

ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORY IN EUROPE

The last three decades

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THEORY IN SPANISH ARCHAEOLOGY SINCE 1960

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Introduction

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In Spain, as in other West European countries, archaeological theory and methodology have undergone important and at times very rapid changes since 1960. Various socio-political, economic, academic, geographical and cultural factors in Spain have nevertheless meant that the pace and pattern of this evolution have been somewhat different from elsewhere. The archaeological literature published in Spain during these years (consisting of over 10,000 articles and books) reveals both constant trends and certain very sudden changes. In general, a very traditional attitude to archaeology was maintained throughout the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, but this was followed by a highly complex situation in which a variety of schools and tendencies coexisted, not always peacefully. This second period gradually generated a fruitful process of dynamic reappraisal that has gone beyond the mere imitation of foreign models.

One of the main influences on the dynamics of archaeological thought in Spain during the last thirty years has been the country's political situation. Under the regime headed by General Franco, which lasted until 1975, certain attitudes were frowned upon by the authorities, who thus blocked the introduction of alien theories and the development of models (especially Marxist) that went against official ideology. Related to this political environment, the prevailing university system, based on deference to the authority of the academic establishment, favoured certain kinds of traditional, routine research rather than theoretical innovation, epistemological analysis and methodological creativity. This tendency

was exacerbated by archaeology's academic classification among the humanities, which preserved it from the influence of the natural sciences. Furthermore, at a time when the trend in the rest of the world was for prehistoric studies to court the natural sciences and anthropology, the subject of prehistory was divorced in Spain from ethnology, with which it had hitherto been associated in history faculties. Other factors tending to sustain traditional archaeology have included economic limitations in the fields of education and research (a chronic problem shared by other disciplines), which have prevented investigation on a scale that would do justice to the enormous archaeological wealth of a country whose geographical structure has favoured the development of such an intricate cultural mosaic. In addition, geographical proximity to France, which had traditionally strongly influenced Spanish culture (twenty years ago, French was taught in all Spanish schools and universities, English in practically none), aided the introduction of theories and methods originating in French centres of learning.

Although some of these factors are still at work, traditional archaeology has been increasingly challenged over the last decade by a more vigorous, innovative and stimulating way of thought that entered Spain by two main routes: Spanish studies of American archaeology, which inevitably involved exposure to – and discussion and appraisal of – English and American influences, especially that of the New Archaeology; and the presence in Spain of many foreign researchers attracted by the country's archaeological wealth. European scholars have indeed long been visiting Spain to study questions of interest for Western Europe as a whole, to the extent that in Madrid there is a permanent centre (the German Archaeological Institute) for German archaeologists, most of whom have concentrated on proto-history and the Classical period. The French have also carried out many studies here, especially on the palaeolithic. In recent years, however, the Europeans have been joined in Spain by Americans investigating the middle palaeolithic, the Cantabrian upper palaeolithic and south-eastern Spanish proto-history. This influx of archaeologists representative of a wide variety of different schools (American New Archaeology, the German tradition, and various strains of French thought) has naturally had a great influence on the archaeology practised and preached by the Spanish themselves. Together with the development of American anthropology and the introduction

of archaeology as a distinct academic specialism in Spanish universities, it has allowed the continued presence of traditional archaeology to be accompanied by the growth of an 'anthropological archaeology' defined largely in terms of scientific method rather than anthropological theory. This new approach was for a long time based somewhat slavishly on the New Archaeology, but is now beginning to develop theories and methods of its own that testify to its increasing maturity.

The exploitation of the sources of intellectual inspiration mentioned above has been encouraged and aided by the great changes in Spanish society in recent years. In particular, the advent of democracy has brought with it numerous advantages for scientific research: a climate of political and ideological freedom tolerating debate; a reform of the university system that aims to promote research and accepts the authority of individual academics within their fields; the provision of more funds for research; an improvement in the social status of all kinds of research activity; and greater interest in things Anglo-American, from life-styles and language to scientific methods and theories. All this has allowed the birth of anthropological archaeology (in the sense defined above of scientific methodology) alongside traditional archaeology, which though remaining faithful to its original postulates is itself beginning to undergo an apparent metamorphosis so as to adapt to the new intellectual climate. The coexistence of traditional archaeology and anthropological archaeology is not without its tensions, with traditionalists scorning anthropologists as 'theorisers' and anthropologists disparaging traditionalists as 'potologists' (*cacharrólogos*). Add to this the traditional rivalries between different universities and regions (Spain has seventeen semi-autonomous territories) and it is possible to get some idea of how dynamic (some would say chaotic) the current situation is. In this simmering melting-pot of schools and approaches, the reappraisal of methods and theories in the light of the great variety of topics tackled has begun to result in the appearance of a number of studies with a peculiarly Spanish stamp.

Spanish Archaeology from 1960 to the 1970s

At the first congress of Spanish Anthropologists, held in Seville in January 1973, J. Alcina-Franch presented a paper in which he analysed the current situation of Spanish archaeology and its

development during the previous decades (Alcina-Franch 1975). As characteristics of Spanish archaeology between 1940 and 1970 he listed the following:

- (1) an almost complete lack of theoretical orientation;
- (2) lack of any coherent programme of research;
- (3) the ubiquitous adherence to a descriptive, or 'archaeographic', style;
- (4) the absence of all but historicist interpretations;
- (5) deficient consideration of environmental factors;
- (6) the absence of interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary studies.

