

BARBARA SASSE, *Der Weg zu einer archäologischen Wissenschaft. Band 1: Die Archäologien von der Antike bis 1630.* Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde Band 69,1. DeGruyter, Berlin, Boston 2017. € 102.95. ISBN 978-3-11-021469-7 (Hardcover). € 102.95. 978-3-11-038424-6 (E-book). € 102.95. 978-3-11-021470-3 (PDF). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214703>. XII + 446 pages with 60 figures.

The work of Barbara Sasse is one of the most ambitious investigations ever devoted to the history of archaeology in that it explores the entire history of the field throughout Europe from Greco-Roman antiquarians to the mid-19th century. It is subdivided into two volumes: one dedicated to the history from the origins to 1630; the other from that date to 1850. Here only the first volume will be considered; this deals with the birth and the development of archaeological approaches up to the beginning of the 17th century.

This first volume is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a sound essay in which the current archaeological situation in Europe and the United States is described and in which the various fields of knowledge taken into consideration by the author are defined (pp. 1–82). The second chapter deals with archaeological attitudes in Antiquity and the Middle Ages (pp. 83–136), while the third is devoted to the Renaissance and the definition of antiquarian practice until the creation of the Swedish Royal Office of Antiquities (pp. 137–369). The bibliography is dominated by the German tradition but significant space is given to Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, French, and Hispanic literature. Paradoxically, Central Europe and Russia are not subject to a critical study despite the role German archaeology played in these countries. The contribution of the Czech archaeologist Bohumil Soudský to the analysis of the European Neolithic, that of the Polish archaeologist Witold Hensel to Medieval Archaeology, or that of the Russian archaeologist Sergey A. Semenov to the history of techniques are not mentioned, to name just a few outstanding examples. A second paradox is linked to the almost complete absence of Italian archaeologists in this work, for example, the studies of Ranuccio Bianchi-Bandinelli and his students, which completely modified the framework of Classical Archaeology in the second half of the 20th century. Of course, in such a large-scale essay it was not possible to analyse all the schools and figures, but a brief glance at the five volumes of the “Encyclopedia of Archaeology” edited by Tim MURRAY (Santa Barbara 1999/2001) or at the two volumes by Nancy DE GRUMOND (*An Encyclopedia of the History of Classical Archaeology* [Westport 1996]) would have been welcome to complete a picture in which the dialogue between one part of Europe and the United States is overemphasised.

Nonetheless, Barbara Sasse engaged herself in a large-scale enterprise that is outlined in the introduction (chapter 1, pp. 1–82), where she defines her aims and circumscribes the various archaeologies, the sources, and the methods applied. She thus clearly defines the limits of the epistemological field she aims to explore. She wants to deliver archaeology and in particular Pre- and Protohistoric Archaeology from a vulgate that quotes it as being a young science which would have emerged only in the 19th century. In contrast, by examining the Greco-Roman roots of archaeology the author aims to stress the long duration of archaeological practice in European culture. The reader is somewhat confused to see that the classical manual by Karl Bernhard STARK (*Handbuch der Archäologie der Kunst. Erster Band. Einleitender und grundlegender Theil. Erste Abteilung. Systematik und Geschichte der Archäologie der Kunst* [Leipzig 1878 / 1880]. doi: <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.24465>), which is the first modern synthesis devoted to the history of Classical Archaeology without neglecting antiquarianism, is not cited. However, her objective is not to write a history of archaeology in its entirety but rather to identify the ancient roots of the foundation of Prehistory and Protohistory which emerge with the Renaissance and which develop in Scandinavia with the creation of an archaeological service and academic education in Sweden. This historic moment, 1630, thus appears as a reference date for the first volume. Any history is

