

Samuel Lafone Quevedo

and the construction of Archaeology in Argentina

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*T*he history of the construction of Archaeology

as a scientific discipline must be at the same time a history of the construction of an archaeological community. In our newly constructed nations, the institutionalization of academic human studies, meaning the formalization of mechanisms of state control of scientific endeavour, included an "academic geography" that paralleled that of broader politics. But, as space is not referred here as an abstract dimension, but in reference to the situated character of the archaeological perspectives, changes in "academic geography" as a part of the processes of construction of archaeological science and its community of supporters, should be reflected in changes in theoretical (as definition of the objectual realm of archaeological interpretation) and methodological (as definition of the legitimate approaches to that realm) aspects of archaeological practice.

In a very special way, the first stages of the history of Archaeology, the process of definition of what is included and what excluded from the boundaries of the discipline, is clear in showing the meanings of our first theory and methodology. In the Argentine case, and we can suspect that it is not in isolation, this process (and the meanings attached to it) was related with the construction of the national state and nationhood (Haber 1995 for the Argentine case; see Rowlands 1994).

In this work we want to show the changes underwent by a pioneer of humanistic studies in Argentina, Samuel Lafone Quevedo, at the times he was increasingly absorbed by academy, and he committed himself with its construction. The importance of bounding ourselves to an individual career is to stress the personal experience of Lafone as an empirical case.

If we review the historiography of Argentine Archaeology (Fernández 1978; Madrazo 1985; among others), we'll find broad justification concerning Samuel Lafone Quevedo as a pioneer. On the other hand, we need to realize that his work has not been favorably considered, as the works of most of his contemporaries. Certainly, Lafone Quevedo has not been a classic in Alexander's sense (1991). The fact that Lafone's work is not a reference point for the history of the discipline shows that the greater part of it was left outside of the boundaries of legitimate archaeological practice, and that those boundaries have not changed so much as to re-absorb Lafone's main work. Perhaps here stays the relevance of this research in a self-reflective moment of nowadays Archaeology.

Our vision of Lafone is strictly in the present time, and in that sense, our work is a presentation. It is not that we defend or reject his interpretations as valid today; it is that, at the moment of re-thinking the assumptions of our own discipline, returning to read Lafone with his peculiar pre-disciplinary approach, is an enlivening exercise.

We think it is convenient to underline the contradictory positions in Lafone's work, in order to stand out and put in context his contributions and internal contradictions. In the light of those differences, we can see the paths opened by Lafone, those paths that justify our presentation of him. And in a work inspired in a topological sense, it appears, almost as an obligation, the need to polarize between Pilciao and La Plata (his former and final residences). This distance becomes a true metaphor of his work and also of the Anthropology of Northwest Argentina.

In order to stress the distances and differences that marked his own intellectual biography, and its relation with his involvement with the process of construction of academic Archaeology, we'll neglect some other important aspects of Lafone's thinking, as for example the influence of English Anthropology (mainly Frazer, but also Tylor) and North American Archaeology and Antiquarianism (the Mountbuilders of Ohio and Squier's research, for example). Evolutionism and racism were part of Lafone's thinking, as much as of his epoch (though certainly he was not a militant as other contemporaries); but it is not our purpose to characterize the commonalities with his colleagues, what can be explained as influence of the "spirit" of the times. We prefer to emphasize the changing relations of academic production and the construction of an archaeological field as a context for Lafone's own work.

A brief biographical comment

Samuel A. Lafone Quevedo was born in Montevideo (Uruguay) in 1835. His mother was a Catholic and his father, Anglican. Lafone's father, a rich English merchant with multiple businesses in both margins of Plata river, sent his son to England, to study at the University of Cambridge, in 1848. Nine years later, Samuel returned with the degree of Magister Artium.

In 1859, he came to Catamarca for the first time, accompanying his father and Benjamin Poucel, a Frenchman who, having traveled previously throughout this country, transmitted to young Samuel all his knowledge and interest in the history, Geography, Ethnography, and Archaeology of the region. A little later, due to his father's financial problems, Samuel was sent to Catamarca to manage a mine and a mineral mill.

