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On archaeological praxis, gender bias and indigenous peoples in South America

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses several aspects of the practice of archaeology in South America, specifically in the Southern Cone. Examining two key issues: the socio-political context of knowledge production and the positioning of South American archaeology in relation to its European and North American counterparts. Three cases that bridge these issues are examined. First, Gero's argument for gender bias in the recording of field data, based in her ethnographic work during the excavation of the Paleondian site of Arroyo Seco 2. Second, the reburial of the human remains of Inakayal (an Indian chief who died at the end of the nineteenth century). Third, the excavation of the Inca mummies of the Llullaillaco peak in the southern Andes. The first is a critique on methodological grounds, the second demonstrates that Argentinean archaeology cannot free itself from its colonial past and the third illustrates the ethical dimension of archaeological praxis, specifically the complex interaction between local and foreign archaeologists.

KEYWORDS

archaeological socio-politics • gender archaeology • reburial issues
• South America

■ INTRODUCTION

A few years ago I asked a Catalan archaeologist who was giving lectures in various places in Argentina what his impression of archaeology in the country was. He answered dryly: 'quite colonized'. His answer triggered in my mind some issues which have been discussed briefly, but on the whole insufficiently, on previous occasions. What is the relationship between the peripheral position of Argentina and other South American countries in a global context and the way archaeological knowledge is produced, legitimated, reproduced and disseminated? Is South American archaeology, like other archaeologies, a science exposed to the influence of scholars from other continents where the production of theoretical knowledge is far more significant, or is it essentially a 'colonized' science practiced by subordinated third-world archaeologists? Is the archaeological knowledge produced in the region by both foreign and local archaeologists relevant to the people of the South American countries, especially indigenous and mestizo communities (which, in some countries, such as Bolivia and Peru, are the majority of the population) or, on the contrary, is it a bourgeois practice, an exercise to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of a few, and a latter-day derivation of colonial domination? Does archaeology still retain the colonial spirit of its origins?

These questions are still in my mind and are far from resolved. However, I believe that a reflection on aspects of the practice of archaeology in the region will help in understanding some of the processes related to two key issues: the socio-political context of the production of knowledge about the past in the region, and the extent to which South American archaeology is subordinate to its European and North American counterparts.

In the format of a single article I have not attempted, or claimed to have achieved, any degree of comprehensive coverage. My aim is merely to highlight the issues outlined above in order to better understand the contemporary praxis of archaeology in South America, and especially in the Southern Cone. These concerns are neither new nor exclusive to the region. Outside archaeology, such issues have been widely discussed by Bourdieu in numerous papers (among many others 1976, 1990, 1992), and within the field of archaeology several books and articles have been illuminating (e.g. Gero et al., 1983; Ucko, 1983; Trigger, 1984; Shanks and Tilley, 1987a; Layton, 1989a, 1989b). Within this debate it has been argued that an academic archaeology that interprets past material culture is political action which 'operates as part of a wider cultural discourse serving to reproduce the relationship between the dominant and the dominated' (Shanks and Tilley, 1987b: 188). Some have even gone further, and a more extreme position claims that, since science is an instrument of domination, 'scientific' (positivist-processual) archaeologists can be seen as agents of imperial



hegemony (Miller and Tilley, 1984). In South America, with few exceptions (e.g. Funari, 1992; Politis, 1995; Gnecco, 1999; McGuire and Navarrete, 1999), there is an absence of reflection on these issues. These exceptions clearly demonstrate, however, that archaeological praxis within South America must be understood within its global, 'postmodern' context. As such, and understanding the postmodern condition as a globalizing cultural project which reflects the logic of the multinational phase of capitalism (Jameson, 1984), it has been proposed that the praxis of scientific archaeology has been converted into a hegemonic exercise in accordance with this globalizing project (Gnecco, 1999: 23).

