

FMS1204S: Fraud, deception and data

Week 9

Fraud in archaeology

Fraud in archaeology

- ▶ There are many famous scientific frauds that have occurred in the field of archaeology.
- ▶ Quite often fraud in archaeology is of a fairly simple kind - frequently the fraud will consist of simply planting some artifact and then pretending to find it (i.e. the fraud consists of making data up).

Fraud in archaeology

- ▶ Discoveries in archaeology don't represent scientific experiments in the usual sense – once a site has been excavated, it cannot be done again, so there is no repeatability.
- ▶ However, frequently a discovery will suggest that other similar discoveries might be made, and archaeologists will generally have a sophisticated understanding of the context of a certain discovery.
- ▶ A fraud will often be obvious to a trained archaeologist and new technologies for analysis of specimens also make fraud increasingly difficult.

Group 1

- ▶ McKie, Robin (2012). Piltdown Man: British Archaeology's greatest hoax. *The Observer*, Sunday 5 February 2012.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2012/feb/05/piltdown-man-archaeologys-greatest-hoax>

- ▶ This article describes the Piltdown man controversy.
 - ▶ What was the scientific significance of the discovery (in terms of evolution)?
 - ▶ Who were the main suspects in the fraud, and what were their motivations?

Group 2

- ▶ Edward Steers, J. & Nickell, J. (2013). Hoax: Hitler's Diaries, Lincoln's Assassins, and Other Famous Frauds. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky. (Chapter 2, Pearl Harbor, Treachery in the Oval Office?)
- ▶ In this Chapter the author describes the Pearl Harbor attack and the investigations surrounding the attack afterwards.
 - ▶ Why many people suspected that Roosevelt knew the incoming attack in advance and deliberately allowed it happen?
 - ▶ Why the Churchill-Roosevelt telephone transcript is a hoax?

Group 3

- ▶ Hudson, M. (2005). For the people, by the people: postwar Japanese archaeology and the Early Paleolithic hoax. *Anthopological Science*, 113, 131–139.
- ▶ The Japanese amateur archaeologist Shinichi Fujimura planted artifacts at many sites in Japan. He was the nickname "God's Hands" for his apparent good luck in finding important sites. His dishonesty did a great deal of damage to scholarship in Japanese archaeology, as this article discusses.
 - ▶ What did Fujimura do, and how was he eventually exposed?
 - ▶ Why were so many people anxious to believe in his "discoveries"?

Group 4

- ▶ Dexter, Ralph W. (1986). Historical aspects of the Calaveras skull controversy. *American Antiquity*, 51, 365–369.
- ▶ This article discusses the apparent find of an Ancient human skull in a mine in Calaveras County, California. Subsequently the find was exposed as a hoax, and this article discusses the controversy.
 - ▶ Who was most willing to believe that the find was genuine, and who was most skeptical?
 - ▶ What were the motives of the hoaxers?

Group 5

- ▶ Mosteller, F. (2010). The pleasures of statistics: The autobiography of Frederick Mosteller. Edited by Stephen E. Fienberg, David C. Hoaglin and Judith M. Tanur. Springer. (Chapter 4: Who wrote the disputed Federalist Papers, Hamilton or Madison?)
- ▶ This is one chapter of an autobiography of the famous statistician Frederick Mosteller. He pioneered the use of statistical methods in authorship studies.
 - ▶ Describe the history of Mosteller's studies of authorship of the Federalist papers.
 - ▶ What methods did Mosteller and his collaborators try which failed before they finally succeeded?