

Archeologické rozhledy

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MATERIALIA

Nálezy z mohylníku v Plešnicích, okr. Plzeň-sever / Funde aus dem Hügelgräberfeld in Plešnice, Bez. Pilsen-Nord (*J. Blažek - J. Militký*), 519-521. Addenda ke článku J. Waldhausera: Laténská spona z hory Oblík v Poohří / Addenda zum Artikel von J. Waldhauser: Eine Latènefibula aus dem Berg Oblík bei Louny (*J. Blažek*), 522.

MISCELLANEA: 522-529.

MONOGRAPHIAE: 529-533.

PERIODICA: 533-536.

During the 1980's archaeological theory in the English-speaking world began to recognize and deal with three closely-linked problems. The first was a realisation of the poverty of arguments about the past which were limited to adaptive, ecological and functional relationships. Already, in the work of archaeologists such as *Clarke (1972)*, *Renfrew (1973)*, *Flannery (1976)* and *Friedman and Rowlands (1977)* attention had turned to the incorporation of social questions into archaeological debate. Issues such as ranking and the spatial organisation of societies were seen as relevant to evolutionary change. This more humanistic concern with social questions led in turn in the 1980's to the incorporation of symbolism into archaeological theory (*Renfrew 1982*; *Leon 1982*) and to a wider debate about the nature of material culture as a signifying system - as a text, to be read by people in the past and present (*Hodder 1986*; *Shanks and Tilley 1987*). Material culture was seen as meaningful rather than as a distorted fossil record of past behaviour. At the minimum, this wider debate in archaeological theory shows that too much of the archaeological data are left unaccounted for if reasoning is restricted to adaptive and ecological accounts.

The second problem which began to be addressed in the 1980's was the processual archaeological view that material culture is passive and that human beings are passive. Within the systematic models suggested by Flannery and Renfrew, for example, human beings are controlled by systems which they do not comprehend. Indeed, the thoughts, intentions and strategies of human agents are not thought of as relevant to long-term change. Thus material culture is simply the passive by-product of the efficient running of the system. The intentions of the producers and the meanings given to the products by the users are not thought to be relevant to archaeological study of long-term adaptive change. In the 1980's there began to be an increasing concern with the role of agency in social change and the role of material culture as actively constructing that change (*Hodder 1982*; *1986*). The most productive direction in which this line of enquiry has been taken is into material culture as ideology and into the ideological framework for domination and resistance (*Miller and Tilley 1984*; *Miller, Rowlands and Tilley 1989*; *McGuire and Paynter 1990*). For example, *Fergusson (1990)* has shown how pots and rituals were used by North American slaves as part of a resistance to white domination.

The third problem with early processual archaeology which began to be exposed in the 1980s was part of a broader transformation within anthropology as a whole. Increasingly history ceased to be viewed disparagingly as descriptive and particularistic. There was a reaction against the over-stressing of generalisations. In archaeology it proved difficult to identify 'law-like' generalisations which were more than self-evident or trivial (*Flannery 1973*). There was an increasing acceptance that generalisation had to be tempered by in-depth contextual understanding - a temporal version of *Geertz' (1973)* 'thick description'.

These three issues (the importance of meaning, agency and history) gradually came to be accepted within processual archaeology, either through internal development (*Renfrew 1982; Flannery and Marcus 1983*) or in reaction to the critique by post-processual archaeology. Some examples of recent attempts to incorporate some aspects of post-processual archaeology into an advanced or cognitive processual archaeology are provided by *Earle and Preucel (1987), Renfrew (1989), Renfrew and Bahn (1989), and Mithen (1990)*. (For a general review of the relationships between processual and post-processual archaeology see *Preucel 1991 and Hodder 1992*).

These attempts to reach a compromise between processual and post-processual archaeology, at least in terms of the three problems dealt with above, gloss over an important epistemological difference. As processual archaeology has gradually tried to incorporate symbolic meaning, human agency and historical context, it has met difficulties in accommodating these new considerations within a positivist framework. This philosophical issue has been fully discussed by *Wylie (1989)*. A dilemma existed in positivist processual archaeology before any attempt to interpret past symbolism, but it was thrown into focus by that attempt. In essence the problem is that archaeologists had espoused first empiricist and then positivist perspectives according to which they could only test hypotheses which concerned the observable world. And yet archaeologists want to go beyond their data to make statements about the dynamics of past societies. They want to make statements about behaviour, economic and social structures and so on which go beyond the data and are not themselves observable. Archaeologists felt that they could ignore this dilemma so long as they could argue for deterministic links from the material to the non-material. But the attempt to get at past symbolism undermines any such argument. The very definition of a symbol normally includes some reference to its arbitrary nature. Few people would argue that the symbolic meaning of an artifact can be determined cross-culturally. How could a positivist approach possibly deal with the arbitrary nature of the sign?