With regard to the first of these points, it was suggested that Spanish archaeology in the period 1940-70 was open to exactly the same criticisms as Walter Taylor made of pre-war American archaeology in 1948 (Taylor 1948). Alcina considered the cause of this situation to be the habit of treating archaeology within a historicist framework, which made for essentially descriptive, unprogrammatic research. A survey of the latest volumes of five of the most important Spanish archaeological and prehistorical journals (*Ampurias* and *Pyrenae*, published in Barcelona; *Archivo de Prehistoria Levantina*, published in Valencia; *Cesaraugusta*, published in Saragossa; and *Trabajos de Prehistoria*, published in Madrid) showed that of a total of 172 articles considered, 63 per cent were merely descriptive (reports of archaeological material recovered by excavation or studies of collections or individual pieces), with no attempt at greater generalisation than the analysis of a few typological series; 12 per cent were studies of collections of coins, inscriptions, etc.; and only 10 per cent were historiographic or concerned with historical interpretation. The articles reporting excavations or prospections exhibited a total lack of theoretical orientation 'even from the historical point of view, the only one that most Spanish archaeologists, in principle, recognise as being of interest' (Alcina-Franch 1975).

The acceptance of only the historical viewpoint, i.e. the interpretation of archaeological data within an exclusively historical or culture-history framework, meant that archaeology was in fact used simply to illustrate historical research on high cultures, the study of pre- or proto-historic cultures being forced into a similar historical mould distinguished only by a concern for determining sequences, contacts and typological or stylistic variations that were often explained using a diffusionist model. For

Alcina, the cause of this situation was the isolation of traditional archaeology from the natural sciences and the academic anti-Marxism attributable to the then current political regime. The only signs of reform that he detected in Spain were positive responses to the works of Gordon Childe, while other English and American theorists were unknown.

As a reaction against the situation described above, Alcina proposed the use of the models that were originally the basis of the New Archaeology; also that Spanish archaeology, while encouraging interdisciplinary work and scientific co-operation in general, should rest firmly on an anthropological basis, since only anthropology would be able to provide the theoretical framework so sadly lacking in Spanish traditional archaeology. These principles he recognised as already having been put into effect in the little anthropological archaeology then practised in Spain, most of it on American themes. Finally, Alcina expressed his confidence that the intellectual evolution and critical capacity of the new generations of undergraduates, together with the expansion of anthropological studies, would eventually overcome resistance to this kind of approach and achieve highly positive results.

Because of its swingeing criticisms, Alcina's paper, which appeared both in the proceedings of the congress and as a chapter in a book of theoretical reflections on archaeology, history and anthropology (Alcina 1975), kindled considerable polemic, but it proved prophetic as regards the growth of anthropological archaeology, which indeed owes much to his efforts and those of his disciples. His description of the situation in 1973 was quite accurate on the whole, but it would be unfair not to mention here a number of precursors. Theoretical meditations on the nature of archaeology as a discipline had already been published by Esteva (1959) and Alonso del Real (1961), with the conclusion that its objectives, programme and methods should be brought increasingly into line with those of anthropology. Interesting contributions to anthropological archaeology had also been made during the 1940s within the culture-history approach of the Viennese school, especially by specialists in the proto-historic peoples of the Iberian peninsula. However, the standard-bearer of anthropological archaeology in Spain was, and still is, the *Revista Española de Antropología Americana*, which since its foundation in the mid 1960s has served to divulge the successive waves of the New Archaeology, while classical work in the New Archaeology has

since 1970 been made available to a wider university public in the *Cuadernos de Antropología Social y Etnología*.

Not without difficulties (as Alcina had foreseen), anthropological archaeology thus began to emerge beside traditional archaeology as the result of its discussion by the Americanists, the penetration of a variety of French tendencies, and the arrival of numerous American researchers wishing to apply their theories, methods and programmes to the quantitatively and qualitatively rich archaeological material available in Spain and so test them against the theories and methods of other schools. At the same time, the installation of palynological laboratories and C14 equipment, and greater familiarity with and facilities for the application of physical, chemical, biological and mathematical techniques, allowed the use of more rigorous methodologies in keeping with the theoretical progress. Traditional archaeology nevertheless continued to be the dominant tendency, as is shown by inspection of the literature listed in the *Repertorio de Arqueología Española* for these years; for in spite of the apparently impeccable presentation of many reports of excavations or other investigations, with their initial enunciation of rigorous working hypotheses, their detailed explanation of the methods employed and their painstaking description of the material recovered (not forgetting lengthy appendices listing the results of analysing the finds by physical or chemical techniques, etc.), this rigour is often but a thin disguise covering what is basically a neo-positivist historicist approach. The basic position of traditional archaeology continued to be that described by Alcina in 1973.

