

**Athens Institute for Education and Research
ATINER**



**ATINER's Conference Paper Series
HIS2016-1949**

**The Asset of Reading Archaeological Archive
Records Together - Archaeology and History as
Companion Disciplines**

**Tove Hjorungdal
Professor
University of Gothenburg
Sweden**

**Carl Holmberg
University of Gothenburg
Sweden**

An Introduction to
ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. This paper has been peer reviewed by at least two academic members of ATINER.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

This paper should be cited as follows:

Hjorungdal, T. and Holmberg, C. (2016). "The Asset of Reading Archaeological Archive Records Together - Archaeology and History as Companion Disciplines", Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: HIS2016-1949.

Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL:
www.atiner.gr
URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm
Printed in Athens, Greece by the Athens Institute for Education and Research. All rights reserved. Reproduction is allowed for non-commercial purposes if the source is fully acknowledged.
ISSN: 2241-2891
26/08/2016

**The Asset of Reading Archaeological Archive Records Together
- Archaeology and History as Companion Disciplines**

Tove Hjorungdal
Professor
University of Gothenburg
Sweden

Carl Holmberg
University of Gothenburg
Sweden

Abstract

We present a methodology on how archaeologist and historian have practiced reading and interpretation of archaeological archive acts together. Our material of analysis is Danish botanist/archaeologist Georg Sarauw's acts from the documentation of the site Mullerup in Zealand, Denmark excavated anno 1900. The project aims to contribute to practice-approaches to archaeological historiography and to new approaches to academic teamwork. Our methodology is material-semiotic while we discriminate and interpret scientific practices in hand written archive acts, by support of a verb-oriented method of reading.

Keywords: historiography; material-semiotic methodology; practices; situatedness

Introduction

We present a new line we have tested for *teamwork* between archaeologists and historians. It is a tryout of new approaches to how we write archaeological historiography together. In more detail it is a *material-semiotic methodology* on how we read and interpret archaeological archive acts together by discriminating and interpreting practices by the support of verb-oriented methodology. The project aims in turn to contribute to discussions on practice-history and to new approaches to scientific teamwork. In the following we summarize our point of departure and approach, followed by a few examples among the practices we recognized in our source material. Sources are the field reports produced by Danish archaeologist/botanist Georg Sarauw (1862-1928), at his anno 1900 excavation of the Stone Age site Mullerup, Western Zeeland, and filed in the National Museum of Copenhagen, Denmark. We give a few more words on the background of our approach, and of the assets and potentials of this methodological experiment. The project ideas and main results of our work were presented in two articles (Holmberg & Hjørungdal 2016; and *in prep.* 2016). We close this paper by a brief summary of conclusions so far.

Approaches to Historiography

We were from the beginning conscious about the fact that we joined an established, but innovative field of historiographical research. A few decades ago this track was stimulated by Bruce Trigger's history of archaeological thought (Trigger 1989) and is now a broad field. Comprehensive analyses, syntheses, individual biographies as well as new approaches and methodologies are published regularly. Trigger and many other colleagues have discussed the role of contemporary ideas in the development of archaeology. A few colleagues have taken up again Ludwig Fleck's *Denkstille* (Fleck 1935) as well as Bourdieu's *habitus* approach (Bourdieu 1972), alongside various *actor-network concepts* (Latour 2005). An extra-disciplinary analysis of how archaeological knowledge is constituted through time is developed in a feminist perspective by the philosopher Alison Wylie (Wylie 2002). Temporal aspects of epistemic are also focused on by Anders Gustafsson who problematized the question of what the history of archaeology is, asking whether it is history or archaeology (Gustafsson 2001). Additionally, some later works on methodologies explore aspects of *approaches to practices* (e.g. Yarrow 2003; Diaz Andreu 2012; Jensen ed. 2012). The latter works demonstrate the intensified role of archives in academic historiography, and thus of archive acts in approaches to archaeological historiography. We joined this discourse by a focus on the fact that archaeology and history *share the sources of archive files* but our disciplines' relationships to archives are partly different: in our specific case archaeologists have written the excavation reports and are also experts in the qualities of materiality; historians are

