

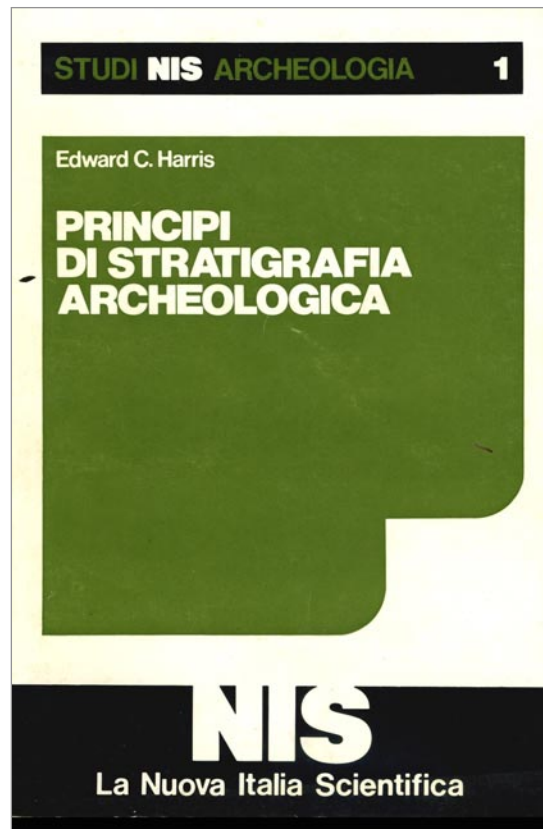
The Italian edition of Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy (Academic Press 1979) was published in 1983 by La Nuova Italia Scientifica in the first non-English edition of the book as Principi di Stratigrafia Archeologica, with 40 figures, 178 pages, and included an introduction by Professor Daniele Manacorda at Rome. Now published by Carocci editore, the book is still available in a 2016 edition, which was reprinted four times since. The Italian archaeological community is thus one of the foremost supporters of revolutionary principles of stratigraphy in archaeology that began with the invention of the Harris Matrix in 1973.

Prof. Manacorda has kindly agreed to the translation of his Introduction, which was, and remains, a major statement on the state of stratigraphy in archaeology, in particular in Italy. As it is thought to have stood the test of time, it has now been made available to the English-speaking world, almost four decades after its original publication.

I thank my Italian colleague, Dr. Cinzia Perlingieri, for her translation and modern adaptation of this text, and for her support of this version of its publication.

Prof. Manacorda's notes for his Introduction have been included but not translated, for the sake of completeness.

*—Edward Cecil Harris, MBE, PhD, FSA
November 11, 2024*



PRINCIPLES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRATIGRAPHY

By Edward C. Harris

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1983 ITALIAN EDITION

Principi di Stratigrafia Archeologica

By Professor Daniele Manacorda

Translated by Cinzia Perlingieri, PhD

SECTION 1

The name of Edward C. Harris may not be among those heralded in the elite circles of world archaeology, and his scholarly work seldom grabs headlines in the international media. Yet there is a burgeoning conversation about a ‘Harrisian Phase’ in contemporary archaeology.¹ This is not contradictory; the broader public and media, both print and digital, traditionally overlook methodological discussions, even if they hold significant implications for research practices and objectives. E. C. Harris’s contributions might not populate the main displays in specialist libraries, nor can they be found in the magazine sections of train stations. His publications, mostly confined to British journals of limited circulation, might not be household names. While Harris played roles in major English archaeological endeavors—like those at Verulamium (S.S. Frere), Portchester (B. Cunliffe), Wroxeter (Ph. Barker), and Winchester (M. & B. Biddle)—he was not always front and centre. However, Harris’s influence is unmistakable in all projects that have embraced the “Harris Matrix” or, as Andrea Carandini translated it, the “stratigraphic diagram.” Carandini was the pioneer in introducing the theories and practices of British (Harrisian) archaeology to Italy.²

After training under Martin Biddle at the expansive archaeological site of Winchester in the late 1960s, Harris began to develop a groundbreaking method in the ’70s for documenting archaeological stratigraphy. This method introduced a fourth dimension to archaeological records: time. Harris was inspired by the challenge of managing over 10,000 stratigraphic units from the excavations at Winchester’s Lower Brook Street, as he recounts in the second appendix of this volume. As excavation techniques at the site evolved, enhancing the capacity to discern intricate interplays of human and natural events preserved within archaeological layers, the pressing need to systematically catalogue and organize these units also intensified.

Anybody familiar with the principles of stratigraphic archaeology knows that the Harris matrix³ must be applied as an organic framework throughout the archaeological excavation, where the creation of a stratigraphic sequence is the result of the identification and meticulous recording of all stratigraphic units and their relationships. Such framework is the primary goal of an archaeological investigation: it precedes the interpretation, and should be integrated in the daily excavation practice as a tool for both planning and management. It is becoming increasingly challenging to manage the complex data produced from a stratigraphic excavation without constantly proving its validity against its graphic diagrams. As there can be no stratigraphic sequence without a proper stratigraphic excavation, there came the need to reconsider the entire excavation process in archaeology, and redefine not only its fundamental and practical tools, but its theoretical framework. In such an increasing complexity of our research field, even the traditional British empiricism alone could not provide a solution to manage the results of its own methods.

Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy was first published in 1979, marking six years since the Matrix’s inaugural application in archaeological practice. This pioneering work stemmed from Harris’s PhD research at the University College of London and underwent rigorous evaluation by a distinguished academic panel. Notably, this committee boasted the presence of Philip Barker, recognised for penning the inaugural guide to contemporary English archaeology and its subsequent introduction to Italian archaeologists through a recent translation.⁴ Carandini astutely observed: “Though manual-writing aligns with British tradition, Harris’s endeavour to theorise its principles stands out. Typically, English archaeologists shy away from recalibrating their established methods.”⁵ Carandini’s perspective is poignant. While Barker’s manual heralds a transformative era in modern archaeology, evolving from Wheeler’s methodologies (indeed, we reference a post-Wheelerian transition in the early ’70s), Harris’s contributions provide

the bedrock for a novel wave of scholarly pursuits and field explorations.

Harris's chosen title, *Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy*, provides a lens into his unique perspective. Contrasted against a potentially broader title like "Principles of Stratigraphic Archaeology," Harris's emphasis becomes evident. While the latter might come across as redundant to professionals aware that archaeological research inherently demands stratigraphic comprehension, Harris's title underscores his core argument: stratigraphy isn't just an aspect of archaeology—it is foundational. His work underscores stratigraphy as an indispensable cornerstone for meaningful archaeological endeavours.

The concept of stratigraphy originated in the field of earth sciences. In his book, Harris dedicates the first chapter to this concept, not to reestablish a lost connection, but rather to emphasise the distinctions between its application in earth sciences and its role in archaeology. The book's title is particularly apt, especially considering that the profound difference between the two applications has often been overlooked or even misunderstood. In fact, archaeological stratigraphy has been predominantly interpreted through a geological perspective until quite recently. Harris's work seeks to "define the principles of archaeological stratigraphy," a task he believes should have been undertaken over five decades ago.

Harris's book is anchored in a theoretical framework that defines the general principles of archaeological stratigraphy. These principles are outlined through four laws: original continuity, original horizontality, stratigraphic superposition, and succession. Harris elaborates on these definitions in the Glossary, an Appendix to his volume in its 1979 edition. The unique characteristics of archaeological stratification, which must be converted into a stratigraphic sequence for historical interpretation, led Harris to refine the law of superposition.⁶ There emerged a pressing need to depict the intricate non-geological nature of archaeological stratigraphy and express it through the law of archaeological succession. This law posits that "every stratigraphic unit finds its position between the lowest of the units above it and the highest of those below it that directly touch it; all other relationships are redundant." Central to the construction of a stratigraphic matrix, this law not only governs the written and visual documentation of an excavation and the excavation technique but also offers tools to categorise the physical and temporal relationships between stratigraphic units.⁷

Harris outlines three pivotal components of archaeological stratigraphy: the foundational theory and its guiding principles; the comprehensive documentation; and the strategic correlation and phasing of the stratigraphic sequence. The first component, which delves into the theory and its underlying principles, coincides with the initial phase of archaeological research. This phase commences with the application of the law of stratigraphic succession, leading to the identification of strata and interfaces, denoted as the elements of stratification in Chapters 5 and 6. These elements are also referred to as stratigraphic units, which form the bedrock of the new archaeological paradigm. Harris's contributions have significantly advanced a process that took its early roots at Maiden Castle, under the stewardship of Wheeler in the 1930s. There, strata in sections were systematically numbered for the first time. This innovative method evolved post World War II in Britain, distinguishing between different strata and related elements. By the mid-1970s,⁸ this system made its debut in Italy.

A pivotal distinction emerged between a stratum and other associated elements, revealing a critical contradiction with far-reaching implications: the juxtaposition of "the relative objectivity of individual actions" with "the relative subjectivity of interpreted activities."⁹ This contradiction precipitated ambiguity when interpreting the activities and the unearthed stratigraphic elements (or features) during excavation. In numerous instances of pre-Harrisian stratigraphic archaeology, a blurry line existed between the descriptive facet of the investigation and its interpretative counterpart. To put it another way, there was a conflation of the historical elements with the non-historical facets of the archaeological stratification. This

mirrored the traditional archaeological practice of segmenting stratification elements based on “functional” criteria and prematurely interpreting them during excavation. Such an approach resulted in methodological inconsistencies and the inception of convoluted naming conventions for stratigraphic elements. While some archaeologists might appreciate the intricacy, it frequently proved to be an obstacle for readers and novices. They often found themselves navigating a maze-like lexicon of terms such as “strata IIB” and “IIIA,” interspersed with references to “pit Y” and “wall Δ” situated in “room 5,” creating an overwhelming labyrinth of information.