The 1980s have seen an acceleration of change in Spanish archaeology, for alongside a traditional archaeology that is increasingly rigorous in its methods but unforgiving as regards its lack of critical acumen and engrained historicism, a minority group has been increasingly active and influential wherever the new generation has attained posts of responsibility as researchers or in the lecture halls. As a result, contributions have appeared that are no longer slavish imitations of imported models or fashions, but instead include an increasing amount of original thought: theoretical papers reviewing archaeology as a discipline, epistemological essays and numerous articles reporting advances in methods of prospection, excavation, physical, chemical and palaeontological analysis, and the application of mathematical tools and computer techniques. Indeed, the effervescence of Spanish archaeology in

these years has meant that these studies have often been combined a wide variety of theoretical attitudes.

It should be emphasised, however (personal communication from M. I. Martínez Navarrete of the Centre for Historical Studies, Madrid), that the revival of archaeological debate in the 1980s was largely independent of the discussions around 1975. The initial interest in anthropological archaeology had been less towards processual, adaptive and evolutionary theories and more towards scientific methods, environmental studies and the like. In the new context of the 1980s, the dichotomy which emerged was not between history and anthropology but between a traditional descriptive empiricism on the one hand and, on the other, historical materialism and other explanations using a scientific methodology. The latter was seen as non-arbitrary and hence as liberating and radical. In such a context the term 'anthropological archaeology' came to have little relevance, and the contribution of processual archaeology continued to be largely methodological or technical.

Theory and Method in Spanish archaeology during the 1980s

R. Risch

In general one can say that theoretical awareness in Spanish archaeology started developing at the beginning of the 1980s, mainly among a younger generation of archaeologists. This must also be understood in relation to social and political changes in Spain at that time. These can very broadly be characterised by the political instability of the young democracy (in early 1981 the Spanish Congress was occupied by military forces, and in October 1982 the last of a series of military insurrections failed), economic difficulties and the strong political awareness and commitment of large parts of society (mainly among those social classes and groups that most strongly resisted the dictatorship, that is the working class, the peasants, national groups like Basques and Catalans, and certain intellectuals).

The sense of creating a new state was expressed in the progressive nature of parts of the Spanish universities, and surely influenced questions about the future of archaeology in society and in the new Spain. The theoretical and methodological foundations of the discipline were discussed, with the aim of developing an

epistemological framework in which a more scientific and socially relevant archaeology could be undertaken.

Traditional archaeology was thoroughly analysed on the one hand (e.g. Martínez Navarrete and Vicent 1983), while on the other hand the influence of perspectives from the USA and England promoted the beginning of alternative views (e.g. Estévez *et al.* 1981). It is interesting that the influences on Spanish archaeology thus shifted from Central Europe, predominantly Germany, towards the English-speaking countries. Traditional archaeology, which had hitherto dominated at the institutional level, had developed from the foundations of German archaeology, mainly concerned with the improvement of excavation techniques and the establishment of typological sequences for the prehistoric cultures of the Iberian peninsula. An interesting account of what was, and still to a certain extent is, 'traditional' archaeology can be seen in the recent book by Antonio Beltrán *Ser arqueólogo*, 'To be an archaeologist' (1988). A younger generation of archaeologists, at that time mostly still graduate students, considered this approach insufficient for their aim of understanding prehistoric societies, and started looking for new perspectives.

The beginning of this development took place in an atmosphere hostile to theoretical discussion, which was considered irrelevant to archaeology and was frequently seen as the result of left-wing propaganda. An example of this is the 'reactions' produced by the appearance of Lull's *La 'cultura' de El Argar*, the subtitle of which may be translated 'A model for the study of prehistoric socio-economic formations' (1983) (on the influence of this work, see also Martínez Navarrete 1989). The marginal position of the theoretical debate can be recognised in, for example, the 'peripheral' character of the universities (peripheral not in a pejorative sense, but in relation to economic resources and the numbers of teaching staff) that have organised congresses on theoretical issues: Cáceres (*Actas* 1985), Teruel 1984 and 1986 (Burillo 1984, 1986), Murcia 1986 (*Jornadas* 1986). A more recent theoretical congress, although taking place in Barcelona in late 1986, was organised by archaeology students under serious infrastructural difficulties (see Ballestín *et al.* 1988a: 149-51). These examples show that the discourse was struggling not only with the difficulties of the subject but also with an often intolerant and unproductive environment. Also, and this is an important feature of the evolution of theoretical perspectives in Spain, there was a general lack of trends in the

discussions other than a generalised apathy and rejection of theory. Theoretical awareness was only shown by isolated individuals, or by small and marginal groups spread throughout Spain. Thus one cannot talk of one centre of theoretical debate in Spain, but only of individuals and groups. Nor do I think that one can even speak of 'theoretical debate', understood as the development of ideas through propositions, critique and replies; at least this does not appear in published form. Few of the synthetic works which have recently appeared on theory and method cite Spanish contributions, let alone offer any deeper discussion of them (Fernández Martínez 1989; Alcina-Frank 1989). The reasons for this lack, or conscious avoidance, of an open scientific discussion may lie in the sphere of the micro-politics of our subject or in the bad theoretical training of most archaeologists.

