

INTERPRETIVE ARCHAEOLOGY

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INTERPRETIVE ARCHAEOLOGY

A READER

Edited by
Julian Thomas



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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

John C. Barrett is Reader in Archaeology at Sheffield University. His research interests include archaeological theory, funerary archaeology and landscape archaeology.

Barbara Bender is Emeritus Reader of Anthropology at University College London. Dr Bender has written on socio-developments within gatherer-hunter societies, past and present, the emergence of inequality, and transitions to farming. She has excavated in many parts of Europe, in the Sudan and in North America, and has taught in the USA. She is currently working part-time on the social construction of landscape and on heritage issues.

Pierre Bourdieu is Professor of Sociology at the Collège de France. He is the author of many books including *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*; *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* and *Homo Academicus*.

Victor Buchli is Lecturer in Anthropology at University College London. Dr Buchli writes on material culture and social change. His specific interests are architecture, post-socialist transition and the archaeological study of the present. He has conducted field work in Russia and Kazakhstan as well as in Britain. At present he is conducting research on the re-construction of the post-Soviet built environment and is beginning a project investigating notions of physicality and understanding of material culture.

Thomas Dowson is Lecturer in Archaeology at Southampton University. He specializes in rock art in the Americas, Europe and Southern Africa, and the socio-politics of rock art research. He has recently been engaged in projects concerned with using rock art to reconstruct indigenous histories.

Moirá Gatens is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney. She is the author of *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality and Imaginary Bodies*.

Joan Gero is Professor of Anthropology at American University, Washington, DC. She focuses her research on gender and power issues in prehistory, especially in the Andean regions of Argentina and Peru. After directing excavations in New England, South Carolina and Labrador, she researched the early administrative centre of Queyash Alto in Peru during the 1980s, while her current co-directed project in the Argentinian Andes involves Early Formative household economies. She writes about the origins of state level society, feminist interpretations of prehistory and the socio-politics of doing archaeology; her many publications include the popular book *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory*.

J. D. Hill is Assistant Curator of Archaeology at the British Museum. He is a specialist in the archaeology of Iron Age Britain and Northern Europe, archaeological theory and pottery analysis. His previous work has included studies of later prehistoric social organization, ritual and taphonomy/site formation processes. His main fieldwork interests are in south Denmark where he is co-director of the Als archaeological project. His current research is focused on cultural and social change in Iron Age southern England and the social and economic interpretation of pottery, and he is working on the Ceramic Sociology of Iron Age East Anglia project.

Ian Hodder is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge, and Professor of Cultural and Social Anthropology at Stanford University, California. His research interests include post-processual archaeology, methodological studies of quantitative approaches to spatial analysis, material culture and social structure. His many publications include *Reading the Past* and *The Archaeological Process*.

Tim Ingold is Professor of Social Anthropology at Aberdeen University. Professor Ingold has carried out ethnographic fieldwork among Saami and Finnish people in Lapland, and has published widely on hunter-gatherer and pastoral societies, evolutionary theory and human ecology. He is currently researching environmental perception and the anthropology of technology.

Harald Johnsen works for the Troms fylkeskommune, in Tromsø. He received his master's degree in Archaeology from the University of Tromsø in 1992.

Matthew Johnson is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Durham. His research interests include medieval and post-medieval archaeology of England and Wales, vernacular architecture, landscape history and archaeological theory.

Siân Jones is Lecturer in Archaeology at Manchester University. She specializes in the area of archaeology and identity, in particular the interpretation of ethnic identity from archaeological remains, which is the subject of her recent book, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity* (1997). In the course of her research she has focused on material from the Iron Age and Roman periods in Britain and in the region of Palestine. Alongside this work she has also looked at the role of archaeological knowledge in the construction of modern ethnic and national identities, in particular the intersection of nationalism and archaeology in modern Israel.

Igor Kopytoff is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a general practitioner in cultural anthropology, with an ethnographic focus

on Africa and with some past research in northern Asia. More specifically, his interests, research, and publications deal with social structure, political organization, and religion – and the process of transformation in them. He has also worked and published on slavery as a general cultural phenomenon, with a special interest in indigenous slavery in Africa as a culture-historical phenomenon. He has done fieldwork in the Congo, Cameroon, and the Ivory Coast.

Paul Lane is director of the British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi.

Bruno Latour is Professor at the Centre for the Study of Innovation at the School of Mines, Paris. He is the author of *Aramis, or The Love of Technology*; *We Have Never Been Modern*; *Science in Action*; and *The Pasteurization of France*.

Mark P. Leone is Department Chair in Anthropology at the University of Maryland. He is interested in historical archaeology and interpretation, critical theory, outdoor history museums and African–American archaeology.

Randall McGuire is Professor of Anthropology at the University of New York, Binghamton. His principal interests lie in the development of power relations in the past. He has carried out most of his field work in the US Southwest, and currently is conducting a long-term field project in northwest Mexico. He has also done historical archaeology and oral history research in the northeastern US. He has initiated a project investigating the 1913–14 coal strike in southern Colorado. In addition to historical archaeology, history and ethnology, his interests include quantitative methods, social theory, cultural resource management and archaeomagnetic dating.

Henrietta Moore is Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics. Her research is concerned with East and Central Africa, economic anthropology, development, gender and feminist theory.

Bjørnar Olsen is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Tromsø.

Michael Parker Pearson is Reader in Archaeology at Sheffield University. His research interests include later prehistory, funerary behaviour, archaeological theory and ethnography. He has conducted field projects in the Outer Hebrides, Madagascar and south Yorkshire (including Scrooby Top and Scabba Wood).

Linda Patrik is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Union College, Schenectady, New York. She graduated cum laude from Carleton College and received her doctorate from Northwestern University, specializing in European philosophy. She has studied phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics and Sanskrit at the universities of Freiburg and Tübingen, and the philosophy of archaeology in Athens. Her research on meditation has taken her to India and her research on archaeology led her to work on a dig in Tunisia. She has published papers on eastern philosophy, phenomenology and the philosophy of archaeology.

Parker B. Potter, Jr received his PhD from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and worked as field archaeologist for the ‘Archaeology in Annapolis’ Program.

Keith Ray is County Archaeologist for Herefordshire. He received a PhD in Archaeology from Cambridge University for his work on the Igbo-Ukwu assemblage.

Colin Richards is Lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Glasgow. His research interests include Neolithic archaeology, material culture studies and ethnoarchaeology.

Paul Shackel is Director of Graduate Studies in Anthropology at the University of Maryland. He is interested in historical archaeology, industrial archaeology, complex societies, labour history, consumer behaviour, and public history.

Michael Shanks is Professor of Classics at Stanford University. His publications include *Experiencing the Past: On the Character of Archaeology*; *Classical Archaeology: Experiences of the Discipline*; and *Art and the Early Greek City State*.

Anthony Sinclair is Lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Liverpool. His research interests include Palaeolithic and Mesolithic archaeology, Japanese archaeology, archaeological theory, technology and fieldwork in Britain and South Africa. He is Co-director of the Carden Project.

Shirley S. Strum received her PhD in Anthropology from UC Berkeley in 1976. She currently teaches primate behaviour, human evolution and conservation at UC San Diego.

Julian Thomas is Professor of Archaeology in the School of Art History and Archaeology at the University of Manchester. His publications include *Time, Culture and Identity: An Interpretive Archaeology* and *Understanding the Neolithic*.

Christopher Tilley is Professor of Anthropology and Archaeology at University College London. Professor Tilley has research interests in theory and philosophy, material culture and prehistoric Europe, with regional expertise on Europe and New Guinea. He is currently carrying out research in Bodmin Moor, Cornwall on the cultural construction of landscapes and on a project involving the comparative study of museums, ethnicity and tourism in the Pacific. His broader research interests are in the study of theories of representation in relation to material form.

Ruth Tringham is Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests include the study of Neolithic and Eneolithic Southeast Europe, gender archaeology and multimedia.

Alison Wylie is Professor of Philosophy at Washington University, St. Louis. Her interests include philosophy of the social and historical sciences, and feminist perspectives on archaeology.

Tim Yates received his doctorate in Archaeology from King's College, Cambridge. He has published on archaeological theory, ethnoarchaeology and the European Bronze Age. He has carried out extensive field research on the rock carvings of Bohuslän, Sweden.

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INTRODUCTION

The Polarities of Post-Processual Archaeology

JULIAN THOMAS

New Archaeologies

In 1972 Mark Leone published a collection of articles under the title *Contemporary Archaeology: A Guide to Theory and Contributions*. In the ten years which had preceded this publication American archaeology had undergone a fundamental revolution, with the emergence of what had come to be known as the New Archaeology. While it had been prefigured by earlier calls for increased conceptual sophistication and problem-orientation (e.g. Taylor 1948), the New Archaeology represented a unified programme for the reform of the discipline. At its core were a demand for robust means of constructing and verifying hypotheses about the past, and a desire to address questions of past social and cultural process, which might or might not articulate with evolutionary approaches. Taken together, these imperatives recast archaeology as a science of material culture. Leone saw his book as a means of demonstrating that a new and powerful body of theory had begun to accumulate, whose coherence and integration were not always evident, since the theorization was dispersed in journal articles or embedded in accounts of fieldwork and analysis. Leone was offering a selection of the canonical statements of the New Archaeology as a handbook or reference source for professional archaeologists (1972, ix). Armed with this volume, archaeologists could go out and *do science*. Beyond this, his concern lay with demonstrating the contribution which archaeology was increasingly making to human knowledge.

This book might be compared with Leone's, in that it attempts to document the principal ideas and approaches which have characterized a particular phase of disciplinary development. Just as Leone had collected together many of the best-known contributions to New or processual archaeology, this volume contains some of the most-quoted examples of post-processual or interpretive archaeology. However, at this point the parallel breaks down. The New Archaeology can be identified as a unitary project, because its practitioners believed that there was a single truth about the past that could be accessed as long as one had the right approach, and did the right kind of science. There were certainly disagreements amongst the New Archaeologists, some of them acrimonious, but they tended to revolve around the identification

of appropriate ways of addressing the archaeological record. The ultimate objective of archaeological investigation was generally agreed: the generation of law-like statements covering human social and cultural development. There has never been this degree of conformity over the ambitions of a post-processual archaeology, to the extent that Christopher Tilley (this volume, Chapter 24) argues that there is no such thing as a post-processual archaeology. Similarly, Ian Hodder (1991a: 37) has suggested that we should speak not of a post-processual movement but of a post-processual era. This is not to imply that processual archaeology has become a thing of the past, and is no longer practised. Rather, the period since the early 1980s has seen the development of a variety of perspectives which are either critical of processual archaeology, or build on its foundations in ways which were not originally imagined.

Instead of the development of a single new research programme within archaeology, the past two decades have seen archaeologists beginning to engage with a very wide range of debates which are being conducted within the human and social sciences. Processual archaeology gained much of its inspiration from the natural sciences: ecology, geology, evolutionary biology and the 'spatial science' of human geography. More recent work has simply widened the scope of this interdisciplinarity, so that a greater variety of theoretical materials are now recognized as being relevant to archaeology. What this means in practice is that those archaeologists who are described as 'post-processualists' do not constitute a distinct research community, and may understand their closest affinities as lying with other disciplines: anthropology, philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, art history, technology studies, performance studies, and so on. As a consequence, this book represents anything but the exposition of a 'party line'. What I have chosen to include here is a series of papers, all of which I have found inspiring, in various ways. I do not necessarily agree with everything that is contained in all of the articles, and they very plainly do not agree with each other. But I have found something useful in each of them, and I would recommend any or all of them to my students. In tune with the interdisciplinarity of contemporary archaeology I have chosen to include a number of papers which were not written by archaeologists. Some of these are works that have been repeatedly referenced in archaeological debates, while others are pieces which I believe to have considerable relevance to the discipline (although the authors probably did not have archaeology in mind when they wrote them).

This book, then, is a celebration of the diversity of the ideas which are presently being employed in archaeology. To some it will appear to be a 'post-processual manifesto', but my intention in this Introduction is to draw attention to the differences of opinion which exist within this non-existent school of thought. To that end I will attempt to identify a series of areas within which unresolved tensions can be recognized.

Epistemology: for and against

There is some agreement that recent developments in archaeological theory have resulted in a wider range of issues being addressed within the discipline: gender, power, symbolism, ritual action, personal identity, nationalism, representation, and so on. However, this growing diversity of investigation is continually met with the objection, 'This is all very well, but where is the methodology?' This argument is

extremely beguiling, and it is easy to be seduced by it. Ian Hodder (1991a: 8) notes that post-processual archaeologies have been more concerned with theory than methodology, and indeed that the critique of processualism has been most cogent at a philosophical level. It is tempting to imagine that if one's theoretical framework is more powerful, it should be possible to generate an epistemology which is superior to that of the New Archaeology. However, attempts at founding a 'post-processual method' tend to collapse, in that they generally rely upon some set of presumed universals, whether of human nature, cognitive processing, or the capabilities of the human body. The reason for this failure is easy to discern. The New Archaeology *was* methodology. It was above all an attempt to place epistemology at the centre of archaeological practice, and to establish foolproof ways of determining the veracity of statements about the past. Many of the criticisms of the New Archaeology have been pitched precisely at the poverty of this empiricism: the hypothesis-testing approach attempts to do away with any need to interpret, and to take responsibility for our interpretations (Shanks and Tilley 1987a: 47). The method itself should automatically guarantee truth. Now, if we have already argued that archaeological evidence is theory-laden, and that our observations take place in the context of a series of pre-understandings and prejudices which we cannot evade, it makes little sense to attempt to construct a universal epistemology for archaeology. To do so is to implicitly accept the terms of argument of the New Archaeology. If there is no one definitive knowledge of the past, no single methodology can reveal it to us.

This is not necessarily to argue for the methodological anarchy advocated by Feyerabend (1975). We should be rigorous in our procedures, while remaining realistic about what they can and cannot achieve. We need methods which are context-specific, strategically employed, and designed to elicit particular information from particular sets of evidence. The knowledge that we produce will not necessarily be one from which we can generalize. And as Shanks and Tilley (1987b: 6) argue, our methods should be seen as secondary to and derived from social theories, which help us to understand the conditions under which we conduct our investigation. When epistemology assumes the foundational role that it had for the New Archaeology, particular kinds of knowledge claims can come to be disregarded. One of the most important lessons that feminism has taught archaeology is that there are important things to know about the past which simply cannot be tested. Gender, for instance, has often been completely neglected on the grounds that it cannot be empirically 'found' (Wylie 1992).