specialists in source critical approaches to written documents and their sociopolitical contexts of production. This shared, but diverse connection should be further explored and built up, with the aim to work as a resource to methodology of academic co-operation. In order to find out more about our various attitudes to archives and how we can gain by their particular potentials, we used to discuss aspects of situatednesses and expertise of academic disciplines and of their respective scholars, and in which locations they encounter and grow operative together. Next we summarize the historical context and material of analysis and also some points on how we co-operated.

Approaching Georg Sarauw, his Context and Archive Material

The *archive reports* on the excavation of Mullerup are written in Danish by Georg Sarauw. They are extensive and a multitude of practices during the fieldwork have been recorded, in writing as well as in sketching. This quality makes the record material effective to a methodological development on practice approaches. Supported by his detailed record, our project has followed how Sarauw came to his conclusions on chronological definition of the cultural layer and the bone and antler objects in the site. Mullerup is situated in western Zealand, belongs largely to the Boreal Mesolithic Maglemose culture and was famous because it came to be the first site to be placed in the so called *Hiatus* between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic. With his multifaceted background, Sarauw was the right person for the task of interpreting Mullerup. He was educated and located in a scientific pivot, learned in archaeology as well as in geology, botany, zoology among other natural sciences, in addition to several dead and living languages. Sarauw's formation also shows that he is situated in the middle of, and at the same time makes up an illustration to the changing conditions in European and Danish intellectual life of his time. This was generally a sociopolitical setting characterized by tensions between humanity and sciences, between idealism and materialism, between conservative ideas and ideas of evolution, progress and emancipation, between traditional culture and avant-garde art, between dreams of military conquest and struggle for disarmament and between authoritarian rule and democratic mass movements (Mayer 2010: 189-210; 279-299).

Excavation reports is a material-semiotic class of source material and thus a genre of *written* material which is also clear about documentation of *practices* and of the use and role of *materiality*, not only of thinking and writing – yes, probably less a source on ideas and thinking. Archaeological field reports have previously been discussed in a few of their tempo-spatial aspects (Hodder 1989; Bradley 2006; Yarrow 2003; Hjørungdal 2009), but a number of analytical points can be added. Among them is the importance of their heterogeneous character; they include photos and a manifold of written orders such as letters, notes, tags, receipts, coupons, and by these they are a rich source to various scientific encounters. The documents relate principal aspects of what arose during the excavation and interpretation of a site; which

and how decisions were made, and frequently they include analyses made by the natural scientists in co-operation with the archaeologist in charge.

The practices we choose for analysis in a field report have to be explicitly articulated and named for the analysis we plan. Preparing our analysis we therefore asked questions about, What scholars did in the field, with which instruments; the how's and where's in their process of interpretation and also in publishing. According to our methodology, we reasonably looked for *verbs*. Scientific working procedures found in reports consist of written verbs in context with descriptions of the use of tools, instruments and materials of various characters in intra-action with the scholar's body and choreography. Verbs describe something about how a material object like an instrument or a trowel is used and how it intra-acts with the scholar, the soil, the site and the surroundings, how it assists and also how it can cause complications as well as useful results. By the support of verbs, we mainly looked for practices of specific interest to the question of how our own companion disciplines can be operative together. There are several, but we have confined them to a few finds of *characteristic practices/verbs*. In the context of archive material we could approve the idea that the verb is an obvious site for encounters between words, human actions and materiality.

