

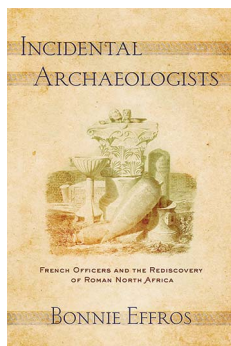
Review article

Construction of the racialised and colonised *other*: global comparatives in imperial and colonial archaeology

Uzma Z. Rizvi*

BONNIE EFFROS. 2018. *Incidental archaeologists: French officers and the rediscovery of Roman North Africa*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; 978-1-50170-210-5 \$49.95.

BONNIE EFFROS & GUOLONG LAI. 2018. *Unmasking ideology in imperial and colonial archaeology: vocabulary, symbols, and legacy* (Ideas, Debates, and Perspectives 8). Los Angeles (CA): Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press; 978-1-938770-13-5 \$85.



As the French report on restoring African heritage, *Restituer le patrimoine africain* (Sarr & Savoy 2018), lands within global public discourse, two new books, *Incidental archaeologists: French officers and the rediscovery of Roman North Africa*, by Bonnie Effros, and *Unmasking*

ideology in imperial and colonial archaeology: vocabulary, symbols, and legacy, edited by Bonnie Effros and Guolong Lai, feel remarkably timely. Both volumes offer a rich context, with a social historical rigour that provides an insightful backdrop to contemporary political events, as well as being a welcome addition to the growing literature on the histories of imperial and colonial archaeology practised worldwide.

Whereas Sarr and Savoy (2018) focus on artefacts taken from various African countries after 1885, *Incidental archaeologists*, considers “the first four decades of the French conquest and pacification of Algeria under the authority of the French military Government General” (p. 24). Throughout the volume,

Effros presents a convincing argument in which the social history of military infrastructure lays the groundwork for the future of the French civilising mission. She is clear about the magnitude of the task that the book is engaged in; it provides links between early French archaeologists and epigraphers and their place within the development of the disciplines. It also considers the ways by which romanticised narratives, created by French officers, about the classical archaeology of Algeria led to irresponsible destruction of antiquity, violence against local resistant populations and classifications that became constitutive of colonial archaeological interest and practice.

Bookended with an Introduction and Epilogue, Effros’s volume provides five chapters of robust social history (1830–1870) that challenge the “triumphal narratives of the history of the French officers’ engagement with archaeology in Algeria” (p. 29). Each chapter follows a chronological logic, covering roughly a decade of military events and decisions made, while illustrating the structural shifts in policy and the creation of governance that established the colony of Algiers and its relationship to a Roman past. It is the placement of that Roman past within the French social and scientific imaginary that Effros efficaciously highlights as creating the patronising colonial archaeological and scientific missions and mindsets that are a hallmark of colonial French archaeology, and the development of stakeholders for a universalising sense of heritage that is seemingly always European but limited in the local sphere.

The book moves beyond the Introduction with a first chapter on the military conquest of Algiers and Constantine, with particular attention paid to the region’s ancient monuments. This context lays the groundwork for the second chapter, in which Effros utilises

* Dekalb 301, Department of Social Science Cultural Studies, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY 11205, USA (Email: urizvi@pratt.edu)

colonial archives to demonstrate how the French understanding of the ancient Roman past played a major and decisive role in competing visions of the colonial settlement of Algeria. The use of archives in this chapter, and indeed throughout the book, reveals not only content, but also the building logistics of coloniality that maintain themselves within contemporary neocolonial conventions. Conversations that are ostensibly about military and colony building provide historical insight into contemporary conservation and preservation debates, in particular whether or not countries of the global south have the capacity to protect heritage. These archival documents are significant, as they demonstrate in their content and logic that in order to legitimise colonial authority, Roman archaeology and epigraphy was used to create a connection between a French sensibility around history and archaeological features in Algeria. What is at stake, then, in contemporary French repatriation, is not only the return of objects, but an excavation into French archaeological imaginaries where the ownership and stakeholdership have a deep history and connection that was deliberately imagined and forged.

This becomes more evident in Chapter 3, in which Effros provides a deep and rich social history of such competing visions of coloniality through the use of the exceptional site of Lambaesis to unpack the many ways by which archaeology, tourism and military instalments and considerations co-mingle and entangle themselves into futures for archaeological sites. The use of Lambaesis also illustrates affective modalities that emerge within colonial discourses, such as the romance of a ruin, or an affection for a past elsewhere. Those feelings become very important as the desire to institutionalise archaeology and collections becomes apparent both in the metropole and colonial spaces. It is in Chapter 4 that we begin to see the foundations of the first successful colonial archaeological societies and museums, such as the Musée de Philippeville, in Algeria (1852–1860), and the concomitant issues with funding and integrity that often plagued early efforts. It is also within this chapter that the archive is utilised to illustrate explicitly how the French viewed the *armée d'Afrique* as contributing to the vandalism of antiquity. This builds on earlier concerns of who the rightful owners of the past in Algeria are, and leads to the building of collections under the French, which, as Effros points out, did not include any Libyan inscriptions, even though plenty were available. The final chapter (5)

of the volume delves into The Second Empire, illustrating how the support of Napoleon III provided the infrastructure required for the development of topographic missions (related to Roman roads), the deployment of excavation teams from the metropole that integrated expertise of French military men, and the start of archaeological tourism.