Interpretation

The New Archaeology saw hypothesis-testing as a means of confounding one's own assumptions about the past, and allowing oneself to be surprised by the evidence. Many archaeologists have now turned to a conception of knowledge informed by hermeneutics, in which whatever questions and tests we use to confront the material are conducted *within* the interpretive process. The 'hermeneutic circle' is not something which we can evade; it does not have an 'outside'. This means that we must always take into account the position of the interpreter, who is the means through which any understanding of a situation is to be achieved. Although there are many who are now happier with the tag 'interpretive archaeology' than with 'post-processualism'

(Shanks and Hodder 1995: 5), there remains some debate over the character of archaeological interpretation. For Hodder (1991a: 11) interpretation is a process in which the past and present constitute one another, and the notion that past and present can enter into a dialogue of sorts is accepted by many (Johnson and Olsen, this volume, Chapter 7). Yet while some understand interpretation to be a process in which past meanings are recovered, others hold that it is a contemporary practice which creates a knowledge that is of and for the present (Shanks and Tilley 1989a: 4).

Interpretation makes sense of the archaeological evidence (Tilley 1993: 10), rendering it comprehensible. 'The interpreting archaeologist fills the gaps in the past, but these gaps are always already there. They are not simply a feature of preservation or inadequate amounts of survey or excavation. Like a metaphor the past requires interpretation' (Shanks and Tilley 1987a: 21). But this leaves open the relationship between observation and interpretation (Hodder 1999: 81). Is interpretation an act which we carry out upon materials that we already know in some sense? Does it add a deeper level of understanding to something that we can already grasp through observation? Or is there an interpretative aspect to our apprehension of things? Martin Heidegger (1962) would have argued that we always come to things with a certain pre-understanding, which enables us to comprehend them *as* something in particular. By this argument there can be no fixed distinction between observational knowledge and interpretation: there is interpretation in all knowing.

Cultural and epistemic relativism

Our knowledge of the past is created in the present, through our involvement with archaeological evidence. Because each of us has a different access to power and knowledge, and has a different set of experiences to draw upon, we will each construct the past in different ways. Our understanding of any past world is contingent and incomplete, but so was that of anyone who occupied those worlds. To be able to grasp the full significance of all aspects of the past, or the present, one would have to be gifted with divine omniscience. These arguments have often been rehearsed over the past twenty years, but they still remain troubling to many archaeologists. Aside from the presumed lack of a definitive methodology, it is this denial of a single and entirely knowable past which has provoked the most voluble criticisms of post-processual archaeologies. If there is no definitive past, it is argued, then anything goes: there is nothing to stop us saying anything we like about prehistory (see Yoffee and Sherratt 1993a, for example). UFO enthusiasts and Nazi archaeologists have an equal right to present their own interpretations of the past. So post-processual archaeologies are charged with *relativism*.

Broadly speaking, relativism involves a belief that there are no universal criteria that we can use to compare or judge between values, customs, beliefs and interpretations. However, there are two distinct forms of relativism, both of which can be identified within archaeology. The first is cultural relativism, often associated with the work of the anthropologist Franz Boas. Cultural relativists hold that it is inappropriate to evaluate other societies (including those of the past) according to our own standards, since these have themselves been constructed within a particular set of historical conditions. Ian Hodder's position in *Reading the Past* (1986) comes close to a cultural relativism. Hodder proposes that frameworks of meaning are

implicated in all aspects of human life, so that no action can be separated from its cultural context. These frameworks of meaning are not universal, and as a consequence the same act conducted in two different societies may not carry the same significance (*ibid.*, 118). It is therefore impossible to compare the subsistence practices, funerary rites or metalworking techniques of any two communities in abstraction from the systems of meaning which render them comprehensible.

More radical still is epistemological relativism which questions the universality of our knowledge of the world and the means by which we acquire it. Epistemological relativists may be entirely sceptical concerning the existence of universal truths, the possibility of objectivity and value-freedom, and even the existence of a definitive reality, as opposed to a series of equally valid interpretations of existence. However, it is not the case that all forms of epistemological relativism doubt the existence of a real world 'out there'. For instance, Richard Rorty (1989: 5) has suggested that our real problem lies in imagining that we can capture and express the world in language, no matter how real that world may be. The notion of truth as it is commonly understood relies on the belief that statements or sentences can be made to correspond to things in the world. This correspondence theory of truth requires that the world out there should be made up of sentence-like entities which are waiting around for us to label them with words. Having eventually 'labelled' everything, we shall have acquired a satisfactory understanding of reality. Rorty presents an alternative perspective: we use language to describe the world, and our descriptions never entirely correspond with reality. Nor do they ever exhaust all that might be said about any particular phenomenon. He argues that scientists and scholars do not tell truths about things in the world, so much as use language to re-describe things. The language that we have at our disposal is an accident of history, so the notion that our description of some phenomenon is more 'truthful' than that of people living in another time is a nonsense. But what we can do is to attempt new and novel re-descriptions of the world, which allow us a more profound understanding of things.

In *Re-Constructing Archaeology* (1987a), Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley adopt a form of epistemological relativism, which serves as the basis for a critique of the New Archaeology's avowed scientific objectivity. Shanks and Tilley set out to demonstrate the extent to which the whole philosophy and methodology of the New Archaeology were dominated by the values of contemporary capitalism. The New Archaeology had sought to turn archaeology into a science, but in the process it had come to associate scientific reason with method, with simply following a given set of rules of procedure. Here, truth is connected with objectivity, with being free from biases. Thus the aim of the scientist is to remove all potential forms of distortion from their observations, so that he or she can see the world as it really is. Shanks and Tilley's case is that this kind of value-freedom is an illusion, and that facts and values are always intimately bound up with each other. Their illustration of this point involves the evaluation of a series of the supposedly value-free, objective, scientific methodologies of processual archaeology, showing that each embodies a series of contemporary values. In the first place, the New Archaeology presented 'facts' as if they were isolated and context-free pieces of information, passed from hand to hand like the alienated commodities that circulate in a capitalist economy. Similarly, cultural evolution judges different human communities according to their adaptive

success, their efficiency in material terms. Systems theory relies upon conservative values of persistence and homeostasis, and denies that internal conflict or contradiction can ever bring about positive change. Mathematics and quantification in archaeology purport to boil archaeological evidence down into a set of neutral and easily understood patterns, but in practice they dehumanize the past, reducing it to malleable figures in the same way that contemporary capitalism reduces men and women to mere statistics.

However, Shanks and Tilley reject the charge that relativism disables intellectual inquiry by affording equal validity to all interpretations (1987a: 60). One can be pluralistic without being uncritical, and different perspectives can enter into a productive debate. It may be that their truthfulness or falsity cannot always be established, but this is not the only basis for distinguishing between competing accounts of the past. We can make judgements on the basis of the ethical and political values which different archaeologies embody. This, of course, raises a series of further problems.

Archaeology and political commitment

Shanks and Tilley's position is that we can discriminate between different versions of the past, but that the only way of doing so is on the basis of the value systems which lie behind them (1987b: 195). While some archaeology may be written as overt propaganda, the real problem is that we always bring a series of prejudicial assumptions to our study of the past, of which we may not be remotely aware. To be objective is a practical impossibility, since it is our prejudices and our interests which motivate us to act at all, but the aim of a critical archaeology is to make us aware of the reasons why we study what we do. This cannot be achieved by attempting to achieve a position of neutrality, erasing ourselves from the scene of knowledge production. On the contrary, we should conduct our inquiry on the basis of an explicit and honest commitment to a distinct set of values. A similar argument is presented by Leone, Potter and Shackel (this volume, Chapter 27). But significantly they write from a more orthodox Marxist perspective, which lacks the hermeneutic element found in Shanks and Tilley's work. The consequence of this is that Leone, Potter and Shackel consider that a critical archaeology can produce a more secure and even objective knowledge of the past, by removing sources of bias. Shanks and Tilley would presumably object that while critique can provide us with a superior understanding, it is none the less a contemporary knowledge, which must remain radically incomplete.

Drawing as they do on the social sciences, it is unsurprising that many recent varieties of archaeological thought have been alert to the political significance of the past. Yet there is a further point of argument that divides these approaches in a fundamental way. Many authorities are willing to recognize that archaeology is conducted in a political context (for example, Kohl and Fawcett 1995). However, rather fewer are ready to concede that archaeology is itself a political practice. This point of view is ultimately derived from the work of Antonio Gramsci (1971), who argued that all forms of cultural production are implicated in a 'war of position', in which conflicting visions of reality compete in order to secure the support and compliance of social groups. Archaeology can support or dispute conceptions of human nature, or constructions of ethnic and national identity, or accounts of the universality of particular

social arrangements. As such it is directly embedded in the political field, and the statements that archaeologists make are always potentially politically active. This is all the more important in a global and multicultural context, where the utterances of archaeologists have direct implications for minority communities, in terms of access to land-rights, sacred sites and human remains (Zimmerman 1989).

Difference and alterity

One of the principal ways in which the past can be political lies in its difference from the present. The recognition that even the most mundane everyday activities have changed over time, and *have a history*, serves to undermine our conviction that the way that we are in the present is the way that humans normally are (Foucault 1984). If nothing about human beings is changeless and eternal, then political change can be recognized as a real possibility: we are not restricted by the fixity of 'human nature'. For instance, a more equitable future seems possible when we recognize that acquisitiveness and the profit motive are not written into the human constitution. Accordingly, a concern with the alterity of the past has been an abiding theme within post-processual archaeologies (see Hill, this volume, Chapter 25).

On the other hand, some authors have been concerned to draw attention to the potential drawbacks of conceiving the past as Other. Such a past can become an exotic fantasy onto which we project our own desires and fears (Hodder 1999: 154). Ian Hodder has also raised the interesting question of how we can ever recognize the difference of the past if it is entirely produced in the present (this volume, Chapter 6). One answer to this would be that while our understanding of the past is a contemporary interpretation, the existence of archaeological remains in the present alerts us to the otherness of past ways of being. In the act of interpretation we come to terms with this alterity and subdue it, but the process is one in which our understanding of ourselves in relation to the past has been challenged.

Cross-cultural generalization and historicism

In one of the most important and influential critiques of processualism, Hodder (this volume, Chapter 3) questioned the utility of the comparative method as it is employed in archaeology. Cross-cultural generalizations were habitually used as the basis for establishing universal laws of culture, but in practice they had the effect of erasing variability, reducing humanity to a set of standardized themes (adaptation, competition, social hierarchy, subsistence practice). Hodder argued that archaeologies which took symbolism and meaning seriously should look back for inspiration to a previous generation of British archaeologists, like Gordon Childe, Grahame Clark, Glyn Daniel and Stuart Piggott. These prehistorians had emphasized the historical contingency of human life, and had understood artefacts to be material manifestations of ideas. While their approach had been 'normative' in presenting material culture as the product of internalized traditions, more sophisticated theoretical frameworks could actually build upon their work to address the specific historical and cultural contexts in which artefacts were produced.

Hodder's advocacy of historicism was consistent with his cultural relativism, and most post-processual archaeologies have followed suit in emphasizing the specificity of contingent circumstances. However, while the uniqueness of cultures is generally

agreed upon, there is sometimes a willingness to accept that human universals underlie the construction of these cultures. Hodder, for example, argues that universal principles of meaning allow people to be socialized, and enable them to come to terms with the social world (1986: 124). Similarly, Tilley (1994: 12) discusses fundamental human bodily attunements which facilitate the experience of place and landscape. Do these propositions represent cross-cultural generalizations? We could argue that *being human* is not so much the characteristic of an entity which possesses a series of attributes, as an activity, something which one does. This being the case we could say that being human does not rely upon any foundations or essences, it simply takes a particular form. It involves, for instance, a concern over one's own being (Heidegger 1962). But it is clear that post-processual archaeologists are not agreed on the question of how much is held in common by human beings in different places and times.

Totalization

Just as the generalizing approaches of the New Archaeology have been criticized for homogenizing human diversity, so the system-level analyses of processualism have been attacked on the grounds of their remoteness from human experience. It is undeniably the case that people are commonly embedded in social relationships which extend over enormous geographical distances, and that certain historical processes are pan-continental in scale (Sherratt 1995). However, we should also recognize that these processes were lived through at a more intimate level (Barrett 1989a: 306). Human action and knowledgeability are localized, and it is more likely that we will comprehend historical processes by investigating the ways in which they were worked through 'on the ground' than by instituting a systemic explanation which bears down from above. Moreover, as Foucault (1984) suggests, the willingness to deal in totalized accounts of the past suggests an affinity with totalitarian politics. If we are comfortable for the people of the past to disappear into vast systemic processes, perhaps we will show equally little concern for the disappearances of people in the present.

These arguments have some affinity with the rejection of a unified archaeology with a single methodology that we have already discussed (Tilley, this volume, Chapter 5). If there is no singular past, then there may be many stories which are worth listening to, including those of the dispossessed, the poor, the slaves, the illiterate and the insane. One of the great strengths of archaeology is that it can use material evidence as a means of addressing these 'other histories', and allowing other voices to come to the fore. In this way, archaeology becomes an agent of 'history from the bottom up'. None the less, it is worth suggesting that, although we may reject the idea of a totalized understanding of a given period, we should not allow our accounts of the past to become so parochial that they are unable to contest the large-scale histories and prehistories of conventional archaeology.

Context

The reaction against generalization and the growing emphasis on the localized conditions which render material culture meaningful lead one towards a consideration of the notion of context. For Ian Hodder, 'reading' an item of material culture is

achieved by placing it into its context, the 'totality of the relevant dimensions of variation around any one object' (1986: 139). Just as words have multiple meanings but 'make sense' in the context of sentences, so material symbols can be better understood when we encounter them in a particular physical setting. Context is thus a relational concept, and Hodder stresses that each object can be part of the context of other objects (1991a: 15). He argues that the context of an artefact is composed of a number of dimensions of variability: time, space, depositional unit and typology (Hodder 1986: 131). But is the *archaeological* context of a thing (the pit, floor, hearth or ditch from which it is retrieved) comparable with its *historical* or *cultural* context? Or is it more appropriate to say that any artefact will have a variety of different kinds of context, each of which casts a different kind of light on the thing?

Hodder's focus on context serves to define a way of working in which the myriad potential meanings of material things become restricted. The symbolic significance of an object ceases to be arbitrary when it is bounded within its appropriate context (Hodder, this volume, Chapter 6). As a number of archaeologists have pointed out, this leaves open the question of how we define and limit the context itself (Yates, this volume, Chapter 10; Tilley 1993: 9). For Yates, context is an arbitrary means of trying to halt the limitless signifying capacity of material things, while Tilley stresses that the interpreting archaeologist is integral to the context of the artefact. Context is therefore not simply a bounded entity set in the past, but an aspect of the relationship between the past and the present. The notion of a contextual archaeology has been one of the most important developments of the post-processual era, but it may be that we should not think of context as a fixed container that surrounds an object. Instead, we might choose to say that the relationships in which an artefact is embedded are heterogeneous and regioned. The place in which a thing is found, the other things alongside it, the designs with which it is decorated are all places where we can begin our exploration of its significance, but they do not exhaust its potential meanings.

