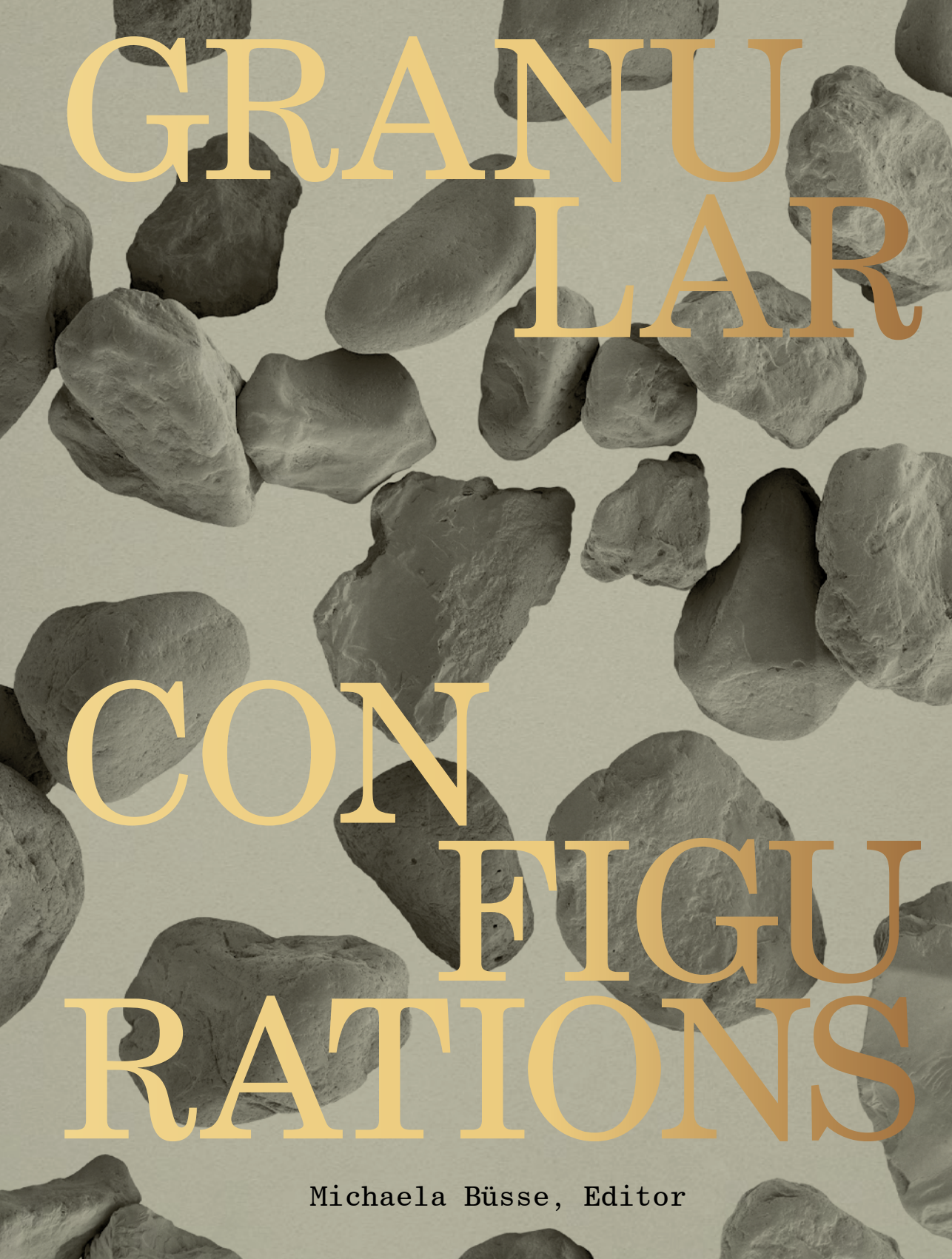




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Michaela Büsse, Editor

# GRANULAR CONFIGURATIONS

## Sand, Materiality, and Planetary Urbanization

Michaela Büsse,  
Editor

K. Verlag, 2025

# The Extractivist Gaze of Archeological Evidence

FRAUD

(Francisco Gallardo & Audrey Samson)

*“[Las] épocas se enfrentan, se ignoran o se entreddevoran sobre una misma tierra o separadas apenas por unos kilómetros [...] Las épocas viejas nunca desaparecen completamente y todas las heridas, aun las más antiguas, manan sangre todavía.”*

[A] variety of epochs live side by side in the same areas or a very few miles apart, ignoring or devouring one another [...] Past epochs never vanish completely, and blood still drips from all their wounds, even the most ancient.

— Octavio Paz, *El Laberinto de la Soledad*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Octavio Paz, *El Laberinto de la Soledad* [The Labyrinth of Solitude] (México, D.F., y Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996 [1950]), 2. Translated by the authors.