invariably linked to periodisation and any scholar is free to determine its terms, but I have to say that this way of subdividing the history of archaeology is somewhat surprising. European and more particularly Italian Renaissance has completely transformed society's view on the past by rediscovering the concept of *antiquitates* defined by Marcus Terentius Varro in the first century BC. While savants had been collecting a large number of Latin and Greek literary works for a long time, they were at the same time interested in the description, interpretation, and the safeguarding of buildings, inscriptions, and ancient objects and they developed methods to deal with these. Humanists who devoted themselves to this task proclaimed themselves as *antiquarii*, antiquarians, and this term became prevalent up to the end of the 18th century, apart from a few exceptions, for example, the case of Jacob Spon cited by the author. Admittedly, Spon made an attempt to use the ancient Greek word *archaiologia*, but his definition of antiquarian works does not differ from that advanced by Cyriacus of Ancona and his heirs: the study and the safeguarding of vestigial remains of the Greco-Roman world. I perfectly agree upon the fact that at the turning point of the 1630s the observation of the past in Scandinavia is completed by the collecting of thunderstones and urns and by the description of megaliths, but in my opinion this is not an epistemological break. We are dealing here with a widening of the observation window to include objects and monuments that previously were not incorporated into the field of *antiquitates* but considered as being the result of natural or magical forces. The birth of archaeology, considered as being the interpretation of vestigial remains of the past in my opinion as well as in Glyn DANIEL's opinion (*A Short History of Archaeology* [London 1981]), emerges at a moment when the old conflict between human history and natural history was definitely overcome during the early decades of the 19th century. This leads me to remain sceptical about the use of the term archaeology prior to that date except if it is understood in the metaphoric sense it is given by Michel FOUCAULT (*L'Archéologie du savoir*. Bibl. scienc. hum. [Paris 1969]), but this is in contradiction to the genealogical dimension provided by Sasse with the aim of establishing a kind of prehistory of prehistory.

From this perspective, the turning-point of the 1630s appears strange because it does not correspond to a structural transformation of the observation of the remote past. Certainly, the idea of the presence of people prior to history begins to emerge during these years, but the arrest of Isaac de La Peyrère – a theologian who, inspired by the antiquarian studies of Ole Worm, defended the idea of the existence of people before Adam – by the Inquisition shows that the lesson was not heard and that two further centuries were necessary to achieve this. One may object that my definition of archaeology is quite different from that of Sasse and I admit it. We will see below on what we agree and what divides us.

Chapter 2 (pp. 83–136) is entitled “Spuren archäologischer Wissenschaft in Antike und Mittelalter?” The question mark and the use of the word ‘traces’ suggest that the existence of an archaeological science in the full sense of the term cannot be acknowledged for these periods. The convergence between the antique world and the medieval world is justified by the massive use of text sources that dominate the approaches to the past in the Greco-Roman world and the medieval Occident. Herodotus and Thucydides as much as Titus Livius or Tacitus consider *historia* as being a narrative founded on an investigation primarily based on text sources; these can be completed by documents, inscriptions, or monuments which are not subject to a specific analysis but occasionally serve to produce evidence. The singularity of the *historicus* or the *antiquarius*, in order to re-use the Roman terms which perpetuate the Greek traditions, is his intellectual autonomy. He does not act on royal or princely order, he takes over an investigation of his own free will and he collates the narratives, facts, and documents from the perspective of a history that transcends the established powers and usages. Varro is the *antiquarius* by definition; Cicero quotes him as being the founder of critical and collective memory: his books provided the Romans, who had lost their benchmarks, with a home that assigns them a place in time and space as well as particular institutions (p. 106).

The historian is essential for the city, but the *antiquarius* makes an additional contribution: he makes it possible, through the description of human affairs (*res humanae*), to build a narrative that takes into account the different aspects of civilisation. The savants of the Greco-Roman world therefore provided the initial tools necessary for the exploration of the past: they focused on the significance and use of monuments; they compared the different ways of life of human populations; they founded what Sasse calls “das römisch-antiquarische Kulturkonzept”.

All this is convincing and enlightening. However, it ought to have been essential here to briefly compare the strategy of the antiquarians and of Greco-Roman historians to that of their Egyptian and Mesopotamian predecessors, whose dependency on the authorities has considerably limited their historical interpretation, although they have proven to be extremely efficient antiquarians. They established themselves as savants able to precisely date inscriptions, monuments, and antique objects and to organise excavations not only in order to recover treasures or *spolia* but also to establish a link with the reigning monarchs, attested by the foundations of ancient temples. Set against the Near Eastern world the Greco-Roman culture has established an original system of historicity that made it possible to carry out previously unknown comparative history.