Nevertheless, the situation has definitely been changing over recent years. The creation of a large number of working places and departments of archaeology in universities, regional and city councils, etc., has opened the possibility for 'institutionalising' the concept of theory, and giving it continuity in the country. The sudden increase of publications and conferences on theory and method at the present time signals a new situation. What are the reasons behind this change, and has real 'progress' taken place? Although 'traditional' anti-theoretical archaeology still controls large parts of the power structures in archaeology, to discuss theoretical aspects no longer constitutes an act of radical critique. What Lull (1990) called the 'clandestine' atmosphere of the early years has gone. Yet this does not mean that archaeology has become more 'progressive', since the power structures and unequal distribution of resources and employment, as well as the reproduction of a conservative and elite discourse, are guaranteed. 'Theory' has been integrated and is now used by the old system. This shows that in just ten years a rather complex development has taken place in Spanish archaeology which should be analysed more deeply.

Research programmes and areas of interest

The major change in Spanish archaeology of the 1980s took place in the field of research methods and techniques, as a result of what Vicent (1984) called the 'technological revolution'. Influenced by processual archaeology and the palaeoeconomic school of

shown an increasing interest in applying scientific techniques, rather than merely concentrating on the recovery of objects and architectural structures. The new methods mainly concern the analysis of organic materials, metal objects or stone implements, the recording of intrasite distribution patterns and systematic field surveying. Nevertheless, these new archaeological techniques are often used in an uncritical way, and are not related to any specific questions or theoretical frame for the reconstruction of prehistoric societies. The traditional approach remains unchanged; only the archaeological record has been extended to include new sorts of materials.

However, an increasing number of research programmes are now working with explicit hypotheses on the environment, economy and society, as well as with social theories of historical change. Examples include the works on palaeolithic cave sites in northern Spain (e.g. Gomez 1983; Bernaldo de Quiros 1980; Vila i Mitja *et al.* 1985). In Galicia, Criado *et al.* (1986) have been working on the spatial distribution patterns of megalithic monuments and settlements from a perspective that attempts to relate environment, culture and symbols (see also Bello *et al.* 1987). Specific research on the socio-economic formations of Copper and Bronze Age societies has been undertaken by a team from Barcelona in south-east Spain in collaboration with an English team (Chapman *et al.* 1987), and there is a similar project in Mallorca (Gasull *et al.* 1984). Other interesting research is being undertaken on the Iberic settlement of the Lower Aragón (Burillo and Peña 1984), also using a spatial approach.

Moving from this level of specific research programmes towards a more general perspective, we can observe an improvement in the discussion of specific aspects within archaeological theory. In this respect the area of spatial archaeology has received most attention, thanks to two congresses organised by Burillo and his team in Teruel (Burillo 1984, 1986). Although the discussion was centred on very general principles, the importance of these congresses is reflected in the growing awareness of spatial aspects in the understanding of prehistoric societies.

The so-called 'archaeology of death' has also been a focus of Spanish archaeological theory (e.g. Ruiz-Zapatero and Chapa 1988). After a critique of processual archaeology's approaches to the understanding of burial practices, Lull and Picazo (1989) have developed an alternative based on historical materialism. The func-

tionalist idea of an economic time of labour, separate from a social time of labour, is rejected. Instead, tombs and their contents have to be related to social cost and relative social value respectively, which themselves are conditioned by the general social relations of production. Invested labour cannot in their view be defined only in terms of effort or energy invested, as labour has an implicit social value. Following the same direction, Lull and Estevez (1986) developed a statistical analysis that made it possible to establish hypotheses about the social structures of the Bronze Age, using burial complexes.

Theoretical perspectives

Apart from these specific examples of archaeological theory, the discussion of a 'general theory' for archaeology received close attention during the 1980s. The congress of Soria in 1981 (*Primeras Jornadas* 1984) on 'Methods in archaeology' can be considered as the first time that theoretical issues were discussed on a broad basis. Although the general level of discussion was very basic compared to what was going on at the same time in, for example, England, Mexico or the USA, its fundamental importance lies in the fact that it represents a starting point for Spanish theoretical archaeology. Some years later the 'Seminar on new tendencies in archaeological methodology', organised in Madrid in 1985 (unpublished), had a strong influence on the Spanish archaeological debate. The congress organised in Barcelona in December 1986, 'Theoretical tendencies in archaeology', mentioned on p. 32, is the most important event so far, as it was the first time that epistemological issues were discussed in monograph form (Ballstén *et al.* 1988a). It illustrates the progression in ideas since the first positions taken up in Soria in 1981. Archaeologists and social anthropologists analysed from different perspectives the problem of archaeological theory and epistemology, archaeology's role in the social sciences, and its present political and social implications and difficulties in Spain.

Today, many works include some consideration of aspects of general theory and epistemology. I would mention three main currents explicitly developed in this respect, using as criteria their relevance to the debate, their specific attention to theoretical problems, and their originality in relation to the general development of archaeological theory in Europe and America. In this sense, I

follow a similar selection to Martínez Navarrete (1989) in her recent review of the Spanish theoretical debate.

