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DISCUSSION ARTICLE

Promoting discussion. Complexity and other questions

María Gabriela Chaparro

Investigaciones Arqueológicas y Paleontológicas del Cuaternario Pampeano (INCUAPA), Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) – Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, Olavarría, Argentina
Email: chaparro@soc.unicen.edu.ar

The work of Félix Acuto encourages archaeologists to compromise more strongly when it comes to the praxis towards, with and for the Indigenous people. Understanding archaeology as a practice oriented by the political stance of decolonization, Acuto's work promotes making it available – through its knowledge, methods and techniques – as a dedication in time and experience to the projects and struggles of Indigenous people in Latin America. The goal is to contribute to the double decolonization that these populations are undergoing, via their shedding of what has been imposed on them by Western society and by the relationship that the state establishes with them – that is to say, arguing that interculturality is the way.

First, I want to mention that I concur with the central points of Acuto's opinion. Archaeology can be a tool in contributing to the emancipation of people. The cases he develops are concrete examples of the application of both theory and action. Likewise, I consider the author's problematization of his practice to be noteworthy; he has submitted it to analysis and academic discussion through the writing of articles, many of which were co-authored with different members of Indigenous populations. However, throughout the article, Acuto presents a very general and simple synthesis of the Latin American background. His article develops four specific cases on which he has been working for years at the request of interested parties, in the north of Argentina; in addition, in Chile he mentions the returns of ancestors, and in Brazil, he addresses intercultural education.

To organize my commentary, I want to provide a greater depth and historical complexity to the author's proposal, citing unpublished or little-known experiences that I can contribute from my own career in Argentina. In short, I am going to share some questions that I asked myself while reading this work, which can open the debate to the reading public.

Adding depth and historical complexity

To begin with, in his work Acuto mentions the (Zabala 2019) as a precedent for a reflective space in professional practice. With the desire to enrich the historical trajectories and in tune with them, we can trace several meetings and congresses where mainly Latin American Marxist archaeologists, who are committed to revolutionary causes, have discussed the contemporary political and social role of archaeology (Lumbreras 1975). Among these colleagues, a group stands out: Latin American Social Archaeology. Difficulties in archaeology were discussed by this group; however, beyond having a solid theoretical background, this group did not achieve much (Tantaleán and Aguilar 2012). Nevertheless, it can be said that, since the 1970s in Latin America, several

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archaeologists have found archaeology to be dissociated from the Indigenous reality and even complicit in their subalternity, and they have denounced this.

To continue giving the greater context discussed by Acuto some more historical depth, I would like to address some research I engaged in more than 15 years ago together with Rafael Curtoni (Curtoni and Chaparro 2008). In this research, we, similar to Acuto, identified at least three modalities of relationships with Indigenous populations corresponding to researchers' positioning, perspectives and interests. We continue to believe these three modalities still persist today.

The first modality is when research directly involves local agents in the projects through participation in field work, obtaining information and/or providing support in infrastructure and logistics. This modality is one where participation does not generate space for members of Indigenous peoples to make decisions and therefore reproduces subalternity. It is worth mentioning that this perspective is currently decreasing. The second modality is one that promotes only the dissemination of the results of archaeological investigations to the reference community. Although academia believes that there is a mutual interrelation, these actions accentuate distances and consolidate inequalities between disseminators and receivers. Finally, the third modality seeks to generate actions from within and with people as protagonists, supporting the practice in consultation, dialogue, respect and mutual learning. This exchange seeks to be horizontal and positively impact both the ways of knowing and the development of joint proposals (Curtoni and Chaparro 2008, 221). Whereas the first two approaches undergird a colonialist, Western, white and patriarchal relationship, one without a rethinking of the disciplinary implications and its practice, the third is in line with what Acuto proposes.

In our 2008 article, we denounced several cases of abuses and land dispossession of Indigenous peoples and rural villagers in different regions of the country[1]; we alerted the archaeological community of what is happening within the research territories, and we urged them to take concrete actions. In addition, we developed several examples that were, in our opinion, successful in their way of relating to the Indigenous population. One of the examples mentioned is that of the Laguna Blanca Integral Museum located in the Puna of Catamarca, in the Argentine Northwest 'which involves subjects in a co-productive instance of knowledge and actions' (Delfino, Dupuy and Pisani 2019, 152, author translation).

