

Worlds Apart: Modern Conflict Archaeology and Battlefield Archaeology

Različna svetova: Arheologija modernih konfliktov in arheologija bojišč

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Abstract: In recent years, ‘modern conflict archaeology’ has become an increasingly sophisticated interdisciplinary endeavour, informed by anthropological theory, and embracing a diversity of intellectual engagements with landscape, material culture, identity, and heritage. The complexities of 20th and 21st century conflicts, beginning with the First World War, and based on industrialised technologies, demand a powerful response. The article stresses the advantages of the research methods of the conflict archaeology in comparison to the battlefield archaeology and outlines the potentials of this new kind of archaeology, which has to date mainly focused on the First World War, though its concepts and approaches are increasingly being applied to other 20th and 21st century conflicts.

Keywords: conflict archaeology, battlefield archaeology, material culture studies; trench art, landscape

During the last ten years, ‘modern conflict archaeology’ has developed into an increasingly sophisticated interdisciplinary endeavour, and has begun to cast off the straitjacket of what, hitherto, had widely been known as ‘Battlefield Archaeology’. The purpose of this brief polemical essay is to define the term ‘Conflict Archaeology’, and to differentiate it from ‘Battlefield Archaeology’ by showing the former’s vast potential to alter our views of and engagement with modern conflict.

The central point is that investigating and understanding the scale and complexity of the archaeology of 20th and 21st century conflicts demands a truly multidisciplinary approach, rather than the narrow focus adopted by battlefield archaeology (albeit practised mainly on pre-20th century sites). In other words, the social, technological, and cultural complexity of modern wars and their aftermaths, demands a powerful response, beyond the simplistic collection of objects and reinforcement of a military history perspective.

Battlefield archaeologists were, and remain, concerned with ‘digging battlefields’ - an activity guided by (and often regarded as an adjunct to) military history, rather than as an archaeological enterprise in its own right. For battlefield archaeologists, the battle stands alone as a unique event, and can be understood in its entirety by reference only to itself and the place where it occurred. No wider context is required, and the importance of the battlefield landscape is determined solely by its effects on the course and outcome of the battle. Objects are recovered,

Izvleček: Arheologija modernih konfliktov je v zadnjih letih oblikovala vse bolj dovršen interdisciplinaren raziskovalni aparat, ki ga oblikuje antropološka teorija in ki v sebi združuje različne intelektualne povezave s pokrajino, materialno kulturo, identiteto in dediščino. Zapletenost konfliktov 20. in 21. stoletja, ki se začinjajo s prvo svetovno vojno in so osnovani na industrializiranih tehnologijah, zahtevajo odločen odziv. Prispevek prinaša predstavitev prednosti raziskovalnih metod arheologije konfliktov v primerjavi z arheologijo bojišč in izrisuje potencialne nove veje arheologije, ki je bila doslej osredotočena večinoma na raziskovanje prve svetovne vojne, ob tem pa se njeni koncepti in pristopi vedno bolj uporabljajo tudi za raziskave drugih konfliktov 20. in 21. stoletja.

Ključne besede: arheologija konfliktov, arheologija bojišč, študije materialne kulture, umetnost z bojišč, pokrajina

identified, catalogued according to type, and sometimes exhibited in a museum. In many ways, this is a straightforward exercise, aimed at identifying a battlefield and locating the material traces of a battle in the hope that they will confirm, deny, or at least add detail, to the facts as understood by the written sources of military history.

In reality, battlefield archaeology as traditionally practised, is a catch-all term applied to, and adopted by, anyone who investigates any battlefield – from prehistoric to Roman to medieval, though mostly belonging to the period of the 17th - 19th centuries. Investigations of single-battle events belonging to the English Civil War, the Napoleonic Wars, and the American Civil War are characteristic of battlefield archaeology as practised in recent times.

