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Understanding the Present and the Past: Perspectives on Anthropology and Archaeology

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ABSTRACT Anthropology and Archaeology informs us of the full viability of life, past and present. Since the beginning, the discipline of archaeology and anthropology has influenced and informed each other. In this paper I have tried to chart and analyze their changing relationship. It is not possible to look at all the aspects of anthropology in this paper so I would only focus on the theories and methods of social/cultural anthropology and archaeology. Archaeology and Anthropology are linked intimately, in different ways in various parts of the globe. It is not just archaeologists who value knowledge of the past. Anthropologists are becoming more aware of the fact that an accurate representation of the past, as it is perceived to bear on the present, is a critical element of all social life. It is impossible to approach the present without the knowledge of the past and that much of this past is prehistoric, thus only accessible through archaeology. Archaeology and Anthropology has joint heritage and separate identities. Anthropology looks at structures of meaning as they exist in the present; archaeology provides a long-term perspective on the development of systems of meaning and the general conditions through which human meanings can be generated. In this article I would explore new trends in these two disciplines. Looking at the mutual influence of the two disciplines it would be wise to say that frameworks of thought developed in anthropology are important to archaeology, and it is the results of archaeology which have made the most impact on anthropology. No doubt there has been a subtle process of reciprocity between these two disciplines.