

# Legacies of Inequality – Learning from Critical Histories of Archaeology

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“Make the woman equal to the man even in this sphere, i.e. give her access to all possibilities which lie open to the man, let her without restrictions and unconditionally taste the fruits of the tree of knowledge for good and for worse – and the modern culture shall be stuck in a swamp, yes, without the powerful intervention of God, it will drown in a pool of mud, at which the thought shudders. I have seen the faces of female emancipation, the American women, up close, and I shuddered. If you ever need an assistant professor in the future, you can, after I have published some more, give me a push.”<sup>1</sup>

The quote above is taken from a letter sent by Lennart Kjellberg (1857–1936), a PhD in classical languages at Uppsala University, Sweden, in March of 1893. The letter was addressed to Johannes Paulson (1855–1918), professor of Greek at Gothenburg College (later Gothenburg University). Kjellberg had defended his thesis a couple of years before and was now searching for a position. In 1894, he would conduct the first Swedish-led excavations in Greece, in the sanctuary of Poseidon on the island of Kalaureia (Poros), together with Sam Wide (1861–1918). In 1918, he became the second person to occupy the professorial chair at the newly established Department of Classical Archaeology at Uppsala University. Lennart Kjellberg remained a conservative voice throughout his life and his misogynous comment in the letter to Paulson is not an isolated event. For Kjellberg and for many of his contemporaries, the idea of female emancipation – and with it access to academic and professional work – was an upsetting and threatening concept.

Today, few are surprised to discover misogynic statements and exclusionary politics of belonging based on gender in archival material from the late 19th century. Histories of classical archaeology (as well as the histories of other archaeologies) are full of such stories. We are taught as undergraduates to admire the ‘women pioneers’ of the profession, who, despite staggering societal odds managed to influence archaeological knowledge production. The story of the emancipation of women in the history of Classical Studies is winding path, full of national and regional differences and gendered research traditions. In many areas, Sweden included, women who entered archaeology and classical studies found themselves in a hostile environment, where established roles and practices were prone to imperceptible change. Many of these women disappeared from the records once they married. Others remained in the background of male archaeologists, as assistants, wives and/or lovers, contributing a great deal to archaeology but being left out of publications and access to academic positions. A few managed to reach positions of authority, often based on a combination of academic brilliance and clever maneuvering in the existent network.

It is however surprising, to some, to learn about the ramification of such historical structures still being felt in 2018. Despite a number of important contributions on the structural discrimination faced by female archaeologists over the past decades,<sup>2</sup> the fact that women still experience unequal opportunities seems to leave many in bewilderment or in denial. A lack of concern for equal representation has led to situations where women's contribution to archaeology is ignored. The AIAC keynotes speaker list consisted, at first, of all-male contributions, prompting the panel on diversity in classical studies, of which this paper forms a part. Reports of harassment in fieldwork situations are part of the same structure of inequality. In the fall of 2017, as part of the Swedish #metoo-movement, 387 female and non-binary archaeologists signed a petition to end sexual harassment in archaeology. Anonymous testimonies formed the basis of the petition under the hashtag #utgrävningpågår (#excavationinprogress).<sup>3</sup> The testimonies tell of students who have left the profession after being sexually assaulted by supervisors, of charges filed to university boards only to be met by silence and cover-ups, of inappropriate groping and sexist remarks at conferences and other professional settings, of sanctioned blurred lines between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. At the EAA in Barcelona in September 2018, a group of Spanish archaeologists lined the walls of the conference venue with posters displaying disturbing results from a recent survey where 1 in 2 women had experienced harassment on site.<sup>4</sup> A study of harassment and abuse in scientific field work settings by Kathryn Clancy et al. from 2014, shows that women are more likely to be targeted by senior staff, while in instances of men being harassed the perpetrator was often a fellow student or peer.<sup>5</sup> The 'romantic' sanctioned stereotype of older, male professors and senior staff members preying on young females has resulted in inappropriate relationships (at times consensual, at times forced and coerced) between supervisors and students. This has created an atmosphere where access to knowledge production, for a lot of young professionals, is intimately wound up with either trying to please superior male figures, or trying to avoid getting in their way, in order to remain in the field.

