

# **Conflict Landscapes**

An Archaeology  
of the International Brigades  
in the Spanish Civil War

Salvatore Garfi



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Salvatore Garfi  
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## **PART ONE**

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Polly wasn't certain what she'd expected. Men and horses, obviously. In her mind's eye they were engaged in mortal combat, but you couldn't go on doing that all day. So there would be tents. And that was about as far as the mind's eye had seen. It hadn't seen that an army on campaign is a sort of large, portable city. It has only one employer, and it manufactures dead people, but like all cities it attracts... citizens. What was unnerving was the sound of babies crying, off in the rows of tents. She hadn't expected that. Or the mud. Or the crowds. Everywhere there were fires, and the smell of cooking. This was a siege after all. People had settled in.*

– Terry Pratchett, *Monstrous Regiment*.

As Terry Pratchett's cross-dressing soldier-heroine, Polly Perks, came to realise when she finally encountered an army on campaign: armies do not fight all of the time. When not engaged with the enemy or moving cross country, they encamp. While digging in and making shelters (or raising tents), soldiers light fires to cook and keep warm, and in an era when women and wives followed their soldiering men-folk there could even be accompanying children. Such an army imprints itself on the ground with its 'crowds' of 'citizens' – soldiers and hangers-on – churning up the very earth in a way that only happens when masses of people gather together in open country. They, in effect, 'settle in', creating something akin to what Pratchett describes as a 'portable city'. They can even, and often, create conurbations, made up of many places in geographic space, and all serving specialist functions, such as fighting, living, command, communication, transportation, victualing and other services, even including leisure. Hierarchies will also express themselves in the distribution of places in space, and all of these are connected through linkages. Some might be hinge-like because they are contiguous, or simple route-ways crossing open space.

### Space and Place

This monograph deals with spaces and places in a warscape, and ones specifically created by and for armies and their numerous activities, martial or otherwise. 'Place' and 'space' are the contexts in which all human activities take place, and what Polly Perks saw, as in Terry Pratchett's fiction, is reflected in these pages. So how do we understand the concepts of space and place in a martial environment; how do we relate to them, and how do they relate to each other? I am not a geographic theoretician, so what follows will be brief, but I should like to begin with an interpretation of space and place as expressed by the humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan:

what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value... The ideas of 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.<sup>1</sup>

Space for us can be perceived in different ways. There is 'earth', or geographical space, being the natural environment with all of its topographic variables. There is behavioural space which deals with social relationships. These include relationships between individuals, between groups of individuals, and between the individual and groups. While also, there is cosmological space, dealing with ideational beliefs and attitudes – of myths and religions – making 'thought as powerful as any physical factor'.<sup>2</sup>

It goes without saying that there is very much more to say about space and place, but on a personal level, my own life-path as an archaeologist has been defined by space and place. They have always sat together

<sup>1</sup> Tuan 1977: 6.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts 1996: 11-12.

on my shoulder, spurring me on. I have spent decades exploring geographical space and the places, both natural and man-made, that constitute the physical environment in which we humans exist, that is, the landscapes in which our lives are situated.

In minimalist terms, a landscape is the backdrop against which archaeological remains are plotted. From economic and political perspectives, landscapes provide resources, refuge and risks that both impel and impact on human actions and situations. Today, however, the most prominent notions of landscape emphasise its socio-symbolic dimensions: landscape is an entity that exists by virtue of its being perceived, experienced, and contextualised by people.<sup>3</sup>

So, following on from this, by putting human perception, experience and context centre stage, then ‘the study of landscape is much more than an academic exercise – it is about the complexity of people’s lives, historical contingency, contestation, motion and change’.<sup>4</sup> This is ever so paramount when trying to understand landscapes of conflict, and in the case of this study, a landscape of modern, twentieth century conflict.