- (1) Marxist ideas have played an important role ever since the beginning of theoretical discussions in Spanish archaeology. The socio-political situation of Spain during recent decades has been relevant in this respect. Marxism has been discussed on a political as well as an academic level, for example, by the Communist Party in Spain and it must be remembered that as recently as 1979 the now ruling Spanish Socialist Party still included 'Marxism' on their political agenda. This awareness of Marxism in society and in the social sciences has mainly been represented in archaeology by two working teams, one at the 'Autonomous University' of Barcelona, the other at the University of Jaen. Marxist debates in other countries also influenced the new discussions in Spanish archaeology. Thus, neo-Marxist perspectives in French anthropology were important. An interesting critique of French neo-Marxism was conducted by Catalan archaeologists (Ballestín *et al.* 1988b). But considering themselves historians rather than anthropologists, both the Barcelona and Jaen teams are more associated with Latin American archaeological Marxism on the one hand, and Italian on the other. Latin America, with such archaeologists as Bate, Lumbreras and Muntané, possibly has the most important Marxist tradition in archaeology in the western world. In Italy the work of Bianchi Bandinelli and his scholar Carandini (see Chapter 3 of this book) is also relevant to the developments in Spain. Of course the work of Gordon Childe is of great importance too in this respect.
- (2) J. Vicent, from the Department of Prehistory of the Centre for Historical Studies (CSIC) in Madrid, has carried out a critical revision of the present state of archaeological theory. He has introduced the concepts of the Frankfurt School into archaeology, and in this way also uses related to a Marxist approach. His initial proposal comprises the development of archaeological theory through the notion of 'language', understood in an epistemological sense.
- (3) A different direction has been taken by C. Martín de Guzmán, from the Department of Prehistory of the Universidad Complutense of Madrid. His aim is the formation of an archaeological theory through structuralism, but from a different

approach to the one taken by British archaeology in the last years.

Conceptualising archaeology

In the early stages of the development of an archaeological theory one of the central questions was to find an adequate definition of the subject and its object of study.

In 1981 the group from Barcelona, which was one of the first to approach these questions, outlined the need for a more scientific archaeology, concentrating on the history and evolution of socio-economic formations, the level of development of the productive forces and the complexity of their relations of production as seen in material remains (Estévez *et al.* 1981: 24, 1984: 28). It is important that the Marxist groups emphasise the fact that archaeology is a science related to history (Estévez *et al.* 1984: 22; Ruiz *et al.* 1986a: 10).

Lull (1988a, 1988b, 1989), who continued the early theoretical work of the group from Barcelona, has centred his work on the conceptualisation of what the object of archaeology is. He criticises the definition of archaeology as the science that studies the material remains which societies in all times and places have created for their production and reproduction, since it implies that the objects of study of archaeology are the material remains themselves. This is considered to be wrong because: first, not all archaeological materials are of the same order and therefore cannot be grouped into the same categories; second, the media of information and the object of study of a science cannot be identical; it implies that things have meaning in themselves, which in turn implicitly defends a descriptive and positivist archaeology. Rather, the real 'object of study of archaeology is to propose coherent representations which, by means of validating theories through empirical support, explain the historical meaning of the nature, properties and presence of archaeological materials' (Lull 1988b: 74).

For Vicent (1982: 64), following in this case a more anthropological perspective, prehistory and archaeology should be considered as two different disciplines, which both aim towards the same formal object: culture. Archaeology represents the basis for the deductions developed by prehistory, in order to understand culture in a synthetic way at a general scale (Vicent 1982: 66).

Both disciplines have to develop different methodologies. Prehistory should mainly be concerned with coherent models in the field of the social sciences, and archaeology with the method of correspondence between the theoretical model and the empirical evidence.

Martín de Guzmán (1984: 40), on the other hand, claims that the knowledge of prehistory has to refer to the 'meaning' and the 'structural position' of the material object, seen as the product of past societies. Again, this can only be achieved through the building of a 'scientific' archaeology, which means a discipline with a particular theoretical frame (Martín de Guzmán 1988: 27). Its aim is to formulate 'logical representations' of past social and cultural facts (Martín de Guzmán 1984: 53). But in order to achieve this true scientific knowledge, archaeology will need a specific paradigm, understood as the model *par excellence* of a discipline (Martín de Guzmán 1988: 56). This paradigm is urgently needed where the empiricist, particularist and inductivist positions still dominate, and where the archaeological object is admired and fetishised (Martín de Guzmán 1988: 36f.).

The 'paradigm' proposed by Martín de Guzmán (1984) for the object of archaeology is a 'structural model' with two levels. On the first level the model will be concerned with the typology and function of the object. On the second level the typological-functional context becomes a category of contexts, which expresses structural relations and which will be verified by the mode of study. 'To each material expression of the culture (signifier) corresponds, at least, one intentional component (signified)' (Martín de Guzmán 1984: 53). This relation between 'signification' and 'significant' in the artefact allows the object to be considered as a sign. These signs tend to imply connotations that transform them into 'symptoms' – because of their reiterative frequency in the discourse – or into 'symbols' with a metaphorical or metonymical change sanctioned by the social tradition, and incorporated into institutional levels (Martín de Guzmán 1984: 48).

