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Confinement and Detention in Political and Social Archaeology

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The next CHAGS (IX) was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2003, chaired by Dr. Alan Barnard (Barnard 2004). And CHAGS X convened in Liverpool, UK, June 25–28, 2013, chaired by Dr. Larry Barham (chags@liv.ac.uk).

A wide range of themes have characterized the papers presented at CHAGS, with archaeology sharing time with papers on social anthropology and increasingly papers on indigenous rights and political struggles. CHAGS I through IX have left a permanent legacy in the form of substantial volumes of collected papers listed below.

Cross-References

▶ Complex Hunter-Gatherers
▶ Ethnoarchaeology
▶ Hunter-Gatherers, Archaeology of
▶ Indigenous Peoples, Working with and for

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Confinement and Detention in Political and Social Archaeology

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Introduction

Confinement and detention played a central role in many of the most infamous episodes in modern history, including the use of civilian concentration camps in the Boer War, the internment of Japanese-Americans in the Second World War, the Soviet Gulags, and the secret prisons of the Argentinian Junta. The Holocaust of European Jews largely took place within a vast infrastructure of slave labor camps, transit camps, concentration camps, and extermination camps. The material traces of this event at Auschwitz-Birkenau and elsewhere remain among the most iconic modern heritage sites. Penitentiaries and jails – holding people accused or convicted of behavior deviant of social norms – though usually out of everyday view, are of course quotidian features of almost any every society.

Confinement and Detention in Political and Social Archaeology, Fig. 1 A sweater with bullet holes, excavated evidence of the murderous regime of the Argentinian dictatorship (1976–1983) (Courtesy of Melisa Salerno)

The archaeology of confinement and detention is part of a growing field studying the material remains of modern power and structural violence on a global scale. Studies of sites, artifacts, and other traces of confinement reflect many archaeologists' desire to engage with processes of commemoration, truth and reconciliation, education, and heritage management in societies often coming to terms with historical narratives of oppression and social control. Recent work in the archaeology of confinement demonstrates the extent to which it is living up to the heavy responsibility imposed by this historical background. Worldwide, archaeologists are intervening on sites of internment to create and recreate historical narratives. In Argentina and Poland excavators are unearthing sites that the perpetrators of violence had tried to erase (Fig. 1). In the United States and South Africa, former prisoners have participated in the transformation of detention sites into heritage sites, adding their memories to the historical record. These types of projects work to provide a foundation and a platform for the voices of the imprisoned.

Definition

The archaeology of confinement and detention has emerged as an interdisciplinary initiative within the larger and more established fields of historical archaeology, conflict archaeology, and the archaeology of the modern world. The question of scope is often raised, as terms such as confinement, detention, internment, imprisonment, incarceration, and captivity are problematic to define. Broad definitions encourage boundary-pushing work and lively intellectual discourse, and the authors have previously stated:

> Incarceration or internment might be described as the practice of organizing material culture and space to control and restrict the movement of a person or a group of people. Sites of internment can range in scale from a single room or building to entire landmasses (Myers & Moshenska 2011: 2).

Thus, a common sense definition of the archaeology of confinement and detention might be *any study where archaeological approaches are used to interpret the material remains of confinement*.

Historical Background

An early example of the archaeology of confinement took place in Berlin in 1985, when prison cells beneath the ruins of the former Gestapo headquarters were subjected to an unofficial "guerrilla excavation" by a community history group, the *Active Museum against Fascism and*

for Resistance in Berlin (Baker 1990). The excavation was largely symbolic, aimed at drawing attention to the official neglect of the site and the perceived failure to adequately memorialize the victims of the Gestapo. The excavators included former prisoners held in the cells on the site, as well as relatives of those who did not make it out alive. The dig was a vivid reminder of the power of archaeology to literally and figuratively uncover hidden histories of oppression and control.

The Berlin Gestapo site has since been more fully excavated and is now open to the public as a striking and unique archaeological museum: the *Topography of Terror* (Hesse et al. 1989). Through their action the diggers sent a message that archaeology can and should be used to study recent violent pasts. Twenty-five years on this maxim has been embraced by archaeologists studying incarceration and internment, and the expansion of this field of study is due in part to the energy and enthusiasm of grassroots community and human rights groups seeking information about people and events, exposure of injustices, healing of wounds, and reconciliation between erstwhile adversaries.

