Review article

Archaeology and anthropology: a growing divide?

Alan Barnard*

Joshua D. Englehardt & Ivy A. Rieger (ed.). *These 'thin partitions': bridging the growing divide between cultural anthropology and archaeology*. 2017. Boulder: University Press of Colorado; 978-1-60732-541-3 hardback $75.

Pam J. Crabtree & Peter Bogucki (ed.). *European archaeology as anthropology. Essays in memory of Bernard Wailes*. 2017. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; 978-1-934536-89-6 hardback £47.

Bill Finlayson & Graeme Warren (ed.). *The diversity of hunter-gatherer pasts*. 2017. Oxford & Havertown (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78570-588-5 paperback £36.

The three volumes reviewed here have different origins but a common theme: all try to put some social or cultural anthropology into, or back into, archaeology. In the United Kingdom these are separate disciplines anyway, but in North America they are usually taught in the same department and have similar interests. The problem is that they are growing apart.

Englehardt and Rieger explicitly seek to bridge this 'growing divide' between archaeology and anthropology. The contributors have experience on several continents, but the focus is decidedly theoretical, and more Americanist than anything else. Crabtree and Bogucki have a European theme, and the volume results from a tribute session to the late Bernard Wailes held in Honolulu in 2013 by the Society for American Archaeology. Wailes, trained at Cambridge but teaching at Pennsylvania, sought to instil anthropological ideas into Europeanist archaeology. The Finlayson and Warren volume consists of papers from a session at the CHAGS11 conference, held in Vienna in 2015. Coverage includes papers on the Northwest Coast of America, Central Africa, Japan, Tierra del Fuego, Europe and sub-tropical Asia. The periods under discussion here range from the Middle Palaeolithic to the contemporary. Of the three volumes, only this one was published in the United Kingdom. Space constraints preclude covering all 37 substantive chapters, introductions and concluding remarks in the three volumes, so I shall concentrate on just a few, mainly those that most interest me.

Through all these volumes, the crunch comes in what they are trying to achieve. Are anthropology and archaeology best seen as two separate disciplines, or as a single discipline united by common goals in understanding things such as historical processes? Is collaboration between archaeology and social or cultural anthropology a good idea, or does it not really matter? As their title suggests, the volume edited by Englehardt and Rieger sees collaborative efforts as the best solution. The emphasis here is to a great extent on Central and North America. The Crabtree and Bogucki book sees archaeology as already part of a wider anthropology, as is typical in the Americas. Finlayson and Warren have archaeological concerns, but as a specialist hunter-gathererist book, theirs is tuned in to issues that transcend archaeology or anthropology (as narrowly defined) anyway. They mainly look to diversity among hunter-gatherers.

It is well known that all humans were once 'hunter-gatherers'. This was only 12 500 years ago. If the human species is about 200 000 years old, then around 95 per cent of our existence as a species has been as hunter-gatherers (or more in the case of some peoples). Of course, archaeology depends

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on what is left in the ground. If material culture is scant then there is not much to go on. For this reason, other areas of archaeology can be more popular. Although Finlayson works mainly in Jordan, his paper in the Finlayson and Warren volume is general and comparative, as are the papers by Graeme Warren and Paul Lane (all archaeologists). Jordi Estévez and Alfredo Prieto also have a clear comparative framework in their paper on Tierra del Fuego and the north-west coast of North America. Finlayson considers hunter-gatherers in the context of the non-hunter-gatherers who invariably surround them. He makes the point that those who still subsist by these means are but a tiny minority of the world's population, whereas all humans once counted in their number. This causes problems of definition, as indeed do anomalies such as the Pre-Pottery Neolithic, when domestication was in its formative stages. Are *hunters* different from *gatherers*? What about hunter-gatherer-fishers? What about pre-*Homo sapiens* or pre-symbolic culture hunter-gatherers?

The chapter on Middle Palaeolithic Europe, by Penny Spikins, Gail Hitchins and Andy Needham, is particularly interesting. Defined by their inability to think creatively, to bury their dead, to use language or symbolism, or indeed to survive until the present, Neanderthals were once thought to be very primitive indeed. New insights gained from studies of Middle Stone Age sites such as Blombos Cave and Border Cave in South Africa have, however, led us to rethink the idea of sociality among these hominins, or indeed these *people*. The Middle Stone Age is a uniquely African period, and although there were no African Neanderthals, the insights gained in Africa have implications for Europe too. Symbolic thought and language are not European inventions, but were present in the African sites as long ago as 100 000 BP, before the Neanderthals. Although this volume is not intended to be 'anthropological' in any narrow sense, at least this chapter does open up the scope for an anthropology as well as an archaeology of Neanderthal society. Spikins, Hitchins and Needham may be going a little too far in their search for an 'intimate sociality' here, but on the other hand perhaps this is what archaeology needs in order to become more truly anthropological?

