

## INTRODUCTION

The doctrines and values of the 'new' archaeology are in the process of being broken down; for many they were never acceptable. Books such as Hodder's *Symbols in Action* (1982b), *The Evolution of Social Systems* (Friedman and Rowlands (eds.) 1978), *Symbolic and Structural Archaeology* (Hodder (ed.) 1982), and *Ideology, Power and Pre-history* (Miller and Tilley (eds.) 1984) have demonstrated the value and importance of fresh research orientations for the analysis of the relationship between social practices and material culture patterning. Many archaeologists may very well be persuaded that the kinds of studies undertaken in these works do represent a significant and important departure from the kinds of research characterizing the new archaeology while still remaining unclear as to the kinds of knowledge claims being advanced. It is the case that no systematic evaluation has been made of the epistemological and methodological basis underlying a non-positivist and non-functionalist archaeology. Similarly, criticisms of the new archaeology have been largely confined to demonstrating the inadequacy of specific approaches such as systems theory or ecological frameworks for the understanding of the past. Metatheoretical issues of fundamental importance, for example the relationship of theory to data and the idea of value-freedom, have hardly been touched upon.

This book is designed, in part, to try and fill that gap. The purpose of the book is to attempt to clarify some of the goals, the conceptual structure, explanatory content and procedure of a social archaeology concerned with material culture as not merely an object of analysis but forming part of a social reality charged with meaning. It is intended both as a challenge and as a radical alternative to the disciplinary practices of both traditional and 'new' archaeology.

The book ranges widely across a number of schools of thought that have remained largely unconnected within archaeology or have not been discussed at all. Reference is made to positions in the philosophies of science, of history and of action, Marxism in a number of variants, most especially critical theory, hermeneutics and structuralism. However, the book is not simply a theoretical work but argues strongly for the need to dismantle current barriers between theoretical argument and the business of practical research - be it excavation or analysis, or the relationship between professional archaeologists and the public. This concern with linking theory and practice is a fundamental feature of the book. The linkage developed involves a transformation of such perspectives as the problem orientated hypothetico-deductive approach. It is maintained that theory mediates data and vice versa, and that any adequate consideration of the connection must involve setting archaeology in its historical context - contemporary

society. Through a systematic critique of the pathological antinomies (e.g., subject/object, fact/value) of established positions, archaeology is revealed as truly being what it can only aspire to be, an active relationship between past and present.

In this, the book is intended to be a contribution towards a reflexive archaeology, an archaeology which is critically self-conscious. It is argued that any adequate conceptual and theoretical framework developed in studying the past must incorporate reflection upon archaeology as a professional discipline in the present. The process of gaining knowledge of the past depends on exploring the meaning, form and context of that process in the present.

This book is not a discussion or exposition of the arguments and positions of others, be they archaeologists, philosophers or sociologists. It is a critical encounter rather than an attempt at exegesis. We refer to works and ideas as a means of developing and elucidating our own concern - an archaeology which respects the *humanity* of past and present, which can make a meaningful contribution to the present. We are not concerned with establishing allegiance to one or a group of established philosophical or sociological positions. Naturally, we share certain approaches with other authors, but we are not concerned to provide a label for our own work, to claim that it is part of a 'school' or 'paradigm'. Others will be only too ready and willing to do that.

The chapters in the book have been written and arranged as separate essays, complete in themselves, and each tackling a number of issues. This means that they can be read in any order. The chapters are thoroughly cross-linked throughout the book, issues only briefly referred to in one chapter are taken up and discussed in detail in others. To say that the chapters are more or less complete in themselves does not imply that their ordering in relation to each other is arbitrary. The reader who wishes to get the most out of the book will follow it through as it is presented, from the beginning to the end. In organizing the book in this manner we hope that it can be studied on a number of different levels in terms of the individual chapters and their relationship to the whole. The material relationships of the parts to the whole make it what it is.

We have adopted a four part structure. Part I begins with general questions of ontology and historiography, and an evaluation is made of how archaeologists and historians conceive of the past. Questions of time, authorship, conservation of the past, and the justification of archaeology are considered. Chapters 2 and 3 consider in detail the manner in which the past has been approached in the new archaeology. We set out a rigorous critique of its epistemology - positivism - and confront a major issue - that of objectivity and value-freedom. In Chapters 1 and 3 we counter those approaches we criticize with a radically different conception of the relation between past and present, we argue for a critical and reflexive archaeology. Ultimately, the issues of the first three chapters are inseparable from the ideological and political implications of archaeological research and archaeologists as participants in contemporary capitalism. Accordingly, Chapter 4 looks at the relation between academic archaeology and presentation to the public, we present a series of interpretative studies of museums, focussing on the aesthetics of display, and identify possibilities for a creative and non-ideological relation between past and present in the museum.

Part II presents a philosophical and conceptual basis for a truly social archaeology,

following up criticisms and alternatives outlined in Part I Chapter 5 suggests archaeology should be interpretative practice, and considers the link between theory and data Chapter 6 poses the question of the object of a social archaeology and presents a series of concepts to deal with material culture and the social

Part III consists of two substantial analyses of material culture change in ceramic design of neolithic pottery from southern Sweden, and the design of beer cans in contemporary Britain and Sweden Both analyses draw on and elucidate some of the discussions of previous chapters It is, however, important to remark that it is not possible to judge this book simple reference to these chapters which work with data They are not an empirical 'test' b\ means of which the value or otherwise of the rest of the book may be assessed They are simply aspects of a critical encounter with the archaeological past and present, as are the other chapters in the book

Part IV contains some final remarks

Our framework is provisional, frail and flawed, a product of a personal encounter with the past and its present No work can be anything more, there are no final answers We offer our feelings and ideas in the hope that they will stimulate others to think and render what we say inadequate and so move on The past opens up possibility We must live this possibility It is to this end that we write