

Archaeology in the Making of Nations: The Juxtaposition of Postcolonial Archaeological Study

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Abstract. The development of archaeological theory is inseparable from the evolution of cultural thinking in global society. This two-way relationship can develop both synchronically and diachronically. Archaeological sites and artefacts are often used to legitimize various opinions and beliefs. In the colonial period, the interpretation of archaeological objects was often biased by racial, religious, and ethnic perspectives. The postcolonial paradigm emerged in criticism of white supremacy hegemony. However, even in the era of post-colonialism, prejudice practices continue to occur. The perspective of neo-colonialism can still be found today. Archaeology, and the sciences generally, are considered a neutral field however, it regularly plays a central role in symbolic personifications of identity, pride, and political propaganda. Similar controversies can also be seen in the museum field. The discourse of repatriation between ex-colonies and 'universal museums' often devolves into extensive controversy. Resolution for many of these disputes remains out of reach due to the lack of equal cooperation and communication between respective parties. On the other hand, there are a number of countries that impose very strict regulations on foreign research (or ban it altogether) to protect their historical legacy. This policy unfortunately, often hampers the development of research and collaborations in the country. In effect, archaeology will never be completely separated from its various interested parties, and so efforts to harmonise academic, ethical, and political interests must be pursued.

Keywords: postcolonial archaeology, paradigm, nationalism, repatriation

Abstrak, Arkeologi dalam Pembentukan Negara: Persimpangan dalam studi postkolonial arkeologi. Perkembangan teori arkeologi tidak terlepas dari evolusi budaya berpikir masyarakat global. Hubungan yang saling mempengaruhi secara dua arah ini dapat dilihat secara sinkronik maupun diakronik. Situs dan artefak arkeologi kerap digunakan untuk meligitimasi berbagai macam kepentingan. Pada masa kolonial, interpretasi terhadap benda arkeologi kerap diselimuti oleh bias ras, agama, dan kesukuan. Paradigma postkolonialisme hadir sebagai kritik terhadap hegemoni berpikir supremasi kulit putih tersebut. Namun kenyataannya, bahkan di era pasca kolonialisme, praktik serupa masih kerap terjadi. Cara pandang neo-kolonialisme masih dapat ditemui hingga saat ini. Arkeologi tidak hanya ditempatkan sebagai bidang ilmu yang netral, namun masih menjadi salah satu isu sentral sebagai simbol personifikasi jati diri, harga diri, maupun propaganda politik. Kontroversi serupa juga dapat dilihat di ranah permuseuman. Wacana repatriasi antara negara ex-koloni dengan 'universal museums' selalu menuai perdebatan yang panjang. Perselisihan ini kerap kali tidak berujung pada suatu solusi karena salah satu pihak cenderung menutup pintu dialog. Di sisi lain, tidak sedikit pula negara-negara yang menutup atau memberlakukan regulasi yang sangat ketat (atau bahkan melarang sepenuhnya) terhadap penelitian asing demi melindungi kekayaan sejarah mereka. Kebijakan ini tidak jarang menghambat berkembangnya penelitian di negara tersebut. Kenyataannya, arkeologi tidak akan pernah sepenuhnya lepas dari berbagai kepentingan, namun usaha untuk menyelaraskan kepentingan akademik, etik, dan politik harus terus dilakukan.

Kata Kunci: postkolonial arkeologi, paradigma, nasionalisme, repatriasi

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1. Introduction

The term 'postcolonial' is used in three related but distinct thought perspectives (Moro-Abadia 2006); 1) chronological: usually for distinguishing between pre- and post-independence of a nation(s) from Western imperialism, 2) critical thought: analysing the reasons and effects of colonialism, and 3) political: as a manifestation of neo-colonial resistance. The paradigm shift in thinking which occurred in the wake of independence from colonisation, especially after World War II, revolutionised these thought perspectives. Postcolonialism emerged as representative of the divergence from colonial concepts and thought, emphasising the aftermath of occupation and beginnings of independence. As Hamilakis (2012, 1) raised a question to the archaeological scholars, "Are we post-colonial yet now?". Despite independence from foreign colonizing powers, some researchers still take advantage of improvised or warring nations and states, use ethically questionable funding sources, and rely solely on western-based, English publications aimed at the 'global' reader. Furthermore, the extensive collections of cultural materials collected during colonial occupation still held in foreign museums such as the Louvre, the British museum, and New York's Metropolitan museum are continuing sources of contention regarding ownership of cultural materials and artefacts of community identity. While repatriation of various artefacts has occurred in recent decades with work continuing in this area, many museum curators still argue that the collections are best kept where they are in 'universal museums' (Reppas 2007; Scott 2013).