After he settled in the zone, he bought an algarrobo wood situated 25 kilometers south of Andalgalá, practically in the borders of the Pípanaco salt plain. Lafone re-baptized the place, with the name of Pilciao. He himself declares,

"I'm the author of the orthography of Pilciao, when I gave back its old name to this place. The property was bought under the name of 'Balde de la Carpintería' (Well of the Carpentry) or 'of Don Fabián' (Mr. Fabián's well) because so was named its previous owner"¹ (Lafone 1898: XLI).

In that place, Lafone founded a mill with a village, to which he gave some characteristics beyond the mere commercial establishment. Years after Pilciao was considered as a project similar to a Jesuitic Mission, a settlement, a foundation in a broader sense. He built houses for the workers (who were more than five hundred), a school, a church; he coined their own money and propitiated cultural activities in the community.

"Five days of work around the figure of a beloved man, who was the first to take part in the hardest labors, and two days of rest: Saturday and Sunday (...). That was the (...) home day and not even the children were away from their houses. Sunday

¹ This and the remaining translations of texts in Spanish pertain to the authors.

was the day of the people, the opportunity of knowing each other in the neighborhood. People from the nearer settlements, fifteen or more kilometers away, came to participate in the entertainments of those two days" (Furlong 1962:14).

In a biographical review (Furlong 1962:20) we are told that "(...) Lafone's philological and archaeological vocation had become firm from 1880 on". Even from the beginning of the 1880s, when Lafone began writing weekly personal notes (he went on with this task till 1896), he speaks about his obsessive passion for the transcription and study of antique documents. In his will of coming near the character of an original American culture, he didn't hesitate in trying to learn different languages, such as Quechua, Araucan, Abipon, Mocovi, Toba, Guaycuru, Chinese, Japanese, Egyptian, Sanskrit, Chibcha, Maya, Quiche, Nahuatl. Simultaneously he studied compared grammar.

Pilciao broke the monotony of a rural provincial landscape, and Lafone broke the history of that distant place. Pilciao was both a place and a man; it produced admiration and attracted the attention of every scientific traveler who came around. All those who, in different times and circumstances have spoken about Lafone, surprisingly agreed in showing a well-balanced interest between his businesses and his researches. A great number of scientists visited Pilciao, such as Engineer Gunard Lange, the Anthropologist Hermann Ten Kate, the Geologist R. Hauthal, Doctor L. Brackebush. But no doubt -in Furlong's opinion (1962:21)- "(...) the man who did more for Lafone, was Francisco Moreno", who in 1892 trusted him with the Chair of the Department of Philology of the La Plata Museum. His commitment with institutions of Buenos Aires became stronger, and he traveled south more and more frequently and for longer periods. In 1895 the University of Buenos Aires appointed him delegate to the International Congress of Americanists at Rome. He had to decline this invitation because of his family duties and specially because he had to concentrate in dealing with his financial problems.

"Everything was going with the utmost prosperity until the first presidency of Roca, when politicians began to get interested in mining. They ruined Lafone's enterprise. (...) the taxes and all kind of obstacles were increasing in such a way that (...) at the end of those years, Lafone wrote: 'It's a bad business to go on with Pilciao, and though it breaks my heart to end this undertaking, I can't find any other solution" (Furlong 1962:19).

He came gradually to some decisions that ended in reducing the number of workers. Finally, in 1902, he was obliged to sell the mine. Then, he settled definitely in the city of La Plata (the capital of Buenos Aires province), where in 1906 he was appointed Head of the Museum of Natural Sciences of La Plata. He remained in this position till his death.

In 1898 Lafone was appointed Professor of American Archaeology in the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature of the University of Buenos Aires, formally opening the academic studies in this area. The institutional acknowledgments to his talent reached its highest point in 1910, when the University of Buenos Aires awarded him the Honoris Causa Doctorate.

Samuel A. Lafone Quevedo, the pioneer of the philological, ethnographical, archaeological and linguistic studies in Argentina died on June 18th 1920.