<sup>2</sup> Nigel Clark and Kathryn Yusoff, “Geosocial Formations and the Anthropocene,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 34/2–3 (May 2017): 3.

Saharan sand bridges epochs, from the ancient fossil seabed that affords its phosphate rich content to its instrumentalization for development and tourism in support of the Francoist regime. We wish to pay particular attention to how archeology was appropriated to claim ethno-racial heritage over lands outside the Iberian Peninsula. This inquiry is particularly relevant because of the extractive “geosocial formations” that continue to mobilize accumulation by dispossession and denial of self-determination contemporaneously.<sup>2</sup> In a way, our investigation recalls what Octavio Paz refers to as the haunting of past epochs, unveiling their historiographical invisibility. To understand epochs, we must step out of the Gregorian calendar and into geological time. Here, it is the Sahara’s history as a seabed that creates the conditions of possibility for the following narratives to unfold. Fossilized shells and phosphate rich carcasses decomposed, covering the ocean floor. As the water body dried, this layer surfaced to become the ground upon which trading caravans would move, guided by the occasional acacia tree as a navigating tool. The sand dunes resemble their past

as a fluid body, moving like waves in the wind, sometimes gaining momentum to move across continents. Satellite imagery shows that particles are being carried from Western Sahara to the Canary Islands, and much further westwards to the Amazon forest, where their phosphate rich composition acts as a fertilizer.

### *Jable rubio* [blond sand]

The word *jable* is thought to be a deprecation of the French term *sable* [sand] and colloquially refers to sand dust blowing to the Canary Islands from the Saharan regions. In winter, hot, dust-laden sandstorms known as *calima* blanket the islands, forcing airports to shut down as visibility nears null. More importantly, Saharan dust continues to travel beyond the Caribbean Sea reaching the South American continent, with a considerable amount being deposited in the Amazon Basin. This *jable* is of organogenic origin and contains highly concentrated phosphorous salts which are ultimately derived from the sedimentation of ancient marine/aquatic life. Thanks to this dust transport system, soils of the Amazonian forest are replenished with Saharan phosphate dust—a testament that ten million years ago, Western Africa was a seaway, not a desert.<sup>3</sup> Far-reaching continental dependencies also exist with the northern neighbors across the Mediterranean. Clouds carrying radioactive sand dust traveling as far north as Sweden remind us, every now and then, of the Sahara desert's other geohistories, such as the French Nuclear tests in Algeria. Sand holds memory that can traverse epochs.

### Progress

Like the quickness with which a sandstorm arises, the narrative accelerates when human agents start moving the sand. Inexpensive raw material and agricultural imports became increasingly coveted by West European countries who feared uncontrollable inflation after World War I. During the Francoist dictatorship (1939–76), large volumes of high-quality *jable* were imported from the

3 Hongbin Yu et al., "The Fertilizing Role of African Dust in the Amazon Rainforest: A First Multiyear Assessment Based on Data from Cloud-Aerosol Lidar and Infrared Pathfinder Satellite Observations," *Geophysical Research Letters* 42/6 (March 2015): 1984–91.

4 Like French Algeria, Spain considered Western Sahara, along with Ceuta, Melilla and the Spanish Protectorate not as colonies, but as provinces.

5 Ricardo Herrera, "La Playa Artificial de Las Teresitas Cumple Cuarenta Años," *Diario de Avisos*, 12 October 2012.

6 Ruyman Izquierdo, "La Playa de Las Teresitas: la Historia de un Fracaso Urbanístico [Las Teresitas Beach: The History of an Urban Planning Failure]," *Planeta Canario*, 3 March 2019.

Saharan "provinces" into the islands of Tenerife, Las Palmas, and Lanzarote.<sup>4</sup> Initially, it was sourced for its unique qualities to supply *enarenado* [sand-plot] plantations of tomatoes and bananas across the archipelago. The prized characteristics of sand include that it retains atmospheric humidity, protects plants against extreme temperature changes, and deters weed growth. A layer of porous sand granules also fosters condensation at night percolating water towards the ground below while avoiding evaporation during the day. As the experiments on the island were deemed successful, the sand-plot method was later transposed to the export-oriented greenhouse region of El Ejido (Almería), constituting the backbone of contemporary intensive agriculture.

