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Archaeological Value: Epistemological Foundations and Practical Implications

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Abstract:

In archaeology and heritage studies, "archaeological value" is a term frequently used yet often lacking clear epistemological and philosophical context. Its ambiguity is particularly problematic in academic and professional discourse, leading to inconsistent and sometimes flawed evaluations of archaeological artifacts. This study seeks to address this ambiguity by exploring the concept from two perspectives: the philosophical dimension, focusing on axiological semantics, and the archaeological dimension, emphasizing its empirical application in practice. By examining how socio-cultural constructs and historical contexts influence perceptions of value, this paper proposes a novel framework to reconcile theoretical and practical perspectives. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study aims to establish a coherent epistemological basis for understanding and applying "archaeological value."

Keywords: Archaeological value, Epistemology, Axiology, Cultural valuation, Heritage studies.

Introduction

The evaluation of archaeological materials is a cornerstone of archaeological and heritage studies, shaping decisions regarding artifact preservation, acquisition, and interpretation. Despite its central importance, the concept of "archaeological value" is frequently used without a clear epistemological or philosophical foundation. While this term appears prominently in academic discussions within the humanities and social sciences, it is often employed without precise conceptual understanding. This ambiguity results in inconsistent evaluations and limits the development of a standardized framework for assessing the value of archaeological materials.

The lack of clarity surrounding "archaeological value" has profound consequences. It fosters a fragmented, uncritical application of the term, where evaluations of artifacts often reflect sociocultural biases rather than systematic or objective criteria. These biases can lead to a failure to recognize the multifaceted value of artifacts, focusing narrowly on particular dimensions—such as economic or historical value—while neglecting others, such as cultural or contextual significance. Compounding this issue is the relative and variable nature of societal values, which challenges the establishment of universal standards for archaeological evaluations.

A critical question arises in this context: To what extent does the value assigned to artifacts by archaeologists align with the values perceived by their original creators and users? Addressing this methodological issue requires a dual approach. The first involves a philosophical investigation into the axiological semantics of "value," exploring its theoretical and epistemological dimensions. The second entails defining and contextualizing "archaeological value" from an archaeological perspective, focusing on its practical applications in the evaluation and interpretation of artifacts.

This study seeks to bridge these perspectives by constructing a comprehensive framework for understanding and applying the concept of "archaeological value." By examining its philosophical underpinnings and practical implications, the research aims to reconcile subjective sociocultural influences with objective evaluative criteria. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper theoretical understanding of value in archaeology while offering practical tools for more consistent and

rigorous artifact assessment. Ultimately, this framework aspires to foster greater interdisciplinary consensus and improve the methodologies employed in archaeological practice.

1. The Etymological Foundation of the Term "Value"

The term *qiyamah* (value) carries rich linguistic and cultural connotations in Arabic, reflecting its significance in various contexts. In the Qur'an, Surah Al-Bayyina, verse 3, the term appears as “wherein are valuable scriptures” (هَاتَا كَاتَا فِي قَيِّمَاتٍ), interpreted as "straight scriptures that distinguish truth from falsehood." This interpretation underscores associations with correctness, alignment with truth, and moral rectitude. Classical Arabic lexicons provide further insights into the term's meaning. Ibn Manzur, in *Lisan al-Arab*, defines *qiyamah* as "the price of something when assessed" (ابن منظور، ب ت، ص 3781), linking the term to measurable worth or market value. Al-Jawhari, in *Al-Sihah*, explains: “The value (*qiyamah*) is a singular of 'values,' and its root is 'waw.' To make something *qawim* is to make it straight or correct” (الجوهري إسماعيل بن حماد، 2017، ص 978). These interpretations highlight the term's connection to stability, steadfastness, and structural integrity, with the root *qiyam* (قيام) emphasizing ideas of standing, determination, and durability.

In Western traditions, the term "value" originates from the Latin verb *valere*, meaning "I am strong." This root reflects notions of strength, vitality, and resilience, which later evolved into broader ideas of success, adaptability, and significance. These foundational meanings shaped the adoption of "value" into European languages, including English, where traces of the original sense persist. In English, "value" has become a flexible term, adapting to a wide range of intellectual and cultural contexts while retaining its core association with worth and importance. This evolution illustrates how cultural frameworks influence the interpretation and application of fundamental concepts like value.

