Martin Carver, whose research proposal was selected in open competition by the national management committee responsible for the site. It was the first British archaeological project to have a published and publicly scrutinised project design. The questions it framed drew on information from an 'evaluation' and 'strategy' phase that was carried out before any digging began (1998: 176). How different to 1938, when it had

been curiosity, perhaps tinged by spiritualism, that motivated research, and even 1965, when plans were very much kept in-house and played close to the chest. Carver's investigations were part of wider changes as British archaeologists accepted that, if their discipline was to grow, then it had to adopt professional standards. The watchwords in this third phase were management and accountability.

The project design set out to place Sutton Hoo in its archaeological context. Carver's investigations tackled the question at a variety of analytical scales and with a battery of techniques. Non-destructive methods such as ground-penetrating radar and geophysical survey were used to find out about the site. Greater time-depth was achieved by sampling the much earlier settlements in the immediate landscape. More of the cemetery was excavated to better judge the status and position of the original finds within the wider society of which Sutton Hoo was a part. Graves, with much less in them, now took months rather than a fortnight to dig and record. As a result, bodies were found as traces in the sand. The surrounding region was systematically studied through The Kingdom of East Anglia survey. The pattern of land use and settlement was reconstructed to answer the question as to why such wealth should have been found in what today is regarded as a rural backwater. And in order to meet the accountability criteria, Carver set out to interest the public in the work and explain it to them. After all, the public had benefited from Mrs Pretty's generosity and it was in their name that the site had been placed under state protection through existing Ancient Monument legislation. Television coverage, impractical in 1939, meant that 13 million people watched the excavations in the 1980s, compared with perhaps a hundred who visited the original dig.

SUTTON HOO AS A HERITAGE SITE

Ironically, science provided the means both to aid and to destroy archaeology: the latest investigations at Sutton Hoo were partly prompted by the threat of treasure-hunters using metal detectors. Mrs Pretty's selflessness was matched by others' greed for treasure, and such venality has extended in many directions. At the close of the project, the nation, in the shape of the appropriate government agency, was invited to buy the site, but valued it at only £3,000. A

plea for private sponsorship failed. Eventually The National Trust stepped in and, with £3.6 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the site was secured.

We should not be surprised. At the same time, archaeologists had discovered in London the remains of the Rose theatre, where all of Christopher Marlowe's plays opened and where Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* was first performed in 1592. A site of unquestionable national significance, the Rose now lies wrapped in cling film and covered by sand in the basement of the office block that stands there (Wainwright 1989). Preserved for the future, yes, but hardly accessible to the present. The state likes its heirlooms but will not fork out the financial compensation that is involved in stopping a city office block from being built.

The successive campaigns at Sutton Hoo provide in microcosm an illustration of the change from an amateur to a professional discipline. At the same time, the conceptual framework has shifted from an exclusively culture history approach to consider the wider issues raised under the umbrella of anthropological archaeology (Chapter 2). The process was repeated in every country over the past 60 years, a shift that also involved the increasing use of science to validate claims and an awareness of contemporary issues.

'Who owns the past?' is a big question that all archaeologists now face. Flashpoints such as the Rose theatre are extreme examples which polarise the various views and raise critical questions about professional ethics. Do you, as an archaeologist, side with the heritage lobby and the famous actors who claimed the site must be saved and displayed, or with the developer who was guided by planning legislation and arrived at a solution, preservation in situ, with the proper authorities? Should the past halt progress, even if it is just another office block? Would the arguments have been different if a hospital had been planned for that location?

At Sutton Hoo the move from individual ownership to protection by a national heritage organisation also involved controversy. Some archaeologists questioned whether the 1980s' excavations were appropriate. Now they are divided over how to develop the site as a tourist and educational attraction, as proposed by the saviours of the site, The National Trust ('Tourist centre "would destroy Saxon site"', the *Guardian*, 11 October 1999).