■ SOME ASPECTS OF THE RECENT TRAJECTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN SOUTH AMERICA

Firstly, I would like to explain why I have defined the 'region of study' of this paper as South America. I have chosen to discuss this area in preference to the more common unit of analysis – Latin America – because, in spite of some similarities in their Spanish backgrounds and idiosyncratic characteristics, there are marked differences between these two regions with respect to the issues discussed in this paper. The historical development of the archaeology of Central America varies considerably from that of South America, and the role played by US archaeology in the former is significantly different to its role in the latter. Obviously, contemporary South American archaeology is a product of its historical development, especially over the last 50 years, when, after the Second World War, the US extended its economic and political hegemony over South America.

In archaeology, this situation brought with it the consolidation of the culture-history paradigm, over the *kulturkreise* school, as well as some surviving mechanical diffusionists, and a variety of direct historical approaches (Politis, 1995). This process of consolidation of the North American culture-history paradigm has to be seen within the context of the way the region was incorporated into political and economic dependence on the USA, as well as its capacity for organizing, systemizing and giving meaning to previously dispersed groups of data. In general, the process of expansion of the culture-history paradigm has to be understood within the context of the transference of ideas and models from the centre to the periphery. In practical terms, the manner in which culture-history achieved dominance in the region was quite simple.

Firstly, North American archaeologists worked intensively in the area and significantly increased archaeological knowledge of the region within this conceptual framework. The most notable cases were Gordon Willey and Wendell Bennett in the Andes, Betty Meggers and Clifford Evans in the

Amazon and Irving Rouse in Venezuela. Secondly, South American archaeologists studied in the USA or were heavily exposed to the influence of Anglo-Saxon intellectual production. They read, discussed and taught the kind of archaeology that was legitimized in the USA during the post-war years. Through these mechanisms the culture-historical method of studying the pre-Hispanic past permeated the archaeology of the region and constituted the core of the archaeology practiced in South America until the 1970s. At the end of this decade, the processual influence started to make itself felt: South American archaeology began to follow the new agenda, and issues such as adaptation and paleoecology became core questions in research. For some archaeologists, both foreign and locals, the region was converted into a giant laboratory for the testing of adaptationist models.

Alternative Marxist approaches (e.g. Lumbreras, 1974) were more restricted in the archaeology of the 1970s and early 1980s, due, among other reasons, to the persecution of leftist scientists by military governments during the period. The current status of what is considered the most refined expression of Marxist thought in contemporary South American archaeology – Latin American social archaeology (one of the very few original theoretical productions from the region) – is subject to debate. Outside Latin America it has been viewed positively and valued for its originality (McGuire, 1991; Patterson, 1994; McGuire and Navarrete, 1999). However, some critics inside the region take issue with its theoretical structure (Oyuela-Caycedo et al., 1997), the absence of a methodology (Gnecco, 1995) and its application on an empirical level, basically in the archaeology of South American hunter-gatherers (Lanata and Borrero, 1999).

During the 1990s archaeologists in South America witnessed the emergence of several research projects, derived from the heterogeneous body of research programs within the so-called postprocessual approach. The trend created an interest in themes which had never before been the subject of scrutiny in the region, such as gender archaeology, ethnicity, the socio-political context of archaeology, human agency, etc. In accordance with certain postprocessual propositions, it was assumed that archaeological discourse should not be hegemonic, that diversity in research methodologies should be lauded and that multiple views of the past should be encouraged and taken into consideration (Hodder, 1999). In the postprocessual agenda there is an interest in providing visibility to subordinated groups who had not been systematically considered in archaeological research (see the publications from the WAC 1 conference, Southampton, 1986, e.g. Gathercole and Lowenthal, 1989; Layton, 1989a, 1989b). The work conducted within gender archaeology and the examination of the relationship between the rights of indigenous peoples and the practice of contemporary archaeology are in accordance with such an agenda.



■ GENDER ARCHAEOLOGY: FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE OBSERVED

Gender archaeology, with its close links to feminist archaeology, is one of the worldwide hallmarks of the postprocessual endeavor, as postprocessualists established the need to examine variables such as gender in archaeology (Wylie, 1991). Nonetheless, its application has been limited in South America, and is basically restricted to North American archaeologists working in the Andes (e.g. Silverblatt, 1987; Gero, 1991; Hastorf, 1991; Gero, 1999). South American archaeologists themselves have done virtually no work in the area. The little that has been done has been oriented towards the sociology of knowledge (e.g. Bellelli et al., 1994) or to the identification of the sexual division of labor as represented in dwellings, ceremonial spaces and settlement patterns (Oyuela-Caycedo, 1991). Related fields of knowledge, such as social anthropology, have had a relatively greater impact and have produced more in-depth studies (e.g. González, 1993; López, 1997).