The post-colonial movement was a massive blow to colonial discourse, especially the voices from non-western countries. Edward Said, a Palestinian-American came up with the concept of Orientalism (1978), an adaptation from Michael Foucault's post-modernism in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969; 2013). Said

raised the issue of how western society justified the imperialist scheme by treating non-western societies as a lesser human, or not even human at all. This imperialist perspective was held not only by the general majority of the western community, but even among its scholars, until the at least 20th century. An Italian Marxist intellectual, Antonio Gramsci, once came up with a term 'subaltern', meaning 'inferior rank' or society who are the subject of hegemony or ruling classes. This notion became an issue since Gayatri Spivak raised a critique on her famous essay (1988); 'Can the subaltern speak?'. Therefore, the ideas of postcolonialism are not limited to just the fight against military oppression but are more generally concerned with the resistance to western cultural domination.

In the history of archaeological research, the postcolonial paradigm shift had a huge impact on the research narratives. Since the 16th and 17th century, antiquarians rendered a significant influence on the ideas of patriotism, cultural identity, and national pride (Schnapp 2002). Moreover, this predecessor of the archaeological profession often worked alongside the king, ruler(s), or aristocrats of the western colonizing power. There is no surprise therefore, that their interpretation of historical and archaeological artefacts recovered from these colonised peoples was heavily biased by western beliefs of national superiority and racial stereotypes.

Following independence and the fringes of postcolonial thought saw a new wave of archaeological thinking develop. With the emergence of the theory of cultural evolution researchers began looking to attribute cultural developments with their environmental conditions rather than racial and ethnical prejudice. However, the 'western' way of thinking is proved to be continued at least into the 19th and 20th centuries (e.g. Murray and White 1981). As stated by Moro-Abadia (2006), the continuing effects of colonialism and imperialism in archaeology practice today can

be recognized even without a post-colonialism viewpoint. However, post-colonial studies can be used to recognize the wide variety, nature, and impact of (neo)colonialism and their influence on archaeological theory and practice.

2. Archaeology for the Colonialist

The discovery of the ‘Great Zimbabwe’ medieval city is probably one of the most famous examples of bias interpretations by colonial archaeologists. Here the strong western beliefs of national superiority resulted in disbelief by the colonialists who visited the site, that any non-western civilization was capable of building such a monumental structure (Hall 1995). They associated the ruins as the remnants of a construction by King Solomon or Queen Sheba from biblical history. This speculation was also used by European colonists of South Africa and Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) to legitimatise their occupation and racial superiority, with their colonization instead reinterpreted as reoccupation of land which had previously belonged to them (Trigger 2006, 197-200). J Fontein (2006) successfully explained the symbolic changes to this monumental site during pre and post-colonialization in his book entitled *The Silence of Great Zimbabwe*. A similar case western superiority biasing archaeological interpretations also occurred with the Mound Builder culture in North America. During the 18th century, colonists were incapable of comprehending that Native Americans (or their ancestors) were the ones who build the mound found in Ohio. They instead believed and maintained the myth that it must have been built by people from an ‘advanced’ society that had disappeared long ago (Silverberg 1968; 1986). Such a mentality is seen in the various archaeological and historical discoveries throughout the colonized regions (e.g. Bingham 1913; Layard 1849; Poch 1907; Tylor 1969).

