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and Personal Experience in Global Historical Archaeologies

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*Eleanor Conlin Casella*

# HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

GLOBALIZATION, IMMIGRATION,  
TRANSFORMATION

Alasdair Brooks and Eleanor Conlin Casella, *Guest Editors*





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Natascha Mehler

## Globalization, Immigration, and Transformation: Thoughts from a European Perspective

### ABSTRACT

Historical archaeology as an archaeology of the modern world is greatly dominated in Europe by British research. Nevertheless, the discipline is gradually gaining a foothold in other European countries as well. This paper looks at the contribution that historical archaeology can make to the subjects of globalization, immigration, and transformation from a European perspective and how it relates to them. Three issues are dealt with: Is Europe, as the “missing link,” conducive to the formation of a global historical archaeology? What are the topics of research that can contribute to its creation from a European perspective? What role does the interplay between globalization and nationalism play in all of this?

### Introduction

Looking back on my own understanding of archaeology I think I only became aware of the term “global” when I first came into contact with historical archaeology. Most European archaeologists, I dare say, would not perceive their work as having a global range. If anything, they would rather view it as being international. Prehistorians, medieval, classical, and historical archaeologists, to name just a few, investigate movements of populations across Europe throughout all periods of time without the restriction of modern borders. However, due to the research focus of most archaeological disciplines the idea of a global range does not even arise. Pre- and post-Christian expansion movements by the Greeks and Romans or by the Egyptians, for example, took place within relatively small areas compared to the postmedieval expansions of Europeans into the New World, Africa, Asia, and Australia. While this does indeed give traditional European archaeology, such as pre- and protohistory and classical archaeology, an international range, it still does not make it global. The archaeological study of

globalization is in actual fact unique to the field of historical archaeology (Orser 2002b).

In his introduction, Alasdair Brooks argued that globalization not only has an impact on the archaeological record but also on archaeologists as researchers, and that this ultimately affects the perception and practice of historical archaeology in Europe and its individual countries. With this in mind, I would like to examine three different aspects of the interlacing of archaeology and globalization, and consequently also of immigration and transformation, from my own European perspective. I hope the southern and western European researchers will forgive me if I cannot, as a German citizen currently living in Austria with a northern European research focus, do justice to all the countries in Europe.

### Toward a Global Historical Archaeology?

Due to the complexity and diversity of a continent with 27 nation states where more than 23 national languages (and considerably more minority languages) are spoken, it is difficult to summarize the evolution and practice of historical archaeology. In many European countries, historical archaeology arose from and includes medieval archaeology—see, for example, Bertelsen (1992), Frommer (2007), and Mehler (2013a:table 1)—and some even take the view of Anders Andrén who defined the field as the archaeology of all literate societies (Andrén 1998), which would for Germany imply a start in the Roman period. Historical archaeology as the archaeology of the modern world is a rather new field of activity that for the most part has only emerged in Europe during the last two decades. Historical archaeology (or postmedieval archaeology), as it has been practiced in Great Britain for more than 45 years, is of course an exception. Thanks to the relatively large number of researchers, publications, and conferences, it plays a dominant and influential role within the European context. Since a sizeable amount of British works is well known—see, for example,

Courtney (1999), Tarlow and West (1999), and Egan (2009)—I will restrict my observations to the rest of Europe.

Compared to the U.S., in most other European countries historical archaeology is only in its infancy, and the discipline is currently experiencing an exciting process of formation and consolidation, for example in Germany, the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, and Denmark (Smetánka and Žegklitz 1990; Laszlovszky and Rasson 2003; Gaimster 2009; Høst-Madsen and Harnow 2012; Mehler 2013a). This strengthening, however, is not so much the product of an academic institutionalization of the field or of a targeted educational policy, since there are still hardly any university institutes or other research facilities that practice historical archaeology. It is, rather, the direct result of the work of individual scientists or enthusiastic initiatives. In some countries, small groups of archaeologists, mainly from the area of traditional pre- and protohistorical research, have come together in informal historical archaeology networks. Hardly any of them have managed to gain permanent academic posts, since such positions are practically nonexistent. For an overview of the academic institutes at which historical archaeology is taught see Gaimster (2009), Høst-Madsen and Harnow (2012), and Mehler (2013b). Moreover, there are hardly any state or European institutions that would grant financial support for targeted research projects. While there are large funding organizations, both at national and international level, such as the German Research Foundation (DFG) or the European Science Foundation (ESF), their decision-making bodies consist exclusively of prehistorians, classical archaeologists, and archaeologists of the Roman provinces, who still remain oblivious to the pleasures and significance of historical archaeology.