The dilemma was exacerbated as the notion of material culture as a text began to take a clearer form. The view that material culture is meaningfully constituted takes us close to the realisation that the meaning of an artifact does not simply derive from its production but also from its use and perception by others. The main purpose of the claim that in some respects the metaphor of the text is appropriate for material culture, is to move archaeologists away from the notion that the data are a passive record with only one meaning. Different people will have read the 'text' differently, in different contexts. It is not a large leap from this last statement to the realisation that archaeologists too, in their different and changing contexts, will 'read the past' differently. If the meaning of a text is not equivalent to the intention of the author, or the context of production and use, but includes the readings made by 'them' and by 'us', then how can we know how 'they' were reading the material culture? Is any reading made by archaeologists, and indeed by non-archaeologists equally valid? The spectre of relativism haunts archaeology.

Positivist processual archaeologists try to avoid this issue by retaining a commitment to testing theories on independent and objective data. Such an approach may work pragmatically in sciences which deal with a single herme-

neutic. Physics and biology, for example, deal with only one framework of meaning (our own) in attempting to describe natural phenomena in our terms. The humanistic and social sciences (including archaeology), however, deal with a double hermeneutic since the objects studied in 'our' terms also have another meaning in 'their' terms. The problem becomes one of translation. The processual, hypotheses-testing approach might work adequately for a single hermeneutic and for the 'hard' science aspects of archaeological enquiry (though even here, as with radiometric dating, interpretive issues are in my view involved, but it deals less well with the double hermeneutic. I want to show an example how such hypothesis-testing procedures are undermined when archaeologists are dealing with past symbolism.

The example I wish to use is *Renfrew's* (1985) interpretation of a sanctuary at Phylakopi in the Bronze Age Aegean. At this site, Renfrew had found a building which he wished to interpret as a sanctuary or shrine for religious behaviour. In order to test this hypothesis, he followed a typically processual procedure. He undertook a survey of the anthropological literature on religion and came up with a list of material expectations for religious sanctuaries. For example, there should be images of the divine, special gestures as in adoration, and attention-focussing devices. He then checks this list against the evidence from Phylakopi and finds that there is a good fit. For example, large figurines represent divine images with their hands raised in special gestures, and the platforms in the building represent attention-focussing devices. The hypothesis that the building is for religious purposes is confirmed.

In the natural and physical sciences such a procedure would appear acceptable. But when we are dealing with a double hermeneutic, the objectivity of the data is less secure. Renfrew wants to test his theories against data without making intuitive leaps. But perhaps 'the data' meant different things to people living in the past. For example, how can we be sure that a large figurine is a god, or that the gestures are religious, or that a platform focussed attention? Renfrew's supposed objective procedure is in fact based on subjective statements about what the data meant and mean. He ends up imposing meaning from the outside without trying to understand what the data meant to the inhabitants of Phylakopi.

A more adequate testing of Renfrew's theory that the building was a shrine would, in my view follow a different procedure, not in terms of the use of generalisation since that is clearly needed in any archaeological interpretation but in terms of the approach to data. It is necessary to recognize that archaeologists deal with a double hermeneutic. We need to try to understand what the building and what 'religion' meant to 'them'. The data are of course 'objective' in the sense that they have certain universal physical properties, but they are not 'objective' in the sense that they have universal meaning. They are perceived differently by different people in their different cultures and so we cannot test our theories objectively.