The introduction of the “stratigraphic unit” concept has been a game-changer for archaeologists. This notion streamlines not only the excavation and documentation stages but also the interpretation of stratigraphic sequences. As Harris articulates: “The process of stratification encompasses an erosion and accumulation cycle. It’s a blend of naturally occurring erosion and deposition models, intertwined with human-induced landscape changes through digging and construction activities” (*refer to p. 80*). By adopting a “stratigraphic disassembly” approach, archaeologists can deconstruct this intricate process, distilling it into its fundamental typological elements. Each of these elements can then be meticulously described and analysed. Based on the mechanisms of accumulation, deposition, and construction, or erosion, subtraction, and destruction, every stratigraphic unit can be classified as either positive or negative, and as natural or man-made.¹⁰

Harris’s method of simplifying the intricate layers of archaeological stratification into a structured set of numbered stratigraphic units, along with their interrelations, stands as one of his most notable achievements. By accentuating the role of interfaces and other non-material elements within stratification, Harris revolutionised the foundational principles of archaeological exploration. While building upon the British tradition’s theoretical underpinnings, he set the stage for the emergence of some of the most pivotal advancements in archaeology. These innovations have particularly flourished in Britain over the recent generation.

Harris advocated for stratigraphic excavation as a method of uncovering layers in the reverse order of their deposition, adhering to the natural contours of each stratum (*p. 104*). Beyond its technical implications, this perspective brought transformative shifts to archaeological planning, either intentional or inadvertent. One of the standout outcomes of Harris’s methodology is the facilitation of expansive investigations across vast areas concurrently. This approach champions “horizontal graphic documentation,” superseding Wheeler’s grid-centric excavation approach and the over-reliance on balks—a shift that Harris keenly critiques (*pp. 105–07*). The emphasis transitions from just vertical documentation to a more encompassing horizontal perspective. As stratification evolves over time (diachronically), understanding its simultaneous (synchronic) facets is essential, best visualised through a horizontal lens. Harris’s stress on horizontal documentation during excavation is a pivotal aspect of his contributions, amplifying the need for detailed plans of individual layers¹¹, supplemented by grander site blueprints. With his pragmatic theory and its adept applications, Harris champions a call for archaeology’s theoretical evolution, pushing for a foundation rooted more firmly in scientific principles.

Harris’s impact on British archaeology is evident in his methodological reorganisation and the establishment of a robust theoretical framework. While he was greatly influenced by predecessors like Biddle and Barker, Harris’s innovations were distinct and, at times, seemed to position him at odds with certain British archaeological circles.¹² This was perhaps due to a perceived challenge to the established order or skepticism towards formalised theoretical principles.

Bruno D’Agostino points out a dichotomy in British archaeology, represented by the approaches of Harris and Philip Barker. Harris sought standardised and formalised processes, while Barker took a more

adaptable approach, striving for clarity throughout the excavation process without sacrificing meticulousness. However, it might be an oversimplification to rigidly categorise British archaeology into these two camps. Harris's work can be viewed as a progressive extension of the British archaeological tradition,¹³ and not necessarily in opposition to what one might term "Barkerian" archaeology.¹⁴

A significant advantage of Harris's methodology is that it universalises British archaeological practices, moving away from the notion that these methods are exclusive or bound by particular conditions. Harris posits that the apex of British archaeological expertise is not contingent on specific historical or cultural circumstances but can be replicated universally. In essence, Harris emphasises that the exceptional practices of British archaeology can be adopted and applied globally, transcending any unique conditions.

The debate between meticulousness and a more streamlined, automated approach in archaeology stands out when comparing the methods endorsed by Harris and Barker. D'Agostino¹⁵ points out an almost overzealous attention to detail in some practices, contrasting with Harris's advocacy for more streamlined data recording.

Harris cautions against overemphasising minor details to the detriment of the bigger picture. He critiques the fixation on mapping even the most trivial aspects of soil composition within strata, suggesting that this could stem from a misunderstanding of what these maps or plans represent. For Harris, these should depict interfaces or surfaces, capturing the topographic history rather than detailing the soil's pedological intricacies.¹⁶

It is vital to understand that the essence of archaeological investigation does not rest solely in documenting these minor details, although they have their place. Instead, the true measure of a successful archaeological investigation lies in accurately understanding and visually representing the relationships between stratigraphic layers. Both Harris and Barker seem to agree on this point, underlining its significance in contemporary British archaeology. The primary distinction between their methods is the degree of detail and precision they believe is necessary to achieve this overarching goal.

SECTION 2

In Italy you can get a master degree in archaeology, get a position as antiquities inspector, and become a tenure-track professor without having ever excavated a site, without any field experience whatsoever. From this reality come our outdated methods, and the lack of consistency in the archaeological practice. Few positive exceptions only confirm this rule. Such an underdeveloped state of our archaeology—that often clashes with the excellent capabilities of Italian scholars in other fields of research and critique on antiquities—is not limited to Italy, but common in Mediterranean archaeology, for reasons that can be searched in cultural traditions, and that we are not investigating here. We must remember, however, that the worst archaeological crimes have been carried out on our very Mediterranean coasts (in the colonies and outside).

With these harsh and justified arguments, Andrea Carandini opened his presentation on the methods of modern European and British archaeology to the Italian National Research Centre in October 1976. That presentation, titled "Contro lo sterro e per lo scavo"¹⁷ [Against looting and in defence of scientific excavation], was a statement against the low level of quality of archaeological investigations in our country, but also a report on the positive and productive collaboration between the Italian Archaeological Mission in Carthage¹⁸ and the British team, directed at that time by Henry Hurst. In that presentation, Carandini highlighted the professionalism of the archaeologists that were directly involved in the excavation and not remotely directing operations; the consistency of methods and quality of research, due to a solid and

tested research tradition; the coordination of the different archaeological contributions, unified by the common techniques; the obsolescence of Wheeler's method; and the new idea of archaeology as a public service, and as a consequence, the need to rethink the relationship between scientific research and the public.

The new British archaeological methods, tailored to the Italian cultural context, began to be implemented during those years, especially at the expansive archaeological site of Settefinestre,¹⁹ which was being excavated in collaboration with an English team. Around this period, there was a gradual assimilation and promotion of these new principles. This resulted in various comparative studies between the innovative approaches and the pre-existing Italian methodologies. Additionally, the younger generation of archaeologists displayed a welcoming and positive reception to these contemporary techniques.

One of the significant milestones in this fusion of Italian archaeology with more progressive European methods was the initiation of a field data documentation system based on specific forms. These forms intended to replace the traditional archaeological diary, ensuring a more systematic and uniform method of data collection.²⁰ Introduced initially in 1976, these excavation forms had been trialed and refined in several Italian digs, drawing inspiration from Harris's latest theoretical inputs.

By the late 1970s, these forms became a central topic of discussion within a committee of the Central Institute for Recording and Documentation, under the guidance of Franca Badoni. The outcomes of this discussion, which involved contributions from numerous Italian archaeologists from varied specialisations, were unveiled during the conference, titled "How archaeologists operate in the field." This event was hosted by the School of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Siena and was supported by the Ministry of Cultural and Natural Heritage. This increasing engagement and discourse around the modern methodologies serve as concrete evidence of the evolving perspective of Italian archaeologists from both public and academic sectors. They were not just acknowledging these new methods but were also keen to delve into detailed discussions regarding them.²¹

In the evolving landscape where Italian archaeologists were increasingly embracing the techniques of British archaeology, the recent translation of Philip Barker's manual by Longanesi publishers stands out. This effort was made possible, in part, due to the proactive endeavor of Mario Torelli. The eloquent introduction penned by Bruno D'Agostino for the book symbolises yet another significant stride in the maturation and openness of the discerning Italian archaeological community towards the burgeoning British tradition. The collaboration in the field between Italian and British archaeologists is becoming increasingly prevalent. Such collaborations not only benefit the Italian archaeological paradigm but also provide British archaeologists with a unique opportunity to integrate more effectively into the Italian archaeological and cultural milieu.

British archaeology has traditionally been isolationist, a trait often seen across various research domains in the UK. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the valid criticisms that British archaeology has directed towards what they perceive as the "backwardness of Italian archaeology." This criticism has sometimes even been documented. Around two decades ago, O. G. S. Crawford commented in a review about Field Archaeology across Europe, stating that the archaeologists sponsored by the Italian Fascist Government in its North African territories merely functioned as precursors for Italian tourism. Funding for publishing research outcomes was elusive. Furthermore, preparing a report, which includes surveying and drafting plans, is a more tedious and less engaging task than supervising others as they uncover buried relics. This leads the archaeologist to persistently "direct excavations" year after year, until a backlog of unpublished findings accumulates and becomes insurmountable. Such practices have been widespread in Italy, evident in sites like Ostia and Herculaneum. Foreign archaeologists were often prohibited from photographing and, even when granted permission, publishing was restricted to prevent pre-empting a

report that never materializes.²²

This reproach, largely stemming from the harm wrought by Italian colonial archaeology in Africa, also pertains to prevalent practices in post-war Italian archaeology. Readers should not be affronted by an erroneous sense of nationalistic pride. The reality is that the criticisms of traditional archaeological methods in Italy are regrettably accurate, and the fact that these flawed practices extend beyond Italian borders amplifies their significance. There is a growing acknowledgment of the inherent shortcomings in our field archaeology. Still, this realisation serves as a hopeful indicator for catching up. This self-awareness coexists with the recognition of Italy's prowess in numerous other facets of both historical and archaeological studies. We should not overvalue foreign contributions out of a sense of self-deprecation. However, it is essential to recognise the pressing need for a fresh methodological perspective and the urgency to embrace contemporary theoretical and practical tools to reshape archaeology at an institutional level.