An important part of the analysis of this 'discourse of the object' is the 'non-verbal syntax', as adapted for example by Leach to anthropology. The main problem that arises is that one object may contain more than one cultural 'meaning', the so-called 'polysemy of the object'. Only the contextual relations of the objects can help to replace them in a cultural structure. The object conceived as a message would consist of a semantic value which

implies a direct meaning (e.g. ashes, flakes, bones), and an associated value which arises from its contextual relations, a functional incidence and 'meaning' (Martín de Guzmán 1984: 50f.). The aim of the discursive analysis (logical and theoretical) is to define the dimensions of structural complexities, as well as significant and regular patterns in the archaeological register, in order to reveal their structural function. Thus, established 'chains of equivalences' allow the definition of structural categories, providing an economic and social meaning. It is important to note that this linguistic-structuralist approach, presented around 1982 (Lull 1990), goes in a similar direction to the cognitive and contextual archaeology in England which was unknown in Spanish archaeology.

The group of Jaen has offered a different method of conceptualising the archaeological object, by creating a contextual theoretical matrix in which the artefact is seen as a 'product' (Ruiz *et al.* 1986b). For the development of an operational theory of the 'product' in archaeology, they start from Clarke's analytical approach, rejecting Binford's neo-functional view of the artefact. The artefact, seen in its context of disposition and deposition, becomes a product. This allows us to study the technical relations of production: 'The technology as part of the economic structure, transforms the artefact into the effect of a process of labour, and consequently into a product whose use value has to be distinguished' (Ruiz *et al.* 1986b: 67). What follows is a development of spatial categories in relation to the theory of the artefact: areas of production, consumption and exchange. Yet this relation between space and object should not result in a typology of products in the way Clarke proposed, because the same artefacts can appear at different levels (consumer good, object of exchange), and because a typology would not help to reconstruct the socio-economic processes. Therefore it is important to propose a 'theory of the means of production' as well as a 'theory of the product'. The first would be, as Carandini considered, more related to a technological level, the second more to social relations.

A 'macro' level of spatial analysis gives rise to the historical concept of the socio-economic formation as a political and economic territory, which is the state (Ruiz *et al.* 1986a: 59). As such it has to be explained by a double theory, on the one hand in spatial terms, and on the other in political terms.

An important feature of these early critical approaches is the emphasis on using analytical categories for the description of the

archaeology in order to avoid the impressionist character of descriptive traditional archaeology. In this respect Clarke's work was very influential, and his analytical concepts were also the basis for the development of the new archaeological terminology (Estevez *et al.* 1981, 1984: 26).

Methodology

According to the initial definition of archaeology as a 'science', it was of prime importance to develop a methodology, and to discuss the epistemological foundations of archaeology. The agreement of all the authors in this respect must be seen in the light of the dominating view of archaeology as a catalogue (Vicent 1988) and of its complete lack of explicit methodological foundations.

As their theoretical 'manifesto', 'Reflections from a non-innocent archaeological project' implies, the team in Jaén centre their critique on traditional positivism which regards data as innocent, and value-free science as possible (Ruiz *et al.* 1986a: 9).

For Vicent (1984), epistemological research involves comparing an existing project with a possible one which is better adapted to the formal and theoretical objective of the discipline. The definition of both 'real' and 'possible archaeology' is undertaken at a twofold level. A 'general level' will mainly work out a meta-language with which we can describe and compare different theoretical and methodological problems of prehistory. This possibility of developing a rational reconstruction aims to make explicit the logical determinations of our discourse (Vicent 1984: 73f.). A 'restricted level' involves the discussion of the specific epistemological problems of the discipline and the self-correction of its research programmes. As a result of the problems arising from both levels, it appears that in a programme of epistemological research the 'general level' can only be used as a frame of reference for the 'restricted level', which has to determine, at least partially, our meta-language (Vicent 1984: 79). Also on the 'restricted level' problems arise from the lack of explicitness of our discipline.

More recently, Vicent has attempted to show the possibility of developing this alternative philosophy of archaeology on the basis of 'Critical Theory'. 'Scientific knowledge appears before us as a social product, whose sense depends on its relation to non-cognitive interests of the social praxis' (Vicent 1988). Such a 'critical philosophy of archaeology' is based on the concept of the 'negative

dialectic' as conceived by Adorno, that is the implicit negation of a global sense of archaeological praxis beyond the subjective and objective conditions in which it develops (Vicent 1988: 4). The aim is to reveal the 'false consciousness' of archaeological praxis that arises between the perception of archaeological activity and the implications in reality. This 'false consciousness' appears in the New Archaeology as the acceptance of the unquestioned absolute of a normative epistemology within a model of scientific rationality.

Lull (1988b) gives to the concept of 'representation' a key role in the development of an epistemology suitable to archaeology. Scientific representations should be formal and systemic models with factual implications, which establish the dialectic relation between the fact and its scientific comprehension. In such a model there should be no contradictions between the logical bases which sustain it (formal sphere) and the archaeological patterns (factual sphere), the whole procedure being legalised through the methodology (Lull 1988b: 71). The representation should establish the causes of the structural relations between subject and object through a definition of the world that considers the dialectic between them both. The 'representations' we generate about the past are objective models formulated in the present, in order to understand the past. They are strongly influenced by the context in which they are being produced and, therefore, do not imply truthfulness, even if their internal structure is coherent. On the other hand, theory does not only try to understand reality, but also to transform it; this means that it is important to distinguish between theory and method. Ideology may be the motor of scientific theories, but the method itself, through which ideas are tested, must be independent (Lull 1989: 23). Often in archaeology, hypotheses are verified not through their empirical implications but through other hypotheses. The result is that rather than scientific discussions, ideological debates take place in the discipline. For Lull, the solution to these problems can only emerge through the use of a 'dialectical methodology'. Knowledge is understood as the dialectical process between what we think about reality and reality itself. Therefore what has to be formalised is the dialectic relation between theory and practice, which is the actual process of knowledge (Lull 1989: 16). The aim should be to show the relation perception-idea-reasoning. Finally there is an emphasis

on the ethical condition of a staeology, that we should make our theories, and the method used, explicit.

