

lesson in empathy in order to understand what is in many cases a regular occurrence for descendant communities engaging with archaeologists.

Reading this volume, I was delighted by the diversity of fresh topics and innovative approaches, and by the direction of thought and connections made in some very critical pieces. It was a pleasure to be off the beaten path and this volume both demonstrates the capacity of archaeology to surprise, and its limitless potential to see the world through new eyes. While 'historical' and 'contemporary' archaeologists will no doubt continue to receive criticism for studying 'the things we already know,' Holtorf puts it simply: "there is no reason why archaeologists, studying material remains, should not be studying objects from the recent pasts" (9). Indeed, this practice is singularly in a position to "help us to apprehend everyday realities that we are usually expert at ignoring" (Holtorf 16).

This is the strength of anthropology—making the familiar, seem unfamiliar—and archaeology is most potent, most powerful, when it is used to look at our own material culture, where we already have some understanding of our cultural analogies, metaphors, and networks of meaning. Applying an 'archaeological gaze' can destabilize these, disrupt our accepted norms, expose our ideologies, and challenge us to think critically about everything that we say, do, or buy (into). It can also "give a voice to those silenced in or by society" (Holtorf 12), and in doing so create "a powerful narrative in a global politics of power, domination and resistance" (Piccini 14). An archaeology of the contemporary therefore is immediately socially relevant, in part because those responsible for the material record are in large part still around, still interacting with the material world, and still making meaning from it. As Holtorf and Piccini (16) assert, "contemporary archaeologies marry archaeology *in* the modern world with the archaeology *of* the modern world." This book illustrates the diversity and creative potential of such a marriage, and is a must-read for all who want to broaden their archaeological horizons—the sky is no limit.

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Archaeology as Political Action

by Randall H. McGuire

University of California Press, Berkeley, 2008.
xv + 294 pp.; figures, maps, index

Reviewed by Bill Angelbeck

Scholars cannot resolve the dilemma of politics and archaeology by invoking a sterile vision of archaeology as either science or politics. Two decades of debate have shown us that archaeology is both science and politics. The productive question is not, How do we make archaeology one or the other? but, instead, How do archaeologists link science and politics in our practice (McGuire, p. 36).

Archaeologists often strive for scientific objectivity. This can lead to the idea that archaeology is, or should be, apolitical. Randall McGuire, in *Archaeology as Political Action*, argues that archaeology always has a political context to it. Yet, this is not to abandon any sense of objectivity—rather, his main point is that archaeology is both political and scientific. Archaeologists have to retain the authority of their craft, but they also should be vigilantly aware of the sociopolitical context in which they operate. They should use their work for positive and moral ends to serve the needs of communities. To be effective in doing so requires that our knowledge claims be tied to the data we gather.

McGuire acknowledges that archaeology can seem to be a most arcane intellectual pursuit. Many might think that archaeological information could only be used in critique, as Jared Diamond or Brian Fagan cited such data to comment on the issue of global warming, for instance. However, in this book, McGuire shows how archaeologists can use archaeology to further positive political action, to help those communities that have been oppressed historically or exploited economically. This is using archaeology to effect changes in society, to make it relevant.

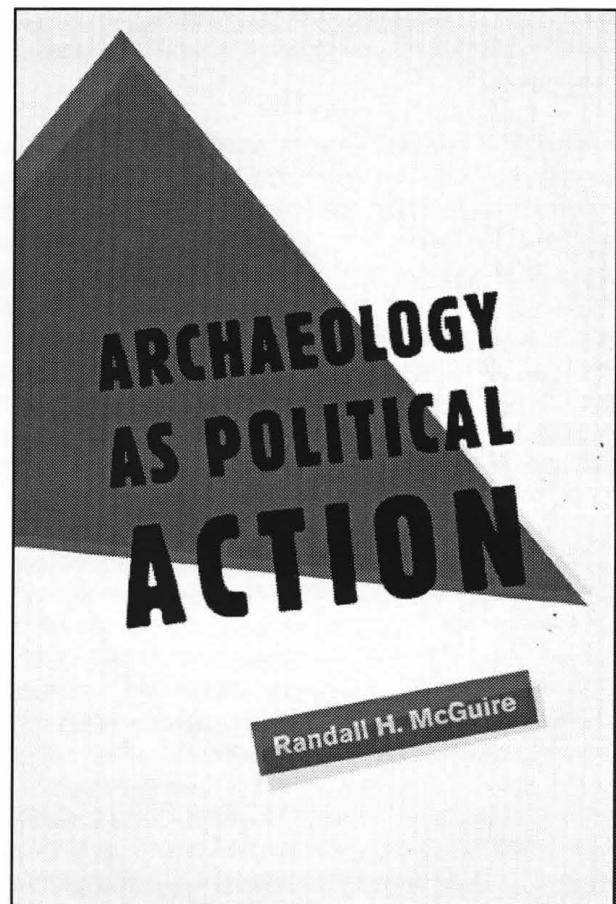
To set the basis for this, McGuire recalled how important archaeological sites have been strategically targeted in wartimes. Many acts of war have aimed to destroy the heritage of the enemy. This includes the routine acts of conquerors in the ancient near east to scrub evidence of prior rulers, and it includes more recent events, such as the Croats specifically bombing the centuries-old Stari Most bridge in Mostar valued by Bosnians (an act that has been described as "killing memory"). These actions constituted attacks upon their heritage and ideology, and these can be devastating for a people. McGuire argues that archaeology can serve to work the opposite way: as a positive force, extolling heritage or providing accuracy or corrections to claims about the past. This is using archaeology as praxis.

