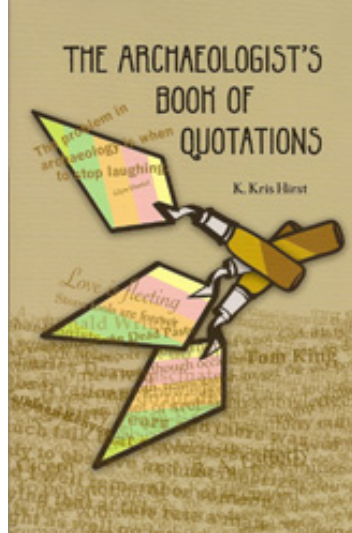



Anthropology Review Database



Hirst, K. Kris
2010 The Archaeologist's Book of Quotations. Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press.

Notes: 134 p. ; 22 cm. ISBN:
 9781598744347

Reviewed 28 Feb 2011 by: 
Diogo M. Costa
<diomc2@gmail.com>
University of Florida, USA

Medium: *Written Literature*

Subject *Archaeologists;*
Keywords: *Quotations;*
Archaeology

ABSTRACT: This collection of quotations about archaeology, popular culture, and the past in general is segmented into themes and filled by a wide variety of sources.

Reading Hirst's book is like digging in an insightful sand box, each quotation is a vestige of a thought, and each chapter is a stratigraphic horizon that covers numerous facets about many topics. However, as in any archaeological site the context is everything, and although Hirst provides a meticulous reference to each citation, unfortunately the quotations are not displayed in a more elaborate order or even a chronological sequence, and the result will likely be confusing to an unfamiliar reader. At the same time, one can read the book without major pretensions, as the pages reveal

years and years of accumulated wisdom from many sources. Anonymous or not, the authors that left their ideas, inspirations, and opinions were patiently panned to our delight by the long effort of the editor.

The first chapter shows some definitions about archeological work, statements about what archaeology is, concerns about archaeological practice, and the archaeologist's self-perception. The chapter begins with the demonstration that archaeology is broadly considered as an isolated endeavor. In sequence, the perceptions are about the exclusivity and the 'dirt-fun' of doing archaeology, where excavations are occasionally represented as an ultimate goal for a nerd's vacation. The chapter ends with the not so shocking result that the majority of archaeologists are regularly more exotic than their own finds.

The second chapter talks about why it is important to study the past, revealing also the pitfall of this practice, the lessons learned with the studies of the past, and the evaluation of archaeology as a science. In the first part, the utility of the past is discussed, both to the present and to the future. Following this thought, the past is questioned as a result of today's imagination, or yesterday's reality. This chapter suggests that archaeology always can teach us about the world in which we live.

The third chapter explores the art and literature of archaeology; some examples of poetry about the past are exposed, as well as ancient texts that reveal the thoughts of Western and Eastern sages. This part of the book presents examples of how the past can work in a sentimental way. The chapter is completed by the demonstration of numerous future predictions from the past.

The fourth chapter contains a variety of quotations from archaeologists themselves plus common perceptions of the public about archaeology. Archaeologists view themselves as far away from the public as the objects that they study, while to the public, archaeology is so distant from their daily life that is usually filled by the media with mythology and fiction more than science.

The fifth chapter presents some concerns about

ethics in archaeology, the relationship with religious topics, and about who owns the past. Beginning with the not unanimous consensus that archaeology is also a political endeavor, the eternal fight between 'truths of faith' and 'truths of science' are also exposed. However, the chapter also suggests that it is time for some practitioners to realize that the past never has a unique owner.

The sixth chapter covers the self-evaluation of constructing the past, the relationships between the past, present and future and the philosophy of doing archaeology. More philosophical in nature, this last chapter reveals deep thoughts about the past in general, zigzagging between the existentiality of today and yesterday, and concluding with the perception that archaeology is an important piece in the science puzzle.

In conclusion, Hirst's book is like a penknife to be used in most diverse situations by a good boy scout, or as the author said just to place some 'fancy' phrases on our office doors. However, the book is a rich depository of academic and vernacular information for the neophyte to the expert, and helps to bring aspects of archaeology to the public.

To cite this review, the [American Anthropological Association](#) recommends the following style:

Costa, Diogo M.
2011 Review of The Archaeologist's Book of Quotations. *Anthropology Review Database*
February 28, 2011.
<http://wings.buffalo.edu/ARD/cgi/showme.cgi?keycode=3716>, accessed March 22, 2013.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](#).

© Anthropology Review Database

(available online: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/ARD/>)