There are some overviews on the current state of medieval archaeological research in the various countries from which historical archaeology has emerged. However, only a small number of overviews of the state of archaeological research into the period after ca. 1500 has yet been published (Carmiggelt and Hacquebord 1990; Ericsson 1995; Baart 1997; Schreg 2007; Høst-Madsen and Harnow 2012; Stephan 2012; Mehler 2013a). Some of these show a clear personal bias, with certain authors optimistically portraying the discipline in their country as thriving, while others

are unable to see any noteworthy developments and describe the glass as being half empty. These circumstances must be borne in mind when trying to determine whether a global historical archaeology, as championed by Charles Orser, is possible or not (Orser 1996, 2002a; Gilchrist 2005), or whether European historical archaeology can find its place in this global subdiscipline.

Language is another important aspect in this context. In view of the fact that Europe has at least 23 official languages, while only a very few European archaeologists speak more than three, it is practically impossible for individual researchers to keep abreast of all the existing literature. It has therefore been argued that the European perspective tends to side with the opponents of global historical archaeology, citing the risk of losing the variety, idiosyncrasies, and contradictions if an attempt is made to apply a global approach (Funari 1999:57; Lawrence 2003:3; Hicks 2005:374–375). In contrast, North American and Australasian historical archaeology, as well as British and Irish postmedieval archaeology, are closely linked due to their common language. Unrestricted debates on disciplinary theory and methodology have been held, and results of those debates noted for a number of decades now, and it comes as no surprise that this transatlantic exchange has been much more fruitful than with the non-English-speaking majority of Europe. Given these circumstances, it is indeed valid to question the value of a global historical archaeology. While in most European countries English has long been accepted as the common language of science in the technical and medical disciplines, there is still some resistance in the humanities. Nonetheless, historical archaeologists in Central and northern Europe have increasingly begun to publish in English over the past number of years (Smetánka and Žegklitz 1990; Krajč 2007; Mehler 2009, 2013b; Schreg 2010; Høst-Madsen and Harnow 2012; Nordin 2012).

Besides language as a connecting or separating element on the path towards a global historical archaeology, linguistic styles often also pose great challenges in the process of international communication. In countries with a traditional, antiquated, and strictly hierarchical university system such as Germany, scientific quality is to a great extent defined by linguistic expression and writing style. Many researchers, particularly of an older generation, take the view that a complicated



and sometimes antiquated style of writing with long sentences and a complex syntax is a sign of professionalism. Texts that are easy to read and understand are often dismissed as popular science (Härke 2002:32–35). However, readers who do not share the same mother tongue can find such affected texts particularly difficult to access. Moreover, narrative texts, which have become particularly popular in recent years as stylistic devices in historical archaeology in the English-speaking world (Joyce 2006; Mytum 2010), unfortunately find it very hard to find an audience in these conditions. Although Europe is now entering the international stage of historical archaeology, these language barriers seem to make a global approach toward and discussion of such impossible unless European historical archaeology also begins to deal with global subject matters.

### Globalization from a European Perspective

From an American perspective it must seem surprising that the subjects of colonialism or immigration as a major component of globalization have, to date, hardly been dealt with by non-British European archaeologists—see also Courtney (2009:181–182). Some of the few exceptions to date include a 17th-century Swedish silver-mining colony in Lapland (Nordin 2012), Icelandic emigration to Canada in the 19th century (Edwald 2012), the study of the early European colonial expansion in the North Atlantic (Figure 1), and some German studies on colonial Panama (Patzelt et al. 2007; Schreg and Zeischka-Kenzler 2013). Various degrees of importance are attached to this topic of world history within Europe. The history and politics of colonialism in Central Europe clearly differ from those of Spain, Portugal, France, England, and the Netherlands. While their colonies in America form a core component of historical archaeology, the subject has largely remained untouched by German, Italian, Danish, and Belgian researchers—for exceptions, see Gulløv and Kapel (1979), Gronenborn and Magnavita (2000), Vogt (2002), Munzi (2004), and González-Ruibal et al. (2011). This is equally true of these countries' often significant African colonial ventures. Their colonial expansion began very late, was less wide ranging compared to the British, French, and Iberian

colonial undertakings, and may also have had different motivations. However, this very contrast would, in fact, lend added depth to the subject of global colonialism in archaeological research.