In order to understand what the building meant to 'them', in my view a contextual approach should be followed. My first question would be 'how does the building differ from other buildings on the site?' Renfrew gives us few clues about the full range of artifacts, sherd sizes, activity traces, discard patterns, faunal differences between the building and supposed 'domestic'

houses. Was there more evidence of feasting, different approaches to refuse, different types of figurine? In this way one could, for example, explore the assumption that religion was separate from domestic activities at this time period. Perhaps 'they' viewed religion very differently. The aim would be to relate our general understanding of religion to specific contextual patterning. This alternative procedure involves not only searching for correspondence (fit) with the data, but also at internal coherence. If the building really was a religious shrine, then all aspects of different types of data, from refuse patterns to faunal assemblages should be affected. A coherent argument has to be made which makes sense of 'the whole'. If the building was really religious in a sense different from our own, being more closely tied to mundane everyday activities, then we have to adjust our expectations to make coherent sense of the whole. What I am describing here is the hermeneutic procedure which I think most archaeologists implicitly use. It involves searching for data correspondence within a theory which makes coherent sense of as much of data as possible.

I have used hermeneutic procedures of this type in work on the meaning of Neolithic long barrows (*Hodder 1990*). I do not claim that long burial mounds universally mean houses. I cannot objectively test the theory that they mean houses using universal instruments of measurement. What I can do though is show that there are internal relationships within the data which support the hypothesis. In particular, in a number of specific ways, the tombs look like houses. This 'objective' similarity of form does not necessarily imply similarity of meaning. But the correspondence is supported by other factors (such as that the tombs are sometimes built over houses or settlements) and by a coherent theory which explains why tombs should be built like houses in the particular economic and social context of Neolithic North-west Europe. A hermeneutic procedure has led to a plausible account of a set of meanings different from our own.

Many processual archaeologists have today become very pessimistic about saying anything about the past. They realize that the data are theory laden and they recognize that meaning does not lie in the object but in the interpreter. And yet they want to retain a commitment to positivism and objectivity. The result is paralysis. The contradiction cannot be dealt with in positivist terms.

An alternative, hermeneutic approach, which can deal with the contradictions depends on arguments of coherence of a whole (not universality) in conjunction with correspondence to the data. But post-processual archaeologists tend to recognize that even correspondence and coherence are not sufficient in the evaluation of plausible hypotheses. Two other factors are the social 'usefulness' of the theory and the 'rhetoric' used.

The first issue derives from critical theory and feminism and concerns the relations of power which lie behind the interpretations we give to the past. The term 'discourse' is often used here to mean 'situated communication'. In other words, what we write and find plausible as archaeologists depends on how our discussion is historically, materially, socially and politically situated. This issue has been discussed very effectively by feminists who have showed the gender biases evident in even the most descriptive and objective accounts (*Gero and Conkey 1991*). Also, archaeology has traditionally been linked to the interests

of those in the middle and upper classes in Europe. More recently, indigenous groups around the world have expressed their own interpretations and claims on the past (e.g. *Condori 1989*). It has become increasingly important to analyse critically the disciplinary and wider social context within which certain statements appear to have truth value.

A second, closely related issue is the strategy used in archaeological writing. Archaeologists have not, on the whole, examined the way they write or the relationship between their writing and the audience to whom it is addressed. But the plausibility of an account depends very much on the rhetoric that is used. Critical analyses of archaeological writing (e.g. *Hodder 1989*) and new experimental forms of writing (e.g. *Spector 1991*) are now being undertaken.

Far from the simplistic and contradictory views of processual archaeologists, post-processual archaeology accepts that the 'truth' or plausibility of an archaeological hypothesis is a complicated, and social, matter. It involves correspondence, but also coherence, social context and rhetoric.

MAIN INFLUENCES IN POST-PROCESSUAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Despite the common underlying themes described above, post-processual archaeology is highly diverse. Indeed, rather than embracing a new overall paradigm, it is simply 'post'. United in criticism of processual archaeology there is a great variety of possible responses. Nevertheless there are four strands which can be seen in current debates in English-speaking archaeological theory which go beyond an ecological perspective.