One of the better-known examples of the application of ideas from gender archaeology to a South American case study is the ethnographic work carried out by Joan Gero (1996) on the excavation of Arroyo Seco 2, a Palaeoindian site located in the Pampas region of Argentina, under the direction of the author. Gero spent about two weeks in the 1992 fieldwork season recording the excavation practices of the crew of approximately 20 people who were working on five 2 x 2 m units. Among Gero's objectives was the examination of how gender bias can affect archaeological interpretation from the very beginning of the process, from the gathering of basic archaeological data. She was also interested in examining issues such as gender and power, as well as hierarchy and objectivity. As such, Gero sought to establish if the Arroyo Seco 2 field season would provide a case for the hypothesis that the style of practice of contemporary archaeology is coded with values and messages (such as objectivity and autonomy) which enables males to be more successful (Gero, 1996). As the director of the excavation I agreed to participate in Gero's project. I also agree with the idea that fieldwork and excavation are not neutral procedures for recovering the past (Shanks and Tilley, 1987b: 22–3). Almost the entire crew felt relaxed during the experiment and enjoyed the feeling of being 'the other' for a period of two weeks (an experience I strongly recommend to every ethnographer and ethnoarchaeologist). I should add that the intellectual honesty and discretion of Gero and her team-mate, Charles Goodwin, made the whole experience easy and comfortable for us.

In principle I believe that gender bias, as well as other types of bias, have an effect on excavation practices and hence the collection of data. Unfortunately, the methodological shortcomings of Gero's project produced

'bias' in the results. As expected, Gero concluded that there had been androcentrism present in the recording process and a reinforcement of male values, based on two examples. These examples were: firstly, that a male member of the team produced larger pedestals of earth to support artifacts than those created by a female member of the team. Supposedly, in this way the male excavator captured the attention of the director (the author) and 'deliberately (if unconsciously) advance his data, pushing it – and himself as its producer – into the limelight of the excavation block' (Gero, 1996: 269).

According to Gero, this was the outcome of a masculinist style of doing research: more aggressive, more competitive and more strongly hierarchical. The second example used was that of a male member of the team who marked soil stains and other features using a trowel, and mapped with solid lines, while a female excavator did not mark out features prior to drawing them, and used broken lines when mapping. This example represents the 'dichotomous A/Not A logic' (Gero, 1996). As men mapped with a solid line they left no room for ambiguity or gradations, presenting archaeological data in a solid, compacted manner. Contrarily, '[w]omen, bombarded by a gender ideology of femininity, practice a "feminine" science in which intuition and needing to feel that one has gotten it "right" often overwhelm the politics of advancing one's practice through the hierarchy of practitioners competing to produce useful data' (Gero, 1996: 272).

As I stated above, I am open to the possibility of the existence of gender bias in any part of the process of archaeological research, but the two examples presented by Gero to support her conclusions are trivial. There are two basic problems with Gero's analysis and hence the force of her conclusions. Firstly, over a period of about two weeks, in a group of 20 or more excavators mapping several times weekly (after passing the plough zone, we mapped every 5 cm, not every 10 cm as Gero stated) there are a variety of tendencies that can be noticed regarding different recording techniques. However, Gero paid no attention to – or at least did not publish – the statistical representation of her observations. Consequently, it is difficult to tell whether the differences noticed were statistically relevant with respect to gender-related practices, or whether they indicate more personal proclivities. In other words, out of many different examples it is always possible to find one or two which fit your hypothesis. But, in the present case, how many men and women exhibited these tendencies? 'Hard' statistics were not required, merely some idea of the proportion of men and women carrying out activities in more or less the same style. As concerns the first example, there are additional problems with the observations which affect the final conclusion: I can guarantee that I, as director of the excavation, was not in the slightest bit interested in the size of the pedestals. What did capture my attention was what was on top of the pedestals – the archaeological object.