In English, the term "value" is used in various contexts, each with distinct implications. In a general sense, it refers to the importance or usefulness of something, whether tangible or intangible. In the moral context, "value" denotes ethical principles or standards, such as honesty and fairness, which are regarded as desirable or correct. Philosophically, it differentiates between intrinsic value, signifying something's inherent worth, and instrumental value, which pertains to

its utility in achieving specific goals. Economically, "value" refers to financial

worth, encompassing concepts such as price and economic significance (Schwartz, S. H, 1992, pp. 1–65). These diverse meanings reflect the adaptability of the term across disciplines, while its core notion of worth remains constant. A comparative analysis of Arabic and Western perspectives reveals shared emphases on worth and durability, though each cultural tradition inflects the concept with its unique philosophical and practical nuances.

2. Philosophical Perspectives on the Concept of Value

The exploration of value as a concept began with humanity's intellectual pursuit of truth and understanding, which emerged prominently in Greek philosophy during the 6th century BCE. Early thinkers such as Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes laid the foundations for philosophical inquiry, but the study of value became more focused with the Platonic school (427–347 BCE). Plato associated value with the ideals of goodness, beauty, and truth, emphasizing that true value exists in the realm of ideas rather than material objects. He proposed that ideal forms, such as justice and virtue, represent fundamental values that humans should aspire to comprehend and embody. Plato regarded reason as the key to perceiving and judging these values, asserting that rational thought is essential for achieving happiness and success in life.

Aristotle (384–322 BCE), Plato's student, advanced the discussion of value in systematic ways through his Aristotelian school. He categorized value into two types: actual values, which are inherent qualities such as health, beauty, and happiness, and potential values, which represent capacities to achieve higher states, such as virtue and knowledge. Aristotle's philosophy underscored the importance of actualizing potential values to lead a fulfilling life. The Hellenistic period, following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, saw the emergence of diverse schools such as Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism. These schools viewed values such as happiness, virtue, and self-composure as the ultimate goals of human life. For example, Stoicism emphasized rationality, justice, courage, and prudence as essential virtues for achieving happiness, while self-composure and mental tranquility were particularly valued by Skeptics. Rational thinking was universally regarded as a means to achieve virtuous and balanced living, aligning philosophical thought with practical life goals.

In Eastern traditions, Chinese philosophy also made significant contributions to the understanding of value, particularly during the Zhou Dynasty. Thinkers like

Laozi, Confucius, and Mozi sought ethical and political solutions that addressed the practical realities of Chinese society rather than engaging in metaphysical abstraction. Taoism and Confucianism, two prominent schools, emphasized moral philosophy, ethical conduct, and harmony in personal and societal contexts (عمر 66–53 ص ص 1999، عبد الحي). Regarding the concept of value, Al-Awa states: “*The concept of value is a mental activity that envisions something of significance and calls it value*” (44–43 ص ص 1986، العوا، عادل). This perspective suggests that value is not an inherent property of objects but rather a construct of the human mind, shaped by individual inclinations, emotions, and socio-cultural contexts. These values are passed down and refined across generations, reflecting humanity's evolving understanding of significance and worth.

3. The Original Value of Things

When discussing the value of things, particularly in archaeology where it is referred to as the "value of archaeological materials," a distinction must be made from other non-material values such as beauty, truth, and goodness, as explored in axiological studies. Ahmad Bauer, in his analysis of the "riddle of value," posits that the foundation of value lies in the object's existence. He argues that an object's perfection and goodness are measured by its realization of its unique purpose for existence (4 ص 2021، باور أحمد). For Bauer, the inception of value in an object occurs simultaneously with its creation. This implies that objects are brought into existence to fulfill a specific purpose, such as a pen for writing or a clay pot for storage, and their value is tied to this purpose. This concept aligns with the theory of values, which asserts that the "original value" of an object emerges from the necessity that drives its creation. Practically, this value is often linked to price, as the existence of an object grants it material value.

Philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) echoes this view, suggesting that the value of humans and objects alike is represented by a price (توماس هوبز، 2011، ص 94). In the economic realm, value manifests as price, influenced by human needs and desires. Humans, as creators of objects, assign value based on the utility and desirability of these objects. The greater the need or desire for something, the higher its perceived intrinsic value. However, when these needs and desires fade, the original value of the object diminishes, revealing its subjective nature. In this context, the value of archaeological materials is deeply tied to their relevance and utility within their historical, cultural, or interpretive frameworks.