One should also mention institutions, such as the Museum of Anthropology of Córdoba, that have been working for several decades with native peoples in different regions of Argentina. Although at first they were collaborative projects (as Acuto mentions), since 1996 they have sustainably responded to Indigenous demands (Fabra and Zabala 2019, 19), mainly in regard to the treatment of their ancestors' remains, but also regarding co-participation in and consultation on the handling of those found in the museum.

Up to this point, I have elaborated on several antecedents that are not mentioned in Acuto's work. Now, to further delve into the complexity of this subject, I think it is important to mention some historical events at the end of the 20th century that led archaeologists to rethink and act with regards to Indigenous matters, that is, beyond the theoretical movements that had already begun several decades earlier.[2] As a recent graduate of the University of Buenos Aires, I remember an event in the country that changed the perspective of many of us, in addition to having a great impact on professional ethics and deontology. This critical case was the famous 'discovery' of the three mummified children in an Inka sanctuary at the top of the Llullaillaco volcano (Salta province) in 1999 by a National Geographic expedition (Reinhard and Ceruti 2005). The scientific value of the discovery caused the case to have international repercussions; however, as archaeologists, it invited us to reflect on our professional practice and pushed us to a new work agenda. This event became subject to public opinion because of its 'spectacular nature' but also because of the dramatic tone the descent of 'the mummies' acquired, the jurisdictional conflicts between the funding agency and the provincial entity that exercised dominion over 'their heritage' and the claim of a Kolla community that believed that one of their high-altitude sanctuaries had been disturbed. The discontent manifested by the Kolla and the claim that the cosmic balance of

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their habitat in the world had been violated almost went unnoticed in the local and national media. In this scenario, a working group was quickly created at the National University of Salta to discuss the consequences of the case, and for the first time, recommendations were adopted to respect the right of local and Indigenous communities to engage with their cultural heritage (Mesa Redonda 1999, Politis 2001). A few years later, at the XV National Congress of Argentine Archaeology, this issue remained important, and with the presence of representatives of different Indigenous peoples, the possibility of creating an exhibition of the children of Llullaillaco in a new museum, created for that purpose, was discussed. This culminated in the signing of the Declaración de Río Cuarto (2005) in the framework of the First Forum of Archaeologists–Indigenous Peoples, which was coordinated by the Association of Indigenous Jurists and an Indigenous and Archaeologists Commission. This had a strong impact on professional associations and research institutions because, at the same time, a code of ethics was created, which since then has indicated the procedures to be followed in response to international and national legislation that was already in force (Endere and Ayala 2012). Ultimately, what I want to emphasize is that, beyond the theoretical positionings of each researcher, which were the convictions that led us to reflect theoretically and/or modify our procedures in relation to the link with Indigenous peoples, since 2000 the archaeological community has been 'forced' to respect agreements and professional codes and to comply with standards to access research grants.[3] It is in this contextual framework that we today can understand this set of practices that range from conducting outreach workshops and delivering reports to working from intercultural perspectives, as the author suggests.

I understand that Acuto's background information is based on literature published in scientific journals and books (these are the rules of the game of the system); however, there are experiences that are not always published in these academic formats and remain as congress presentations, such as abstracts from conferences and meetings, and others, non-academic productions. I have already mentioned several; now, I will comment on some other examples involving myself. Since the year 2000 we have created and strengthened the ties of work, advice and connection with members of various Indigenous peoples. At the beginning, these ties were specific overtures, in some cases made by professors who personally invited different members to participate in specific research projects (e.g. Endere and Curtoni 2006).

Later, the joint work was more systematic, with their participating as coordinators, lecturers, or co-organizers, mainly when some academic event that addressed different issues of interest to Indigenous populations was held (First Forum of South American Indigenous Rights 2010, Autumn School of Intercultural Education 2015, International Symposium on Cultural Heritage and Local Community 2017, among others). Likewise, the link in several cases was institutionalized through the signing of agreements that allowed Mapuches, Tehuelches and Rankülches to teach courses on their language, pottery and weaving; to create a Mapuche/Spanish dictionary; and to be part of the Observatory of Indigenous and Peasant Peoples' Rights. Furthermore, in our university, celebrations were held to welcome the new year (Wiñoy Xipantu); three Indigenous parliaments were held (in 1998, 2000 and 2010); and we were invited as professors to accompany several ceremonies of reburials, repatriations and ancestral returns.