Past meanings, past minds?

In an exponentially growing archaeological literature concerned with interpretation, cognition, symbolism, text and context it is inevitable that the issue of meaning must loom large. What do we mean by meaning? Arguably, two different answers could be given to this question. One is to say that any item of material culture has two kinds of meaning. First, it has a prosaic, denotative or material meaning, connected with its function, use and appearance. An axe *means* a thing for chopping wood; a chair *means* a thing for sitting on. Over and above this the artefact may have a secondary meaning, which is symbolic or connotative. So the axe may be a symbol of exchange relations and gender identity, or the chair may be a throne and carry connotations of royalty and state power. I would suggest that this is the conception of meaning which is most commonly employed within contemporary archaeology. But alternatively, we might say that the meaning of a thing is its significance, the way in which we come to understand it. In this formulation the distinction between primary and secondary meaning breaks down. Recognizing a throne *as* a thing to sit on has no necessary priority over recognizing it *as* a symbol of royalty. The two are entirely bound up with each other in the way in which the chair reveals itself to us.

Ian Hodder has argued that the attempt to interpret archaeological evidence necessarily involves trying to get at the meanings inside the minds of past people (1999: 72). By complete contrast, John Barrett suggests that: 'Instead of attempting to read back from modern archaeological remains to meanings in the past, a better proposal is to explore the implications of particular material conditions for the structuring of specified social relations' (Barrett 1987b: 471). In other words, since the minds of dead people are no longer available to us for scrutiny, we cannot address meaning at all. Instead, we should consider the material mechanisms which made the production of meaning possible, in different ways at different times. Tim Yates (this volume, Chapter 10) objects that this perspective attempts to place materiality outside the condition of meaning. It is as if meaning is an addition to a set of material conditions which we can already know in a transparent way. Yates maintains that as soon as we encounter the material traces of the past, they are meaningful to us. But this meaning is a contemporary one, which cannot be identical with past meanings.

Hodder's search for a past meaning that was contained in the heads of past people seems to me to rely upon the mind/body dichotomy. Meaning is something that exists in the rarefied sphere of thought. By contrast, Barrett wishes to evict meaning from the material world altogether. These are perhaps the two sides of the same coin. My own argument would be that when we encounter the material remains of a past world we engage in a work of reanimating a technology of meaning. We enter into a relationship with that past world because the material things themselves were integral to a past way of life. But we do this in the present. We are not recovering past meanings, but creating new meanings which result from the meeting of past and present.

Ideology

The concept of ideology was of critical importance within early manifestations of post-processual archaeology, as it provided a means of challenging the New Archaeology's belief that archaeological evidence amounts to a reflection of past social relationships (see Miller and Tilley 1984b). The origin of the concept as it is now commonly understood lies with Marx and Engels, in their book *The German Ideology* (1970). In that work, Marx and Engels were interested in the way in which history had come to be written by the German idealists, and in particular Ludwig Feuerbach. Their argument was that this school of historians tended to reproduce the conception of the world that prevailed amongst the dominant classes. Marx and Engels suggested that in any historical epoch, the dominant set of ideas will be those of the ruling class. The population at large is provided with a set of understandings which are taken as fact, and their compliance allows society to reproduce itself without a constant state of class violence existing. That is to say, if the lower orders were aware of their own real interests, and of the way in which they were constantly being exploited by the dominant group, they would tend to struggle against that domination.

Thus, each class that comes to power throughout history tends to represent its own sectional interests in ideal form, as a set of unquestionable and eternal truths that constitute the only universally valid ideas. Because the rest of the community accepts these ideas, their understanding of the world becomes a warped and partial one. Marx uses the image of a camera obscura as a metaphor for this situation: reality is viewed

through a lens which inverts it. Since people gain a distorted impression of their own interests and their relationship to the material conditions of existence, they tend to comply with the desires of the ruling class.

As a number of writers have pointed out, Marx and Engels' account of ideology is one which allows space for two different interpretations of the term (Callinicos 1983: 129; Therborn 1980: 3). Firstly, there is what has been described as a *pragmatic* conception of ideology. This suggests that ideology is a *product of lived experience*. Because different people have different experiences of the world, they tend to conceptualize it in rather different ways. Their aspirations and values will vary from person to person, and especially between people whose economic circumstances are different. Simply because different classes live under different material conditions, they will have distinct understandings of the way the world works. Moreover, it will tend to be the understandings of the dominant class that dominate the consciousness of society as a whole.

On the other hand, there is what we might call an *epistemological* view of ideology. According to this way of thinking, ideology is seen as 'false consciousness', a distinct set of *untruths* about the world which are concocted by the dominant class and imposed on the rest of the community. Ideology, then, becomes a pack of lies designed to keep the workers in their place. From birth, the working classes are subjected to a range of propaganda which tells them how to behave, and which emphasizes the value of submitting their will to the common good. These untruths should be distinguished from the real conditions in which people live, and they serve to hide reality from them. They are also quite distinct from the kind of knowledge that is produced by science, which is objective and untainted by ideology. This kind of understanding tends to represent Marxism as a kind of science of social and economic relations, which seeks to expose and undermine ideological notions by building up a true and undistorted picture of the world.

It was a more sophisticated version of this epistemological conception of ideology that was presented by Louis Althusser in the 1960s. In his article 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses' (1971b), Althusser asks why ideology should exist at all, by considering the process of social reproduction. If a social formation is to maintain its existence from one generation to the next, both material resources and positions of authority must be reproduced. This requires that the labour force must continue to accept its position, and must submit to the established rules of order. So from birth, members of the working class have to be placed in a position of not wishing to question their lot. Althusser contends that societies, or sets of social relations of production, are like great faceless machines which require people to insert themselves into particular roles and positions in order to allow the whole to function. As he puts it: 'the structure of the relations of production determines the places and functions occupied and adopted by the agents of production, who are never anything more than the occupants of these places' (Althusser and Balibar 1970: 180). So capitalism, or any other mode of production, requires that people take up positions on production lines, or in offices, in which of course they are exploited and their labour power is sucked out of them.

The role of ideology is to present a different view of all of this. People *may* only exist to be a cog in a vast process of production, but it is only through adopting these

positions, says Althusser, that people gain their sense of self-identity. Ideology makes people believe that the world around them exists for their benefit, rather than that they exist to service the productive process. Ideology sets up an imaginary picture of the way that the world is, and this serves as the basis for people's actions. What this means is that ideology is not just a set of ephemeral ideas, but is a set of real relationships in the world, even if they are in reality articulated to a vision of the real interests and material conditions of people which is illusory. Such an ideological understanding of real relationships is produced and promoted by the dominant class. The fundamental point here is that if people who live under capitalism are to become human beings at all, they have to accept and adopt this ideology. Because ideology infiltrates and permeates all aspects of our culture, it is simply not possible to gain an understanding of the world without ingesting a whole set of ideological notions in the process. Principal among these is the idea that each of us is a free, rational, decision-making individual, who is in control of their own life and is free to do what they like, rather than a mere node in a network, a bearer of relations of production. So ideology actually gives each of us our place in the world.

This notion that ideology is composed not of ethereal ideas but of real relationships is emphasized by Althusser's insistence that ideology exists in and through human institutions. Thus, in modern capitalist society there are a whole series of Ideological State Institutions, through which ideological messages are conveyed from the dominant to the subordinate classes. At each stage in their emergence as distinct human beings, people are constantly bombarded with these messages regarding what is and what is not acceptable behaviour: in schools, the media, public information, the workplace, and so on. Where the Ideological State Apparatuses can achieve the compliance of the workforce without violence, the Repressive State Apparatuses (the police and the army) can be held in reserve. In pre-capitalist society, Althusser suggests that it is the church which serves as the major Ideological Agency, producing an ideology which is concerned with the relationships between the vassal, the lord, the king, and God: an imaginary set of relations which ensures a compliant peasantry. This emphasis of Althusser's on religion as a form of ideology leads on to the use that prehistorians have made of his ideas, in claiming that ritual practice can be seen as a form of ideology (Shanks and Tilley 1982).

As we have noted, the use of the concept of ideology made archaeologists aware that, as a form of signification, material culture could be mobilized to present a distorted image of social reality, or to support sectional interpretations of the world. More recently, some archaeologists have begun to express reservations about the theory of ideology. Some, like Barrett (1994: 77) follow Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980) in doubting the capability of structures of ideas to 'dupe' entire populations and secure their compliance. Instead, ideologies may serve as a means of enhancing the solidarity of distinct social groups. Others agree with Foucault (1980a) that the notion of ideology relies upon a distinction between truth and ideological falsehood. Quite apart from the problems inherent in identifying and verifying a single and definitive truth, it is arguable that any form of knowledge (irrespective of its truth value) is potentially active in power relationships. Thus we should concern ourselves less with demonstrating the falsity of ideological messages, and more with how forms of knowledge serve to promote particular interests.

The 'active individual'

As Lynn Meskell has recently observed, 'accessing individuals in the past' has been a recurrent theme for post-processual archaeologies (1998a: 363). But again, there is little unanimity over the possibility or desirability of this objective. For entirely laudable reasons, one of the early criticisms that was made of processual archaeology was that it had lost sight of human beings in its pursuit of adaptive systems and long-term change (Hodder 1986: 6). Personal creativity and intentionality were underplayed. As a corrective, a focus on the active individual was proposed, stressing the dynamic role that people have in historical processes through their strategic use of material culture. This approach was underpinned by the use of the 'practice theories' of Bourdieu and Giddens. According to these perspectives, social institutions are presented as being reproduced through the continual exercise of human agency. It is through practice that structures are carried forward, yet agency is constituted structurally and draws on various resources in order to be effective. However, it is arguable whether 'individual' and 'society' can be conflated with 'structure' and 'agency' (see Johnson, this volume, Chapter 12). John Barrett has complained that Hodder's concern with the active individual actually decontextualizes human beings, by presenting them as entirely free agents who can create social practices in a way that seems to be untrammelled by cultural tradition or processes of subjectification (1987b: 471).

A very different point of view was represented by Shanks and Tilley (1987b: 65), who pursued a series of post-structuralist arguments, under which human subjects are not considered to be the authors of texts and material culture, but the 'effects' of processes of signification. That is to say, language and material culture are not the product or prerogative of any single person: it is the cultural field which constitutes us as beings of a particular kind. In this sense human beings are 'produced' by their cultural traditions, and it follows from this that they may be produced in radically different ways in different times and places. This suggests the possibility of an 'archaeology of subjectification', exploring the mechanisms through which identity and agency are constructed in different epochs.

Of course, if the character of 'being human' is not fixed but culturally variable, it is open to question whether the notion of the active individual is not itself historically situated. Marilyn Strathern (1988) has demonstrated that for many Melanesian communities the notion of a bounded and self-contained individual with an internal world of subjectivity is virtually incomprehensible. Melanesians more often conceive of themselves as 'dividuals', who are at once embedded in relationships of kinship and obligation, and composed of body parts and substances which can be disaggregated. Arguably, the concept of the individual is not a neutral synonym for 'person' or 'subject', but is a way of thinking about human identity which is specific to western modernity. Since the Renaissance, and more thoroughly since the Enlightenment, Western thought has prioritized the exercise of free will and reason by a political subject who is autonomous from cultural tradition and social ties. Indeed, such individuals are not imagined to be the products of societies, but form societies through a contract to their mutual advantage. 'The individual' is at once an ideal to which only some members of society can hope to approximate (male, white, educated, wealthy heterosexuals) and a kind of fantasy. For human beings do not

come into the world fully equipped to deal with reality. Language, cultural attunements, and habitual social skills are all the prerogatives of the community, and unless we grow up within such a community we cannot be human at all.

Postmodernity

The suggestion has often been made that in some way post-processual archaeologies have an affinity with postmodernity or postmodernism (e.g. Bintliff 1991; Hodder 1990b; Walsh 1990). This is another point over which I feel that there is some level of disagreement. For some, post-processualism is simply the manifestation of postmodernism within the discipline of archaeology. For others, the two phenomena are entirely unrelated. I would like to suggest that the relationship is a more complicated one than either of these views would allow, and that much of the difficulty rests with the variety of different meanings that can be attached to the term 'postmodern'. This requires a little explanation.

Perhaps the best place to begin is with the contrasting term, modernity. While we are accustomed to using the word 'modern' as a synonym for 'contemporary' or 'up-to-date', in philosophical terms it applies more properly to an era in the history of the Western world that began with the decline of feudalism. Modernity has been the age of capitalism, of mercantilism, of European expansion across the globe, of the emergence of nation-states, and of industrialization in manufacturing. It has also been an era of empires, racism, genocide, and of the industrialization of warfare. All these phenomena were underwritten by a series of what Jean-François Lyotard (1984) refers to as 'metanarratives'. By this he means the understanding that some great, long-term pattern underlies the whole of human history, which can be expressed in a story-like form. These metanarratives would include the rise of the West, the emancipation of the human spirit, universal progress, the development of economies, the growth of democracy, and so forth. As a consequence, modernity has involved a widespread faith in the notion that everything we do contributes to a greater design, which will ultimately lead to a better world. Along with this set of metanarratives came a concern with origins. While the Greeks and Romans had discussed the concepts of evolution and progress, the medieval world was more accustomed to the belief that human capabilities and achievements were in decline, and that a Golden Age had existed at some time in the past (Trigger 1989b: 31). The notion of social evolution, from savagery to civilization, or from stone to bronze and to iron ages only re-emerged in the modern era. Archaeology as a discipline is a product of modernity, and one of its principal tasks has been to investigate the origins of the modern nation-states by tracing the migrations of tribes and races. Similarly, in more recent times, archaeology has concerned itself with the origins of modern humans, the origins of agriculture, the origins of urbanism, and so on, creating a series of metanarratives of its own.

The sets of ideas which most thoroughly characterized Western modernity were those that were associated with the 'Scientific Revolution' of the seventeenth century, and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth. The former was based on the understanding that the universe has a definable structure which obeys a series of invariant laws, and that this structure can be identified through human experience. In other words, we can discover how nature works through scientific experiment. The Enlightenment

sought to transfer this vision of an ordered and predictable universe into human society. If the medieval period had been dominated by superstition and religion, the Enlightenment promoted a secular society in which God, and the avoidance of sin, had been replaced by Reason (Gray 1995: 145). What was suggested was that, as superstition lost its grip on humanity, the human will was gradually freed. By acting freely and rationally, people would create an ideal society – and indeed René Descartes argued that a person who acted freely and in a fully rational way would be incapable of sin (Carroll 1993: 122). So the moral void that was left behind by the removal of God from the centre of the universe was filled by a series of moral codes, based upon Reason and human nature (Bauman 1992; 1993: 25). This concept of human nature was of cardinal importance to the Enlightenment project. What was implied was that just as the world of Nature had a fixed character that could be determined by the natural sciences, so Man (and the masculine is intentional) had a nature which was universal and which could be known. It was with the Enlightenment that we can identify the foundation of a series of Sciences of Man, which worked to explain human nature: sciences like economics and statistics, human biology and anatomy, and linguistics (Foucault 1970).