Despite the utilitarian and subjective nature of value, the purpose behind creating an object often transcends material utility. Objects, whether tools, artifacts, or artworks, are frequently designed to embody higher moral values such as goodness, beauty, and justice in Platonic thought, or happiness, virtue, and knowledge in Aristotelian philosophy. Adil Al-Awa emphasizes the human role in conceptualizing value, arguing that humans actively seek and reveal value within objects rather than merely recognizing inherent qualities (العوا، عادل، 1986، ص ص 44–43). This perspective highlights a contrast between the concept of original value, which stems from an object's intrinsic purpose, and the value humans attribute based on personal, cultural, or societal frameworks.

4. Post-Use Value of Objects

The creation of an object is a deliberate act that involves intellectual and cognitive effort, as well as the investment of time, both of which are crucial in defining the object's original value. These values often stem from the material nature of the object, the technical craftsmanship involved in its production, and the creativity or discovery that accompany its creation. Such values reflect the intended purpose and function of the object, marking the phase in which it embodies the original intent. For example, prehistoric stone tools were crafted to fulfill specific needs, contributing to human survival and the development of early societies. These objects thus carry functional value, with each use accumulating additional layers of meaning, often aligned with human ethical values such as goodness, beauty, and happiness.

However, once these objects are in use, they may acquire new sets of values that depart from their original intent. For instance, stone tools originally designed for survival purposes—such as hunting—might later be repurposed for warfare, transforming their value from one associated with life-sustaining activities to one linked with destruction and conflict. This shift in value illustrates a broader, more complex ethical dimension of human behavior: the ability to alter the meaning and purpose of objects based on context. The repurposing of objects often reflects deeper, darker aspects of human ethics, including values tied to harm and sorrow. Yet, despite this transformation, the objects retain their historical and material link to their original context, a reminder of the multifaceted nature of value across time.

This evolution in the value of objects presents a significant challenge for researchers, particularly archaeologists. The question arises: Are the original values of these objects inherently positive or negative, or do they hold different meanings based on cultural context? From an archaeological standpoint, the original values are often viewed through the lens of the creator—reflecting the creator’s knowledge, beliefs, and emotional or moral inclinations. These values can be categorized as historical or archaeological values, and more broadly, they align with civilizational values that give objects their cultural and temporal significance. Thus, understanding the post-use value of objects requires careful consideration of how their meaning shifts within different cultural and historical contexts, making it a complex interpretive task for archaeologists.

5. Value and the Element of Time

Time plays a crucial role in shaping both the physical and philosophical dimensions of human experience. Philosophically, time is often considered a linear or cyclical progression that structures events and their relationships. Physically, it is regarded as the fourth dimension of space, interwoven with concepts of relativity and absolute measurements. Additionally, time encompasses psychological dimensions, influenced by individual and collective experiences. When intersecting with the concept of value, time acts as a transformative force, altering how values are perceived, evaluated, and maintained. Time not only modifies the stability of values but also elevates some while challenging the endurance of others. This interaction between time and value can be understood through several key insights:

A. Time as a Modifier of Value Stability

Values can be categorized as either stable or mutable over time. Certain values, such as honesty, justice, or respect for human dignity, are often considered timeless. These values are seen as fundamental principles that remain relatively constant across generations and cultures. In contrast, other values fluctuate in response to shifting economic, political, or social circumstances. For instance, in archaeology, the value of an artifact may change depending on the societal context in which it is evaluated. The needs, priorities, and technological advancements of a society can shape how value is attributed to material culture at a given moment.

B. The Strengthening of Values Over Time

Some values, particularly those associated with collective identity or national pride, can gain significance as time progresses. As societies evolve and their historical narratives are passed down to future generations, values related to patriotism, cultural heritage, or shared memory often become more pronounced. Over time, these values acquire emotional weight, as they are continuously reaffirmed and passed on, becoming integral to the identity of a group. For example, national monuments or artifacts may grow in importance due to their association with pivotal moments in history, often taking on greater significance as they are memorialized across generations.