The lesson to take away is that archaeologists do not just dig things up. Our campaigns also create the symbols that people use to contest fundamental issues of concern in the modern world (Chapter 8).

CASE STUDY 2: TANGLING WITH AGRICULTURAL ORIGINS

For many years the high, treeless plateau of Anatolia was a blank on the archaeological map of Turkey. British archaeologist James Mellaart changed that just before nightfall on a cold November day in 1958 when he visited the huge habitation mound at Çatalhöyük near the town of Konya. He quickly realised from the pottery and stone tools on the surface that this was a vast Neolithic site. He returned in 1961 with permits, a dozen archaeologists and local workmen to do the digging. In four breathless seasons he established that Çatalhöyük had been created in 1,000 years by repeatedly building houses, one on top of the other.

The rate of accumulation at Çatalhöyük is impressive. Today the mound stands 17.5 metres proud of the plain that it sits on, with possibly another 4 metres of archaeological deposits below the present ground surface. This means that on average the mound was growing at more than 2 centimetres a year. In time it also came to cover 13 hectares in a high-density mosaic of flat-roofed, square and rectangular houses that were home to some 8,000 people. Çatalhöyük was a well-organised Neolithic town occupied between 9,400 and 8,400 years ago, reminiscent of the pueblos of Arizona and New Mexico where entry to rooms was also by ladders from the roof.

A FORK IN THE ROAD

Çatalhöyük translates as ‘mound at the forked road’, which is an appropriate local name for the global impact that Mellaart’s excavations would have. The Neolithic period had been described by its great champion Gordon Childe (1942) as taking place in the ‘grey night of remote prehistory’. Mellaart, however, had found its technicolour dawn. Above all Çatalhöyük is known for its vivid art and sculpture. The mud-brick rooms may be small but they have

figurative and patterned wall paintings and clay-modelled animal skulls, particularly bulls with large horns. These were painted in bright, earth colours and even within these dimly lit rooms must have had a dramatic impact.

Many of the rooms had human skeletons buried in the floors, while elsewhere terracotta figurines of fecund females, that Mellaart dubbed goddesses, were found. This vibrant culture, rich in human and animal symbolism (Box 1.2) led him to conclude that Çatalhöyük was a matriarchal society based on the worship of female fertility. For Mellaart (1967: 221) Çatalhöyük represented a spectacular development in human civilisation. What he had uncovered showed the creative power of the Neolithic revolution founded on efficiently organised food production and conservation.

BOX 1.2 HOW ÇATALHÖYÜK CHANGED THE WORLD

According to its first excavator, James Mellaart (1967: 11), the site is remarkable for its:

- wall paintings and plaster reliefs
- sculptures in stone and clay
- advanced technology in the crafts of weaving, woodwork, metallurgy and obsidian (volcanic glass)
- numerous sanctuaries testifying to an advanced religion, complete with symbolism and mythology
- buildings indicating the birth of architecture and conscious planning
- advanced practices in agriculture and stockbreeding
- numerous imports and a flourishing trade in raw materials.

The second fork in Çatalhöyük's road relates to the issues of where farming originated and what it led to. The age and unexpected sophistication of Çatalhöyük suggested that Anatolia might be the place where the early experiments in domestication took place. The region was always recognised as part of a much wider bio-zone in the Middle East, where the key domesticates of wheat

and barley occurred in their natural state, but until Çatalhöyük it had lacked any evidence for Neolithic occupation. Indeed, the oldest evidence for domestication is still to be found elsewhere in the region. But the size and complexity of Çatalhöyük indicates that the Neolithic people of Anatolia were the first to know what to do with these changes in food production: become an urban power.

From such a location, farmers, organised according to new religious principles, could go east towards the major rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates, where the earliest civilisations would emerge. Much later they headed west into Europe.

The Neolithic revolution, as proposed by Childe, changed the world through farming and put it on its course to the present. If that was the case, then Çatalhöyük provided the archaeological evidence for when and where this tipping point occurred in human history.