The Mullerup investigation: scientific practices aiming at chronological explanation

In the field Georg Sarauw's co-operated with amateur archaeologist/teacher Mathias Mathiassen, with a couple of younger colleagues and with the local peasants and bog-workers. The latter people used to cut peat for fuel and the prehistoric sharp flint tools which initiated that there was a site, were wounding the workers' hands and bare feet. In his report Sarauw tells details on what he exactly makes in the site; he describes his way of digging, in which geographical directions he dug, how he confined and moved in the site. He wants as well to be exact and systematic: The report contains several letters to the National Museum in which he asks for order about what he next shall be expected to do in Mullerup and how; he also asks for order if to continue the investigation and he asks the museum for suitable equipment for the field and for the artefacts. Sarauw was keen to make small, very quick sketches of profiles and of how he laid out his excavation ditch (Sarauw 1900: *passim*). The small number of photos from the excavation reveals that he was a good photographer, too.

Measurements in the site were basically made by Mathiassen, but Sarauw found it necessary to control and teach Mathiassen about his measurements. This education took as well up his teaching Mathiassen geology by the explanation of bog conditions, and by suggesting literature about bog geology (not least by Swedish pioneer scholars in quaternary geology). An important method was to organize material finds by comparison to known sites and finds in a European perspective, and by discarding those sites and objects evidently

not in accordance with the Mullerup material. Site types thoroughly discussed but explicitly discarded were Irish Crannogs and Swiss Pfahlbauten. This is also related in his original article (Sarauw 1903: 175ff).

Sarauw's knowledge from botany studies about microscopy became essential to the identification procedures; he tells how he was cleaning bog samples, in order to pick out seeds of water species and microscoping them for botanical classifications.

Practices executed by/with various co-operators throughout the interpretative process, are as well many. Teacher Mathiassen excavated carefully in the site, and as a clever amateur archaeologist/botanist, he made comparisons in order to try to identify items. Some years earlier he had by the way made a botanical survey of the bog area. His documentation of botanical finds - particularly of Pine (*Pinus Silvestris* L.) in the bog had a leading-edge effect as they drove discussion with Sarauw and dynamically helped out the geological situation in the Boreal. Further, geologist Hartz examined arctic clay in search of Ice Age/arctic species of plants, but there were none. This is an additional way of practicing discarding, which has the aim of drawing conclusions and boundaries in the process of placing the site tempo-spatially.

During the time of the excavation Sarauw was accommodated at the local inn (named *Mullerup Kro*) and sat there writing letters as well as scientific notes for the report, and he read scientific literature in order to get grip of the geological and botanical circumstances of Mullerup. He also housed the find material at the inn, and tried to pack and line the finds in a suitable way for transport by train to Copenhagen. Sarauw had to negotiate with the museum about packing, protection and storing of finds. In his record he was detailed on how he would pack and label the find material, particularly the bone finds; packing and lining the material as well as the size of packages with finds are important. To get enough bags for the finds seems to have stayed a problem; the available newspaper he had got was not suitable for packing wet bones and objects from the bog, and instead he ordered brown lining paper for the security of wet items. Finally he sent the finds, packed and lined by express train to Copenhagen.

In the progress of the excavation Sarauw also visited museums abroad with the aim to find parallel bone objects, which were not at all published yet. He found them in Königsberg's Museum.

All of the practices summarized here, are found in the archive files which contains a report and letters (Sarauw 1900) and in the original printed article (Sarauw 1903). A number of different practices in the field and off the field were needed in order to come to grip with the unfamiliar stratigraphy and the unknown types of objects found in Mullerup. Much of the specific thinking and writing was made off the site; at the inn and later in the museum and at Sarauw's home. There were various physical and geographical locations for the practices needed; in the field, at the inn, the museum, home. It was outdoor and indoor; it was in Denmark and abroad.

All of the practices of measuring, levelling, writing, reading, thinking, discarding, and also discussing with colleagues and amateurs, they all together

made Sarauw able to make an interpretation of the stratigraphy in Mullerup and to draw conclusions about how to situate it in time. His results became subject to much discussion on chronology, stratigraphy and the old Hiatus topic. However later on, his results was accepted for the establishment of a real Mesolithic, a new physical epoch in European prehistory, an era wished for by many scholars and contested by others. A special characteristic of the Mesolithic is anyhow that it was established on other principles than are most other eras; it was the result of *in situ* stratigraphic conditions and on practices out in the field, as opposed to an epoch founded in typology. Archaeological layers' and artifacts' encounters with the elaborated methods and practices from geology and botany, microscoping and levelling, were crucial to the possibility of drawing conclusions on chronology.