Over the past half century there have been growing indications that modernity, as a human project and as an experience of the world, is drawing to a close. These have taken a number of different forms. First, Lyotard has written of an ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’ (1984: xxiv). By this he means that in the Western nations there is now little faith in the idea that history can be understood as a unified and directional process leading towards the betterment of humankind. In an era which has seen the battle of the Somme, the Holocaust, Hiroshima, the Khmer Rouge and Bosnia it is very difficult to place any belief in progress. Reason, and technology, seem just as capable of providing us with nightmares as with a perfect world. This need not imply that human existence is hopeless, but it does at least suggest that the world that we live in is infinitely complex, and travelling in a number of different directions at once. There is no one historical narrative: there are many interwoven histories. The postmodern experience involves a sense that there is no one centre defining everything that is going on in the world: it is no longer the case that a global empire can be ruled from a single city.

The second process that we could point to is a fundamental change in the character of capitalist economics. In the early part of the twentieth century, industrial capitalism reached a height of sophistication with what has been called ‘Fordism’, after Henry Ford’s motor company. Fordism involved a production-line system within massive factory buildings, in which every worker had their place, and probably had a job for life. The company provided them with health care, food in a canteen, paid holidays, pensions, child-care, training and sometimes even housing. In various ways, the worker’s whole life could be bound up with the company. The company was located in a certain place, and the workers formed a community living close by the factory, or the mine, or the mill. The paradigm of this development would be Cadbury’s chocolate factory and company housing at Bournville in Birmingham. The past few decades have seen this pattern gradually eclipsed by what has come to be known as post-Fordism, or flexible accumulation (Aglietta 1980). Under this regime, the larger companies have increasingly become multinational, and are not associated with a single

product. They are not located in a single place, and they periodically move their operations around the world as labour costs change. Jobs tend to be short-term and insecure, and markets are international and deregulated. Workers are told that they have to be flexible, accept the going rate, re-skill themselves periodically, and expect to have a series of different jobs in their lifetime (Murray 1989).

All of this is deeply inter-connected with a third tendency, which has been described as the annihilation of space through time (Harvey 1989). This is an apt description of the communications revolution. Over the past two centuries, methods of transportation have changed dramatically, so that people and goods can be moved around the globe at hitherto unthinkable speeds. More recently, however, the speed at which information can be transferred from one place to another has become faster still. In consequence, money, stocks and shares can change hands at terrific speeds, so that we now have a digitized global economy of capital flows. Importantly, this is an economy which the state simply cannot control, as the British Conservative government found to its cost on 'Black Wednesday' in 1992, when billions of pounds were lost in the attempt to prop up the value of sterling on world markets. Speculators and multinational corporations can now move money from place to place at will, ruining regional economies in the process. Economics are no longer bound to locations, and this has begun to have a corrosive effect on the nation-state, the diagnostic political form of modernity. At the same time, we have also seen the state eroded from within by new nationalisms in Eastern Europe, indigenous movements in the post-colonial world, and regional movements in Western Europe (Friedman 1989). The old certainties of economics and political identity are gradually crumbling away.

Another effect of the communications revolution has been the proliferation of television, film and advertising. Throughout the world people are constantly being bombarded with images and messages. Where once people would have had an experience which was bounded by the world that physically surrounded them, now we have a massively expanded knowledge of the world, and yet it is a superficial knowledge generated by electronic images. These are what Jean Baudrillard (1988) calls 'simulacra', experiences that are not real, but consist only of images. These experiences have no real depth, they do not really touch us, and yet they make up the fabric of our existence. In a curious way this recalls Althusser's (1971b) discussion of ideology, which he describes as a real and lived relationship with an imagined set of conditions. Just as we have an electronic financial economy, so we now also have a world-wide economy of images, continually circulating and bouncing off one another, creating new meanings as they go. And of course, we have the cyberspace of the Internet, in which people communicate and form relationships without any physical encounter. All of this creates a depthless existence of images and flows, in which our sense of space and time is gradually eroded. On the one hand, everywhere is increasingly the same as everywhere else – everywhere has shopping malls, McDonald's, Coke and *Baywatch*. The ultimate postmodern experience is the food plaza in a shopping centre, where you can eat dishes from all over the world – and they all taste the same. Because nothing has any depth, because nothing has any attachment to place or tradition, everything is simply a commodity that circulates in the global market. But on the other hand, we crave distinctiveness and authenticity,

and these are provided for us in the form of Viking Yorvik, Catherine Cookson Country and the Millennium Dome.

This brings us back to the relationship between the past and the present, and the kind of archaeology that can exist in a postmodern world. Clearly, if our sense of space and time is being diminished, and if images and experiences are increasingly part of a global economy, we have to be very concerned about the development of the heritage industry. If heritage is to be marketed as a leisure pursuit, is it not simply a part of the general commodification of existence? Has our relationship with the past changed, so that instead of a set of traditions that are passed down to us and which give us an authentic place in the world, we simply have a set of images – of cave men, Roman soldiers, knights in armour and penitent monks – which can help to provide an instant fix of gratification? This is certainly the lesson that some people have drawn from postmodern architecture. Postmodern buildings often use elements and details drawn from different periods in a mix-and-match fashion, deliberately clashing references and meanings to striking effect. To some this is deeply worrying, because it suggests that instead of creating something new that genuinely reflects the present, this architecture simply reworks the past. It is an architecture of ‘decorated sheds’ (Harries 1993). In the same way, we could argue that our culture of heritage is a symptom of a world in which history has ended, and all that is left for us is to draw on groundless images of the past and re-present them endlessly. In this way of thinking, the postmodern era represents nothing less than the final victory of market capitalism, in which the future holds nothing for us but new TV series, new fashions and new kinds of fast food.

This seems to me to be an unduly pessimistic point of view. It relies on the understanding that postmodernity is a single process that can be readily grasped in its entirety (Strohmeyer and Hannah 1992). There has been a tendency to view the cultural and intellectual developments of the past few decades as a mere reflection or product of economic changes (Harvey 1989). In these terms, post-processual archaeologies are a side-effect of the postmodern condition. Like other post-modernisms, they might be expected to deal in pastiche, play, irony and self-conscious intellectualism (Bintliff 1991). What this view overlooks is that the kinds of thought that are conventionally labelled as postmodernist are in many cases the inheritors of a long tradition in the human sciences, which has consistently developed a *critique of modernity*. This tradition has been extremely diverse, both in philosophical and political terms. It has ranged from the romanticism of Hölderlin to the Christian existentialism of Kierkegaard (Blackham 1952), the hermeneutics of Gadamer and the hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger, to the conservatism of Spengler and the Western Marxism of Horkheimer and Adorno (1972).

I would suggest that any connection between post-processual archaeologies and postmodernity can ultimately be traced to the entity that they have set out to criticize: the New Archaeology. It is no exaggeration to suggest that the New Archaeology was identical with the Enlightenment project. Like the Enlightenment, the New Archaeology emphasized reason, and optimistically believed that there was no aspect of the past which was inaccessible to scientific method. Like the Enlightenment, the New Archaeology stressed the universality of humankind, and valued quantitative rather than qualitative understandings of reality. This reality was singular, and could

be addressed from a singular point of view, whose relative superiority was self-evident. And like the Enlightenment, the New Archaeology was unwilling to accept that other ways of understanding might eventually come to eclipse or supplement it.

Post-processual archaeologies should not be expected to present a uniform view of the past and how we hope to understand it. Indeed, the most important development of the past twenty years has been the collapse of the belief that there can be a single royal road to knowing the past. The post-processual era has not seen the emergence of a new kind of archaeology, so much as a new kind of discourse within archaeology.

PART I

**ON THE CHARACTER
OF ARCHAEOLOGY**

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INTRODUCTION

Although many authors are agreed that some fundamental change has overtaken archaeology since the early 1980s, there is very little consensus over the character of this change. As a result, two inter-related questions have preoccupied archaeologists throughout this period. First, what kind of an archaeology do we want to practise? As the discipline adopts new conceptual frameworks and abandons older ones, the kinds of knowledge it produces and the issues that it investigates are irrevocably changed. But this leads on to a more fundamental question: what kind of an enterprise is archaeology? Hitherto, the nature of archaeological inquiry has largely been taken for granted. The presumed objective existence of something called 'the archaeological record' has tended to limit debate to methodological questions: how do we squeeze a knowledge of the past out of the evidence? It is arguable that one of the more significant developments in recent years has been the questioning of the status of the 'evidence', the 'record' itself. For as long as material things were considered to be a passive record of past human action the vision of archaeology as a search for a key to translate the record could be sustained. But the growing recognition that material culture had an active role to play in human social life, and even that material things were intrinsic to social relationships, has meant that an exclusive focus on method and technique could no longer be upheld. Our relationship with our object of study is increasingly 'up for grabs', and this has called for a reconsideration of exactly what it is that we do when we do archaeology. The chapters in Part I present a series of quite different arguments concerning the material world and its investigation, but each of them opens up a range of new possibilities for understanding the past.

One aspect of this re-evaluation has been the outright rejection of certain aspects of processual archaeology. In his contribution, Ian Hodder points to the way in which functionalist thought has imposed a series of limitations on what can and cannot be discussed within the social sciences. By concentrating on relations between population, resources and ecology, functionalism precludes any consideration of meaning, agency and creativity, and promotes a conservative outlook which only values social change as a reaction to external pressures. Moreover, the processual emphasis on explanation prescribes a form of reasoning in which the world can be reduced to a series of separate variables. In opposition to this John Barrett argues here for an approach which emphasizes relationships rather than entities. Our world is

composed of social and ecological relationships, from which distinct entities emerge (Strathern 1996). Finally, Christopher Tilley points to the idealism of positivist archaeologies which imagine that we can gain an understanding of the past by simply collecting an ever-growing mountain of observations on material traces that exist in the present. All of these perspectives are couched in critical terms, but in each case the effect is to extend the possibilities open to archaeological interpretation.

If the rote-learning of methods of inquiry and the lawlike explanations of functionalism are no longer viable, interest has increasingly come to focus on the intellectual content and origins of the arguments that we make about the past. If much of the initial inspiration for new conceptions of material culture was drawn from structuralism, this has meant that archaeologists have needed to become accustomed to quite advanced philosophical debate in order to assess its strengths and weaknesses. In turn, a growing acquaintance with a wider range of literature in philosophy and the social sciences has spawned a series of new debates. These have touched on the desirability of totalizing grand theories and the appropriate scale of analysis, and the nature of human history. Perhaps most important of all has been the increasing recognition of archaeology as a cultural product, something which is constructed in the present within given political and cultural circumstances. This is essentially the point which Tilley makes when he insists on the materiality of archaeological practice. Archaeologists and their evidence exist alongside each other in a material world, and the degree of disengagement which would be required to ensure scientific objectivity is a practical impossibility. As Tilley goes on to argue, the consequence of this is that we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of claiming that what we write about the past is the dispassionate product of scientific procedure. On the contrary, we have to take responsibility for our accounts of the past, and hope to understand the influences and prejudices which encourage us to write in the way that we do.

In an extended meditation on the consequences of recognizing archaeology as a contemporary production, Shanks and McGuire employ the metaphor of craft. For them, archaeology is a labour of mind and body which employs theories and raw materials in order to create a form of knowledge that is politically active. As they note, the notion that the past may be 'crafted' in the present may be troubling for some, but this makes it no less real. Describing archaeology draws attention to the various skills which it employs, and which are passed from person to person in various kinds of apprenticeship. Moreover, it acknowledges that archaeologists represent a community of practitioners, in the field and in the academy, who share a vocabulary and a series of habits of working. It is this image of archaeology as the practice of a community which offers an optimistic vision for the future. As Tilley suggests, we should not expect to find agreement over our ways of working or our understandings of the past, but if we think of our work as involving a series of conversations between practitioners it may be that our differences can prove productive.

FIELDS OF DISCOURSE*

Reconstituting a Social Archaeology

JOHN C. BARRETT

Introduction

Archaeology continues to arouse little or no interest amongst those who work within the neighbouring disciplines of the social sciences. Historians pay it scant regard and anthropologists can be as dismissive (Leach 1973a). It is not so much that the task archaeology sets itself, to understand the human past through material remains, is uninteresting, nor is it impossible to achieve. Rather there exists a crisis in the current practice of archaeology which contributes towards its apparent irrelevancy.

Archaeologists act as if the object of their study is a modern material record of past events. Inferences about the past are drawn from the various procedures which 'read', 'translate' or otherwise give meaning to this record. Linda Patrik characterises the treatment of archaeological evidence as a record in terms of two models (Patrik 1985). The first employs the evidence as a fossil record where direct, mechanical relationships are taken to exist between past processes and their surviving imprints in archaeological materials. The second treats the evidence as a text. Here a more complex connection between past and present appears to exist for the record encodes ideas and meanings which were created in the past.

These treatments of the 'evidence as record' have resulted in an over-riding preoccupation with issues of methodology. These issues concern the way the record can be calibrated, allowing knowledge of the past either to be read from it, or allowing ideas about the past to be assessed against it. As archaeological evidence is a modern phenomenon the procedures required to link process to record are established in contemporary, ethnoarchaeological research (e.g. Binford 1983a; Hodder 1982b).

However, the two perceptions of the archaeological record which Patrik identifies have different methodological implications. If the evidence is treated as a fossil record then it is also assumed that cross-culturally comparable processes will result in comparable patterns in the surviving evidence. This assumption underpins the New Archaeology's attempts to establish highly generalised statements about the human past which are open to cross-cultural verification. On the other hand, if the evidence is

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a textual record then it is composed as a 'matter of author's choice and convention' (Patrik 1985: 33). The record's meaning must now be culturally and historically specific and, given this, translation becomes highly problematic. How can we read these exotic texts? It is noticeable that whilst demands for a 'textual archaeology' have arisen from ethnoarchaeological fieldwork, as well as having a deeper theoretical derivation (papers in Hodder 1982a), clearly developed procedures of archaeological translation have yet to be presented (cf. Hodder 1984b). The most successful translations have been achieved in historical archaeology. Here written texts are the means by which the material texts are translated (Deetz 1977; Glassie 1975; Leone 1984).