### Landscapes of Conflict

John and Patricia Carman, in their ongoing research into the nature of historic battlespaces, characterise modern, twentieth and twenty-first century warfare as

disconcertingly extended from the surface of our globe into other realms: into the air; under the sea; into the most inhospitable regions of the world... and even into outer space. It has also gone beyond the physical into more conceptual regions: into the relations of government to people; into the realm of science and technology; and, ...into the so-called ‘infosphere’ and... cyberspace. The battles of our age can be said to have no limits or boundaries: they frequently cannot be seen or measured, nor physically controlled. Unlike the warfare of previous ages, they do not occupy a particular location but are at once nowhere and everywhere.<sup>5</sup>

Modern conflict, as John Schofield points out, can be military or civilian. It can include small-scale ethnic disputes or larger civil conflagrations. Conflict can be ‘hot’ or cold’ and spread across the globe. Its complexity and size can include individual battlefields, the landscapes in which battles are situated and the ‘landscape of experience’, including not just the land, but also the sea and air, and into space.<sup>6</sup> This sense of scale and multi-dimensionality, to Nicholas Saunders for instance, means that the archaeology of modern conflict is, by its very nature

an anthropologically-informed multidisciplinary endeavour, concerned with the social, cultural, psychological, and technological as well as military complexities of recent conflicts, and their powerful and unpredictable legacies... This multitude of issues makes modern conflict sites, in effect, highly sensitised multilayered landscapes that require a robust, interdisciplinary approach.<sup>7</sup>

Such a perspective epitomises the archaeology of modern conflict in the 20th and early 21st centuries, which, by being multi-faceted, draws on the insights, resources, techniques and knowledge of disciplines other than archaeology. They include anthropology and culture studies, cultural geography, military history, art history, museum and heritage studies and tourism, plus the sub-disciplines that feed into these fields. This diversity gives a strength to modern conflict archaeology ‘which, rather than privileging one or other kinds of knowledge, seeks instead to draw on each as appropriate in order to respond to the complex challenges of investigating conflict in the modern world’.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Knapp and Ashmore 1999: 1.

<sup>4</sup> Bender 2001: 2.

<sup>5</sup> Carman and Carman 2006: 31.

<sup>6</sup> Schofield 2005: 19-20.

<sup>7</sup> Saunders 2012: x.

<sup>8</sup> Saunders 2012: x.

While describing the practice of archaeology, David Hurst Thomas has succinctly written: ‘Archaeological objects vary. So do archaeological contexts. Deciphering meaning from such objects in context is the business of archaeology’.<sup>9</sup> This simple distillation of archaeology’s purpose, with an emphasis on ‘context’ is ever more challenging when studying the landscapes of modern conflict:

...militarised landscapes and the metallic artefact assemblages of recent conflict... [are] windows into a world of extraordinary complexity and contradictions. Tradition clashes with modernity. Rival ethnicities and nationalisms collide. Memory and remembrance are politically contested.<sup>10</sup>

As pointed out by Klausmeier *et al.*, these complex issues take archaeologists beyond ‘simple field recording, noting presence/absence and architectural detail’. They require ‘more reflexive, more integrated and more thoughtful approaches’.<sup>11</sup>

## This Study

This book presents an archaeological exploration and evocation of ‘spaces’ and ‘places’ of conflict: landscapes that are often described as warscapes, battlescapes, battlespaces, and of course conflict landscapes. Its focus is the Spanish Civil War, an industrially fought war – from July 1936 to April 1939 – that was a part of Philip Bobbitt’s so-called epochal ‘Long War’ of 1914-1990,<sup>12</sup> or as Niall Ferguson has characterised the conflicts of the twentieth century, as one ‘War of the World’, with the greatest excesses of violence carried out between 1904, with the start of the Russo-Japanese War, and ending with the Korean War in 1953.<sup>13</sup> The Spanish Civil War is also seen as a precursor to the Second World War, and as such, it can be considered an integral part of what Charles de Gaulle was to be the first to describe as Europe’s second Thirty Years War.<sup>14</sup>

