

Peter Drewett, *Field Archaeology: An Introduction*, 2nd edition, Abigdon: Routledge, 2011, pp. 182, ISBN 978-0-415-55119-9

The book under review is methodologically structured on 10 chapters, approaches the archaeological science in a more easily comprehensible manner, suitable for students or laics interested in the subject.

As previous stated, the book covers all steps in its ten chapters, from defining the method, subject and objectives of archaeology, to the management, research and publishing of the results acquired from a field archaeological site.

The first chapter serves as an introduction, starting with the dictionary definition of the term “archaeology”. In the following paragraphs, the author limits the subject of archaeology to the human material remains. From the spatial point of view, this subject may cover every bit of space with which humans have interacted and have left marks upon. One of the most important aspects is that not any trace or material has the same importance. In addition, the relevance of a certain type of material evidence may change in accordance with the geographical context it is present in. In a few words, archaeology does not reconstruct the historical past, but merely offers a set of stories and interpretations.

After treating archaeology in general, the chapter furthermore presents the subject of this textbook, which is field archaeology. Here, the author defines field archaeology as a scientific process, in which the prime method is the excavation. On the same note, three types of field archaeologists are brought into discussion, each with certain competences and flaws: pure field archaeologists, field archaeologists as part of cultural resources management and the ones that do it as a leisure activity.

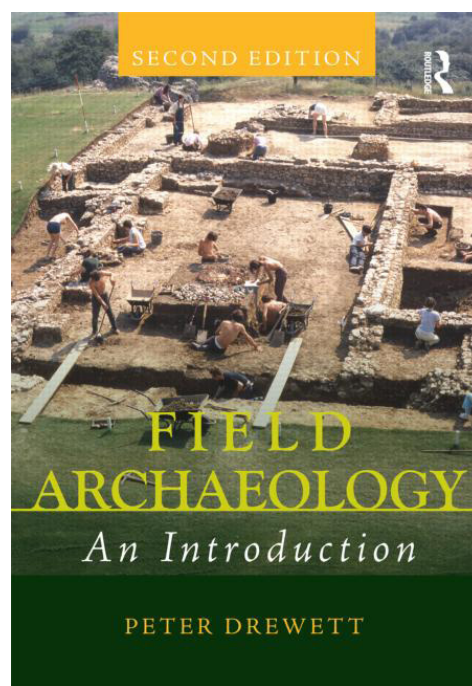
Another sub-chapter analyzes the theoretical frameworks or perspectives, such as the culture-historical one, the processual or the post-processual debating and the comparison between their interpretations regarding different material evidence or contexts.

In the end, the discussion moves towards the management of an archaeological site, presenting aspects such as planning process, equipment, distribution of the resources (both human and technical) etc. In addition it is recommended that an external supervision and a quality form of control to be undertaken in order to ensure a swift and sound project.

The second chapter aims at presenting different aspects related to archaeological sites. The structure is similar to the first chapter, firstly defining sites in accordance with the dictionary definition, as areas of activity or residual deposits. Significant for this matter is the problem of primary or secondary usage of an object, which means that the reuse of an object depends on a certain context. On the same note, a change in use of an object can pose difficulties regarding archaeological dating. The positive side is that although an object in a secondary position offers less information, some relevant data may be extracted, like certain social rules or taboos. One must take into account the fact that a certain object may have been unintentionally discarded or deposited as part of a ritual, each of these offering a different interpretation. Examples may range from different types of burial, in accordance

Dragoş Mitrofan

University ‘Babeş-Bolyai’ of Cluj-Napoca
mitrofandragos@yahoo.com



DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14795/j.v1i3.64>
ISSN 2360 – 266X
ISSN-L 2360 – 266X

to a certain culture, to abandonment of a site from various reasons, such as natural catastrophes, relocation, etc. In the case of abandonment, the past inhabitants would have a selection of objects suitable for carrying along.

The last part of the chapter deals with the post-depositional stage of sites' life. Regarding this issue, different types of intervention, anthropic and natural, are presented. Wind, rain or animals cause erosion and destruction, along with vegetation, bacteria and fungi. Overall, each site represents the end product of a large set of diverse processes and transformations, which may cause difficulties in archaeological interpretation.