This leads on to the second problem: there are a number of other socio-contextual factors which could explain the types of practice noticed by



Gero, but which were not considered in her analysis. For example, excavators may lack or possess confidence according to the amount of excavation experience they have (this would be an alternative explanation for the size of the pedestals or the solid lines on the maps of sediment stains), the stage they are at in their degree program, whether they are naturally timid or confident people, and whether they are from a privileged class, educated at a bilingual school in Buenos Aires, or whether they are from an impoverished background and educated in a rural college. Obviously, these are also biases which should be taken into account in the process of production of archaeological information, but they do not necessarily indicate a gender bias or that such bias is the prime, unique causal factor. In other words, gender bias clearly intersects with other types of bias which were not accounted for in Gero's analysis. I do not want to appear churlish, but neither myself nor any of the participants on the excavation (male or female) believe that the examples provided by Gero indicated an androcentric way of recording data. It seems to me that these two examples do not uphold the assertion that 'science is not sexless, and that scientific practice is itself dominated by masculinist arrangements, modes of interaction and putting forth argument' (Gero, 1996: 269).

■ INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND ARCHAEOLOGISTS: UNDER THE SHADOW OF COLONIALISM

Respect for indigenous rights and wishes in regard to the archaeological record meshes well with the postprocessual agenda. In this section I examine some South American examples concerning the relationship between indigenous peoples and archaeologists, both local and foreign. In this way I hope to contribute to the understanding of the creation and validation of archaeological knowledge and to the examination of the ethical and political dimensions of the practice of archaeology in the region. As Gnecco (1999) has stated, archaeology must critically reflect on its contemporary role if it does not want to lose all legitimacy for the production of knowledge of the past.

For generations archaeologists have excavated human remains in South America (and throughout the world) without paying the slightest attention to the opinions and feelings of indigenous peoples, including the living descendants of those who were exhumed. Two decades ago the situation started to change, essentially corresponding to the period in which *The American Indians Against Desecration* (AIAD) began their claims for the reburial of indigenous remains stored in museums and university collections, and when Australian Aborigines opposed the excavation of burial sites (Hubert, 1989). Henceforth, indigenous people from several parts of the world gained recognition for their rights in regards to human remains,

the most important landmarks in this process being The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) enacted by the US National Congress in 1990, and the Federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Heritage Protection Act, enacted in Australia in 1984 (see review in Hubert, 1989, 1992; Fforde, 1997).

In South America the situation is different and relatively backward in comparison with the USA and Australia. First, it is important to recognize that dialogue between archaeologists and indigenous peoples in the region has always been difficult, erratic, distant and basically absent. Tombs, monuments and sacred places were excavated in the name of science without any consideration for the people culturally and historically related to them (Mamami Condorí, 1989). Until recently, the tight control under which indigenous people had been held since the colonial period did not allow them to react to this situation. They were passive and suffering observers of how archaeologists treated their dead, who were disinterred and sent to city museums. In Argentina, as in most countries of South America, the construction of a single nation with only one 'true' national identity was considered imperative to the consolidation of national unity (Slavsky, 1992) and to the insertion of the country onto the world stage (Barre, 1983). The strategies adopted to achieve this aim in relation to the indigenous population were multiple: war for political domination, appropriation of lands and resources, conversion to Catholicism, dismemberment of traditional practices, cultural alienation, etc. However, indigenous communities resisted for centuries and in many places kept their traditions alive, which has enabled them to re-emerge as a political force in the past decades and fight successfully for their rights to be recognized. By the early 1980s there were already two indigenous representatives in Bolivia and one in Brazil, representing their communities and making their claims heard in parliament (Ontiveros Yulquila, 1988). The South American indigenous struggle has achieved important successes, such as Colombia's new constitution of 1991, which is a good example of how new legislation can respect cultural diversity. Although putting the constitution into practice will have to confront the logical difficulties of the articulation of different cultural categories and cosmologies, it is undoubtedly a step forward.