D'Agostino's observations underscore a critical self-awareness within the Italian archaeological community. He rightly points out that, for a substantial period ranging from the rise of fascism through the '70s, Italian archaeology lagged behind its international counterparts in terms of technical and methodological advancements.²³ With only a few notable exceptions, the overall cultural stature of Italian archaeology remained relatively stagnant. Particularly when juxtaposed with the established norms of prehistoric research, the methodologies employed in classical archaeology in Italy have been found wanting. This is especially evident in the realm of rescue excavation, an area where the professional stature of archaeology remains markedly underdeveloped.

D'Agostino's efforts to contextualize the evolution of Italian archaeology highlight a significant transformation that began in the '70s. This period marked a watershed moment, engendering the need for revamped research strategies and conservation policies. These shifts, D'Agostino argues, are inextricably linked to the evolution of the professional identity of archaeologists. His observations draw attention to the profound relationship between the history of excavation techniques and the overarching conception of archaeology and antiquities. This interconnectedness, he suggests, is frequently overlooked. Yet, it is a relationship that should continually be brought to the fore, serving as a touchstone for ongoing reflection and growth within the discipline.²⁴

Massimo Pallottino's contributions to Italian archaeology, although often rooted in conservative perspectives, cannot be understated. In 1970, he proposed the innovative concept of an "excavation chart," envisioning it as a unified platform for setting and sharing archaeological research and preservation priorities.²⁵ Essentially, this was a call for a standardised framework—a convergence of technical, scientific, and administrative directives—designed to guide field explorations.

Central to Pallottino's vision was the urgency to curtail haphazard and unauthorised excavation activities, bringing them under the ambit of standardised norms and practices. He aspired to see this long-standing challenge addressed, at least until influential figures within the archaeological community could set benchmarks for scientifically planned excavations. One of Pallottino's salient arguments was the imperative that archaeological digs be supervised and managed by individuals grounded in academic archaeology. He emphasized that excavations "should always be directed and conducted by scholarly archaeologists."²⁶ This stance not only reflected his commitment to rigorous, scholarly practices but also highlighted a glaring issue in Italian archaeology at the time. It was not uncommon then for archaeological excavation permits to be handed out to entities or individuals lacking the requisite scientific expertise. Pallottino's proposal, in essence, was a clarion call for elevating the standards and scientific rigor of Italian archaeological endeavors.

Massimo Pallottino's propositions, while theoretically sound, inadvertently overlooked a crucial

nuance. Merely being a scholarly archaeologist does not inherently assure one possesses the exhaustive range of skills and expertise necessary for an archaeological undertaking, except maybe in bureaucratic or academic contexts. It presents a conundrum: What metrics or standards can be used to certify a scholarly archaeologist's proficiency to oversee and execute a stratigraphic archaeological excavation comprehensively? This question, though fundamental, remained largely unexplored and unresolved. It underscores the broader challenge of distinguishing academic qualifications from practical, on-ground expertise in the realm of archaeological pursuits.

Italy boasts important institutions like the Central Institute for Restoration and the Institute for Documentation and Archiving. Yet, it lacks a counterpart that streamlines and oversees archaeological excavation and survey processes. The absence of such an entity, a sentiment previously voiced,²⁷ seems a logical progression to Pallottino's plea for refined effectiveness and improved oversight in excavation practices. However, the vision for this central institution clashes with the political and cultural disparities pervading contemporary Italian archaeology. The clamour for a centralised body governing archaeological excavations, guiding and harmonising scientific endeavors across Italy, is echoed in the call for substantial reforms voiced in the "News on Excavations," a premier academic journal in Italian archaeology.²⁸ Both these advocacies are deeply rooted in the tenets of modern stratigraphic archaeology—tenets noticeably absent in Pallottino's era and distinctly at odds with his personal stance.²⁹

Historic Italian archaeology has displayed a marked resistance to embracing stratigraphic methodologies, primarily due to a lack of comprehension regarding its core value and essence. The chasm between the aspirations of budding archaeologists (and their academic mentors) and their tangible actions becomes more transparent upon delving into the evolution of Italian archaeology throughout the 20th century. Our task of revisiting our scientific heritage is in its infancy. It is imperative to deepen our understanding of myriad historical facets, dispel long-held myths, and reevaluate entrenched beliefs.

SECTION 3

The longstanding allure of triumphalism has posed a persistent challenge to Italian archaeology, evident both before and after the pronounced "triumphalistic frenzy" characteristic of the Fascist era. The continuous influx of both deliberate and serendipitous discoveries, accumulating rapidly across successive generations, has frequently eclipsed the pressing need for genuine advancements in research methodologies and analytical techniques.

Additionally, there has been a dire need for honing the ability to leverage excavation data to craft historically accurate narratives rooted in rigorous scientific scrutiny. While there have undoubtedly been strides made in the span of a century dedicated to archaeology, the progression has been sporadic, lacking a consistent trajectory, and punctuated by extended periods of backtracking.³⁰

Many scientific accounts, even those penned by esteemed scholars, have consistently sidestepped the vital methodological underpinnings of our field. Instead, these works frequently resonate with a somewhat scientifically unsophisticated exuberance, a sentiment shared widely. This pattern is evident in G. Ghirardini's 1912 report commemorating the first half-century of unified Italy, as well as in G. Becatti's account of the first fifty years of the 20th century, penned in tribute to Croce.³¹ The same inclination can be discerned in numerous public and scholarly publications from subsequent decades. The lion's share of archaeological narratives from these eras predominantly chronicles tales of discoveries and explorations, not methodological insights, recounting lists of fortuitous finds made by unchecked and often erratic experts with nebulous credentials. These experts, all self-proclaimed authorities, have, since the time of

Schliemann, professed unwavering dedication to the pursuit of truth, branding themselves as scholars. Consequently, R. Bianchi Bandinelli's assertion that "an unexecuted excavation surpasses a shoddily completed one, much like an unpublished one," seems jarringly discordant amid this prevailing triumphal refrain.³² Given this backdrop, revisiting the historical trajectory of our discipline and its key figures is crucial—now more than ever—not only to rejuvenate theoretical discussions but also to elevate the calibre of archaeological scholarship.

Barker delves into the evolution of excavation techniques in England and other prominent research hubs in Northern Europe in certain sections of his manual.³³ The pioneering archaeological endeavors led by Pitt-Rivers at Cranborne Chase from 1881 to 1896 signify the advent of contemporary archaeological methodology. However, the trajectory following Pitt-Rivers, encompassing notable figures like Flinders Petrie—who authored the 1904 English guide, *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*—was a tumultuous one, marked by twists and intermittent halts. Barker views the 1915 publication of another English manual by J. P. Droop as indicative of the methodological muddle and retrogression post the Pitt-Rivers era. Contrarily, Harris holds a divergent stance on this period. While both Barker and Harris critique Petrie's scientific foundations, Harris does not attribute Pitt-Rivers' endeavours as pivotal in elucidating the stratigraphic notion, which is, conversely, evident in Droop's manual through numerous illustrations and sections.

This disagreement underscores a profound distinction between two luminaries of modern stratigraphic archaeology. Barker's emphasis leans more towards the strategic intricacies of archaeological digs and the precision of their documentation. In contrast, Harris appears more engrossed in the theoretical and practical delineation of archaeological stratigraphy. The origin of this disparity can also be traced back to the inherent ambiguities of a discipline that was still sculpting its essence, principles, and methodologies, particularly in the aftermath of the monumental archaeological finds in the Mediterranean and the Middle East during the first half of the 20th century.

