

Atalay, S. (2012). *Community-based archaeology: Research with, by, and for indigenous and local communities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 312 pp.

Review by Margaret Brown Vega

Initiatives such as crowd-sourced research, citizen science, and service-learning courses at colleges and universities are part of a larger shift in how scholars, and specifically scientists, not only relate to the public, but collaborate with the public as well. Heavily influenced by the work of foundational figures in education and critical pedagogy such as John Dewey, Myles Horton, Paolo Freire, and bell hooks (all cited in this book with the exception of Dewey), teacher-scholars in higher education continue to shift toward a more democratic way of building knowledge in our society. In *Community-Based Archaeology: Research with, by, and for Indigenous and Local Communities*, Sonya Atalay makes the case that this must happen in archaeology, but the points she makes apply well beyond this discipline.

Sustainability is a word used far too often today with little thought as to what it really means. However, Atalay begins Chapter 1 by effectively using this word and makes the case that archaeology cannot sustain itself without becoming an “archaeology that matters” (p. 5). For both philosophical and practical reasons, archaeology must benefit not just archaeologists, but communities as well. To do this, archaeological research must be performed *with* communities, not just *for* them. As Atalay indicates at various points in the book, the latter way of thinking about research is paternalistic and very much part of the colonial mentality out of which anthropology (and archaeology) was born—a history from which we struggle to break free. Atalay seeks to guide us in this effort by drawing upon a range of experiences with five archaeological community-based participatory research (CBPR) projects: the Çatalhöyük CBPR (Turkey), the Ziibiwing Repatriation Research Project and the Ziibiwing Sanilac Petroglyph Intellectual Property Project (both in Michigan), the Flint Stone Street Ancestral Recovery and Site Management Project (also in Michigan), and the Waapaahsiiki Siipiwi Mound Project (Indiana).

Atalay’s book provides a historical review (Chapter 2) of CBPR in archaeology, identifying the broader contexts that helped shape this shift in the discipline, beginning with the Red Power Movement and civil rights activities of the 1960s. Within archaeology, indigenous archaeology and public archaeology developed out of this his-

torical context. As an indigenous archaeologist, Atalay understands very well the tensions that have existed between archaeologists and indigenous groups in the United States and around the world. But the missteps of past (and some current) archaeological research endeavors create tensions that may go unrecognized in *all* communities, indigenous or not. Communities impacted by archaeological research include those living near major cultural heritage sites such as Çatalhöyük. Atalay points out that there are differences between CBPR projects and other kinds of collaborative archaeology initiatives. Table 1 (p. 49–50) is very useful for enumerating the variety of approaches that have been pursued in order to make the distinctions clear. Atalay’s objective is not to dismiss other kinds of collaborative work, but rather to point out that CBPR involves a different approach from these other initiatives.

CBPR is guided by five basic principles (Chapter 3) that serve as a compass when trying to navigate the sometimes challenging waters of CBPR in archaeology. These principles are more of a commitment and shift in mindset than rules, and Atalay identifies them by examining what has worked in a variety of successful CBPR projects. She responds to concerns and outright criticism that such projects lack scientific rigor or that they have done more harm than good (commonly documented in many development projects). In reviewing these critiques, Atalay concedes that participatory research presents, and will continue to present, challenges. Honest reflection about what has worked and what has not is necessary to move the endeavor forward.

The bulk of the book details ways of moving toward and executing a CBPR project, with abundant examples of effective strategies and pitfalls, with some treatment of outright failures. She observes that connecting with communities and how to define what constitutes a community is not a straightforward issue (Chapter 4). Most archaeologists are not trained in the kinds of skills, such as ethnography, that may be critical for effectively making these connections. Gaining consent and navigating both community and institutional levels of review can present challenges (Chapter 5). Atalay emphasizes the importance of “like-mindedness” (p. 143–145), which means that community members and researchers alike must be on the same page about goals and how to proceed in order to negotiate the research process.