The Approach and its Background

The companion disciplines approach defines our methodology of cooperation that has made it possible to practice co-reading the way we demonstrate. It is adjusted from Donna Haraway's outlook on interactions between differently situated subjects (Haraway 1988; 2008). We asked how and where do subjects/disciplines meet and become operative together when they aim to produce mutual results. Additionally our methodology is material-semiotic: in the chosen archive material we discriminate and interpret practices by support of *verb-oriented methodology*. This method is initially developed at British Universities on substantives. Dispersed to verbs by social and historical disciplines, it seeks to identify and analyze practices and has the advantages that it can be achieved through combining different theoretical and methodological approaches. Gräslund Berg et al. have adjusted the method to their study of gender and work practices by looking for verbs observed in data base material accumulated from specific modern historical contexts (Gräslund Berg et al 2013). We in turn, adjusted the method to our context which is a very different one to a database context, as it is hand-written archaeological material from the archive files. As a result, we needed to interrogate and enlarge on a few aspects before we could make the methodology effective to our context. We share the buzzword *practices* with Gräslund et al., but practices include a manifold of verbs and acts characteristic to discipline and to situation. Characteristic to archaeological reports are thus explanations of long-term, enduring and repetitive work procedures, all described with verbs. The verbs support our reading about if and how a material object is used and how it intra-acts with the scholar, the site, the bog and the surroundings. In this important aspect our approach also relate to Karen Barad's notion of material-semiotic practices (Barad 2007; cf. Mol 2002). This is an approach able to give a push to the study of material-discursive practices as well as to new ideas and practices about academic co-operation between different disciplines with different expertise. With the support of such a co-operative methodology of reading verbs and practices in texts, we were able to articulate more explicitly

definitions, descriptions and analyses of the practices Sarauw used in the process of interpreting Mullerup. It demonstrates a characteristic example of a complex scientific process behind clear conclusions.

Conclusions

It has been very useful to explore questions and methods about how archaeology and history can co-operate in writing history of archaeology. Our experiment takes up practice history and co-operation with history as a potential still unexplored. Archaeological field reports are tempo-spatial documents on various aspects of scientific practices. They give abundant examples of how practices of excavation and documentation are performed, and combined by excavators' use of materialities such as trowels, instruments, together with writing. The analysis of scientific practices was to us a means by which we could grasp details about how Sarauw arrived at his chronological interpretation of Mullerup. A next step was that his scientific practices were contextualized and regarded against their anno 1800/1900 temporal, scientific, and sociocultural background. So far we are content with the initial co-operation in a companion disciplines approach. This time co-operation was planned because archaeology initiated it to its own benefit. The methodological experiment was untested prior to this. Although archaeology and history share a long academic history of encounters in many respects, encounters and co-operation have not been approached by any explicit methodology. Results of the project were generated on four levels (Holmberg & Hjørungdal 2016; and in prep 2016): *The first level* problematizes the question of how to write history of archaeology; *the second level* elaborates on a few specific issue of how archaeology and history can co-operate methodologically on that question; on *the third level* we have gained a more detailed knowledge about practices and encounters in Georg Sarauw's interpretation of the cultural layer in the *Hiatus* as it was recognized in Mullerup in 1900; in more detail we have got a more extensive background to how an archaeological conclusion was established through small steps of measurement, comparison, discarding and discussions. We have drawn conclusions on social organization of the archaeological investigation (scholar amateurs, local peasants and labourers), on agrarian practices and archaeology (sites, i.a. Mullerup, discovered by peat cutting in bogs), and the use of scientific instruments (theodolite and microscope). *The fourth level* is on how to methodologically problematize the issue of interdisciplinarity - a widely applied term in archaeology. Each of these four levels exemplifies results of analyses initiated by contemporary academic encounters. In the context of archive material the verb is an obvious site for encounters between words, human actions and materiality. The value of the *Companion Disciplines Approach* is the approval of the respective professional skill in each discipline, archaeology and history. The value of the approach is also the flexibility and potential to be adjusted to context, source genre and form of co-operation.