In order to grasp and analyze the scope of sexual, and other, discriminatory structures in archaeology we need to investigate the intricacies of politics of belonging in academia and in fieldwork. The past of our profession is important here. The following short commentary will concern mainly the binary opposition of female and male archaeologists, while I recognize that sexual orientation, physical and mental ableness, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity are important intersections here.<sup>6</sup>

Disciplinary histories have shown how archaeology grew out of, and was shaped by, contemporary power structures and sensibilities. This includes not only the theoretical underpinnings for interpretations of the past, but also the way in which archaeology took shape as a profession with certain praxis, rules and codes for how to behave.<sup>7</sup> *Politics of belonging* is a useful theoretical tool in order to understand how groups and networks internalize and reward certain behavior and personal characteristics.<sup>8</sup> By locating an individual's social position and investigating what is required for an

individual to be accepted into the community, i.e. to be entitled to belong, we can start deconstructing the structures holding the community together.

Every aspect of archaeological politics of belonging is impossible to cover in one short article. The following commentary is based on my own work on the history of Swedish archaeology in Greece in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and my work on the production of histories of archaeology in the discipline of Classical Archaeology in Sweden.<sup>9</sup> Instead of highlighting women, I have in my work focused on male archaeologists (because the main protagonists in my archival material were male) and their gendered politics of belonging. It has been a way for me to understand privilege and power hierarchies in an almost exclusively homosocial arena. By understanding privilege in the politics of belonging, we can then turn our attention to exclusionary practices and the reasons why certain bodies were excluded from the history of archaeology.

One theme that emerges when we look at self-representations among 19<sup>th</sup> century archaeologists is the *adventurer* stereotype, the basis for popular images of the archaeologist in present-day media.<sup>10</sup> This self-imagery was based on ideals of bourgeois masculinity (stamina, fearlessness, poise and gentlemanly heroism), combined with colonial practices of conquest and discovery.<sup>11</sup> In practice, the adventurer thrived on field experiences, and not having to share responsibilities for child rearing and housework enabled him to travel for extensive periods of time. By mediating these experiences in newspaper articles, popular science magazines, and autobiographies, an image of the ideal archaeologist was created that has effects until this day.

The adventurer was combined with the *entrepreneur* and the *professional scholar*. These two tropes share many common features, and are products of the capitalist and industrial societal change of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> The entrepreneur put his networking skills to good use in designing and managing projects – tying key individuals to his research and maintaining large networks of friends and financial benefactors. At a time when archaeology, to a large extent, had to be funded by private means, the entrepreneur learned how to mediate and promote his research at the expense of others. As a professional scholar, he was trained in academic warfare from an early age, where cutthroat competition for academic positions and excavation opportunities made enemies out of colleagues. Aligning oneself with the right authoritative figures became crucial for surviving. The military rhetoric here is not an exaggeration. Analogies between military campaign and archaeological fieldwork, and academic settings, are frequent in the histories of archaeological practice.<sup>13</sup> Attention to details and the study of mass materials required diligence and patience and one's chosen profession was, at times, viewed as a calling, an almost religious sense of duty and expectation. Fulfilling the visions of the Enlightenment combined with a sense of duty towards the nation in creating an appropriate heritage.

An underlining premise for politics of belonging is that individuals tend to group together in homosocial networks where successful individuals seek out like-minded individuals who possess the same character traits. In order to become accepted into

the, rather small, community of archaeologists, it then became essential to possess the qualities mentioned above. These products of 19<sup>th</sup> century social and cultural norms became standardized as “archaeological” traits and mediated through legitimizing histories of archaeology to new generations of students. Being exposed to representations of disciplinary predecessors means that students are, in the words of archaeologist Anders Gustafsson, ‘acclimatized through a subtle network of implicit norms into his or her role as an archaeologist.’<sup>14</sup> If the story of disciplinary predecessors consists of heroic tales of field work, father figures who almost become untouchable legends in the history of the discipline, and constant gendering of female (but seldom or never of male) role models then students will learn to replicate such behavior. Not representing and mediating political and social premises for individuals to maneuver in academia, we neutralize political actions as “common practice” and so the intricate politics of becoming (and remaining) an archaeologist is hidden.