Key Issues
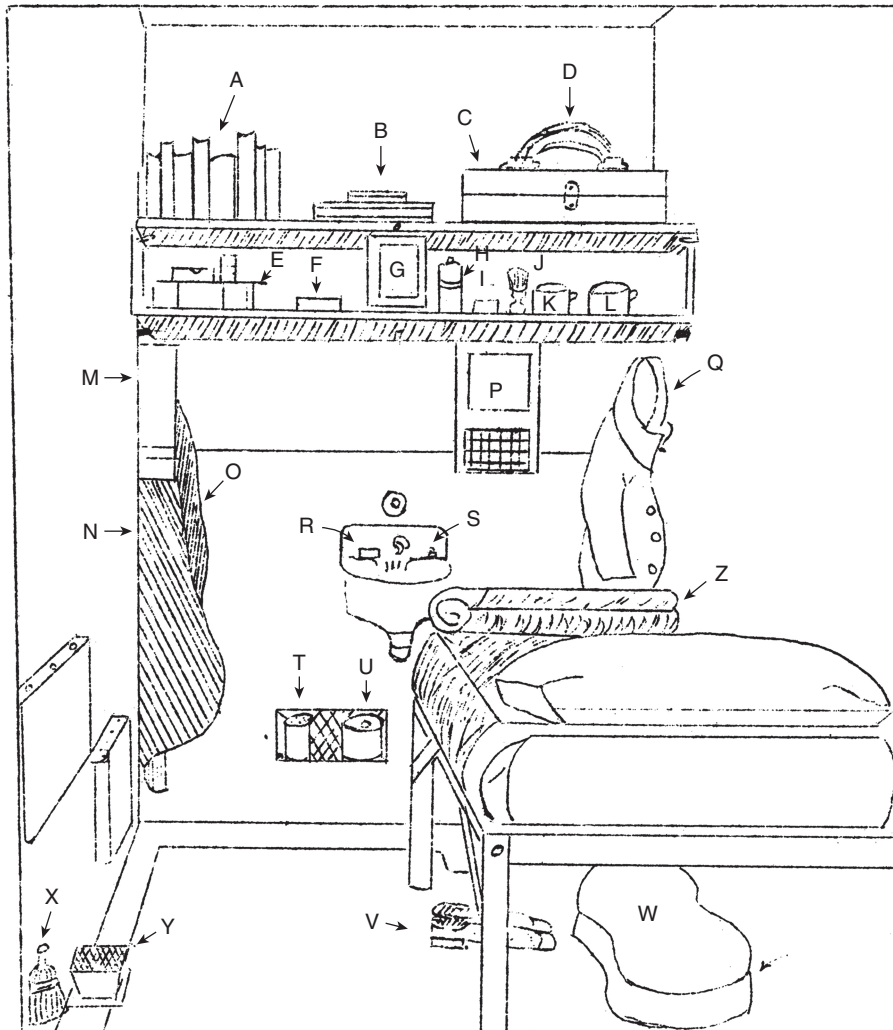
Control and Surveillance

Spaces of confinement and detention are chosen or constructed primarily to control their inmates; among the most distinctive material manifestations are boundaries and other material restrictions on movement. Some of these boundaries are constructed: the concrete walls of a prison, the barbed wire fence of a prison camp. Other, apparently ephemeral boundaries rely on a known threat: step across the line and you will be shot. Another common mechanism of control is the natural boundary: many sites of detention are islands or parts of islands such as Robben Island in South Africa, Ai Stratis in Greece, and Alcatraz in the United States. Other geographical boundaries include deserts and wildernesses – where survival in the landscape is impossible and physical boundaries are unnecessary.

For these reasons Second World War Prisoner of War (PoW) camps were often located in remote areas such as Finnish Lapland, the Australian outback, central Canada, and the mountains of southern Arizona. The remote locations of these sites are an advantage to the archaeologist, as they are considerably less likely than other sites to have been destroyed or damaged by development or other human activities.

