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Annotated Bibliography
Topic: Critical Theory in Archaeology

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(Citations are in Chicago 15th B Style for general humanities)

Epperson, Terrance W. 2004. Critical Race Theory and the Archaeology of the African Diaspora. *Historical Archaeology* 38(1): 101-108.

Gathercole, Peter. 1989. Childe's Early Marxism. In *Critical Traditions in Contemporary Archaeology: Essays in the Philosophy, History and Socio-Politics of Archaeology*, edited by V. Pinsky and A. Wylie. Sante Fe, NM: University of New Mexico.

Gero, Joan M. 1989. Producing Prehistory, Controlling the Past: The Case of New England Beehives. In *Critical Traditions in Contemporary Archaeology: Essays in the Philosophy, History and Socio-Politics of Archaeology*, edited by V. Pinsky and A. Wylie. Sante Fe, NM: University of New Mexico.

Handsman, R. G., and M. P. Leone. 1989. "Living History and Critical Archaeology in the Reconstruction of the Past," in *Critical Traditions in Contemporary Archaeology: Essays in the Philosophy, History and Socio-Politics of Archaeology*. Edited by V. Pinsky and A. Wylie, pp. 117-135. Sante Fe, NM: University of New Mexico.

Leone, M. P. 1986. "Symbolic, Structural and Critical Archaeology," in *American Archaeology Past and Future*. Edited by D. J. Meltzer, D. D. Fowler, and J. A. Sabloff, pp. 415-438. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Leone, Mark P., and Parker B. Potter. 1999. *Historical Archaeologies of Capitalism*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Leone, M. P., P. A. Potter, and P. A. Shackel. 1987. Toward a Critical Archaeology. *Current Anthropology* 28:283-302.

Leone, Mark P. 2005. *The Archaeology of Liberty in an American Capital: Excavations in Annapolis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Little, Barbara J., and Paul A. Shackel. 2007. *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

The Ludlow Collective. 2001. Archaeology of the Colorado Coal Field War, 1913-1914. In *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, edited by V. Buchli and G. Lucas. New York: Routledge.

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- Palus, M. M., M. P. Leone, and M. D. Cochran. 2006. "Critical Archaeology: Politics Past and Present," in *Historical Archaeology*. Edited by M. Hall and S. Silliman, pp. 84-106. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
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- Patterson, Thomas Carl. 2003. *Marx's Ghost: Conversations with Archaeologists*. Oxford, UK ; New York, NY: Berg.
- Paynter, R. 2005. Contesting Culture Histories in Archaeology and Their Engagement with Marx. *Rethinking Marxism* 17:400-412.
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- Potter, Parker B. 1994. *Public Archaeology in Annapolis: A Critical Approach to History in Maryland's Ancient City*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Saitta, Dean J. 1989. Dialectics, Critical Inquiry, and Archaeology. In *Critical Traditions in Contemporary Archaeology: Essays in the Philosophy, History and Socio-Politics of Archaeology*, edited by V. Pinsky and A. Wylie. Sante Fe, NM: University of New Mexico.

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Annotations:

(The following are drawn out of the above list)

- Epperson, Terrance W. 2004. Critical Race Theory and the Archaeology of the African Diaspora. *Historical Archaeology* 38(1): 101-108.

According to Epperson, historical archaeologists need to develop more intensive collaborations with African-American descendant communities. Indeed, he believes that all archaeologists working with minorities in the past need to embrace this approach. He bases this call on what he sees as self-serving and meaningless alliances in the past that were used to bolster white archaeologists' self-satisfying goals of appearing inclusive. This appropriation of minority concerns without truly involving the non-white communities is critiqued drawing on Critical Race Theory (CRT). Specifically, Epperson draws on CRT's ideas about the social

construction of race to attempt the point that white historical archaeologists only appropriate the concerns of minority groups when they are inline with the archaeologist's own interpretive goals, and fail to address issues that might be of greater concern to the non-white communities archaeologists claim to serve.

Leone, Mark P. 2005. *The Archaeology of Liberty in an American Capital: Excavations in Annapolis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

The purpose of this book is to summarize the past two decades of critical archaeology as undertaken by University of Maryland archaeologists within Annapolis. Leone draws heavily on critical theorists Althusser, Habermas, and others. The central goal for Leone while working at Annapolis is to understand how substantial differences in wealth and accumulation over the past 200+ years were sustained without violent protest. For the author, this involves identifying the growth of ideology as a mask that naturalized society and socialized nature. Specifically, the different levels of wealth between rich and poor and across ethnicities were explained using an increasingly restrictive social philosophy that drew on dominant narratives. These narratives proclaimed those who worked hard were rewarded with the greatest returns. Of course, the idea that 'those at the top deserve to be there or wouldn't' obscures the complex political economies that were enacted by colonial elites. These political economies allowed wealth to remain ever more concentrated in the hands of a few. The archaeological approach, oriented towards landscape, finds evidence of this ideology at work in the spatial arrangement of Annapolis. This arrangement privileged centers of political, economic, and religious elites in such a way that naturalized the increasingly segmented (and rigid) aspects of Annapolis society. Annapolis, for Leone, serves as a testing ground to understand the rhetoric of liberty and how it has been used for 200+ years to subjugate large percentages of the American population. [what is less clear throughout this book is any mechanism for change]

The Ludlow Collective. 2001. Archaeology of the Colorado Coal Field War, 1913-1914. In *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, edited by V. Buchli and G. Lucas. New York: Routledge.