During the era that saw the release of manuals by Petrie and Droop, Italy was graced by the singular and remarkable contributions of Giacomo Boni.³⁴ It is understandable, albeit a tad restrictive, that Daniel's largely Anglo-centric literature sidestepped Boni's work. However, it is somewhat disheartening that even Harris failed to acknowledge Boni's contributions. Notably, Boni's academic foundation and scientific orientation were deeply rooted in the European positivist tradition, especially drawing significant influences from the British domain.³⁵

The trajectory of scientific methodology in British archaeology is a fascinating narrative, and we will not exhaustively explore its every facet here. However, an epochal moment came about in the 1930s, epitomised by Mortimer Wheeler's groundbreaking excavations at Maiden Castle. Wheeler introduced an innovative methodology that not only revolutionised on-site excavation practices but also instilled a rigorous scientific ethos in the logistics and management of archaeological endeavors. Although historically significant, this methodology is now viewed as archaic in contemporary archaeology. In Italy, Andrea Carandini voiced similar concerns, resonating with critiques earlier posited by both Barker and Harris.³⁶ Barker's criticism was not aimed squarely at Wheeler's methods³⁷ but rather at what might be termed "Wheelerism." This refers to the uncritical adoption of Wheeler's foundational principles—like excavation by quadrants, preservation of balks, and a pronounced emphasis on sectional over planar views—practices ideally suited to expansive sites, and misapplying them to more constricted excavations. Devoid of the broader horizontal expanse typical of larger sites and with an undue emphasis on vertical stratigraphy, often misunderstood, the results skewed more towards what one would expect from preliminary test digs. Such a misapplication and oversimplification of Wheeler's techniques was prevalent, for example, in the monumental archaeology espoused and conceptualised by Amedeo Maiuri and his

contemporaries. They frequently misconstrued the core essence of stratigraphic research.³⁸

Italy's decision to bypass the Wheeler method in archaeological practice is an intriguing facet of its academic history. The absence of an Italian translation for Wheeler's *Archaeology from the Earth*, especially when juxtaposed with the adoption of Ceram's *Buried Civilizations* after its translation by Einaudi, raises questions about the country's archaeological inclinations during that timeframe. This emphasis on Ceram's work, which leans towards narratives about ancient civilizations, may reflect Italy's historical-literary traditions. Italy has always been a nation with deep historical roots, intertwined with ancient civilizations such as the Roman Empire. Hence, it is conceivable that the historical narrative style might have resonated more with the Italian readership than a methodological treatise on excavation.

However, this speculation does not fully explain the lack of enthusiasm for translating Wheeler's manual. Even if the Wheeler method was not widely practiced, it would seem prudent for academia to make such foundational texts available for scholarly reference. This oversight might suggest an underestimation of the work's significance, or perhaps there were other political, academic, or economic factors at play. Diving into Italy's editorial strategies during this period would offer insights into this gap. Such strategies are often a mirror to a country's academic and cultural pulse, revealing preferences, biases, and inclinations. Understanding why Wheeler's volume was overlooked for translation could provide a clearer picture of Italy's academic priorities and its perspective on the global archaeological discourse of the time.

The translation of *Buried Civilizations*, with an introduction by R. Bianchi Bandinelli, was never intended to be a manual of excavation techniques. However, this idea was later represented in a volume Einaudi published for archaeology two years after *Buried Civilizations*, in its "Saggi" series. Two distinct manuscripts of Leonard Woolley, the renowned excavator of Ur, were combined into the Einaudi volume titled "Il mestiere dell'archeologo" (Translator note: "The Job of the Archaeologist"³⁹). The second part of the volume, titled "Come si scava" ("How to Excavate"), was a translation of the concise manual "Digging up the Past," which Woolley himself revised in his later years, around the same time Wheeler released his manual on new archaeology. These two volumes share very little in common. The sections where Woolley details the excavations of his Mesopotamian "tells" present a captivating, albeit unaware, portrayal of the "pharaonic" tradition of colonial archaeology, where a small team of five archaeologists oversaw over 300 workers.⁴⁰ The content of "Digging up the Past" originates from 1930, thus predating the Wheelerian revolution. "When I was approached to revise my work," Woolley writes in his introduction to the updated edition, "I presumed that nearly 25 years later, it would demand substantial effort from me. I was wrong. Had my writing concentrated on the outcomes of the excavations, surely a majority would need rewriting...but my focus was on the foundational principles and methods, which alter minimally or not at all."⁴¹ Yet, in that very year, Wheeler's groundbreaking method was beginning to seem obsolete to the pioneers laying the groundwork for the new post-Wheelerian archaeology in the 1950s.⁴²

While no one in Italy championed Wheeler's method, the situation in France, a country with a similarly outdated approach to field research,⁴³ was different. The same volume was translated in the early '60s, and the method found a staunch supporter in Paul Courbin. He went against the prevailing conservative views held by the local scientific community in both Paris and Rome.⁴⁴

Courbin's understanding of Wheeler's method falls under what we term "Wheelerism." Not only is there an utter lack of a comprehensive horizontal view of the site (a hallmark of the post-Wheelerian revolution), but Courbin also accentuates and adopts the riskier aspects of Wheeler's approach: a restricted perspective of the excavation visualised in just a small square, rooted in a vertical section, continually informed by preliminary test pits, and still largely relying on unskilled labour.⁴⁵ This methodology results in significant confusion between layers and interfaces, which stands as both the foundation and the pinnacle

of contemporary archaeology.⁴⁶

In Italy, following the 1966 translation of Kathleen M. Kenyon's *Beginning in Archaeology*, which introduced Wheeler's method, the early '70s saw the translation of Louis Frédéric's *Manuel pratique d'archéologie*. Contrary to expectations, this was not a work by a seasoned field archaeologist. By his own description, it was the product of "a traveller, an art historia...an 'archeographer.'" ⁴⁷ He appears to be a classic advocate of Wheelerism.⁴⁸ Frédéric accurately asserts: "We primarily conduct excavations to study stratigraphy." However, his understanding of stratigraphy remains distinctly "geological" and, at least theoretically, overlooks the equally significant counterpart: the interfaces.⁴⁹

While Italy did not have a figure like Courbin, it found something distinct and original in the work of Nino Lamboglia. His scientific significance would only be fully acknowledged much later. For many years, Lamboglia's endeavours remained overlooked, with Italian academic archaeology neither recognising nor learning from his contributions. Despite this academic isolation, Lamboglia still became a guiding light in the Italian archaeological scene, especially for the younger generations. This recognition came even though his formal education and sincere nationalistic beliefs might be seen by some as drawbacks to certain aspects of his historical and antiquarian work.⁵⁰

We wish to highlight only two significant aspects of Lamboglia's work, which are evident throughout his career and particularly showcased in his 1960s excavations behind the Curia in Rome.⁵¹ Lamboglia aimed to establish a meticulous stratigraphic excavation in Rome's centre, standing as a constructive counter to the rampant destructions of the 1930s at the Curia, the Foro of Caesar, and the Imperial Fora.⁵² He sought to illustrate that the stratigraphic method was both essential and timeless. In doing so, he embraced a modern approach to archaeology, which today is viewed as a crucial progression towards the emergence of new urban archaeology.⁵³ Lamboglia's goals were twofold: firstly, "to educate young architects and archaeologists on how to analyse superimposed structures across both space and time" and secondly, "to discern, right in the heart of the "urbe," the actual horizons of ceramics and other archaeological materials from various eras. This understanding was not based on just a few isolated samples or test pits but on the examination of hundreds and thousands of items. These were meticulously collected, sorted, and categorised based on secure stratigraphy and documented in clear archaeological and constructive phases, all of which were well-identified in the field.⁵⁴

Lamboglia expressly acknowledged the stratigraphic excavation as foundational for an evolved ceramology. This perspective sought to transcend the significant yet restrictive view of ceramics merely as chronological markers for the monuments with which they are associated. This particular emphasis, which was met with both sarcastic and pitiable criticism from the archaeological establishment of the era,⁵⁵ laid the groundwork for a fresh study of the ancient world's material culture. Although the phrase "material culture" was not part of Lamboglia's lexicon, his focus marked a pivotal shift. It signified the surmounting of Maiuri's method, initiated in the late 1930s. Maiuri's approach, still regarded as the epitome of officially sanctioned field investigations in Italy, can be characterised as "para-stratigraphic." It lacked a theoretical foundation, was highly constrained in its spatial scope, and was narrowly defined in the aims attributed to stratigraphic practices.⁵⁶

SECTION 4

Lamboglia has been characterised as a post-Wheelerian archaeologist before his time.⁵⁷ His methodology refined the stringent structures of Wheeler's approach. While it still relied on the vertical section, Lamboglia's excavation technique was not constrained by a rigid grid of squares and bulks. Instead, it was

tailored to a site's topographical layout. By the 1970s, it is evident that archaeology began transitioning into a post-Wheelerian phase. Even among staunch proponents of Wheeler's method, there's a prevailing sentiment that it requires reevaluation and modernisation.⁵⁸ Such an evolution suggests a fine-tuning of the stratigraphic excavation techniques, but it does not entail altering the inherent nature of the stratigraphic concept. This concept, solidified through the combined experiences of Wheeler and Kenyon, remains unaltered. In essence, the evolution of Wheeler's system doesn't pertain to the excavation practices per se; it's more about the overarching excavation strategy. This distinction between strategy and techniques represents one of Harris's most pivotal contributions.

Harris outlines a distinction between two fundamental aspects of archaeological excavation. Firstly, there's the strategy or excavation design, which stands independently from the actual excavation techniques. Broadly, there are two primary excavation methods: the arbitrary method and the stratigraphic method. The arbitrary method involves either indiscriminate soil removal using any tool or excavating based on predetermined layers of a set thickness. In contrast, stratigraphic excavation adheres to the natural contours of archaeological deposits, removing them based on their inherent shape and layering. Notably, both these methods can be employed within various excavation strategies. Over the past two centuries, while numerous strategies have been explored, only these two excavation methods have stood the test of time (Page 64 of the Italian edition).

Given the premise that a modern strategy does not inherently guarantee correct stratigraphic excavation, and conversely, a system we might deem obsolete today, such as Wheeler's, does not necessarily indicate an absence of the stratigraphic method, it is essential to underscore that experimenting with newer excavation strategies—especially those applied to large-scale excavations—can influence the quality, depth, and consistency of the historical information derived from the dig.