The subsequent chapter treats the problem of finding an archaeological site. The chapter begins by discussing an important aspect: that the majority of the sites have never been lost. They are either known by indigenous population or by older studies. Usually a site is registered in some historic environment record, which is a site sheet containing a map, localizing the site, and other pieces of information such as an unique number of reference, an address, the type of site, chronological and preservation aspects, etc. Nowadays, data is registered in the Geographical Information System (GIS). Furthermore, data can be obtained from the unpublished finds in museums. The main source for localizing a site is the documentary evidence. In addition, maps, photographs and local names are considered primary sources along with satellite imagery, Lidar and geophysical surveying. One problem related to this may be the reliability and volume of information contained in such documents.

The following subchapters discuss the importance of the aerial and ground surveying and ways of conducting them in an appropriate manner. Firstly, the author describes what tools are necessary for executing aerial photography, and its alternatives (such as Lidar or the LANDSAT system). In the case of the ground survey, different types are presented, such as sampling or within an open area excavation. Sampling is divided into four main categories: simple random, stratified random, systematic and stratified systematic unaligned sampling. These types are conducted using a square system, but an alternative is examining parallel line across the landscape (generally orientated on an N-S axis). For the ploughed areas, field walking is advised as the most appropriate method. The interpretation therefore relies on the clusters of material and their distribution.

On the same note, the chapter continues with an analysis on the geophysical survey techniques as methods of noninvasive means of prospection. Thus, the author enumerates and describes: electrical resistivity, magnetometry, the GPR, chemical survey. The last subchapter treats accidental discovery, advising specialists to treat with enthusiasm each find coming from the general public, in order to keep the public interest high.

In the fourth chapter, the discussion moves towards the ways of recording an archaeological site. In general, this covers three elements: written description, a survey including plans and elevations and the photographic evidence. Thus, the written description can be on a pre-printed record form or as part of topographical survey form, involving a much larger description together with some interpretation. The survey can be done through a traditional technique such

as sketch survey (for which only basic equipment is needed), or through digital methods such as the total station, GPS, etc. For a satisfactory recording the site ought to be gridded, with at least three fixed points necessary for positioning onto existing maps. These simple and cheap techniques do not produce any data regarding the rise and fall of land. In order to record this aspect, one must use a level (either dumpy, a quick-set or an automatic one) and a surveyor's staff. This equipment, although still in use, has been outdated by the electronic surveying type. A good example is the total station which is an instrument containing both a theodolite and an Electronic Distance Measurement (EDM). An indispensable instrument remains the GPS, needed for positioning points on existing plans or maps.

Last but not least, there is the photographic evidence. The author recommends at least two cameras, preferably SLR, with spare batteries, for extended field projects. Also, apart from the quality of the camera, it is also important how the images are captured and processed. An angle of view of 45°, similar to the human eye, is recommended. The recording ought to contain a number, details, a compass bearing and date and time of day.

The fifth chapter treats the step of planning the excavation. After being granted permission from the land owner or by the state, a proper funding plan is required. One should remember that the entire plan must be in accordance with the laws and legislation of the country or area he is working within. This chapter proceeds with a description of the English and American laws, regarding how and where monuments and sites may be listed. Thus, the author presents certain problems, such as the problem of jurisdiction or the necessary permits needed for an excavation, and how they may be avoided. Also, human remains and all the valuable material that may come up are subjected to a different type of legislation. Funding is important, ideally covering the entire value of the project, which unfortunately is rarely the case. Funding is usually obtained from developers but this may have certain disadvantages, such as low wages for the archaeologists.

The site safety is discussed in the subsequent paragraphs. The author advises that three principles should be undertaken: the employer must provide proper premises and tools; the employer must maintain the premises and the tools in a proper condition; the employer must apply an organized working scheme. Generally speaking, accidents happen when machinery is used or the trench is too deep and the soil unsteady. Examples of avoiding such accidents range from different types of digging a trench, such as shoring, battered trench edges or stepped trench, to different types of protective clothing (brightly colored vests, helmets). The welfare of the workers and first aid means are also part of the minimum requirements.

