

Session title: THE BARBARIAN IN THE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Organizers: Howard Williams, Department of History & Archaeology,
University of Chester, UK

Time: Friday afternoon

Room:

Session abstract:

The concept of the barbarian has been an enduring presence in the antiquarian and archaeological study of European societies. Indeed the idea of the barbarian as an adjective and concept continues to influence both scholarly and popular perceptions of Prehistory, the Ancient World and Early Medieval societies. Moving beyond studies of the shifting attitudes to the barbarian within successive antiquarian and archaeological paradigms, the session aims to focus on contextual analyses in the history of archaeological thought and practice. In other words, the focus will be upon how particular archaeologists have defined and perceived the barbarian in the archaeological record and the wider socio-political contexts of these attributions.

INTRODUCTION: ARCHAEOLOGIES OF THE BARBARIAN

Howard Williams, University of Chester, UK

THE OTHER'S ROLE: THE SAVAGE/CIVILIZED DICHOTOMY IN MESOLITHIC RESEARCH

Núria Gallego-Lletjós, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

A critical analysis of the history of archaeological research reveals important mechanisms through which modern society has constructed the idea of a superior "us" in contrast with an inferior and undeveloped "other", considered either "savage" or "barbarian". This is mainly expressed in the study of transitional moments from one stage of development to another. This paper offers a critical approach to the historiography of the European Mesolithic and in particular, the transition between a hunter-gatherer way of life to the agricultural one of the Neolithic. This has traditionally been considered as the base upon which "civilization" was constructed. The Mesolithic-Neolithic transition has been seen as the moment where the opposition of savage-civilized has been juxtaposed. First theories about the period were based on racist and colonialist ideas of demographic substitution: differences between the savage hunter-gatherer and the civilized agriculturalists were of such a character that it was impossible to think of a gradual transformation from one into the other. Theoretical positions changed in the 1980s, reflecting post-modern ideas about human diversity. Since then, some Anglophone archaeologists started to admit the possibility of a gradual transition from hunting to

agriculture, as well as to recognize the social complexity and variability existing within hunter-gatherer societies.

THE “PRIMITIVE” IN PORTUGUESE ARCHAEOLOGY DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY: MENDES CORRÊA (1888-1960)

Ana Cristina Martins, Tropical Research Institute (IICT), Portugal

More than the concept of the barbarian, the idea of the “primitive” as an adjective and concept in describing an “archaic way of life” has strongly influenced Portuguese scholarly perceptions of Prehistory, especially between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. This focus on the primitive was mostly due to the considerable expansion of ethnographic studies. In particular archaeologists were committed with the new political agenda of the Estado Novo (‘New State’). They looked for ethnographic parallels from overseas possessions in order to understand better their presumed prehistoric ancestry.

Making use of A. A. E. de Mendes Corrêa (1888-1960) as a case-study, the paper will analyze the identification of the “primitive” in specific artefacts and archaeological contexts. The influence of Portuguese colonial and imperial engagements during “anthropological missions” upon dialogues concerning Prehistory will be identified.

KILLING HUMANS ON STONE CHAIRS OR THE IMPIOUS CELT STRIKES BACK: ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISPANO-CELTIC VARIATIONS ON AN OLD THEME

Silvia Alfayé, Universidad del País Vasco, Spain

The depiction of the celebration of barbarian bloody rituals by druids dressed in unpolluted robes and organized around a stone for sacrifice located in the middle of a terrifying forest is, perhaps, the most influential Celt-related image created by historians, artists and writers of the European 19th century. The identification of megalithic monuments as Celtic rock altars started in the middle of the 18th century, but with the success of the Romantic aesthetic it persisted into the 19th century. European “druidical megalithomania” has had an ample impact of the literature, the arts and the collective imagination. Nowadays, the attribution of a druidic and sacrificial function for singular rock structures remains popular in Spain among both popular and some academic studies. The paper charts the history of interpretation surrounding the most controversial barbarian cult place on the Iberian Peninsula: *Drunemeton* of *Arcobriga* (Monreal de Ariza, Zaragoza). New research into this site presents a very different picture of its function and significance.