Archaeology from Pilciao

"The reproductive forces of Nature appear everywhere as objects of worship of the indians, and even as time and persecutions of adverse religions have tried to make disappear the last vestige of the religion of the defeated, chance and Archaeology replevying of History have found proofs of the way in which disappeared nations acted and thought. The names of places, the symbolism of their tools, their social organization, everything tends to unite the separated nations in our known Americas" (Lafone 1918:79).

In 1890 was published Lafone's first paper appointed to the academic circle. This paper constitutes a paradigmatic example of Lafone's first epoch. In it he describes and interprets the meaning of a bronze disk that he had bought in a village near Pilciao. Guided by this first paper we'll try to penetrate into his whole work. This will be studied with a systematical purpose, rather than chronological.

Lafone seeks in the "Relación de Juan de Betanzos" (a Chronicle of the conquest of Peru) the description of some images in high relief that formed part of the paraphernalia of the Inca cult in Cuzco. He suggests then that the disk could be a copy among many others that would have been sent "to the farthest places of the Empire", to be obeyed and worshipped "or *mochados* like the indian saying goes" (Lafone 1890:4). To confirm this, he describes the different parts of the disk that have greater similarity with the description of the chronicle: "the seat or throne, *tiyana*", "the diadem of beautiful feathers", "the golden earflaps hanging from the diadems", "and the golden medallion on the forehead" (*op. cit.*). The absence of the "two *mamaconas* or women who scared away (*oxeasen*) the flies" is replaced by a graphic synonym. In the disk there are "two lizards or *umucutis*, whose etymology indicate its office; because *umu* means priest and *cuti*, in the place of. The lizards eat flies, so that they can very well perform that office" (*op. cit.*). The text of the chronicle serves as an interpretative frame for the disk. On the surface of the disk, Lafone reads a graphical text similar to that of the chronicle. But to say "to read" is much less metaphorical that we can suppose. Explicitly, Lafone says, "I believe to read some letters in the symbols, and they don't say *Viracocha*" (*op. cit.*:9). But this idea is presented to us in its historical dimension. "(...) this cult -the one of *Viracocha*- up to some point noble and pure, had deposed other nearer to the traditions and superstitions that then were popular". Shortly after the beginning of the last section of his work, and under the title of "The letters", Lafone tells us:

"the embroiderings and paintings repeated *ad nauseam* in the archaeological objects had some meaning: what becomes conventional began being meaningful" (*op. cit.*).

How can we arrive at this meaning? Lafone provides us different clues alongside his work. In 1890 he compares each one of the graphic units that conform the motive, with the Egyptian and Mayan hieroglyphics and with their semantic and phonetic value. As a result of this task of deciphering and transcription, he concludes that the motives repeat the word "cuati", which will be, in its turn, the object of translation in the frame of chronicles and historical documents, linguistic data and folk traditions.

In his paper about "The *huacas* (sacred burials) of Chañar-Yaco" he derives the symbolic meaning from the functional:

"(...) painted (...) with those wavy lines in zig-zag and *quencho*, that, if I'm not mistaken, are the signs that indicate water, because we find them in cups and jars that evidently were used for the transportation and deposit of water" (Lafone 1891:358).

In this case, we are dealing with the unity of the thing, its name, its object, and its sense. *Yuro* is, at the same time, the name applied to an elongated vessel, its function and what represents that same symbolism. Its decoration refers to that meaning, as well as the name of the decoration.

In 1900 he repeats the plan. This time he alludes to *manoplas* (knuckle-dusters) made of bronze, interpreting each motive: the parrot is important in a mythological sense;

"the parallelogram is one of the symbols repeated *ad nauseam* in the famous disk discovered in Andalgalá, and that I suppose represents the god *Viracocha* ⁻²⁻. The staircase (...) most probably represent the cultivation terraces in the Andes (...). Of the three openings I shall only say that they are similar to three menhirs or monoliths, which

² See that in the paper dedicated specifically to the disk (Lafone 1890) he interprets it in the opposite direction.

are closely connected with the cult of the agricultural gods of the same zone as the knuckle-dusters (...). These circles, alone or accompanied by other small circles or by central points, have a symbolic value very well known; (...) basing myself in the plate of Yamqui Pachacuti and in my archaeological studies in the Calchaqui region, I don't doubt to join both things and to establish that where we have those *ojos* (eyes), we have the god Viracocha and his son, or emanation, Imaymana" (Lafone 1902:287-288).