His theory of praxis, outlined in the second chapter, sets the framework for the rest of the book. Praxis is based in Marxism as a theory of social relations and, in this respect, he develops upon his prior book, *A Marxist Archaeology* (1992, Academic Press). Accordingly, Marxism treats society primarily as differentiated by class. His framework also draws upon feminist approaches in that archaeologists should be vigilant about how we present our data, interpretations, arguments—including the language used—so that we do not exclude relevant communities. A third component of praxis draws upon indigenous archaeologies in how collaboration should be integrated into archaeological practice.

He further describes praxis as involving the “four C’s.” Archaeologists need to exhibit a *coherence* in their logic and argument and have *correspondence* between their interpretations and data. Moreover, archaeologists should aim to be aware of the *contexts* in which they operate and the *consequences* their interpretations have for relevant communities.

In the third chapter entitled “Class,” co-written with Mark Walker, the authors describe the conditions of North American archaeology through the perspective of class and political economy. By this, they focus on archaeology both in the academy and the cultural resource management (CRM) industry. They argue that capitalism applies “pressure to produce more for less” (132). In the universities, this is shown in the expansion of use of adjunct and sessional instructors who receive inadequate pay, benefits, and job security for the skills they provide. They use this as an example of how economy devalues many archaeologists. In this discussion, it is revealing to read it through their perspective, however, it applies to many other disciplines more generally. Their analysis of the CRM industry applies to archaeology alone.

In this section, McGuire and Walker detail how capitalism economically pressures archaeologists, particularly those that conduct the actual fieldwork. Here, their discussion applies more to the U.S. than Canada or B.C., but is relevant nevertheless for the underlying processes they highlight. They describe the “archaeological proletariat”: field technicians are skilled labour, but the industry devalues their knowledge and skills—this is reflected in the slang terms used for these laborers, such as “shovel bum,” “grunt,” or “digroe” (128). They also discuss the history of the United Archaeological Field Technicians (UAFT), recounting their attempts to organize archaeological fieldworkers into a union and the obstacles they faced from the archaeological firms. Unfortunately, that is not a history of success. Yet, their discussion highlights the need for collective bargaining. In one study, unskilled laborers working on a highway project made \$18.64 per hour on average, while archaeological technicians on the same project averaged \$10.50 per hour. As they note, “Unskilled labor is cheap labor, and unorganized labor, regardless of skill, is cheaper still” (130). In reflecting upon both the academy and industry of archaeology, they show that there is an extreme “bifurcation of the labor force,” which leads to growing inequalities (128). The authors offer some proposals to make archaeologists more conscious of the effects of class in archaeology, in the hopes that some will act to better working conditions for those employed in this craft. And, to not just provide criticism, McGuire describes how they were conscious of such elements in their own research projects. This included



educating archaeological students and other fieldworkers about their rights as labourers, adhering to an eight-hour workday, and ensuring safe working conditions on site. Two of these research projects are the case studies for the next two chapters, “Mexico” and “Ludlow.”

The first case study is McGuire’s excavations with the Trincheras Tradition Project in Northern Mexico. In enacting this project, his research team operated with an awareness of the history of colonialism. As he details, the descendant border community of Tohono O’odham (or Papago) have experienced a double colonialism: Mexico and the United States. He uses this project to consider the main types of interactions that archaeologists can have with descendant communities or other interests; this section has relevance for archaeologists working in the Northwest Coast. One relation is through education: to inform the communities about your research and findings in the area; it can also involve archaeologists learning about those communities. Another interaction is consultation, having discussions about your research project with leaders or representatives from those communities. Importantly, such actions acknowledge a community’s power, rights, and authority. However, consultations can also be bureaucratic, often having only limited goals. McGuire maintains that consultation always has the potential for relationships to become more than instrumental. This is collaboration, and it entails the integration of goals, interests, and practices. He stressed that “effective collaboration begins before the definition of an objective or problem so that all parties can contribute to this definition” (146). He also

emphasizes that true collaboration means that local communities have the power to say no. Yet one more form of relationship McGuire outlines is opposition, which may be necessary to take against certain interests.