Professionalisation and institutionalisation has played an important part in the development of archaeology, particularly with regards to

colonial discourse. The colonization practice of collecting (often by less than legitimate means) the exoticism of their colonized societies for display in European museums or exhibitions had a significant impact on the development and implementation of western archaeology. As a result, there emerged some archaeologist (or aristocrats with an interest in antiquities) conducting Indiana Jones-like investigations such as Heinrich Schliemann with his Troy (Schliemann 1976), Austen Hendry Layard with his Nineveh (Layard 1849), or Thomas Stamford Raffles with his Borobudur (Raffles 1817, 29-30). Numerous ‘scientific’ expeditions conducted all over the world often focused more on the collection of exotics for their museum collections than with any ‘true’ scientific study or documentation. The colonial loot also taken from these ‘exotic countries’ by the conquering European nation was displayed in various colonial exhibitions. This kind of exhibition was held by the colonizing country to boost trade and gain support for the imperialist agenda, with little thought and mention of the artefacts original owners. Other than archaeological findings, these exhibits often included items of scientific, technological, art, architecture, and lifeways interest, and in extreme cases; a human zoo (Emery 2005; Fisher 2005; Launay 2007). Most of the museum collections in Europe are still full of these artefacts from colonized countries. Some of these museums can even be seen as promoting colonialism or taking a pride over the colonized countries (Aldrich 2009).

Two of the most famous colonial exhibitions were held in Paris in 1889 and 1900 (Fig. 1 and 2) as part of the French *Exposition Universelle* series from 1855 to 1937. Displays in this international exhibition included collections, commodities, and performances from Africa, Latin America, Indochina, Asia, and Pacific. They built pavilions, gardens, and imitation villages of the colonized countries such as a Javanese kampong (Chazal 2002), the Angkor

palace (Falser 2014), Aztec palace (Jimenez 2014) and many more to give visitors an idea of what it looks like. They also transported the local people to do performances (Isaac-Cohen 2007) or just mundane activities to make the architecture display more alive (Tran 2015). The 1900 *Exposition Universelle* was the last and largest exhibition of the century. It covered around 550 acres in the centre of Paris and was visited by at least 50 million people from all around the globe over a period of eight months (Wilson 2008). Despite the controversies these various colonial exhibitions had a massive impact, both positive and negative, direct and indirect, to the development of socio-political ideologies in the

colonized countries (Norindr 1995; Fisher 2005; Deyasi 2015).

This western institutionalization was also established in the colonized countries in the form of museum, universities, and government offices that continued the focus on collecting antiquities (Diaz-Andreu 2018, 8). In Indonesia, under Dutch colonization, formed an organization in 1778 called *Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences) (Kolff 1929; Tanudirjo 2003) that later built the Museum of the Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences (Fig. 3) which is now the National Museum of Indonesia in Jakarta. The Dutch also formed



Figure 1. Photographs from the 1889 *Exposition Universelle*, Paris shows dancers from Kraton Mangkoenegoro, Surakarta with kampong pavilion as background (Viollet 1889). Accessed from Leiden University Libraries KITLV 41695.



Figure 2. Pamphlet advertising the exhibition of the Dutch colonies; showing the Sari Temple, Yogyakarta and traditional Sumatran housing, for the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris (KITLV 1900). Accessed from Leiden University Libraries KITLV 1402474.



Figure 3. European and Javanese dignitaries in Batavia (Jakarta), at the Museum of the Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences (KITLV 1931). Accessed from Leiden University Libraries KITLV 86532.

an early archaeological society in Java called *Oudheidkundige Onderzoek van Nederlandsch-Indie* (Antiquarian Research in the Dutch East Indies) in 1885 which participated in the colonial exhibition in Paris (Chazal 2002). This institutionalization treatment is varied among colonized countries, depending on their cultural circumstance and political conditions. For instance, during British colonization in India, the English East India Company began to pay attention to Indian cultural heritage following the speech of Viceroy Lord Curzon at the meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1900 (Sengupta 2018).

During British occupation of Java, Thomas Stamford Raffles became Lieutenant-Governor of Java from 1811 to 1815. He recorded local culture and archaeological remains including Hindu-Buddhist temples. After the Convention of London (also known as the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814), that forced Britain to return their colonial possessions of the Dutch from before the Napoleonic Wars, Raffles sailed back to Britain and published his book *'The History of Java'* in 1817. However, it was not until 1913 at the request of N. J. Krom, when the Netherlands officially established the *Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indie* (Antiquarian Service in Dutch East Indies), a government institution focusing on antiquities (Tanudirjo 2003). The legal backing became stronger when they ratified the *Monumenten Ordonnantie stbl 1931*; a law to manage cultural heritage in the Dutch East Indies (Tanudirjo 2007; Fitri et al. 2015). France also carried out a similar effort to Cambodia. Just before the settlement of the border dispute with Siam (now Thailand) which claimed back ownership of Angkor Wat in 1904, France established the Mission Archéologique d'Indochine. Two years later, the name was being changed to *École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO: French School of the Far East) implying the beginnings of the transition process from exploration and inventory, into study and

restoration (Peleggi 2013).