FACTS AND FICTION: INTERPRETATIONS OF LATE LA TÈNE BURIAL PRACTICES AT BASLE-GASFABRIK

Sophie Stelzle-Hueglin, Archäologische Bodenforschung Kanton Basel-Stadt, Switzerland

Norbert Spichtig, Archaeologische Bodenforschung Kanton Basel-Stadt, Switzerland

At the Iron Age site of Basle-Gasfabrik there are not only burials on two cemeteries outside the settlement, but human skeletons are also found within: bodies were laid down in disused structures, skulls were deposited and human bones can be found in every other pit. While inhumations on graveyards outside the settlement are looked at as the “normal” way to deal with the deceased, it can be debated whether the “strange” practices with the dead inside the settlement should be called burials at all. In almost a hundred years of research on Basle-Gasfabrik the phenomenon of the skeletons in the pits, cellars and wells has been interpreted in many different ways as waste disposal or victims of massacres. They seem to prove the Celts having been head-hunters and even cannibals. Presumptions made by former archaeologists are still very popular with the press and the public. This fearful picture stands in the way of an unprejudiced interpretation of the evidence. Today the comparison between the human skeletons outside and inside the settlement of Basle-Gasfabrik gives reason to interpret the bodies in the pits as representatives of the élite. Does this interpretation move us away from portrayals of the ‘barbarian’ Celt or is this simply “zeitgeist” again?

THE BARBARIAN, THE SCHOLAR AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WARDROBE: DISROBING THE ESSENTIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUBJECT

James A. Johnson, University of Pittsburgh, USA

Despite recent advancements in archaeological methodologies and theories regarding the investigation of identity in prehistory the “barbarian” remains one of the most enigmatic and controversial subjects in historical and recent archaeological discourse. The concept of barbarian is rooted not only in cultural evolutionary paradigms, but also permeates culture-historical and relativist approaches leading to the construction and perpetuation of false dichotomies in archaeology. Whether it is the barbarian or the ubiquitous “other” that archaeologists investigate it is the assignment and privileging of homogeneous roles to social groups in different regions and time periods that forms the epistemological and problematic base for the widespread perception of the barbarian in European prehistory.

In this paper, I examine the role of the barbarian, the Scythian, and their interactions with the Greeks in the Pontic region (modern day Ukraine) during the Iron Age. Using the Scythians as my primary case study, I analyze the influence of colonial engagements in not only archaeological discourses on the barbarian in prehistory but also how archaeologists construct and perpetuate models of culture contact and change that lack temporal and spatial depth and, ultimately, avoid discussions of intra- and inter- group barbarian cultural and social variation. This paper highlights the inherent variability found in barbarian identity as a key element missing in how barbarians are perceived and represented in European prehistory.

THE "DRUNKEN BARBARIAN": CELTS, GERMANS, NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE OTHER

Bettina Arnold, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA

The "drunken Indian" stereotype in colonial European accounts of Indian drinking practices corresponds closely to descriptions of the "drunken Celt and German" trope in the literature of Greece and Rome. Such negative representations were motivated partly by racial and ethnic prejudice in both contexts and partly by a misunderstanding of the role of mood-altering substances in Celtic and Indian societies vis á vis their literate counterparts. Binge drinking, drinking to get drunk and violent quarrels, often ending in the deaths of one or more combatants, were all considered characteristics of Celtic drinking behavior as depicted by Classical authors. All of these characteristics have also been attributed to Indian drinking behavior by European and Euro-American colonizers. This paper will compare these contact scenarios through an analysis of the language used to describe these behaviors as well as the archaeological and internally generated written evidence for drinking behavior in these societies.

BETWEEN DEFACTION AND CELEBRATION: THE CULTURAL MEMORY OF THE LOMBARDS IN NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY ITALY

Annamaria Paziienza, University of Padua, Italy

This paper deals with the historical memory of the Lombards in nineteenth and twentieth-century Italy and argues how, usually seen as barbarian invaders in the context of national historiography, they have instead become regarded as prestigious citizens in some local realities. By the mid-nineteenth century in the climate of Italian political Union (1860), some historians proposed an ideological interpretation of the sixth to eighth-century "German" Lombard kingdom in the Italian peninsula. Explicit parallels were made with the Austrian occupation of northernmost Italy in the nineteenth century. For this reason, the early medieval past has never been a completely accepted part of Italian nationalist history that has instead traditionally looked towards the Roman Empire or at the later Age of the Italian Communes. But this is not the case for Cividale, Castel Trosino and Monza, where Lombard local heritage has been able to develop around archaeological discoveries of early medieval furnished burials and Theodelinda's treasure - a very rich group of gold objects attributed to Lombard queen and preserved in Monza Cathedral. This study investigates the complex relationship between national defamation and local celebration of the Lombard "barbarians", focusing on antiquarian researches and the ability of material objects to communicate messages and create identities easily disseminated and understandable by all layers of Italian society, not only by intellectuals.