## Saharan Jewels

Sand, however, became increasingly attractive to the regime for its potential as a material for development, with beaches at its center-fold. Juan Arencibia narrates that in 1961, the Ministry of Housing approved the urban plan for the San Andrés neighborhood in *Las Teresitas*, among the crown jewels of the regime's "renewal" and "invigoration" program for the archipelago. Engineers Pompeyo Alonso and Miguel Pintor designed the new beach and, given the evidence of its high cost, planned to urbanize its surroundings in order to obtain financing and create a tourist center of "great importance."<sup>5</sup> After its presentation in the public exhibition of the Partial Plan in 1965, the Teresitas beach was declared a "center of national touristic interest" by the Ministry of Information and Tourism in 1968.<sup>6</sup>

In 1971, towards the creation of this tourist center, the local council of Santa Cruz received a loan to purchase 150,000 cubic meters of Saharan sand to redevelop the area. The shipment was transported by Fosfatos de Bucraa, a company also invested in the prospection of phosphate in the *Sahara Occidental* [Western Sahara], founded by the regime's National Mining Enterprise of



Figs. 01 and 02. FRAUD, *Fictions of the Primitive II*, glass gánigo replicas made from sand of Playa Mogán (Canary Islands), which is illicitly mined in Western Sahara. Approximate dimensions: 30 × 20 × 20cm (Ø : 20cm); glass shaped by Torsten Röttsch and Louise Lang. Photo by Hannah Jung. All photographs in this chapter © the authors.

7 WSRW Canarias, “Informe del Monitor de Tráfico de Sáhara Occidental – Islas Canarias [Western Sahara – Canary Islands Traffic Monitor Report],” (May 2008); [wsrw.org/files/pdf/canarias\\_aridos\\_mayo\\_08.pdf](http://wsrw.org/files/pdf/canarias_aridos_mayo_08.pdf).

8 Sergio Méndez, “La Arena del Sáhara Depositada en Playas como Las Teresitas Puede Causar Daños Ecológicos [Saharan Sand Deposited on Beaches Like Las Teresitas May Cause Ecological Damage],” *Diario de Avisos*, 2 May 2022.

9 “La Playa de las Teresitas Otra Vez: La Insolita Realización Turística Tinerfeña [The beach of the Teresitas Once More: The Unusual Tenerife Touristic Achievement],” *Costa Canaria*, 30 December 1974. Translated by the authors.

10 Many such shipments have been rigorously logged by the Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW), such as a series of deliveries made in 2013, where the Sierra Leone-flagged Trio Vega cargo vessel (capacity circa 1,800 tons) shuttled between Las Palmas and El Aaiun for ten days. The sand was allegedly stored in Granintra S.A. silos, a cement factory located on the harbor premises, for subsequent usage on location or shipment to project sites. See “Bloody Beaches: Sand, Salt and Minerals of Occupied Land,” *Western Sahara Resource Watch*, updated 14 April 2022; [wsrw.org/en/news/bloody-beaches-sand-salt-and-minerals-from-western-sahara](http://wsrw.org/en/news/bloody-beaches-sand-salt-and-minerals-from-western-sahara).

11 Joffre Dumazedier, *Vers une Civilisation du Loisir ?* [Towards a Leisure Civilisation?] (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962).

12 Sandie Holguín, “National Spain Invites You’: Battlefield Tourism during the Spanish Civil War,” *American Historical Review* 110/5 (December 2005): 1399–426.

the Sahara earlier in 1962. When the beach was inaugurated in 1973, it was reported that 200,000 tons of sand were imported for the redevelopment of littoral de San Andrés (Playa de Las Teresitas, Tenerife).<sup>7</sup> Subsequent shipments have been logged and continue to this day.<sup>8</sup>

## Development

“Allí donde antes no había arena sino roca”

Where there was only rock, now there is sand

— Costa Canaria: Revista de Información Turística<sup>9</sup>

Much like the quote from *Costa Canaria* magazine suggests, sand covers the rocky coastline in the trajectory of progress. Though Teresitas is an often cited example, this type of plunder was a common strategy.<sup>10</sup> It was applied to many other areas pegged for development during the rise of the *civilisation du loisir* [leisure civilization] in post-war Europe.<sup>11</sup> With a decidedly international outlook, tourism was incorporated in the propaganda apparatus of the state. It was no accident that during the Francoist regime one of the most prominent state departments was the *Ministerio de Información y Turismo* [Ministry of Information and Tourism], commonly referred to as the Ministry of Propaganda. Notably, during the civil war, the National Tourism Service (*Servicio Nacional de Turismo*, SNT) operated a modestly successful tour called *Rutas de Guerra* [War Routes].<sup>12</sup> Paying clientele was being bused and paraded into active war zones, accompanied by politically overcharged live narration.

Later, the presence of foreign tourists also became a testimony to the international community’s tolerance of the regime, something that other authoritarian and illiberal regimes had previously

touted.<sup>13</sup> More importantly, the associated tourism revenue provided valuable collateral to secure international loans necessary to finance large-scale infrastructure development in the beleaguered Iberian Peninsula. The importance of tourism towards this effort cannot be understated as “[b]etween 1959 and 1969, revenue from foreign tourism covered two-thirds of Spain’s trade deficit.”<sup>14</sup> As Spain’s fascisticized modernity advanced, it mobilized aggressive disrization to make way for tourism-led development, and the figure of the beach became the central ornament of this sandy “pleasure periphery.”<sup>15</sup>

“The beach was the crucible of the leisure civilization, where health, repose, bare skin, and displacement from routine converged most dramatically.”