McGuire provides an important discussion about the archaeologist's role when working with communities. Collaboration does not mean giving up "authority as good crafts persons" (xii) in archaeology. His position is apt. For archaeologists to maintain such authority, they need to connect their interpretations to the data. Archaeologists cannot simply advance claims of certain groups without making those arguments fit the data in a way that is acceptable to the community of archaeologists. To do so not only undermines the archaeologist's authority, it also does not serve the community well when such claims do not stand.

... in our knowledge claims, archaeologists need to have some independence from the social groups and interests that we serve. The basis for this independence resides in our craft and in our obligations to the community of archaeologists. It is, therefore, almost inevitable that our knowledge claims will come into conflict with the claims of the communities we work with. I view this situation as good. Such contradictions create tensions that force each community to critically examine its own dialogue as well as the other's (95).

It is commendable that McGuire examines his own failures from his project in Mexico. The issue concerned ten burials that his team excavated. They sought permission from the Tohono O'odham community to excavate the burials and to perform some nondestructive analyses. Once the analyses were complete, they requested permission from the Mexican authority, the Consejo de Arqueologia, to repatriate the remains. But, they were denied. A main reason was that the Consejo did not want to acknowledge the Tohono O'odham's rights over the remains—they viewed archaeological remains as Mexican heritage; to allow repatriation to the Tohono O'odham would have acknowledged their authority over that heritage. Plus, the Tohono O'odham had relations as well with the U.S. (with many members living north of the border as well as relations with the archaeological team) and the Consejo also viewed this as an imposition on the authority of Mexico. McGuire's team was not able to repatriate the burials, and they felt that they had broken their trust with the Tohono O'odham community. From this experience, he learned that collaboration needed to involve all relevant parties, including the Consejo. They tried to be conscious of the effects of the double colonialism upon the Tohono O'odham, yet it was precisely that legacy that hampered their own investigations and relations with the community.

In the second case study, McGuire and colleagues describe their excavations at Ludlow in Colorado, a site that is an example of, literally, class warfare. From 1913 to 1914, battles broke out between the coal mining companies and labourers. The Colorado National Guard arrived and attacked a tent colony of striking workers and their families at Ludlow, killing nineteen people: five men, two women, and twelve children. Other tent villages of workers were also attacked during the Colorado Coalfield War. In 1996, McGuire and Dean Saitta began their investigations at the site of Ludlow to highlight those events. In this way, they

performed "archaeology as memory" (210), where the fieldwork serves as a form of societal recall. Indeed, their excavations received media coverage in local and national outlets, which served as opportunities to relate that history and discuss the events.

A major component of the project involved educating visitors from the local community and members of the United Mine-worker's union, with whom they were collaborating. In this way, they showed how archaeology can be much more powerful than evidence on documents. Archaeology recovers not something written about an event or what led to it—it uncovers the actual artifacts of the individuals involved. In this case, they unearthed clues about their living conditions, charcoal from their burned tents and homes, and bullets from the guns that fired at them. The use of archaeology as "memory" is important here and marks an important way that archaeology can be political.

Overall, the book is a tremendous resource. Throughout the work, McGuire summarizes and cites numerous archaeological studies as examples of effective political action. In so doing, the book provides a worthwhile overview and is a sourcebook for further exploration of these issues. It is dense with good information that can only be hinted at here, and it is clear in its prose and argument.

My main complaint concerns his use of power. There are often references to "speaking truth to power." While this concerns wording, it has some implications. This is using "power" primarily in contexts that apply to one group dominating another, or what could be seen as a "vertical" notion of power from top to bottom. There is also a "horizontal" form, the power of coalitions and alliances—it's the power that speaks truth to power. While McGuire is arguing for organizing weaker parties in unions and collaborations, he rarely uses "power" to refer to it. This leads to a sense that only those in roles of dominance over others have power. Power should not just be used in a negative sense—everyone wants power; it is attractive and it can help various communities see the benefits of alliance. To not use power in a positive manner is, in a sense, disempowering. It is important to use the term in other contexts, so that idea of collective power can be a draw precisely to support and strengthen political actions.

In the end, McGuire solidly establishes his main point that archaeology is political. This does not mean that archaeology, therefore, cannot accord with reality. Rather, to be effectively political, archaeologists need to tether their arguments to objective facts. More to the point, McGuire stresses that archaeology, to be relevant, should be political; otherwise, the research can lead to the "three dangers" (19-20) of displaying triviality, being complicit, or having unexamined prejudices.

McGuire's book reminds us that archaeology is always political, even while it strengthens and even aims for better scientific methods. Archaeology is a scientific craft that occurs within the legacies of history and operates within sociopolitical circumstances. No matter how far archaeologists may strive for the objectivity of a natural or positive science, archaeology will always remain a social science.

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