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## BOOK REVIEW

**Review article:** Alain SCHNAPP et al. (eds.). 2014. *World Antiquarianism. Comparative Perspectives*. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute. ISBN: 978-1-60606-148-0, pp. 464, 23 color and 81 b/w illustrations, 4 maps, \$60.

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You may find the all revealing sentence of and about the book under review here on page 210: “But if calling his [sc. caliph al-Ma’mūn’s] impulse ‘antiquarian’ helps us understand it, then by all means let us do so.” The here clearly formulated disappointment of the contributor, Michael Cooperson, about the negative opinion on the caliph’s journey to Egypt and his visit to the pyramids in recent research as a kind of robbery tour—something he convincingly argues against in his article (pp. 201–211)—can also be read as a judgment on the concept of this article collection: Let us call it “antiquarianism”, if we have no other word for it.

In fact, the term “antiquarianism” is a rather fragile concept as are all “isms”: These “isms” produce a kind of ideology for themselves or are said to produce one by opposition, so separate or separated from another point of view. Here, this other point of view is scientific research which—this is clearly felt in some of the articles especially from the Westerners—acknowledges the collection work of “antiquarians”, but denies a deeper thought behind it. So the lack of a general definition of “antiquarianism” in the introduction of the editor Alain Schnapp (pp. 1–10), although concerned with the “antiquarian” and admitting that there is more in him than a simple collector, leads to various and different definitions by the authors of each article—a pity, for the concept “antiquarianism” comes to an end right before it has been discussed!

And this is also true for the “antiquarian” as an opposite concept to the modern “researcher”. Especially, if you look at the 20 contributions that deal with different times and regions, perhaps not the whole world but with important centers in Western and Southeast Asian cultures (and views to Mexico and Polynesia).

The first three articles form together with the introduction the first part, “The Necessity of Antiquarianism”. Tim Murray’s thoughts (pp. 11–34) about the often “colonial” approach to preliterate societies in modernity and, along the line, the construction of an ahistorical past, are worthwhile although the answer to the second part of the title “Antiquarianism *of* and *in* Preliterate

Societies” can, if at all, only be given by the heirs, perhaps, *with* but also *without* the help of modern (archeological or anthropological) methods.

The overview given by Lothar von Falkenhausen in “Antiquarianism in East Asia” (pp. 35–66) is concise and points to the diversity of approaches to the past mainly in China, but also in Japan (e.g. through historiography, geography, ethnography, philology, collectionism), that is always connected with the circumstances and different purposes of the inquirer.

Peter N. Miller is concerned with different philosophical approaches to “antiquarian(ism)” (pp. 67–87), e.g. Nietzsche, Goethe, and modern explanations of the phenomenon, especially the influential article of Arnaldo Momigliano (“Ancient History and the Antiquarian,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 13, 1950: 285–315). Due to the rather affective name- and topic-dropping this is really a “tentative morphology”, as stated in the title, and thus a lot of research on this subject remains to be done.

The second part unites 17 papers as case studies, ordered chronologically, to give insights into “antiquarian” studies in different societies, cultures, times, and regions. What is conspicuous in all contributions, is the at all times tentative attempt of “antiquarians” to put relicts of the past, e.g. writings, inscriptions, monuments, etc., into their present frames and to form them according to their purposes. So the citizens of Lindos, the capital of the island of Rhodes, created an inventory of the sanctuary, within which they “proofed” the origin of the possessions, even of mythological persons, by secondary sources and long narrations—thus bringing together history and mythology, as Alain Schnapp works out (pp. 159–175). I would rather doubt whether emperors like Claudius and Nero did not care much about the past due to a concept of a *saeculum novum* (pp. 167–168). That view may have been due to the overly negative tendency in the literary sources against the policy of these two emperors (for a more detailed view on handling the past in antiquity, cf. now J. Ker and Chr. Pieper (eds.). 2014. *Valuing the Past in the Greco-Roman World. Proceedings from the Penn-Leiden Colloquia on Ancient Values VII*. Mnemosyne-Supplements 369. Leiden / Boston: Brill.

Most fascinating are the studies of Felipe Rojas on Roman Sardis (pp. 176–200) and Hans-Rudolf Meier on the handling of material antiquities in medieval and early modern Europe (pp. 249–272) because they both show that correction, improvement or even faking of antiquities were not understood as forgery in a modern sense, but as creating “true” genealogies, identities, and histories.

Also the analyses, especially of the Chinese and Japanese attitudes to the past, work out the close connection of political developments and trends with the view on the past. So, for instance, the collection *Jigu lu (Records of collecting antiquity)* of the statesman and intellectual Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) and the

establishment of the methodological conception of *jinshixue* (*study of metal and stone objects*) in the Northern Song period is profoundly examined by Yun-Chian C. Sena (pp. 212–229) and Ya-Hwei Hsu (pp. 230–248). The reviewer, a historian of classical antiquity, is astonished by the analogies with the establishment of epigraphic research methods and the political-scientific networks in the 19th century.

The modern anthropologist's view on India or Polynesia indicate another crucial point: the relationship between "private" collectors and "institutional" collections, especially the state. That modern research is often concerned with the latter and the motivations behind it, hence only functionalized within a "greater" plan of (state) history writing, is again an expression of the top-down view from nowadays on "antiquarians". Therefore we have to be cautious not to diminish the role each individual collector played as a person creating memory and even history.

To sum up, each article offers interesting aspects to the topic, although "comparative perspectives", as supposed in the subtitle, are at most to be done by the readers who will clearly get fresh ideas about antiquarian interest, behavior, and incentives in different times and epochs. But, indeed, the main question, which has not been answered by the present volume, does not have to be about "world antiquarianism", but when, how and if antiquarian interest (has ever) lost its capacity to create, explain or remember history. If not, then the paradigm of (better) scientific research *per se* has to be questioned, perhaps before it puts an end to its antiquarian partner.