

Session ID	45
Session Title	The Decolonisation of Archaeology and Archaeological Collections within museums
Start Time	Tue Dec 17 09:30:00
Room	826

The work we undertake as archaeologists and curators of archaeological collections has the potential to be of great social value. Archaeology can have a positive effect on individual and collective wellbeing, contributing to the construction of identity, social connectivity, a sense of belonging and collective empowerment. However, these wellbeing effects vary between demographic groups. Up until the mid-20th century, Archaeology played an important role in the justification of colonial conquest by state and religious actors, the enactment of violent control, and the appropriation of the past of other countries. Through discourse of civilization and origins, Archaeology was used in the construction of European identity and of superiority. Colonial ideas continue to persist within academia (content and pedagogy), within the wider profession, and in museum practices. They are used to justify archaeological projects abroad, and they influence research frameworks and project designs in the UK. Cobb's Digging Diversity research (2012; 2015) highlights the lack diversity within academia and the profession. As such, diverse perspectives and interpretations of archaeological evidence are excluded, and there is a distinct lack of representation within the stories we tell publicly. This session will discuss and explore: how the histories of colonialism and empire are reflected in archaeology, academia, archaeological practice, and museum collections and archives; diverse perspectives and re/interpretations of archaeological evidence; new approaches and examples of good practice.

References:

Cobb, H. L. 2012. 'Digging diversity? A preliminary examination of disciplinary diversity in UK archaeology', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*.

Cobb, H. L. 2015. 'A diverse profession? Challenging inequalities and diversifying involvement in British archaeology', in P. Everill and P. Irving (eds.) *Rescue Archaeology: Foundations for the Future*, 226-245. Hereford: RESCUE.

9:30	Laura Hampden, Museum Detox; Laura Hampden, Historic England, Museum Detox, ClfA Equality and Diversity Group	Introduction	
9:35	Louise Fowler, MOLA	Where does archaeology take place?	<p>A consideration of where (and when) actions, things and people take place is fundamental to our practice as archaeologists. Place is embedded within our regional and national frameworks, in the management of heritage, and in the structure of the developer-funded archaeology sector. Place permeates our practice – from decisions about stratigraphic context to discussions about heritage-based place-making. The cultural theorist Stuart Hall eloquently problematised the idea of where we consider that history takes place, arguing that there cannot be a history of England without also considering the silences present within that history: 'I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea [...] There is no English history without that other history' (Hall 1991), and projects such as the Legacies of British Slave-ownership and Colonial Countryside are addressing these entangled histories. Similarly decolonising our archaeological practice will require us to reconsider how we make place in our work, and this paper will explore what this might look like in practice, drawing on work in progress with a group of contemporary objects collected by photographer Gideon Mendel at the site of the Calais 'Jungle' camp.</p> <p>Hall, S. 1991 Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities, in A. King (ed) <i>Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity</i></p>