The spaces and places – the landscapes – of conflict from the civil war in Spain, and afterwards under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, are many and varied. First, the front line in the war (though its position altered by the end of the war) has left indelible remains inscribed on the land. Unlike First World War entrenchments in Flanders, the entrenchments of both the Republican and Nationalist sides in Spain are still well preserved in many places, and they can be seen to cut across swathes of countryside. There are also the sites of prisoner of war and concentration camps, with the latter still in use into the 1950s. These housed former Republicans and political prisoners and their purpose was to humiliate and punish the losers of the Civil War, to ‘re-educate’ the inmates, and to ‘rehabilitate’ many through forced labour. In fact, forced labour was a way for political prisoners to redeem parts of their sentences. They were put to work on numerous public construction projects, with the most grandiose being the dictator, Francisco Franco’s own tomb, the Valley of the Fallen.<sup>15</sup> There is also a landscape of resistance and guerilla war that can be found behind the Nationalist lines during the war, and throughout certain parts of the country after the war, since armed opposition to the Franco regime continued in Spain for a good ten to twelve years after the conflict.<sup>16</sup>

The Spanish landscape is also littered with more than 2000 mass graves of victims of the violence of the Civil War,<sup>17</sup> with the majority being those of extra-judicial killings by the Franco regime, as well as unmarked graves of mainly Republican soldiers (both Spanish and foreign) from the war. The identification and exhumation of mass graves sites was given a very real impetus in the year 2000, when

<sup>9</sup> Thomas 1989: 15.

<sup>10</sup> *Current Archaeology* 2009: 40.

<sup>11</sup> Klausmeier, Purbrick and Schofield 2006: 5.

<sup>12</sup> Bobbitt 2003: 24.

<sup>13</sup> Ferguson 2007: xxxv.

<sup>14</sup> Charles de Gaulle expressed his view that both the First and Second World Wars were one conflict, in a speech he gave at Bar-le-Duc, France, on 28 July 1946. The speech is available online at: <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/textes/degaulle28071946.htm> accessed 20 February 2017. Other commentators and historians have shared this view with one of the most recent being Ian Kershaw. See Kershaw 2005.

<sup>15</sup> González-Ruibal 2007 and 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Bondura *et al* 2015; Cowen 1990 Franández Franández and Moshenska 2016; and Tellez 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Memoria Histórica.

the journalist Emilio Silva Barrera wanted to look for the remains of his own grandfather – and to come to know the story of the violence that occurred in his grandfather’s village in northern Spain – and through his efforts the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*, that is, the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (the ARMH), was founded. The ARMH is a national NGO, now taking advantage of Spain’s ‘Historical Memory Law’ of 2007, which reversed the so-called ‘Pact of Silence’ that sought, after the death of Franco in 1975, not to examine the legacy of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco Regime, in what has been described as an act of ‘national amnesia’.

Exhumations are not dealt with in any way in this study, but the work of the ARMH and similar organisations has been impressive indeed, though undoubtedly controversial. The Association reaches out to locally concerned community groups and it continues to collate data on mass graves. It also records local histories from the war and the stories of those people who experienced Francoist repression, and, as its core objective, it alone has excavated (during the years 2000 to 2014) almost 160 grave sites consisting of more than 1300 individual exhumations.<sup>18</sup> But, when taking all of the scientific work on exhumations into account across the whole of Spain (as of 2016), an overall total of around 8500 victim’s remains have been unearthed in approximately 400 exhumations.<sup>19</sup> All of this has been carried out mainly by volunteers, alongside forensic archaeologists and anthropologists, and their work has allowed numerous Spanish families and communities to learn about the circumstances of the disappearance and death of their family and community members, and to achieve some form of personal, family, or community ‘closure’. The ARMH and its kindred organisations and initiatives are profound facilitators of this, and of bearing witness to, and making sense of, the violence of the Civil War. As an archaeological endeavour, their work is poignant in the extreme.<sup>20</sup>