C. Time's Influence on Individual and Social Evaluation

At an individual level, personal values often evolve in response to life experiences and shifting circumstances. A person's ethical framework might be influenced by pivotal moments, such as education, relationships, or transformative experiences. Similarly, collective values undergo transformations as they adapt to historical and political changes. For example, the values of freedom, justice, and equality have taken on different meanings across various historical periods, as societies confront new challenges and conflicts. The evolution of these values illustrates how time, both personal and societal, impacts what is deemed valuable at any given moment.

D. Value Effectiveness According to Time Periods

Certain values resonate more strongly during specific historical periods. In times of crisis or social upheaval, values like social solidarity, mutual aid, and community cohesion are often emphasized as essential for survival and stability. Conversely, in times of peace and economic prosperity, values associated with individual development, creativity, and innovation tend to take precedence. These shifts demonstrate how societal needs and collective priorities shape the value systems that guide human action during different temporal contexts.

E. The Resilience of Values Over Time

The enduring strength of a value is often revealed through its ability to withstand the test of time. If a value persists across generations and retains its significance despite changing circumstances, it indicates a deeper, intrinsic worth. The resilience of such values suggests they are rooted in fundamental human needs or universal principles that transcend temporal fluctuations. For instance, core

ethical values like honesty or justice continue to resonate through time, even as specific social contexts and practices evolve. The ability of such values to endure across diverse periods and societies highlights their foundational importance in shaping human experience.

6. Value as an Output of Archaeological Thought

Archaeological artifacts derive their value from their role as indispensable material historical documents. These objects serve as critical tools for testing the validity of historical narratives, filling gaps within those narratives, or even contributing to the creation of new ones. However, the concept of value in archaeological thought seeks to distinguish itself from other related notions such as importance, meaning, interpretation, and semantic load. This distinction is essential for advancing archaeological discourse with greater precision. By clearly defining "value," we can provide a more structured and methodological framework for understanding the artifacts under study and their role in the broader context of human history.

Despite its centrality to archaeological practice, the literature on the value of archaeological artifacts has yet to elevate the term to the level of a precise scientific concept. Instead, the term is often used ambiguously, leading to conceptual confusion. This lack of clarity hinders our ability to fully grasp the epistemological and methodological implications of "value" in archaeological research. The resulting semantic disorder undermines the intellectual rigor and coherence of archaeological inquiry, preventing the field from achieving a more unified understanding of how value is attributed to material culture. In turn, this impacts the methodologies archaeologists employ, making it difficult to establish universally accepted standards for evaluating artifacts.

Given the current epistemological and methodological landscape, it is clear that the concept of value remains a work in progress within archaeological research. This situation is reflected in two key areas that require further exploration:

- The theoretical frameworks that seek to define the value of archaeological artifacts.
- The practical steps or procedures through which the value inherent in archaeological materials can be determined or extracted.

These challenges lead to several important epistemological questions:

- Does the value of archaeological finds exist independently of the observer (i.e., the archaeologist)?
- Is the value we assign to archaeological finds the result of an interaction between the objects and the researcher?
- How does the value determined by the archaeologist compare to the value attributed to the artifacts by their original creators and users? This raises a fundamental methodological issue: How can we ensure that the values defined in archaeological research accurately reflect those assigned within the original cultural context?

This complex epistemological situation invites us to propose more robust definitions of "archaeological value" in an effort to address these unresolved questions. By doing so, we can move closer to a more systematic and methodologically sound approach to understanding the value of archaeological artifacts.

7. The Implications of the Concept of the Value of Archaeological Finds and Their Various Uses

The value of archaeological finds is a multifaceted concept, shaped through the interaction of archaeologists, social stakeholders, and the historical and cultural contexts in which these finds exist. As such, it is not a fixed notion but rather an output of a dynamic system where scientific, social, and cultural elements converge, making it difficult to establish a single, precise definition. From an epistemological standpoint, the value attributed to archaeological materials is influenced by the theoretical models and methodologies employed by researchers. These frameworks are often shaped by the prevailing social imagination, which in turn influences how historical narratives of the past are constructed and understood.

The concept of archaeological value is further complicated by external factors such as power dynamics and political agendas, particularly in heritage management and the interpretation of archaeological sites. Political interests and management strategies can alter or restrict the perceived value of archaeological finds, often reducing them to symbols of national identity, economic value, or

cultural heritage. Different researchers offer varying definitions based on their focus areas, which further illuminates the concept's fluidity. For instance, Marie Leclerc (2018, p. 25) argues that archaeological value lies in the ability of finds to reveal a clear historical narrative of past societies, including their ways of life, religious beliefs, and responses to environmental challenges. She suggests that each artifact, building, or artwork serves as a crucial piece of the puzzle, helping to reconstruct the shared history of humanity.