Alongside physical control, surveillance is an important element of confinement and detention, the most noted example of which is Bentham's Panopticon, in which large numbers of prisoners could be observed from a central location (Bentham 1791). Surveillance appears in the archaeological record in the watchtowers of prison camps, in the spy holes in prison doors, and in the CCTV and other electronic monitoring systems employed in more recent periods. Traces of these and other elements of surveillance have been studied and recorded in abandoned prisons and prison camps such as Long Kesh/Maze in Northern Ireland. González-Ruibal (2011) has shown how, during and after the Spanish Civil War, certain sites were used for internment due to their symbolism: schools and monasteries represented the authority and order to be imposed on the prisoners. Control takes many forms, many but by no means all of which can be traced in the material remains.

A key component of control and surveillance in institutions – and one that is often exposed through the material remains of sites of internment – is repetition in materials and structures. This trend is patent both in portable material culture (e.g., identical ceramic dishes for all prisoners) and in architecture (e.g., row upon row of matching barracks). The repetition of small materials, and their close regulation, contributes to the institutional goals of social conformity and the elimination individuality and of more easily identifying prohibited items (Fig. 2). Repetition in architecture and the broader penal landscape facilitates surveillance by maintaining long and linear lines of sight, and by eliminating interior variability which could be used to deceive the captors (Fig. 3). The cult of repetition, of course, is not limited to material culture. In reforming
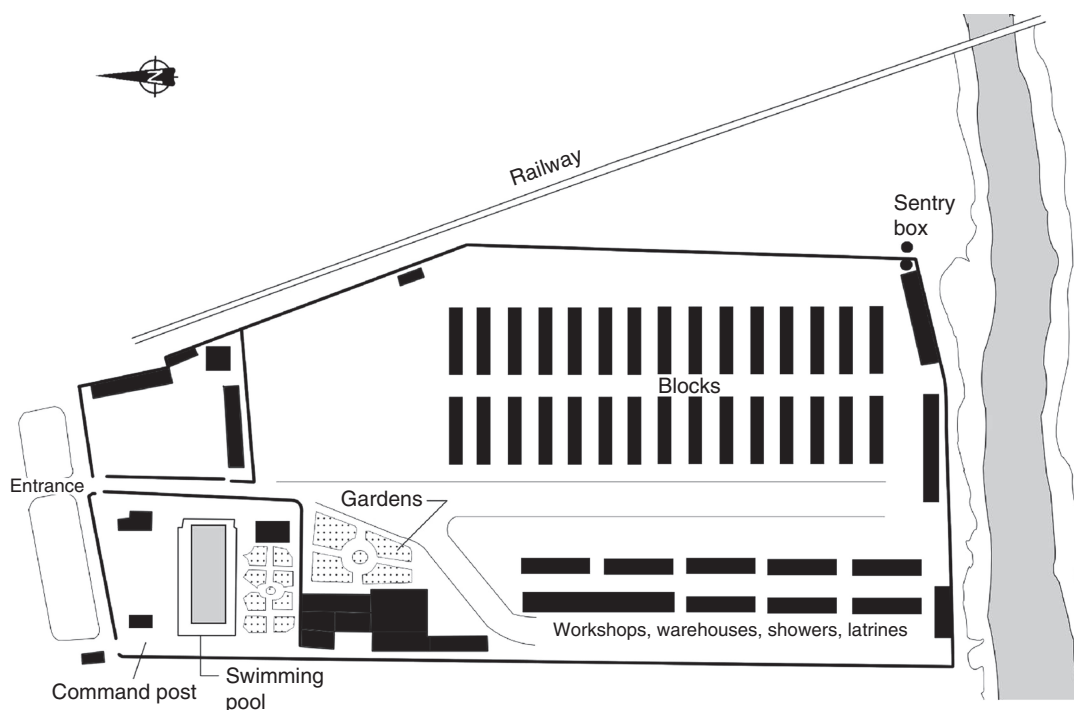
REGULATIONS FOR INMATES
U.S.P., ALCATRAZ
PAGE 8

