

editorial

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An editorial statement

International debate in archaeology since the early 1960s may be said to have an ambiguous nature. On the one hand, 'new' and 'fresh' orientations and perspectives have been proposed one after another at an increasing rate. The wide variety of processual, marxist, contextual, structuralist archaeologies, which are often fundamentally at odds and yet may be found together even in one single publication, undeniably demonstrates the pluralist character of contemporary archaeology. Continental European archaeology is moreover characterized by a striking *regional diversity* of clearly distinct traditions, each with its own specific academic interests and particular ways of practicing and theorizing on archaeology. Although none of these regional traditions is entirely homogenous or without internal discussions, the regional aspect represents a significant unifying feature in each case.

On the other hand, the dominant position of Anglo-American archaeology in international debate, abundantly illustrated by recent surveys of archaeological practice and thought in various regions and countries (Trigger and Glover 1981; Vašiček and Malina 1990; Hodder 1991a), has generally narrowed the scope of themes addressed: both the New Archaeology as well as the subsequent processual and post-processual perspectives have tended to focus on particular themes while ignoring other matters which were of concern to regional archaeologies. Most continental archaeologies have moreover explicitly tended to withdraw from international debate or have only attended from a distance (cf. Cleuziou et al. 1991, 91-92). This situation can be easily interpreted in terms of a 'centre-periphery' relationship or of a 'delayed' or even 'failed' reception of Anglo-American orientations. According to this view, Anglo-American archaeology of the last three decades stands out as the inspiring, reflexive and, in particular, productive partner in dialogue, while the continental European traditions are represented as being rather passive, focusing one-sidedly on empirical practice and merely 'consuming' innovations.

In opposition to this view, we maintain that no continental tradition is necessarily related to Anglo-American archaeology: *Archaeological Dialogues* explicitly aims at breaking through the dichotomy of Anglo-American *versus* continental European archaeology so often suggested.

The New Archaeology and successive structural-marxist, contextual and critical perspectives in archaeology unquestionably have gained ground on the European continent over the last three decades, and naturally both American and British debates have contributed significantly to this. But it would be an exaggeration to hold these discussions solely responsible for all (theoretical) developments which have taken place in continental archaeology since the 1960s. It should be noted that the various regional archaeologies on the European continent have been characterized not so much by the Anglo-American 'paradigm shifts' as by intertwinements of existing research traditions and inspiring external impulses. As such, these external stimuli have not just constituted some kind of theoretical mould for shaping regional practice but have continuously added new perspectives to existing regional research traditions. A brief survey of continental traditions in archaeology convincingly demonstrates the constantly varying approach to international debate and shows the different aspects emphasized. In this view, British archaeology represents but one specific outcome among many of intertwined traditions and impulses (cf. Champion 1991).

Scandinavian archaeology is a well-known case in point of such an interaction between 'indigenous' and 'foreign' elements. At a relatively early stage, well before any other continental archaeology, Scandinavian archaeologists were interested in developments taking place in American and British archaeology. The main motive for this participation in international debate, however, was the Scandinavian academic situation, with its emphasis on dialogue and cooperation among the social sciences. As a result, neither the incorporation of new elements nor intensive interaction with British archaeology in particular have seriously altered the regional character of Scandinavian research traditions (Myhre 1991, 163–170).

A rather different research tradition is that of Dutch archaeology, which has long kept aloof from the supposedly typically Anglo-American focus on the social sciences (see Slofstra's paper in this volume). In the Netherlands, processual archaeology was embraced relatively late in the mid 1970s by only few archaeologists. More recently, however, interest in structural marxism, neo-structuralism and critical approaches has been growing (see Jongste in this volume). Yet all these diverging orientations are tied into a specifically Dutch amalgam which is geared to the detailed analysis of specific regions, such as the study of Roman and indigenous economic and political organization in the Dutch eastern river area (Willems 1986). The Pionier project 'Power and Elite' at the Institute of Pre and Protohistory, University of Amsterdam, on the expanding power networks in late prehistory and protohistory of north-western Europe represents a more recent example (Roymans and Theuvs 1990). It focuses on the south of the Netherlands from an historical-anthropological perspective, rooted in a variety of concepts ranging from the French *Annales* school and neo-marxism to Elias' civilization theory.

