Ex Novo Journal of Archaeology

Volume 9, December 2024

LEARNING, TEACHING, CHANGING AFRICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Editorial Panel

Subscriptions
The journal is published once a year. For all subscription-based enquiries please contact: info@archaeopress.com

Instructions to authors
Authors who consider submitting an article to the journal are requested to contact the editors before sending in manuscripts. They can download a copy of the Editorial Style Guidelines to which they must conform as closely as possible. All manuscripts will be reviewed by external referees before acceptance. Manuscripts may be submitted to:
m.revello.lami@arch.leidenuniv.nl

Cover Image
Artwork by Francesco D'Isa and Chiara Moresco for the exhibition AI Manifesta (2025), created in collaboration with Sineglossa for Manifestipolitici.it by Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna.

ISSN 2531-8810
ISBN 978-1-80327-719-6

Published by ASSOCIAZIONE EX NOVO in association with ARCHAEOPRESS
www.archaeologiaexnovo.org
www.archaeopress.com

Ex Novo Journal of Archaeology
Volume 9, December 2024

CONTENTS

Learning, teaching, changing African archaeology

Jesús García Sánchez[1] & Martina Revello Lami[2]
1Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología en Roma, EEHAR-CSIC – Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas
[2]Faculty of Archaeology - Leiden University

DOI: 10.32028/exnovo-vol-9-pp.1-4

Archaeology in Africa continues to be shaped by a long history of asymmetrical perspectives—colonial, Eurocentric, and post-colonial—that often reduce the continent to a passive recipient of outside interpretations. However, "Africa is various", writes Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992) and Shepherd remembers one decade later (2002). Yet, as the contributions to this issue of *Ex Novo* demonstrate, African archaeologies are anything but static. They are dynamic fields of inquiry that interweave natural and cultural heritage, confront systemic challenges, and challenge entrenched stereotypes while generating new educational and social opportunities.

Abdelkader Chergui, Said El Bouzidi, and Réda Ajaraam's exploration of the Sebou Basin exemplifies the potential of African landscapes to tell stories of continuity and exchange across millennia. Located in northern Morocco, this region is a crossroads of civilizations—Phoenician, Roman, Mauretanian, and Islamic—whose traces remain visible in archaeological sites such as Banasa, Thamusida, and Rirha. The Sebou River itself emerges as both a natural and cultural artery, sustaining life and fostering interaction. Their call for UNESCO recognition highlights not only the universal significance of this heritage but also the pressing need for sustainable models of preservation that harmonize human activity with fragile ecosystems such as the Sidi Boughaba Reserve. In this way, archaeology becomes not only an academic discipline but also a driver of environmental awareness and local identity.

Yet heritage is not preserved or studied in a vacuum. Degsew Mekonnen, Osman Khaleel, Humphrey Nyambiya, and Nompumelelo Maringa bring attention to the lived realities of early-career African archaeologists. Their contribution underlines systemic barriers that hinder professional growth: scarce mentorship, limited funding, restricted access to conferences and publications, and uneven availability of resources. These obstacles not only affect individual trajectories but also constrain the circulation of knowledge and the sustainability of archaeological practice in Africa. By foregrounding these voices, the article insists that structural inequalities in training and opportunity remain a central issue for the future of African archaeology. Programs such as the Antiquity journal-led "Rewriting World Archaeology: Africa" aim to equip participants with the skills and

knowledge necessary to publish at an international level. That is, providing the tools to early-career African researchers to conduct crucial investigations and engage in equal conditions with research produced elsewhere. Addressing them is as urgent as preserving monuments and sites, for without fostering new generations of scholars, heritage itself risks becoming voiceless.

Oskar Aguado-Cantabrana's essay shifts the focus to the global imaginary of Roman Africa as represented on screen. From early Italian cinema to contemporary Hollywood productions, North Africa has often been depicted through the lens of exoticism, orientalism, and colonial nostalgia. Films such as *Cabiria*, *Gladiator*, and *Those About to Die* reveal how modern political and cultural contexts shape portrayals of ancient worlds. This contribution highlights how deeply embedded stereotypes about Africa continue to circulate in popular media, influencing both public perceptions and scholarly frames. Confronting these representations is thus integral to reshaping the narratives around Africa's past. Aguado discovers that topics such as Manichaeism, exoticism, Orientalism, and presentism permeate the discourse. One should ask, therefore, how such topics permeate or do not permeate the view of present-day Western scholars when approaching the complex African past.

Finally, Belén Hernáez Martín's review of the ATLAS project's final colloque; a joint enterprise of University of Hamburg, University of La Rochelle and the Institute du Patrimonoine National from Tunisia; and the "Invisible Cities" exhibition reminds us that Africa's urban past—spanning Late Antiquity in southern Spain and northern Africa—offers fertile ground for revisiting how we conceptualize connectivity, identity, and heritage. The project demonstrates the value of collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches that move beyond reductive paradigms, positioning African archaeology as an initiator rather than a recipient of theoretical and methodological innovation.