During World War II, archaeological research served as justification for nationalist ideologies. Archaeological data was manipulated to support political interests and legitimatise the war (Arnold 2006; Flouda 2017). World War II was not just a war between military forces, but also between the scientists, including archaeologists. Campaigns for national identity were backed by historical glories, despite their accuracy, and is considered a powerful propaganda strategy. Italian Fascism leader Benito Mussolini claimed to be the modern manifestation of ancient Rome greatness, German Nazism endorsed the Third Reich, and the Soviet Union respond with prehistoric Slavic superiority through surviving harsh environmental conditions with the claimed that no German could handle the same (Trigger 2006, 251). Previously, the Germans had promoted Slavic people as a backward society due to their hunter-gatherer culture rather than the development of agriculture (Brather 2001, 484).

3. Archaeology for the Nationalist

Southeast Asia is one example of a region with a long and magnificent classical history dotted with various great kingdoms during the early millennia including; Ayutthaya (Thailand), Sukhothai (Thailand), Bagan (Myanmar), Champa (Vietnam), Khmer (Cambodia), La Xang (Laos), Srivijaya (Indonesia), Mataram (Indonesia), and Majapahit (Indonesia). All those complex civilizations are easily identified as they built many monumental palaces, temples, and structures such as Borobudur, Prambanan, and Angkor Wat which survive today (Miksic 2017). By 1900 most of the region in Southeast Asia had been occupied under European colonization, except for Thailand. As World War II began to subside, decolonization by the British, French, and Dutch occurred as troops were recalled for the war effort (Hall 1960). Countries began to regain their independence, however people

needed to build the idea of independent greatness and national identity. This concept of national identity is a fundamental component for a country to be united, especially for a country with a broad ethnic diversity (Reynolds 1995).

In Indonesia, the idea of the greater nation had been cultivated since before independence (McIntyre 1973) in 1945 (not recognized by the Dutch until 1949). The declaration of *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Pledge) in 1928 made the idea of cultural unity nationally recognized. Some Indonesian scholars such as Sanusi Pane, Mohammad Yamin, Armijn Pane, Marius Maramis Dayoh, Nur Sutan Iskandar, Abdoel Moeis, and Matu Mona used historical, archaeological, and even mythological narratives to raise and promote the idea of nationalism (Bodden 1997). Some of Pane's plays including *Airlangga* (1928), *Kertadajaja* (1932), *Sandhyakala ning Madjapahit* (1933), also Yamin's *Kalau Dewi Tara Sudah Berkata* (1932), *Ken Arok dan Ken Dedes* (1934), and the novel of *Gadjah Mada* (1948), are full of the historical grandeur of Indonesia. Soekarno, the first president of Indonesia, also realized the importance of Indonesia's historical background to promote nationalism (Blombergen and Eickhoff 2011). This effort has proved to be successfully applied as can be seen with the adoption of historical ideology in the Indonesian national emblem (*Garuda Pancasila* – a bird from Indonesian Hindu mythology) and flag (*Sang Saka Merah Putih* – inspired by the Majapahit flag) following independence. In Indonesia, archaeological images have been portrayed in banknote art to further develop a sense of nationalism (Unwin and Hewitt 2001) and longstanding history of Indonesian culture and civilisation (e.g. Fig 4).

After independence, every country used different approaches to retain, maintain and reinforce their cultural identity. These attempts sometimes induced conflicts with neighbouring countries. Norodom Sihanouk, the King and father of national independence in Cambodia,