HIATUS AND CHANGE

Mellaart's last digging season was in 1965. Although he wanted to continue there were problems with conserving the delicate sculptures and other fragile finds, including textiles and wooden artefacts. The science of conservation needed time to catch up. There was also his controversial involvement, that led to the loss of his excavation permit, with a mysterious Bronze Age treasure from northern Turkey.

What followed was a hiatus, a term used to describe a gap in an archaeological sequence when nothing happened because people abandoned the site for a time. The hiatus in digging at Çatalhöyük lasted almost 30 years, more than enough time for a new generation of archaeologists to be trained. During this time Çatalhöyük was not forgotten and in fact acquired iconic status within the Goddess Movement of the 1970s. This movement coincided with the rise of feminist critiques of institutions and power that were biased towards the male. Inspired by archaeologist Marija Gimbutas (2001), Çatalhöyük provided an example of an original religion that was focused on female imagery and, following Mellaart, a matriarchal structure.

Work resumed in 1993 with an international team led by Ian Hodder. There was, however, some continuity. Childe had taught

Mellaart, and in turn Hodder had attended Mellaart's lectures. But there the similarity ends. In that 30 years archaeology had changed in scale, funding and purpose. For example, Çatalhöyük would now be investigated by over 100 archaeologists, which in Michael Balter's (2005: 4) opinion 'represents the greatest concentration of scientific firepower ever focussed on an archaeological dig'. While Mellaart was interested in filling in the archaeological map, the new Çatalhöyük dig has a Mission Statement (Box 1.3) that addresses issues of science, heritage and the visitor experience. The multi-million-dollar funding needed to achieve these aims now comes from many sources: industrial sponsors and private corporations as well as research foundations and councils.

BOX 1.3 THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE ÇATALHÖYÜK PROJECT

The full text can be found at www.catalhoyuk.com/mission.html.

Çatalhöyük is an example of the important Anatolian contribution to the development of early societies. A site of this importance for Turkish and global heritage needs careful conservation and presentation to the public. It poses problems of conservation of mud brick and wall plaster, and problems of site management which have a wider applicability to many sites in the Eastern Mediterranean. ...

The aims of the current international project at Çatalhöyük involve full-scale modern archaeological excavation and conservation, and promotion of the site for visitor access. ... The work aims at extensive uncovering of new areas of the site and the recovery, conservation and presentation of paintings and sculpture. The work is planned to continue over 25 years.

The ultimate aim is to provide the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism with a well planned heritage site. ... By providing a range of visitor experiences the full heritage potential of the site can begin to be exploited.

The main research direction is to place the paintings and symbolism within a full environmental, economic and social context.

Central questions concern the origins of the site and its early development, social and economic organisation and variation within the community, the reasons for the adoption and intensification of agriculture, the social context for the early use of pottery, temporal trends in the life of the community, trade and relations with other sites in the region.

MANY VOICES

As conceived by Hodder (1999), his long-term project at Çatalhöyük is an exploration of how the archaeological process of discovery and interpretation can evolve. Understanding the past comes from engaging with archaeological practice. It is important, as the dig's official biographer puts it (Balter 2005: 4), to understand the community of archaeologists 'with its own unique blend of friendships, rivalries, traditions, and rituals', if we are to understand the Neolithic community that they are investigating. How is this done?

It is done by allowing many voices a say in interpretation, rather than just leaving it to the Director to state the significance of the site. You can see the results in the diaries of staff and their daily blogs on the project's website (www.catalhoyuk.com) and in its books (Hodder 2000, 2006). The outpouring of their private thoughts nicely matches the claustrophobic privacy of Çatalhöyük's mud-brick architecture and the secrets it contained.