Modern conflict archaeology takes a radically different approach, and is a necessary response to dealing with the complexities of 20th and 21st century conflict. These complexities are generated partly by the nature of modern wars as conflicts of industrialized intensity, and partly because they incorporate political and nationalistic motivations, and notions of ethnicity and identity. Furthermore, many of these conflicts are often within living memory, and so demand an increased level of sensitivity in their investigation. Many have become (or are becoming) ‘sites of memory’, politically contested and economically important places of cultural heritage and, increasingly, of tourism. This multitude of issues makes 20th century conflict sites, in effect, highly sensitive multilayered landscapes that require a robust, multidisci-



Figure 1. University of Bristol students excavating a First World War training trench on Salisbury Plain, southern England in 2008 (foto: N. J. Saunders).

Slika 1. Študentje Univerze v Bristolu med izkopavanjem vadbenega jarka iz prve svetovne vojne v dolini Salisbury, južna Anglija, 2008 (photo: N. J. Saunders).

plinary approach, far beyond the ability of the traditional, single-event-oriented, battlefield archaeology to deliver.

Modern conflict archaeology

Modern conflict archaeology focuses on the idea of conflict as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, which may leave a variety of physical traces in many different places, all or most of which can possess multiple meanings that may change over time. Conflict generates new experiences and ideas for soldiers and civilians alike, and these may vary for men, women, and children – all of

whose material worlds are transformed to a greater or lesser extent. This fact alone brings the study of modern conflict within the realm of anthropology.

Conflict archaeology is not restricted to battlefields, nor to large-scale wars between nations, but embraces any kind of armed conflict (and its wider social and cultural correlates), at any level, within a single nation, or between nations. Conflict archaeology is by definition a multi-disciplinary undertaking, and draws on anthropology, cultural geography, art history, cultural history, museum studies, and heritage and tourism studies, as well as military history.

First World War practice trenches on Salisbury Plain (Brown and Field 2009) (Figure 1), the shrapnel collecting habits of Second World War children (Moshenska 2008), prisoner-of-war and internment camps (Cresswell 1994; Carr 2009), the 3-D artworks produced by Vietnam veterans, the wearing of war medals (Joy 2002; Richardson 2009), the material heritage of the cold war (Cocroft 2001), the effects of ethnic cleansing on the traditional material culture of the Balkans (Saunders n.d.), and the devastation of Iraq's hitherto peerless museum collections are all consequences of conflict – but none are battle-events. Conflict archaeology is concerned with all manifestations of conflict and its legacy during the 20th and 21st centuries (see Saunders 2004, Saunders and Cornish 2009, and Schofield et al 2002, for further examples).

First World War archaeology

In the vanguard of modern conflict archaeology is the First World War. This is partly due to coincidence, but also to the fact that this was the world's first industrialized conflict fought on a global scale. The First World War created the technological, social, cultural, and economic templates for all subsequent conflicts; similarly, the advances made in its archaeological investigation have set an interdisciplinary benchmark for the archaeology of all modern conflicts.

The nature of First World War archaeology reveals its complexity in archaeological terms. In one sense, it is a kind of Industrial Archaeology – whose strata are saturated with mass-produced artefacts – an overwhelming sea of material culture that seems to mock the archaeologist's quest for insightful patternings of objects indicative of individual and group behaviour. In another sense, it is also Historical Archaeology – with a wealth of written documents on every conceivable aspect of the conflict, from trench life to global strategy and the political and economic consequences of four years of war. It is also, and self evidently, Social Archaeology, Contemporary Archaeology, and Anthropological Archaeology. It is, above all, the archaeology of the recent historical past in time of war which subsumes the study of material culture, landscape, and cultural memory, and cuts across the many disciplines mentioned above.

It is important to identify the nature of the unique archaeological strata of First World War archaeology (and



Figure 2. German officer and soldier uncover a carved Roman monument during construction of a trench in northern France.

Slika 2. Nemški častnik in vojak pri odkrivanju rimskega spomenika med gradnjo jarka v severni Franciji.

the strata of many – though not all - subsequent conflicts as well). First World War archaeology is inextricably associated with traditional archaeology – from Palaeolithic prehistory to Classical antiquity and the Medieval period, and from Belgium to Italy, Hungary to Mesopotamia (Iraq) (Figure 2). This is because the digging of gun emplacements, dugouts, and hundreds of thousands of kilometres of trenches uncovered arguably the largest quantity of sites and artefacts since the birth of archaeology during the 19th century (Saunders 2002, 102-103).