In his paper, again in the Finlayson and Warren book, Reinhard Blumauer offers an interesting take on the Vienna School. This was a theoretical school in ethnography that emphasised the idea of *Kulturkreise* (culture circles) expanding across the globe, each overtaking earlier culture circles. It is interesting because of its Roman Catholic ideology: many of its ethnographers were priests, and they noticed that 'primitive' monotheism was common among hunter-gatherers, while Neolithic and post-Neolithic societies had 'slipped' into other religious belief systems. Blumauer exposes the contradictions between Vienna School assumptions and the diversity of hunter-gatherers, as well as the evolutionist tendency of the School in its reconstructions of prehistory.

In the same volume, Estévez and Prieto compare hunter-gatherer-fishers in Tierra del Fuego and on the Northwest Coast. This is noteworthy because these societies are so very different, occupying extreme poles of societies whose subsistence base is largely centred around fishing, and because their resources are nevertheless similar. Their solution to the problem rests on divergent reactions to changes in the resource base, as evidenced in the archaeological record. In his contribution, Warren looks at the use of analogy in the north-west European Mesolithic to argue, among other things, that the period is impoverished by assumptions about what hunter-gatherers are meant to be like. Lane compares the approaches in the various chapters to contextualise them. Like me, he is troubled by the lack of a clear explanation of what led to the Neolithic. Other papers in the volume include ones on the Northwest Coast, Central Africa, Iron Age maritime hunter-gatherers, experimental ethnoarchaeology in Tierra del Fuego and comparisons and analogies in subtropical Asia.

The Englehardt and Rieger book contains two concluding commentaries. Let me start with those. The first is by Donna M. Goldstein, a cultural anthropologist with a specialisation in Latin America. She writes a largely personal account, and also looks for things that are actually not in the book, such as an explanation of what happens in departments with disputes over grant funding, postgraduate training and mentorship and collaborative projects. The other is by William A. Parkinson, who is basically an archaeologist—although he describes himself variously as an 'anthropological archaeologist' or an 'archaeological anthropologist'. These two disciplines of archaeology and anthropology, of course, are united in most American departments, in a constellation that also includes linguistics and biological anthropology; a formulation that owes much to the vision of Franz Boas at the turn of the

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nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Times have changed since then, but the old debate as much as the newer configuration still remains: what have these two frameworks got to do with each other in a mutable and highly politicised world? I am not going to answer that question here, but many of the chapters of this book have a go. Most are by archaeologists, but cultural anthropologists are well represented too. Several comment on the 'evils' of postmodernism and subjectivity. The topics include Mesoamerica and the Pueblo Southwest, evolutionism in cultural anthropology, trendy areas such as post-humanism, neomaterialism and actor-network theory (the idea that things are as important as people), archaeological theory and Nuer ethnography, a modern Yucatecan village, the Aj Bop B'atz Project in Guatemala, ancient Greece, cross-cultural ideas of choice and wellbeing, practical exchanges between the disciplines (by Ivy Rieger, a cultural anthropologist) and what happens in Mexico (by Joshua Englehardt, an archaeologist). The volume is both detailed and varied in its coverage.

Finally, we can have a brief look at the collection edited by Crabtree and Bogucki. In a way, this is the narrowest of the three in its focus on the work of just one scholar, but Wailes's contribution is illuminating and has a wide geographic coverage. Many of the contributors here were Wailes's students, or have direct involvement in the broad project he initiated: to focus on late European prehistory rather than on the worldwide interests of V. Gordon Childe. Chapters deal with Indo-European origins, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, religious belief in Iberia, Irish chiefdoms, socio-economic change and religious settlements in medieval Ireland, coins of Antioch, state formation in Anglo-Saxon England (by archaeologist Pam Crabtree) and the transition to agriculture in Scandinavia and the British Isles (by archaeologist Peter Bogucki). Crabtree and Bogucki also offer a short social history of European archaeology in North America. This includes interesting remarks on, among other things, hiring practices in North American departments. Old World societies after the Ice Age are often overlooked in North America, and the focus for both younger scholars and older ones too has tended to be more on the Americas. To me, this is unfortunate and highlights the difference in perception of what is regarded as theoretically relevant for archaeology in general.

The three volumes reviewed here all have great selling points. If I were to pick a favourite, it would have to depend on period or (especially as I am an anthropologist) on region of specialisation: for a social anthropologist, geographic area is more important than time period. All things considered, my vote would probably go to *The diversity of hunter-gatherer pasts*. It makes intriguing and original points, with a surprisingly informed element of sparkle. That is, there are elements I had not thought of before I read it. *European archaeology as anthropology* is interesting too, and especially its final essay on the direction archaeology seems to be travelling on the North American continent. *These 'thin partitions'* is unique in its direct engagement with the problem at hand, and this also is no bad thing. In other words, it is actually difficult to choose among them.

Some minor points: of the three volumes, only that by Englehardt and Rieger has an index, and that from Finlayson and Warren has no notes on the contributors apart from their addresses and emails. This is a little disconcerting, as is the lack of a bibliography of the work of Bernard Wailes. Apart from these things, the volumes do offer a great deal individually and collectively on the state of archaeology and its ties to social or cultural anthropology. I leave it to readers to decide whether it is good or bad that the disciplines are so separate in part of the world and so united, or at least talking to one another, elsewhere in the world. This probably matters less for professionals, but surely it will matter to our students, both now and in the future.

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