—Sasha Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*<sup>16</sup>

Beaches and bullfights were among the images used in the regime’s popular marketing formula of low-cost pleasure and exoticism. With its newly developed sandy beaches, the Canary Islands became one of the key sites promoted in the advertisement campaigns, accounting for a significant portion of the allocated budget.<sup>17</sup> *Revista Geográfica Española*, a magazine often portraying Spain’s resources and tourism potential, devoted entire issues to Gran Canaria’s landscape.<sup>18</sup> Across Spain, tourism campaigns offered an “orientalist” gaze, alluding to the exoticism of a non-Western country.<sup>19</sup> In this vein, the camel with the backdrop of sand dunes quickly became a tourist icon for the Canary Islands. Moreover, kitsch camel rides run by businesses such as *Camello Safari Duna Oasis* [Camel Safari Dune Oasis] remain an attraction on the islands to this day, a practice that continues to garner attention for its mistreatment of animals.<sup>20</sup> Much like the sand, the camels are likely to be an import into the archipelago from the fifteenth and sixteenth-century raids off the African coast occurring after the

**13** Notably the USSR, from which Spain repurposed the tourist advertising phrase: “the USSR is Different” (to “Spain is Different”). Spain also looked to the United States for lessons in marketing to attract tourists. See Neal Moses Rosendorf, “Be El Caudillo’s Guest: The Franco Regime’s Quest for Rehabilitation and Dollars after World War II via the Promotion of U.S. Tourism to Spain,” *Diplomatic History* 30/3 (June 2006): 367–407. See also Sasha Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship: Europe’s Peaceful Invasion of Franco’s Spain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

**14** Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 2.

**15** Enrique Navarro-Jurado et al., “Pleasure Peripheries: When Tourism Becomes Real-Estate Tourism Developmentalism,” *Bulletin of the Spanish Association of Geography* 67 (2015): 507–13.

**16** Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 8.

**17** Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 70–71.

**18** Jacobo García-Álvarez and Daniel Marías-Martínez, “Geographical Magazines and Popular Geographies: the Case of the *Revista Geográfica Española*, 1938–1977,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 39, (2013): 96; doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2012.06.001.

**19** Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship*, 3.



Fig. 03. FRAUD, *Fictions of the Primitive I*, glass gánigo replica, made from sand of Playa Taurito (Canary Islands), which is illicitly mined in Western Sahara. Approximate dimensions: 45 × 20 × 20cm (Ø : 20cm), glass shaped by Torsten Röttsch. Photo by Hannah Jung.



Fig. 04. View of Playa Mogán (Canary Islands), an artificial beach continually replenished with Western Saharan sand. The sand for *Fictions of the Primitive II* was sourced from this location.

Fig. 05. View of Playa Taurito (Canary Islands), another artificial beach lined with Western Saharan sand. The sand for *Fictions of the Primitive I* was sourced from this location. Photos by FRAUD's attaché in Gran Canaria. Courtesy of the authors.

**20** This malpractice has been documented by organizations such as *Partido Animalista Con el Medio Ambiente* [Animal Party for the Environment]; see “PACMA denuncia el maltrato a los camellos en los paseos turísticos de Canarias [PACMA denounces the mistreatment of camels on tourist tours in the Canary Islands],” Updated 14 December 2024; [pacma.es/actualidad/pacma-denuncia-el-maltrato-a-los-camellos-en-los-paseos-turisticos-de-canarias](https://pacma.es/actualidad/pacma-denuncia-el-maltrato-a-los-camellos-en-los-paseos-turisticos-de-canarias).

**21** Statistically, the bulk of tourism in the Canary Islands is from countries in Northern Europe such as Germany, Sweden, and England.

**22** Antonio José Farrujia de la Rosa, *Arqueología y Franquismo en Canarias: Política, Poblamiento e Identidad (1939–1969)* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Museo Arqueológico de Tenerife, 2007), 22.

Spanish Conquest (read occupation and genocide of the Islanders). Meanwhile it was Saharan sand that lined the beaches depicted in the brochures, such as Mogan and Taurito in Las Palmas, or Las Teresitas in Tenerife (the world’s largest artificial beach), transforming the rocky strands of traditional fishing and small farming communities into altars of heliolatry for North European tourists.<sup>21</sup>

## Weaponizing Archeology

However, the presence of Spain in the archipelago was itself a colonial extension which occurred long before the peninsula had laid claim to the *Sahara Occidental*, a testimony to the layers of embedded violence, reenacting and reothering. As tourism had helped the regime render its brand of fascism palatable to the inhabitants of countries outside Spain, it was archeology which was mobilized to convince the Spanish populace of the validity of occupying extra-territorial lands.