The 'constant' is the presence of a 1914-18 level of war destruction, but the 'variable' is the specific type of traditional archaeological level which the war's activity cut into, disturbed, incorporated, or destroyed. In other words, each First World War archaeological stratum is a unique configuration of a particular archaeological past and modern war. The effect of the First World War on the status of traditional archaeological knowledge from 1914



Figure 3. Conflict archaeology as commemoration and heritage tourism. Visitors to the excavation of the front line trenches at Thiepval Wood on the Somme, France, in 2006 (foto: N. J. Saunders).

Slika 3. Arheologija konflikta kot spominski in dediščinski turizem. Obiskovalci na izkopavanju frontnih jarkov v gozdu Thiepval na reki Somme v Franciji, 2006 (photo: N. J. Saunders).

onwards has only occasionally been acknowledged, and is yet to be investigated (Saunders 2002, 102-3; 2010, 4-9), and the theorising of 'unique conflict strata' (and their associations with identity, nationalism, and heritage tourism) has barely begun.

Landscapes of conflict

Archaeologists have always been interested in landscape, but in recent decades, the influence of anthropology has been increasingly marked. In the study of modern conflict landscapes, traditional battlefield archaeology displays its theoretical inadequacies by its lack of both analytical rigour and breadth of engagement. Crucially, there is a fundamental difference between modern 20th and 21st century

industrialised war landscapes and those that belong to conflicts that had taken place before the 20th century.

Before 1914, battlefields were comparatively small places that, once fighting had ended and bodies cleared, reverted back to inert and harmless places, albeit sometimes important in tradition and memory, such as Thermopylae (480 BC), Kosovo (AD 1389), Agincourt (AD 1415), and Waterloo (AD 1815). From 1914 onward, battlefields changed their nature forever, because they continued to kill and maim human beings long after the armies had left the field, by virtue of the huge quantities of unexploded bombs and shells that they contained (Webster 1998).

After 1914, battlefields became pro-active killers of human beings irrespective of age, gender, status, and

nationality. Even today, almost a century after the war ended, there is an annual death toll along the old Western Front of France and Belgium due to the explosion of artillery shells, mortars and grenades (Saunders 2001, 46-47). This dramatic change in the nature of the conflict-zone indicates that the post-1914 battlefield-as-artefact is fundamentally different from pre-1914 examples, and has a potentially lethal afterlife which can last for centuries. This extended lifetime of a lethally dangerous place demonstrates that such landscapes have to be assessed and understood from an anthropological as well as an archaeological perspective.

First World War conflict landscapes are cultural artefacts, tied to a sense of personal and national identity, and are subject to changing attitudes towards war and memory. The increasing number of battle-zone commemorative events (in France and Belgium at least), sees places in the landscape that were virtually ‘empty’ geographical locations just a few years ago become the focus of well-attended commemorations, such as the huge mine crater at Lochnagar on the Somme, in France (Saunders 2010, 85-86).

Perhaps more surprising, is a recent development that has seen archaeological excavations of First World War sites become ‘temporary commemorative spaces’, attracting visitors and the curious who may leave their own respectful offerings to the dead (particularly if human remains have been found). First World War archaeology here is less the archaeology of commemoration, than archaeology *as* commemoration (Saunders 2010: 167-168, and see Price 2004) (Figure 3).

While the commemorative dimensions of excavating such sites have not yet been explored in any detailed way, more attention has been given to what some investigators regard as a major reason for undertaking such work – or at least an important by-product. Reclaiming the dead from lists of ‘the missing’ by identifying their remains and ‘repatriating’ them to family descendants has proved to be an emotional development in First World War archaeology in recent years. It also adds a problematic moral dimension to investigating the war’s conflict landscapes.

In 2003, at Serre on the Somme in France, archaeologists recovered three skeletons, two German and one British. One German had personal effects that allowed him to be identified as belonging to 7 Kompanie of 121 Reserve



Figure 4. The excavation of the German soldier Jakob Hönes, at Serre, France, in 2003 (foto: Martin Brown).

Slika 4. Izkopavanje nemškega vojaka Jakoba Hönesa pri Serreju, Francija, 2003 (photo: Martin Brown).