References

Archive material

- Sarauw, Georg n.d. Beretning om Undersøgelse af en Stenalders Boplads i Maglemosen ved Mullerup. Gotenburg University Library; Gothenburg University. Handskriftsavdelningen.
- Sarauw, Georg 1900. Stenalders Boplads. Matr. Nr. 7 af Mullerupby, Drøsselbjerg S, Löve H, Holbæk A. Nationalmuseet Copenhagen, Oldtiden, Arkiv: A. 18269.

Literature

- Berg, Elisabeth Gräslund et al 2013. Praktiker som gör skillnad. Om den verb- inriktade metoden. *Historisk Tidskrift* 2013: 3; pp. 335-354.
- Barad, Karen 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press. Durham & London.
- Bourdieu, Pierre 1972. *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique, précédée de trois études d'ethnologie Kabyle*. Genève : Librairie Droz.
- Bradley, Richard 2006. The excavation report as a literary genre: traditional practice in Britain. *World Archaeology*, Vol. 38 (4), pp. 664-671.
- Diaz-Andreu, Margarita 2012. *Archaeological encounters: building networks of Spanish and British archaeologists in the 20th century*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.
- Fleck, Ludwig 1935. *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache. Einführung in die Lehre vom Denkstil und Denkkollektiv*. Schwabe und Co. Verlagsbuchhandlung, Basel.
- Gustafsson, Anders 2001. *Arkeologihistoria som historia och som arkeologi. Studier i arkeologins egenhistorier*. Institutionen för arkeologi, Göteborgs universitet. Gotarc Series B. Archaeological Theses 17.
- Haraway, Donna 1988. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14 (3), pp. 575-599.
- Haraway, Donna 2008. *When species meet*. Posthumanities, Volume 3. University of Minnesota Press.
- Hjørungdal, Tove 2009. "A Hybrid Burial Practice". *Situated Practices and the Production of Situated Knowledges in the Archaeology of the Vestland Cauldron*. BAR International Series 2004. Archaeopress. Oxford.
- Hodder, Ian 1989. Writing archaeology: site reports in context. *Antiquity* 63 (1989:), pp. 268-274.
- Holmberg, Carl & Hjørungdal, Tove 2016. Archaeology and History as Companion Disciplines. Co-analyzing Georg Sarauw's work on the Mullerup excavation at the start of the 1900s. *LAR: Lund Archaeological Review*.
- Holmberg, Carl & Hjørungdal, Tove in prep 2016. *An archaeological model and its historical setting – the assets of different situatednesses in academic teamwork*. Manuscript.
- Jensen, Ola Wolfhechel (ed.) 2012. *Histories of Archaeological Practices. Reflections on Methods, Strategies and Social Organization in Past Fieldwork*. The National Historical Museum, Stockholm. Studies 20.
- Latour, Bruno 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Mayer, Arno 2010. *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War*. Verso, London.

- Mol, Annemarie 2002. *The body multiple: ontology in medical practice*. Science and Cultural Theory. Duke University Press.
- Sarauw, Georg 1903. En stenalders boplads i Maglemose ved Mullerup, sammenholdt med beslægtede fund. Bidrag til nystenalderens begyndelse i Norden. *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* 1903, pp. 148-315.
- Trigger, Bruce 1989. *A History of Archaeological Thought*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wylie, Alison 2002. *Thinking from things. Essays in the philosophy of archaeology*. University of California Press.
- Yarrow, Thomas 2003. Artefactual Persons: The Relational Capacities of Persons and Things in the Practice of Excavation. *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 65-73.