CHANGING THE SYMBOLS

Çatalhöyük is dominated by symbols and these have been the focus of attention for Mellaart, Gimbutas and Hodder. But the move has been from seeing them as simple representations of religion and ritual to a broader investigation of how we engage with the material world. Consequently, are the wall paintings and figurines a way of exploring the minds of people in deep history: a Neolithic blog perhaps? They were certainly regularly updated, as Hodder's precise contextual excavations, backed up by detailed scientific analysis, have shown. As a result, it is now known that the walls of

the houses were replastered annually. The art and its symbols were transient rather than permanent. The delete key was always being pressed, but the blog remained there as successive, hidden layers. Furthermore, the average life of a house at Çatalhöyük ranged between 40 and 120 years. So, between two and six generations saw the annual transformation, and the rooms became a material metaphor for the addition and renewal of both individual and social memories. The rooms, as Hodder argues, were also the spaces for their lives to become entangled with material culture in complex ways. These were the places where they answered questions such as how to protect people and things from misfortune, how to keep while giving and how to deal with the implications of living with the dead, since they were buried under the floor.

With these questions the significance of Çatalhöyük changes. Where once it stood at the fork in the road that led from the Neolithic economy to the present world, now its rich data point to another path that asks why we came to think the way we do. The first fork understands the drive to domestication and farming as purposeful, since what followed – urban life, civilisation and eventually the modern world – was beneficial. The second fork, as put by Hodder (1990a), sees agriculture and sedentism as unintended consequences of a symbolic world that had always existed, but which was now made material in ways that invited novel connections to be made.

At least two interpretations of the archaeological evidence are therefore on offer at Çatalhöyük. This was not the case at Sutton Hoo, where adding detail rather than investigating the interpretive process was paramount. My two examples of how archaeology has changed differ most when it comes to their target audiences. Outside Northwest Europe Sutton Hoo has little impact. Art history aside, it is one example among hundreds of how political power was organised and displayed before the modern nation state. It is, however, an excellent example of archaeology at those local and regional scales that I described at the beginning of the chapter. Çatalhöyük also covers these scales, but at the same time its findings address the global issue of how we use the past to understand our changing humanity. Both studies show that the archaeological imagination never stands still.

FOLLOWING UP

Luckily many excellent textbooks now exist to guide your footsteps as you discover what archaeology is about. These include: Robert Preucel and Ian Hodder (Hodder 2010; Preucel and Hodder 1996), Christopher Gosden (1999) and Matthew Johnson (2010) on archaeological and anthropological theory; Julian Thomas (1996) on the archaeological imagination; Robert Wenke (1990), David Hurst Thomas (1998), Kevin Greene and Tom Moore (2010), Herbert Maschner and Chris Chippindale (2005) and Martin Carver (Carver 2009, 2011) on aims, methods, theories and techniques – the craft of archaeology – and I recommend anything by the doyen of archaeological writers, Brian Fagan. Here is a sample of some of his titles since the last edition of this book (2008; 2011; 2013) and some from before (1991, 1992, 1997, 1999, 2005). These deal with how archaeology is written, climate change past and present, water, the rise of sea levels through history and overviews of the subject: the best individual introduction to the scale and scope that the archaeological imagination covers.

Among the many overviews provided by encyclopaedias, handbooks and companions on archaeology I would select Claire Smith (2014) and Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn (2005, 2012) and the edited overviews of themes, regions and periods by Barry Cunliffe, Chris Gosden and Rosemary Joyce (2009), John Bintliff (2004) and Chris Scarre (2013), while not forgetting the Heritage Reader on archaeology in the commercial and contemporary world (Fairclough *et al.* 2008) and a comprehensive training manual for modern archaeologists (Jameson and Eogan 2013). The best introduction to material culture, including the take that archaeologists give it, is Arthur Berger's *What objects mean* (2014), while there is also a comprehensive handbook to provide a detailed overview (Tilley *et al.* 2006) as well as Danny Miller's (2012) personal account of how things made an anthropologist out of an archaeologist. Suitably guided, we can now turn our attention away from the question, 'What is archaeology?' to consider 'How many archaeologies are there?'

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