Figure 4. Early Indonesian money showing artistic depictions of an archaeological artefact (top) and site (bottom). Top: 1000 rupiah note issued in 1952; displaying image of Padmapani. Bottom: 10000 rupiah note issued in 1979; displaying image of Prambanan Temple (Source: Bank Indonesia; <https://www.bi.go.id/id/tentang-bi/museum/koleksi/uang/Default.aspx>)

came into conflict with Thailand regarding the territorial dispute over Preah Vihear Temple. This conflict became an international issue and major cultural identity debate following Cambodia's independence from France in 1953 (Ngoun 2018). Preah Vihear Temple located at Dangrek Mountain range is on the border between Cambodia and Thailand. This temple was built during the era of Khmer Empire (ca. 802 to 1431 AD). This case became complicated as a result of the rigid territorial borderline concept adopted from European countries. The local culture of the classic Hindu-Buddhism kingdoms in Southeast Asian considered boundaries to be more fluid following the principle of 'mandala' (Lee 2014). Eventually, the International Court of Justice awarded the victory to Cambodia in 1962 due to the relevance of their national identity. This decision led to massive protests, anger, and dismay from the Thai society. This conflict continued during the enlistment of the temple as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 2008 with

resistance continuing even until today (Baaz and Lilja 2017).

Similar disputes also occur between Indonesia and Malaysia in various degrees. However, conflict between these two countries is more about culturally intangible heritages rather than tangible archaeological sites. These heritage practices include batik patterns, shadow puppetry (wayang kulit), traditional dances (pendet and reog), musical instruments (gamelan and angklung), traditional weapons (keris), folksongs (Rasa Sayange) and even food (rendang) have caused controversy between Indonesia and Malaysia (Chong 2012). The symbolic efforts and advertising campaigns by the Malaysian government is not just for the sake of nationalism and cultural identity, but also to attract international tourists (Hoffstaedter 2008). Claims by Malaysia concerting what cultural practices belonged to them raised much protest from the Indonesian people and led to tense politics between the two countries. In 2011 Indonesia enlisted batik, keris, wayang kulit, and angklung on the List of Intangible of Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. This achievement is considered a great victory by many Indonesian people regarding their cultural identity.

Indonesia is a multicultural nation with a broad and diverse territory. A long dynamic history has left Indonesia with the particularly diverse remnants of its past, whose study is broadly grouped by period: prehistory, classics (Hindu-Buddhist and Islam kingdoms), and colonial. The abundance of sites and artefacts known from Indonesia represent a unique and rich resource for archaeological study, however they can be at risk of interpretations coloured by political, racial, and/or religious sentiments. While careful, detailed analysis of Indonesia's rich archaeological material can act as a positive reinforcement of cultural and national identity, this is unfortunately not always the case. One example of apparent political subjectivity in archaeological interpretation in Indonesia comes

from the site of Gunung Padang, Cianjur, Jawa Barat. This site has long been recognised by Indonesian archaeologists as a megalithic site with the majority of researchers supporting a construction age of ca. 2,500 - 1,500 BC (Sukendar 1985). This is based largely on comparative interpretations of motifs and the construction techniques recorded at the site (Yondri 2007; Ramadina 2013). In 2012 however, one team of Indonesian archaeologists led by Ali Akbar proposed that the site was significantly older and larger than previous interpretations. Akbar (2013) suggested that the Gunung Padang megaliths represent the top of a much larger structure now hidden under the hill. Should this be the case, the site would be a significantly larger stone construction than even Borobudur. Based on this hypothesis, Akbar and colleagues (2013) suggested four possible civilizations capable of such extensive construction, resulting in a published age estimation of 13,000 (Hilman 2011; Widjaja 2016) and up to 20,000 BC in public media comments (Bachelard 2013; Griffiths 2015).

The possibility of a huge stone structure pre-dating the pyramids of Egypt but located in Indonesia was seized by local and national media, capturing the imaginations of the public. Gunung Padang then gained further media attention when it was discovered that Akbar and his team, Tim Riset Terpadu Mandiri, had not received full approval from ARKENAS (National Research Centre for Archaeology) for their excavation efforts at the site. As a result, in 2014 KEMDIKBUD (the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia) instructed Tim Riset Terpadu Mandiri to cease their excavation at Gunung Padang (Dipa 2014). However, shortly after the team re-commenced excavations with assistance from the Indonesian army, under the instruction of then-president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (Yudhoyono 2014). This presidential decision to over-rule the instructions from KEMDIKBUD led to numerous protests from

Indonesian archaeologists with concerns for site conservation and management. Concerns that the excavation has been rushed and the risks of potential loss of data have also been raised (Utomo 2014; Teguh 2018). While political support for research is a valuable resource, if financial support is not evenly distributed however, the possibility of situations where archaeological materials is at risk of politically subjective interpretations emerges. Similarly, differences of opinion and hypotheses are inevitable and important for a healthy scientific community, however, the health of this community also rests on respect for the different management bodies put in place to oversee its actions (Sulistiyanto 2014). Thus, while the excavations at Gunung Padang may initially appear to be an exciting research project deserving of political support, the actions which have led to this has caused some to question the motives behind the research effort.