Martín de Guzmán (1984) tries to link the idea of culture as language with the nomological-deductive method. Valid explanations require that, first, the 'principle of relevance' and, second, contrastability should be fulfilled. Nevertheless, the 'notion of grammar' appears as a method which is better suited to cultural phenomena (Martín de Guzmán 1984: 56), because of the differences between the social and the natural sciences, and their different concepts of 'objectivity'. The latter results from the difficulties of using 'experiments' in the social sciences, as well as from the implications of social scientists working in their own cultural context.

In synthesis it would seem legitimate to base an epistemology of archaeological models on the systematic study of the correspondences between syntactic and semantic concepts. These contain or imply the contexts (and the relations) certified by means of *excavation directed* through a previous plan where the important cultural, economic, institutional, environmental, etc. issues are being questioned.

(Martín de Guzmán 1988: 35)

Reaction to external debate

Finally, it is important to study the reaction of archaeological theory in Spain towards the theoretical debates in Britain and the USA, mainly concerning 'processualism' and 'post-processualism'. The theoretical debate in Spain started late, basically when the 'paradigm' (Martín de Guzmán 1988) of processual archaeology was being revised in its countries of origin as well as in Latin America (see e.g. Gándara 1982). But it is interesting to realise that when Spanish archaeology became aware of the theoretical debates, it developed them in a plurality of directions. Approaches coming from the English-speaking world have been criticised and improved, as in the case of Clarke's analytical categories, rather than just adapted as fixed models to Spanish archaeology.

In 'Archaeology as archaeology', also presented at the Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) Conference in Britain in 1983, the Barcelona group (Estévez *et al.* 1984) emphasised the status of archaeology as a science in its own right, clearly distancing them-

selves from the anthropological perspective of the New Archaeology. Binford's divisions of a society into economic, social and ideological levels were rejected (Estévez *et al.* 1984: 26) in favour of hierarchically interrelated levels in a given socio-economic formation. The idea of 'spatial archaeology' was criticised as unable to explain the synchronic/diachronic relations of an object (which depended on the socio-economic formation in which it was produced), and as unrelated to a social theory.

Vicent severely criticised processual archaeology on an epistemological level, as well as through its application to prehistory. Processualism has insufficiently discussed the relation between a general epistemology and prehistory, accepting in an unreflecting way the concepts of 'philosophy of science' as developed for the physical sciences which are mainly based on 'laws' and on normative methodological procedures. For Vicent it would first be necessary to find a language in which 'laws' are a significant grammatical category (Vicent 1984: 84ff.). Instead, New Archaeology has not considered that the hypothetico-deductive programme represents a speculative and analytical conception of a reality which can only manifest itself phenomenologically. As a meta-theory developed for physical systems, all models proposed for the social sciences 'would be mechanical, and are therefore, and here lies the fundamental question, deterministic' (Vicent 1982: 48). The scientific rationality on which processualism is based was never questioned, and the idea of science was simply equated to the adoption of the hypothetico-deductive method. Philosophical discussion in archaeology is reduced to propositions concerning the interpretation of hypothetico-deductive categories in archaeological terms. Yet culture cannot be understood as a mechanical system because its explanation is possible neither in terms of physical facts, nor in terms of causality. Culture, for Vicent, can only be comprehended. Lull's (1988b) development of a 'theory of representation' in archaeology has also to be seen in relation to the critique of the 'hypothetico-deductive' method sustained by processualism.

Nevertheless, the 'critical learning process' of Spanish theoretical discussion has not followed the lines of English 'post-processual' archaeology either. Even the structural approach of Martín de Guzmán, which shows conceptual similarities, clearly differs in questions of methodology. Vicent, who proposed to conceptualise cultural phenomena through the notion of 'language' from an epistemological perspective, understands this in the German

tradition of 'Critical Theory' rather than in the sense of French structuralism from which it was introduced into English post-processualism.

Recently an increasing number of rather critical commentaries on post-processual archaeology have appeared. For Vicent, Hodder's (e.g. 1986) theoretical construction is

directly based on the idealist tradition of historical particularism. Hodder seems to ignore the fact that a restoration of subjectivism, based on concepts such as 'empathy' and other allusions to a knowledge of history 'from the inside' etc., requires the supposition of models of rationality opposed to a radical perspective of the critique of archaeological knowledge. By transforming the subjectivity of the individual, its 'empathetic' capacity, into the final reference of archaeological knowledge and its validation, the knowledge is directly under the control of all the interests that form the subject as a social individual.

(Vicent 1988)

For this author processualism and post-processualism are two competing versions of the same conservative tradition in the social sciences (Vicent 1990). Through processualism a new version of positivism became the dominant paradigm, and with Hodder a renewed post-modern form of the old relativist and idealist discourse is presented. Other criticism of post-processualism (Ruiz *et al.* 1988) has concerned its lack of a coherent and explicit theoretical body, its methodological anarchy, rejection of objective knowledge, and the acceptance of idealism as an ontological position and as the epistemological base of theory.