Following these paragraphs a scheme of work lines is suggested. Staff is organized on three different lines, with a Director or a Principal Investigator in charge of the project. There is an excavation team made up from diggers, conducted by site supervisors and site assistants, a finds team with supervisors and processors and a specialist's line. In addition, one may choose to organize a site public relations line if needed. Logistics are also discussed, with examples of

equipment needed to conduct an excavation and the general site items needed for a base-camp.

Another subchapter presents different approaches toward the excavation process. Examples like test units, test pits, sondages or transects are given. In addition, the levels of recovery are considered further on as most important. Different tools may be useful in the process of recovery, from general methods such as mechanical digging to very fine ones, such as sieving. In the end, the author advised the recovery of proper samples, because that will be all that remains.

The sixth chapter relates to the actual digging of a site. Because the action involves moving massive amounts of earth, the way of disposing it is discussed in first part of the chapter. After defining the purpose of an archaeological excavation, the author presents the context system together with its definition and means of identification. Contexts such as surfaces, pits, post holes, and ditches, each treated separately thanks to their unique appearance (cut and fill). Masonry structures are analyzed in a different manner, containing elements such as a foundation trench or a footing, but also their sequence is important towards interpretation.

Excavation of human burial is depicted in the following part of the chapter. The author enumerates the legal, ethical and practical issues regarding such an excavation, like what is the most appropriate way of undertaking such a task, while preserving as much as possible. But, because not all sites have such features as the ones presented above, the following subchapter offers a few insights into the sites that may come up with information related to the agricultural history of an area, such as field lynchets and dry valley sediments. Thus, after being defined, several examples of digging and recording are presented. The recovery and treatment of artefacts and ecofacts under normal circumstances (the site is not waterlogged, desiccated or frozen), is furthermore discussed. Basic field conservation skills are required for underdoing such a task, each material requiring different conditions of preservation.

Dating and phasing of the contexts is established through the principles of *terminus ante quem* and *terminus post quem*, both part of the theory of stratification. This helps with the relative chronology of a layer. Absolute dating is very rare, mainly because objects may be reused for an undefined number of years after they were produced. The last part of the chapter deals with the management of the public-archaeological site relation, encouraging tours and the involvement of the public.

Chapter seven is continuing the discussion with the next phase of the archaeological excavation, the recording one. The recording stage involves the written record, the drawn record, the photographic record and the finds. Although some archaeologists still use field note-books, pre-printed context forms are the ones mainly used nowadays. Usually they should be divided into five parts, the first one including coordinates, a site code, sub-division, category, length, diameter, height/depth, soils (color, texture, consistency, coarse components). The second section deals with the method of excavation, finds and samples. The third box is the one in which different relationships with other contexts are mentioned. The interpretation part is a different box,

with the last one reserved for a checklist with the drawn and photographic record. On the same note, the drawn record is a series of measured drawings of vertical or horizontal surfaces. Because the limits of certain contexts may be arbitrary (depending on the trowellers), the author suggests the single-layer context plans. These plans register each context separately, the only disadvantage being the volume of information. Plan drawing can be done by offset or by triangulation from fixed points. Details may be easier to draw with a drawing frame. The vertical plans can be related using a total station, to establish depth/height. Several advices and conventions regarding the actual process of drawing are presented in the following paragraphs. The photographic record is mostly undertaken with digital cameras. Photographs ought to be taken like basic field survey ones. Besides the obvious basic photographic training needed for this task, cleanliness of the site is also recommended. Other preparations such as dampening the soil, a form of scale and an orientation are required. The last record is the material/finds one. It contains the location of certain finds, either by context (general finds) or by coordinates and depth (special finds). The finds register ought to contain record bag number, context number, grid reference, date, brief comments etc.