This approach also characterises the Western medieval world: Christian revelation led to universal history written by the Church Fathers and then by scholars. A new order of historical knowledge emerged, the bases of which are those of antiquity but their apologetic objective restricted critical freedom. The historians and antiquarians who were devoted to work *ad majorem gloria Dei* were all clerics employed by the Church or by princes and royal houses. In such a context, local histories related to a cathedral, a monastery, a principality, and even a state flourished, but universal history exclusively remained that of the Church. Historians were therefore somewhat constrained; by contrast, antiquarians who collated the narratives of the past, who interpreted monuments, who were interested in the fossils of nature occupied an enviable position. Sasse summarises this in detail while describing the Church’s process of reclaiming ancient monuments or of colonising the imaginary by the cult of relics, which generated excavations and created an economy of *spolia*.

During the 8th and 9th centuries Roman ruins were still visible throughout Europe north of the Alps. By observing them and by attempting to reclaim them, the clerics laid the foundations, according to Sasse, of “empirical research”, which progressively modified the relationships of people in the Occident with the monuments and remains of classical antiquity. This led to a confrontation with the heritage of antiquity, which would be a final straw. People started to become interested in Roman antiquities, in cities, in works of art but also discovered “upright stones”, “urns”, and “thunderstones”, monuments and objects in the ground that were not part of the traditional dictionary of the antiquarians. From this confrontation a new agenda would emerge, a new approach to the ancient past.

Barbara Sasse has devoted the third part of her book (pp. 137–380) to this radical transformation of the relationship to antiquity. As early as the 15th century, Italy and then the rest of Europe had caught a sudden fever of an unprecedented return to antiquity. The Renaissance was not only characterised by a great upheaval of knowledge but also by a movement which concerns all human activities whether these were related to economy, society, or belief. It is linked to the growth of economies and all types of exchange but also to two major events: the fall of Byzantium and the discovery of America. In mid-14th century Rome, Cola di Rienzo based his ephemeral dictatorship on a return to antiquity, on his ability to decipher Roman inscriptions and to interpret them. At the same time, Petrarch, through his poetical work and his historical reflections, established a programme of confrontation with and return to antiquity. Both paved the way for many savants, writers, and artists who found a powerful stimulus for their intellectual curiosity in the observation

of the antiquities of Rome, in the reconstruction programmes of the city, and in the excavations they prompted as well as in the accumulation of discoveries of antiquities. The great breakthrough was not only the profusion of antique texts, which were made available by the arrival of Greek manuscripts following the fall of Byzantium, but also the confrontation with the monuments and the philological approach of the Byzantine scholars.

The merit of Barbara Sasse's book is to propose a history of these discoveries by shifting the point of view from the texts to the monuments and objects. She offers us an original fresco with regard to both the history of ideas and the action of figures that contributed to this revolution of the knowledge of antiquity in Rome and then in the rest of Europe, which undermined the very structure of European culture. As a matter of fact, the movement which started in Rome, in particular due to the high Pontifical administration, progressively expanded across the whole of Europe as far as Britain, Scandinavia, and Spain. Sasse brilliantly accomplished a synthesis on a European scale of the phenomenon, the impact of which is redoubled by the Protestant Reformation and the transformations it brought about by the relationships between the states and the Church, and the gradual emancipation from the subjection of scholars to ecclesiastic and secular hierarchies. There was obviously still a long way to go, but the increase of savant societies, academies, and universities provided antiquarians with a prominent role that was not theirs in medieval society. Humanism contributed to the foundation of a "Republic of Letters" in which antiquarians played a leading role. The academic networks, the savant perigees, contributed to this accumulation of knowledge and techniques. The appendix dedicated to the most significant authors of "Renaissance archaeology" forms both an unprecedented and original sociogram of the antiquarian history of Europe (pp. 438–440). Nonetheless, the disproportionately small part of Hispanic and French erudition is regrettable: Luis de Góngora, Lope de Vega, Rodrigo Caro, François Rabelais, or Joachim du Bellay should have been included next to less renowned antiquarians.