Lafone ends:

"Having put together these data, I think it's justified the hypothesis that this, and other handles that appear in the collections, are those *manoplas* (knuckle-dusters) with which the indians implored the favor of Viracocha, of the Sun and of the Thunder" (*op. cit.*:289).

But it is in the Prologue to Adán Quiroga's book "The cross in the Americas", written by Lafone in 1901, where he gave the symbology its more explicit framework:

"These drawings tell us that there was a symbolism with recognized signs, and basing myself in this, in the universality of a great number of them in our continent, I don't doubt in talking about a sacred language with a well known symbology in the north as well as in the south" (Lafone 1977:21).

The idea of a pan-American sacred language seems to us excessively diffusionist. But, much more relevant that the matter of diffusionism, is the idea of the sacred language as a frame of meaning for the drawings, because they provide a justification for the idea of, at least, an Andean world that share broad symbolic conceptions. As these shared conceptions are underlying material manifestations, they can be traced, for example, through the Andean mythical thought and then, indicate the meaning of the manifestations. These, besides referring to the archaeological objects and to the drawings that ornate them, also allude to the names, not only those that designate things, but also the names of places and persons. The name provides the trail for the meaning of a thing. The road goes through a linguistic and etymological field.

During many years Lafone collected folk words, toponymics and onomastics in the region where he lived. This region, Calchaqui, was in linguistic debt with Cacan and Quechua, languages overlapped by Spanish, causing the almost total loss of Cacan and the survival in regionalisms of Quechua. Lafone's experience in this field caused that Francisco P. Moreno commended him to write the "Instructions of the Museum of La Plata for collectors of Indian words", which he completed in 1892. In 1894 he began publishing in a serial another huge work which is published as a whole in 1898. It was the "Thesaurus of *Catamarqueñismos*", a real dictionary of regional folk words. Each term is explained according to its etymology, that is to say, its original meaning, that one before "becoming conventional".

Once explained the origin, it's necessary to delve deeply into the meaning and that is the point where Lafone is taken by the etymology. And from there, he appeals to a range of folk, historical and mythical texts to penetrate the field of the translation of the meaning. And this is quite valid not only for the terms but also for the archaeological objects.

For instance, once he concluded that the motives of the bronze disk mean *coati*, he argued, based in the chronicles, in the Indian languages and in the folklore, about the meaning of *coati* for the makers of the disk.

"The word isn't Quechua and we don't know if the Peruvian Incas worshipped Cuati; the Aymaras, on the contrary gave to the word the meaning of "God" and that's why they advised the priests to inquire if Cuati was God. The Caribbean invasion destroyed the old South American world and its civilization; we know this in its rebirth under the Incas dynasty (...) and we attribute to them and to the Chimus (...) things that possibly

correspond to the old race that the Caribs destroyed. The Incas didn't bury their dead in vessels and we know by means of Montesinos, that in times of the seventh Pachacuti, 400 A. D., the use of letters was forbidden and there was a reform in religion. Probably what was forbidden was the superstition of Cuati (*cuatiamiento*) that, nevertheless, continued in the remote places. The Inca would order the making of the disk and the provincial men would fill it with symbols of Cuati: so, the Colla, while pretending to worship the Christian God in the altar of the chapel, was actually adoring the *huaca* that cautiously had buried under it" (Lafone 1890:10-11).

