



BIG DIG ENERGY

Gendered
practices and
internalised
patriarchy in
archaeological
fieldwork in
West Asia

Workshop, BANEA 2024, Glasgow

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Workshop theme

In keeping with BANE 2024's broader themes surrounding equitable futures for the archaeology of West Asia, this workshop is intended to promote critical and constructive discussions around how gendered practices in (and around) archaeological fieldwork shape scholarly cultures of research and learning, and how they affect the consumption as well as the production of knowledge.

The range of themes include but are not limited to the role of gender in:

- divisions of scholarly labour and implicit assumptions around the relative importance of different types of evidence and specialisations (e.g. 'big data' (male) vs 'minutiae' (female); 'hard science' (male) vs 'soft subjects' (female))
- expectations of invisible labour around project management, dig-house-keeping, pastoral care
- mentorship, training, and succession
- access to material, resources, opportunities, and networks
- rights of and visibility in publication
- reconciling fieldwork with caring responsibilities
- adapting (or not) to fieldwork cultures of performative (hyper-)masculinities
- exposure to microaggressions, implicit misogyny, bullying, harassment

Workshop format

Speakers will be taking up short, 15-minute slots which can be used to present data, respond to/review relevant literature, outline questions, or share personal histories with a view to articulating gendered practices both as a point of problematisation in terms of archaeological ethics, as well as a methodological and epistemological concern warping the production and consumption of knowledge.



Programme & Abstracts

Session I **Big Dig Energy in the Archaeology of West Asia** **12.15–14.45**

Big Dig Energy: Introduction **12.15–12.30**

Yağmur Heffron, UCL

The Parable of the Caravan Mom **12.30–12.45**

Sophie V Moore, Newcastle University

Who is the Caravan Mom? She doesn't have to be a woman, although in my experience she always has been. I have learnt from Caravan Mom, I have been Caravan Mom willingly and I have found the role of Caravan Mom thrust upon me.

On every excavation with young people in attendance (and here I consider the majority of University undergraduates to be young) Caravan Mom appears, whether or not the temporary accommodation is actually a Caravan. Caravan Mom teaches you how to cut up an onion; how to sew on a button; that leaving your dirty, sweaty underwear in the middle of the shared caravan floor is just not acceptable. She tells you if your top is too tight for the context, she's overbearing about sunscreen, and will cut your hair if you ask. She looks at the rash which you're secretly very worried about and decides whether it's the right time to go to the hospital.

This paper will look at gendered dynamics of care in excavation contexts, and open a discussion about best practices in the field for structuring and acknowledging this work.

Parenting in the Field: Structural Solutions to a Very Personal Problem **12.45–13.00**

Nancy Highcock, British Museum

The difficulties that parents face in conducting archaeological fieldwork are well-known and often discussed. Despite recent strides in identifying the impracticalities and incompatibilities of extended periods of fieldwork with parenting responsibilities, the solutions are often ad-hoc and expensive and the burden to find these solutions placed on individuals. This presentation will focus on structural problem-solving: how can institutions and grant-funding bodies build new models of fieldwork, compatible with parenting, from the ground up? Through a survey of current institutional structures and those developed in other sectors, this presentation will forward potential avenues for field archaeologists who are unable or unwilling to divorce their professional and personal lives.

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12.15–14.45

Queering the Field

13.00–13.15

Hélène Maloigne, University of Greenwich

In this contribution I would like to offer a reflection on working as a queer archaeologist and historian of archaeology and what both fields can gain from a turn towards the queer. Queer Theories offer a range of modes of being and practice that are be useful for thinking about our communities and our place within them.

Concepts such as the '**chosen**' or '**logical**' family (as a counter to the biological family) can help us understand what roles we take on at an excavation and how we relate to one another. Thinking about our project as a family can help resolve conflicts, both personal and professional, that inevitably arise within archaeological communities. Extending the idea of family to embrace all members of the team (not just the academics among us) can also help efforts to improve inclusivity, diversity and acknowledge the importance of non-academic staff for excavation projects.

Thinking about our scholarly personae as archaeologists through the lens of (gender) **performativity** can again help us become more aware of how we are perceived by other members of the team, the public and wider academia. What image do we – personally and as a profession and a discipline – want to project? Who is our audience? And how do we change our persona depending on our audience (at conferences, in the field, in the classroom, with our non-archaeological family and friends, etc.)?

We are more than 'just' archaeologists. Our **intersectional** identities (student, lecturer, queer, straight, trans, cisgender, able-bodied, (im)migrant, 'Middle Eastern', 'Western'...) all play together and determine how we act and react, with whom we interact and when. Being mindful that not all aspects of other people's identity are immediately visible can change the way we speak to and about each other, bringing more respect and awareness for our diverse experiences. Adopting different viewpoints can also help us see the past and our interpretation of it in a new light.

Using these concepts in exploring the **history of archaeology** can moreover help us understand how the harmful structures and practices grown out of colonialism, racism and gender-based discrimination are perpetuated in the field today – often unconsciously – and how we can break them down to build a more equitable and diverse future for the field.