To many people, the work of the ARMH is what comes to mind when the archaeology of the Spanish Civil War is mentioned. But their importance to the Spanish people in both personal and socio-political terms has obscured ‘the importance of the war heritage at large, from both a historical and a political point of view’. The archaeology of the Civil War, though exceedingly well preserved in many locations, is also deemed as unworthy of serious study since, to generalise, academic archaeologists in Spain appear to show little interest in periods that post-date late antiquity, and heritage protection legislation considers the remains of the war as too recent.<sup>21</sup> Because of this, funding for Civil War archaeology is scant, and as González-Ruibal pointed out in 2007, but which is still pertinent today:

An exploration of the archaeological bibliography of the Spanish Civil War reveals that the studies and projects existing to date are usually unconnected to other similar works, have a narrow scope, are seldom directed by professional archaeologists and are divulged in obscure journals, local books with very limited circulation, newspapers, leaflets, and unobtainable proceedings – if they are published at all.<sup>22</sup>

Of the different types of fieldwork projects carried out, they have mainly dealt with the recording of built field fortifications, the excavations of portions of battlefields (usually entrenchments), and of course, the exhumation of mass graves. This work has been undertaken by a variety of groups and these have included amateur military history associations, town councils, contract and academic archaeologists, and organisations representing the victims of Francoist repression in cooperation with archaeological volunteers and forensic scientists.<sup>23</sup> In spite of this mix of efforts, an exceptional amount of archaeological fieldwork on the warscapes of the Civil War has nevertheless been carried out. A good deal of it has been in the form of targeted excavations with associated field prospecting usually at battle sites, though as well as these, work on labour and concentration camps have been undertaken, along with, and for example, very recent excavations at the site of a medical clinic in what was the battlespace of Madrid’s

<sup>18</sup> ARMH. For an introduction to these issues see Tremlett 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Larsen 2016.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed study of an exhumation of mass graves and the effect it has had on a local community see Renshaw 2011.

<sup>21</sup> González-Ruibal 2007: 206-207 and 209.

<sup>22</sup> González-Ruibal 2007: 212.

<sup>23</sup> González-Ruibal 2007: 210-211.

University City.<sup>24</sup> But the material remains of the Civil War – and the individual sites and landscapes examined meticulously by archaeologists and others – are all part and parcel of larger landscapes of violence, be they sites of battle, civil unrest, or outright repression.

...we cannot understand battlefields without exploring mass graves, military barracks, prisons and fascist architecture; we have to make sense of the materiality of whole warsapes and historical processes. In the era of total war and totalitarian regimes, it is totalities that have to be appraised.<sup>25</sup>

Such a topographic awareness is what informs this study, though my approach in the following pages is limited in scope and geographic area. As such, it aims to look particularly at the archaeology of a very specific landscape, one encountered by foreign volunteers who went to Spain during the civil war, and fought on the side of the Second Spanish Republic against the Nationalist rebels led by General Francisco Franco. The largest number of foreign volunteers on the Republican side fought in the International Brigades: numbering more than 35,000 and hailing from 50 some odd countries. But many also joined the ‘revolutionary’ militias, such as the POUM and the CNT-FAI,<sup>26</sup> with others, both women and men, going to Spain to give front and rear line medical assistance, as doctors, nurses and ambulance drivers. However, in this study, all of these individuals will be treated for descriptive purposes, as making up one international force – an aggregate ‘international brigade’ – that went to Spain to assist its democratically elected government against the coup d’état and military rebellion of July 1936. An example of such a collective view of the foreign volunteers has been held for decades by the American organisation, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA), which explains on its website that ‘the U.S. volunteers [in Spain] served in various units [including other battalions] and came to be known collectively as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade’.<sup>27</sup>

Such a catholic approach is relevant here since the region of Spain mainly dealt with in this study is that of the Aragón front, where the Republican forces that occupied and fought along it included the revolutionary militias, the Republican Popular Army, and of course, the International Brigades. For an overview of the foreign volunteers, who went to Spain to fight for, and support, the Spanish Republican government, and in particular, the International Brigades, see Chapter 2.