The indigenous voice can be heard increasingly loudly and clearly these days. Indigenous groups are nowadays in the process of organizing themselves and are struggling for their rights (see review in Contreras, 1988), rights to their lands and resources, to make their own decisions, to maintain their culture and language, and to dispose of their dead and ancestors in their own way. The conflict with the archaeologists emerges from this last point, and the arena of the debate is the argument over the ownership of archaeological human remains. Of the entire region only Peru, Argentina and Uruguay have precedents respecting claims for the return of indigenous humans remains. In other countries, notably those with significant and



varied extant indigenous populations such as Colombia and Brazil, there has not been a single known case recorded in which an indigenous community has solicited the return or the reburial of human bones.

In contrast, in Argentina in recent decades a number of claims for indigenous human remains have been made (see review in Endere, 1998). Among them, two cases show the complexity of the issue and the erratic position of archaeologists within it: the reburial of Inakayal, and the Inca mummies of the Lullaillaco peak.

Inakayal, an Indian chief whose father was Pehuenche and mother was Tehuelche, lived with his people in northwestern Patagonia. In October 1884 he and another chief called Foyel were taken prisoner when they went to parley with a National Commander who had located a fort in their land. Their camps were destroyed, their families were taken prisoner and all of them were sent on a horrendous trip to the prison of El Tigre in Buenos Aires. The government subsequently sold their lands to the English Tecka Suderland Argentine Company (Endere, 1998). Eighteen months after their capture, the Director of the Museum of La Plata, Dr Francisco Moreno, obtained permission from the government to give accommodation to Inakayal, Foyel and their families. Inakayal died in the Museum on 24 September 1888. He was not buried; his bones, brain, scalp and death mask became part of the museum collection. His skeleton was displayed in the Anthropological Galleries of the museum until 1940 when it was stored in the deposit.

On 19 April 1994, 'The Day of the Aborigine' in Argentina, the remains of Inakayal returned to his homeland in a National Air Force airplane and were buried in the small Patagonian town of Tecka in a mausoleum. The urn containing the bones was covered by stones in the manner of an indigenous tomb (a 'chenque'). Direct descendants of Inakayal were present at the ceremony. The event was made possible by a law proposed by the National Senator from the Patagonian Province of Chubut, Dr H. Solari Irigoyen, and was supported by indigenous organizations. The law was approved by the National Congress in 1991 as number 23,940 and it required the Museum of La Plata to return the remains of Inakayal to his descendants. The High Council of La Plata University, to which the Museum is attached, agreed to return the bones (to do otherwise would have been to infringe the law which required the devolution), and also paid homage to Chief Inakayal. An archeologist from the Museum of La Plata also accompanied and took custody of the urn with the remains from La Plata to Tecka and offered apologies in the name of the institution to the descendants of Inakayal.

However, this case did not mean that most of the archaeologists and physical anthropologists of the Museum of La Plata agreed with the return nor respected the rights of indigenous people in the disposal of their dead. Only a few years earlier, in 1992, the Academic Council of the Facultad de Ciencias Naturales de la Universidad de La Plata (to which the Museum of La Plata is accountable) refused to deliver the remains of another

indigenous chief, citing a legal impediment: the archaeological collections were public property which belong to the nation and therefore cannot be claimed as part of the private dominion (Podgorny and Politis, 1992). On that occasion the indigenous community, 'Cacique Pincén', which had made the claim for the remains, did not have enough lobbying power to force politicians to help them. However, these claims opened the door for the future law, as they gained visibility in the press and attracted the attention of the senator from Chubut.

Even after the enactment of the federal law that obliged the museum to return the remains of Inakayal, internal debates continued within the Museum of La Plata. Some archaeologists ardently defended the 'indivisibility of the collections' and the legal property rights of the museum over what was considered to be a part of the museum's patrimony rather than remains of deep significance for the Patagonian indigenous communities. For this group of scientists, the return of Inakayal was a mistake which would open the gates for the spoliation not only of other human remains, but also of the entire archaeological collection (thousands of objects collected over the last 120 years). As the reburial of Inakayal was widely covered by the national press (*Clarín*, *La Nación*, *Página 12*, etc.) the opinion of these scientists took the public stage. At the same time, the local newspaper, *El Día*, carried out surveys of people who did not belong to indigenous groups (most of them from European background) and opinions in the street. Almost everyone interviewed considered that the remains of the indigenous chief should be returned to his descendants.