A – 12 Books (Maximum)	J – Shaving Brush	S – Sink Stopper
B – Personal Papers	K – Shaving Mug	T – Cleaning Powder
C – Paint Box etc.	L – Drinking Cup	U – Toilet Tissue
D – Radio Headphones	M – Face Towell	V – Extra Shoes & Slippers
E – Ash Tray & Tobacco	N – Bathrobe	W – Musical Instrument/Case
F – Extra Soap	O – Raincoat	X – Broom
G – Mirror	P – Calendar	Y – Trash Basket
H – Toothpowder	Q – Coat & Cap	Z – Extra Blankets
I – Razor & Blades	R – Soap	

Confinement and Detention in Political and Social Archaeology, Fig. 2 Instructional graphic depicting proper placement of approved personal items at the United States Penitentiary Alcatraz, California (Reproduced from Madigan 1956)

Confinement and Detention in Political and Social Archaeology, Fig. 3 Plan view of Miranda de Ebro concentration camp, Spain. Regularized pattern of building arrangement facilitates surveillance and prisoner management (Courtesy of Alfredo González-Ruibal)

institutions at least, repetition encompasses the human body through physical and moral training and adherence to time discipline regimes.

Domination, Resistance, and Cooperation

The experience of internment is one of coercion, oppression, domination, and surveillance. From the perspective of the jailer internment serves numerous purposes but is most commonly used to remove a perceived threat, whether by containment, reform, or annihilation. Almost by necessity, confinement will include domination by the captor and resistance by the captive. Resistance to captivity can take a number of forms, many of them visible in the archaeological record of the internment site. Internment sites are often governed by sets of rules to control the behavior of internees: these include curfews, uniform codes, restrictions on association and communication between prisoners, and the prohibition of trading with guards and outsiders.

The violations of some of these rules can be regarded as acts of resistance to internment, albeit frequently petty and self-defeating ones if they lead to repercussions on the rule breaker or other prisoners. Steve McQueen's character in the film *The Great Escape* is the quintessential internee rebelling petulantly against his captors. The solitary confinement cells at *Stalag Luft III* are testament to the occurrence of this sort of behavior. From an archaeological perspective the most obvious evidences of rule breaking are the remains of contraband goods such as nonuniform clothing (Casella 2000), foodstuffs (Myers 2008), and personal hygiene and grooming products (Pringle et al. 2007).

Perhaps the most direct form of resistance to internment is escape, either by absconding or, where necessary, overcoming the physical barriers. In PoW camps the escape options were summarized as "over the wire" (usually under cover of darkness), "under the wire" (tunneling),

or "out the front door" (in disguise). Tunneling is the most archaeologically visible and enduring of these, and the archaeological investigation of escape tunnels using geophysical and excavation techniques has been successfully conducted at *Stalag Luft III* in Zagan, Poland (Pringle et al. 2007).

Attempting to damage, destroy, or "improve" the prison site is also a form of resistance, often symbolic but in some cases practical. Wall art and graffiti such as that recorded at Long Kesh/Maze served to stamp the internees ideology and identities on an institutional space and may well have served to intimidate outsiders and guards. These artworks were also an act of cultural resistance, a more common theme in internment, often demonstrated in the nostalgic or defiant craftworks and artworks produced by civilian or military detainees and often curated into the present. Such seemingly petty symbols of cultural resistance can maintain the morale of prisoners, and often remained entirely unnoticed by the captors. On a more practical level, many internment sites show traces of the consumption of alcohol and other intoxicants, both as evidence of contraband and a form of temporary escape from the oppression of internment.

González-Ruibal (2011) criticizes over-emphasis of resistance in studies of internment, particularly the abstracted formulations of internment that stress the agency of the oppressed and neglect the brutal real-world manifestations of the "discourse" of power. In studying the archaeology of internment there is a risk of becoming too enamored with the glamour of resistance and failing to take into account the constraints, threats of violence and psychological effects of long-term incarceration. To do so would be a betrayal of the victims of the historical crimes we study. In turn, the hierarchical "domination/resistance" paradigm itself, as a whole, has come under increasing scrutiny. Often in cases of internment evidence points to multiple layers and directions of control and surveillance – for example, the notion that prisoners can watch the guards, just as the guards watch the prisoners – which has led some to move towards analyses of *heterarchy* rather than *hierarchy* (e.g. Casella 2011). Heterarchical approaches leave open the possibility of cooperation between guard and prisoner.