The proliferation of large-scale excavations has been notable over the last fifteen years.⁵⁹ This strategy, detailed in Barker's recent manual, is conspicuously absent from Harris's volume, which prioritises procedures over the strategic facets of excavation. It has not yet gained widespread acceptance in most European countries. Here, there is a discernible lean towards the comfort of bulks. Even in contemporary manuals, such as the one by De Boüard, there is a palpable hesitation in bridging the old and new strategies. In my opinion, this indicates more a trepidation of the novel than a thorough analysis of the merits or flaws of each approach.⁶⁰

That said, we must proceed with caution and not assume that the quest for innovative strategic principles is solely addressed through large-scale excavation methods. On this, Harris is resolute: Is his critique aimed not at Barker, but towards a burgeoning "Barkerism" that could reintroduce confusion between the strategy and procedures of excavation?

SECTION 5

Harris's work is squarely centered on the chronological, topographic, and non-historical facets of stratification. This encompasses all principles of archaeological stratigraphy that lack historical significance and thus have universal applicability. The stratigraphic interpretation of the soil and its historical analysis are kept distinct, with a theoretical explanation supporting this separation. We should interpret this clear delineation between the two phases of archaeological research not as an irrational effort to rank events, but rather as highlighting the essential and comprehensive distinction of methods and tools within stratigraphic archaeology from related fields. The goal is to foster a more advanced and synergistic integration of various insights.

Andrea Carandini has frequently delved into this subject with his analytical precision; we will not dwell further on detailed explanations here. Instead, we wish to steer our readers' focus toward a pivotal element of this discussion that directly pertains to archaeologists and their professional development.

Through rigorous logical analysis, when we grasp the non-historical aspects of archaeological stratification and affirm its universal applicability, a new professional role emerges. This role is familiar to the Anglo-Saxon archaeological community but remains relatively unknown in Italy: the archaeological stratigraphy specialist. This expert is trained in discerning stratigraphic relationships and identifying interfaces, standing apart from a historian who interprets based on artifact analysis. In essence, this specialist focuses on the “iconography of removal and building actions” or becomes a “typologist of natural and human interventions on the ground.”⁶¹ Given their understanding of the universal laws of archaeological stratification, such specialists can adapt effortlessly to any excavation site. This is primarily because the specific attributes of varying excavations, pertaining to chronology and occupational culture, do not impinge on the stratigraphic interpretation (pp. 79–80 in the Italian edition). Their primary responsibility is identifying the units that form the stratification and comprehending the stratigraphic sequence. Only during the stages of phasing and periodisation will these sequences be segmented and dated based on chronological and cultural insights (pp. 137 and subsequent in the Italian edition).

There is an ongoing debate regarding the professional characterisation of the stratigraphy specialist: its legitimacy and its relation to the conventional field archaeologist as recognised in Italy. This discourse extends to the intervention methodologies and clarifies the nature, future, and objectives of archaeological disciplines. The conversation also influences the foundational distinctions—related more to content than methodologies—among various archaeologies: prehistoric, protohistoric, classic, Christian, medieval, and so on. It challenges long-standing delineations that have rigidly separated disciplines and areas which, in reality, often intersect and overlap within the stratified layers of an archaeological site.

Bruno D'Agostino acknowledges the theoretical foundation of Barker's assertion that different-aged sites and monuments do not necessitate varied excavation techniques.⁶² However, he challenges its practical application.

D'Agostino writes: “While it's feasible to conduct an excavation at an unfamiliar site, any archaeologist experienced with a specific site or cultural element realizes that their excavation technique has evolved over time, becoming more refined. Through continual exposure, they develop an understanding of the site's nuances. When we excavate with prior knowledge of the site, we lean on mental frameworks and models that aid in maximising the evidence—every piece of data, every hint—without overshadowing the actual evidence. Indeed, the methods of excavation and classification remain consistent.”⁶³

D'Agostino makes an important observation, one that I believe resonates with anyone who has revisited the same archaeological site or context multiple times, each visit enriched by more nuanced and expert perspectives.⁶⁴ While it is often the case that we discover what we anticipate, the ideal approach would be to seek what is genuinely present. This would help avoid the pitfall of selective interpretation, a trend that has predominantly marked Italian classic archaeology in comparison to other archaeological disciplines or fields.

A skepticism towards the concept of a modern archaeologist, as inspired by Barker-Harris archaeology, may lead to an extreme view that dismisses the significance of an archaeologist specialising in stratigraphy. Such a view might favour a more historically-erudite approach associated with traditionally trained archaeologists. The Latin expression, “*Rem tene, verba sequentur*” (meaning “Grasp the facts, the words will follow”), attributed to Cato the Elder, suggests that understanding the historical context and asking the right historiographical questions provides the key to unlocking the treasures of the buried past.

This saying can also be interpreted inversely: by understanding the tangible evidence present in the stratigraphic sequence, a deeper and clearer historical interpretation will naturally emerge. However, the prevailing approach in our region leans towards the former understanding. While it is essential to conduct archaeological studies to address significant questions rather than merely achieving academic acclaim, the unique philological nuances of excavation techniques should not be overshadowed.

The archaeological discipline presents a dichotomy: On one hand, we have the archaeologist-historian, steeped in humanistic education, open to insights from emerging sciences, adept at intricate interpretations and dazzling syntheses. Yet, this professional often lacks an understanding of archaeological stratification laws, excavation techniques, and the foundational principles essential for stratigraphic interpretation. On the other hand, there is the stratigraphic archaeologist, who, although skilled in analysing stratigraphic relationships and classifying natural and human actions, may be oblivious to the broader and nuanced historical issues of the site under study. Such an expert is adept at understanding the associations in assemblages, the distinctions between filled and empty spaces, and navigating the underground's four dimensions.

Both these extremes are flawed in isolation. Should they independently manage an entire dig, the results could be starkly different. The archaeologist-historian, lacking the ability to discern the stratigraphic sequence beyond a superficial level, might inadvertently ruin his site. By indiscriminately removing soil, he might focus solely on space's three dimensions, neglecting the critical fourth dimension: time. Ironically, he might miss the historical perspective he set out to discover. In contrast, the stratigraphic archaeologist would deliver a flawless stratigraphic sequence, backed by meticulous documentation—both written and visual. But, the intricacies of this documentation would be mostly lost on others. It would be decipherable mainly through a historical context and specific historiographical inquiries. Subsequent professionals might be tasked with interpreting his meticulous records.

In essence, historical research should never lead to the loss or destruction of invaluable data. Instead, a harmonious blend of both these approaches might be the ideal way forward in the ever-evolving field of archaeology.

Giacomo Boni serves as an intriguing case study in the ongoing debate between the technical and the historical approaches in archaeology. Filippo Coarelli's critique points out the limitations of Boni's purely technical approach.⁶⁵ While Boni's meticulous excavation methodology might have been exemplary, allowing modern archaeologists to trust his findings, the historical conclusions drawn at the time of his excavations were found lacking. Coarelli's observation holds weight. The value of an excavation is not merely in the act of unearthing artifacts but in the interpretative layer that lends meaning to these findings. And while Boni's technical precision has stood the test of time, other scholarly archaeologists who relied heavily on personal observations, lacking rigorous scientific documentation, have not fared as well. Their findings might be challenging to validate or refute due to the absence of detailed records.

D'Agostino's perspective is balanced. An excavator who marries technical prowess with a deep understanding of the site's historical and cultural context would undoubtedly yield richer, more nuanced insights. The hypothetical clash between the archaeologist-historian and the stratigraphic archaeologist should not be about which approach is superior. Rather, it should focus on how the strengths of each can be combined for the betterment of the discipline. In this theoretical tug-of-war, it may be wise for the archaeologist-historian to cede some ground to the stratigraphic archaeologist, particularly if the end goal is a deeper understanding of history. But the ultimate question is: Does this mean a purely technical approach is the best way forward for future research and training? Not necessarily. While the merits of a technically robust methodology are undeniable, sidelining the importance of historical context could be

detrimental. Italy, with its rich archaeological tapestry, needs to address this balance before the dichotomy widens, leading to potential misconceptions and lost opportunities in the realm of archaeological discovery.

Italy's rich archaeological tradition is deeply woven into its historical fabric. As highlighted, archaeology in Italy possesses a distinctive historical character, distinguishing it from the practices of other regions. The evolution of this approach has been shaped by various factors, as described by the three-phase division proposed by Bianchi Bandinelli:

1. Philological Archaeology (till WWI): This phase, spanning until the end of World War I (1914–18),⁶⁶ emphasised the textual and linguistic analysis of artifacts. The focus was predominantly on understanding ancient languages, inscriptions, and using textual references to provide context to archaeological finds.

2. Historic-Artistic Archaeology (Interwar Period): Between the world wars, archaeologists began blending artistic interpretations with historical contexts. Artifacts were perceived not merely as stand-alone items but as integral components of a broader cultural tapestry that conveyed the artistic and aesthetic values of the civilizations they originated from.

3. Historic Archaeology (Post-WWII): After the conclusion of the Second World War, starting in 1945,⁶⁷ there was a shift towards framing the broader historical narratives in alignment with prehistoric and proto-historical contexts. The approach evolved to be more holistic, fusing past learnings with novel methodologies and interpretative lenses.

The influence of Bianchi Bandinelli, particularly through his seminal work “Archeologia come scienza storica” (“Archaeology as historical science”),⁶⁸ has been foundational. He argued for the primacy of archaeology as not merely an auxiliary tool for historians but as a discipline in its own right. His emphasis on archaeology possessing unique methodologies and providing fresh insights has played a pivotal role in its evolution in Italy.