The other occasion on which archaeologists and indigenous people confronted one another was the famous case of the Llullaillaco mummies. This example was far more complex as it also involved a foreign archaeologist, Johan Reinhard, who clashed with local authorities and local archaeologists. The whole issue, involving the exhumation of three Inca mummies, highlights and crosscuts the ethical and political dimension of the practice of archaeology. Reinhard, well-known for excavating high peak mummies in the Andes, climbed the Llullaillaco peak with his excavation team and a young archaeologist (a doctoral candidate from the University of Buenos Aires) as his Argentinean counterpart. Two Argentinean undergraduate students also participated in the expedition. Until 1995 only nine mummies had been found in high altitude sites (above 5000 m above sea level), the first of this kind being the Chachami mummy, found in southern Peru between 1896 and 1898. The majority of these mummies had been recovered in rescue operations because they had been exposed by natural causes or looters (see Schobinger, 1999, for a summary). They were isolated and hazardous finds. The data obtained from these mummies were integrated into the systematic research on high altitude sites, specifically from the Inca period, by several researchers (e.g. Hyslop, 1984; Schobinger, 1986). From 1995 onwards the finds of Inca mummies in high altitude sites have



multiplied as a product of the *ad hoc* excavations carried out by Reinhard, first in Peru and later in northwest Argentina. The mummies of the snow peaks of the Ampato hills, Sara-Sara and Misit, in southern Peru, and Lullaillaco in the Argentinean northwest were all excavated in this fashion. Furthermore, all of these findings were colorfully reported in *National Geographic* magazine (Reinhard, 1996; 1998; 1999).

In the case of the most recent finding – the Lullaillaco mummies, pompously presented as from the highest archaeological site in the world – there were several problems that were badly dealt with by the director of the expedition. Firstly, the research team only partially fulfilled the conditions for legal authorization, since it had provincial permission but not the national approval required by law, as was clearly stated in the document produced by a committee organized by the Universidad Nacional de Salta (CEPIHA, Facultad de Humanidades). This document was signed by professors, graduate students and undergraduates (Mesa Redonda, 1999) who made a critical analysis of the condition of the archaeological heritage of Argentina, especially in Salta Province. This debate took place in November 1999 and was organized specifically to discuss the ethical implications for archaeologists of these types of finds. A number of recommendations were made to improve preservation and management of the heritage, emphasizing the need for the political authorities to take into account the rights and interests of the local community and indigenous peoples and for them to participate in the management of the cultural heritage as stipulated in the protective legislation.

Secondly, Reinhard and his team did not solicit the opinions of the local indigenous people. As a result, the Kolla indigenous community 'Los Airampos' filed a suit, alleging that their rights had been violated by the finding and excavation of three Inca mummies in Lullaillaco. The Kollas consider themselves living descendants of the inhabitants of the Kollasuyo during the Inca period. The peak sanctuary where the mummies were found is considered a sacred site in the indigenous territory and the mummies are understood to be part of the communities (Curtoni and Endere, 2000). They claimed that they had the right to be consulted before the mummies were removed. The federal attorney rejected the claims, alleging that the archaeological expedition had fulfilled the legal requirements to carry out the research as it had been authorized by the provincial government. The provincial authorities, the national and the Catholic universities, the members of the expedition, as well as the indigenous community, became embroiled in a dispute to decide the conditions under which the mummies should be studied and stored. Even though the political authorities and many local archaeologists were absent from the round table discussions, the recommendations adopted by its members are a cornerstone in the struggle for recognition of indigenous peoples' rights to their cultural heritage in Argentina. For the first time a group of archaeologists agreed upon and admitted the legitimacy of their claims (Curtoni and Endere, 2000).

Thirdly, the find was first published in *National Geographic* and portrayed the kind of archaeology that we would rather forget, focusing exclusively on impressive and spectacular finds. As is usual for this publication the text is scientifically poor but the pictures are attractive and of excellent quality. Disappointingly, some of the images were truly pathetic and gave the public a false view of archaeology, for example, two members of the expedition holding one of their collaborators by his feet while he is trying to rescue a mummy from the bottom of a pit (which was certainly dug from a more orthodox excavation position).