After the Berlin Conference (1884–85), the Canary Islands gained a renewed geostrategic importance. Officials at the service of the imperial powers of Germany, France and, of course, mainland Spain issued competing claims of ethno-racial heritage over the archipelago. In less than a century, archeologist Antonio José Farrujia de la Rosa slyly noted,

[t]he indigenous population of the Canary Islands went from being the descendants of Noah, to becoming the survivors of Atlantis, to later be related to the Egyptians, Celts, Iberians, Vandals, Armenians, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Libyans, Romans and a long etcetera of possibilities, until they became, during the Franco regime, the island representatives of the North African Ibero-Mauritanian and Ibero-Saharan cultures.<sup>22</sup>

Under Franco, the discipline of archeology was incorporated as an ideological instrument of the State. Archeological evidence such as pottery was read following racist, anti-Semitic, and ultra-ethnocentric doctrines with the aim of consolidating Spain as a nation.<sup>23</sup> The 1939 victory of the national camp brought about the official adoption of a Spanish-flavored version of fascism formulated earlier by Miguel Primo de Rivera (1870–1930), who posited Spain as a historical unity, a (fictional) community with a single destiny.

These tenuous archeological narratives, however, were not a Spanish exception. The tenets of modern pre-historic archeology were conceived against a background of unconcealed imperialism. In “pre-historic times” (1865), English banker and politician John Lubbock detailed how differential evolutionary selection operated upon populations, their cultures and technologies. He is most credited for the three-age system (Stone, Bronze, and Iron) in the



Fig. 06. Shipment of Western Saharan sand being delivered on 2 December 2019 from the Arinaga harbor to the Mogán beach, seen here being offloaded on the shore. The initial shipments were traced and documented by the Western Sahara Resource Watch (WSRW). Various letters were sent to the local authorities in protest of the municipality's financial contribution to the Moroccan occupation of the former Spanish colony through the tonnes of sand purchased for the maintenance work of Mogán beach. Courtesy of WSRW, [wsrw.org/en/archive/4590](https://wsrw.org/en/archive/4590).

**23** Antonio José Farrujia de la Rosa and María del Carmen del Arco Aguilar, “La arqueología en Canarias durante el régimen Franquista: El tema del primitivo poblamiento de las islas como paradigma (1939–69),” *Trabajos de Prehistoria* 61/1 (2004): 22.

**24** Antonio José Farrujia de la Rosa, *An Archaeology of the Margins: Colonialism, Amazighity and Heritage Management in the Canary Islands* (London: Springer, 2014), 26.

**25** For more on this see Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 171–72.

**26** Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (London: Routledge, 2013), 234.

**27** All of this without considering the inherent limitations when studying very early societies. Such works relied almost entirely on the study of inorganic remains, even though the majority of their material culture was organic—well above 90 percent see James M. Adovasio et al., *The Invisible Sex: Uncovering the True Roles of Women in Prehistory* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), 233. These societies often inhabited the resource-rich frontiers of the Euro-American Empires.

study of general prehistory. Also, terms like paleolithic and neolithic were incorporated after him into the discipline. More importantly, though, was the adoption of the use of stratigraphic methods by archeologists when attempting to establish chronologies—whereby individual findings were dated with the aid of their geologic context. French engineer Gabriel de Mortillet (1821–1898) introduced the four-age system which is still in use—further subdividing Lubbock’s Stone Age into two epochs: Flaked Stone Age and Polished Stone Age.<sup>24</sup> Despite this small divergence, both systematizations rely on the study of artifacts as organizational systems. These diagnostic tools were aided by seriation and the use of index fossils to establish local chronologies.

It is important to highlight that Lubbock and Mortillet’s theories reeked of Social Darwinism.<sup>25</sup> They followed a conception of time that was developmental, successional, and linear. More troublingly, Euro-American societies were conceived not only culturally, but also intellectually and emotionally superior. The image of modern society was thought to be the highest stage of technical and evolutionary development. In tandem, non-modern belief systems and practices that survived until this period, such as nomadic pastoralism, were declared as cultural fossils, or as Mignolo and Walsh note, as traditions which were usually defined in contradistinction to Modernity, and whose presence were “prejudicial to social evolution.”<sup>26</sup> Canarian peoples were additionally framed as a window to study extinct Neolithic societies.<sup>27</sup> Through Social Darwinism, inequality was

inscribed from the political into the geological strata. Differences occurred as a matter of varying degrees and of varying rates. At best, changes observed in artifacts were attributed to adaptations to the environment and not ushered by inherent creativity and internal dynamism. Nothing novel could be learned from the archeological record—Indigenous societies were assumed to be static and thus surpassed by the dynamic Modern.