This means that there is a mythical background, a common sacred language, but not exactly the same among different people. The relationship among the Indian populations in South America, and particularly in the Andean area, have been very complex and it is necessary to understand that every cultural expression is the result of a historical process. That's why, for Lafone, it's critical the concern for the Andean mythology, but it was also important the understanding of that mythology immersed in the historical contingencies that corresponded to each population. The multiple invasions and conquests were usually seen as the context of the imposition of one culture over another. Lafone, instead, knew how to appreciate the manifestations in which the culture of submitted people survives the conquest. At the same time, what can be interpreted as a racist denegation of historical continuity between the "South American world and its civilization" and the modern Indians (of Carib-barbarian- origin, destroyers of civilization, those who he tried to manage and convert in Pilciao), can also be understood as historical continuity of culture. His own interpretation of history makes possible an interpretation of archaeological symbolism through myths and chronicles, as all of them share up to some point the same frameworks of meaning.

An example, probably the most imposing of his work in this field, is the "Mythological essay" of 1892. In it, Lafone appeals to the text of Santa Cruz Pachacuti, a colonial Indigenous writer, to assert the existence of an Andean god named Tonapa. But Pachacuti himself is object of inquiry by Lafone and, in this case, about his credibility. When Lafone asks about the existence of Tonapa, he appeals to a rhetorical presentation then resolved by him:

"The dilemma in which we are immersed is this: either Pachacuti *invented* the tradition of Tonapa with all its details, which is unlikely, or he *reproduced* everything that he and many others knew (...)" (Lafone 1892b:349; emphasis by the authors).

Some pages ahead, he goes on saying:

"The Yamqui Pachacuti could invent hymns and put them in the mouths of the Cuzco kings, but he would do it reproducing popular traditions and practices that he knew" (*op. cit.*:364).

It isn't simply a critic to the historical sources, but a theoretical justification of his methodological option for the mythographic explanation. The dilemma between invention and reproduction, proper of an epoch marked by the discussions between evolutionists and difussionists, is overcome by the idea of "to invent (...) reproducing", in which it gets sense the myth in folklore, the pots in the popular tradition, the toponymics in archaeological ruins, all in a historical framework of meanings of the Andean culture. Pure invention would have discarded any importance of cultural tradition in its broader sense. An example of this, among our contemporaries, are the functionalist and evolutionary archaeologies. Pure reproduction would have destroyed every interest in the local expressions. Lafone knew that he was living in an Andean valley, but he also recognized that it wasn't central the Andean world. On the other hand, nothing would have meant the historical processes if everything would have been reproduced in them. Lafone finds an intermediate position in his interpretation of Pachacuti, a position that is also broadly overcoming the dilemma. In it, there is room enough for the cultural resistance as well for the re-semantization of significant.

But, if the myth is re-elaborated (“invented and reproduced”) according to the historical context, Lafone must express its meaning in historical terms. And this task will become one of our man's greatest concerns. In many opportunities (as in his first work of 1888, “Londres and Catamarca”) Lafone inscribes his interpretations in the frame of the historical processes, including episodes that go from the discovery of America, the conquest of Peru by Pizarro, to the Spaniards' entry in the territory that afterwards they would call “Tucuman, Juries and Diaguitas”, that is to say, to the present Northwest Argentine region. In this zone, a mountainous terrain, the Diaguitas (and/or Calchaquies) began a long resistance war, that during more than a hundred years prevented the definite establishment of the Spaniards invaders. This period of resistance and conquest was one of Lafone's favorite themes, to which he returned in almost every paper.

But before the Spaniards invasion, it had taken place an Inca invasion that Lafone knew not only through the chronicles but also through the broad diffusion of Quechua (the imperial language from Cuzco) in the provinces of Northwest Argentina, both in the toponymics and in the folk language. The Inca invasion had caused the cultural unification of the Andes, which supported the reference to Andean mythology in the interpretation of the meaning of culture. But this was not a diffusionist perspective, to the extreme of believing that everything had come from Cuzco.

