

UNDERSTANDING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD



This book explores the diverse understandings of the archaeological record from historical and contemporary perspectives while also serving as a guide to reassessing current views. Gavin Lucas argues that archaeological theory has become too fragmented and disconnected from the particular nature of archaeological evidence. The book examines three ways of understanding the archaeological record – as historical sources, through formation theory, and as material culture – then reveals ways to connect these three domains through a reconsideration of archaeological entities and archaeological practice. Ultimately, Lucas calls for a rethinking of the nature of the archaeological record and the kind of history and narratives written from it.

GAVIN LUCAS is Associate Professor in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Iceland. He is the author of three books, *Critical Approaches to Fieldwork* (2001), *An Archaeology of Colonial Identity* (2004), and *The Archaeology of Time* (2005). He is also the editor of several volumes, including *Hofstaðir: Excavations of a Viking Age Feasting Hall* (2009), *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* (with Victor Buchli, 2001), and *Interpreting Archaeology* (with Ian Hodder, Michael Shanks, Alexandra Alexandri, Victor Buchli, John Carmen, and Jonathan Last, 1995).

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For Elín, Marteinn, and Benjamín

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

<i>Illustrations</i>	<i>page ix</i>
<i>Tables</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xiii</i>
1. The Trouble with Theory	<i>I</i>
2. The Total Record	<i>18</i>
3. Formation Theory	<i>74</i>
4. Materialized Culture	<i>124</i>
5. Archaeological Entities	<i>169</i>
6. Archaeological Interventions	<i>215</i>
7. A 'New' Social Archaeology?	<i>258</i>
<i>References</i>	<i>267</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>301</i>

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01026-0 - Understanding the Archaeological Record

Gavin Lucas

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Archaeological alchemy; or, how archaeologists spin stories from scraps.	<i>page 15</i>
2. Schematic representation of the simplification of sampling theory and its separation from formation theory.	65
3. Transformation processes in operation at a wrecker's yard in New York in 1966.	94
4. Michael Schiffer's flow model for durable objects through a cultural system.	97
5. Warren DeBoer's taphonomic model of the archaeological record, with Schiffer's division between systemic and archaeological context added.	101
6. The problem of time averaging: cumulative graph showing changing composition of three hypothetical faunal assemblages at fifty-year intervals.	109
7. Stratigraphic matrix of a simple sequence of three units, transposed onto an entropy grid.	122
8. Hawkes's ladder of inference juxtaposed with Childe's division of material and spiritual culture.	139
9. New model of externalization that emerged in the mid-twentieth century.	143
10. Leroi-Gourhan's view of the exteriorization of techniques in evolutionary perspective.	147
11. Binford's and Hodder's views of the relation between behaviour and material culture.	155
12. Grid of forces defining objects and events.	187

x • *Illustrations*

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 13. The two basic meanings of the archaeological assemblage and their mutually interdependent nature. | 197 |
| 14. Buildings as organisms. | 203 |
| 15. Diagrammatic representation of how assemblages stabilize and disperse. | 212 |
| 16. Grid of forces of assembly and disassembly in terms of the processes of enchainment and dispersal, and containment and exposure. | 213 |
| 17. Hodder's version of the archaeological operation: the hermeneutic spiral. | 225 |
| 18. The assembling process: sorting finds as they come out of the ground. | 235 |
| 19. The translation process: mobilizing properties from one material medium to another. | 240 |
| 20. Visual translation devices: an archaeological planning frame and artist's perspective frame. | 241 |

TABLES

1. Patrik's Five Meanings of the Archaeological Record	<i>page 7</i>
2. Three Meanings of the Archaeological Record as Used in This Book Compared to Patrik's Scheme	10
3. Types of Sources Available to History and Archaeology (Pre- and Protohistory)	58
4. Grid of Externalization Implicit in Nineteenth-Century Views of Culture, Defined by Two Characteristics: Immediacy and Stability	131
5. The Archaeological Concept of Assemblage Articulated through the Concepts of Enchainment and Containment	200
6. Different Proposed Schemes for Dividing Archaeological Theory from the 1970s and 1980s	223

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978-1-107-01026-0 - Understanding the Archaeological Record

Gavin Lucas

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

This is one of those books that had a long gestation. It began primarily as an attempt to develop some of the themes explored in the last chapter of my book *Critical Approaches to Fieldwork* (Lucas 2001a; see also Lucas 2001b), in which I looked at the idea of archaeology as a materializing practice. These ideas were most immediately developed in the context of seminars I gave, first at the Department of Archaeology at Manchester University in 2002 and then at the Center for Archaeology at Stanford University in 2004. Much of this work has been used extensively in Chapter 6. I first started to write a book on this theme during a sabbatical break in Portugal in 2005, but it simply did not work. In the same year, however, I published a book called *The Archaeology of Time* (Lucas 2005), and the chapter I wrote on the archaeological record was instrumental in taking me in a new direction. Discussions on the subject with Tim Murray during this period were particularly influential (see e.g. Lucas 2007b), and these ultimately led me to develop the concept of a book on the archaeological record, but connecting it to my earlier interest in materiality. My sabbatical in the fall of 2008 took me back to Stanford, where I began work on the new manuscript in earnest. Over the next few years of writing the book, interrupted inevitably by other tasks, I also wrote and published a number of shorter articles in which I explored and rehearsed many of the themes addressed in this book, especially the rather complex ideas presented in Chapter 5 (e.g. Lucas 2007a, 2008, 2010b, 2010c).

Given all this, many people need to be thanked: the University of Iceland, for the time in which to write this book; the Archaeology Center at Stanford University, for hosting my sabbatical as a visiting scholar

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Gavin Lucas
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xiv • *Preface*

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