Within ethnographical and archeological domains, deserts and arid lands fared no better. Anchored in an environmental racism that arced back to the Greek physician Hippocrates, deserts were described through tropes such as emptiness, aridness, and lifelessness.<sup>28</sup> In cartographic representation they were often depicted as dots upon an empty field—the absolute blank space was reserved for the representation of ocean space. Furthermore, although exceptional for the preservation of archeological remains, nineteenth century European imperialism depicted desert lands as resulting from mismanagement by local populations. The redefinition of arid lands as empty, and of Indigenous populations as “degenerate” are themselves violent acts of erasure, which guide the ownership and use of land and management of populations. Along with Geology and Ethnology, Archeology laid down the foundations, and the semantic tools of validation of Euro-American colonization.

Extractivism repurposed this re-culturation of strata. Territories occupied by colonial empires often inhabited resource-rich frontiers coveted by the growing Eurafrican project.<sup>29</sup> Spanish extra-peninsular lands (and associated waters) included fish stock, fossil fuels (oil and coal), nuclear power (uranium), iron, water, phosphate rock, and had great potential for agriculture. Other resource examples were the *guayule*, a source of natural rubber, and seaweed, used for caustic soda manufacture, and indispensable for soap and glass production.<sup>30</sup> Along with strata redefinition, a vocabulary emerged to posit colonization as a salvation. “Indigenous degeneration”, “desiccated”, “living fossil”, “Pre-Hispanic”, “calcined surface”, “terre morte [dead land]”, “unnatural aberrations”—these are the semantic tools used to validate expropriation and open arid lands to extraction.<sup>31</sup>

During the Francoist regime, officials like Julio Martínez Santa-Olalla (1905–1972) and Martín Almagro Basch (1911–1984) contributed to the fashionable nomenclature of dispossession by formulating archeological theories which endorsed claims by the Spanish regime for the newly “acquired” frontiers in Africa.<sup>32</sup> Most significant was the coinage and adoption of the term pre-Hispanic. On the one hand, this concept framed the Hispanic as a horizon of reference. It effaced the islands’ differentiated identities, whose spheres are eminently extra-European (i.e. Amazigh).<sup>33</sup> In addition,

**28** See Gary Reger, "Greeks and Romans in the Sahara Desert: Ideology and Experience," *Global Environment* 12/1 (2019): 34; doi.org/10.3197/ge.2019.120102; and Samia Henni, *Deserts Are Not Empty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

**29** For an in-depth examination of Eurafica see Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), or a synopsis of the concept in our interview with Stefan Jonsson and Peo Hansen, "Eurafica: Sediments of the European Economic Community," in FRAUD, eds., *Euro-Vision: Undergrounding the Critical Mineral* (Berlin: K. Verlag, 2025), 64–75.

**30** Emilio Guinea López, *España y el Desierto: Impresiones Saharianas de un botánico español* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1945), 253–54; Beatriz Andreu Mediero, "La Industria de las Algas en el Antiguo Sáhara Español [The Algae Industry in the former Spanish Sahara]," *Veguetá: Anuario de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia* 17 (2017): 330; [revistavegueta.ulpgc.es/ojs/index.php/revistavegueta/article/view/393](http://revistavegueta.ulpgc.es/ojs/index.php/revistavegueta/article/view/393).

**31** In their article examining the continuum between archeology and the construction of Brazil national identity, Funari and Menezes Ferreira introduce some of the many terms used by Carl Friedrich von Martius in his theory of degeneration for Indigenous populations in his explorations of the Amazon Forests. See Pedro Paulo A. Funari and Lucio Menezes Ferreira, "A Social History of Brazilian Archeology: A Case Study," *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 16/2 (2006): 20–22.

categorizing the Canary Islands and Western Sahara as pre-Hispanic, painted the colonization by the Castilian Crown as civilizing. The extermination and assimilation of most of the Indigenous populations was the price to pay for being paired with mainland modernity. And the exchange currency in this transaction was forced labor in sugar plantations.<sup>34</sup>

For Spain, archeological evidence glowed bright with extractivism. Official archeology reinforced theories and research objectives that tied the Spanish Sahara, the Protectorate of Spanish Morocco, and the Canary Islands to mainland Spain. Nevertheless, contradictions abounded. For some officials, the Spanish Sahara was considered the *Heimat* [nation] for the Canary Islands, while for the peninsula, any African trace of descent was outright rejected. Also, in a clear break with mainland fieldwork, Spanish officials considered the archipelago to be devoid of stratigraphy. Only by disregarding such geological pointers, could remains such as ceramics become the main substance of archeological study. Ceramics were abundant in excavations and remain stable long after fabrication. It is for this reason that, in the most extensive study of Canary pottery, local official Diego Cuscoy claimed: "(l)a cerámica de Tenerife es una cerámica fósil" [Tenerife ceramics are fossil ceramics].<sup>35</sup> Through this lens, remains became not only pre-Hispanic but also Neolithic, in other words, fossils. This classification not only posited the archeological evidence as much older than it really was, but it also placed them in a grouping under the umbrella of belonging to the "primitives," objects therefore excluded from modernity.