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Session I **Big Dig Energy in the Archaeology of West Asia**

12.15–14.45

Exploring the Leaky Pipeline: Lived Experiences of Female Archaeologists in Türkiye

13.15–13.30

Beril Özbaş, Collegium Civitas

Despite initial equality in numbers in educational attainment, there is a large gender disparity in leadership roles and academic careers within Turkish archaeology in favor of male professionals. This study aims to analyze the lived experiences of female archaeologists in Turkey regarding gender disparities, harassment, and mobbing in both archaeological fieldwork and academia, in addition to looking at how organizational factors and coping mechanisms affect the career trajectories of female archaeologists in Turkey.

This paper will utilize qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews with a sample group of women who have studied archaeology at the undergraduate or graduate level but did not move on to be subsequently employed in academic positions. In their depth and breadth, it is these interviews that will furnish complex understandings of the large-scale problems faced by female archaeologists in Turkey such as gendered field dynamics; inadequate mentorship; and harassment/mobbing issues.

These narratives explore the reasons behind "the leaky pipeline," a phenomenon where trained women wishing to work in the profession but are unable to advance. These women's experiences are analyzed to examine academic career paths as well as the cultural, social, emotional, and professional barriers that prevent many women from leading projects or pursuing academic careers at every level.

According to the women's narrated experiences, possible structural changes that are necessary for this transformation in archaeology will be discussed. These changes could include developing organizational cultures where everyone feels included and supported, creating policies that address harassment and discrimination, and creating strong mentoring programs across levels of career development.

Programme & Abstracts

Session I Big Dig Energy in the Archaeology of West Asia **12.15–14.45**

Intersectional Perspectives on Gender and Archaeological Fieldwork in Türkiye **13.30–13.45**

Müge Durusu–Tanrıöver, Temple University

The last two decades saw fundamental changes in the administration and execution of archaeological fieldwork in Türkiye, including an increase in the overall number of projects mainly driven by a rise in those led by Turkish archaeologists while foreign expeditions have been declining. Within this shifting landscape, however, the gender imbalance of project leadership has stayed the same: female archaeologists hold between 23–32% of the overall permits issued each year, while male archaeologists have traditionally held somewhere between 68–77%.

In this paper, I will look at the processes of fieldwork directorship in Türkiye from the perspective of gender and intersectionality. My first aim is to question the processes with which permit holders get to occupy their posts. I will then explore the multiple layers (such as gender, training, nationality, language skills, caring responsibilities) that intersect to work to the advantage or disadvantage of different groups. I will conclude by arguing that the continuous patterns in project leadership continue to reproduce certain kinds of archaeological practices and research questions to the detriment of others, producing larger repercussions for our discipline beyond the confines of active fieldwork.

Implicit Gender Bias: Beyond Archaeology **13.45–14.00**

Ophelia Tychon, UCL

The term ‘implicit bias’ has entered the popular vernacular over the past 20 years. In fact, many of us have either heard of, or personally gone through a form on ‘anti-bias’ training. In my talk, I will discuss the latest scientific view on the nature of implicit bias and whether training aimed at increasing awareness thereof is effective. I will also discuss the current research on other methods being used to tackle gender bias, implicit or otherwise, irrespective of the industry and geographic setting. I will ultimately aim to consider whether these methods may be useful in archaeology (in or away from the field).

The audience is invited to complete a pre-workshop survey: Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) by following the here: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>. If you have the time and feel comfortable, please take the **Gender – Career** IAT. It should take you about 10–15 minutes. Of course, feel free to take the other ones if you like as well.

Roundtable Discussion

14.00–14.45

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Session II **Big Dig Energy beyond West Asia: Comparing Notes with Sister Fields** 15.00–17.00

Introducing South Asia: Women in Fieldwork (SAWIF) 15.25–15.40

Afifa Khan, University of Cambridge

The Mapping Archaeological Heritage in South Asia (MAHSA) project at the University of Cambridge includes a team of women from many different countries and disciplines, career stages and ambitions. The combination of a shared project goal and a highly collaborative working environment led to regular discussions about our experiences during fieldwork. Whether family restrictions and responsibilities, lack of supportive networks and mentors, or the entrenched cultural norms in the discipline and in the fieldwork locations themselves, we found that there was much common ground in our experiences of the multiple barriers and considerations for women working in the field.

From this, we created a university-wide research network that would focus on the experiences of women in fieldwork, especially of South Asian women, which was open to all to attend. Over the course of the academic year, we have been discussing these major issues and exploring themes and existing research on the topics we covered. One of the key network aims is to work towards finding possible resolutions to issues whilst simultaneously creating a supportive network of interdisciplinary researchers supporting women, ALL WOMEN, in the field.

Case Study: Lessons Learned 15.40–16.00

Heba Hashmi, Maritime Archaeology and Heritage Institute (MAHI), Pakistan

Experiences in field work: issues surrounding identity and positionality in the field, the difficulties they faced and how to tackle them in the future.

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The White Paper and Future Actions 16.00–16.20

Afifa Khan, University of Cambridge

One of the outcomes of the series of talks and meetings held by SAWIF in 2022–23, was a joint effort by convenors and members of the group to create a ‘white paper’ of recommendations on hiring practices at the university. This paper is tailored to the hiring and supporting of South Asian and minority women in disciplines in which fieldwork is a major component, beyond archaeology, and covers topics such as job advertisements, interview panels, and post-hiring support. The true test of these recommendations has been in the recent recruiting and hiring at the MAHSA project, however, this is only one example. As we finalise the details of the paper itself, we would welcome second opinions and further recommendations.

Roundtable Discussion 16.20–17.00