



Universiteit
Leiden

ARCHON research school
of archaeology

Communities of Practice, Communities of Style: Towards Practice

February 17th, 2017

Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University

Room F1.02

9:15 Registration / Reception / Coffee

9:45 Alexander Geurds (Leiden University, University of Oxford)

Welcome - Introduction

10:00 Valerio Gentile (Leiden University) - v.gentile@umail.leidenuniv.nl

The Fight Club – A Praxeological Perspective on Prehistoric Martial Identities

During the Bronze Age (BA, c. 2200-800 B.C.) an unprecedented amount of martial paraphernalia enters the archaeological record. Bronze weaponry is found deliberately deposited in graves or hoards, and depictions of armed individuals appear in the coeval figurative arts pointing towards the development of some kind of “martial ideology”. While the social significance of weaponry, and swords in particular, is practically unquestioned by the almost totality of BA scholars, many question the existence of a proper warrior identity. According to this interpretation, the circulation of a large quantity of weaponry does not necessarily imply an increase in the practice of violence or the existence of expert warriors: BA warriorhood rather constituted a symbolic status devoid of practical everyday significance.

Instead of focusing on the aspects of weapons' ownership, this research investigates the consequences of the practice of interpersonal violence in the constitution of martial identities in traditional societies. Skill acquisition and reiterated participation in combat events are thus explored through a multidisciplinary perspective held together by 'practice theory'. Such an interpretative process allows a holistic overview of the significance and effects of martial practices, and produces an outline of warriorhood that challenges the current reconstruction of this social identity in European prehistory.

10:20 Natalia Donner (Leiden University) - n.r.donner@arch.leidenuniv.nl

Simone Casale (Leiden University) - s.casale@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Alexander Geurds (Leiden University, University of Oxford) - a.geurds@arch.leidenuniv.nl

Dennis Braekmans (Leiden University, TU Delft) - d.j.g.braekmans@arch.leidenuniv.nl

Traditions of Monumentality as a Collective Endeavour: the Case of Aguas Buenas, Chontales, Nicaragua

The site of Aguas Buenas (AD 500 - 1522) is located some 25 km northeast of Lake Cocibolca in the present-day Nicaraguan province of Chontales. The site is defined by a unique geospatial design consisting of 379 man-made mounds of mostly circular shape, built to form six concentric circles. The people involved in its construction shared architectural knowledge and building practices, including construction materials and techniques to plan and realize its creation. Previous archaeological knowledge on this part of Chontales was limited to indicative references to the clusters of mounds at Aguas Buenas. However, a recent systematic surface survey conducted in a 52 square kilometer area around Aguas Buenas identified at least eight more mounded sites in a 2.5 kilometer radius. Ceramic analysis using thin section petrography,

geochemical techniques, and a macroscopic technological approach have questioned the longevity of the practices associated to Aguas Buenas, the actors involved in its construction, as well as the intended and unintended consequences of its presence within the social landscape. In this paper, we discuss this data through the perspective of Aguas Buenas as a gathering place built as a collective endeavor by communities in and possibly beyond the research area. We argue this practice to have formed over at least ten centuries, before the construction of the mounds, and with varying practices through time. In particular, we address questions about shared structures, practices, and actions that led to the gradual construction of this unique monumental site in Lower Central America

10:40 Stefan Riedel (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) - Stefan.Riedel-j8h@ruhr-uni-bochum.de

Society-moulding in Orontid Commagene? – A top-down Perspective on Style as Means of Community-Shaping

Throughout the Hellenistic period the ancient world was closing in with unprecedented rapidity on various levels consequently challenging pre-existing as well as newly emerging communities. The processes and local responses to the changing social environment are most visible in places at the interfaces of what is commonly labelled different ›cultures‹.

The paper will focus on the kingdom of Commagene in south-eastern modern Turkey which was established as regional, independent kingdom in the 2nd century BC between Hellenised Asia Minor and the areas east of the Euphrates river more strongly preserving Achaemenid traditions. The geographical location in itself entrains questions on the formation, shaping and self-perception of the Commagenian society. As a step towards an understanding of this complex multi-layered phenomenon the focus will be on the kings of Commagene taking a top-down perspective on Commagenian communities understood as basic elements of the society in question as well as transcending it. In focussing particularly on the most famous ruler of the Orontid dynasty, Antiochus I. Theos, and his chosen iconographic styles in different depictions and contexts, it will on the one hand be touched upon issues of the communities the king itself was actually part of and on the other hand questions concerning the implied impact on the addressed communities will be raised.

In putting style central to this overarching issues and connecting the ideas gathering around the ›communities of style‹ to the basic assumptions of the ›language of images‹, i.e. the messages inherent in depictions, the paper will pose the general question in how far the style of archaeological artefacts in general is a helpful indicator or even generator of communities.

