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### **I. Editorial**

There are many sources easily available to those interested in uncovering parts of archaeology's past. They range from the factual chronicle (as in Glyn Daniel's *A Hundred Years of Archaeology*), the personal essay, reminiscing about one's colleagues (as in Gordon R. Willey's *Portraits in American Archaeology*), the analysis of ideas and theory (as in Bruce G. Trigger's survey of centuries in his *A History of Archaeological Thought* or Paul Corbin's Binford-bashing (inter alia) in *What is Archaeology?*), the romp through the deceptions and follies that have committed in archaeologies name (as in Stephen Williams' *Fantastic Archaeology* and, years ago, Robert Wauchope's *Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents* to the landmark publications of archaeology's earlier years (such as Squier and Davis' *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* or John Aubrey's *Monumenta Briannica*). For a more personal approach (archaeology is done by people, after all), there are a wealth of biographies and autobiographies. A few of my favorites among those who have written about themselves and their work are the books by O.G.S. Crawford, Max Mallowan, Samuel Noah Kramer, J.Eric S. Thompson, and Mortimer Wheeler (what a varied group of people!). There are also many excellent biographies, such as those of Max Uhle by John H. Rowe, Augustus and Alice LePlongeon by Lawrence G. Desmond, and Phyllis M. Messenger, and Pitt Rivers by Mark Bowden, to mention only a few. All of these offer views into archaeology's history that are available in no other way.

In an altogether different class are the voluminous files, archives, letters, and other records that are in large part always will be unpublished. Often they are not easily available (sometimes even their existence is unknown) and using them can be difficult and discouraging, but looking into them can be immensely rewarding. Finally, one important approach to looking at the past has hardly been tapped by archaeologists--oral history, whether transcribed and put into print or offered in its visual format, as in the informative entertaining dialogue between William Haag and George Quimby on federal archaeology during the Great Depression ("Bring the Past Alive"). These are all resources that those

interested in digging into archaeology's past will be using more and more often in the years ahead.

But why bother to look back at all? There is natural curiosity, of course, but more importantly, there is the circumstance that if you don't know where you've been it's hard to know where you are and how you got there. And not knowing where you are makes it hard to decide where you want to go next and how to get there. Thomas Hobbes observed in the 17th century that "Out of our conception of the past we make the future."

We can admire, scoff at, puzzle over, or marvel at our predecessors' efforts, but we can also learn from their mistakes and profit from their successes. Archaeology, in both its humanistic and scientific aspects, is cumulative, though its progress is often meandering, sometimes up to blind alleys that archaeology has had at least as many pitfalls as paradigms.

It has become commonplace that the social, economic, and political environments in which past (and relatively recent) archaeological endeavors have taken place is extremely relevant to our evaluating, using, or discarding their results. Every archaeologist has had an ideological agenda, often unrealized or unadmitted and varying widely from that of others (compare, for example, the approach of Mariette in Egypt with that of Petrie a few decades later). It is worth discovering these agendas, not just as intriguing of changing scholarly and social climates but for the effects they've had on each archaeologist's research approach and published conclusions.

Every generation rewrites, as it should, its history of the past in new terms that replace the "errors" of the past. But these discarded ideas and interpretations are worth remembering, preserving in our records of our discipline's past, and pondering whenever we feel so sure that now, at last, we understand everything better than ever before. As James Judge has commented, "We are guests of the past, and as guests, we must treat our host with respect."

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## II. Discourse on the History of Archaeology

### L'Abbé Henri Breuil: Archaeologist

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In his otherwise excellent book, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, Trigger (1989:156) makes only one passing reference in a half-sentence to the central figure in the development of Paleolithic prehistory in the first half of the 20th century -- and manages to get his name wrong, confusing Henri Breuil with his long-time, close colleague, Hugo Obermaier. Thirty years after his death, Breuil's role in the history of Old World prehistory required more serious consideration. He was a seminal figure not only in rock art studies, but also in the archaeology of at least France, Spain, England, Portugal, South Africa, and China. Before I had read Trigger's work or Sackett's (1991) critique of my supposed misinterpretation of Breuil's theoretical stance (e.g., Straus 1986, 1987), I had presented a review of Breuil's contributions in the 1991 Annual Snead-Wertheim Lecture in Anthropology and History at the University of New Mexico (Straus n.d.). The following is a brief summary of some of my conclusions.

My main thesis is that Breuil, while fundamentally concerned with establishing prehistoric sequence in both Paleolithic archaeology and cave art, was, in terms of explanation, a theoretical eclectic. Born in 1877 and died in 1961 (see obituary by Vaufrey (1962); biography by Brodrick (1963), Breuil knew and was influenced by 19th century founders of prehistory in France (G.d'Ault de Mesnil, E. Piette, G. de Mortillet, E. Cartailhac) and lived to see (yet essentially ignore) early application of radiocarbon dating to the Upper Paleolithic. Breuil's vast corpus of writings of accumulated ideas derived from unilineal evolutionism and degenerationism; the theories of invasion and diffusion, but also convergence; hunting magic, shamanistic, religious and psychological explanations for Stone Age art (Breuil 1912 [1937], 1925, 1926, 1952, 1954; Breuil and Obermaier 1935; Breuil and Lantier 1959; Alcalde de Río, Breuil and Sierra 1912; Bégouën and Breuil 1958). Breuil rarely discarded a theory, but he did add to his stock of accommodative notions over the course of his long career.