In the following chapter the discussion moves towards the post-fieldwork processing of the finds and samples recovered from a site. The author advises that finds ought to be washed and marked either on the field or as soon as they reach the home base or museum. Artefacts and ecofacts are treated separately in respect to the suitable means of cleaning and primary preservation. In addition, all the site records should already be organized in order to facilitate an upcoming interpretation of the data. A form of selection must be applied to any class of material. The subchapter discussing pottery analysis is ampler than the others, thanks to the amount of information it can grant to the archaeologist; the author identifies three forms, concerning: fabric, form and decoration. All this amounts to the understanding of patterns that can be found in the discovery and how prolonged was the inhabitation.

Another analysis refers to petrological finds. After identifying the type of stone used in the making, the study moves towards the method by which the tool was produced, along with the waste material. Ultimately, one must consider the purpose for which it was made, be it symbolical or practical. In the case of metal objects, the analysis is done in a quite similar manner, by firstly identifying the type of metal, the object itself, and by defining and counting fragments by context. Unlike the finds presented so far, the organic artefacts, apart from being rarer than the others, require conservation before analysis. As so, in the case of wood, after identifying the species, one should try to understand how the object was made, also with its nature and possible usage. This type of research goes hand in hand when it comes to bone, but other organic materials are in need for special conservation and identification procedures. There is much procedural emphasis put upon the food refuse, such as snails, seeds, or other plant remains, like charcoal. In order to identify environmental samples, a laboratory analysis is required; for instance pollen is examined under a microscope for positive identification. A similar interpretation which required spe-

cial conditions is the counting of land Mollusca, extracted from a sample. For a finer analysis, soils and sediments may be taken into account.

The last but one chapter brings to light the interpretation of the raw data collected on the field site. The first-most step is the identification of the site's zone of exploitation. For one to grasp this information, it is advised to search in nearby river alluvium or dry-valley deposits (samples of pollen or Mollusca may be obtained in such areas). The next area to be interpreted ought to be the household and its activity areas; the plan of the house, the symbolical context it lays within, and moving forward to the nature of the tools, combined with their spread. For one to add to the understanding of the activities that could have taken place in said areas, the archaeologist may take input from ethno-archaeology and experimental archaeology research. Because no household stands alone, the study should be extended towards acknowledging the community it was part of. Different types of factors account for the layout of the settlement.

The conclusion of this chapter is in fact the end product of all the interpretation aforementioned, that of how people conducted their lives. Contributing to the big picture, artefacts and ecofacts ought to be viewed as part of a daily life and activity of past inhabitants. In this sense, plants and animal remains may provide the researcher with insight into the lives of those people, from diet and routine, to taboos related to animal sacrifice. One should not restrain his conclusions to the raw data of how artefacts came to be, but also bring into consideration the value they had when traded or exchanged. The author makes clear that most of the times there can be found more than one explanation for the findings, depending on the archaeologist's theoretical preparation.

The last of the ten chapters depicts the last stage of an

archaeological research, the publishing of the report. After a brief introduction in which the author describes the proper conditions through which the archive and the materials ought to be kept, the discussion moves towards the archaeological illustrations. Instructions are given to the researcher, providing him with a set of conventions (from the type of pencil, to illustration rules and conventions). In addition to drawing, there are also advices towards obtaining photographs suit for publication. Field reports can be divided into three different categories: archive reports, technical reports and reports for publication. An archive report is to preserve data on a long-term. The technical one is the one a developer expects after funding an excavation. The report intended for publication is designated in such a way that archaeologists do not need to return to the archive one, in order to reinterpret the site. But, in the end, a report needs to be published, in order for scientists to consider a project concluded. In the last paragraphs the author presents some journals and where a field archaeologist may publish his or her report.

In the end, we believe that this textbook strongly serves its purpose, setting a series of basic principles that one should take into account when undertaking an archaeological research. Targeting a public made up either by undergraduate students or laics interested in the problem, this work does not exceed in details, which would be meant for the specialists. By using an accessible language and offering explanations to terms that need one, together with photographs and drawings, it leaves a strong impression along with a close to reality general picture. The author narrates in a relaxed and colloquial manner, so that the reader will not lose interest. We furthermore recommend this book as one of reference when one wants to discover and understand what archaeology is all about, besides the actual digging and the Indiana Jones like image that the media created.