One of the weaknesses of these criticisms is that post-processualism is too much identified with Hodder's work (translated and better known in Spain than that of other authors who use this approach), which itself has been changing rapidly, without too much regard to variations in position. But however accurate these criticisms are, they express scepticism towards something which in the English theoretical debate might be 'radical', but which in the Spanish context can be integrated in such a way as to revive the 'traditional' subjective archaeology. Fernández Martínez (1989: 267), thinking in scientific circles, even suggests that post-processualism is returning to pre-processualist positions.

A theory implies 'radicalism' or 'conservatism' not just in itself but in relation to the political and social context in which it is produced, as well as to the scientific and political praxis it demands.

While in the situation of the early 1980s practically any theoretical proposal would have supposed a challenge to the traditional archaeological community, today the terminology 'hypothesis', 'verification', 'deduction', etc., is of common use. Although the idea of 'theory', even in a Marxist version, has been integrated into archaeology, its conservative character has not changed in general. This implies that something which is exposed as 'critical' within a former frame of reference may no longer be so. In this sense the revisions of post-processualism through other critical positions are superficial because they do not take into account this new situation.

Especially where archaeological praxis is concerned, little has changed since the 1970s and early 1980s. The number of excavations has increased, but the results and the specific process of research remain in the private domain of many archaeologists. On the other hand, in the last ten to twenty years, 'treasure hunting' has increased rapidly in connection with international networks of clandestine – or not so clandestine – trade in antiquities. With the growth of industrial activities as well, many sites have already been destroyed and official protection in fact is normally non-existent. But 'professional archaeology' remains mostly indifferent and shows no sign of taking a committed attitude in order to force the official institutions to take measures. Finally, and not unrelated to the previous points, one should mention the absence of communication between archaeology and the rest of society. The archaeological community generally remains more interested in the maintenance of its elitist positions and the reproduction of its privileges than in the social relevance it could claim by offering a critical view of the past in relation to the present. On a political level, the archaeological institutions have returned to their entrenched positions after the short period between the end of the dictatorship and the mid 1980s. This process corresponds to the general political evolution of what was formerly an alternative left-wing party but which now supports the government.

While from a 'reformist' perspective it is difficult to doubt that the overall situation of archaeology (jobs, finances, etc.) has improved, basically because Spain has become a richer country and wants to reach the 'European standard', it should also be clear that the initial dynamism has decreased. Some recent publications even give the impression that the consequence is a retrogression or impoverishment of theoretical development in Spanish archaeology: while the early publications, however open they may be to criticism, contained original approaches moving in a plurality of directions, the recent works (e.g. Fernández Martínez 1989) are superficial copies of the 'knowledge' that circulates in archaeology in England and the USA, with few original contributions to the Spanish or English theoretical debate.

This new situation for theory should lead, in my view, to a different approach to post-processual archaeology, one which includes elements of non-conformity towards the dominating structures. Also the fact that the recent changes in Eastern Europe are resulting in a general shift towards more conservative positions in the social sciences should induce us to reconsider our route to a critical and committed Spanish archaeology. This would be more constructive than limiting the discussion to problems of theoretical and methodological inconsistencies. On the other hand there are plenty of possibilities for developing a 'radical' discourse: economic orthodoxy still dominates most archaeological models; although Spain has important ecological problems with historical origin, environmental studies are still descriptive approaches and no socio-economic ecological perspective has been developed; the cultural heritage and the problem of what to do with it have not been considered from an alternative position; but feminist archaeology is starting to develop (Picazo and Sanahuja 1989) as well as discussions on the role of education in archaeology (Bardavio Novi 1990). These are just some examples of the alternatives which exist and are possible. It does not mean that the classical radical approaches, mainly Marxist, have lost their revolutionary potential, only that it will be necessary to question their present form and context of application. Finally Spanish, and more widely Mediterranean (also including North African) and Latin American social thought has produced a marginal and critical tradition sufficient to develop its own approaches, rather than just to reproduce out of context the models of the English-speaking world which are now so much in fashion. The aim should be to widen and

diversify international communication, which is still very poor and controlled by particular 'bosses', while 'capital' finds it ever easier to cross borders.

The development of Spanish archaeology shows that 'radicalness' or 'marginality', and what is considered as such, has to be questioned continually. But questioning does not mean wholesale rejection of valuable approaches. A specific feature of the Spanish marginal discussion has been its emphasis on the epistemology and coherence of archaeological models, and a critical attitude towards archaeology in general. Inside the country even though the idea of theory may have become integrated, archaeology resists thorough revision. Outside, and especially in the context of post-processualism, the Spanish discussion on theory can suppose an interesting contribution to a critical discourse whose main weakness has been its method. I therefore think that the present conditions should lead us to use and adapt all the possibilities we still have for the development of critical or radical approaches in archaeology; this can only take place through communication and discussion on an international scale.

Note

1. The first part of this chapter, by J. M. Vázquez Varela, was translated by I. C. Coleman of the Translation Service, Instituto de Idiomas, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

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