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Review of Jay M. Stottman, ed. *Archaeologists as Activists: Can Archaeologists Change the World?*

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## REVIEWS

Edited by Renee B. Walker

*Archaeologists as Activists: Can Archaeologists Change the World?* JAY M. STOTTMAN (ed.). University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2011. viii, 207 pp., illus., maps. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN: 0-8173-5622-3.

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In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, archaeologists and the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) became actively involved in protecting the cultural heritage of Iraq, passing a resolution that expressed concerns for the potential damage to monuments, sites, antiquities, and cultural institutions caused by war. Another declaration, published in March 2003, again asked countries to recognize the effects of warfare on antiquities. Malcolm Bell, then the vice president for professional responsibilities at the AIA, encouraged cooperation between countries in order to rebuild and support Iraqi administrative structures and promoted the protection of cultural heritage in all countries. It seems as though the efforts of these archaeologists did not go unnoticed. The Iraqi National Museum has been renovated, sites such as Ur and Uruk have been continually (though not always successfully) protected from looters, and optimism for the future protection of Iraq's antiquities is growing.

The AIA resolutions are indicative of the fact that archaeologists have played a more active role in politics during the past two decades than ever before. The book *Archaeologists as Activists* argues that this activist power can be harnessed to promote archaeology and integrate it into the community fabric. It was at a 2004 session organized for the Society for Historical Archaeology conference in St. Louis, Missouri, that Jay Stottman, a staff archaeologist at the Kentucky Archaeological Survey and lecturer at the University of Louisville, asked the question "Can Archaeologists Change the World?" The focus of the panel was to investigate the antecedents and growth of "activist archaeology." The resultant book brings together contributions from fourteen archaeologists whose pieces temper critiques of the past with an ebullient positivity for the future, all while calling on archaeological professionals to recognize the potential of the field to affect communities.

Stottman's introduction lays the groundwork for reconstructing the nascence of the archaeological activist and emphasizes that self-reflexivity is essential to taking archaeology from the passive to the active state. Drawing on predecessors such as Parker Potter,

Stottman indicates that discourses must be opened up between the past and the present in order to engage the community and to fully understand its significance. This requires archaeologists not only to be versed in excavation methods but also to acquire people skills. Due to the fact that archaeologists affect the context within which they exist and the people they interact with, they are, in a sense, increasingly navigating the anthropological realm. In navigating their roles as scholars and educators, Stottman asks archaeologists to place advocacy and community involvement at the forefront of archaeological planning, to collaborate, and to balance publication ambitions with the needs of the communities they serve.

Part 1 attempts to reconceptualize "archaeology for activism" (p. 17) by examining how archaeologists think about activism theoretically in their projects. In chapter 1, Kim Christensen examines gender, feminist theory, and the changing definition of "activists" through a case study of the nineteenth-century home site of abolitionist, feminist, and suffragist Matilda Joslyn Gage in upstate New York. Christensen urges archaeologists to enter "the fray of current sociopolitical debates" (p. 20) but to choose associations and involvements with care. Moreover, she implores us to view activist sites, such as Gage's, as a means to reassess the past and dismantle stereotypes.

In chapter 2, Carol McDavid focuses on how archaeologists can, in her words, "use the public archaeology of the African diaspora sites to acknowledge racism, to confront it, and to challenge it" (p. 37). By recognizing that African diaspora archaeology is part of a larger activist movement that challenges white privilege, class stereotypes, and racism, we can revise conceptions of the "archaeological product" (p. 42). Furthermore, archaeologists should be self-reflexive and more transparent about their biases, mixing authority with humility. Chapter 3 also investigates how to engage communities. David Gadsby and Jodi Barnes discuss the historiography of archaeological activist literature before exploring how direct action and critical consciousness combine to form praxis—the conscious act of change. Two case studies, of the Hampden project, located in central Baltimore, and the Appalachian Trail Archaeological Heritage project, show the seminal niche of archaeology within the community and the divide that archaeologists must straddle between action and theory.