11:00 Coffee Break

11:20 Lucy Gill (University of California, Berkeley) - lucy_gill@berkeley.edu

Communities in the Zooarchaeological Record: Human-Animal Relationships as Learned Practices

Practice theory has been heretofore underapplied within zooarchaeology. However, faunal remains can be used to address interactions between individual preferences and societal traditions, engendering communities of practice characterized by similar patterns of procurement and utilization. While certain decisions relating to food production are functional from a perspective of animal anatomy, cultural proclivities are distinctly evidenced in species selection, method of preparation, and context of consumption. As these are learned practices, I argue that legitimate peripheral participation, the process by which individuals gradually acquire skills until they become fully inducted members of a particular community of practice, can be evidenced zooarchaeologically. Specifically, I investigate the physical manifestations resulting from the bodily practice of butchery to identify instances of learning in the zooarchaeological record. I explore how a practice theory framework can influence both the methodology and interpretation of zooarchaeological research using two case studies. The first, a Spanish colonial context in New Mexico, illustrates how multiple communities of practice can be distinguished within a singular site, as well as the origins of hybridized practices concerning faunal exploitation that emerge at the intersection of these communities. The second, a group of sites within one valley of pre-Hispanic Nicaragua, evidences both constellations of practices operating on an intersite scale and the concurrent maintenance of different communities of practice within a

small area despite the networks of interaction that link them. The applicability of practice theory to faunal analysis in such diverse spatiotemporal and scalar loci illustrates its immense potential within this archaeological subfield.

11:40 Marie Kolbenstetter (Leiden University) - marie.kolbenstetter@live.fr

Communities of Practice in Time and Place : an Example from the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras.

Communities of practice, as coined by Lave and Wenger, has recently given a new dimension to archaeological research, in focusing material culture studies further on the social dimension of production of artefacts, and allowing the discipline to focus on the spread of ideas rather than solely on the distribution of artefacts. In the Gulf of Fonseca, Honduras, the *chaîne opératoire* analysis of ceramic artefacts from different sites and different time periods can shed some light on the role of *communities of practice* and craft transmission in the building of local identities and of a local cultural tradition. I will further argue that *communities of practice* cannot, in this case, be considered independently from the period nor from the landscapes those communities were practicing their craft in. The latter I believe is central to understanding the sociality of crafts. Building on Dietler and Herbich (1998) who suggest the connection between *Habitus*, techniques and styles, I would extend the concept of *Habitus* to the landscape the communities evolved in. In fact, the landscape holds importance not only for the movement of people, and the distribution of ideas and artefacts, but also in shaping the local identities. If such local identity is reflected in the craft of *communities of practice*, then the landscape dimension cannot be ignored. Finally, I would like to discuss the challenges of such approach to small scale artefact collections.

12:00 Lunch Break

13:00 Milinda Hoo (Kiel University) - mhoo@gshdl.uni-kiel.de

Sum or synergy? Promises and pitfalls of communities of practice in relation to Hellenism

This paper explores the potential of communities of practice and communities of style as alternative views on 'Hellenism' in Asia and Central Asia. Following trends within the social sciences in the wake of the 'global turn' of the 1990s, historians and classical archaeologists have increasingly come to theorize that the ancient world, too, could have been a small world: an interconnected space in which societal and cultural encounters can lead to various, sometimes unpredictable forms, transformations, and reinventions of traditions. As reflected in the globalized world of today, interconnectedness also gives rise to a wider range of possibilities of identification and material expressions of affiliation. Despite increasing interest in cultural fluidity and networked identities, the concept of Hellenism has remained an influential term to describe and interpret Greek-styled material culture. The term's inherent ethno-geographical connotations make it easy to fall back into traditional culture-historical reasoning, assuming the necessary presence or involvement of ethnic Greek people in the production, dissemination, and/or use of Greek-styled material culture. Through a comparison of what is presented as 'Hellenism' in the cities of Ai Khanum and Babylon – two royal settlements in Hellenistic-period Eurasia – this paper seeks to tease out problematic points of interpretation and explore the potential of communities of practice and style as alternative heuristic frameworks to shed light on other possible forms of identification. In doing so, it addresses both the promises and pitfalls of the terms, offering a critical examination of concepts of community, (trans)localism, and change, in relation to Hellenism.

13:20 Roosmarie Vlaskamp (Leiden University) - r.j.c.vlaskamp@arch.leidenuniv.nl

Alexander Geurds (Leiden University, University of Oxford) - a.geurds@arch.leidenuniv.nl

Construction and use of mounds in Pre-Hispanic Nicaragua

Earthen and stone mounds are a prevalent, if not the most prevalent, feature of Nicaragua Prehistory. They occur across the entire country, though they differ in amount per location, construction methods, and use.

Why these mounds were constructed is often answered in singular functional terms. Shifting our focus to investigating the actual practices of use of the mounds allows us to question such long-held beliefs regarding the separation of domestic and ritual space. The similarities between mounds suggest that if we look at practices of use and construction, regional networks of interaction and communities of practice may become evident.

The potential of this kind of analysis for Nicaraguan prehistory is explored here by examples from several sites, including results from recent investigations at the site of La Pachona in Central Nicaragua. Specifically, this paper will look at the presence of human remains versus evidence of daily use and/or habitation in the mounds.

13:40 Short break

13:45 In collaboration with the Material Agency Forum (LU), we present our guest lecturer:

Rosemary Joyce (University of California, Berkeley) - rajoyce@berkeley.edu

Confronting the Limits of Material Properties: From Kitty Litter to Granite in the Archaeology of Nuclear Waste

As concerns with materiality give way to consideration of "vibrant matter", archaeological engagements with matter should make archaeologists key voices in the development of "new materialisms". Yet this has yet to be evident. This presentation builds on the specificities of archaeologically informed attention to matter in action in the case of handling of nuclear waste, to explore how we might shift our ways of writing to invite more engagement with scholars outside the discipline and with non-academics, while demonstrating the kinds of insights on vibrant matter possible through archaeological practice.

14:30 Discussion

15:00 Miguel John Versluys (Leiden University) - m.j.versluys@arch.leidenuniv.nl

Concluding Remarks

15:30 Drinks

19:00 Dinner (location to be announced)