Things in Stories/Stories in Things

The experience of incarceration in all its forms has inspired works of literature, philosophy and scholarship for centuries, from Boethius, Cervantes and de Sade to Hitler, Pound and Gramsci. Diaries, autobiographies and accounts of 'life inside' are also a consistently popular genre, particularly those that describe escape attempts. Accounts of internment are potentially of interest to archaeologists as ethno-historical source materials which can provide valuable information for the archaeologist about the layout of sites, the functions of structures, and the material possessions of prisoners, as well as providing color to reports and publications. The use of such textual sources must, of course, take into consideration the vagaries of memory and artistic license in their creation.

Another use of these accounts focuses on the material culture of internment from a biographical rather than purely descriptive point of view, drawing on theories of the social lives of objects developed in the 1980s. In this model objects are considered in terms of their "life histories" from creation through use, reuse or consumption, disposal, and deposition. The plethora of accounts of internment, particularly for certain periods and events including the Second World War, Apartheid, and the Holocaust, encourages us to consider some of the ways in which we can use these texts to study the material culture of those periods. This is particularly salient in the case of internment sites for which we have multiple accounts by different authors, such as Colditz Castle where the same site, structure and even some objects such as articles of escape equipment are described at different times by different authors.

Throughout history Prisoners of War and internees have passed the time by making craft objects and artworks for use, for sale or as gifts. Dusselier (2008) has shown how Japanese-American internees in the Second World War used handicrafts to domesticate the spaces they

found themselves in, to reassert their national and ethnic identities, and to provide themselves and others with emotional support. Studies of British civilian internees in Second World War Germany show a similar phenomenon, including an emphasis on patriotic symbolism. Following the end of periods of detention many of these objects were curated as souvenirs or family heirlooms, often serving as material repositories for stories or memories.

Prison Economies

In every case of confinement, smuggling and trading of both allowable and forbidden goods takes place. This maxim remains true even in situations of extreme material depravity, such as at the death camps of the Holocaust. Secret trading was in fact an integral component even of the mass executions at Birkenau, since the food and valuables found on the bodies of the deceased by the *Sonderkommando* forced laborers were redirected to sustain those not yet sentenced to the gas chamber (Myers 2007). Intriguingly, smuggling often goes "both ways" – goods and services pass from outside the camp or prison to the inside and, in turn, from the inside to the outside. This might happen when, counter intuitively, a prisoner has access to goods not available to neighboring civilian communities, such as the case of Allied PoWs in Europe who received Red Cross care packages filled with items long unavailable under Nazi wartime rationing.

In many cases smuggling and trading are used to supplement grossly inadequate caloric intake, such as at the Nazi death camps in Europe and Japanese camps holding Allied PoWs in Asia during the Second World War. But once basic sustenance is achieved (and sometimes even where it is not), smuggling and trading serve other purposes, such as rediscovering small comforts of home, protecting the body against the natural elements, or preparing for an escape attempt. In some cases, astute black marketing by the confined leads to the accumulation of great wealth and power. Perhaps the most colorful example of this is described by James Clavell (1963), in his historical novel *King Rat*.

Popular culture has often well represented the historical reality that in many situations of confinement the cigarette becomes the base unit of currency. From the PoW camps of the Second World War to present-day penitentiaries in the Unites States, the relative values of all other goods and services are usually measured in cigarettes (Radford 1945; Lankenau 2001; Reed 2007). In some cases, extremely complex prison economies develop which include phenomena such as base currencies (e.g., cigarettes or prisoner-developed paper currencies), offering of services by small business entrepreneurs (such as laundering, cooking, and prostitution), notice boards with classified advertisements, monopolies, price fixing and price gouging, price falls and price rallies, inflation and deflation, and even stock-exchange style traders and speculators working on "futures markets" (Radford 1945).

