
EDITORIAL

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One of the constant refrains of governments and those who fund archaeology is to ask how what we do is relevant to society today (meaning of course that we shall not be funded unless it *is* relevant), and indeed many archaeologists find such a question difficult to answer.

This was not a problem for some of our predecessors, who saw archaeology as being naturally very relevant to contemporary society. Grahame Clark (1939: 197–201), in his *Archaeology and Society* (the title itself of this book emphasizes our discipline's relevance), drew attention to the exploitation of classical archaeology for political purposes by the inter-war fascist regime in Italy: 'by subsidizing excavations and flamboyant but well-calculated gestures, Signor Mussolini has striven to awaken in the Italian people a sense of their imperial destiny' (Clark 1939: 198; cf. Manacorda and Tamassia 1985). By emphasizing the greatness of the Roman Empire, colonial possessions and adventures could be projected as a second Roman Empire, and the exhibition for the bi-millenary of the birth of Augustus, opened in Rome on 23 September 1937, was therefore actively used for political propaganda. Over the entrance to the building that housed the exhibition was an exhortation from *il Duce* to outdo the glories of ancient Rome: '*Italiani fate che le glorie del passato siano superate dalle glorie dell'avvenire*' (Clark 1959: 201).

Let us then examine a further question, posed by the massive expansion of the European Union on 1 May 2004: what is the relevance of archaeology to Europe as an ideal, a cultural unit, a political force? Here again our predecessors had no doubt that our discipline could contribute to the debate. Gordon Childe, writing as a Marxist in the 'West' during the Cold War, saw the Bronze Age as distinctly European, as providing the basis for a distinct European identity (1958; cf. Gathercole 1971). If we are to understand Europe, therefore, we must understand the Bronze Age. Childe's thesis (1958: 172–173) was that the 'distinctive politico-economic structure' of Europe allowed metal smiths to become independent of local political or kinship ties, and that the 'lineal descendents' of these smiths are contemporary scientists and thinkers, who should be free to move like the

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wandering scholars of medieval Europe (the *clerici vagantes*). For Childe, Europe's contribution to world history is the freedom of science.

Of course, Childe's idea of 'wandering smiths' has since been criticized on ethnographic grounds (Rowlands 1971), and as he himself wrote (1958: 8), it was actually Christopher Hawkes (1940) who first identified the Bronze Age as showing 'progressive and distinctively European innovations'. What is of interest is the concept that we, as archaeologists, are the 'lineal descendents' (1958: 173) of the Bronze Age metal smiths we study. I was fortunate enough to be at a conference in the Czech Republic on Accession Day, and our group included a number of delegates from states that were joining the European Union. The theme of the 'Archéologie et gobelets' association conference, ably organised by Magdalena Kruťová and Jan Turek, was "'Beaker days" in Bohemia and Moravia', and we had the opportunity to reflect on this phenomenon which united much of Europe. But of course, the conference itself might be seen iconically in the light of Childe's thesis: as we drove around the Moravian countryside we were an international group of 'wandering scholars', heirs to the great European tradition.

The first article in this issue, by Per Lagerås, has a heritage management theme, and outlines a number of techniques used by the Swedish National Heritage Board in areas of peat (which cover 15% of Sweden and 6% of Europe). Because they have excellent conditions for preservation, wetlands provide important data for our understanding of the past, and there is a real need for the development of methodologies for archaeological fieldwork in advance of development in such environments.

The second article, by Oliver Craig and colleagues from Hungary and the United Kingdom, looks at the evidence for milk use in Copper Age Hungary through organic residue analysis. In many cultural contexts artifacts are assigned a function (interpreted) on the basis of ethnographic analogies with the forms of contemporary or recent objects. Craig and his colleagues test the so-called 'milk jugs', whose interpretation is based on such an analogy, for evidence of milk and offer a contribution to the debate on the prevalence of dairying practices and on Sherratt's 'secondary products revolution' (1981).

César Parcero Oubiña's article returns us to the Castro culture of northwest Iberia, which was also the subject of a paper by Inés Sastre Prats (2002) in issue 5(2). He uses the Germanic Mode of Production and peasantry as models to identify the processes by which a non-class 'heroic society' was formed.

The last article is by Eric De Sena and Janne Ikäheimo, and looks at the supply of various commodities to Pompeii from c. 150 BC to AD 79, when the city was destroyed, by a study of the pottery assemblage from the House of the Vestals. They show how the economy of the city changed from self-sufficiency based on its hinterland to becoming a 'consumer city' in the Imperial period.

The Reviews section, edited by Peter Biehl and Alexander Gramsch, has a number of reviews that explore the continuing diversity of paradigms in archaeological monographs, from Binford's 'unreconstructed' processualism to David's typological study within a culture-historical paradigm. The issue of

archaeology's relevance to society is highlighted in the reviews section: Irina Podgorny's review deals with the relationship between prehistoric archaeology and National Socialism, and it is interesting to note that while, as we have seen, Italy's fascists exploited classical archaeology, it was prehistory that was favoured in Nazi Germany. Finally, Mark Hall's exhibition review discusses medieval Europe and the multi-layered nature of identity.

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