However, this transformative journey of archaeology has not been devoid of challenges. As the discipline grew in stature and assertiveness, it inevitably clashed with traditionalist historians, leading to tensions.⁶⁹ Yet, the ascent of archaeology from an ancillary role to a recognised discipline testifies to Italy's robust scholarly traditions and the continuous endeavors of its researchers to redefine and expand the frontiers of knowledge.⁷⁰

The rise of Italian archaeology's self-reliance and its distinct historical character was not a silent evolution but a vibrant and expressive one. A pivotal hallmark of this autonomy was the establishment of the journal “Dialoghi di Archeologia” (Conversations in Archaeology) in the 1960s.⁷¹ This journal became a platform that heralded the fresh perspectives and methodologies of the time. Notably, many of its early contributors have ascended to eminent positions in Italian academia and the management of cultural resources.

This “radical change”⁷² led not only to an explosion of groundbreaking research but also instilled progressive outlooks concerning heritage management and territorial interventions. A key figure in this transformation was Bianchi Bandinelli. He stressed the importance of strategic excavation practices, advocating for them to be not just selective but also integrated into broader schemes that considered historical significance and environmental contexts.⁷³ His insights reflect a shift from arbitrary digs to a more holistic approach that emphasised preservation and meaningful exploration based on priorities.

With the expanding influence of archaeological practices in piecing together the intricate mosaic of past societies, there arises a pressing urgency to reassess both the theoretical and applied techniques intrinsic to the discipline. The landscape of archaeology is changing, echoing calls for a transformative “new archaeology” and a rejuvenated historical approach. This discourse is not recent but has its roots in

spirited debates sparked by Carandini's "Archeologia e cultura materiale" (Archaeology and material culture) from 1975. This pivotal work underscored the need for a fresh perspective, challenging established norms and pushing the boundaries of archaeological thought and practice.

Archaeology's identity as a historical science offers numerous prospects for academic exploration and systematic structuring, yet it concurrently exposes potential mismatches between the overarching objectives of investigations and the present-day resources and methodologies at hand. The esteemed scholarly journal, "Dialoghi di Archeologia," as early as 1966 accentuated the significance of cultivating historical-philological proficiencies in archaeologists, ranking them higher in priority than mere technical competencies. A year prior to this publication, Bianchi Bandinelli championed such a vision with avant-garde clarity,⁷⁴ a perspective we can only truly appreciate if we engage in an elucidative discourse regarding the essence and depth of a historical-scientific curriculum for budding archaeologists. Throughout the later stages of his academic journey, Bianchi Bandinelli remained fluid in his approaches and theories, consistently attuned to the evolving dynamics and fresh paradigms in the archaeological realm, including this particular aspect.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, a prevalent sentiment within Italy's leading archaeological institutions over the past twenty years appears to demote certain central issues from methodological discussions to mere technical considerations.

Advocating for archaeology's recognition as a historical science is of paramount importance. The outdated viewpoint that relegates archaeology to a mere subsidiary role, or endeavors to reclassify it under art history or even antiquarian pursuits, should be contested. However, as we endeavor to spotlight archaeology's genuine scientific value, refining our methodologies and tools is imperative. Carandini, building on the groundwork laid by Bianchi Bandinelli, asserts that Italy has paved the way to reconcile the erstwhile dichotomy, which only surfaced in the late 19th century, between a scientific approach to archaeology and a humanistic one. It would be a grave oversight to let a rigidly technocratic version of archaeology dominate this discourse. Hence, it is crucial to challenge the decade-long dichotomy that posits humanism against technicism.⁷⁶ Such a stance not only counters the prevailing reservations regarding technicism but also addresses the flawed conflation of means and tools (research methodologies) with the ultimate objectives (historic understanding).

Promoting the distinction between mere collection and purposeful study, archaeologists delve deep, amassing, measuring, and meticulously documenting remnants and features from yesteryears. Their focus remains unyielding: these relics are reflections of past human actions, and more profoundly, of human thought. Such a perspective starkly contrasts archaeology with hobbies like philately. It is not about gathering for the sake of gathering. Instead, it is about understanding and interpreting. In Gordon Childe's words, the difference is as evident as comparing a purpose-driven collection of archaeological data to a casual assemblage of tobacco boxes, as noted in "I frammenti del Passato."⁷⁷

Historical archaeology has evolved, setting itself apart from mere antiquarianism. As Mortimer Wheeler aptly put it: "The archaeologist does not dig for objects, but for human beings." This sentiment encapsulates our philosophy even today. It is easy to understand the cynicism directed towards those who, in their pursuit, lose sight of humanity and history amid the layers of the earth, getting sidetracked by insignificant details, akin to chasing rat holes. This peril lurks in all disciplines demanding a philological method of inquiry. Analogously, it is reminiscent of the strict philologist who cannot look past his marred text, the epigrapher ensnared in mere descriptivism, caught between the archaeological and historical facets of his inscriptions, or the iconographer fixated solely on repetitive patterns.

Despite these pitfalls, we expect meticulous methods and philological precision from philologists, epigraphers, and iconographers for their scholarly integrity. Oddly, archaeologists often receive a free pass

from their peers—a metaphorical “license to kill.” This grants them the leeway to annihilate their sources and evidence, ostensibly to avoid the pitfalls of over-technicality, making any overreach seemingly acceptable.⁷⁸

The act of selectively excavating items based on personal fascination or liking, as highlighted by A. Leroi-Gourhan, is comparable to cherry-picking words from a text while ignoring the structural elements that give it meaning. Just as omitting articles, pronouns, verbs, and other syntactic components from a text renders it incomprehensible, choosing only the intriguing artifacts and disregarding the rest can distort our understanding of the past. To gain a holistic understanding of any historical context or ancient civilization, it is crucial to consider all evidence without bias.

Is not this what an archaeologist, driven only by eagerness to acquire historical information but completely lacking technical skills and tools, would do? No paleographer would be permitted to work on a manuscript without the right tools. Unfortunately, skepticism toward technical methods has often upheld an antiquated conception of monumental archaeology, one that has been in place for two centuries.⁷⁹ This skepticism resulted in the unjustified dismissal of the invaluable information contained within the ground, information that an archaeologist without the necessary stratigraphic excavation skills would struggle to comprehend. For decades, this rejection coexisted with the practice of “shoveling” the soil instead of systematically excavating it. While such indiscriminate methods have unearthed a vast amount of information,⁸⁰ they have simultaneously prevented our discipline from developing innovative methodologies. This has constrained the evolution of our research objectives and the questions we ask.

If we acknowledge that our primary research objective is historical interpretation, and that an archaeologist should not forsake the theoretical and practical mandates of our field for fear of methodological technicism, then I posit that the more astute Italian archaeologists have all the tools they need to address any stagnation our discipline might face. They can distance themselves from the unwanted and often inadvertent idealistic notions that seek to champion history by entirely countering technique and science. If it holds that “to become a proficient historian, an archaeologist must first excel in archaeology”⁸¹ and “broadly speaking, our ability to reference and utilize mental models to enhance our sensitivity and interpretation of archaeological evidence intrinsically relies on understanding the challenges inherent to excavation,”⁸² then it appears to me that the correct course is to establish equilibrium between the twin pillars of field archaeological research. This means striving for that sought-after “integration of diverse research facets: the morphology of stratigraphic units and discoveries, stratigraphy, and history.”⁸³ Achieving this balance is no easy feat, but our aspiration should be to make this the standard, especially for those overseeing field research. Such a goal is paramount in professional training, which, in turn, necessitates broader discourse about the institutions committed to this end. I’ll wrap up by touching on two foundational concepts of Harris’s theoretical framework: the imperative to articulate research methodology and the feasibility of imparting its underlying theory.

The pervasive tendency not to disclose the methodologies used in research often mirrors a widespread deficiency in structured research methods and their inconsistent application. As early as 1939, Kathleen Kenyon highlighted this scientific oversight, which had already faced criticism on multiple occasions, primarily due to the constraints such neglect imposed on the introduction of new methods or the enhancement of existing ones.⁸⁴ This shortcoming not only hampers the discipline’s public perception but also fosters confusion between the research’s objectives and methodologies. Moreover, there is a notable gap in communicating the true essence of an archaeologist’s work and in familiarising the public with the context and techniques through which archaeologists craft history.⁸⁵

The challenge in elucidating field methodologies mirrors the complexity of teaching them. All too

often, a prevailing cliché suggests that one cannot teach excavation methods but should instead rely on common sense. This belief stems from the absence of a coherent, structured method. Instead of offering fixed guidelines, the emphasis is on gaining experience and, over time, developing a technique—or rather, an aptitude—to adapt through ongoing empirical adjustments. While this may have been the predominant perspective in the past, it is surprising that De Boüard begins the chapter on field excavations in his recent manual by stating: “The art of excavation is learned in the field, tools in hand, and not in the books.”⁸⁶

Let’s be clear: the recent recognition and celebration of an archaeologist’s manual skills, as well as the practical aspects of their research activity, are commendable advancements we should continue to foster. The comprehensive nature of an archaeologist’s work, both manual and intellectual, will gain strength as we further elucidate its theoretical underpinnings. Excavation can indeed be taught, especially since the principles of archaeological stratigraphy can be imparted. The more aware we become of this fact, the more stratigraphic archaeology will stand on par with other disciplines that demand rigorous theoretical training before practical implementation. Ever since Harris released his manual four years ago, we have been presented with this opportunity.