Specifically referring to Catamarca region, he believed that,

“the invasions of savage bands or *juríes* destroyed something -if not everything- of the civilization established by the Chibcha tribes, introduced by the Incas or by the predecessors to the Tiahuanaco epoch, not excluding a revival under the protection of the kings of Cuzco, who -for me- are no more than restorers of the civilization of an old empire of Peru, whose big center was situated in the already mentioned Tiahuanaco” (Lafone 1902a:262).

Montesinos' chronology is adopted by Lafone, so much as his version of the myth of a pre-Incan civilization centered in the Altiplano (High Plains). This has many present resonances, among which we can mention the proposals of a Quechua appropriation of Altiplanic mythologies (Bouysse-Cassagne & Bouysse 1988; Szeminski 1987), to the possibility that it could exist a very old mythical background shared by the different Andean regions (see Pérez & Heredia 1990).

Lafone, from Pilciao to La Plata

“How well we sleep under the stars in the barren plateaus and deserts of Catamarca” (Lafone 1891:356).

Lafone researched these issues in an epoch in which Archaeology and Anthropology were not yet developed in Argentina, but were still in formation. Lafone's vision of himself, of his own position behind the object, will allow us to catch a glimpse about how he constituted both the object and the discipline.

In a first moment, Lafone needed to speak at large about the definition of his own place among the cultures.

“It mustn't be believed that all this is heard and learned as if we passed away in a train. The native has great distrust of outsiders, because he believes that the outsider asks questions just to make fun of his things and what he doesn't understand is the issue of the archaeological or historical interest. They tell something to me, because they are now sure that ‘I'm a curious’ and that ‘I like this things’, and that is convenient to me” (Lafone 1891:356).

So, as he was neither a native, nor an outsider, he approached the antiquities and popular traditions with the same ambivalence that, in fact, “served him” in either side.

With the natives, he talked, asked questions, listened to them, and gave way to his "curiosity". He learned about their believings and their words, and with them, he apprehended their reality. His categories were the folk categories, because he lived in that reality and so he knew them, and what he described, then, was part of that reality.

To his guests from other places, he advised them "that they should earn the "llastay" or owner of the birds -³- because of him depends the luck of the hunters" (*op. cit.*, 353). He received the outsiders, he shared their tastes and their knowledge. But he also understood their lack of understanding.

"Every outsider who enters what was the province of Tucuman, Juries and Diaguítas, would have noted the dialect that the people use in their family conversations, that is different of the learned Spanish, not only their accent, but also in a considerable number of words which make no sense to those who hear them for the first time" (Lafone 1989:XIII).

This understanding of the outsider perception, that may have been once experienced by Lafone himself, led him to write his vocabulary, a kind of guide through a territory where he had become a spokesman, in a dialect in which he had become a guide.

But beside the natives and the outsiders, that together with him defined themselves by their being in Pilciao, there were others that were also interested in the old cultures. And, behind them, he tried a self-definition that was as much an assimilation as a separation.

"Dr. Tylor is an authority and an additional link in that chain of Englishmen, that as Forlong, Frazer, Robertson and Smith are busy investigating in depth the origin of religious creeds in Man's first stage; but at the same time, *we, the Americans who pretend the rank of Americanists*, must ask him if, in wanting to attribute to the Christian missionaries everything that smells to Judaism or to Christianity in all that is told about the savage or barbarian tribes of the new continent, he had acknowledged what the Peruvian, Mexican and the people of other nations more favoured of our continent knew and believed in religious matters" (Lafone 1892b:325. The emphasis by the authors).

Lafone shared with the English anthropologists his objectual field, but his distance to them, allowed him to define the object from another place⁴. Lafone was an Americanist, but before that he was American, and this precedence marks the situatedness of his perspective.

Lafone was, then, spokesman and guide, intermediary between two worlds, those of natives and outsiders. But neither his position as an intermediary, nor the position of the poles between which he mediated, were possible without a necessary reference to the place. The curious man of Pilciao for some people, the scientist from Pilciao for others, his position has a topological tying. And precisely from there, and only from there, could Lafone think this other Americanism, the properly American. Now, if his intellectual self-placing was geographically defined, we can suppose that the changes in Lafone's geography would be translated in changes in his own position. And everything seems to indicate that this is so. At the beginning of the century, when his stays in Buenos Aires and La Plata became longer and longer, and afterwards, in 1902, when he was definitely established in La Plata, Lafone lost irremissibly his reference in Pilciao.