Infanterie Regiment - Württemberg infantry regiment - who were at Serre between 10-13 June 1915. Other belongings, and details of his uniform, together with meticulous archive research, identified him as Jakob Hönes, a labourer in a brick works near Stuttgart who had been killed (and lost) in action (Figure 4). The Hönes family, that included Jakob’s only surviving son, was still living in the Stuttgart area, and, almost ninety years after Jakob died at Serre, he was reunited with his family, and buried in the German military cemetery near Metz (Fraser and Brown 2007).

The second German was identified as Albert Thielicke, an NCO in 7 Kompanie, 121 Reserve Infanterie Regiment (the same as Jakob Hönes), and who was killed in action on 11 June, 1915. The NCO’s buttons, and other elements of the uniform can be connected only with one person in either 121 or 119 regiments known to have

been in the area at the right time. This circumstantial evidence convinced the German War Graves organization – the VDK – that the body was Thielecke's, and this is the name on the headstone of his grave in the military cemetery at Metz (Fraser and Brown 2007).

These two cases, and others (see Brown and Osgood 2009), demonstrate that the developing modern archaeology of the war possesses a broader anthropological dimension which, reinforced by military history and archival research, includes such issues as people's real and imagined relationships with landscape, the war itself, their own families and their emotions.

In attempting to situate First World War archaeology in the wider world, as well as within archaeology itself, and to gain intellectual purchase on crucial issues, it is vital to acknowledge a fact concerning the unique nature of the landscapes that First World War archaeologists excavate.

The human cost of creating First World War battle-zone landscapes was described day-by-day, sometimes hour-by-hour, in memoirs and regimental war diaries. This surely produced the most exhaustively documented, intimately personalized, and spiritualized areas ever to be subject to, or considered for, archaeological investigation (Saunders 2002, 106).

Quite apart from the moral and philosophical issues raised by this statement, Great War landscapes are yet more complex. Some of the multi-dimensional issues that are raised by investigating them include:

- an increasing awareness of battle-zones as national and trans-national cultural Heritage
- the commercialization of battle-zones stimulated by burgeoning tourism
- the creation and rejuvenation of war-related museums and heritage sites in battle-zone areas
- the incorporation of places and commemorative events into a widening trend for public war remembrance activities
- the ambiguous survival of large areas saturated with unexploded First World War munitions
- the existence of private collections of war artefacts; a vigorous international trade in such items, and the stimulus this provides to despoil the battlefields
- the development of a methodology specifically tailored for investigating industrialised battle-zones

Other kinds of modern conflict landscapes are also beyond the ability of battlefield archaeology to conceptualise or investigate. Vast stretches of landscape were altered by the war but were never battlefields. Ammunition dumps, military hospitals, airfields, repair depots, and prisoner of war camps occupied militarised and quasi-militarised landscapes, but were well behind the front-line battle areas.

Sometimes, prisoner of war and internee camps, and trenches, dugouts, and fortifications designed for training purposes were even further away from the front line – e.g. across the English Channel, in Britain (in the case of the Western Front). Grouped together with such locations are other more overtly civilian landscapes, where new buildings associated with the manufacture of munitions and weaponry, and its associated infrastructure were constructed, and which similarly were never the scene of armed conflict – though they were places where conflict-related deaths (as accidents) sometimes occurred (e.g. Cocroft 2000; Saunders 2010, 202-212; Schofield 2004).

Given the inability of battlefield archaeology to include and make theoretical sense of these diverse (and almost un-investigated) landscapes of war, it is more appropriate and more accurate to consider that archaeologists of the First World War are engaged in 'Conflict Archaeology', and are more interested in 'conflict landscapes' and 'battle-zones' rather than battlefields.

Material culture of conflict

First World War archaeology, as the leading edge of modern conflict archaeology, is an integral part of modernity, and is inescapably anthropological in nature. Arguably, it is the most anthropological, and the most interdisciplinary of all the various new kinds of archaeology that have appeared over the past few decades. Its connections to what is widely referred to as 'material culture studies' (Buchli 2002; Tilley et al. 2006), was, inadvertently but presciently, recognized at the time: the First World War was called above all 'a war of material culture, or *materialschlacht*'.