There are some points in favor of Reinhard. Looters have discovered other mummies, such as those found on Mount Quehwar in Peru, some of which were blown up in the attempt to get the body and their goods away quickly. This evidence of plunder 'only strengthens our resolve to excavate as many high-altitude sites as possible in advance of thieves' (Reinhard, 1998: 134). It is fair to say that South American governments are generally bad at protecting their cultural heritage. Cultural policies are far more declarative than effective, and the practical possibilities of controlling access to archaeological Andean peak sites is remote. A further point to take into account is that the weather conditions in which an excavation would have to be carried out at more than 5000 m above sea level are extremely bad, and the time in which to complete the excavation would be correspondingly short. As a result, archaeologists who work at high altitude sites need special training and technical procedures that are quick and effective. A third point is that the quality and quantity of data that can be obtained from these mummies, given their excellent state of preservation, could be highly significant. However, none of these three points justifies the excavation of a place considered by contemporary historically related indigenous people living in the area as a sacred site. Nor is it an excuse for not complying fully with the authorization procedures or carrying out more careful excavations. The other exhumations of mummies carried out by Reinhard in the Peruvian Andes, also sponsored by the National Geographic Society, and also colorfully displayed in the pages of the Society magazine (Reinhard, 1996; 1998), followed the same style. Essentially, the sites were approached in order to exhume the mummies and their accompanying funerary goods. It is unclear how the team conducted other necessary archaeological recording or how they excavated the tombs. The piles of dirt surrounding a few days of excavation shown in the figure on pages 134–5 (Reinhard, 1998) is, at least, suggestive. Finally, in the case of the Lullaillaco mummies, interaction with local archaeologists was very limited, being restricted to a single graduate student and a pair of undergraduate students. The rest of the archaeological community was essentially ignored, especially the archaeologists and anthropologists from the Universidad Nacional of Salta, in the province where the mummies were found.



■ FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The cases summarized above raise points relevant to several of the issues stated at the beginning of the paper. Gero's paper underused the potential of ethnographic research to contribute to the understanding of gender bias in the various steps of the archeological process. Gero could be correct in her assertions that a 'masculinist' style of doing archaeology is considered to be the standard, and as such there exists androcentric bias in the generation of archeological data. However, there are many examples that show that this supposedly more aggressive, more competitive and more self-confident 'masculinist' style is not the exclusive patrimony of men. It could be argued that many women in archaeology act in exactly this way. What are the proportions of men and women performing this supposedly 'masculinist' style? As such, Gero appears to make a too easy correlation between the specific activities of men and women (in this case, one man and one woman) and the maintenance of an admittedly existent masculinist system. Furthermore, the case presented by Gero does not demonstrate in a conclusive manner what she is asserting, fundamentally due to the lack of representativity in the employment of one example out of a universe of examples which could exemplify the opposite point, and because other biases are not taken into account.

Gero's article highlights how quickly and uncritically certain ideas get into the archaeological literature and gain a level of legitimacy in the production of archaeological theory. Gero's article, which in spite of its originality has, at the least, methodological shortcomings, is mentioned in a recent book on archaeological method and theory (Hodder, 1999: 69) as a clear-cut example of data description and gender bias. In Hodder's book, this example is separated from the main text (in a text box), and the prestige of the author and the importance of the publishing house will ensure that it has an extensive circulation and important impact. Similarly, various seminars given by Gero in North America and Europe have afforded the case a high profile in the context of the current discussion of gender bias in archaeology. I have the right to suppose that this rapid inclusion in theoretical discussion, high visibility in a respected text and the circulation of her results in various academic circles have been favored by Gero's origins in the Anglo-Saxon world.

The case of Inakayal involved local archaeologists and clearly indicates that several of them, including physical anthropologists, still consider human remains, even those with close, 'scientifically' proven living descendants, as an indivisible part of a museum's collection. Over 25 years ago, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) proposed that the remains of Truganini (the so-called 'last Tasmanian') be disposed of immediately in accordance with her own wishes and those of her descendants, because '[i]t was felt that the case of Truganini, a known historical

person, is an exceptional one and that the moral issue involved overrides any other consideration' (Ucko, 1975: 7).