Opening questions

As we know, Indigenous peoples in their conformation as subjects of law have established their own agendas, and each one defines whether or not they interact with archaeologists and, if there is, when is the right moment and the way and the degree of commitment they wish to take on. In the case of Argentina, not all archaeologists who are interested in creating an intercultural link with Indigenous peoples are able to do so. And as a guideline for 'good professional practices', neither

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should we try to implement this at any cost, out of respect for other people's decisions, time and processes. The choice to co-author academic publications where the voice of Indigenous peoples is expressed is also somewhat controversial in my opinion. In my experience, most of the time, it is not in the interest of certain Indigenous interlocutors to participate in this closed academic circuit, following the guidelines of disciplinary work. To encourage or enact these practices would be to perpetuate the colonialist and paternalistic forms from which we claim to be breaking away. That is why I maintain that transforming archaeology into a tool for the emancipation of peoples can be viable for those who decide or are able to do so, whether from one place of enunciation or another.

Another issue I propose considering is that the process of ethnic re-ethnization and reemergence is neither homogeneous nor stable, nor does it progress from minor to major. It involves ups and downs that are expressed in the diversity of realities that can coexist in the same territory. One can think that, for example, the Mapuche people-nation, with its long tradition of struggles and social demands, is organized and has an established work agenda, but the communities that constitute it have very different trajectories and developments in terms of the times and the people involved. Sometimes, the communities themselves are the ones who determine whether they require advice or some kind of interaction with academics; sometimes, 'it is not yet the time'. In several regions of Argentina, there are still no Indigenous communities conformed as such. The same can be said in relation to archaeologists or metropolitan areas and large cities, where in some cases archaeology is linked to accompanying families who are making revisions of ethnic adscription, memory processes linked to migrations and uprooting and other more subjective processes that are come from their relationship with certain archaeological materialities (Salerno and Leiva 2017). Times and processes are never homogeneous.

Finally, at this place on the planet and this point in the 21st century, we have modified our foundational prerogatives, whether because of conviction or obligation. This is a new landscape for re-founding our professional work, and I am glad that there are archaeologists who are moving towards doing what Félix Acuto is doing.

Notes

1 Owing to certain processes such as the expansion of the agricultural frontier (soybeanization), mining extractivism and tourist mega-enterprises. This led to not only the expulsion of rural villagers and Indigenous settlers but also the illegitimate appropriation of thousands of hectares of land for these purposes (Curtoni and Chaparro, 2008).

2 Added to those already mentioned regarding Latin American Social Archaeology, here I add the post-processualist criticism initiated in the 1980s and specifically the congresses of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) and the Archaeological Theory Meetings de América del Sur (TAAS). In Argentina, two were held: in 2000 the II TAAS in my city of residence, Olavarría, and the IV TAAS in 2007 in San Fernando del Valle de Catamarca.

3 It should be clarified that when applying for financing, the requirement for prior consultation with indigenous peoples is completed, but this step is not always included in the project schedule, nor does the institution ensure compliance with this requirement. Nor do the evaluators seem to consider it for their opinions.

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María Gabriela Chaparro is a researcher at the National Council of Science and Techniques Research (CONICET) based at the Instituto de Investigaciones Arqueológicas y Paleontológicas del Cuaternario Pampeano (INCUAPA), assistant professor of Legislation and Management of Cultural Resources at the Department of Archaeology and professor of the Ph.D. program in Archaeology, Faculty of Social Sciences (FACSO), University of the Centre of Buenos Aires Province (UNCPBA), Argentina. Her research interests include public archaeology, museum studies, social assessments and Indigenous claims on heritage issues.

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Indigenous archaeology further East. Experiences from the far Northeastern corner of India

Tiatoshi Jamir

Professor of Archaeology, Department of History and Archaeology, Nagaland University, Kohima, Meriema, Nagaland 797001, India,
Email: tiatoshi@nagalanduniversity.ac.in

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Introduction

To my mind, every Indigenous archaeology practiced across the length and breadth of the world is uniquely situated within its own socio-cultural and political milieu. In this respect, no processes within its practice are identical in nature. Proceeding a step further from Felix Acuto's experience of Latin American Indigenous archaeology, this discussion piece examines the nature of the Indigenous community's involvement in archaeological research within a South Asian context, locating the frame within Northeast India, particularly Nagaland. This takes a rather more interesting turn when the engagement constitutes an archaeology 'with, for and by Indigenous peoples' themselves who belong to a certain Indigenous community, who are either inside or outside of the participant community. Engaging local people in archaeological excavations has long been

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