The influence of anthropological theory on archaeological approaches to material culture is particularly apparent in investigating what has been called the 'social lives' of objects and their intersection with human experience (Ap-

padurai 1986). This led to archaeologists focusing less on artefacts for their own sake (e.g. describing and cataloguing), and more on reconstructing how the social, economic, ideological, and spiritual aspects of human lives became embodied in the objects that individuals make.

From this perspective, the conflict artefacts of the First World War exist in several intersecting dimensions. Few kinds of archaeology are so democratic in the way they spread their finds across different social worlds. Artefacts dug up from archaeological sites can have analogues in private as well as museum collections, and they can exist in private homes, either stored in attics, or, more often than maybe supposed, exhibited as heirlooms in the living room or hallway, where they still function as memory objects. The war is over, and the war generation virtually gone, but the objects resist oblivion, and can still spark the imagination and help retrieve and define individual identities.

One example of how the interdisciplinary study of conflict-related material culture can be figuratively unpacked is the recent investigation of Trench Art – 3-D objects made from re-cycled war *matériel* and other materials by soldiers and those civilians affected by conflict and its aftermath (Saunders 2003). These items reveal themselves as objectifications of the self, symbols of loss and mourning, and are poignantly associated with memory and landscape, and with issues of heritage and museum displays that increasingly emphasize the common soldier's and civilian's experience of war. Trench art objects are also associated with pilgrimage and battlefield tourism – particularly as souvenirs and memorabilia.

Trench art can be carved from wood (e.g. cigarette boxes, figurines, picture frames, musical instruments), stone (e.g. miniature 'trench models', regimental insignia), and textiles (e.g. lace handkerchiefs, silk paintings, and embroideries). The vast majority of such items however were those made from the recycled metals of war – from bullet-pens and pencils, bullet cigarette lighters, scrap metal letter-openers, matchbox covers, and a huge variety of re-shaped and decorated artillery shell cases (Figure 5).

The latter can be cut down into ash-trays, adorned with artistic motifs, painted with landscape scenes, or used as part of more elaborate objects such as representations of windmills, aeroplanes, or as clocks. First World War examples were probably made in their millions between



Figure 5. A typical French and Belgian-style artillery shell-case trench-art item, decorated with art nouveau flowers and having a 'twisted' body (foto: N. J. Saunders).

Slika 5. Značilen primer umetnosti z bojišč v francoskem in belgijskem stilu, narejen iz tulca artilerijskega izstrelka, okrašen z art nouveau cveticami in zavitim telesom (photo: N. J. Saunders).

1914 and 1939, and all were, in one sense, three dimensional testaments to the experiences of war – for maker and consumer, for soldier and civilian, and for men and women, in markedly different ways. The diversity of meanings which trench art could embody over time makes it a distinctive kind of material culture for interrogating the relationship between human beings and war for virtually every conflict of the twentieth century.

Making, buying, and selling such varied objects (as souvenirs and mementos) was one way by which a soldier