Trading and smuggling might be seen as a form of resistance, since usually the action is forbidden by institutional regulations. But trading is also often a form of cooperation or even collaboration, since trade networks incorporate guards and other staff. Thus, the prison black market is an example of a social aspect of confinement that challenges the duality of the "domination/resistance" paradigm by showing how guards and prisoners sometime work together for mutual benefit.

Gender

The theme of gender is vital to our understanding of internment from historical, sociological, and archaeological perspectives, as demonstrated by Casella's ground-breaking studies of a nineteenth-century prison in Tasmania (e.g., Casella 2001a, 2007). The practice of internment has often been explicitly gendered in cases where only the military-age males of a population have been interned, or where the families of men involved in insurgencies have been interned to isolate, demoralize and blackmail the combatants – as in South Africa during the Boer War. In most internment sites where both men and women were held there was physical segregation of the sexes, and women were sometimes held in

accommodations considered more comfortable, secure or private than that of the men. This separation is a common pattern that might be recoverable in the archaeological analysis of internment camp sites. Most of the cases where male and female internees were treated without differentiation are those where murder or genocide was the ultimate aim of the internment.

There is a need for more studies in the visibility of gender in the archaeology of internment. As Casella has argued, even acknowledging the existence of women in these sites genders the history and archaeology of internment, an important stage in the evolution of the discipline, albeit one we might hope by now to have superseded (Casella 2001b: 68). Future studies in the archaeology of gender in internment might consider the construction and interpretation of gendered material culture assemblages, gendered representations and commemorations of internment, and forge links with studies of sexuality and sexual and reproductive health in internment and incarceration. One of the most important outcomes of a gendered archaeology of internment will be a critique of the widespread view of female internees as vulnerable, helpless victims. The archaeological evidence, as Casella has demonstrated, is likely to tell a very different story.

Sexuality

Though all forms and expressions of sexuality that exist outside of confinement can also plausibly occur within prisons and prison camps, sexual activity, like all other activities, is constrained and changed under conditions of confinement. Institutions usually aim to control sexuality and sexual reproduction, and perhaps the most obvious attempt at this is through the common practice of separating women prisoners from men prisoners, and both of these from non-prisoners of any gender. This obstruction of heterosexual relationships is of course often challenged through prohibited access to buildings or wards (possibly facilitated by bribes), permanent or temporary escapes, assignment to work details or billeting outside of the prison, and in some contexts sanctioned conjugal visits. In addition

to separation of the sexes, working against all sexual activity in prisons and prison camps are two further forces of institutional control: the unfailing lack of privacy and the reduction of caloric intake, which has the side effect of reducing sex drive.

Where prisoners are housed in open areas or have access to each other – which is the case in most situations of confinement – same-sex relationships are maintained with comparative ease. This trend came under the scrutiny of military doctors after the Second World War when anecdotal evidence suggested that some formerly heterosexual Allied PoWs "turned" to homosexuality when faced with many years in camps populated exclusively by men (Cochrane 1946; Jackson 2004).

Both consensual and non-consensual sexual relations take place under conditions of confinement, and sexual abuse, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, and rape and mass rape are consistent aspects of institutional confinements. In some cases in the Nazi concentration camps, female prisoners were selected by the guards for housing in the camp brothels, which both guards and wealthy prisoners could pay to visit.

Stakeholder Communities

There is a recurrent theme in the archaeology of the modern world in general, and of the archaeology of internment in particular, of surviving participants of the events under investigation becoming involved in the research process (Moshenska 2009) (Fig. 4). This trend has theoretical, methodological, and ethical dimensions which future archaeologists studying internment sites will need to take into account. A central aspect of community involvement in archaeologies of internment is the value of individual memories in reconstructing the material and social formations of the site. Many internment sites teeter on the edge of living memory, and oral historical research can reveal an enormous amount of information of use to the archaeologist.