My inaugural digging experience was at Corbridge in Northumberland. I readily admit that the methods employed would appall, and justifiably so, any contemporary British archaeologist. However, these methods were emblematic of practices from forty-five years ago. At that time, field archaeology was relatively nascent, and few excavators in the UK felt compelled to emulate the pioneering methods of Pitt Rivers. With the Northumberland County History in the works, there was an interest in obtaining more information about the Roman station at Corbridge, prompting a modest excavation to discern the nature of the site.

The committee sought guidance from Professor Haverfield, a renowned authority on Roman Britain. Planning a holiday to the Roman Wall, he agreed to oversee the dig. The necessity arose to appoint someone responsible for the operations. Given my position as an Assistant Keeper at the Ashmolean Museum, Professor Haverfield, an Oxford scholar, presumed I was inherently qualified. Truthfully, I had never witnessed an excavation, never delved into archaeological methods (primarily because no books on the subject were available), and lacked the know-how to conduct a survey or draft a ground-plan. My only edge was my brief experience handling museum artifacts. My team was similarly composed of unseasoned amateurs. While the first season was deemed an experimental endeavour, its relative success resulted in the formation of a committee dedicated to a comprehensive excavation of the site. Thus, in 1907, I found myself spearheading a significant dig, despite my glaring lack of readiness.⁸⁷ (from L. Woolley’s original book).

Many budding archaeologists from our universities and supervisory bodies might see a reflection of themselves in Leonard Woolley. Like him, they were dispatched to the field by esteemed scholars, unprepared and ill-equipped for the task, yet unable to decline due to the absence of any structured learning alternative. If scenarios similar to what transpired in England at the turn of the century were still prevalent in Italy merely a decade or two ago, and persist even now, then it is imperative to prioritise the professional training of archaeologists in contemporary archaeological discussions. There is a lot at stake, both in terms of advancing scientific research and in the realms of conservation and preservation.

—*Daniele Manacorda*

NOTES

- 1 A. Carandini, *Storie dalla terra*, De Donato, Bari 1981, p.33.
- 2 *Ivi.*, in part. P. 97 ss.
- 3 Sul valore del termine matrix si veda quanto dice lo stesso Harris a p. 166.
- 4 Ph. Barker, *Tecniche dello scavo archeologico*, Longanesi, Milano 1981.
- 5 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 33.
- 6 L'unica generalmente menzionata nei manuali archeologici: Harris, v. p. 169.
- 7 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 264.
- 8 A. Carandini, *Per una 'carta dello scavo archeologico' 1976. Appunti preliminari da sottoporre a discussione*, in "Archeologia medievale", IV, 1977, pp. 257-261; Id., *Contro lo sterro e per lo scavo*, in "Ostia IV", Studi miscellanei 23, De Luca, Roma 1977, pp. 419-424 (quindi in *Archeologia e cultura materiale*, De Donato, Bari 1979², pp. 304-316).
- 9 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 79.
- 10 Su tutto l'argomento si rinvia all'ampia trattazione di Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 38 ss. e p. 86 ss. Le unità stratigrafiche così definite vengono tutte contrassegnate con un numero arabo che non ha alcuna relazione con l'ordine della sequenza stratigrafica. Questa prassi lascia talora sconcertati coloro i quali sono abituati ad identificare di fatto le unità stratigrafiche con le fasi (per cui sotto lo strato I viene individuato uno strato IA o uno strato II, sotto di questo un IIA o un III ...), ma in realtà non fa che ribadire la separazione del momento del riconoscimento della stratificazione da quello della sua interpretazione.
- 11 «Nel corso della storia dell'archeologia l'umile strato — osserva Harris (v. p. 125) — è stato sempre considerato l'ultima ruota del carro».
- 12 Queste problematiche, ad esempio, sono del tutto ignorate anche nell'ultima e recentissima opera di Glyn Daniel (*A short history of archaeology*, Thames & Hudson, London 1981; trad. it.: *Storia dell'archeologia*, Rizzoli, Milano 1982), che pur vuole dedicare il suo capitolo conclusivo ai "Grandi temi dell'archeologia". Si vedano, in proposito, le giuste osservazioni critiche di A. Sherratt, in "Antiquaries Journal", 62, 1, 1982, p. 132.
- 13 B. D'Agostino, *Introduzione* a Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- 14 Interessanti, a questo proposito, sono i metodi di analisi portati avanti, sulla scia del matrix di Harris, da M. O. H. Carver: si veda la recente edizione, curata con G. P. Brogiolo e altri, della *Sequenza insediativa romana e altomedioevale alla Pieve di Manerba (BS)*, in "Archeologia medievale", IX, 1982, p. 237 ss.
- 15 B. D'Agostino, *loc. cit.*
- 16 D'altra parte, se l'occasione dello studio analitico della composizione del suolo è data dalla realizzazione dei grafici delle sezioni, tuttavia per Harris è ancora una volta preminente piuttosto il loro valore di documentazione stratigrafica (v. pp. 107-108).
- 17 *Cit.* a nota 8 di questa introduzione.
- 18 Diretta da Andrea Carandini e coordinata da Antonino Di Vita.
- 19 A. Carandini-S. Settis, *Schiavi e padroni nell'Etruria romana*, De Donato, Bari 1979.
- 20 In assenza di una rivista di archeologia classica che si faccia luogo di dibattito delle problematiche che qui ci interessano, in questi ultimi anni la rivista "Archeologia medievale", diretta da Riccardo Francovich, ha molto contribuito all'opera di avvicino dell'archeologia stratigrafica italiana agli ambienti europei: cito, ad esempio, il saggio di G. Maetke-T. Rysiewska-S. Tabaczynski-P. Urbanczyk, *Problemi dell'analisi descrittiva nelle ricerche sui siti archeologici pluristratificati*, in "Archeologia medievale", IV, 1977, p. 7 ss. e la nota di P. Hudson, *Contributo sulla documentazione dello scavo: problemi di pubblicazione e della formazione dell'archivio archeologico nell'esperienza inglese, ibid.*, VI, 1979, p. 329 ss.
- 21 Su questa esperienza cfr. A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, pp. 33 e 51. Gli atti sono in corso di stampa presso l'editore De Donato.
- 22 O. G. S. Crawford, *Archaeology in the Field*, Phoenix House, London 1960, p. 211.
- 23 B. D'Agostino, *loc. cit.*, pp. 14 e 24.
- 24 *Ivi.*, p. 18. Questo legame ho cercato di mettere in luce in due lavori recenti dedicati a *Cento anni di ricerche archeologiche italiane: il dibattito sul metodo*, in "Quaderni di storia", 16, 1982, pp. 85-119 e *Per un'indagine sull'archeologia italiana durante il ventennio fascista*, in "Archeologia medievale", IX, 1982, pp. 443-470.
- 25 Qualche anno prima Domenico Mustilli si era espresso in favore della costituzione di una sorta di Istituto centrale dedicato ai problemi dello scavo (*La scienza archeologica di fronte ai nuovi metodi di ricerca, in Tecnica e diritto nei problemi della odierna archeologia, Venezia 1962*, Roma 1964, p. 160).
- 26 M. Pallottino, *Archeologia* 1970, in "Archeologia classica", XXII, 1970, pp. 16-17.
- 27 A. Carandini, *art. cit.* (a nota 8); A. Carandini-S. Settis, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
- 28 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 212.
- 29 M. Pallottino, *Che cos'è l'archeologia*, Sansoni, Firenze 1963, pp. 129-130; cfr. D. Manacorda, *Cento anni, cit.*, pp. 109-110.
- 30 D. Manacorda, *Per un'indagine, cit.*; cfr. anche *Aspetti dell'archeologia italiana durante il fascismo*, in "Dialoghi di archeologia", n.s., IV, 1982, 1, pp. 89-96.
- 31 G. Ghirardini, *L'archeologia nel primo cinquantennio della nuova Italia*, Tip. naz. Bertero, Roma 1912; G. Becatti, "Archeologia", in *Cinquant'anni di vita intellettuale italiana (1896-1946)*, II, Napoli 1950, p. 193 ss.
- 32 «Se mi si obietta — precisava Bianchi Bandinelli — che senza sogni romantici Schliemann non avrebbe scoperto Troia, rispondo che avrei preferito che la scoperta fosse stata fatta più tardi e ci avesse fornito elementi più controllati» (R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Prefazione* a A. Mongait, *Civiltà scomparse. L'archeologia nell'Urss*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1964, p. 8).
- 33 Ph. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 30 ss.
- 34 È del 1901 il suo saggio su *Il metodo negli scavi archeologici*, in "Nuova antologia", fasc. 16, luglio 1901, poi ristampato nel 1913: cfr. D. Manacorda, *Cento anni, cit.*, pp. 86-91.
- 35 Nella tabella creata da Harris a p. 60 c'è senz'altro posto anche per Boni: ricordo la descrizione del suo metodo di scavo, basato sulla rimozione degli strati «se cono il loro giacimento naturale» e l'importanza da lui attribuita all'individuazione e allo scavo preventivo delle fosse. Boni — vale la pena ricordarlo — ebbe un ruolo significativo per la nascita, all'inizio del secolo, della British School a Roma (cfr. T. P. Wiseman, *The first Director of the British School*, in "Papers of the British School at Rome", XLIX, 1981, p. 144 ss.).
- 36 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, pp. 61-64; v. Harris a p. 130 ss.
- 37 «Sir Mortimer, come molti innovatori, riuscì a superare i limiti insiti nelle sue innovazioni» (Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 32).
- 38 A. Maiuri, *Principi generali sul metodo dello scavo archeologico*, in "Cooperazione intellettuale", VII-VIII, 1937, p. 57 ss. Sul metodo di A. Maiuri cfr. D. Manacorda, *Cento anni, cit.*, p. 97 ss.
- 39 L. Woolley, *Il mestiere dell'archeologo*, Einaudi, Torino 1957.
- 40 *Ivi.*, p. 127 ss. Si vedano considerazioni analoghe nel libretto di A. Parrot, *Scoperta dei mondi sepolti*, Sansoni, Firenze 1959, p. 16 ss. Si pensi che oggi si discute sulla possibilità di impiego sul cantiere di almeno tre o quattro archeologi per ogni operaio.
- 41 L. Woolley, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- 42 Ph. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 33 ss.
- 43 Si vedano le pagine di A. Ferdière, *La fouille, pour quoi faire?*, in A. Schnap (a cura di), *L'archéologie aujourd'hui*, Hachette, Paris 1980, pp. 23-60, e in particolare i giudizi sull'opera di J.-J. Hatt e P. Courbin, rispettivamente a pp. 29 e 39. Anche Ferdière riconosce la necessità di un superamento del metodo Wheeler ed afferma che «la pesanteur d'un milieu scientifique particulièrement conservateur a conduit à ce que cette technique soit dépassée avant même d'avoir été généralement adoptée» (p. 41).
- 44 P. Courbin, *La fouille*, in G. Charles-Picard, *L'archéologie. Découverte des civilisations disparues*, Paris 1969, pp. 73-89; Id., *La diffusion du système Wheeler*, in "Archeologia", 38, 1971, pp. 44-51.
- 45 P. Courbin, *La fouille, cit.*, p. 89.
- 46 Sono di quegli anni altre prese di posizione di sospettosa