Chapters 4 and 5 revolve around the topics of education and public awareness. Patrice Jeppson solicits archaeologists to first consider their goals and

responsibilities when performing public outreach in schools. She promotes the use of archaeology in the broader context social studies—for example, broader studies of race, multiculturalism, power, and identity—rather than focusing on its traditional contribution in the classroom. In the subsequent chapter, Robert Chidester demonstrates how his promotion of the labor movement and working-class heritage in Maryland filled a gap in public perception and contributed to “movement archaeology” (p. 80), which aims specifically to promote social causes.

Part 2 uses cases studies focused in Kentucky in order to help indicate how, exactly, we can strive to become this platonic ideal of the “archaeological activist.” In chapter 6, Lori Stahlgren asks archaeologists to adopt the stance that revision of the past, particularly through the integration of the histories of those such as slaves, women, and immigrants, who have been traditionally silenced by the textual record, is necessary in order to change the present and the future. Likewise, Stephen and Kim McBride show how archaeology at Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage Park helped to mediate the past and the present and redefine local identities.

Chapter 8 looks at archaeological activism in the Portland Wharf area and the attempt to revitalize old and historically significant neighborhoods in order to foster a more cohesive communal identity. The project is a good example of communities recognizing their archaeological attributes, putting them to good use, and transforming themselves into advocates and stakeholders. In the next chapter, Sarah Miller and Gwynn Henderson focus on the Crab Orchard Archaeology Education Project in south-central Kentucky, indicating (with some redundancy) that while the project did not produce any significant archaeological results, the community benefited from active participation in the site. The dig was a tool that manufactured connections for the participants both with the site and with each other. As with all the case studies in the book, the Crab Orchard project elucidates the need for archaeologists to take critical ownership of their roles and branch out to the communities at large.

In conclusion, it is evident that the strengths of this volume lie in delivering something that has not, to my knowledge, been provided yet: a self-help book for archaeologists who aspire to reconceptualize, reformulate, and initiate their roles within the larger sociopolitical arena. The pitfalls perhaps lie in the lack of global comparanda. For example, archaeological outreach at sites such as Vindolanda in northern Britain form an extremely pivotal part of the local community and can serve as an example of how to bring in local involvement and connect archaeology with identity. While it is understandable that Stottman and the other contributors wish to explore the roles of American

archaeologists, a more globalized perspective would perhaps have served to reinforce—to an even greater degree—that interconnected, communicative networks between social groups and archaeologists are crucial to inciting change not only in America but also throughout the world.

*Woodland Potters and Archaeological Ceramics of the North Carolina Coast.* JOSEPH M. HERBERT. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2009. 352 pp., illus. \$60.00 (hardcover), ISBN: 978-0-8173-1638-9; \$36.95 (paper), ISBN: 978-0-8173-5517-3.

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Joseph Herbert, an archaeologist with the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg, Directorate of Public Works, Cultural Resources Program, is an expert in the ceramics of the North Carolina Coastal Plain. This work, the culmination of years of study of materials from the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, UNC–Chapel Hill and other materials collected by Fort Bragg archaeologists, attempts to refine the regional ceramic taxonomy for the Coastal Plain of North Carolina and assess potential patterns in the geographical distributions of these types.

The use of thermoluminescence (TL) dating to study sherds from archaeological contexts in North Carolina is a key aspect of this text. New dates provided for sherds in the Fort Bragg collection use this technology, and Herbert is a strong supporter of its potential applications in the analysis of poorly stratified artifacts from the Coastal Plain. The book is composed of a discussion of ceramic technologies and related sociological and anthropological theories for interpretation, a series of case studies representing three distinct regions of the North Carolina Coastal Plain (the Sandhills, Sea Island, and Embayed sections) presented alongside dating information from each region, a clarification of the ceramic taxonomy for the region, an analysis of the spatial distribution of Coastal Plain sites, and Herbert’s thoughts on the potential social causes for archaeological patterns.

Herbert presents his information with a caveat that patterns observed in archaeological materials cannot adequately be assumed to represent true social or temporal boundaries. He uses an evolutionary perspective in his study but tempers this with an understanding that archaeological materials do not always move in a pattern from least efficient to most efficient. A discussion of learning and practice examines the potential sociopolitical factors that may coexist