THE BARBARIAN IN THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF RICHARD CORNWALLIS NEVILLE

Howard Williams, University of Chester, UK

Richard Cornwallis Neville (b. 1820, d. 1861, the fourth Baron Braybrooke from 1857) was one of a number of early Victorian antiquaries who excavated and published discoveries of furnished inhumation and cremation graves and assigned them to the 'Anglo-Saxons'. Neville and his contemporaries regarded 'Saxon' graves as manifestations of the process of 'Teutonic' invasion and settlement - both the heirs of Rome and the progenitors of English civilization.

Neville's investigations particularly focused upon Roman and Saxon antiquities in the environs of his aristocratic family home at Audley End, Essex. The paper identifies a possible rationale for the nature and character of Neville's antiquarian pursuits in his personal and social context as well as the history, politics and reputation of his family. Neville's interest in the fate of the Roman Empire and its barbarian successors upon British soil may be regarded as a symptom of the military career of great-grandfather, Charles Cornwallis. It was his decision to surrender British forces to George Washington at Yorktown in 1781. The paper provides a case study in the relationship between locality, aristocratic family identity and anxieties over the fate of Empire motivating the archaeological investigation of the barbarian origins of the English.

FROM WALHALLA TO WAGNER (AND BACK AGAIN): IMAGES OF A GERMANIC PAST IN BAVARIAN NATIONALISM

Susanne Hakenbeck, University of Cambridge, UK

Bavaria only became a kingdom with the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. As a recent creation, the notion of the antiquity of its people and ruling dynasty was an important instrument in the process of nation-building. Throughout the nineteenth century, images of the Germanic past played an important role in the building programmes of the Bavarian monarchs. Two examples will be explored in detail: The *Walhalla*, commissioned by Ludwig I. and completed in 1842, was the first pan-German national monument to be built in the German states. At a time when the Germanic past was still considered inferior to classical antiquity it was modelled on the Parthenon and decorated in the classical style with images of Germanic gods and heroes. Following the tradition of the Enlightenment, it explicitly intended to elevate and educate the population's sense of nationhood. By the time of Ludwig II, the German state was unified and ideas of Germanic grandeur were firmly rooted in the nation's imagination. As an admirer and patron of Richard Wagner, Ludwig II had his 'fairy-tale' castle *Neuschwanstein* decorated with scenes from Wagner's operas, which were themselves representations of an invented Germanic past. The circularity of these historical references, coupled with an emotive and intuitive experience of the site, created a sense of an authentic past. The quasi-medieval setting situated the past closer to the present and thereby made it more explicitly German. These buildings not only track the tension and eventual shifts from Bavarian nationalism, which was initially based on principles of the Enlightenment, to Romantic pan-German nationalism, but they also represent the creation of a seemingly authentic and true Germanic past.

Poster abstract:

THE EURASIAN BARBARIANS-SCYTHIANS: FROM EURASIAN STEPPES TO CAUCASUS AND EUROPE (THE ISSUE'S HISTORY AND MODERN DEVELOPMENTS)

Vera Kovalevskaya, Institute of Archaeology RAS, Moscow, Russia

The Greek and Near-Eastern sources recognize the warlike Scythian horsemen as the barbarian enemies of European and Near-Eastern civilizations. At the same time, classical authors from Pompeius Trogus onwards considered the Scythians as the most ancient ethnos, i.e. the autochthonous population of the Eurasian steppes. Archaeological materials related to the Scythians, both Asiatic and European, were brought to light as early as the early 18th century; these were artifacts in the so-called "Scytho-Siberian animal style". Later G. Müller identified grave goods from the famous Melgunov barrow excavated in 1763 as 'Scythian' showing Persian influences having come from Iran via the Bosphoran kingdom. During the 18th-21st centuries much attention has been paid to the migrations of the bearers of Scythian culture along the Eurasian steppe corridor and methods have been employed in studying the migrations and interactions of the Scythians with local populations on the basis of the archaeological record.

In this poster we present the specificity of the migrations of Scythians and investigate the different forms of contacts between indigenous communities and newcomers in art, metallurgy, crafts, anthropology, warfare, through time and space, focusing on Russian archaeology from the 18th to the 21st century.