Patrik's paper is important, not only for the clarity with which she has distinguished between the different concepts of an archaeological record, but also for her concluding remarks. She writes:

I would like to raise the question expressed in the title of this paper: 'Is there an archaeological record?' For the question hints that archaeological evidence may not form any kind of record at all . . . If neither the physical recording connection nor the recording connection of signification seem exactly right for an appropriate conception of archaeological evidence, if neither seems to capture the actual connection between archaeological evidence and what it is evidence of, then perhaps the whole concept of recording is not appropriate for the evidence.

(Patrik 1985: 57)

With this comment Patrik opens the way to a rethinking of the archaeological evidence. She demonstrates that to speak of an archaeological record carries metaphysical implications which determine the way inferences are drawn from that evidence. Of her two models I wish to leave aside that of the evidence as a fossil record. Within the limited applications which Patrik identifies for it the model is internally consistent. However, the model of archaeological evidence as a text is inadequate. I do not believe that such texts are capable of adequate translation. But more importantly this model does not accurately represent the relationship between human action and material conditions. In offering a reconsideration of our use of archaeological evidence I will argue that we should treat it not as a record of past events and processes but as evidence for particular social practices.

Archaeological evidence

Social archaeology, as currently practised within the entire spectrum of archaeology, attempts to demonstrate that empirically recoverable patterns of archaeological material record the nature of past social organisations, beliefs or ideologies. The recoverable pattern of things is commonly taken to record the adaptive procedures of a particular type of social system including the internal organisation of that system whereby goods, energy or information are stored and circulated. Social practices in the past have therefore appeared to result in a static configuration of archaeological materials (Renfrew 1974). Social institutions, the product of recurrent social practices, similarly appear as static material representations. Archaeological analysis, equating social institutions with the systemic pattern of things, becomes the analysis of lifeless systems.

Functionalism is inherently concerned with statics, and what Renfrew terms 'system thinking', far from 'explaining continuous change', simply allows us to 'describe the society at any given time by a large series of observations or measurements, the observables to be measured are the *parameters* of the system. The changing values of those system variables effectively describe for us the successive system states through time' (Renfrew 1984: 249). 'Parameters' and 'system states' are clearly statics, and subsequent reference to input and feedback within the system does nothing to dispel the original, static formation. This view is entirely consistent with the notion that time is nowhere contained in routine archaeological observations because the material record is only a set of 'observationally static facts' (Binford 1977a: 6). Time, existing in neither an adequately conceived social theory nor in basic analytical observations is expelled from a place central to archaeological practice, a remarkable failure for an historical discipline to display.

Ultimately, questions which might distinguish between liberal and Marxist archaeologies (the way institutional relations work in harmony or in tension as contradictory forces) fail to distinguish between various functional explanations. For example, if conflicts between social groups are expected then a functional integration is achieved via an ideological feedback:

The social order must be legitimised and the principles upon which control is based justified. One of the most powerful means of achieving this is in the active production of a normative consensus naturalising and misrepresenting the extant nature of asymmetrical social relations so that they appear to be other than they really are.

(Miller and Tilley 1984a: 2)

Social systems cannot be analysed in terms of pre-existing social institutions. Instead it is necessary to confront the issue of human agency by which institutionalised practices are themselves maintained. In current archaeological practice social institutions appear static and history, driven from their very essence, becomes a problem limited to the explanation of periods of change.

If material residues are taken to record or reflect social conditions or meanings then they are immediately isolated from the actual processes of social discourse where that material originally resided as the media of communication and social practice. The result is that the creative process, which constantly brings the social system into being, takes on the appearance of largely abstract forces lying outside the material conditions and the control of social agency.

I wish to develop this argument, particularly in the light of Giddens' theory of structuration (Giddens 1979; 1981). Before doing so, however, I must emphasise that I am seeking not only to break with the functionalism which characterises much of current archaeological thinking, but also with the more recent demands for an 'archaeology of meaning' as propounded by Hodder. In his own attempt to escape functionalist explanations Hodder has shifted the attention of archaeology towards considering the intentions and motivations of human agents. He seems to suggest that through a detailed analysis of the patterns preserved in the material record it should be possible to recover something of the 'ideas in people's heads' (Hodder 1984b: 25). Even if this were possible, and published examples of this kind of

reasoning are far from convincing (Hodder 1984a), we are simply moved from a position where social structures govern human behaviour to one that asserts the primacy of the individual.

In the theory of structuration Giddens employs the 'time-space continuum' as the framework within which structured actions of human agents can be observed reproducing the institutionalised form of the social system. 'All human action is carried on by knowledgeable agents who both construct the social world through their action, but yet whose action is also conditioned or constrained by the very world of their creation' (Giddens 1981: 54). Knowledge here extends beyond a discursive understanding of the world and includes the practical knowledge of 'how to go on'. This in turn may be distinguished from unconscious sources of cognition and motivation (Giddens 1979; 1981: 27). Practical knowledge should not be reduced to a set of rules drawn upon to enable participation in the workings of pre-existing social institutions. Instead it is knowledge which is rediscovered and reproduced by action and discourse. It is through this continual process of rediscovery that human subjects define themselves. This is achieved by the agents' ability to monitor the world they occupy, and which they contribute towards constituting as a culturally meaningful resource. Structuration is the rediscovery of those competent methodological procedures employed in structuring particular social practices. Structuration therefore involves a duality for 'the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise' (Giddens 1984: 25).

This duality is of central importance to us, but it is a concept which has received a certain amount of criticism. Smith and Turner argue that:

the notion of the duality of structure seems to us to involve a vitiating circularity . . . social structures are constituted by human agency as well as simultaneously being the medium of such constitution. We will show that action is taken as a (prior) necessary condition for structure and structure as a (prior) necessary condition for action, so that we are forced into an impossible circle.

(Smith and Turner 1986: 127)

However the circle is broken. Giddens has stated that 'structure exists only as memory traces' (Giddens 1984: 377; cf. Cohen 1986: 126) meaning, I take it that action draws initially upon, and is guided in anticipation by, the subject's memory of previous experience. Important although this point is, an equal, if not greater, emphasis must be placed upon the particular material conditions within which social practices are situated.

The material world acts as a storage of cultural resources, including architectural forms of spaces and boundaries and the temporal cycles of day/night and seasonality in which people pass through and are held in place by, this architecture. The material world therefore acts as a complex series of *locales* within which meaningful and authoritative forms of discourse can be sustained.

There is no contradiction in recognising the essential role material *locales* play in structuring action, and realising them they are in turn sustained by that action. However, this argument is not developed by Giddens, although he does recognise that 'linguistic competence involves not only the syntactical mastery of sentences, but the mastery of circumstances in which particular types are appropriate . . . In

other words, mastery of the language is inseparable from mastery of the variety of contexts in which language is used' (Giddens 1987: 79).

If Giddens has not developed a clear understanding of the importance of the material situations occupied by social practices, Bourdieu has. He has argued for example that

inhabited space – and above all the house – is the principal locus for the objectification of the generative schemes; and, through the intermediary of the divisions and hierarchies it sets up between things, persons and practices, this tangible classifying system continuously inculcates and reinforces the taxonomic principles underlying all the arbitrary provisions of . . . culture.

(Bourdieu 1977: 89)

The material world, permanent and decaying, constructed and demolished, exchanged and accumulated, is a potentially powerful system of signification. It is inhabited by actors whose practical understanding of their daily routines is constructed with reference to a material architecture and their temporal movement through those spaces and across their boundaries. This architecture has no single, objective meaning. In Bourdieu's study for example:

The house . . . is globally defined as female, damp, etc., when considered from the outside, from the male point of view, i.e. in opposition to the external world, but it can be divided into a male-female part and a female-female part when it ceases to be seen by reference to a universe of practice coextensive with the universe, and is treated instead as a universe (of practice and discourse) in its own right, which for the women it indeed is, especially in winter.

(Bourdieu 1977: 110)

The material world contains acculturated structures drawn upon and invested with meaning by human action. Archaeological evidence should not be treated as a static outcome of past dynamics (a record). Instead it is the surviving fragments of those recursive media through which the practices of social discourse were constructed. Social practices are the object of our study: archaeology is the empirical examination of material evidence to discover how such practices were maintained within particular material conditions. To facilitate the required reconceptualisation of archaeological evidence we need not further methodological refinements but new intellectual procedures.

The field of discourse

Discourse is a means of communication, it draws upon and reproduces particular structures of knowledge, thus also reproducing relations of dominance between individuals and collectivities (Bourdieu 1979a). In all discourse power is sustained as 'reproduced relations of autonomy and dependence' (Giddens 1981: 50). Such relations involve authoritative demands being recognised through some degree of compliance. Thus control is established over humans and material resources. The authority of the code is signified by the symbols through which the participants know, and acknowledge the validity of, the conditions under which they act. That acknowledgement reproduces the authority of the code, but may transform the conditions under which it is sustained.

In discourse meaning is located in the particular employment of a code; it is grounded in the context of usage (Asad 1979; Giddens 1979: 98). Structured in time-space, Bourdieu has shown that the lapse of time between the establishment and fulfilment of an obligation is part of the practical strategy of discourse. 'To restore to practice its practical truth, we must therefore re-introduce time into the theoretical representation of a practice which, being temporally structured, is intrinsically defined by its *tempo*' (Bourdieu 1977: 8). An authority deriving from hereditary status and age may demand gifts of agricultural produce from the labour of others. These products, returned as food gifts, may further increase that original authority. These temporally separate and irreversible practices transform the meaning of the circulated gift, a point lost when we telescope gift and counter-gift into a timeless 'objective' system of reciprocity. Bauman has also suggested that signs exist in primary or in secondary and derivative contexts in relation to their temporal position in a particular discourse (Bauman 1971: 284). This recognises that the claim of dominance, established by mobilising (as primary signs) an authoritative code, is then acknowledged by reciprocation of compliance (through the mobilisation of secondary signs).

Particular lines of authoritative knowledge are reproduced in discourse. But other forms of knowledge and the means of resistance are not eliminated (Braithwaite 1984). Power resides in the ability of certain agents to maintain an 'authoritative discourse which seeks continually to preempt the space of radically opposed utterances' (Asad 1979: 621). The hegemonic growth of a particular authority involves penetrating increasingly wider ranges of discourse with meanings of a dominant code. Discourse reproduces systems of prestige and rank which include, but are not necessarily reducible to relations of production in the Marxist sense (Ortner and Whitehead 1981: 15). There can be no general theory which specifies the locus of a determinate discourse, for we are dealing with codes particular to their historical and cultural contexts. Dislocation between the various structures of power and prestige are to be expected, and they cannot all be reduced to a single formula of determinancy. Change is possible because of the tensions which exist between alternative forms of discourse and because of changing material conditions under which utterances may come to lose their authority.

The means of conceptualising the occupancy of time-space by situated practices must avoid splitting the analytical procedure into alternative questions of temporal frequency and spatial organisation. It seems to me that Giddens fails to avoid this split in his recent discussion of 'time-geography' (Giddens 1985).

Similarly in current archaeological thinking time and space are merely employed at a descriptive level. They are used to define relationships by patterning atomised units of observation: sequences of stratigraphic units (time), of geographical distribution of artefacts (space). But, as Scholte states 'empirical entities do not create intelligible relationships, relations create entities' (1981: 169).

To move archaeological study away from the patterning of things to the structuring of relationships (i.e. social practice) requires heuristic devices allowing us to think about the way time-space may have been occupied by such practices. I wish to define one such device as the *field of discourse*.

The field is an area in time-space occupied by virtue of the practice of a particular discourse. Such fields 'shade off' in time-space and contain material conditions which

contribute towards the structuring of practice. Archaeological evidence is the residue of these various material conditions.

No field is closed, one may encompass another. A number may crosscut at moments of their existence; the same material components may be shared by a number of fields, and the symbolic components of one field may be stored and transformed into the symbolic components of another. The means therefore exist for alternative discourses to challenge authoritative statements or to avoid their domination. And one authority may extend its hegemony into neighbouring fields. It is therefore a matter of priority to consider the degree of co-variance on the axis of time-space between different fields, thus exposing mechanisms central to the history of particular authority structures.

The analytical strength of the field of discourse is threefold: it is concerned with human relationships not material entities; time-space is fundamental to its definition; and it refuses single units of material residues fixed historical meaning. The analytical components of the field are as follows:

- a) The temporal frequency within which the field is routinely occupied. This tempo is often likely to conform to cycles of agricultural production, where the seasons of nature are endowed with cultural meaning (Bourdieu 1977). The emergence of the modern world was achieved by breaking with many of these natural rhythms of authority, the clocktime of industrial production extending from the factory to the home (Giddens 1982).
- b) The spatial extent of the field. This is the geographical space occupied by the actors involved in a particular discourse. Often of a limited scale involving face to face encounters, examples will include the residential spaces within a household, the spaces occupied by cycles of agricultural production (Pred 1985), or the places of religious observance.
- c) The cultural resources which are drawn upon to define and instigate the authoritative demands of discourse, and those resources which, in turn, are chosen to be employed in acknowledging the existence of that authority. These resources may include the architectural settings which structure the orientation of the subjects' bodies, the adornments of dress placed on those bodies, or the items exchanged. These cultural/symbolic resources may often have been stored and transmitted from one field to another. It is through such modes of transmission that certain forms of authority come to be 'presenced' over wide regions of time-space.
- d) The transformations which take place in the available cultural resources as the field is reproduced. These transformations themselves reproduce authority and domination in discourse whilst transforming the material conditions of future discourse (the latter may be seen as an unintended consequence of action). Authority only exists in as far as it elicits a response, and it is not possible to propose a means by which cultural resources may have been constituted as authoritative without considering the response evoked which completed the cycle of discourse. The symbolic resources of authority may originate in a restricted locale, but in discourse they have to be mobilised over the same spatial region as that from whence the resources of domination are to be drawn. The two sets of resources are temporally displaced in any discourse, being linked in a cycle of reproduction.

To consider more fully this as an archaeological approach I will take, as a single example, the archaeological analysis of gender. This has raised profound methodological problems for contemporary archaeology.

The archaeology of gender

The feminist critique of archaeology has been one of the signs of an emergent self-critical discipline. As Conkey and Spector state, histories of '*man* and *mankind* are not general, but exclusive' (Conkey and Spector 1984: 2). But archaeology has long worked as if gender were not an issue of history, and where the archaeology of *man* has rendered gender distinctions invisible.

Now that gender has been forced into the historical agenda traditional archaeology is returned to the issue raised by Patrik. Questions of gender in archaeological research appear to flounder upon the methodological question of visibility (Conkey and Spector 1984: 6). If we treat the material evidence as record the question turns on how the evidence records particular gender activities. If we accept, as we must, that gender is constituted in historically and culturally specific ways then we are employing the archaeological record as a text. Specific codes signify the meaning of female and male in particular cultural contexts and we are returned to the question of how such texts are to be read.