In other countries, however, notably in eastern and southern Europe, archaeologists have been much more involved in different debates; to them, Anglo-American archaeological achievements represented only one out of several contributions to archaeological debate. Two major causes can be brought forward to explain why the New Archaeology did not remain unnoticed in these countries but nevertheless failed to prevail over existing research traditions. One of them is the particular political situation in many of these countries, which inevitably

has strongly conditioned archaeological practice and university teaching. The situation in eastern Europe has been commented upon repeatedly, both before the 1989 revolutions (e.g. Trigger 1989, 207–243) and more recently (e.g. Miraj and Zeqo 1993) but the consequences of the particular political situation in Mediterranean Europe for archaeological research have long been ignored (Díaz-Andreu 1993). Yet the eminence of marxist perspectives in archaeology can hardly be dissociated from the polarized politics of Spain or Italy in the 1960s and 1970s. In Greece, moreover, archaeology has always been ideologically charged, since it is crucial to the identity of both the nation and the people (Friedman 1992, 838–841). The other main cause of the critical stance towards Anglo-American trends in archaeology must be found in the widespread and lively debates which were already taking place across the Mediterranean. Moreover, southern European archaeology remained in touch with both the former Eastern bloc on ‘typically marxist’ issues such as the slave economy (see for example the conference organized by the Gramsci Institute; Giardina and Schiavone 1981) and with north-western European countries, all of which have archaeological institutes in the Mediterranean. A fine example of the adaptation of northern European influences is the Mediterranean survey which ultimately goes back to Thomas Ashby’s landscape studies of the Roman *campagna* before the war and to Ward-Perkins’s introduction of field walking in central Italy in the postwar period: both were directors of the British School at Rome (Barker 1985).

Thus the encounter of varying existing research traditions in continental European archaeology with the New Archaeology and its successors may be seen as giving rise to intertwinement with specific accents and preferences, which differ time and again, rather than as a more or less successful introduction of the latter. In the case of Mediterranean archaeology, Renfrew’s ‘Great Divide’ between traditional and processual archaeology (Renfrew 1980) may present itself as such from the Anglo-American point of view but much less so to Mediterranean archaeologists: rather than having been taken on board lock, stock and barrel, only particular features of the Anglo-American tradition have been picked out and joined with other, typically Mediterranean achievements, most of which had remained unnoticed by Anglo-American archaeologists (cf. Hodges 1990).

Theoretical archaeology A re-appraisal

4 The relative state of ‘progress’ of any regional archaeology, including British archaeology, has usually been ‘measured’ by its degree of theoretical sophistication and its distance from local and particularist issues. The basically unilinear development prominent in many surveys of archaeological thought from artefact-oriented to theoretical archaeology is a clear case in point. The notion of ‘theory’ as something clearly distinct from or even opposed to ‘practice’ was first proposed by the New Archaeologists. In contrast to the supposed primacy of data, which had to serve as ‘a yardstick of measurement’ of any propositions about the past (Binford 1968, 90), theory was regarded as something abstract that is separate from archaeological practice and useful only in relation to practice, when applied to data. More recently, the discussion on theory and practice has been sharpened by a further distinction between archaeological theory and theoretical archaeology. In order to claim a ‘truly’ theoretical archaeology

for the post-processual approaches of the 1980s, archaeological theory is more narrowly defined, with an appeal to David Clarke, as being strictly separated from any practical issue (Hodder 1991b, 4–9).

As a result of these developments the term ‘theoretical archaeology’ has taken a rather negative connotation. It has come to imply ‘grand theories’ and abstract reflections on the philosophy of science, and is by many associated – possibly, to a certain extent, rightly – with ideas which in final analysis are irrelevant to archaeological interpretation. Consequently, the need for a distinct subdiscipline of theoretical archaeology is rarely felt (Veit 1992, 555). We therefore want to abandon ‘theoretical archaeology’ as too narrow a basis for a periodical like *Archaeological Dialogues*, because it represents but one point of attention among various others (see below). Instead, we propose an archaeology, which is equally rooted in both theory and practice, and, moreover, sensitive to specific regional themes. Considering theory to be inextricably linked to practice, we advocate a ‘theoretical practice’ which takes into account both the theoretical dimension and the artefactual basis of all archaeological interpretation (cf. Shanks and Tilley 1987, 25–28).