### **IBAP - The International Brigades Archaeology Project**

In 2013 I was with Alfredo González-Ruibal of *Incipit*, the heritage sciences section of the Spanish National Research Council (*Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* – the CSIC), at an archaeological conference held at the University of Leicester. We had organised a session on modern imperialism, and since he, being probably the best known proponent of modern conflict archaeology in Spain had been carrying out fieldwork on the archaeology of the Spanish Civil War since 2006, and I was working on the archaeology of the Western Sahara conflict of 1975-1991 out of which I was tangentially developing an interest in the Spanish Civil War (Western Sahara was a former colony of Spain – Spanish Sahara), we got talking about the possibility of organising a field project exploring the archaeology of the Civil War through the prism of the International Brigades. Alfredo thought that this would be very worthwhile since the specific targeting of sites of the International Brigades had not been done before, and we presumed that there would be a good deal of support for such an endeavour since there is a very strong interest in the International Brigades in both Spain and abroad. There are numerous organisations set up to keep alive the memory of the brigades, and to foster and recognise that what the brigaders fought for in the 1930s is still relevant to people today. These organisations include the *Asociación de Amigos de las Brigadas*

<sup>24</sup> González-Ruibal 2018.

<sup>25</sup> González-Ruibal 2007: 221.

<sup>26</sup> Around 700 foreign volunteers joined the POUM militia between July 1936 and June 1937, see Durgan 1997, and up to 3000 joined the CNT-FAI militia, see Nelles 1997. POUM stands for the Marxist *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*, while CNT-FAI represents the *Confederación Nacional de Trabajo* and the *Federación Anarquista Ibérica*, two anarchist worker’s organisations pushing for a social revolution in Spanish society. As such, they opposed the Soviet Union’s brand of communism, and were considered ‘Trotskyist’ by Stalinists.

<sup>27</sup> There was never an ‘Abraham Lincoln Brigade’ in Spain, only the Abraham Lincoln Battalion of the 15th International Brigade. However, the descriptor ‘brigade’ stuck and has been used to describe all U.S. volunteers, in all of their capacities, in the Spanish Civil War, see ALBA.



*Internacionales* (AABI) in Spain, and the Abraham Lincoln Brigades Archive (ALBA), already mentioned, as well as the International Brigades Memorial Trust (IBMT) in Britain. Elsewhere, there are further organisations in countries that include Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Annually, and throughout any given year, members of these organisations, as well as other interested individuals, and even relations of some brigaders, journey singularly or in groups to the sites where the International Brigades fought, and to the towns and villages where they were stationed. There are guide books to some of the battle grounds where they fought,<sup>28</sup> and there are even specialist tour guides who provide set and bespoke tours of the battle sites and other locales relevant to the presence of the International Brigades in Spain. These sites can be described as ‘orphan heritage’,<sup>29</sup> since the foreign visitors give a value to the locations where the Brigaders fought making them, in effect, stakeholders. Because of this obvious international interest, Alfredo and I thought that we could run what would in effect be an international community archaeological project exploring landscapes of the Spanish Civil War as encountered by the volunteers of the International Brigades.

‘Community archaeology’ is a term that has been in use in the anglophone world at least since the 1980s, and it has come to encapsulate ‘archaeological projects explicitly designed for, or incorporating, substantial community involvement and participation’.<sup>30</sup> To Gabriel Moshenska, community archaeology is very much a community centred undertaking. But writing in 2008 he expressed strong reservations about defining the term explicitly: ‘if pushed, I would argue that it is the actions of individuals or groups to investigate the archaeology of their local area or other areas of interest or importance to them’.<sup>31</sup> As such, Alfredo and I felt that we could tap into the strong and sincere interest in the International Brigades that apparently exists, and to offer interested individuals the chance to take part in excavations and other field work. They would have the chance to handle artefacts that they themselves would have unearthed in the context of controlled excavations in specific historical locations, and to become intimate with landscapes and landscape features of the Spanish Civil War through field-walking. Some even, if related to International Brigaders, could have the chance to possibly tread the same ground, and maybe even the same trenches that their relations fought in, and for some, might have died in. Such archaeology would be more than just an excavation or a survey, but a memorialising experience. So, with all of this in mind, Alfredo and I launched the International Brigades Archaeology Project (IBAP) in the early months of 2014.