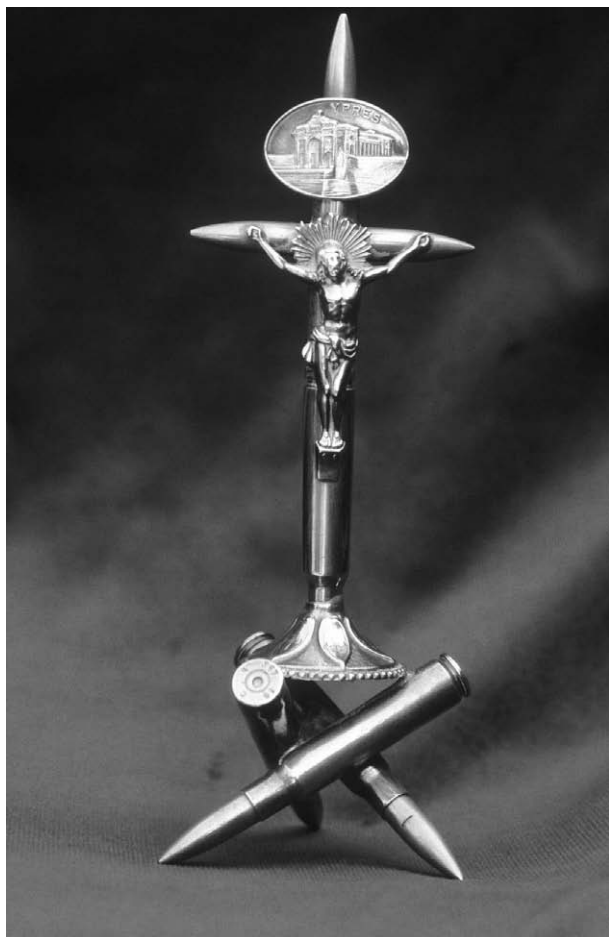


Figure 6. Bullet-crucifix standing on a tripod of German Mauser bullets. The memorial plaque attached shows the Menin Gate memorial to the missing at Ypres, Belgium.

As this monument was built in 1927, this item is likely a post-war battlefield tourist souvenir (foto: N. J. Saunders).

Slika 6. Razpelo iz nabojev in krogel, stoječe na trinožniku iz nemških nabojev Mauser. Spominska ploščica na njem prikazuje Meninska vrata, spomenik pogrešanim v Ypresu v Belgiji. Ker je bil ta spomenik zgrajen leta 1927, predmet najverjetneje predstavlja povojni turistični spominek z bojišča (photo: N. J. Saunders).

could increase his worldly wealth, and ‘construct’ a wartime record of his experiences (whether ‘true’ or fabricated). Many of these objects became potent memory objects. One example is a trench-art inkstand made by an Australian soldier whose manufacture materialized his experiences, commented on the different technologies from three armies (British, French and German) and

also, via toponymy, was a miniaturized embodiment of the local military geography (above and below ground) of the Somme battlefield in France.

[The object was] ... Completed on the Somme in February 1917. The base and pen handles are of oak and were cut from a table in a German dugout in Contalmaison and polished with boot polish. The bowl is from a propeller of a Vickers biplane wrecked at Le Sars. The ends are German anti-aircraft shell fuzes, one from Martinpuich, the other from Bazentin-le-Grand. The brass bands, standards and lid were souveniried from an 18-pounder battery near ‘Needle Dump’, and the French buttons on the base were exchanged for cigarettes in Albert. The ink container is a flare cartridge from Eaucourt-l’Abbaye. (AWM 14150)

Collecting the component parts from which to make the trench-art item could be a hazardous undertaking, and illustrates the layers of visceral meaning and significance that could be invested in the making of trench art. Human, object, and landscape were inextricably fused in this process, and could never be separated out.

After 1918, relationships between objects, people, and places, were mediated by battlefield tourism, the trade in war souvenirs (often but not always trench art), and the activities of those who cleared the landscape (legally at first, but increasingly illegally as time passed). An important theoretical point is that many items now sold to battlefield pilgrims and visitors were made from the same materials and by the same methods as they had been during the war (Figure 6). Yet, while post-1918 objects were often indistinguishable from pre-1918 items, their meanings and significance were very different. Before November 1918, they had been sold to male soldiers in life and death situations, whereas from 1919 onwards, they were sold mainly to women civilians who wished to connect to the experiences of their lost loved ones. Materiality and technology remained the same, but the temporal shift from war to peace had opened a new chapter in the cultural biographies of these objects.

The final destination of most of these objects was the domestic space of the home, where, during the 1920s, they became poignant household ornaments. Sometimes they were placed in the windows of homes - signifying perhaps an informal community of the bereaved; at other times they were placed in the hallway, on a mantelpiece,

or a bedside table. Far from being mere ornaments, these items were volatile memory objects that stood at the nexus of the distancing process between rememberer and remembered, where the memory of the missing body was replaced by that of the present object (Stewart 1993, 133). Brought back from a battlefield visit by a bereaved wife or mother, these objects fabricated the past through their re-ordering of the material world of the post-war home.

The long and potent afterlife of this kind of conflict material culture continues today, almost a century later. There is a thriving market in items similar if not identical to those recovered from archaeological excavations or encountered in homes. These can be found in militaria fairs, car boot sales, and flea markets across Europe and beyond (see Isyanova 2009). This world of dealers and collectors has been internationalised in recent years by the arrival of internet auction sites such as Ebay, and there now exists a global network of those who buy, sell, and collect such artefacts, from machine-gun bullets to helmets, cap-badges to volatile artillery shells and trench art. In other words, the trans-national circulation of First World War memorabilia is itself a legacy of the war, and a phenomenon suitable for investigation as an example of social archaeology or material culture studies.