The most important consideration in community archaeologies of internment is the recognition of the multiple, overlapping and

Confinement and Detention in Political and Social Archaeology, Fig. 4 Project archaeologist (*right*) looking at finds in the laboratory with Mario Villani (*left*), a survivor of an Argentinian torture prison (Courtesy of Andres Zarankin)

often violently antagonistic communities involved. These include victim, perpetrator, and bystander communities; exiled or diaspora communities; and current residents on or near the site who may be associated with some or none of these (Cappelletto 2005). Planning for the engagement or involvement of these multiple communities may make the archaeology of internment a more difficult task, but the ethical and practical implications of ignoring them are far greater.

Future Directions

Today the sites of some of the most infamous prisons and concentration camps of the twentieth century are forest. Within a few decades – the blink of an eye in archaeological terms – vast settlements carved and built from the forests of central Europe, for example, have been reabsorbed by their natural environment. What are the mnemonic and archaeological implications if one can walk for miles across the sites of Treblinka or *Stalag Luft III*, once home to tens of thousands of prisoners, without realizing it? One of the most common and striking characteristics of internment sites, and from an

archaeological perspective one of the most troubling, is physical ephemerality (Fig. 5). This is particularly the case with internment camps; indeed, the very term "camp" implies a temporary residence.

This ephemerality has been repeatedly exploited by the perpetrators of internment – from Nazi Germany to Pinochet's Chile – to erase the traces of camps and other internment sites from the earth and thereby from history. Combined with the absence or destruction of documentary evidence and the murder, silencing, or shaming of prisoners and witnesses, it is terrifyingly feasible that a substantial episode of internment can be erased and subsequently denied. Against this backdrop of physical and historical ephemerality, devastating c-transforms and powerful n-transforms, the responsibility of the archaeologist grows: to diligently collect what meager traces remain, and to bear witness legally or historically. The term "forensic archaeology" is usually taken to refer to studies of human remains. Its literal meaning is archaeology carried out as part of the judicial process, and it is in this sense of the term that archaeologists might want to approach sites of internment: as crime scenes where the gathering and interpretation of evidence must be carefully conducted,

Confinement and Detention in Political and Social Archaeology, Fig. 5 Ruins of Auschwitz-II Birkenau. The site was razed by the fleeing Nazis, and vast fields are all that remain of large sections of the concentration camp (Courtesy of Adrian Myers)

documented, and maintained for future use. Archaeologists are uniquely skilled to collect and store these fragile forms of data.

This appeal to careful examination is not meant to disparage or belittle the more descriptive or interpretive archaeological work conducted on internment sites, nor to suggest that archiving a site totally fulfills our moral responsibility to the past. Many internment sites are well recorded or well preserved and will survive as heritage sites or sites of memory for the foreseeable future. Yet to these as much as to faint traces of barracks beneath a forest floor archaeologists arguably have a duty of stewardship.

It is heartening to note, however, that countering this fact of ephemerality and trend towards erasure is the growing interest of archaeologists. With increasing temporal distance from the two World Wars, for example, we are beginning to see increasing archaeological research on internment camps from these most devastating and influential eras. Clearly, however, there are presently major gaps in the archaeological study of prisons and prison camps, and archaeologists need to expand their interest to outside of North America, Europe, and Australia.

Cross-References

▶ Internment and Prisoners of War in Historical Archaeology
▶ Nationalism and Archaeology
▶ Nationalism and Archaeology: Overview

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Basic Biographical Information

Margaret (Meg) Conkey (Fig. 1) is one of the leaders in archaeological method and theory, gender and feminist archaeology, and Paleolithic art. She received her B.A. in Ancient History and Art from Mount Holyoke College in 1965, and an M.A. (1969) and Ph.D. (1978) in Anthropology from the University of Chicago. Conkey taught at San Jose State University (1970–1976), University of California, Santa Cruz (1979–1980), and SUNY Binghamton (1982–1986), where she also served as codirector of Women's Studies. She joined the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley as an Associate Professor in 1987, received the Class of 1960 endowed chair in 1997, and became an Emerita Professor in 2011. Conkey also served as Director of the Archaeological Research Facility (1994–2007).

Conkey has held numerous professional administrative positions and been honored by many awards. She was the Chairperson of the Committee on the Status of Women in Archaeology of the American Anthropological Association (1975), and served as President of the Association for Feminist Archaeology of the