Lafone joined physically to the scientific discipline and then he had to identify himself with its interests. In 1901, when he wrote a prologue to Quiroga's book "The cross in the Americas", he

³ The owner of the birds, also known in the region as 'coquena', is like an elf, a supernatural being that looks after the security of wild animals.

⁴ Remind that not only his father was an Englishman, but that he himself was educated at Cambridge. This underlines his differentiation.

adopted a position relative to the archaeological objects that, up to this time, had been vigorously defended by Moreno, the Chair of the Museum of La Plata. Lafone said,

“Once more we must protest against those massive destructions of the deposits that contain these traces of prehistoric times in our country. The only way to prevent the commercialism that had invaded the collectors would be not to accept any collection which didn't possess the credentials of each object and of its discovery and location, and that it isn't satisfactory to the experts in the matter, for our museums have today data that allow this kind of demands” (Lafone 1977:22).

Even in 1901, his new position was revealed as such, to the point that the prologue was not signed in Pilciao but in La Plata (The Museum). But he kept yet the sensitivity with the distance (to the museum), from which Quiroga wrote his book.

“He spent his holidays in Calchaquí, his nights interpreting books in other languages, and thus, three hundred leagues away from the publishing house, he was able to finish his work “The cross in the Americas” (Lafone 1977:22).

The issue of the not commercialization of archaeological objects would become, from that moment on, a recurrent one. It would configurate one of the principal marks of Archaeology as a scientific discipline, to the point of justifying the exclusiveness of the approach to archaeological objects. In consequence, the fact of Lafone assuming the defense of archaeological heritage, tells us that he had adopted Archaeology as his field of knowledge and that he works to obtain its (and his) legitimation.

In another work he presents us a justification of Archaeology in terms of discipline (in its different meanings). Speaking of Pajanco and Tuscamayo, he tells us that,

“(…) I decided to visit the place of the ruins to learn its character and importance, to advise or not an exploration of them to our Director, Dr. Moreno” (Lafone 1902a:259).

What was broadly justifiable before because of his curiosity (as Chañar Yaco), is now directed as a report to the consideration of the Museum. It's appearing in Lafone, a migration from the guide's place to the traveler's place⁵.

In 1906, Lafone presented a work that had for title an idea that, in the biographical context, seems ironical to us. He published his stays of 1902 and 1903 in the place where he had lived for almost half a century as “Archaeological travel to the region of Andalgala”. This apparent contradiction can be understood considering his assimilation to the traveler, to the scientist that had to do a journey to meet the object of his study, the same as the anthropologists and archaeologists from the Natural Sciences and Ethnographical Museums of La Plata and Buenos Aires did. This approach to the object made through a journey was one of the characteristics of the naturalistic sciences that were in formation in the museums, and among which was Archaeology. Only defined from the Museum, the sciences could be performed through a journey. In the case of Lafone, it sounds forced, but seen from his new identity, it was highly coherent.

We can notice an even greater coherence if, from this new position a different theoretical and methodological approach is defined. We find it more clearly in the consideration of the meaning of the archaeological objects, that became irrelevant for the classification. Formerly, the objects were inserted in the text as part of the narration, as examples, or interpretative arguments themselves. Now, the objects were placed at the end of the work and ordered not by their meaning but by their provenance, their raw material, their color, their decorative technique, in short, classified. Nothing remained from the meaningful past; that's why Lafone explained that “we have to rely principally on the geographical classification” (Lafone 1906:110; cf. Lafone 1908).

Lafone explicitly adopted an objectivist pretension when he said,

⁵ According to Furlong, even since his first contacts with Moreno, Lafone was seen differently by the Buenos Aires intelligentsia: “(…) he was not more seen as the industrial and business man but as the archaeologist and ethnologist”(1962:22).