Conclusion

As an integral and leading part of modern conflict archaeology, First World War archaeology is a challenging approach to understanding conflict since 1914. Unlike most kinds of archaeology, it is a memory-making activity, which sees a range of professionals and the public engaged in exploring the multi-vocal remains and resonances of industrialised war and its varied legacies.

The tension between the scientific objectivity of modern archaeology, the intensity of emotions that investigations can produce, and the almost inevitable momentum towards commemoration, museification, and commercialisation at designated locations, reveals that conflict archaeology is a uniquely interdisciplinary endeavour (Figure 7). By contrast, battlefield archaeology is revealed as little more than an intellectually impoverished activity, almost totally reliant on military history, and with little interest in or capacity to acknowledge or incorporate a broader agenda, in which the whole spectrum of human activities during and after conflict is mobilised.



Figure 7. Trench Art commemorative metal sculpture overlooking the Soča/Isonzo Valley battlefield at Monte San Michele, Italy (foto: N. J. Saunders).

Slika 7. Spominska kovinska skulptura v stilu umetnosti z bojišč nad bojišči v dolini Soče na Debeli Griži v Italiji (photo: N. J. Saunders).

The challenges ahead for conflict archaeology are considerable, for they mix and juxtapose materiality with spirituality, experience with memory, and science with emotion. In a fast-moving, technologically oriented, and splintered world, there is little evidence that conflict is diminishing, though its shape is constantly evolving. To understand the true nature and consequences of industrialised conflict - for individuals, communities, and nation states - a truly modern, interdisciplinary, and intellectually rigorous and coherent approach is required. It is this which modern conflict archaeology offers, and which battlefield archaeology so clearly fails to deliver.

*Različna svetova:
Arheologija modernih konfliktov in arheologija bojišč
(Povzetek)*

Arheologija modernih konfliktov je v zadnjih letih oblikovala vse bolj dovršen interdisciplinaren raziskovalen aparat, ki ga oblikuje antropološka teorija in ki v sebi združuje različne intelektualne povezave s pokrajino, materialno kulturo, identiteto in dediščino. Zapletenost konfliktov 20. in 21. stoletja, ki se začenjajo s prvo svetovno vojno in so osnovani na industrializiranih tehnologijah, zahtevajo odločen odziv. Tradicionalna arheologija bojišč s svojim poenostavljenim in ozko usmerjenim pristopom, osredotočenim le na vojaško zgodovino, tega ne more ponuditi. Arheologija modernih konfliktov zavzema radikalno nov hibriden pristop, osnovan na študijah materialne kulture, vendar obenem vsebuje empirična in teoretska dognanja antropologije, zgodovine, geografije, muzeologije, študija dediščine, turizma itn. Če arheologi bojišč »izkopavajo bojišča« iz kateregakoli obdobja (čeprav večinoma od 15. do 19. stoletja), arheologi konfliktov raziskujejo socialne in kulturne pokrajine sodobnih konfliktov, ki so lahko včasih precej oddaljene od samih prizorišč bitk, njihovo čustveno, simbolično in politično zapuščino, njihovo večplastno predstavitev v umetnosti, razstavah in medijih, ter poskušajo razumeti različne izkušnje in posledice konflikta tako za moške kot za ženske in za otroke. Če arheologi bojišč z iskalcem kovin pregledujejo prizorišče Napoleonove bitke, arheologov konfliktov ne zanimajo le sodobne bitke, ampak tudi njihovo nadaljnje življenje kot pogosto izredno nevarna »mesta spomina«, politično in ekonomsko »sporni« kraji kulturne dediščine in potencialnega turizma. Doslej se je večina te nove veje arheologije osredotočala na prvo svetovno vojno, vendar se njeni koncepti in pristopi vedno bolj uporabljajo tudi za raziskave drugih konfliktov 20. in 21. stoletja.

(prevod: Tina Milavec, Matija Črešnar)

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