Contemporaneous with the Gunung Padang pyramid announcement, a social movement considering Indonesia as the 'lost Atlantis' gained substantial public support. The movement was first developed following the publication of the book "Atlantis: The Lost Continent Finally Found" by Arysio Santos and coupled with Stephen Oppenheimer's 1999 book "Eden in the East: The Drowned Continent of Southeast Asia". Santos (2005) combined evidence from prehistoric (Austronesian) and classic archaeological assemblages and compared this with the script on Timaeus and Critias to suggest that Plato's Atlantis was in the Indonesian archipelago. Oppenheimer (1999), on the other hand, referred to the great flood mythology found across multiple civilizations including the Noahs arc saga of Abrahamic religions. Supporters of the 'Indonesia Atlantis' movement considered the Gunung Padang pyramid hypothesis as additional support for their claim. During the height of the 'Atlantis sensation' a series of books by Fahmi Basya (2014) claiming that Borobudur was a Solomon temple became a

national best seller. This claim drew significant public attention leading to numerous seminars and debates. Basya (2014) compared Borobudur and surrounding sites with script from Al Quran to substantiate his Solomon association.

While these authors are recognised researchers in their respective fields, the 'Indonesian Atlantis' and 'Gunung Padang Pyramid' publications and their various interpretations have been heavily criticised by Indonesian and international archaeologists alike (Fagan 2006; Rochmyaningsih 2015; Callahan 2017). Moreover, such interpretations can be characterized as diffusionism in archaeology, and as Rowe (1966) stated, "Doctrinaire diffusionism is a menace to the development of sound archaeological theory ... it distracts archaeologists ... and seeks to destroy the basis of comparison." These books and other similar works have a significant impact on society and people's perceptions of national identity. The lack of sound archaeological research and evidence increases the risk of unsubstantiated claims misleading the public and raising a false sense of national pride and racial primordialism. It also exploits a cognitive bias in society (e.g. rosy retrospection; Mitchell et al. 1997) which tends to glorify the past and believe that human culture is on the process of decline, known as declinism (Aysha 2003; Aughey 2010). Regarding the Gunung Padang pyramid and Indonesia Atlantis matters, Tanudirjo (2012) stated that in this instance, instead of gaining national identity, we have lost it. He calls it a symptom of millenarism or "cargo-cult", where the society craves a vision of a glorious past. Similarly, Simanjuntak (2012) also suggests that the pyramid and Atlantis concepts hold no place in Indonesian archaeology.

Vietnam, on the other hand, declared their independence since 1945 but suffered through the Indochina Wars for decades following this. They have been showed very little interest in exploring the archaeological records from Chinese and French colonization. Instead, they

are more focused on the exploration of the Bronze Age (Miksic 2017) when Vietnam had cultural influence over the majority of prehistoric Southeast Asia. The Dong Son culture that predates all Chinese influence has become a major component of Vietnam cultural identity. During colonization, the French scholars either interpreted Dong Son culture as a product of Chinese or Indonesian culture. They refused to believe that Vietnamese ancestors were capable of producing such a unique bronze-iron culture (Le 2011).

Different to every other Southeast Asian country, Thailand is the only nation that was never colonized. Their nation was however, still strongly dependant on European hegemony. King Mongkut is famously known for his bold step to embrace Western innovation and modernization. His story became the basis of various theatre, novel, and movie adaptations (Jory 2001). He discovered the Sukhothai inscription in 1833 and successfully translated it in the early 20th century (Peleggi 2013). He used the inscription as a basis of national identity and to unite the Thailand people to resist against French domination that occupied most of mainland Southeast Asia. Sukhothai and Ayutthaya were attributed as the two 'successive capitals' before Bangkok. The inscription was also used to legitimatise the King's right to challenge the ownership of Angkor Wat. This political use of the Sukhothai inscription resulted in a less than correct chronological history for Thailand as they ignored many other inscriptions and rarely mention the other groups or states that existed prior to or contemporary with Sukhothai (Shoocongdej 2007).

