

At the 16th annual meeting of the *European Association of Archeologists* (EAA), ArkéoTopia realised that, throughout the world, the professionalisation of archeology has led to a split between amateur archeologists, be they erudite locals, members of associations, or from learned societies, and professional archeologists.

This split is sometimes justified - some amateur archeologists do not want to follow a scientific approach, which they consider too cumbersome, - but becomes unjustified when it is applied to other amateurs who carry out quality work. Since the work of each is interesting, complementary, even necessary, ArkéoTopia aims to be a mediator which can help one and all escape from a climate of mistrust and fear and to rebuild dialogue and harmony.

During the annual meeting of the *European Association for Archeologists* (EAA), in the Hague (Holland) last September, ArkéoTopia took part in a round table entitled "Debating community based archaeologies across Europe," organised by Thomas Kador (University College Dublin, Ireland), Don Henson (Council for British Archaeology, United Kingdom) and Jeroen van der Vliet (Digital Heritage Netherlands, Holland). During this event three researchers including two sociologists presented works about the relationship between amateurs and professionals in Greece and Britain. Although their approaches were diverse, and despite the contribution of (voluntary) amateur research to archeology [1], **ArkéoTopia's questions highlighted the distance between amateurs and professionals maintained by many researchers and which grows a little more each year, in France as well as elsewhere.**

Although researchers like Dr Jean-Paul Raynal [2] and even associations of professional archeologists such as *Halte au pillage du patrimoine historique et archéologique* (*Stop the Plundering of Historical and Archeological Heritage*)[3] try to differentiate the work of amateur archeologists and erudite locals from that of treasure hunters, but happily not reducing all amateurs to the level of destroyers or making them *persona non grata*, it must be noted that this position is not shared by everyone. Very often professional researchers just ignore the presence of these amateurs whose work is nevertheless the origin of archeological research. Although the work of pioneers, known as antique dealers or learned societies, served primarily to furnish museums with beautiful objects, the History of archeological research cannot deny the work of these pioneers who contributed to the development of archeological professionalism in archeology, just as much as the twentieth century volunteers who went far beyond the search for beautiful objects to concentrate on understanding human History through its technical dimension. However, over and above the usual indifference, the addition of contempt or even the omission of a site's founder's name or the open denigration of his research [4] is not uncommon. ArkéoTopia upholds that voluntary work, whatever its form, should not replace the employment of professional archeologists, but that it is a necessary complement to scientific research. There will never be enough professional archeologists in the public or private sectors to carry out all the work to be done, whether it be prospecting, excavation, inventory, or data analysis. Without becoming an unpaid employee open to exploitation, the amateur has a place in the midst of scientific research according to his competences. The environmental world could even give us lessons about integration which we can take as an example of the integration of volunteers within the *Ligue de Protection des Oiseaux* (French Bird Protection League) for tasks involving birdlife observation, data from which is returned to professionals at the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS - French National Scientific Research Centre). Would not dividing up work with the aim of reinforcing teams to obtain quicker, more complete results be a

step along the path leading to the rebuilding of links between amateurs and professionals?

ArkéoTopia is working on this hypothesis and is trying to come up with others which would also contribute to recreating the link that some professionals are also calling for. **Bringing amateurs and professionals closer together would contribute not only to a better understanding of the researcher's work, but also to a wider diffusion of scientific culture in which the public would no longer only be a spectator, but also an actor.**

[1] See the study by Suzie Thomas for the *Council for British Archeology* (CBA) at <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/research/community>.

[2] Research director at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS - French National Scientific Research Centre) - UMR 5199-PACEA (Bordeaux 1)

[3] See [the page Agir](#), on which it is clearly highlighted that the association does not reduce amateur archeologists to looters since they point out that "the association HAPPAH does not in any case target volunteer prospectors who are duly authorised and who carry out work which is essential to the study and safeguard of our archeological heritage." The association targets treasure hunters who have no interest in scientific research.

[4] The case of Jean-Pierre Houdin, architect and amateur archeologist, is a schoolbook example of this. Despite his contribution to a renewal of our understanding of the Egyptian pyramids' construction, notably the Khéops pyramid (see <http://www.construire-la-grande-pyramide.fr>), he is subject to frequent disparagement by some researchers (see for example Jean-Claude Golvin's comments in the magazine *Le Point Hors-série* of December 2007, p. 81).

---

To know more about ArkéoTopia, look to our page [A brief introduction to ArkéoTopia](#). Do not hesitate to e-mail us at [contact@arkeotopia.org](mailto:contact@arkeotopia.org)