The contributions in this issue underline a shared concern: how archaeology in Africa is taught, represented, and sustained. They remind us that education is not limited to classrooms but extends to museums, heritage sites, and even cinema. It is through these channels that both local communities and global audiences engage with Africa's past. By addressing systemic inequalities, advocating for sustainable preservation, and critically reassessing cultural representations, this volume invites us to rethink African archaeologies not as peripheral but as central to the discipline's future.

Figure 1. Algerian and Spanish archaeologists at work at the foot of the funerary monument of the Royal Mausoleum of Mauretania. Credits: Tipasa Project-Palarq and Javier Rodriguez Pandozi.

Alongside the thematic core of this issue dedicated to African archaeologies, we also present two contributions in our *Off-Topic* section that, while tangential, address pressing concerns within the broader scientific community. Both pieces grapple with questions of colonialism, ethics, and responsibility, reminding us that the practice of archaeology is inseparable from the institutional, political, and cultural frameworks in which it unfolds.

Andrea Di Renzoni's *Lost in citations: Why standard metrics fail archaeology and regional scholarship* offers a timely and critical reflection on the dominance of bibliographic indexes and research metrics in evaluating academic output. Tracing the genealogy of indexing systems from early tools like *Index Medicus* to today's omnipresent platforms such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, Di Renzoni demonstrates how arbitrary inclusion criteria, opaque algorithms, and disciplinary hierarchies distort the visibility of research. This distortion is particularly detrimental to the Humanities and Social Sciences, and archaeology in particular, where publication practices and data outputs rarely conform to models designed with STEM disciplines in mind. Drawing on Italian prehistoric archaeology as a case study, the article underlines how citation-based metrics overlook or misrepresent regional scholarship, while also exposing the ethical dilemmas of peer review, predatory publishing, and metric manipulation. In its call for more pluralistic and context-sensitive approaches, the piece resonates widely with scholars seeking fairer frameworks for academic assessment.

In a different but complementary register, Elsa Cardoso's *A conversation between the sword and the neck: On censorship, colonialism and academic responsibility* intervenes at the intersection of scholarship and politics. Drawing on her personal decision to withdraw a book review and an article from *al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* in May 2025, Cardoso offers a deeply personal yet sharply political reflection on how academia responds—or fails to respond—to ongoing crises, specifically the war in Gaza. Her think-piece interrogates censorship, colonial structures in publishing, and the responsibilities of academics as both producers of knowledge and participants in wider society. We also include in this issue the very review Cardoso withdrew, as an archival gesture that speaks to the difficult choices scholars face when ethical concerns collide with professional obligations.

Finally, our review section closes with two further contributions. Cardoso herself reviews Eric Calderwood's *On Earth or in Poems: The Many Lives of al-Andalus* (Harvard University Press, 2023), a work that probes the afterlives of al-Andalus across literature and memory. Agostino Sotgia, in turn, offers a review of Edoardo Vanni's *L'ideologia degli archeologi: Egemonie e tradizioni epistemologiche alla fine del postmoderno* (BAR International Series 3050, 2021), a provocative exploration of epistemological traditions and disciplinary hegemonies in archaeology today.

Together, these off-topic contributions and reviews expand the scope of this issue, reminding us that archaeology is never confined to the past: it is constantly entangled with the ethical, political, and epistemological struggles of the present.

Acknowledgements

The present volume would not have been released without the fundamental effort of all reviewers involved in the process, Silvia Berrica, Gabriele Castiglia, Marina Gallinaro, , Salah Sahli e Carlos Tejerizo.

Lastly, a heartfelt thank you to Franceso D'Isa e Chiara Moresco for sharing their art with us. As per usual at Ex Novo we carefully select the image to be featured on our cover, and this year we fell in love with the powerful works by Francesco D'Isa and Chiara Moresco created for the exhibition AI MANIFESTA (2025). Curated by Sineglossa and Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna, the project has been on display in Bologna since April 2025, exhibited on the walls of the building located at Via Zaccherini Alvisi 11/2. We selected one of the 280 posters realized by reworking a selection of political and social posters from the Manifestipolitici.it database using generative artificial intelligence. Hands, flags, flowers and symbols of war are the recurring elements in the posters — signs of a visual grammar that shapes the collective political imagination.

Figure 2. Artwork by Francesco D'Isa and Chiara Moresco for the exhibition AI Manifesta (2025), created in collaboration with Sineglossa for Manifestipolitici.it by Fondazione Gramsci Emilia-Romagna.