Ceramics were thereby instrumentalized to build connections between North and Central African races with those of the Canary Islands. By comparing and likening archeological ceramic typologies, common ethno-racial heritage was posulated. Thus, with a narrative sleight of hand based

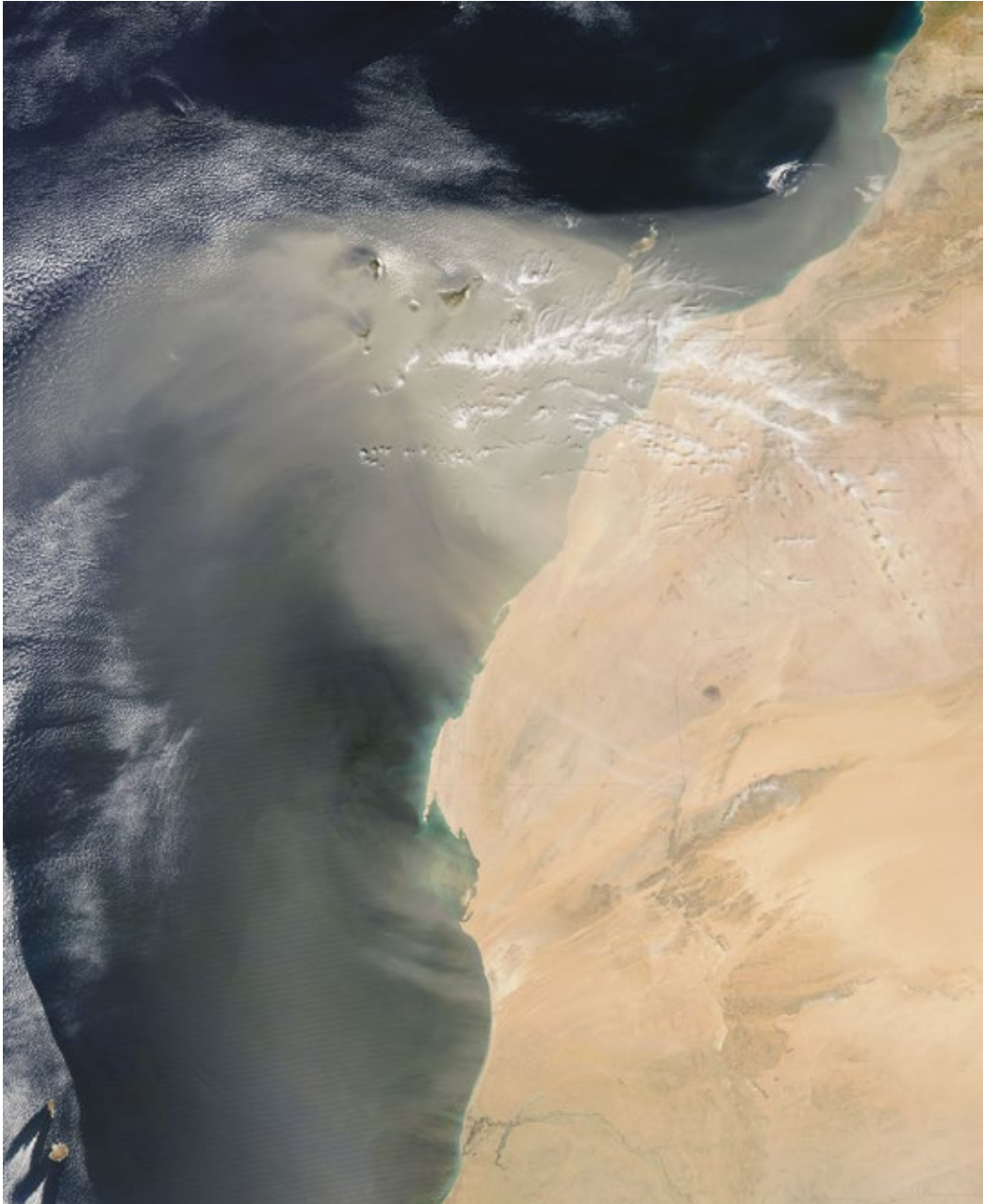


Fig. 07. Satellite image showing the Saharan dust plumes traversing over the Canary Islands, otherwise known as *jable rubio* [blond/gold sand]. In 2007, after climatologists observed how blown dust suppressed storm activity over the North Atlantic and Caribbean by blocking energizing sunlight, these plumes also became dubbed “storm killers.” Image public domain of NASA: Earth Observatory NOAA-20.