9:55	Cathie Draycott, Durham University	Investigating Intersections of Race and Public Perceptions of Archaeology: a pilot survey run in Bermuda, 2019	Survey figures for racial proportionality in archaeology in the US and UK are now out of date, but it is clear that despite a recent increase in visibility of both the issue and of black and ethnic minority archaeologists, the discipline continues to be predominantly white. Perceived problems of this are lack of variety in interpretations of evidence; continued concentration on traditional topics; and the perpetuation of a conservative status quo that keeps people in their social place. Reasons for lack of diversity often pointed to are disparities in financial cushioning needed to pursue a subject not known for its lucrative career potential, and persistent public perceptions of archaeology as by and for white people, if not white men (the Indy effect). This creates a loop. Research and engagement feedback exercises such as the UK's 2013 Barriers to Engagement report for English Heritage (Historic England) have identified action points designed to break or at least disrupt that loop. However, to the knowledge of the author there has not been an extensive survey that queries intersections of public perceptions of archaeology, social identities, and sources of information. To that end, a pilot survey was developed and run in Bermuda in September 2019. This presentation will report on the methods, content and outcomes of that survey, with the intention of gathering feedback from an engaged audience, toward potentially extending the project.
10:15	Gert Huskens, Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and Ghent University	A 'Belgian compromise' of Science and Empire along the Nile	<p>For decades, heroic tales of brave archaeologists, eulogies on champions of decipherment, and mind-blowing reports of mysterious discoveries dominated our view on the history of Egyptology. Only recently, the field has taken the first steps in a long expected process of critical self-reflection and initiated the writing of a multifaceted disciplinary history (Reid, 2003; Carruthers, 2014). Despite the widespread involvement of all sorts of Belgian actors in and around the making of Egyptology, most of the accounts only had an eye for the traditional major imperialist powers (Bavay et al., 2015; Warmenbol, 2012) This contribution makes the case for a profound analysis of the entanglements between Belgian diplomacy and the making of Egyptology before the First World War.</p> <p>As I will argue, a better understanding of this intertwined web will result in a more profound insight in the cultural dimensions of imperial diplomacy and Belgian informal empire in Egypt in general. Moreover, it will explore the role played by the cultural sphere of Egyptology as a place of inter-imperial contention, a meeting ground for both national as well as transnational imperial elites, and the instrumentation of the discipline for imperialist purposes (Trümpler, 2008; Gady, 2005). I will argue why well-known diplomatic actors serving Belgian interests such as the Zizinia's, the Eids' and Mustapha Aga Ayat, but also actors which were neglected so far deserve to be investigated from their position within the web of archaeology, diplomacy and imperialism.</p>
10:35	Zena Kamash, Royal Holloway University; Cathie Draycott, Durham University; Niall Finneran, University of Winchester; Christina Welch, University of Winchester	Panel	Panel Discussion 1. How the Histories of Colonialism and Empire are Reflected in Archaeological Practice and Academia, and What is the Way Forward?
11:05	Dan Hicks, University of Oxford	Seeing the Pace of Violence in Theoretical Archaeology	It was "his classification of the museum of weapons, etc," wrote Edward Burnett Tylor after seeing its public display in Bethnal Green, that led Augustus Pitt-Rivers "to form his theories". A century and a half later, as TAG 2019 is convened "in partnership with the British Museum", this paper uses new thinking from (post)colonial museums as a lens through which to interrogate archaeological theory as white infrastructure.
11:25	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
11:55	Elizabeth Marlowe, Colgate University	How to Say Nothing: A Case Study of the Museum Labels on Some Looted Bronzes	This paper examines how museums talk about objects in their collections with unsavory pasts. In particular, it focuses on a group of life-sized bronze sculptures that were almost certainly looted in the 1960s from Bubon, a Roman site in southern Turkey, and dispersed on the American art market. Bubon statues now feature prominently in the galleries of institutions such as the Getty, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Met's label is a particularly revealing case study of how museums use a variety of rhetorical strategies to obfuscate, mitigate, and deny uncomfortable recent history. Extrapolating from antiquities displays at other institutions, such as the Manchester Museum, that have been more willing to confront such histories head on, the talk will conclude with an attempt at a "decolonizing" rewrite of the Met's label.

12:10	Danika Parikh, University of Cambridge	From accession to access: decolonising archaeological collections through critical tours and audience engagement	<p>Since October 2018, Untold Histories Museum Tours have been delivering decolonial tours of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge. Founded by three South Asian women, the tours discuss the histories of museum collecting and how these are firmly situated within histories of colonialism and conflict. By highlighting the biographies of individual objects, we illustrate the impact of these histories and emphasise their pervasiveness. We dismantle the idea of collecting as a genteel activity by discussing individual collectors who donated objects looted during conflict. We show how museums were complicit in these systems of oppression, even fuelling the destruction of archaeological sites.</p> <p>The tours are routinely attended by audiences unfamiliar with decolonial discourse and practice, and the uncomfortable histories that are our focus. This has led to emotional and fraught interactions. Conversely, BME audiences have confided that hearing these histories spoken out loud in a memory institution felt revolutionary. Balancing these twin goals of educating and empowering was our key aim. In this paper, I will discuss the practical lessons learned over the first year of this project, and reflect critically on the extent to which we achieved our goals. I will explore the impact of our choices in terms of publicity, content, and delivery. Finally, I will examine the benefits as well as the limitations of the direct audience engagement approach to decolonisation.</p>
12:25	Subhadra Das, UCL & Museum Detox Member; Korantema Anyimadu, Arts Emergency Museum Detox Member; Jenny Williams, Take the Space; Ebony Francis, Diary of a Black Tree	Panel Discussion	Diverse perspectives and re/interpretations of archaeological evidence; New approaches and examples of good practice.
13:00	END	END	END