The central premise of this article revolves around the belief that archaeology typically serves middle class interests. In essence, such an interest actually acts to present modern America as a society where class conflict is a thing of the past. After describing the Coal Field Massacre of 1913-14 where dozens of men, women, and children were killed by National Guard troops dispatched by Colorado's governor to break a long strike. Drawing on a broadly Post-Marxist position within critical archaeology, these authors state that their project serves to remind us of the class conflict in US history and expose its increasingly hidden history by telling its compelling story which humanizes the miners. In order to accomplish such a goal, the authors remind us that archaeology is typically a news-worthy activity in our country and can draw press attention to past events in unique ways. This was enhanced through the creation of interpretive programmes which highlights the fact that local working class still struggle for rights and dignity. In addition, the authors remind us that divisions within descendant communities can result from direct-line descendants no longer sharing an experience with their ancestors and modern communities that do share structural similarities with historical examples.

McGuire, R. H., M. O'Donovan, and L. Wurst. 2005. Probing Praxis in Archaeology: The Last Eighty Years. *Rethinking Marxism* 17:355-372.

This article outlines the definitions and uses of praxis by Childe, the New Archaeology, social archaeologists (Latin America), critical archaeology as defined by archaeologists working in Annapolis, and the postprocessual approach. According to these authors praxis is one of the most unique aspects of Marxism. Praxis, as defined here, refers to politically-motivated action in the present aimed at transforming aspects of society that result in oppression or other forms of negative treatment on individuals. This is typically expressed as forms of dominance and the subsequent resistance within societies. They define three steps for realizing a praxis-oriented approach; (1) use of a dialectical approach to gain 'true' knowledge of the world that, (2) leads to critique used to, (3) guide action in the world. Childe did little to move beyond step one. The New Archaeologists failed to realize 'true' knowledge from within a positivist framework that divorced them from sophisticated political understandings of context and the ideological aspects of culture change. Social archaeologists in Latin America were some of the first to integrate the above approach by questioning the political service of archaeology in the form of national museums and the construction of national narratives. Postprocessualists, exemplified by Hodder here, failed to engage true praxis because their work tended to reinforce middle-class ideology into the past. Archaeologists working at Annapolis and the Ludlow Coal Field Massacre are cited as examples of archaeologists fulfilling all three intentions. These projects are considered successful because they raise awareness of class conflict and present ways in which to present such histories to the general public.

Palus, M. M., M. P. Leone, and M. D. Cochran. 2006. "Critical Archaeology: Politics Past and Present," in *Historical Archaeology*. Edited by M. Hall and S. Silliman, pp. 84-106. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

The authors evaluate the history and usefulness of critical theory within historical archaeology; and they state outright that critical archaeology must always focus on class, power, and struggle. If the goal of critical archaeology is transformative, than these authors feel this can only be accomplished through direct interaction with individuals and the media. In addition, as a focus on ideology characterizes critical traditions in archaeology, ideology must be theorized by drawing on various strands of Marxism. In the end, the authors agree with those critical theorists such as Habermas and Foucault who believe that ideology can be seen, understood, and pierced by individuals. As such, and in opposition to Althusser who believes that ideology is too deep a structure and too dangerous an aspects of society to penetrate, these authors believe that local transformations can be achieved since local actors are capable of interfacing with local concerns effectively. In addition, the authors trace forms of Marxism within critical archaeology. For instance, within classical Marxism, ideology is framed as consciously deployed by the upper class against the middle and lower classes. However, Structural Marxism and Critical Theory frame ideology as unconscious and reproduced as 'deep structures' within the mind. Post-Marxism is characterized, like the Annales School, with various approaches; some of which are critical of Marxism's dialectical approach. Indeed, other archaeologists discussed by these authors typically fall within this Post-Marxist approach by focusing less on dialectics and more on the role of hegemonic forces in the modern world as reflected in the political economy of archaeological practice and interpretation.

Paynter, R. 2005. Contesting Culture Histories in Archaeology and Their Engagement with Marx. *Rethinking Marxism* 17:400-412.