- diffidenza verso il metodo stratigrafico: cfr. ad esempio M. Garašanin, *Quelques remarques sur l'application de la méthode stratigraphique*, in "Starinar", 20, 1969, p. 118, e G. Daux, *Histoire de l'archéologie*, Puf, Paris 1966, p. 76 ss., in part. p. 86.
- 47 L. Frédéric, *Manuale pratico di archeologia*, Mursia, Milano 1980³, p. IX.
- 48 Tanto da accogliere nel suo manuale anche una *Scheda stratigrafica di sezione*: ivi, p. 168. Peccato che nel disegno ideale di una sezione, proposto a p. 162, fig. 72, compaia un grosso svarione: lo strato IV infatti copre lo strato V e ne è contemporanea neamente coperto.
- 49 L. Frédéric, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-161.
- 50 Su Nino Lamboglia cfr. A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, pp. 32-33, 60, 70, 113 e D. Manacorda, *Cento anni, cit.*, pp. 104-108.
- 51 N. Lamboglia, *Uno scavo didattico dietro la Curia Senatus e la topografia del Foro di Cesare*, in "Rendiconti Pontificia Accademia di Archeologia", XXXVII, 1964/65, p. 105 ss.
- 52 Il grande scavo di archeologia stratigrafica urbana che ora si progetta a Roma nell'area dei Fori imperiali si collega quindi idealmente, per alcuni aspetti, a quei mo desti 36 mq indagati da Lamboglia venti anni fa.
- 53 P. Hudson, *Archeologia urbana e programmazione della ricerca: l'esempio di Pavia*, All'insegna del giglio, Firenze 1981; D. Manacorda, *Archeologia urbana a Roma: il progetto della Crypta Balbi*, All'insegna del giglio, Firenze 1982.
- 54 D. Manacorda, *art. cit.*, pp. 121-122.
- 55 Si ricordi la nota polemica con Lugli, su cui cfr. D. Manacorda, *Cento anni, cit.*, p. 106 ss.
- 56 Al metodo Maiuri si rifarà sostanzialmente, trent'anni dopo, la *Propedeutica archeologica* di C. Anti (Cedam, Padova 1966: in part. p. 51 ss.).
- 57 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, pp. 33 e 60.
- 58 P. Courbin, *La diffusion, cit.*, p. 51.
- 59 Ph. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 33 ss. Si veda la violenta polemica anti-barkeriana di O. Olsen, *Rabies archaeologorum*, in "Antiquity", LIV, 210, pp. 15-19 e la risposta di Barker, *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
- 60 M. De Bouïard, *Manuel d'archéologie médiévale*, Paris 1975, pp. 206-207; ma si veda anche A. Ferdière, *art. cit.*, p. 47 ss.
- 61 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 46.
- 62 Ph. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
- 63 B. D'Agostino, *art. cit.*, pp. 22-23.
- 64 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 47.
- 65 F. Coarelli, *Topographie antique et idéologie moderne: le Forum romain revu sité*, in "Annales E.S.C.", 37, 1982, p. 724 ss., in part. p. 727.
- 66 Cfr. ad esempio il giudizio di J. P. Morel, *Un débat à Paris sur Società romana e produzione schiavistica*, in "Quaderni di storia", 16, 1982, p. 319 ss.
- 67 R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Introduzione all'archeologia classica come storia dell'arte antica*, Laterza, Bari 1976, pp. 4-5.
- 68 Pubblicato in *Rendiconti adunanze solenni dell'Accademia dei Lincei*, VII, 9, 1973, p. 717 ss. e ristampato come *Prefazione a Introduzione, cit.*, p. XIII ss.; si veda anche uno scritto di quegli stessi anni su *Sensibilizzazione dell'opinione pubblica in merito all'importanza dei beni archeologici*, in *Regioni e beni archeologici. Atti del convegno regionale dei gruppi spontanei di ricerca archeologica, Firenze 1972*, Firenze 1975, p. 33 ss.
- 69 Ma si veda la fondamentale esperienza riversata nei tre volumi su *Società romana e produzione schiavistica*, Laterza, Bari 1981, frutto di anni di lavoro svolto nell'ambito del Gruppo di antichistica dell'Istituto Gramsci.
- 70 Da ultimo si veda E. Lepore, *Intervento*, in "Opus", I, 1982, 2, p. 428.
- 71 Sull'esperienza dei *Dialoghi di archeologia* si vedano le osservazioni dello stesso R. Bianchi Bandinelli in *AA.BB.AA. e B. C. L'Italia storica e artistica allo sbaraglio*, De Donato, Bari 1974, p. 272 ss. e i cenni di F. Coarelli, *Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli*, in "Belfagor", XXXI, 4, 1976, pp. 438-439.
- 72 R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Introduzione, cit.*, p. VIII.
- 73 Si veda, ad esempio, R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Situazione e prospettive della ricerca archeologica in Italia*, in "Ulisse", XIX, 57, 1966, p. 20 e A. Carandini, *Storie cit.*, p. 77: un'esigenza sentita — su altre basi politiche e ideologiche — anche da al cuni settori dell'archeologia più ufficiale e tecnocratica, e in particolare da Massimo Pallottino (*art. cit.*, a nota 26, pp. 16-17), rappresentante, nell'ambito dell'archeologia italiana di formazione conservatrice e accademica, della concezione storico-antiquaria della disciplina, piuttosto che storico-artistica.
- 74 «Il lato più strettamente tecnico dello scavo stratigrafico, della raccolta dei reperti, della loro inventariazione, della loro conservazione e dell'eventuale restauro, forma un corredo di cognizioni pratiche facilmente acquisibili anche da chi non abbia una preparazione storico-scientifica; ma soltanto chi abbia tale preparazione può dare il lavoro dei tecnici a risultati validi. Perciò anche lo studioso di formazione storica deve avere cognizioni tecniche; ma queste non possono e non debbono prevalere sulle prime» (R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *art. cit.* (a nota 73), p. 22).
- 75 R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Introduzione, cit.*, p. XIII ss.
- 76 A. Carandini, *Archeologia, cit.*, p. 146. Un superamento della questione "oziosa" del rapporto tra archeologia "umanistica" e "tecnica" è propugnato dallo stesso Pallottino sulla base di un richiamo all'unità storiografica dell'oggetto di indagine (Pallottino, *op. cit.*, p. 113). Per una illustrazione dei rapporti sempre più stretti intercorrenti tra la ricerca archeologica e le scienze naturali, fisiche e matematiche «in una dimensione tipicamente storica», si veda G. Gullini, *Archeologia oggi*, in "Atti Accademia Scienze Torino", 111, 1977, pp. 33-51.
- 77 V. Gordon Childe, *I frammenti del passato*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1960, p. 9.
- 78 A. Leroi-Gourhan, *Gli uomini della preistoria*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1961, p. 19.
- 79 P. Pinon, *Comment fouillait-on? au 18e et au début du 19e siècle*, in "Archeologia", 158, 1981, pp. 17-26.
- 80 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 22.
- 81 A. Carandini, *Intervento*, in "Opus", I, 1982, 2, p. 421.
- 82 B. D'Agostino, *art. cit.*, p. 23.
- 83 A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 46.
- 84 Ph. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 299; A. Carandini, *Storie, cit.*, p. 35.
- 85 S. Settis, *Introduzione* a N. Himmelmann, *Utopia del passato*, De Donato, Bari 1981, pp. 24-25, 33; B. D'Agostino, *art. cit.*, p. 12.
- 86 M. De Bouïard, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
- 87 L. Woolley, *op. cit.*, pp.