Incidental archaeologists: French officers and the rediscovery of Roman North Africa, offers an in-depth, rigorous archival exploration that, while providing a clear history to archaeological policy under the French in Algeria, also uncovers its links to affective relationships to the past, the construction of the racialised and colonised *other* and the many forms of violence that are attendant with colonial force and often glossed as 'pacification'. Contemplating these same issues, *Unmasking ideology in imperial and colonial archaeology: vocabulary, symbols, and legacy* emerges as a response to the desire for a global comparative view of these forms of colonial and imperial process and their links to archaeology. Set up as five distinct parts, the 16 chapters provide both a geographic and temporal spread that is remarkable and useful for a global comparative approach to the topic, written by a cadre of well-respected scholars from archaeology, anthropology, art history, museum studies and history.

The first section of the volume defines and addresses the distinctions between the historic trajectories of imperial, colonial and post-colonial archaeology. The two chapters in this section, one by Margarita Díaz-Andreu and the other by Hubert Fehr, outline a generally Global South historical trajectory and a post-Second World War European condition, respectively. The development of archaeological programmes, looting of artefacts, and the growth of collections are the general focus. In addition to an interesting discussion of the definitions of colonialism by Fehr, an important point is provided by Díaz-Andreu: "Imperial archaeology was an ideological by-product of nationalism. This explains why, after decolonization, little effort was needed to transform existing archaeological narratives of the newly created states into ones that served nationalist objectives" (p. 21). It is important to separate the ongoing political project of decolonisation and the manner by which it is utilised in this chapter as an historical episode in the post-colony (for decolonisation as an ongoing political project, see Chapter 9 by Ann McGrath).

The second section of the volume dives deeply into case studies dealing with colonialism and nationalism, with three chapters by Neil Brodie, Guolong Lai and Talinn Grigor, respectively. Again, relevant to our own times, the conversation about the Benin Bronzes is so very pertinent. Brodie does an exceptional job of elucidating how British ‘cultural internationalism’ of the late twentieth-century encyclopaedic museums masked nineteenth-century colonial ideologies; for example, the buying and selling of artefacts from Benin provides the monetary support to maintain colonial apparatus in the region. Brodie’s chapter provides key historical depth and questions how ownership is assessed in the contemporary moment: “the seizure of the Benin artworks was a material and symbolic expression of British imperial power and of the chauvinist body of international law that enabled and justified it. Twenty-first century assertions of legitimate ownership are derived from this law and must be judged against its content” (p. 73).

Guolong Lai’s rich chapter uncovers many of the interconnected relationships between the USA and China in terms of archaeological excavations, museums and education. Of particular interest is the intellectual and political history to the introduction of a ‘Western’ archaeology into China and the ways by which Lai traces the shift from an imperial archaeology to a national model for archaeology. Similar to processes in India, the national models often rely on the use of science in archaeology. Linking Western science to the national project and particularly to the ways in which archaeology becomes emblematic of the nation is a theme that also appears in Talinn Grigor’s chapter. Bringing together issues of class resistance, heritage construction that links the nation to glorious pasts, and historical trajectories in Iran, Grigor investigates Pahlvi’s downfall and the rise of the Islamic Revolution (which had started as a Marxist revolution) as linked to extravagant heritage celebrations at the ancient site of Persepolis.

Section III on ‘Indigenous voices’ is complicated, as there is some muddling of the term ‘indigenous populations’. In the four chapters presented in this section, the chapters by Chip Colwell and Ann McGrath are most clearly identifiable with what archaeologists may label indigenous issues in settler colonies; the chapters by Wendy Doyon and Bonnie Effros focus on local populations that were colonised in particularly racialised forms and *othered*, but have a

distinct trajectory in the post-colony. It is important to understand the forms of solidarity that may be forged across these experiences, but to also be very clear about the particularly violent form of settler colonisation that is an ongoing condition for indigenous populations in settler colonies, such as the USA and Australia. One of the interesting aspects that links these chapters to the section prior (in particular the case study of Iran) is a question of labour (from a Marxist perspective) and the interactions of racialised bodies on the ground in archaeological excavations and in spaces of interpretation. Each chapter deals with the ambivalence of working in such conditions, the economic and political factors that local and indigenous communities contend with, and the ways by which local narratives are silenced within the production of knowledge. The authors ask us to consider the politics of inclusion, questioning how, when indigenous voices do find a place, the logic of archaeology does not constitutively permit a legitimate voice. As one possible pathway forward, the authors lead us to consider decolonial strategies of reparation and repatriation.

Section IV, on ‘Archaeology, art and exoticism’, provides three cases studies that illustrate, through the use of archival materials, the impact of colonial and imperialist projects in relationship to the epistemic formations of the traditional disciplines of art and archaeology. The three chapters in this section, by Ursula Brosseder, Jian Xu and Lothar von Falkenhäusen, each provide archival evidence for the politics that shaped the academic building blocks foundational to these disciplines in archaeological work in Russia, the French missions in China and the work of four German orientalist and their legacy in Chinese studies. The creation of the exotic other through knowledge production links each of these case studies. The impact of these sorts of epistemes is seen in Section V on ‘Colonial and post-colonial legacies’, in which the chapters by Matthew McCarty, Peter Schmidt, Yangjin Pak and Maya Stanfield-Mazzi outline archaeological practice in Tunisia, Uganda, Korea and Peru. Each of these chapters demonstrate with efficacy the point that one narrative, in fact, does not fit the local specificity of colonial and imperial archaeological practice.

It is imperative that we, as practitioners of this field, understand that what unites the colonial and imperial history of archaeology is the violence on and in local contexts. Even with the distinct forms by

which it expresses itself, what these volumes demonstrate is that an episteme that is forged through colonial and imperial violence continues to be violent in the post-colony as the national project. In the face of such evidence, it does behove us as archaeologists to think quite intentionally and carefully about what it means when we engage with local labour, national projects and extractive missions to

various parts of the world from metropolises in the Global North.

References

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