The first is Marxism. Since Marxism is itself today highly diverse it is difficult to be precise about its impact on post-processual archaeology (but see *McGuire 1992*). Certainly in Britain and Scandinavia the influence of structural-Marxism, through the work of *Friedman and Rowlands (1977)*, has been considerable (for example, *Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978*; *Kristiansen 1981*; *Gledhill 1978*; *Bender 1978*). These approaches placed a new emphasis on internal contradiction and conflict leading to change, and they gave social rather than economic relations a dominant role. But, rather than fitting into aspects of the Marxist tradition which emphasised explanation as being specific and historical and which problematised the relationship between hypotheses and data, the archaeological applications of Althusserian structural-Marxism often retained an evolutionism, materialism and positivism which did little to threaten the processual paradigm. It was, by contrast, the Marxist notions of ideology, however, which did lead to a more fundamental reevaluation (*Miller and Tilley 1984*). Rather than restricting ideology to the dominant ideology, it has been possible to see ideology as related to interest. Different groups in society are able to develop competing ideologies. Thus ideology is constructed within relations of domination and is closely connected with power. The influence of *Foucault (1977)* has been considerable in that power is seen as being part of a power/knowledge/truth network (*Shanks and Tilley 1987a,b*). Power over others through the control of material resources has to be linked to the valuation, prestige and knowledge allocated to those resources. Even subordinate groups are able to manipulate the meanings of material culture in order to resist and act against oppression. While the contribution of a distincti-

vely Marxist perspective to these ideas is difficult to distinguish, recent publications (e.g. *Miller, Rowlands and Tilley 1989; McGuire and Paynter 1991*) have shown a close affiliation with post-processual concerns. *Kohl (1985, p. 112)* talks of a "subtler historical materialism along which ideas and materials actively and continuously interact with one other".

If some western European Marxist archaeology has become blurred as it has contributed to and merged with post-processual archaeology, the same can be said for structuralism. The initial influence of structuralism in archaeology was important because, like Marxism, it introduced the notion of structures behind systems. It also provided a method for approaching symbolic codes. But the critique of structuralism was quickly established (*Shanks and Tilley 1987*). Within a contextual archaeology (*Hodder 1986*), the emphasis on structured frameworks of meaning is retained, at least in the initial stages of analysis before the transformation of meanings in situated, practical contexts is explored. Post-processual archaeologists may still employ structuralist oppositions in their attempts to reconstruct specific historical contexts. The further transformation of structuralism into post-structuralism (*Bapty and Yates 1990; Tilley 1990*) provides another strand of post-processual diversity. Opposed to the reconstruction of original contextual meanings, and opposed to the notion of agency, post-structuralist archaeology explores 'floating' chains of signifiers and leads to a radical undermining of the discipline of archaeology.

A third strand within post-processual archaeology is that influenced by various forms of critical theory. Associated particularly with the work of *Leone (1982; Potter and Shackel 1987)*, this approach has emphasised the role of archaeology in furthering the dominant ideologies of capitalism and has explored alternative ways of empowering people to critique these ideologies. Once again these ideas have been absorbed into post-processual archaeology and are difficult to distinguish, although there are certainly differences in the commitments expressed towards science and objectivity.

A fourth strand is feminism. I hesitate to include this component since important differences have emerged between some post-processual writing and gender archaeology (*Gero and Conkey 1991*). For example, the apparent commitment to some form of relativism and free-play in post-structuralist writing appears insufficiently engaged politically for some feminists, and it undermines their claims concerning the real material oppression of women in society. Nevertheless, I would argue that feminism forms an important component in post-processual archaeology, because of its concern with meaning, other voices, agency, power, process and the past as construction. Indeed, many of the more active early post-processual writers have since spearheaded the introduction of a politically aware gender archaeology (e.g. *Gero and Conkey 1991; Moore 1986; Wylie 1990*). There is much variation within gender archaeology and some attempts simply to reconstruct what women were doing in the past fit easily into a processual approach (e.g. *Ehrenburg 1989*). However, a politically active gender archaeology certainly contributes to, as well as confronts, a value-committed archaeology.

It might be argued that, given all the diversity within and outside post-processual archaeology, there is little point in using a common term. This is particularly true when we include the accommodations being made within

processual archaeology (see the discussion earlier of the work of Flannery, Renfrew and others). In some quarters a narrow processual view is retained, particularly in the United States of America. In such contexts the processual/post-processual debate still has some relevance. But for most archaeologists the dichotomy can probably not remain a helpful one. Rather than worrying about who is processual and who post-processual, archaeologists are increasingly getting on with dealing with the new range of questions that are raised - such as the nature of material culture meanings, the relationship between discard and power, the changing role of gender relations in prehistory, the social history of archaeology, and so on. The processual/post-processual debate raised some questions. We now have to answer them.

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