Colonialism *within* Europe would also offer an interesting field of research for historical archaeologists, since large migrations of people also took place throughout the continent. Due to cataclysmic changes in the modern era—caused by events such as war and industrialization—many colonies and enclaves were established, and waves of migration occurred, which in turn brought about new cultural currents, transfers of beliefs and knowledge, and zones of conflict. To name but a few examples: after the ousting of the Turks from Hungary, the Habsburgs in the 18th and 19th centuries began a program of resettlement of German immigrants, the so-called Danube Swabians, in Banat, a region which comprised parts of present-day southeast Hungary, Romania, and Serbia. One of the aims was to consolidate the Roman Catholic Church in the region (Paikert 1967). In terms of archaeological research this topic remains completely unexplored. The *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinde* (Moravian German missionaries), a religious community that had its origins in Kunvald in the Czech Republic and in Herrnhut in Germany, would be another very interesting subject. From the 18th century onwards, the community grew into the first large-scale European Protestant missionary movement, which spread across the whole world and eventually led to the rise of the Methodist Church. A small number of Herrnhuter missions have been investigated archaeologically in Labrador (Figure 2), Greenland, and Australia (Loring and Arendt 2009; Lydon 2009; Gulløv et al. 2011)—but not in the actual European home of the movement.

While globalization is a phenomenon of the modern world, many of the economic elements that triggered the process were also deeply rooted in the preceding period (Wolf 1997:24–73; Ertl 2008:140). The 16th-century expansions of the Spaniards, Portuguese, English, and other Europeans into Africa and the New World had their precursors in the European late Middle Ages. The crown of Aragon in Spain, for instance, had conquered Mediterranean regions as far back as the 13th and 14th centuries, and





FIGURE 1. The ruins of a medieval and postmedieval fishing station at Breiðavík in the western fjords of Iceland. These fishing stations played an important role in the north European fish trade and the colonial expansion of some northern European nations into the North Atlantic. (Photo by author, 2007.)

the experiences gained through this process had laid the foundations for the subsequent Spanish expansion onto other continents. The economic and naval power of the Republic of Venice (ca. 8th century to 1797) had made medieval Venice a trading port for commodities from all parts of the known world. Furthermore, the wide network of trading posts of the Hanseatic League, originally a coalition of northern German merchants (ca. mid-12th to mid-17th century), which ranged from London to Iceland to Novgorod and is often described as the earliest global trading power in the Middle Ages, also laid the foundation stone for European colonialism. These expansion efforts in turn were the result of a European process of urbanization that took place during the 11th to 13th centuries and itself led to economic expansion (Nicholas 1997; Wolf 1997:101–126).

### Globalism and Nationalism

Consideration of the contribution that historical archaeology can make to the subject of globalization from a Central European perspective almost inevitably leads to an excursus on what must be termed the completely opposite phenomenon: nationalism. I not only refer to the ideology itself, but also to nationalism as a phenomenon, as an enforcement of cultural homogeneity. Archaeology is linked in two ways with the interplay between nationalism and globalism: on one hand with the past, on the other with the contemporary.

Many definitions of nationalism have been suggested. Particularly appropriate from an historical and archaeological point of view is the theory proposed by the philosopher and social anthropologist Ernest Gellner (1925–1995) concerning



FIGURE 2. The deserted mission station of the *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine* (Moravian German missionaries) in Hebron, Labrador. The main building was erected between 1833 and 1837 and abandoned in 1959. The left wing contained the chapel, while the right wing housed the offices and living quarters of the missionaries. (Photo courtesy of Steven Cox, Torngat Archaeological Project, 1978.)