**32** Perhaps the wildest one placed the cradle of the Bell Beaker culture (2800–2500 BC) on the Iberian Peninsula. Ironically, during the most stringent autarkic period of the regime, the Hispanic civilisation was responsible for the earliest, and greatest, contribution to the construction of Europe.

**33** A Berber ethnic group.

**34** The first plantations were established in the archipelagos of Madeira and Canarias, see FRAUD, “Partnerships: or How to Harvest Fruits without Sowing Seeds,” in *Empathy Revisited: Designs for More than One*, ed. Mariana Pestana et al. (Istanbul: IKSV & Onomatopoe Press. 2021), 165–95. Also widely cited in the colonial chronicler Thomas Nichols’ *Fortunate Ilandes, Called the Ilands of Canaria, with their Straunge fruits and commodities. Verie delectable to read* (London, 1583).

**35** Luis Diego Cuscoy, *Gánigo. Estudio de la Cerámica de Tenerife*, (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Publicaciones del Museo Arqueológico, 1971), 190.

**36** Antonio José Farrujia de la Rosa, “Written in Stones: The Amazigh Colonization of the Canary Islands,” *Corpus* 14, (2015): 3.

**37** Francisco Hernandez Pacheco, *Los Pozos del Sahara Español e Hipótesis de su Construcción* (Madrid: Investigación y Progreso, 1945).

**38** In his book, he namely describes how the term Orientalism is referred to in terms of a primitive state. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 120.

on entirely fictitious commonality of shape between pots found in these different locations, the claim to these lands was deemed not only fair, but redemptive, a repatriation of the lost kin as it were. Another trope that reappears throughout history, including most recently.

Using these cultural-historical approaches (still prevailing in the discipline), the *gánigo* ceramic vessel became one of the central protagonists which allowed archeologists to speculate—rather freely—with timelines, food consumption patterns, and aesthetic trends.<sup>36</sup> For instance: in a study on pre-historic water resources in Spanish (occupied) Sahara, cursory similarities between pottery vessels were enough to justify ethnical and cultural connections between this desert region and the Canary Archipelago.<sup>37</sup> The Canarian *gánigo*, conically shaped and fashioned with a long sturdy handle, was allegedly a relative of Saharan ceramics used to collect sparse rainwater when buried in desert *wadis* (seasonal streams). Following the construction of orientalism that Edward W. Said denounced in his foundational novel, the ceramics were claimed to be older, or more “primitive,” than they were, once again validating notions of progress-oriented temporalities through a fiction of the primitive.<sup>38</sup> We can see here a certain political stratigraphy of the islands coalescing, where ceramic evidence mobilizes geo-chronographic fictions.

## Concluding Thoughts

We have attempted with this text to travel with the Saharan sand, from its constitution of stratified sea life fossils to its extraction and deposition on the beaches of the Canary Islands, serving as modernity's jewel of leisure, its *jable rubio* mesmerizing tourists. Sand played a central role in assuaging the Western palate to Franco's dictatorship and continues to this day as a marker of prosperity, mobility, and leisure. The stereotype of the care-free tourist sipping cocktails on a golden beach is nonetheless constructed with illicitly mined sand, built upon centuries of extractive entanglements which beckon consideration.

Like geology, sand is not ahistorical or neutral. And much of the colonial circumstances which persist in the disciplines' categories cannot be effaced by layering sand over the rocky coasts. The instrumentalization of archeology, as is the case with the *gánigo* vessel, to lay claim over the resource-rich areas desired by the Spanish state, is a reminder that narratives are easily refashioned to serve the interests of capital and maintain or reify power structures, to the detriment of epistemic and climate justice.

Reflecting on the relationship between tourism and extraction, and the operationalization of scientific methods to fuel dictatorial regimes, the question arises: How can we develop a critical spatial literacy to counter similar (and future) misreadings, as we see them cyclically reappearing elsewhere, *everywhere*?

*Granular Configurations:  
Sand, Materiality,  
and Planetary Urbanization*

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While passing as an unassuming material that is both too ubiquitous to be theorized and too commonplace to beckon attention, sand is a pervasive agent at the nexus of ecological, economic, and geopolitical forces. As the essential ingredient for the production of concrete, glass, and land, sand shapes the contours of modernity while it forms the bedrock of urbanization. In its journey from rivers and seabeds to construction sites and artificial islands, sand is not merely a functional element, but embodies the processes of dispossession, accumulation, and dissolution that perpetuate late capitalism.

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