Janet Spector has outlined a methodology for gender studies in the fields of ethnoarchaeology and ethnohistory. Her *task-differentiation* framework is intended to identify the dimensions of female and male activity patterns (Conkey and Spector 1984: 24). Tasks are identified and the parameters of performance then mapped in terms of gender and age, size and nature of groups and the individuals involved, the temporal frequency of performance, the spatial dimensions of task differentiation and the material features associated with each task. Ultimately the aim is to isolate, in a non-androcentric way, the gender-specific features found within the organisation of labour for a given social group.

Whilst such a cataloguing from ethnoarchaeology and ethnohistory will undoubtedly awaken archaeologists to the complexity and the diversity of gender activities within different ecological, economic and social contexts, problems do remain. I am unclear how we will ever reach the point when with 'enough studies of this type, we may begin to approach the archaeological record with sufficient understanding to interpret assemblages in terms of gender' (Conkey and Spector 1984: 27).

It is a requirement of historical analysis that we may discover potentially unique ways by which women and men have defined themselves. But the translation of an 'archaeological text' will require us to impose meanings upon that text, rather than discover meaning from it. I assume, for example, that Spector's approach seeks some form of cross-cultural generalisation by which material residues may be linked to gender-specific activities. But what if there is no continuity between past and present in the cultural expression of gender?

Given this possibility it might be tempting to counter current androcentric assumptions by suggesting radical inversions in gender roles. But the danger is always that myths are created, rather than a critical history of gender conflicts. Rachel Hasted has written:

When we are arguing political conclusions from historical precedents our evidence ought to be investigated all along the line: if we come to believe in myths we may miss a more valuable insight into our own (women's) condition.

It matters to me that as feminists we should share what we find out about women's history with other women honestly, not glossing over our areas of ignorance. It is not in our interests to sell short the complex history we have – in fact we should be telling other historians that their level of awareness on women's history just isn't good enough.

(Hasted 1985: 24)

Gender is constructed as a relationship; it cannot be understood simply in terms of female or male activities. Rosaldo argued that there can be no satisfactory cross-cultural discovery of what constitutes women's experience (Rosaldo 1980). Instead, it is necessary to understand specific historical conditions under which gender categories are brought into being. Those categories are and were produced as a relationship (a discourse) in which women and men are agents who control certain sets of cultural resources (Rosaldo 1980; O'Brien 1982).

A comparison is possible here between Rosaldo's conception of 'gender' and the way Thompson argues that 'class' can be understood neither 'as a "structure" nor even a "category"', but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships' (Thompson 1968: 9).

Gender is therefore structured through various types of discourse. The routine structuring of these relations will be central to many social practices. 'In marrying people "make families" but they also control debts, change residence, stir enmities and establish social bonds' (Collier and Rosaldo 1981: 278).

The archaeological study of gender does not depend upon a methodological breakthrough rendering specific gender activities visible in the 'archaeological record'. It must be founded instead upon the critical realisation that gender relations and conflicts are historical forces. From this position we can recognise that gender discourse is always structured by control over certain human and material resources (cf. Braithwaite 1982; Moore 1982; O'Brien 1982). Gender is therefore produced out of the 'choreography' of human existence (Pred 1977). As people pass through time and space they encounter the complex architecture of an acculturated world. The access they claim to the spaces and resources of that architecture at any moment is determined by, and in turn determines, their authority in this and other forms of discourse. The renegotiation of gender authority will require a renegotiation of these architectural conditions.

As an illustration of this approach I have argued elsewhere that late bronze–early iron age southern Britain can be understood in terms other than those dominated by questions of technological change (Barrett 1989a). Gender and age categories are renegotiated at this time by restructuring the forms of domestic space and inventing new forms of technology concerned with food preparation and its service. The abandonment of traditional funerary practices may also mark a shift in the expression of authoritative systems of inheritance. These changes in social practices laid the foundations for a substantial political emphasis being placed upon the control of agricultural (and probably human) fertility during the iron age of southern Britain. In all this, metal and the adoption of a new technology play a subsidiary role.

Metalwork circulates amongst, and between, gender and age sets which were established by means other than the control of metal itself.

Conclusion

In following the question posed by Linda Patrik, as to whether or not there is an archaeological record, I have argued that an alternative view of our evidence is possible. Indeed I have been concerned to establish that the concept of a record is inadequate to meet the challenge of an archaeology concerned with the history of knowledgeable human agency. In this case the record appears as a text, which I contend can only be translated in our own terms. However self-critical such 'translations' may be, they can never confront the real conditions of authorship by which the text was constructed. Whilst our concerns and motivations in archaeological and historical writing do indeed derive from contemporary conditions (as the study of gender illustrates) we cannot deny the real nature of historical conditions (Thompson 1978). It is those conditions we must confront in a self-critical way. We will not achieve this by continuing with the methodological obsession to give an archaeological record meaning. Here history simply appears as a by-product. We should instead set out to make history. By that labour we will necessarily encounter our evidence, and by working with it we will discover something of its significance within the context of social practice.

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THEORETICAL ARCHAEOLOGY*

A Reactionary View

IAN HODDER

Functionalism is defined as the use of an organic analogy in the explanation of societies, with particular reference to system, equilibrium and adaptation. The New Archaeology is found to be functionalist and a critique of functionalism is put forward, centring on the dichotomies between culture and function, individual and society, statics and dynamics, and on the links to positivism. Criticisms of an alternative approach, structuralism, include the lack of a theory of practice, the dichotomies between individual and society, statics and dynamics, and the paucity of rigour in the methods employed. A contextual or cultural archaeology is described which is based on the notion of 'structuration', and which attempts to resolve many of the difficulties associated with functionalism and 'high' structuralism. The main concern is with the role of material culture in the reflexive relationship between the structure of ideas and social strategies. Similarities are identified with the historical and humanistic aims of an older generation of British prehistorians such as Daniel, Piggott, Clark and Childe. Today, however, the earlier aims can be followed more successfully because of developments in social theory and ethnographic studies.

Functionalism and the New Archaeology

In defining functionalism, a simplified version of Radcliffe-Brown's (1952) account will be used since his approach can be shown to be close to that followed by many New Archaeologists (those who in the 1960s and 1970s were concerned with explanations and approaches of the types outlined by Binford and his associates). Functionalism introduces an analogy between social and organic life. Emile Durkheim (*Règles de la Méthode Sociologique* 1895 [1964]) defined the 'function' of a social institution as the correspondence between it and the needs of the social organism. In the same way that the stomach provides a function for the body as a whole and allows it to survive, so any aspect of a past society can be assessed in terms of its contribution to the working of the whole society. A society is made up of interrelated parts and we

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can explain one component by showing how it works in relation to other components. But these are all very general statements, and there is room for a great variety of views within these general propositions. Indeed, Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 188) stated bluntly that the 'Functional school does not really exist; it is a myth'. Functionalism often appears to be little more than a 'dirty word' used by the opponents of anthropologists such as Malinowski, Boas and Radcliffe-Brown himself, and it may convey little meaning. So if it is to be used of the New Archaeology, a more specific definition needs to be provided.

The concept of function is closely linked to the notion of system. In the middle of the eighteenth century Montesquieu used a conception of society in which all aspects of social life could be linked into a coherent whole. What Comte called 'the first law of social statics' held that there are relations of interconnection and interdependence, or relations of solidarity, between the various aspects of society. It is possible analytically to isolate certain groups of particularly close interrelationships as systems.

According to the functionalist viewpoint as stated in systems theory, societies reach a healthy organic equilibrium, called homeostasis. Plato, in the Fourth Book of his *Republic* saw the health of a society as resulting from the harmonious working together of its parts. The Greeks distinguished good order, social health (*eunomia*), from disorder, social illness (*dysnomia*), while the notion of malfunction and social pathology was a central concern of Durkheim. (In recent systems archaeology, pathologies have been listed and their effects examined by Flannery [1972].)

Pathologies occur during periods when the organic unity and equilibrium are upset as a result of maladaptation. A society can only continue to exist if it is well adjusted internally and externally. Three types of adaptation can be distinguished. The first concerns the adjustment to the physical environment, the ecological adaptation. The second is the internal arrangement and adjustment of components of the society in relation to each other. Finally, there is the process by which an individual finds a place within the society in which he lives. It is through these three types of adaptation that societies survive and evolve. Many anthropologists and archaeologists, however, have discussed change largely in terms of ecological adaptation, the meeting of external constraints. It is an ecological functionalism which prevails today in archaeology.

In this chapter the term functionalism refers to the use of an organic analogy and to the viewpoint that an adequate explanation of a past society involves reference to system, equilibrium and adaptation as outlined above. Although functionalism, and specifically ecological functionalism, were mainstays of the theoretical framework of an earlier generation of archaeologists such as Gordon Childe and Grahame Clark, they have become more widely important as a result of the New Archaeology of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, processual and systems archaeology is almost by definition a functionalist archaeology. As Leach (1973a: 761–2) pointed out,

Binford's remark that 'behaviour is the by-product of the interaction of a cultural repertoire with the environment' may be proto-typical of the 'new' archaeology, but to a social anthropologist it reads like a quotation from Malinowski writing at the time when naive functionalism was at its peak – that is to say about 1935.

This view is too extreme, but Renfrew (1972: 24) also states that to examine connections between subsystems as in systems theory 'is, of course, simply a

statement of anthropological functionalism, that different aspects of a culture are all interrelated'.

The degree to which archaeology has adopted a functionalist conception of society and culture is apparent in the writings of the major figures of the 'new' discipline. Although the archaeological contributions of these writers differ, the notions of organic wholes, interrelated systems, equilibrium and adaptation can all be identified most clearly. For example, in Flannery's (1972) systems model for the growth of complex societies, the job of self-regulation within the sociocultural system 'is to keep all the variables in the subsystem within appropriate goal ranges – ranges which maintain homeostasis and do not threaten the survival of the system' (*ibid.*: 409). According to Binford (1972a: 107) 'we can . . . expect variability in and among components of a system to result from the action of homeostatic regulators within the cultural system serving to maintain equilibrium relationships between the system and its environment'. Similarly, for Clarke (1968: 88), 'the whole cultural system is in external dynamic equilibrium with its local environment'.

Equilibrium is defined as that state in which dislocation amongst the component variety is minimised . . . Dislocation most frequently arises . . . when different networks independently transmit mutually contradictory information – resenting an anomaly at nodes in the structure of the system. Sociocultural systems are continuously changing in such a way as to minimise the maximum amount of immediate system dislocation.

(*ibid.*: 129)

According to Hill (1971: 407), a set of variables is only a system if their 'articulation . . . be regulated (maintained in steady-state) by homeostatic processes'.

The importance of maintaining equilibrium with the 'environment' has also been emphasised by Renfrew (1972). Indeed, man's relationship with the environment is seen by him as one of the main aspects of systems theory. 'The whole purpose of utilising the systems approach is to emphasise man–environment interrelations, while at the same time admitting that many fundamental changes in man's environment are produced by man himself' (*ibid.*: 19–20). 'Culture . . . is essentially a homeostatic device, a conservative influence ensuring that change in the system will be minimised. It is a flexible adaptive mechanism which allows the survival of society despite fluctuations in the natural environment' (*ibid.*: 486).

Thus it is thought that human sociocultural systems can be described as if they were adapting to the total social and environmental milieu. Renfrew (1972: 24–5) talks of the 'essential coherence and conservatism of all cultures . . . the society's "adjustment" or "adaptation" to its natural environment is maintained: difficulties and hardships are overcome'. A similar view is expressed by Binford (1972a: 20): 'Change in the total cultural system must be viewed in an adaptive context both social and environmental.' Indeed Binford's (1972a: 22) definition of culture 'as the extra-somatic means of adaptation for the human organism' is one of the main tenets of systems archaeologists. 'Culture, from a systemic perspective, is defined . . . as interacting behavioural systems. One asks questions concerning these systems, their interrelation, their adaptive significance' (Plog 1975: 208).

Culture is all those means whose forms are not under direct genetic control . . . which serve to adjust individuals and groups within their ecological communities . . . Adaption is always a local problem, and selective pressures favouring new cultural forms result from nonequilibrium conditions in the local ecosystem.
(Binford 1972a: 431)

The functionalist and processual emphasis in archaeology aimed objectively to identify relationships between variables in cultural systems. There was a natural link to an empirical and positivist concept of science.

The meaning which explanation has within a scientific frame of reference is simply the demonstration of a constant articulation of variables within a system and the measurement of the concomitant variability among the variables within the system. Processual change in one variable can thus be shown to relate to a predictable and quantifiable way to changes in other variables, the latter changing in turn relative to changes in the structure of the system as a whole.
(Binford 1972a: 21)

This statement demonstrates the link between functionalism and a conception of explanation as the prediction of relationships between variables. It is thought that the relationships can be observed empirically and quantification can be used to assess the significance of associations. The way is thus open for recovering cross-cultural generalisations, and 'the laws of cultural process' (ibid.:199). Although Binford (1977a: 5) appears more recently to have doubted the explanatory value of cross-cultural statistics, the above attitudes to explanation have at times been developed into a rigid hypothetico-deductive method based on a reading of Hempel (e.g. Watson, Leblanc and Redman 1971; Fritz and Plog 1970).

Critique of functionalism

I do not intend to examine the problems of applying systems theory in archaeology (Doran 1970), nor whether systems theory has really aided archaeologists in their functionalist aims (Salmon 1978). Rather, I want to consider the criticisms of functionalism itself. Martins (1974: 246) describes the critique of functionalism as an initiation *rite de passage* into sociological adulthood, and I have suggested elsewhere (1981) the need for a wider debate in archaeology concerning the various critiques of and alternatives to ecological functionalism.

Many of the problems and limitations of the organic analogy as applied to social systems have long been recognised. Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 181) noted that while an animal organism does not, in the course of its life, change its form, a society can, in the course of its history, undergo major organisational change. Other problems are not inherent to the approach but result from the particular emphasis that is given by archaeologists, perhaps as a result of the limitations of their data. For example, a systems approach which assumes that homeostatic equilibrium is the natural state of things results in the notion that all change ultimately has to derive from outside the system. Negative feedback occurs in reaction to outside stimuli, and positive feedback and deviation amplifying processes need initial external kicks. According to Hill (1977: 76) 'no system can change itself, change can only be instigated by

outside sources. If a system is in equilibrium, it will remain so unless inputs (or lack of outputs) from outside the system disturb the equilibrium.' The result of this view has been to place great emphasis on the impact of supposed 'independent' variables from outside the sociocultural system under study. The favourite external variables have been environmental factors (e.g. Carneiro 1968), long-distance trade (Renfrew 1969) and population increase (Hill 1977: 92), although it is not often clear why the latter is assumed to be an independent variable. Little advance has been made in the study of factors within societies that affect the nature of change (see, however, Friedman and Rowlands 1977a). But Flannery (1972) has shown how the systems approach can be extended to include internal forces of change and those forms of internal adaption within the organic whole which have been described above.