3. The Man Behind the Gun: Academics, Ethics, and Politics

Historical and archaeological data can be manipulated to serve a political agenda. Colonized countries are not always a passive recipient of what happened to them. They are often aware of their condition and sometimes

even take any advantage they can gain of the situation. It is true that the colonialists tend to do anything to dominate and maximize their profit on every aspect, but even the nationalists differ little in their actions. This can be characterized as the colonial mentality in the post-colonial age.

The complex relationship between archaeologists and nations can challenge their methodological and professional objectivity, while the ruling class or Government can influence the results of archaeological interpretations (Ben-Yehuda 2007). False testaments in archaeology can lead to a dangerous cycle with ongoing academic, ethical and political ramifications. Consider Great Zimbabwe: once used as colonialist legitimation to occupy the territory, later became a symbol of indigenous unity against colonialism, now the cause of the conflict between tribes (Fontein 2006). The chauvinist archaeology used during World War II to decide who was 'superior' and 'inferior' for wartime propaganda. Often this archaeological manipulation is initially done in the name of the 'greater good', unfortunately, what is good is not always right.

According to Glyn Daniel, there are three kinds of 'false archaeology'; 1) using archaeology for criminal behaviour such as fakes and forgeries (Scott 2013), 2) using false archaeology for political propaganda, and 3) using false archaeology for financial and self-popularity benefit (Daniel 1981, 11; see Moro-Abadia 2009). What he was trying to say is that 'true archaeology' is the improvement in knowledge related to research on material-culture behaviour of people, while 'false archaeology' is more related to the impact of 'outside' circumstances over the result of the research (Moro-Abadia 2009). Decolonization did not consequently come with a shift of the social base in archaeology (Diaz-Andreu 2018). Even the effort to make archaeology a more scientific discipline can be found during the colonial era. Unfortunately, we continue to see 'archaeological research'

conducted with national, racial, economic, or even religious sentiments in this post-colonial era. Various example can be seen in regarding this case, such as Juris Zarins with his Garden of Eden, Erich von Daniken with his extra-terrestrial, or Fahmi Basya with his Borobudur as Solomon temple speculation.

Practices of commodification and politicisation often occur in cultural heritage collections and exhibits in museums. The existence of former 'colonial museums' in the post-colonial era should enable a new impression of the narrative (Aldrich 2009). The clash between colonialist and nationalist interests is also portrayed with the controversy surrounding repatriation. Gaining back cultural patrimony is an important component of political legitimacy and national identity. The Parthenon Marbles is probably one of the most famous cases regarding repatriation. The conflict between Greece and the British Museum has been unresolved for decades. This classical Greek marble sculpture was removed from the temple of Parthenon by the Earl of Elgin in 1789. The authenticity of his permit to acquisition the artefact is highly questionable (Angouri et al. 2017). This artefact is also considered to be a very important part of Greek national identity. Greece has received significant support from the international community for their ownership claim, however, the British Museum still refuses to return the artefacts. Similar cases also exist between the British Museum and Egypt regarding the Rosetta Stone and many other Egyptian artefacts (Duthie 2011). Some successful repatriation attempts can be seen with Indonesian artefact restitution from the Dutch such as the Buddhist statue *Prajnaparamita* and the *Nagarakrtagama* manuscript (Driehuisen 2018).

While the colonial era produced amazing discoveries, and pioneering efforts in the field of archaeological science, much of this early research was tainted by western colonial perspectives and left a legacy of looting and robbing (Nilsson Stutz

2007; Reppas 2007). How archaeologists identify the cultural material of a people influences the international cultural identity of those people. The importance of some artefacts can also be misrepresented depending on their interpretation. All this information and interpretations are used for defining national questions of 'who we are?' and 'what we deserve?'. Such interpretations are used for claiming certain artefacts or pieces of land or territories. Postcolonial archaeology at its root draws back to the most fundamental questions asked by archaeologists: 'who owns the past?'; 'who has the right to keep spoils of war?'; and 'can anyone own someone else's history?'. The answers to these questions depend on matters of academic, ethic, or politic beliefs and goals.

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