



Savino di Lernia and Marina Gallinaro (Eds.): *Archaeology of Africa. Potential and Perspectives on Laboratory & Fieldwork Research*

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Archaeology has never been an easy task in Africa where political instability, terrorist attacks, and environmental crises can make research challenging and where cultural heritage preservation efforts are often endangered. As a result, Africanist archaeologists are often called to question the ethics of doing research under these conditions—and this was the spirit of a workshop organized by Savino di Lernia and Marina Gallinaro at University La Sapienza in Rome in December 2017. The workshop aimed to bring together Italian and Italian-based scholars working in Africa to discuss new approaches to archaeology on the continent and to suggest alternative ways to carry out research during periods of crisis. The results were two days of intense debate and now this edited volume, including 14 chapters that integrate archaeological data and ethical discussions of research in Africa and present case studies to illustrate virtuous research practices, cultural heritage preservation, and dissemination activities.

The editors (di Lernia & Gallinaro) introduce the book in Chapter 1 by explaining the inspiration and

genesis of the workshop, namely the need for new approaches to archaeology in Africa following the turmoil of the Arab Spring. They then list and briefly describe the contributions and outline the structure of the book, which follows a regional and chronological scheme.

In Chapter 2, Mitchell offers an exhaustive overview of relevant issues in African archaeology, suggesting how to perform archaeological research in ethically responsible ways. He stresses the key role of communication with local communities (villages, schools, etc.) and outreach activities to overcome distrust towards archaeologists resulting from the recent colonial past. At the same time, the author wisely indicates the need to train and collaborate with local people and national scholars in order to create good heritage practices, monitor archaeological sites (and natural resources), and develop strong institutions for contract archaeology. Mitchell suggests another way to cope with difficult periods for in-country research, when fieldwork is not possible, is to process and publish data from older fieldwork. Archaeologists are also encouraged to take advantage of evidence for past climate change to raise awareness about the current climate crisis.

Mercuri focuses Chapter 3 on the role of archaeobotany for studying the Holocene of North Africa, beginning with an introduction to this field and a discussion of the main types of botanical remains potentially present in the archaeological record. She then offers three case studies to demonstrate how botanical

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data can provide information about climate and seasonality (Sai Island, Sudan), human behavior and mortuary practices (Gobero, Niger), and wild grass harvesting (Southwestern Libyan Sahara).

In Chapter 4, Barich integrates archaeological research, heritage, and outreach activities. She first describes how growing critical awareness among Africanist archaeologists in the 1990s led to a move away from Eurocentric views of African history and the development of a new consciousness. This process coincided with the creation of the Forum for African Archaeology and Cultural Heritage in 1990, whose purpose was to promote communication between scholars and protect endangered heritage sites in Africa. Barich mentions the strategies chosen by the Forum to accomplish this purpose, highlighting the importance of interactions with local communities, tourism management, and the creation of archaeological parks. Drawing on her direct involvement, Barich concludes by discussing two good examples of these latter, namely Gilf Kebir National Park and White Desert National Park in Egypt.

Cancellieri and Ben Nasr center Chapter 5 on the difficulties of conducting fieldwork in Tunisia after 2011, illustrating how research strategies have been impacted by the need to give priority to security. Despite these challenges, the authors have been able to conduct fieldwork, such as mapping and describing late Pleistocene and early Holocene sites. This work highlights the need for funding agencies to be more flexible in the allocation and managements of financial resources in such complex situations.

In Chapter 6, Tusa and Bucellato provide a detailed documentation of the endangered sites of Cyrenaica (Libya), not only focusing on those from Roman times but also including those dating to the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods. The availability of new data from these sorts of surveys is important because fieldwork in Libya has been interrupted for years due to political instability and it is difficult to imagine when it will be possible to resume.

Manfredi, Dekayir, and Bokbot offer an interesting overview of pre-Roman mining sites across Morocco and Algeria in Chapter 7. They apply a wide range of diagnostic techniques, from geo-archaeological surveys to compositional analyses of artifacts (XRF, SEM-EDS, PIXE, ICP-MS, and XRD), to develop a general framework for pre-Roman metal production in North Africa.

In Chapter 8, Buzi, Bogdani, Colonna, and Rossetti describe their work at Bakchias, a settlement located in the Fayyum (Egypt) dating from the Pharaonic to the Christian period. The study of the Coptic literature aims to identify sites associated with the production, storage, and dissemination of Coptic manuscripts in the Fayyum area. The project also aims to reconstruct the ancient landscape and provide a diachronic analysis of transformations in cult spaces.

In Chapter 9, Rossi and Ahmed present the results of two surveys conducted in the Dakhla Oasis to map all the archaeological sites of this region, most of which are ascribed to the “Graeco-Roman” period. A further goal of the authors is to protect those sites endangered by intensive agricultural expansion.

Janulardo uses Chapter 10 to discuss the journey of Gustave Flaubert and his friend Maxime Du Camp in Egypt in the nineteenth century. Although this mission sought to document archaeology, it also showcased the excellent ability of this author to describe the landscapes of this time and place.

In Chapter 11, Guirguis describes the Phoenician period across the west-central Mediterranean, extending from Sardinia to the Tyrrhenian coasts of southern Italy, and from Sicily to Tunisia. Focusing on the production of pottery, and tablewares in particular, the author examines the relationship between different cultural identities across the geographical area affected by Phoenician expansion.

Chapters 12–13 both focus on ichnology, the study of tracks and traces left by living organisms. Altamura first gives a detailed introduction of this discipline and its methodology, describing the case study of the human footprints discovered at the site of Melka Kunture (Ethiopia) and dated from 1.8 to 0.6 Ma. He also discusses the footprints of *Hippopotamus cf. amphibious* found in this same area. Cherin et al. then describe their interventions at the site of Laetoli (Tanzania), most famous for the footprints of *Australopithecus afarensis* found there in the late 1970s. These authors, however, explain how other footprint sequences have been found and studied, allowing for a better understanding of the intraspecific variability of *A. afarensis*. They also discuss the role of their project in the conservation of the site and of the dissemination of results.

Mastino concludes the book with Chapter 14 describing the work of the scientific society SAIC (Italian Archaeological School of Carthage) through

a program for documentation, training, and research. The SAIC operates by promoting conventions and agreements between Italian and Tunisian institutions, organizing trainings for Italian and Tunisian students and scholars, and supporting outreach activities and educational programs (included a PhD program). Notably, the society was also responsible for founding the Sabatino Moscati Library in Tunis.

Archaeology of Africa. Potential and Perspectives on Laboratory and Fieldwork Research is a well-conceived project, one that integrates ethical and methodological issues and directs the reader to the roles

of archaeological research in contemporary societies. Moreover, the quantity and quality of data presented by the authors offer a window into the incredible diversity and richness of African archaeology.

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