the causes and genesis of nationalism, as he combined approaches from the fields of anthropology, philosophy, sociology, and history. Ernest Gellner was a “multilingual polymath” (O’Leary 1997:191) with both British and Central European links. Of German-speaking Bohemian origin, he had grown up in Prague and had emigrated with his Jewish parents to England in 1939 (Hall 2012) and was an academic at Cambridge University for many years before he took up the post of director of the Center for the Study of Nationalism at the Central European University in Prague in 1993. According to Gellner, it was the process of industrialization in the 19th century that had bred nationalism in the industrial world, and he made a causal connection between globalization, modernization, and nationalism. In his opinion, an industrial society requires an homogenous culture in order to allow for a joint system of communication underlying both education and employment. A shared language and

culture thus become preconditions for everyday life. The spread of nationalism, not just its initial conception, has also been linked to industrialization. When states come under both economic and political pressure to join the industrial age, it often results in conflicts of interest between rival regions or states that can lead to aggression and warmongering (O’Leary 1997:199; Gellner 2006:19–39,44). One of the most important statements made by Gellner is that nationalist ideology perverts reality. “Nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is a reality” (Gellner 2006:47). He further concludes that “[t]he great, but valid, paradox is this: nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism, rather than, as you might expect, the other way round” (Gellner 2006:54).

A similar view was taken by the British social and economic historian Eric Hobsbawm

(1917–2012), who was born in Egypt (and, like Gellner, had Jewish parents) but spent his childhood in Vienna (Figure 3) and Berlin before emigrating to England in 1933. His remarks in his book *Nations and Nationalism* (Hobsbawm 1992) are clearly inspired by Gellner's theories. In Hobsbawm's view, the conceptual history of nationalism began with the French and American revolutions in the late 18th century (Hobsbawm 1992:18–46). One of his most important findings was a concept of ideological criticism that he termed “invented traditions,” a characteristic of nationalism in which traditions are constructed in order to legitimize certain norms and structures (Hobsbawm 2003:1). An example of this is the Highland Scots kilt featuring a clan tartan, allegedly the traditional dress of Scottish men, but in reality an invention of the 18th and 19th centuries closely associated with the creation of an independent Highland tradition during this period (Trevor-Roper 2003).

It is therefore an ironic paradox that according to Gellner and Hobsbawm the phase of transformation of consumer goods, a characteristic of early globalization created during the industrialist phase by the increased global exchange of raw materials and mechanically produced goods, not only coincided with the genesis and spread of nationalism and regional European ethnic identities, but also had its origins in the social changes linked to it. Remarkably, the term “globalization” was used for the first time in 1944 (Scholte 2000:43), when nationalism reached what was probably its most extreme form: the National Socialism of the Nazi Party. However, it was another intellectual of European origin, an economist and professor at Harvard Business School, Theodore Levitt (1925–2006), who popularized the term. Levitt was a Jew, born in Vollmerz in Germany, who had emigrated with his parents to Dayton, Ohio, in 1935.

The link between globalization and nationalism can also be identified in the archaeological record, since “nationalism is a marketable commodity” (Brooks 1999:51). The research potential in this topic is enormous, but only few historical archaeologists have to date dealt with the subject matter. Alasdair Brooks, for instance, has examined the impact of the creation of a British identity in the 18th and 19th centuries on the designs of industrially manufactured transfer-printed tablewares. This type of pottery was

also popular with British emigrants, who used it in their new homes overseas (Brooks 1999). Hobsbawm's “invented traditions” also manifest themselves in postmedieval material culture. The creation of a mythical Celtic past in Scotland and Wales also led to new designs being used on transfer-printed tablewares (Brooks 1997).

While Brooks's work was based on table ceramics, other types of material culture can also allow the study of this phenomenon archaeologically. Clay pipes offer one potential means of doing so. Research into the latter artifact type can probably be described as the characteristic strongpoint of historical archaeology in Europe. A number of working groups have existed for some decades in England (Society of Clay Pipe Research), the Netherlands (Pijpelogische Kring Nederland), Germany (Arbeitskreis Tonpfeifen), and France (Académie Internationale de la Pipe); each of these groups researches clay pipes and the history and archaeology of tobacco consumption and publishes regular journals dealing with the subject.