Identifying research questions collaboratively, in fact, should ideally be part of a successful CBPR project (Chapter 6). This aspect of participatory research, however, is probably the most challenging for scholars to adopt. Conventional approaches to

research place the sole responsibility for specifying what questions to examine or pursue with the researcher. Involving communities not just in research, but in *research design*, is what fundamentally distinguishes CBPR from other common collaborative efforts. Communities should be involved at the inception of research projects and throughout stages at which data are gathered, analyzed, interpreted, and ultimately shared (Chapter 7). Practical and ethical dilemmas must be negotiated by communities and researchers alike, especially when it comes to knowledge building, and the path is not clearly laid out. Addressing this, Atalay offers an important concept that she calls “braiding knowledge” (p. 207–208). Communities and researchers sometimes have different ways of knowing the world. Finding ways to bring together and share those distinct forms of knowledge, rather than view them as mutually exclusive, is critical to the success of a CBPR project, as well as to the creation of a more inclusive and “multifaceted view of the past” (p. 207).

In her concluding chapter (Chapter 8), Atalay sums up nicely all that is at stake with moving toward more participatory research in archaeology. She returns to each of the five projects in which she was directly involved to identify some of the most lasting impacts. Benefits to the community are one result, but archaeology as a *discipline* also benefits by moving further beyond its colonial roots. It is not easy, and Atalay does not claim it to be. She reminds us of many challenges, from the difficulties with establishing community ties to the realities of securing funding for CBPR projects or securing tenure in a system of higher education that still does not fully recognize such projects as legitimate research. But Atalay rightly ends with the kind of activities that will ultimately change this situation within higher education: incorporating the teaching of these approaches as part of the archaeology curriculum and training our students (both undergraduate and graduate) to be engaged with communities from the beginning. Even if students do not go on to become professional archaeologists, the approaches of CBPR can be implemented by all students in various ways so that they may make contributions within their own communities.

Woven throughout the book are examples drawn from Atalay’s own work, in addition to other CBPR and collaborative projects and fields other than archaeology. Presenting relevant points and examples in this way, rather than with a case-by-case presentation of various projects, is very effective. It is clear that Atalay has a tremendous amount of firsthand experience with CBPR. She shares a great deal of this in the book.

To be honest, the first few chapters felt slow in some ways and difficult to get through. However, by the middle of the book, I no longer felt that way. Atalay's book must be a slow read because there is no recipe for CBPR. Those hoping to thumb through the book to quickly pick up the latest lingo on community engagement, or quickly find ready-made strategies to put into a proposal, will be disappointed. As Atalay points out, good CBPR projects do not result from throwing some buzzwords or superficial engagement into the research mix. They require much more thought and much more work. They are more time-consuming, and still less rewarded by the academic system, than other forms of research. In today's scholarly world, where there is never enough time to juggle academic responsibilities, and differential value is assigned to some activities over others, scholars may struggle with moving toward CBPR. Far more than rewards for individual scholars or institutional prestige, there are rewards for *society*. CBPR is about decolonizing scholarship and collapsing traditional barriers between scholars and the public that should no longer be maintained if scholarship is to truly be of broad significance (as most proposals to major granting agencies, especially in the United States, claim).

Many of us (including myself) are not there yet. But Atalay's book provides abundant food for thought and concrete examples that serve as guides for making this paradigm shift happen in archaeology. Though the book is mainly about archaeology, teacher-scholars in many natural science, social science, and humanities fields, especially those who do any kind of fieldwork, should find this book useful. It dovetails nicely with, and indeed draws upon, the literature of efforts that have been afoot in education for decades. CBPR may be an approach that, at least for scholars, connects the realms of teaching, research, and service in meaningful ways.

About the Reviewer

Margaret Brown Vega is an assistant professor of anthropology at the Indiana University–Purdue University at Fort Wayne. Her research focuses on examining ancient warfare along the coast of Perú and trying to understand war's impact on society, past and present. Brown Vega earned her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.