We aimed to model IBAP after the Great Arab Revolt Project (GARP), based out of the University of Bristol and co-directed by Nicholas Saunders and Neil Faulkner. This project ended in 2016 after ten annual field seasons, and its aim was to study the conflict landscape of the Arab revolt of 1916-1918 in what is now southern Jordan (the northern Hejaz) against the Ottoman Turks, in which the British Army officer and archaeologist, T. E. Lawrence – Lawrence of Arabia – was a prominent figure. The project was self-funding since it relied on fee paying volunteers who would take part in fieldwork for two weeks every year. The iconic figure of T. E. Lawrence and the landscape and archaeology of southern Jordan was an obvious draw for the volunteers, and participants came from a variety of backgrounds including student and professional archaeologists. Judging from the project’s blogs over the years, the volunteers became an interested community in their own right, keeping in touch and keen to explore the archaeology of the First World War in the Hejaz and elsewhere. Some even went on to do postgraduate degrees based on their association with the project.<sup>32</sup>

We felt that this model would work for us since we had some seed funding from Spanish sources to get us started and we felt that the International Brigades, with the international interest that exists for them, would be a draw for fee paying volunteers. The project would also be attractive to Spanish students keen to explore the archaeology of the Civil War, and Alfredo already had a small team of archaeological colleagues who could serve as supervisors and instructors in the field, and be the professional backbone

<sup>28</sup> See Lloyd 2015; and Mathieson 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Price 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Simpson 2008: 69.

<sup>31</sup> Moshenska 2008: 52.

<sup>32</sup> GARP.



of the project. As such, IBAP was conceived as an integral contributor to his, and his colleague's, ongoing archaeological research into the Civil War's multiple landscapes of violence, including post-war sites of repression. He and his team had already worked at numerous locations in Spain – these included sites in León, Madrid, Guadalajara, Catalonia, and Extremadura<sup>33</sup> – and with one of his colleagues already exploring Civil War archaeology in Aragón, around the town of Belchite south of Zaragoza, then that community and its immediate hinterland was chosen as IBAP's fieldwork locus.

Belchite is one of the iconic sites of the Spanish Civil War. It was situated on the front line around 40 kilometres southeast of Zaragoza, and occupied by Nationalist forces early on in the war. The town's layout and architecture, with its narrow streets and with the houses along its perimeter tightly terraced, and with the town only accessed through defensible gates with heavy doors, made it easy for the Nationalists to fortify, while additionally, a ring of entrenchments with bunkers and strong points was constructed around the town. In early September 1937, after Republican forces (including the International Brigades) took the nearby town of Quinto as part of the Republic's push towards Zaragoza, Belchite was invested. After taking the town's outlying defences, Republican forces, mainly the Abraham Lincoln Battalion of the 15th International Brigade, made their way into the town, and had to take it street by street and house by house. The fighting was bloody and harrowing, with the Brigaders even using the now contemporary tactic of smashing holes through building and cellar walls to move from one building to another in which there could only be close quarter fighting.<sup>34</sup> Other 15th Brigade units that took part in the attack included the Dimitrov Battalion and the British Battalion's anti-tank battery. Tanks and aircraft were also used in the attack on the town, and due to the severity of the fighting and the town's bombardment, Belchite was left virtually uninhabitable after being taken.