We propose *Archaeological Dialogues* as a forum for *interdisciplinary* debate both on a wide range of archaeological and related themes on the basis of a particular archaeological or ethnographic situation, and on specific archaeological problems of a given region and period. The theoretical element in *Archaeological Dialogues* should not only be reflected in an interdisciplinary approach, but also in the ‘reflexive’ aspect of the research to be published. Interdisciplinary relationships should be explicitly mentioned and discussed: the debate should have a meta-dimension. Since we are well aware of the importance of philosophical or political (self) reflection on archaeology as a discipline, we furthermore reserve ample space for critical ‘theoretical’ considerations on the role of archaeology in contemporary society (see e.g. the dialogue with Shanks in this issue), and on the nature of the categories and concepts underlying daily archaeological practice.

Archaeological Dialogues Dutch perspectives on current issues in archaeology

The publication of this new journal fits into the picture of an archaeologically diversified Europe. It coincides with a growing awareness of the significance of specific regional research traditions, as demonstrated by the regional meetings on contemporary developments in archaeology in for example Spain, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Germany. Whereas existing continental periodicals predominantly focus on local issues, we instead intend to promote debate among the various continental traditions and to stimulate their regional diversity. In doing so, we specifically emphasize sophisticated and balanced approaches to particular archaeological problems. *Archaeological Dialogues* also wishes to contribute to the trend of critical reflection on what archaeologists actually do and might do. Because of its Dutch background the journal is firmly rooted in continental debates and, as this first issue shows, Dutch archaeology accordingly regularly provides a starting-point for discussions with wider ramification. Nevertheless, we have no preference for any specific period or region within the wider context of European archaeology and some broadly defined themes are listed below. Because

of its emphasis on discussion and debate, *Archaeological Dialogues* basically consists of two leading articles accompanied by several comments and a reply and a number of shorter 'notes', which may be reactions to current issues in archaeology or raise new matters. Review articles of recent publications and critical reviews make up the remainder of each issue. In each of these sections we intend to pay specific attention to the following themes:

SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES IN ARCHAEOLOGY Archaeology may be distinguished from the social sciences by its material object, i.e. the archaeological record. Its formal objects of past societies and material culture, however, offer significant interfaces with social and historical disciplines. We therefore particularly favour themes which go beyond traditional archaeological issues and promote integration with these disciplines. A starting point for archaeological interpretations may be offered e.g. by theories of inequality and power, social construction of gender, state formation, exchange and trade, political anthropology of tribal societies etc.

INTERPRETING MATERIAL CULTURE Archaeological interpretations often draw heavily on assumptions about material culture as a crucial feature in the study of the material shaping of cultural 'worlds'. Fundamental issues at stake in this field of study are the relationships between power, ideology and the *meaning* of material culture, the construction of social space and the methodological applicability of language and text based models and theories.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES Landscapes both past and present are increasingly being interpreted in terms of cultural perception and experience instead of being regarded as a function of the physical environment. Following this shift in interest and drawing on complementary archaeological, historical and geographical perspectives, we invite work on meanings attributed to the landscape within (pre-)historic societies and on the ways in which past experiences may be anchored in the landscape.

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE OF ARCHAEOLOGY Archaeology is a discipline in which data and concepts from history, ethnography, geography and philosophy are applied in order to interpret and compare archaeological data within a wider framework. However, it remains an open question to what extent detailed knowledge is required if archaeologists want to explore fruitfully these disciplines. Critical reflection on the use of such sources seems to be indispensable.

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ARCHAEOLOGY, SOCIETY AND CULTURE POLITICS As a discipline comparing and contrasting other societies, archaeology needs to reflect critically on the moral, political and philosophical implications: ethnocentrism and cultural imperialism can no longer be ignored and the consequences of relativism and cultural critique must be faced. The role of archaeology in contemporary society must accordingly be considered.

THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL THINKING Only recently has archaeology set out to reflect critically on its development as a discipline. In-depth examination of the introduction and application of pivotal concepts as well as biographies of leading archaeologists, schools of thought and institutions may contribute significantly to these ends.

EVALUATING INNOVATIVE METHODS AND TECHNIQUES Archaeology does not proceed significantly in theoretical matters only; new methods and techniques are being developed and existing ones critically evaluated and improved. Nevertheless, the archaeological background of many innovations is not always well considered: new techniques may not always solve old conceptual problems.

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