The interest of poets in antiquity goes hand in hand with the development of curiosity cabinets as well as royal, princely, and shortly later bourgeois collections but also with the establishment of surveying and identification techniques for sites and monuments. Initial systematic excavations developed during the 16th century, as did the structuration of antiquarian fields such as epigraphy, numismatics, and the history of sculpture and architecture. The chapters devoted to Renaissance antiquarian culture focus on this new historiography. The phenomenon which unites the new course of studies related to antiquity is driven by an epistemological revolution. The antiquarians of the Greco-Roman world and the Middle Ages had only words to analyse the monuments and objects of the past. Renaissance painters, draughtsmen, and architects developed drawing and documentation techniques. With the publishing of the first illustrated books of antiquities at the beginning of the 16th century antiquarian science logically progressively improved the images taken from documentation, from the reconstruction of monuments, or the creation of iconographic types depicting ancient humankind. The illustrations (albeit not numerous) are well selected. The author produced an original picture dedicated to the quantitative history of antiquarian book printing (s. pp. 55–61). She has also proposed a revision of David Clarke's famous general model of archaeology (pp. 72–73; 76) and a diagram of M. Mercati's model of the origins of the so-called *Cerauniae* (pp. 444–445).

Barbara Sasse's achievement is to present the different stages and variants of this iconic and cognitive revolution which radically transformed the techniques related to the study and representation of the monuments and objects. In this way, she contributes to a redefinition of documentary studies and to the interpretation of the data, which provides our modern definition of archaeology with unexpected depth. It is, of course, essential to read Sasse's second volume to catch the full scope of this (s. review by Heinrich Härke below), but this first volume, despite some minor

deficiencies, proves its worth as a reference work which completes and overpasses the renowned compilation by Karl Bernhard Stark cited above.

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Barbara Sasse, Der Weg zu einer archäologischen Wissenschaft. Band 2: Die Ur- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie 1630–1850. Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde Band 69,2. De Gruyter, Berlin, Boston 2018. € 123,95. ISBN: 978-3-11-047287-5 (Hardcover). € 123,95. ISBN: 978-3-11-047474-9 (PDF). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110474749>. IX + 482 with 76 figures, 1 table, and 7 plates.

This monumental monograph is the result of a German *Habilitation*: that quaint 19th century tradition whereby those aspiring to a scholarly career in German academia demonstrate their ability to teach university students by producing a higher-level piece of research – higher, that is, than a Ph. D. The logic of this escapes most Anglophone colleagues (this review is mainly addressed at them and other colleagues outside the German sphere of linguistic and cultural influence), but similar systems are known in France and in Central and Eastern European countries which were heavily influenced by German academic traditions. This origin of the book needs to be mentioned here because it usually has two major consequences: the sheer volume of such *Habilitationsschriften* as well as their all too often mind-numbing compilation of extensive data and minute details – something that an English friend of mine once called ‘funnel vision’ (although at the time, some 30 years ago, he applied it to German archaeology as a whole). Fortunately, ‘funnel vision’ is not a problem of this book, which offers extensive details as well as wider vistas of the history of our discipline. It still leaves the reader to grapple with two volumes of a combined 928 pages exploring the development of prehistoric and early historical archaeology in central, northern, and parts of western Europe from its origins in Classical Antiquity to the 19th century, with concomitant challenges for any reviewer. This is certainly true of the present reviewer, although we are dealing here ‘only’ with volume 2 covering over 482 pages the period from the earlier 17th century to the middle of the 19th century (for vol. 1, see above the review by Alain Schnapp). A third consequence, the often late publication of a *Habilitation* thesis, will be considered towards the end of this review.

From the systemic context to that of intellectual tradition: In Germany, the history of archaeology used to be studied as *Forschungsgeschichte*, in the sense of a history of research methods and advances in the knowledge of *Fundmaterial*. I remember the stultifying effect of this perspective from my student days in the 1970s when it almost turned me off this subject for good. The Anglophone perspective of a history of archaeological thought, as exemplified by the works of Glyn DANIEL in Britain (The Origins and Growth of Archaeology. Pelican books A885 [Harmondsworth 1967]; A Hundred and Fifty Years of Archaeology² [London 1975]) and Bruce G. TRIGGER in the USA (A History of Archaeological Thought [Cambridge 1989]), was essentially missing for a long time. In Germany, it only came to the fore from the late 1980s, with a new generation of archaeologists uncovering the instrumentalisation of archaeology, and the complicity of German archaeologists, in the Third Reich (e. g. S. WOLFRAM / U. SOMMER [eds], Macht der Vergangenheit – Wer macht Vergangenheit: Archäologie und Politik. Beitr. Ur- u. Frühgesch. Mitteleuropa 3 [Wilkau-Haslau 1993]; H. HÄRKE [ed.], Archaeology, Ideology and Society. The German