The Nationalists retook the town in March, 1938, in their own offensive eastwards which caused the Republican forces, including the International Brigades, to rapidly retreat (known as the 'great retreats') into Catalonia and to the north bank of the River Ebro. Although other towns were similarly bombarded and ruined just like Belchite, Francisco Franco declared after the war that the town would not be rebuilt, but kept in its ruinous state as a memorial to the war and the Nationalist cause, and to serve as a reminder of the 'brutality' of the 'reds', meaning the Republican government and its armed forces. A Francoist new town was subsequently built, with forced labour, immediately to the north of the ruins of 'Old' Belchite. With Spain's return to democracy after the death of Franco in 1975, Belchite has now become, and is presented as, a sepulchral memorial to all of the violence of the Civil War. The gates into the town have been rebuilt and the streets have been cleared of debris to make them safe. There are also guided tours held daily.

If someone from outside Spain visits Old Belchite today it soon becomes obvious that the site is mainly visited by Spaniards. However, in terms of 'orphan heritage', it is something of a place of pilgrimage for people of all nationalities interested in the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigades. This is especially so for people related to members of the Brigades, and in particular, the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. In fact, this sense of 'pilgrimage' was one reason why some people volunteered to take part in IBAP. In the project's first year, 2014, four people related to Brigaders joined out of a total of eleven. For them, taking part in IBAP was very much a personal journey, and one in which they could get close to the very earth upon which their uncles, fathers and grandfathers fought and even died. They wished to gain an extra dimension to the memory of their relatives, who to them, were people who were very special indeed – and held highly in their family's memories. The 2015 season did not include any relatives of brigaders, but it, like the previous season, included volunteers with a very keen and active interest in the Spanish Civil War, and with one volunteer in particular, who had personally known a number of brigaders, now deceased. Over both years, the age range of the paying volunteers varied from 21 to 74, and the mix was British, Canadian, Irish, American, Spanish, and Croatian.

<sup>33</sup> *Arqueología de la Guerra Civil Española*; and González-Ruibal 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Landis 1967: 296-301.

Although the total number of fee paying volunteers reached twenty-two over 2014 and 2015, and they were all extremely enthusiastic about the project, their numbers were just too low for IBAP to be financially sustainable. Because of this, and because funds from other sources in Spain were too piecemeal, it was decided that IBAP would not continue after 2015. This is not to say that IBAP's fieldwork was not productive. A variety of fieldwork activities were carried out at, and around Belchite, and towards the town of Mediana de Aragón (Mediana), around 17 kilometres to the north. These primarily included excavations at occupied and defended Nationalist positions disposed around Belchite, field walking along portions of the perimeter of Belchite, a geomatic survey of Republican positions overlooking the town, and targeted excavations at fighting and occupation positions along opposing entrenchments southwest of Mediana, including fieldwalking. The results of this fieldwork can be found in a detailed technical report by Alfredo Gonzalez-Ruibal *et al*, with another in preparation, and in a published conference paper by Pedro Rodríguez Simón *et al*.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, four volunteers recorded their impressions of IBAP in articles and blogs.<sup>36</sup>

This study, however, is an elaboration only, of survey work undertaken by myself as an adjunct to the IBAP fieldwork near Mediana de Aragón, when in 2014 it was recognised that since the project's targeted excavations were situated within a broad warscape of Nationalist and Republican entrenchments – and associated habitations – then that landscape would benefit from further field prospection and landscape study.

The defensive remains southwest of Mediana are extensive, covering approximately 56 square kilometres,<sup>37</sup> and can be considered amongst some of the best preserved of their kind in Spain. They consist of fighting trenches and positions, communications and support lines, and habitation areas: places where a great many shelters were dug and stone huts were constructed to house the opposing armies while they watched, bombarded, and sent out sorties against each other. The environment created by the two armies was architectural, exhibiting many of the characteristics of almost any 'built environment'. They had central and peripheral loci (strong points and outworks), and links through route-ways (tracks and communication trenches). There were specific living areas, and specialised activity loci such as observation posts, gun positions, and of course, frontal fighting trenches. They were places where life was profoundly lived, and where it could, and often did, end brutally.