In the case of Inakayal, which has similar characteristics, one would have expected a comparable reaction from the archaeological and anthropological staff of the Museum of La Plata, but incredibly, even today, at least in Argentina, archaeology cannot free itself from its colonial background and the over-expressed respect for 'the other' remains on a declarative level. Of course, advances have been made in this respect, but there is still no consensus concerning what to do with the claims of indigenous people. Furthermore, South American archaeologists have recently been consulted in cases of 're-ethnicity': subordinated groups who claim to be the descendants of indigenous groups that have been considered extinct (for example, the Charrúas in Uruguay, or the Huarpes in Mendoza, Argentina). In none of these cases have the archaeologists been able to express particularly enlightened opinions, due as much to their inability to deal with living populations as to the conceptual and operational problems that ethnic identification carries with it (Jones, 1997).

The split between archaeologists and indigenous groups has not always been the case in Latin America. For an important stretch of time a number of archaeologists – notably Julio Tello in Peru and Manuel Gamio in Mexico – were active supporters of political movements which promoted the recuperation of the dignity and political rights of Latin American indigenous groups. In spite of criticisms that this movement was a product of non-Indians and encouraged integration with Western society (Barre, 1983), it nonetheless signified an advance in the recovery of indigenous rights. Archaeology had a central role in this process as a tool for the transformation of social reality in favor of repressed and subordinated groups. Lamentably, this political commitment has become increasingly diluted, and, with few exceptions, contemporary South American archaeologists are passive observers of the struggles of the many indigenous groups for the recovery of their rights and the revindication of their culture.

The case of the mummies of the Llullaillaco reveals that colonial practices still exist in the manner in which some archaeologists from the central, developed countries conduct research in South America. Instead of considering Reinhard as a foreign scientist sensitive to indigenous claims and involved with local archaeology in a symmetrical relation, which he patently is not, we can perhaps see him more clearly in the light of the title that National Geographic EXPLORER gave to the video that they made of his research – *The Mummy Hunters*. Ultimately, the fact that the finding was first published in *National Geographic* is not an innocent coincidence, as it has been demonstrated elsewhere (Gero and Root, 1991) that this magazine has been successfully promoting the hegemony of Western culture and Western imperialism. The aftertaste of colonialism is still present in the archaeology of South America and involves both foreign and local researchers.



The three cases cited must also be understood in the context of the complex set of relationships between local and foreign archaeologies, or, as Trigger (1984) proposed, national and imperialist archaeologies, although these groups do not always coincide nor are they always equivalent. It is fair to say that at least in recent decades the way foreign (above all North American) archaeologists have carried out their research in South America is based on respect for local colleagues, with the interaction between them symmetrical in nature. True cooperative research projects proliferate in several South American countries. This is, however, at the operational level of the practice of archaeology. In the theoretical and conceptual dimensions the status of South American archaeology remains one of subordination in respect to its North American and European counterparts. It is clear that through their publications archaeologists from the Anglo-Saxon world exert a disproportionate influence on research around the world (Trigger, 1984). This is not only a result of the greater numbers of archaeologists working in these countries, the enormous differences in resources allocated to research and the consequently greater possibilities for theoretical production. As I have argued elsewhere (Politis, 1995), this is the cultural counterpart of the economic and political hegemony that the US has exercised over South America, especially since the Second World War.

The archaeology of South America finds itself with a dual role. On one side, with very few exceptions, its theoretical development is subordinated to the central, developed countries. It follows a little (sometimes a great deal) behind and with less sophistication the agenda put forward in the Anglo-Saxon world. This can also be understood through the difference that exists between the field of production (in the central countries) and the field of reception (in the peripheral countries) which creates significant dysfunction (Bourdieu, 1990). However, South American archaeology cannot escape the essence of its origin which manifests itself in the form of a tool for the domination of indigenous groups through the appropriation of a socially legitimized discourse on their past. Archaeology retains and controls objects from the past of indigenous societies, not only because of the value they hold as sources of information, but also for their symbolic content which is co-opted in the development of the Western hegemonic globalizing model.

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