A more fundamental limitation of the functionalist viewpoint centres on the inadequacy of function and utility in explaining social and cultural systems, and on the separation made between functional utility and culture. All aspects of culture have utilitarian purposes in terms of which they can be explained. All activities, whether dropping refuse, developing social hierarchies, or performing rituals, are the results of adaptive expedience. But explanation is sought only in terms of adaptation and function. The problem with such a viewpoint is not so much the emphasis on function since it is important to know how material items, institutions, symbols and ritual operate, and the contribution of the New Archaeology to such studies is impressive. It is rather the dichotomy which was set up between culture and adaptive utility which restricted the development of the approach.

In archaeology the split between culture and function took the form of an attack on what was termed the 'normative' approach. In Binford's (1965) rebuttal of the 'normative school', he referred to American archaeologists such as Taylor, Willey and Phillips, Ford, Rouse and Gifford who were concerned with identifying cultural 'wholes' in which there was an ideational basis for the varying ways of human life within each cultural unit. Such archaeologists aimed at identifying the normative concepts in the minds of men now dead. Binford more specifically criticised the normative studies which tried to describe the diffusion and transmission of cultural traits. It is not my concern here to identify whether the normative paradigm, as characterised by Binford, ever existed. Certainly, as will be shown below, European archaeologists such as Childe were already able to integrate a concern with cultural norms and a notion of behavioural adaptability. But in Binford's view, the normative approach emphasising homogeneous cultural wholes contrasted with the study of functional variability within and between cultural units. The normative school was seen as historical and descriptive, not allowing explanation in terms of functional process. So he moved to an opposite extreme where culture, norms, form and design had only functional value in, for example, integrating and articulating individuals and social units into broader corporate entities. In fact Binford suggested that the different components of culture may function independently of each other. Functional relationships could thus be studied without reference to cultural context, and regular, stable and predictable relationships could be sought between variables within social systems. As a result, an absolute gulf was driven between normative and processual studies. 'An approach is offered in which culture is not reduced to normative ideas about the proper ways of doing things but is viewed as the system of the total

extrasomatic means of adaption' (Binford 1972a: 205). More recently (1978a) Binford has still more clearly separated the study of norms from the study of process. He has attacked the historical and contextual emphasis of Kroeber and Kluckhohn (*ibid.*: 2). On the one hand (*ibid.*: 3), artefacts are the reflections of the mental templates of the makers and these ideas in the minds of men cannot adapt intelligently to new situations. On the other hand, cultural variability is simply the result of adaptive expedience. He could ask (1979a: 11), 'do people conduct their ongoing activities in terms of invariant mental templates as to the appropriate strategies regardless of the setting in which they find themselves?' Indeed, his Nunamiut ethnoarchaeology is introduced as an attempt to identify whether faunal remains could be studied as being 'culture-free'. Cultural bias can only be identified (1978a: 38) when an anomaly occurs; when the adaptively expedient expectations are not found.

The dichotomy set up between culture and function limits the development of archaeological theory because 'functional value is always relative to the given cultural scheme' (Sahlins 1976: 206). All actions take place within cultural frameworks and their functional value is assessed in terms of the concepts and orientations which surround them. That an item or institution is 'good for' achieving some end is partly a cultural choice, as is the end itself. At the beginning of this chapter Durkheim's definition of the function of a social institution as the correspondence between it and the needs of the social organism was described. But the needs of the society are preferred choices within a cultural matrix. It follows that function and adaptation are not absolute measures. All daily activities, from eating to the removal of refuse, are not the result of some absolute adaptive expedience. These various functions take place within a cultural framework, a set of ideas or norms, and we cannot adequately understand the various activities by denying any role to culture. An identical point is made by Deetz (1977) in his comparison of cultural traditions in two historical periods in North America.

The above discussion is particularly relevant to the functionalist view of material items. As already noted, Binford assumes that culture is man's extrasomatic means of adaptation. According to David Clarke (1968: 85) 'culture is an information system, wherein the messages are accumulated survival information'. In this way material culture is seen as simply functioning at the interface between the human organism and the social and physical environment in order to allow adaptation. It has a utilitarian function (Sahlins 1976). The result of this view is that cultural remains are seen as *reflecting* in a fairly straightforward way, what people do. Even work on deposition and post-depositional processes (Schiffer 1976), while adding complexity to the situation, still assumes that material culture is simply a direct, indirect or a distorted reflection of man's activities. This is a continuation of earlier views of material culture as 'fossilised action'. As Fletcher (1977b: 51–2) has pointed out, material culture is seen simply as a passive object of functional use; a mere epiphenomenon of 'real' life. But there is more to culture than functions and activities. Behind functioning and doing there is a structure and content which has partly to be understood in its own terms, with its own logic and coherence. This applies as much to refuse distributions and 'the economy' as it does to burial, pot decoration and art.

Linked to the separation of function and culture has been the decreased emphasis on archaeology as an historical discipline. If material items and social institutions can

be explained in terms of their adaptive efficiency, there is little concern to situate them within an historical framework. The evolutionary perspective has emphasised adaptive relationships at different levels of complexity, but it has not encouraged an examination of the particular historical context. However, it is suggested here that the cultural framework within which we act, and which we reproduce in our actions, is historically derived and that each culture is a particular historical product. The uniqueness of cultures and historical sequences must be recognised. Within the New Archaeology there has been a great concern with identifying variability. But in embracing a cross-cultural approach, variability has, in the above sense, been reduced to sameness. Diachronic sequences are split into phases in which the functioning of systems can be understood in synchronic terms as instances of some general relationship. The dichotomy between diachrony and synchrony is linked to the split between culture and history on the one hand and function and adaptation on the other. The resolution of the culture/function dichotomy which is sought in this book will also reintroduce historical explanation as a legitimate topic of concern in archaeology.

Another limitation of the functionalist perspective of the New Archaeology is the relationship between the individual and society. The functional view gives little emphasis to individual creativity and intentionality. Individual human beings become little more than the means to achieve the needs of society. The social system is organised into subsystems and roles which people fill. The roles and social categories function in relation to each other to allow the efficient equilibrium of the whole system. In fact, however, individuals are not simply instruments in some orchestrated game and it is difficult to see how subsystems and roles can have 'goals' of their own. Adequate explanations of social systems and social change must involve the individual's assessments and aims. This is not a question of identifying individuals (Hill and Gunn 1977) but of introducing the individual into social theory. Some New Archaeologists have recognised the importance of this. 'While the behaviour of the group, of many individual units, may often effectively be described in statistical terms without reference to the single unit, it cannot so easily be explained in this way. This is a problem which prehistoric archaeology has yet to resolve' (Renfrew 1972: 496). The lack of resolution is inherent in the functionalist emphasis in archaeology.

Further criticism of functionalist archaeology concerns the emphasis on cross-cultural generalisations. After an initial phase in which ethnoarchaeology was used largely to provide cautionary tales and 'spoilers' (Yellen 1977), the concern has been to provide cross-cultural statements of high predictive value. Because of the preferred hypothetico-deductive nature of explanation, it became important to identify rules of behaviour and artefact deposition which were used regardless of cultural context. As already noted, such an approach was feasible because the particular historical and cultural dimensions of activity were denied. Different subsystems were identified, such as subsistence, exchange, settlement, refuse disposal and burial, and cross-cultural regularities were sought. Since the role of cultural and historical factors was not examined, it was necessarily the case that the resulting generalisations either were limited to mechanical or physical aspects of life or were simplistic and with little content. Some aspects of human activity are constrained by deterministic variables. For example, it is difficult for humans to walk bare-footed on spreads of freshly knapped flint, or to work or sit in or near the smoke of fires (Gould 1980; Binford

1978b). Certain types of bone do hold more or less meat or marrow, and they fracture in different ways (Binford 1978a; Gifford 1981). The seeds sorted by wind during winnowing depend partly on wind velocity and seed density (Jones, pers. comm.). Smaller artefacts are more difficult for humans to hold and find than large artefacts and so the patterns of loss may differ (Schiffer 1976). Cross-cultural predictive laws or generalisations can be developed for these mechanical constraints on human behaviour, and ethnoarchaeology has been most successful in these spheres, but attempts to extend this approach to social and cultural behaviour have been severely criticised as is shown by the debate over the hypothesis put forward by Longacre (1970), Deetz (1968), and Hill (1970) (e.g. Stanislawski 1973; Allen and Richardson 1971), and the result has been the frustration implied by Flannery's (1973) characterisation of Mickey Mouse laws. As soon as any human choice is involved, behavioural and functional laws appear simplistic and inadequate because human behaviour is rarely entirely mechanistic. The role of ethnoarchaeology must also be to define the relevant cultural context for social and ecological behaviour.

Linked to the emphasis on cross-cultural functional laws is the idea of 'predicting the past' (Thomas 1974). The percentages of modern societies in which women make pots (Phillips 1971) or in which size of settlement is related to post-marital residence (Ember 1973) are difficult to use as measures of probability for the interpretation of the past because modern societies are not independent nor do they comprise a random or representative sample of social forms. More important, however, is the lack of identity between prediction and understanding. It is possible to predict many aspects of human behaviour with some accuracy but without any understanding of the causal relationships involved. Equally, a good understanding of a social event may not lead to an ability to predict the outcome of a similar set of circumstances. Levels of probability and statistical evidence of correlation are no substitute for an understanding of causal links and of the relevant context for human action. The use of mathematical and statistical formulae which provide good fits to archaeological data leads to little understanding of the past. My own involvement in spatial archaeology, a sphere in which statistical prediction has been most successful, has shown most clearly that prediction has little to do with explanation.

The embrace of the hypothetico-deductive method and prediction in relation to interpretation of the past has allowed the definition of independent levels of theory. A distinct 'middle range theory' has been identified because it has been assumed that objective yardsticks or instruments of measurement can be obtained for the study of past systems and their archaeological residues (Binford 1978a: 45). We have general theories of social development and lower level theories concerning the formation of the archaeological record. Similarly, Clarke (1973a) suggested that pre-depositional, depositional, post-depositional, analytical and interpretive theories could be distinguished despite the existence of overall controlling models. This separation of levels or types of theory is partly possible because of a model of man which separates different functional activities and sets up predictive relationships between them. Thus, depositional theory can be separated from interpretive theory because artefact deposition is adaptively expedient and can be predicted without reference to wider social theories. The hypotheses concerning social institutions and social change are thought to be different in nature from the hypotheses concerning the relationship between society

and material culture. But both material items and their deposition are actively involved in social relations and we cannot separate independent levels of theory. Frameworks of cultural meaning structure all aspects of archaeological information. Leone (1978) has shown most clearly how data, analyses and interpretations are inextricably linked. The different theoretical levels should be congruent, and beyond natural processes there can be no instruments of absolute measurement.

The aim of the New Archaeology was to show the rationality of institutions with respect to their environments. The main criticisms of this general approach as described above are as follows. (1) The dichotomy set up between cultural form and objective functional expedience is misleading, and material items are more than tools holding survival information. (2) The functionalist viewpoint is unable to explain cultural variety and uniqueness adequately. (3) Social systems become reified to such an extent that the individual contributes little. (4) The cross-cultural generalisations which have resulted from functionalist studies by archaeologists have been unable to identify valid statements about social and cultural behaviour because the relevant context is insufficiently explored. (5) Different levels or types of hypothesis have been identified, but in fact all hypotheses are and should be integrated within a coherent social and cultural theory. This volume [*Symbolic and Structural Archaeology* (Hodder 1982a)] seeks to respond to these criticisms by developing alternative approaches. I wish to begin by considering various definitions of 'structure'.

Structure as system pattern and style

In the preceding discussion of functionalism, reference has been made to the adaptive utility of material items and institutions within social and cultural systems. Subsystems (pottery, settlement, social, economic, etc.) can be identified and discussed in cross-cultural perspective. Within each socio-cultural system a particular set of systemic relationships is produced in order to meet local needs at particular moments in time. In the analysis of such systems, the words 'system' and 'structure' are interchangeable. The system (or structure) is the particular set of relationships between the various components; it is the way the interrelationships are organised. Within New Archaeology, then, structure is the system of observable relations. Structure is the way things are done and it, like individual items and institutions, is explained as the result of adaptive expedience.

The functionalist view of structure is apparent in discussions of social organisation, social relations or social systems, none of which are distinguished from social structure. The term social structure is used by New Archaeologists to refer to bands, tribes, chiefdoms, states, as well as to reciprocal, redistributive and prestige transactions. Social structure is observed directly in burial and settlement patterns where the visible differentiation in associations and forms is seen as reflecting roles and activities organised in relation to each other. The structure of social relations as a whole is organised so as to allow adaptation to such factors as the distribution of environmental resources (uniform or localised), the availability of prestige items or valued commodities, and the relationships with neighbouring social groups.

In such systemic studies the close relationship between the terms 'structure' and 'pattern' is apparent. In identifying social and economic structures various patterns are analysed. These patterns include the distributions of settlements of different

sizes and functions across the landscape, the distributions of artefacts and buildings in settlements, the distributions of resources, the distributions of artefacts among graves in cemeteries, the regional distributions of exchanged items and the regional distributions of artefacts in interaction or information exchange spheres or 'cultures'. These various patterns are 'objective' and are immediately susceptible to statistical manipulation, quantification and computerisation. The concern with pattern allows the legitimate use of a wide range of scientific software, including numerical taxonomy and spatial analysis.

The identification of pattern and the implementation of 'analytical archaeology' is extended to studies of arrangements of attributes on individual artefacts, where 'pattern' is often equivalent to 'style'. The analysis of pottery and metal decoration, and of the form of artefacts, leads to the definition of 'types' based on the association of attributes. Artefact styles are interpreted as having utilitarian or non-utilitarian functions; they are technomic, sociotechnic or ideotechnic (Binford 1972a). Style is involved in the support of group solidarity (Hodder 1979) and the passing on of information (Wobst 1977).

In functionalist archaeology, structure is examined as system, organisation, distribution, pattern, or style. It is produced by people attempting to adapt to their environments. Like any artefact, structure is a tool for coping. If culture is a tool acting between people and the environment, and if the term 'culture' describes the particular adaptive organisation produced in each environmental context, then structure is also similar to culture. A culture is seen as the way material bits and pieces are assembled and associated in a geographical area in order to allow human adaptation.