On the other hand, Juan Fernandez (2019, pp. 567-589) emphasizes a more research-oriented perspective, seeing value as the potential of archaeological finds to answer scientific questions about human history. In his view, each artifact or stratigraphic layer provides crucial information that enhances our understanding of key historical processes such as chronology, continuity, and cultural transformation. Elena Gomez (2022, pp. 145-162), however, highlights the economic aspect of archaeological value, framing it in terms of its ability to attract tourists and contribute to local economies. She argues that archaeological heritage can be commodified, transforming it into an asset for communities that fosters sustainable development through cultural tourism and increased awareness about the importance of preservation.

These varied perspectives illustrate the inherent conceptual ambiguity surrounding the value of archaeological finds, which can be understood in at least three distinct dimensions.

- a) First, there is the **historical dimension**, which pertains to the relationship between society and archaeological artifacts, emphasizing the role of material culture in nourishing collective memory.
- b) Second, the **research dimension** focuses on the relationship between the researcher and the artifacts, where value is defined by the research goals and questions, such as understanding cultural transformations and human behaviors.
- c) Finally, the **commercial and investment dimension** transforms the archaeological find into a commodity with economic worth, driven by its ability to attract customers and stimulate local economies.

Given this complexity, the concept of value in archaeology does not have a single, absolute meaning but is instead constructed through various interpretations based

on context—historical, cultural, economic, and more. To clarify this ambiguity, two definitions can be proposed that acknowledge the fluidity of value while providing a framework for understanding it in archaeological discourse. These definitions emphasize that value in archaeology is often contingent upon the researcher's interpretive approach and the interaction between the find and the researcher. In some cases, the value of a find is viewed as inherent, discovered through systematic analysis, while in others, the researcher actively interprets and assigns value based on observable variables and contextual understanding. Thus, the concept of value in archaeological research plays a crucial role in shaping not only academic inquiry but also the broader cultural, historical, and economic narratives associated with archaeological heritage.

8. True Value

True value refers to the inherent significance of an archaeological find, determined by its original life function and role in its culture, independent of its later use as an artifact or its commercialization in the heritage and cultural tourism markets. From this perspective, archaeologists focus on revealing the original meaning of archaeological remains as evidence of past human activity. These remains serve as windows into the cultural, social, and technological practices of past societies, and their true value lies in their ability to represent specific classes of archaeological phenomena—be it in architecture, industry, art, religion, or burial practices.

The expression of true value, however, is directly influenced by the condition of preservation of the archaeological find. Over time, materials often degrade, leading to the loss of components that may be essential for fully understanding their original significance. Moreover, the deterioration of the find's cultural and environmental context further diminishes its temporal and cultural meaning. To counteract this, archaeologists use statistical methods to reconstruct and fill in these gaps by aggregating measurements and variables derived from available archaeological descriptions. This approach provides a framework for attributing meaning to the incomplete evidence, allowing archaeologists to derive new insights and re-establish significance from what remains.

This conceptualization of true value can be considered both quantitative and qualitative. It emphasizes the importance of every archaeological find, avoiding

selective neglect of artifacts from a site. Value cannot be separated from the conceptual framework within which archaeologists interpret their discoveries; it emerges from a relationship between the find and the archaeologist, with the find itself guiding the thought process. Through careful analysis, the archaeologist seeks to uncover the value originally assigned to the object by its makers or users, considering the cultural, political, and religious context in which it existed. The goal is to identify meaningful indicators and variables that offer statistical representation of the find's role in the original society. However, challenges arise from the specific nature of archaeological sites, which reflect the unique cultural, political, and religious systems of the societies that produced them. A similar object may hold varying levels of value across different societies or temporal periods. For instance, in the prehistoric era, tools such as stone flakes were highly valued in certain contexts, while similar materials, like pebbles, were largely ignored. This illustrates how values associated with a specific type of find may shift over time, presenting both epistemological and methodological challenges for archaeologists seeking to generalize value across societies or periods.