The soldiers of both armies 'settled in' and faced each other off. They made the front lines their home, and they created their own communities, though undeniably martial ones. This volume focuses on a portion of this war-scape – referred to as the Mediana Salient – as a place, or perhaps better, a series of linked and opposing places carved out of the space of the arid Aragón countryside, creating a particular landscape of 'settlement' – where soldiers lived their daily lives while confronting the rigours of war. Though planned and laid out, entrenched positions like those at Mediana (for both sides in the war) also had an organic quality, reminiscent of some other types of settlements. They might have been specialised and short lived – only occupied from Autumn 1937 to Spring 1938 – but they were settlements nonetheless, and in this study, their remains and delineations on the ground are presented as settlement archaeology.

## Outline of Chapters

In order to explore the spaces and places dealt with in this book I have divided it into three parts. Part One consists of this introductory chapter, followed by a brief overview of the Spanish Civil War and the formation of the International Brigades in Chapter 2. A time-line of the Spanish Civil War is also included. Part Two consists similarly of two chapters with the first, Chapter 3, aiming to contextualise the use of entrenchments in the Spanish Civil War within that period of modern warfare that commenced with the Russo-Japanese War and continued beyond World War Two and even up to the Vietnam War. It views field fortifications as being 'architectural' in nature, and this is a theme that is followed throughout

<sup>35</sup> González-Ruibal *et al* 2015; Rodríguez Simón *et al* 2015; and *Arqueología de la Guerra Civil Española*.

<sup>36</sup> Billett 2015; Dinnen 2015; Lewis and Ryan 2014; and Park 2014. See also Garfi 2019.

<sup>37</sup> González-Ruibal *et al* 2015: 80.

this study, and in particular in Chapter 4, which is an archaeological landscape study of a portion of the Mediana Salient. There is a location at the Salient that was known as the 'Parapet of Death', and at this location units of the British battalion of the 15th International Brigade engaged Nationalist forces in a hard fought battle, with their hastily dug entrenchments getting them as close as 40 yards from the opposing enemy positions.

The three chapters making up Part Three take a slightly tangential route from the preceding ones. In Chapter 5, the phenomenology of a foreign volunteer occupying Republican trenches along the Aragón front is described through the writings of Eric Blair – George Orwell. Although there are numerous memoirs and accounts written by international volunteers who fought in the Spanish Civil War, very few, if any, described and observed what it was like to occupy front line trenches as lucidly as George Orwell. As Chapter 5 explains, although Orwell has been criticised for his political interpretations and his involvement with the anarchist POUM militia, he was a keen observer of the material and sensual world around him. In fact, his writing style and descriptive abilities were almost archaeological in nature, and these make his book *Homage to Catalonia* relevant to the fieldwork findings presented here.

The second chapter in Part Three, Chapter 6, interprets a selection of thirty-eight contemporary photographs from the Spanish Civil War which show entrenchment features and soldiers' habitations, occupied by units of the 15th International Brigade in 1937 and 1938. As explained in the chapter, the aim is to treat the photographs as 'acts of eyewitnessing' and each as a 'slice of space as well as time'. Each photo is seen as something akin to an archaeological sondage, providing limited information on the materiality visible in each image. Such a systematic use of terrestrial historical photographs is rarely, if ever, undertaken in archaeology, so the sample of photographs included herein – presented as a source of archaeological data – is something of an experiment. It is hoped, also, that the way in which the photographs have been treated can be an indicator to others, on how such imagery can be incorporated into archaeological research beyond the more common use of historical imagery as simple and comparative illustrations. Finally, Chapter 7 is something of an extended epilogue. Issues are revisited, while further, selected observations and material has been added – mainly as a way of holistically rounding off this study, and of course, tying up those inevitable loose ends.