In order to fully serve the variety of audiences (based on class, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, etc.) of archaeological sites, Paynter states that archaeologists need to recursively engage insights about theory, history, and data. In other words, the classic 'grand sweep of history' encapsulated by the Culture History school fails to engage most members of the public, and likewise a thick description of a single event will leave other audiences (particularly academic ones) with a poor understanding of history. Drawing on Marx's idea of grand ambiguity (the idea that situation makes things differentially meaningful to different classes or people), Paynter outlines three elements that he sees as essential to an adequate historical representation. The first one centers on the scholars concepts used to understand human actions and thoughts in the past. The second requires a knowledge of the possibilities and constraints inherent in a contradictory world. Third, these contradictions are both outcomes and starting points for other sets of actions. Indeed, it is the intersections of history, theory, and complex datasets that are equally responsible for the creation of an engaging political history (broadly in line with the first step of the Marxist idea of praxis). Throughout the article, Paynter reminds the reader that while directionality remains an important aspect of history, we must remain suspicious of it lest we fall into teleological and Eurocentric representations of the past.

Potter, Parker. 1992. Critical Archaeology: In the Ground and on the Street. *Historical Archaeology* 26 (3):117-129

This short article looks at the role of recursively of material culture and its ability to shape society and guide behavior in both the past and present. These points are made to draw out critical archaeology's attempt to expose ideology and the problem faced by archaeologists trying to do so all the while surrounded by capitalist experiences. The recursive aspect of material culture is tightly connected to the idea of emulation. This is, in essence, the idea that material objects consumed by wealthy classes will drive lower classes to appropriate similar objects as a way of enacting themselves within a society's hierarchical structures. In other words, what one consumes is designed to say something specific about the purchaser. Recursivity is not restricted to the past, and the way in which material culture teach and those hidden aspects of its message can be felt in the present as well. To draw this out, Potter looks at how artifacts in interpretive exhibits that demonstrate modern ideas are routinely used to explain past processes. Potter ends the piece by stating that there is more work to do, and offers little in the way of explanation in how to move beyond these possible limitations.

Saitta, Dean J. 1989. Dialectics, Critical Inquiry, and Archaeology. In *Critical Traditions in Contemporary Archaeology: Essays in the Philosophy, History and Socio-Politics of Archaeology*, edited by V. Pinsky and A. Wylie. Sante Fe, NM: University of New Mexico.

Saitta's two main goals are to outline Marxian perspectives in other sciences and itself, and to place Marxism's dialectical epistemology alongside other post-empiricist philosophies. The Marxian perspective advocated by Saitta states that Marxist approaches remain critical of

other sciences as well as towards its own research. This is due to the central goal of Marx as reflected in a desire for positive change. The dialectical epistemology of Marxian thought requires that a diversity of sciences develop. The reason Saitta raises this concern is because he believes that Marxian approaches within archaeology has yet to manifest the kind of self-reflexivity called for within a true Marxist metaphysic. This is due to the idea that Marxism, as a dialectical materialism, is foundationally opposed to sciences that fail to examine the social context within which they exist. In other words, a Marxist approach reminds us that knowledge of the world is situational and conventional. In addition, Marxist knowledge of the world is just as situational as other forms, and for a Marxist approach to significantly differ from others, it needs to remain conscious of this and continuously readdress it.

Schmidt, P. R. 2005. Teaching Revolutionary Archaeology: African Experiments in History Making and Heritage Management. *Archaeologies* 1(2):46-59.

The implementation of archaeological programs in Tanzania and Eritrea are discussed by the author as case studies of the difficulties faced when attempting to institute a traditionally Western-centric discipline into post-colonial settings. Specifically, Schmidt addresses his experiences as a senior-level faculty member in Tanzania in the 1980s and again in Eritrea during the 1990s. Considerable similarities and differences typify the success of both of these programs. The use of archaeology as a check and balance on history was well-received in both countries. Lessons drawn from this experience for other contexts center on the rapid building of professionalization of archaeology and intellectual ownership of data; presenting a cooperative effort between Western and post/neo-colonial experiences. The main difference between the two countries revolves around Eritrea's rapid descent into totalitarian rule which as resulted in a need to address human rights historically and in the present in a climate hostile to questioning the government's motives.

Thomas, Brian. 1995. Source Criticism and the Interpretation of African-American Sites. *Southeastern Archaeology* 14(2):149-157.

Recognizing that bias enters various forms of source material drawn upon for text-aided archaeology, Thomas suggests three steps that can be used to recognize and address such slants. First, evaluate sources through source criticism. Next, use multiple lines of evidence. Finally, use ethnographic analogues comparatively. The first step refers to identifying the context of textual sources and knowing what types of bias can enter. For instance, white writing and slave narratives are both bias representations of a past that need to be critically engaged. As such, drawing on multiple lines of evidence can help the archaeologist 'sift' through sources and begin to construct a truer image of the past by juxtaposing such texts, and their contexts, against one another. In addition, Thomas suggests that historical archaeologists need to make use of ethnographic analogy as a way to combat the problems of projecting the traditional view of a culture in the present into the past. According to Thomas, this approach can assist archaeologists escape presentist frameworks as well as overly-homogenizing views of the past (e.g. one culturally-monolithic Africa). The contextual and recursive program outlined here is believed to present archaeologists with a way to 'see from within' past perspectives by analyzing and juxtaposing the various contradictions from different sources and approaches.