When women entered the field of archaeology, they were thus confronted by a set of norms and praxis, in which it was extremely hard to navigate. In a working environment where men also competed with each other, women probably became easy targets. In a societal setting where women were sexualized and their rights to bodily integrity depended on the benevolence of male senior staff, fieldwork became arenas of harassment. With a history like this one faced by women in archaeology, no one should be surprised by surveys showing inequality based on gender in 2018.

Returning to the quote at the beginning of this article, it is an interesting example of exaltation of the self in combination with the condemnation of the other in order to get approval from one’s peers. In male-gendered homosocial networks, this type of politics of belonging is detrimental for women who already have an historical baggage to carry. The dismissal of requests for female representation in archaeology as ‘political feminism not based on merits’ shows a lack of understanding of how of academic structures work. Archaeology (and academia in general) has *never* been based on pure merits; neither at the birth of the discipline in the 19th century, nor during the New Archaeology in the 1960s, nor during the post-processual critical turn of the late 20th century.<sup>15</sup> Access to knowledge production is, and has always been, largely dependent on the researcher’s social position. In order to change the premises for archaeological politics of belonging, we need to collectively criticize and re-evaluate our self-imagery and allow a diverse set of bodies and experiences to take place in our field.

It can be a scary process to reevaluate one’s own professional position, and re-think old truths about archaeological praxis. Sometimes it means putting rivalries aside and to begin the process of situating oneself as a political body. But if we do it together, as a body of professionals, we have a real opportunity to create a better, more inclusive and diverse archaeology. A start could be to ensure that professional codes of conduct are explicitly mediated and explained to students and staff and that breeching those codes of conduct has consequences for those individuals responsible. Why this is not done in all archaeological projects is often a question of poor training on behalf of field staff in

inter-personal conflicts and team dynamics. According to Clancy et al, projects tend to value and prioritize the accurate gathering of data over more social aspects of life in the field.<sup>16</sup> Conferences such as AIAC should ensure female representation in scientific committees and keynote panels, and include sessions on gender, fieldwork practice and politics of belonging. Teaching archaeology, we should stop promoting old stereotypes of archaeological behavior, which are based on capitalist and colonial discourses.

We cannot be afraid to deal with these issues that are a reality for many students and junior staff. It is time to take a close look at our working environment. It is time to call out those who abuse their authority, to treat each other with dignity and to recognize that archaeological knowledge production is a collective affair. We need to stop promoting unhealthy authoritarian behavior and we need to stop turning a blind eye to sexually predatory behavior in the field or in the office. We can begin this important work by learning from the history of archaeology – and in turn shape our own legacies into something we can be proud of.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lennart Kjellberg to Johannes Paulson, March 17, 1893. Letter in Paulson's archive, H127:11, Gothenburg University Library. Cf. Berg 2016, 117–118.

<sup>2</sup> Gero 1985; Gilchrist 1991; Claasen 1994; Díaz-Andreu – Sørensen 1998; Cohen – Joukowsky 2004; Moser 2007; Pope 2011.

<sup>3</sup> The petition was published in Dagens Nyheter, a major Swedish newspaper, on November 30, 2017; see Dagens Nyheter 2017. Petra Aldén Rudd, an archaeologist from Gothenburg and one of the initiators of the petition published a commented response in the same paper; see Aldén Rudd 2017 and 2018.

<sup>4</sup> I refer here to the session “The Women Dimension in Archaeology: Between Politics and Social Constrains” organized by Laura Matilde Magno and Carmen Ruiz.

<sup>5</sup> Clancy et al. 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Blouin 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Jensen – Jensen 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Yuval-Davis 2011

<sup>9</sup> Berg 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Russell 2002; Holtorf 2007; Marwick 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Roberts 2012; Berg 2016, 124–130.

<sup>12</sup> Berg 2016, 118–139.

<sup>13</sup> Evans 2014; Berg 2016, 126.

<sup>14</sup> Gustafsson 2001, 81. My translation from Swedish.

<sup>15</sup> Engelstad 1991; Pope 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Clancy et al. 2014, 1.

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