Clay pipes can connect the U.S. and Europe in a particular way, for example, via the so-called president pipes, stub-stemmed pipes with the heads of American presidents and politicians. Produced in the 19th century as commissions in Grossalmerode and Uslar in Germany, they were exported to the U.S. to support politicians' election campaigns. The pipes can be dated to within a few years, since their popularity depended on the careers of the politicians depicted. In 1845 an estimated 13.5 million industrially manufactured pipes were exported from Grossalmerode to the U.S. (Stephan 1995; Gartley 2003). Another political pipe example is from Gouda in the Netherlands, where the pipe makers in the 18th century were manufacturing clay pipes bearing portraits of the princes of Orange. The Netherlands at that time was in constant territorial conflict with France. The “Oranje” symbols thus made simple items of everyday use, such as clay pipes, widespread vehicles of propaganda (Duco 1992). In this context, 18th- and 19th-century clay pipes not only mirror the fact that the consumption of tobacco had become an integral component of European culture thanks to the colonies in the New World and the beginnings of globalization, but as image carriers they also turned into political media.





FIGURE 3. Villa Seutter, built 1881/1882, in Vienna, where Eric Hobsbawm spent his childhood after World War I. From 1938 to 1945 the building was occupied by the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth). Afterwards it served as Russian military hospital, and later refugee families and officials of the World War II allies lived here. (Photo by author, 2012.)

However, it is not only the material culture, but also archaeology as a discipline, that is closely linked to nationalism. In many European countries both went hand in hand for a long period, particularly during the middle and later 20th century when much of Europe was ruled by totalitarian regimes that exploited nationalist ideologies. This observation, however, applies exclusively to traditional pre- and protohistorical archaeology, archaeology of the Roman provinces, archaeology of the Near East, and classical archaeology, which served the nationalist cause on two occasions over the course of the 20th century. The German prehistorian Gustaf Kossinna (1858–1931), who is considered to have been one of the pioneers of the Nazi ideology, coined the phrase “German Prehistory, a pre-eminently national discipline” (Kossinna 1912; Steuer 2001; Veit 2002:47). However, Mussolini and Franco often joined Hitler in using archaeology to support their ideologies during this period (Arnold and Hassmann 1995; Diaz-Andreu 1995; Härke 2002; McFeaters 2007). Later, during the Cold War and the division of Germany, some Central and Eastern European nation states underpinned their Marxist doctrines using archaeology (Sklenář 1983; Behrens 1984; Neustupný 2002; Parzinger 2002; Lozny 2011). Even in the more recent past, for instance during the dissolution of Yugoslavia or the secession of other Eastern European countries (for example, the Czech Republic and Estonia), it has time and again been archaeology that has been used to support Marxist or ethnic ideologies (Meskell 1998; Neustupný 2002; Novaković 2002, 2011; Konsa 2006:46). However, because historical archaeology is still in its infancy in Europe and does not even exist in some European countries, there have not yet been any opportunities in a European context to ideologically manipulate the subdiscipline.

### Conclusion

Any answer to the question regarding the contribution made to date by historical archaeology to the subjects of globalization, immigration, and transformation from a European perspective, remains rather somber. However, archaeologists may look to the future with hope. With the exception of Great Britain, historical archaeology is a rather young discipline within Europe and will no doubt continue to grow stronger. The fact that the topics central to this issue and the 2013

SHA conference plenary session have hardly been touched upon to date is also due to the fact that archaeological research in Europe—in contrast to America—is not at all, or not very closely, linked to social and cultural anthropology, which means that there are practically no points of contact with these subjects (Tabaczyński 1993; Courtney 2010). The subject of transformation is the only area that has been dealt with, namely in terms of the transformation of consumer goods and the technological transformation. The former can be identified in the material culture, for instance in the occurrence of industrially manufactured clay pipes from the factories in Gouda in the Netherlands (Duco 1980) or in tablewares, such as porcelain from Kilchberg-Schooren in Switzerland or from Meissen in Germany (Matter 2007; Krabath 2011). Technological transformation has mainly been dealt with from the point of view of industrial archaeology, for example in examining the changes and progress made with regard to porcelain firing techniques (König and Krabath 2012) or in heavy industry, exemplified by the German industrial company Thyssen Krupp (Hopp 2011). However, the studies all concentrate on examining technology, style, and types. Social anthropology questions referring to areas like consumer behavior, workers’ living conditions, or ethnic interpretations of material culture are yet to be tackled. The coming together of historical archaeologies at a global level, as is currently taking place, will make all this possible.

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