9. Hypothetical Value

Hypothetical value arises from the interactive relationship between the archaeologist and the archaeological find, yet it differs from "true" value in both its starting point and its focus. While true value reflects inherent qualities of the artifact itself, hypothetical value is contingent on the research question guiding the archaeological study. In this context, the value of an artifact is not determined by its intrinsic properties but by its ability to answer specific research questions posed by the archaeologist.

For example, a particular type of artifact may acquire value as a cultural indicator or as a chronological marker. A pottery vessel, for instance, could hold ritual significance, representing a religious value, or it could have political significance, such as being used in ceremonies to appoint a ruler, thereby establishing a political value. These forms of value are considered "true values" because they are based on observable qualities or functions. In contrast, hypothetical value emerges when an artifact is assigned significance by the researcher based on its presumed role in answering a particular research question. For example, a pottery vessel may be

considered an index fossil—a term used in archaeology to describe a characteristic find that helps define a specific period or event. In this case, the value is hypothetical, as it is not inherent to the object but is constructed by the researcher based on its potential to serve as a chronological or cultural marker. Similarly, a set of finds might be used to reconstruct the cultural profile of a specific community or to define the temporal framework of a period. Hypothetical value, therefore, is a composite value: it is interpretive and created by the researcher rather than directly extracted from the artifact itself.

The concept of hypothetical value also plays a crucial epistemological role in structuring the methodological framework of archaeological research. It reveals the different systems that underlie the site's organization, such as spatial distribution, temporal succession, and relative dating. By attributing value to finds based on their potential to address research questions, archaeologists establish an interpretive framework that guides the analysis of artifacts and their relationships to broader historical and cultural contexts. Thus, hypothetical value is not only a tool for interpretation but also an essential part of the epistemological structure that shapes archaeological methodology.

10. Theoretical Biases and Their Impact on the Concept of the Value of Archaeological Finds

Theoretical biases in archaeology refer to the frameworks or interpretive approaches that archaeologists adopt when investigating archaeological phenomena. These biases influence the way archaeologists engage with material culture, affecting the methodologies they employ, the objectives they pursue, and the interpretations they generate. It is widely recognized that archaeological schools differ in their goals, procedural methods, and interpretive models. As a result, the concept of value attached to archaeological finds can vary significantly depending on the school of thought. These biases shape the relationship between the archaeologist and the artifact, determining whether the value derived is more closely aligned with an artifact's intrinsic qualities (true value) or shaped by the archaeologist's subjective interpretation (hypothetical value). This section explores how different archaeological schools influence the determination of

these values, identifying which schools are better suited to determining true value and which focus on hypothetical value.

A. The Historical-Cultural School

The Historical-Cultural school primarily utilizes typology, classification, and functional approaches to understand archaeological finds. This school emphasizes descriptive analysis, with the initial task of the archaeologist often being to classify and label the find, a process that is viewed as central to archaeological interpretation. This approach prioritizes the organization of finds within a chronological and cultural framework, linking artifacts to specific cultural groups or historical periods (Oliver J. T. Harris & Craig N. Cipolla, 2017, p. 16). The value assigned to the find in this context is closely tied to the completeness of the artifact and the information it can provide about its cultural and temporal context. However, the preservation state of the find can sometimes introduce uncertainty into its interpretation. Nevertheless, the methodology of this school tends to place the find at the center of the analysis, leading to the attribution of what may be considered a more "true" value, albeit with some potential for ambiguity due to incomplete data.

B. The Processual School (New Archaeology)

The Processual school, or New Archaeology, emerged with a focus on quantitative methods and the application of modern scientific techniques. This school advocates for a positivist approach, seeking to explain past human behavior through testable hypotheses and empirical data rather than merely describing artifacts. By incorporating methods such as experimental archaeology and the analysis of operational sequences, Processual archaeologists aim to reconstruct the behaviors, social structures, and technological practices of past societies (Oliver J. T. Harris & Craig N. Cipolla, 2017, p. 19). The primary goal of this school is to understand why past human societies behaved in certain ways, emphasizing the use of measurements and data to draw conclusions. The artifact, in this context, plays a central role, with the archaeological find guiding the research process. The methodological rigor of the Processual school generally results in a clearer alignment with "true value," as the emphasis is on objective, scientifically derived interpretations that avoid over-relying on subjective speculation.