Structure as code

In this chapter I wish to distinguish between system and structure (Giddens 1979), by defining structure not as system, pattern or style, but as the codes and rules according to which observed systems of interrelations are produced. Several archaeological studies have made a contribution to the analysis of structure as code, and some examples are discussed here.

Within studies of Palaeolithic cave art, Leroi-Gourhan (1965) has made specific interpretations of signs as male or female and has suggested various codes for the combination and relative placing of the signs within the caves. Marshak (1977) identified specific interpretations of symbols as dangerous and he related the structure associated with the meander in cave art to the general flow and participation in daily life. Conkey (1977) identified general aspects of the rules of organisation of Upper Palaeolithic art, such as 'the non-differentiation of units', and did not attempt to provide a specific meaning in terms of social organisation. All these analyses were concerned to identify codes or rules, but the nature of the interpretation of these structures and of their relationships to social structures varied.

Studies of later artefact and pottery design have often tended towards a still more formal emphasis in that little attention is paid to the social context in which structures are produced. The linguistic model has been developed fully by Muller (1977) in his analysis of the grammatical rules of design. His work, and Washburn's (1978) definition of different types of symmetry, do not result in any attempt at translating cultural meaning and symbolism. Rather Washburn uses symmetry simply as an

additional trait for the discovery of population group composition and inter-action spheres. Such analyses can be, and have been, carried out without any major change in functionalist theories of society.

Some of the work on the identification of settlement structures has also involved little criticism of the New Archaeology. Clarke's (1972b: 828, 837) identification of structural transformations (bilateral symmetry relating to male/female) in the Iron Age Glastonbury settlement appears as a peripheral component of a systems analysis. A clear link is made between the generative principles of the settlement design and the social system. Isbell's (1976) recognition of the 3000-year continuity in settlement structure in the South American Andes, despite major discontinuities in social and economic systems, raises more fundamental problems for systemic studies since structure is seen to continue and lie behind adaptive change. Fritz's (1978) interesting account of prehistoric Chaco Canyon in north western New Mexico shows that the organisation of houses, towns, and regional settlement can be seen as transforms of the same underlying principle in which west is symmetrical to east, but north is asymmetrical to south. This study is concerned to link the organisation of social systems to underlying structures. The structuralist analysis of a Neolithic cemetery by Van de Velde (1980) has related aims. Fletcher's (1977a) work on the spacing between 'entities' – posts, walls, door posts, pots and hearths – in settlements is concerned less with social strategies and more with ordering principles which carry long-term adaptive value. Hillier *et al.* (1976) have identified a purely formal logic for the description of all types of arrangement of buildings and spaces within settlements.

The above examples are drawn from prehistoric archaeology but structural studies have an important place in historical archaeology (Deetz 1967; Ferguson 1977; Frankfort 1951; Glassie 1975; Leone 1977). While many of the prehistoric and historic archaeology studies explain structure in terms of social functions and adaptive values, they also introduce the notion that there is more to culture than observable relationships and functional utility. There is also a set of rules, a code, which, like the rules in a game of chess, is followed in the pursuit of survival, adaptation and socio-economic strategy. In an ethnographic analysis of the Nuba in Sudan, it has been shown that all aspects of material culture patterning (burial, settlement, artefact styles) must be understood as being produced according to sets of rules concerned with purity, boundedness and categorisation (Hodder 1982b). Individuals organise their experience according to sets of rules. Communication and understanding of the world result from the use of a common language – that is, a set of rules which identify both the way symbols should be organised into sets, and the meaning of individual symbols in contrast to others. Material culture can be examined as a structured set of differences. This structured symbolising behaviour has functional utility, and it must be understood in those terms. But it also has a logic of its own which is not directly observable as pattern or style. The structure must be interpreted as having existed partly independent of the observable data, having generated and produced those data.

The concern with material culture as the product of human categorisation processes is described by Miller (1982a). It is sufficient to emphasise here that the various structuralist analyses of codes can be clearly distinguished from functionalist studies of systems. Both structuralists and functionalists are concerned with relationships and with the way things and institutions are organised. In other words, both are concerned

with 'structure' if that word is defined in a very general way. But there is a difference in that the logic analysed by functionalists is the visible social system (the social relations) which exists separately from the perceptions of men. For Leach (1973b, 1977, 1978), structure is an ideal order in the mind. For Lévi-Strauss (1968a), it is an internal logic, not directly visible, which is the underlying order by which the apparent order must be explained. But for Lévi-Strauss, the structure often appears to lie outside the human mind (Godelier 1977). Structuralists, including Leach and Lévi-Strauss, claim that adequate explanation of observed patterns must make reference to underlying codes.

Criticisms of structuralism

The problems and limitations of the different types of structuralism are discussed by, for example, Giddens (1979), and in this chapter only those criticisms will be examined which are particularly relevant to the themes to be debated in this book. A major problem concerns the lack of a theory of practice (Bourdieu 1977). The structuralism of Saussure, which uses a linguistic model, separates *langue* as a closed series of formal rules, a structured set of differences, from semantic and referential ties. The formal set of relationships is distinct from the practice of use. Similarly, Lévi-Strauss identifies a series of unconscious mental structures which are separated from practice and from the ability of social actors to reflect consciously on their ideas and create new rules. In both linguistic and structural analyses it is unclear how the interpretation and use of rules might lead to change. How an individual can be a competent social actor is not clearly specified. As in functionalism, form and practical function are separated.

The failure within structuralism and within structuralist analyses in archaeology to develop a theory of practice (concerning the generation of structures in social action) has encouraged the view within functionalist archaeology that structuralism can only contribute to the study of norms and ideas which are epiphenomenal. The gulf between normative and processual archaeology has been widened since, on the one hand, structuralist approaches could be seen as relating to ideas divorced from adaptive processes while, on the other hand, it was thought by processualists that social change could be examined adequately without reference to the structure of ideas. Some of the structuralist studies identified above, such as those by Muller and Washburn, make little attempt to understand the referential context. The notion of a 'mental template' can be criticised in a similar vein because it envisages an abstract set of ideas or pictures without examining the framework of referential meaning within which the ideas take their form. In other, more integrated studies, such as those by Fritz and Marshak, the social and ecological contexts of the structures identified are examined, but the link between form and practice is insecure and no relevant theory is developed. On the other hand, work such as that of Flannery and Marcus (1976), which fits better into the functionalist mould, relates all form to function and structural analysis is limited. Few archaeological studies have managed to provide convincing accounts of the relationship between structure as code and social and ecological organisation.

Other limitations of structuralism can be related to the above. As in functionalism, the role of the individual is slight. In functionalism the individual is subordinate to the imperatives of social co-ordination. In the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss the

individual is subordinate to the organising mechanisms of the unconscious. The notion of a 'norm' in traditional archaeology implies a structured set of cultural rules within which the individual plays little part.

The dichotomy between synchrony and diachrony, statics and dynamics, exists in structuralism as it does in functionalism. Structural analyses can incorporate time as a dimension for the setting up of formal differences, but the role of historical explanation is seen to be slight in the work of Lévi-Strauss, and there is little attempt to understand how structural rules can be changed. Structures often appear as static constraints on societies, preventing change. Structuralism does not have an adequate notion of the generation of change.

While the main concern of reactions to structuralism is to develop an adequate theory of practice (Bourdieu 1977; Piaget 1971, 1972; Giddens 1979), other criticisms have concentrated on the methods of analysis. Structures, because they are organising principles, are not observable as such, and this is true whether we are talking about anthropology, psychology or archaeology. They can only be reached by reflective abstraction. Thus, structures of particular kinds could be said to emerge because the analyst is looking for them, trying to fit the data into some expected and hypothetical structural pattern. But how can such hypotheses ever be falsified (Pettit 1975: 88)? For structuralism to be a worthwhile pursuit, it must be possible to disprove a weak hypothesis. However, Pettit (*ibid.*: 88–92) feels that rejection of structuralist hypotheses is impossible, at least in regard to myths, for a number of reasons. For example, the initial hypothesis in structuralist analysis often is necessarily vague so that the analyst can give himself room to shift the hypothesis to accommodate the new transformations. Also, because there are few rules on the way in which structures are transformed into different realities, one can make up the rules as one goes along. By using sufficient ingenuity, any two patterns can probably be presented as transformations of each other.

Thus the structural method of Lévi-Strauss 'is hardly more than a licence for the free exercise of imagination in establishing associations' (*ibid.*: 96). There is certainly a danger that archaeologists may be able to select arbitrary aspects of their data and suggest a whole series of unverifiable transformations. These criticisms are discussed in detail by Wylie (1982). Here I wish to note that Pettit's attack is directed at those formal and structural analyses which take little account of the referential context of social action. Within a structuralism in which a theory of practice has been developed, Pettit's criticisms have less force because the structural transformations must 'make sense' as part of a changing and operating system. Abstract formal analysis must be shown to be relevant to a particular social and historical context, and it must lead to an understanding of the generation of new actions and structures through time.

All the above criticisms of structuralism have concerned the need to examine the generation of structures within meaningful, active and changing contexts. The criticisms of both functionalism and structuralism centre on the inability of the approaches to explain particular historical contexts and the meaningful actions of individuals constructing social change within those contexts. Archaeology in particular has moved away from historical explanation and has tried to identify cross-cultural universals concerning either the functioning of ecological systems or (rarely) the human unconscious. There is a need to develop a contextual archaeology which

resolves the dichotomy evident in functionalism and structuralism between cultural norm and societal adaptation.

Archaeology as a cultural science

The approaches developed by the majority of the authors in *Symbolic and Structural Archaeology* (Hodder 1982a) are not structuralist in that they take account of the criticisms of the work of, for example, Leach and Lévi-Strauss, made by various 'post-structuralist' writers (Harstrup 1978; Ardener 1978). Yet the insights offered by structuralism must be retained in any adequate analysis of social processes, and it is for this reason that I have not deleted the term structuralism from the papers in *Symbolic and Structural Archaeology* (Hodder 1982a) (e.g. Wylie 1982; see also the term 'dialectical structuralism' used by Tilley 1982). Even if structuralism as a whole is generally rejected, the analysis of structure has a potential which has not been exhausted in archaeology.

Structural analyses involve a series of approaches described by Miller (1982a). Important concepts which can be retained from structuralism include syntagm and paradigm. Syntagm refers to rules of combination, and to 'sets' of items and symbols. In burial studies it may be noted, for example, that particular 'costumes' can be identified which are associated with particular sub-groups within society. The rules of combination describe the way in which items or classes of item (e.g. weapons) placed on one part of the body are associated with other classes of item on other parts of the body. Similarly, sets of items may be found to occur in settlements. Syntagmatic studies can also be applied to the combination of attributes on artefacts, and Hodder (1982e) rules for the generation of Dutch Neolithic pottery decoration are described. Paradigm refers to series of alternatives or differences. For example, in the burial study, a brooch of type A may be found worn on the shoulder in contrast to a pin or a brooch type B placed in the same position on other skeletons. Each alternative may be associated with a different symbolic meaning.

But in all such structural analyses the particular symbol used must not be seen as arbitrary. 'High structuralist' analyses are directed towards examinations of abstract codes, and the content or substance of the symbol itself often appears arbitrary. However, the symbol is not arbitrary, as is seen by, for example, the placing of a symbol such as a crown, associated with royalty, on the label of a bottle of beer in order to increase sales. The crown is not chosen arbitrarily in a structured set of differences. Rather, it is chosen as a powerful symbol with particular evocations and connotations which make its use appropriate within the social and economic context of selling beer in England. The content of the sign affects the structure of its use. Barth (1975) has demonstrated elegantly that material symbolisation cannot be described simply as sets of categories and transformations, however cross-cutting and complex one might allow these to be. Culture is to be studied as meaningfully constituting – as the framework through which adaptation occurs – but the meaning of an object resides not merely in its contrast to others within a set. Meaning also derives from the associations and use of an object, which itself becomes, through the associations, the node of a network of references and implications. There is an interplay between structure and content.

The emphasis on the symbolic associations of things themselves is not only a

departure from purely formal and structuralist analyses. It also breaks with other approaches in archaeology. In processual analyses of symbol systems, the artefact itself is rarely given much importance. An object may be described as symbolising status, male or female, or social solidarity, but the use of the particular artefact class, and the choice of the symbol itself, are not adequately discussed. Similarly, traditional archaeologists use types as indicators of contact, cultural affiliation and diffusion, but the question of which type is used for which purpose is not pursued. The symbol is seen as being arbitrary. In this book an attempt is made by some of the authors to assess why particular symbols were used in a particular context. For example, in Hodder (1982e) the shape of Neolithic burial mounds is seen as having been appropriate because the shape itself referred back to earlier houses, and such references and evocations had social advantage in the context in which the tombs were built.

The structural and symbolic emphases lead to an awareness of the importance of 'context' in interpretations of the use of material items in social processes. The generative structures and the symbolic associations have a particular meaning in each cultural context and within each set of activities within that context. Although generative principles such as pure/impure, or the relations between parts of the human body (see Shanks and Tilley 1982), may occur widely, they may be combined in ways peculiar to each cultural milieu, and be given specific meanings and associations. The transformation of structures and symbols between different contexts can have great 'power'. For example, it has been noted elsewhere (Hodder and Lane 1982) that Neolithic stone axes in Britain and Brittany frequently occur in ritual and burial contexts, engraved on walls, as miniatures or as soft chalk copies. The participation of these axes in secular exchanges would evoke the ritual contexts and could be used to legitimate any social dominance based on privileged access to these items. In a study of the Neolithic in Orkney (Hodder 1982b) it has been suggested that the similarities between the spatial structures in burial, non-burial ritual, and domestic settlement contexts were used within social strategies to legitimise emerging elites.

So far, it has been suggested that material items come to have symbolic meanings as a result both of their use in structured sets and of the associations and implications of the objects themselves, but that the meanings vary with context. It is through these various mechanisms that material items and the constructed world come to represent society. But what is the nature of representation in human culture? In particular, how should social relations be translated into material symbols? For New Archaeologists these questions are relatively unproblematic since artefacts (whether utilitarian, social or ideological) are simply tools for adaptive efficiency. Symbols are organised so as to maximise information flow and there is no concept in such analyses of the relativity of representation. It is in studies of representation that concepts of ideology play a central role, and although there is considerable divergence of views within this book (Hodder 1982a) on the definition and nature of ideology, it is at least clear that the way in which structured sets of symbols are used in relation to social strategies depends on a series of concepts and attitudes that are historically and contextually appropriate. I have demonstrated elsewhere (1982c), for example, that social ranking may be represented in burial ritual either through a 'naturalising' ideology in which the arbitrary social system is represented as occurring in the material world, or through an ideology in which social