“Discounting two or three exceptions (...) very little has been done that could be called methodical, and even less scientific” (Lafone 1906:110).

He saw himself in condition of qualifying the methodical and the scientific, legitimizing Archaeology in opposition to the Antiquarianism.

“There is much and there will be more, but much have been lost in the centuries that preceded ours, and much is destroyed by the explorers that trade with these things: these people cause an irreparable damage to Argentine Archaeology, and our Parliament behaves quite badly in promoting this vandalism by buying *bric-à-brac* collections gathered together with great sacrifice of the scientific and historical truth. These explorations must be done with science and conscience, the same as they are practiced in Egypt, in the Mesopotamian region and in all the east Mediterranean. It's painful to see the state in which the Indian cemeteries of Calchaqui are; and, to be able to appreciate the difference that exists between each collection in their cost and in their archaeological value, we just have to compare the material bought by the nation in these last years with what Professor Ambrosetti has managed to collect and describe for the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature” (Lafone 1908:316).

In that time it was developing an archaeological community's self-comprehension, that, beside the corporative exclusiveness to the approach to a part of what is defined as national heritage, postulated the objectivity and scientificism as superior values that legitimize that exclusiveness. And the value of Archaeology was demonstrated by comparing its collections with the non-scientific ones. These are worth money, those are worth Archaeology. But as long as the state bought non-scientific collections to exhibit them in the museums, in which the Archaeology was “produced”, the difference doesn't result very clear. Archaeology was legitimated marking and remarking its method. Only through it, the archaeologists could approach the objective knowledge of the past. And in consequence, only by means of the archaeologists could the nation approach to that knowledge. The pretension of objectivity of Archaeology was closely tied to its pretension of exclusiveness and control of the (physical and intellectual) access to the archaeological matter.

To meet Lafone in a position so distant of the preceding one, in which his ductility was enough for moving between two worlds, becomes utterly suspicious. It isn't possible to think that Lafone could change his experience of knowledge as well as his academic position and place of residence. But it's true that his new place required him a different positioning. Lafone considered necessary to mark his new insertion to the academy because he was, at that moment, one of his authorities. But from 1908 on, his production decreased remarkably. He preferred the reclusion in the silence of the Museum, to reappear only occasionally writing some notes in the newspapers or prologuing other author's works. And this fact may be a key to the interpretation that Lafone did not succeed in completing an intellectual coherence with his new self-comprehension. Only in his old age and towards the end of his life, he presented a couple of works in which he revisited parts of his biography (1919), or made a passionate defense of South-American Indians (1918). The pro-archaeological scientificist discourse was useful to him in his first years in La Plata, and marked a huge distance from Pilciao. Once he felt himself secure, he preferred silence.

Final remarks

If it is true that scientific communities are in the origin of legitimate practices of science, it is not less true that political and ideological aims were in the origin of scientific communities, at least in our case from Argentine Archaeology. In the construction of Argentine Archaeology some practices were excluded, not violently, but, as we have seen in the Lafone's case, as self-exclusion. The interpretation of symbolic meanings of archaeological objects stayed out of the boundaries of legitimate Archaeology, and it is our contention that there were political and ideological reasons for this.

The institutionalization of archaeological practice through the creation of museums heavily sponsored by the state served as a great pressure as to what matched the project of dominant classes in the construction of Argentine state and what not. The conquest of Patagonia and Chaco, meaning the defeating of Indian groups, ended around 1880. That experience was fresh enough to make impossible for the state dominant ideology not to see all Indian issues as war issues. The territories obtained were given to officials of the army and projects of colonization by European migrants.

Symbolic and cultural meanings were not a matter of interest for the national science. While the nation was being constructed through the physical annihilation and reclusion of Indian peoples, scientific classification and control of Indian culture and history part of the practice of legitimation. The interpretation of symbolic meanings of pre-European history was excluded from the definition of the objectual realm of Archaeology. As the case of Lafone showed us, individuals had to adhere if they wanted to be part of the construction of the archaeological academic community. The geography of politics and of academics were in mutual formation.

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