C. The Post-Processual School

The Post-Processual school critiques the methodological and theoretical foundations of the Processual approach, arguing that archaeology cannot be a purely scientific endeavor like the natural sciences. Instead, Post-Processual theorists view archaeology as inherently ideological, asserting that archaeological interpretations are influenced by the archaeologist's own biases, cultural context, and theoretical perspectives (Oliver J. T. Harris & Craig N. Cipolla, 2017, p. 22). In this framework, the role of the archaeologist becomes central to the interpretation of archaeological finds, with the meaning assigned to an artifact shaped more by the archaeologist's ideological stance than by the intrinsic properties of the find itself. As a result, the value determined by Post-Processual archaeology is typically more aligned with "hypothetical value," as it reflects an interpretive, context-dependent process rather than an objective assessment of the artifact's inherent worth. The emphasis on subjectivity in this school demonstrates how theoretical biases can influence not only the interpretation of value but also the perceived significance of the archaeological record.

This overview of theoretical biases illustrates how the approach to archaeological inquiry shapes the type of value attributed to artifacts. While some schools, such as the Historical-Cultural and Processual schools, tend to emphasize more objective or "true" values, others, like the Post-Processual school, engage more deeply with subjective interpretations, yielding "hypothetical" values that reflect the theoretical and ideological perspectives of the archaeologist.

Conclusion:

The topic of archaeological value is undeniably significant within archaeological studies, as it presents a complex epistemological challenge. The concept remains fraught with ambiguity, making it difficult to define and consistently apply. This complexity highlights the need for a rigorous, in-depth examination of its meaning and implications. It is crucial to contextualize the term within various theoretical frameworks, particularly those within the field of archaeology, where the researcher's influence and interaction with the material—representing a value judgment—play a pivotal role. This study concludes that:

The concept of "value" emerged with the development of philosophical thought, particularly in Greek philosophy, where it was linked to ideals such as virtue, happiness, and moral excellence. Plato and Aristotle viewed value as intrinsic to ideals, while the Hellenistic schools focused on happiness and virtue as the ultimate moral goals. In contrast, Chinese philosophical traditions, such as Confucianism and Taoism, emphasized ethical values grounded in practical life and societal harmony. In contemporary thought, value is understood as a mental concept shaped by human perception, social interaction, and cultural context, making it dynamic and subject to transmission across generations.

In the context of archaeological artifacts, however, defining the value of these materials remains an intellectual challenge, often marked by methodological imprecision. Although these artifacts are vital for reconstructing history and correcting narratives, attempts to objectively define "archaeological value" face significant hurdles. This lack of clarity often leads to cognitive confusion, impeding a comprehensive understanding of artifacts and hindering rigorous scientific analysis. As a result, archaeological research must develop clearer theoretical models and methods to evaluate the intrinsic value of artifacts within their cultural contexts, minimizing the influence of contemporary biases to ensure scientific accuracy and objectivity.

The concept of "archaeological value" is further complicated by its multifaceted nature, shaped by scientific, social, and political factors. It is not a singular, fixed value but a relative, context-dependent concept, subject to diverse interpretations. Archaeological value can be understood from several perspectives: as a means of preserving historical memory, as a tool for scientific inquiry, and as an economic asset that supports cultural and tourism development. These dimensions highlight the complexity of archaeological value, which varies depending on the perspective from which it is viewed.

This study also identifies three primary dimensions of the epistemological concept of archaeological value: the historical dimension, which is concerned with collective memory; the scientific dimension, which pertains to research and knowledge; and the economic-commercial dimension, which involves economic and tourism factors. Each of these dimensions influences how the value of artifacts is interpreted, making the concept inherently flexible and open to different readings based on the context in which it is applied.

Finally, the varying theoretical schools in archaeology contribute to the complexity of defining archaeological value. These schools differ in their objectives, tools, and interpretive methodologies, which, in turn, shape how value is understood. Each school frames the relationship between the researcher and the artifact differently, affecting whether the derived value is considered "true" or "hypothetical." Consequently, the biases inherent in different archaeological paradigms must be acknowledged, as they influence the interpretation of value. A more comprehensive and objective understanding of archaeological value requires careful consideration of the intellectual contexts from which it emerges, ensuring that both scientific evidence and subjective interpretations are balanced in the analysis of heritage.

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