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The Politics of "New" Archaeology

3 Yishay St.
Abu Tor
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Mr. Peter Bird Martin
Institute of Current World Affairs
4 West Wheelock St.
Hanover, New Hampshire, USA

Dear Peter,

If you came onto the Israeli archaeological scene as an outside observer and if you believed some of what is published in the archaeological journals and some of what is discussed at the meetings of the Association of Israeli Archaeologists, you might come to the conclusion that something dramatic is happening in Israeli archaeology today. The words often used to describe what's happening-- "crisis," "turning point," and even "revolution"-- may get in the way of clearly understanding what it is, which, I believe, is the uneasy coexistence of two archaeological languages, two distinct methodologies. And the uneasiness may come from more than just a problem of communication. In many cases, the conflict between what is called "New" and "Old" archaeology is presented as the difference between the right and wrong way.

Certainly controversy is nothing new in the archaeology of this country; probably from the time that the first Byzantine pilgrims argued over the location of one of the many holy places, conflict has been part of the search for the past here. In the 19th century, at the time of the establishment of what we call modern Biblical Archaeology, religion played a crucial role in the conflicts. The Protestant scholars who explored the country made the disproof of the traditional-- Catholic and Orthodox-- holy places an integral part of their program. And in more recent times, the conflicts have continued: in the 1950's and 1960's, the Americans and the Israelis argued over the relative virtues of the architectural or the stratigraphic method; the scholars of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem argued with the scholars of Tel Aviv University over the proper approach to Israelite history; and the indomitable British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon, who excavated at Jericho and Jerusalem, argued about almost everything with almost everyone else.

The current conflict, though, is not so easily divisible into religions, nationalities, schools, or even personalities. The controversy between the adherents of the "Old" archaeology and the "New" archaeology is much harder to categorize. In fact, the differences are so hard to pin down to concrete issues that sometimes it's ascribed simply to matters of politics.

On a superficial level, much of the discussion boils down to a disagreement over names, and there's no question that names have a clear sig-

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Neil Silberman is an Institute Fellow studying the political and cultural impact of current archaeological research in the Middle East.

nificance in the current political atmosphere of this region. I remember that when I was working at the archives of the Palestine Exploration Fund in London a few years ago, the secretary of that prestigious archaeological organization explained to me that they were having a terrible problem with annoying crank telephone calls. It seems that dozens of disgruntled people-- of whatever political persuasion-- had the mistaken idea that the Palestine Exploration Fund was some kind of terrorist group.

That may be an exaggerated example, but names can also have a real significance when they're used by people who know exactly what they're referring to. One of the peculiarities of the archaeology of this country is that one can find a wide variety of names used to describe it in the archaeological literature. The name "Israel," for instance, will never appear in an article published in the journals of the Arab countries; there, it will be described universally as "Palestine." In the Israel Exploration Journal, however, both names will appear, in addition to the more religiously loaded "Land of the Bible" and "Holy Land." For some, these may be unintentional selections, though in many cases, the choice of name can be suspected-- quite rightly-- of having been made to express a subtle political point.

In recent years, even that basic conflict in geographical terminology has been overshadowed by a debate about the proper name of the entire scientific discipline. Since the middle of the last century, the exploration and excavation of ancient sites in this country has been most commonly referred to as "Biblical Archaeology," but in the early 1970's, a number of scholars-- primarily American-- have urged that the name be dropped in favor of "Syro-Palestinian Archaeology." Whatever the substance of the name change and the real motivations of the people who proposed it, this name change has been interpreted by some here as the intrusion of conscious politics.

After traveling around this region for over a year now, visiting excavations and interviewing archaeologists, I've learned that many scholars have an uncanny ability to detect the political agenda of their scholarly opponents, but have an extremely difficult time recognizing the political implications of their own work. This certainly wasn't the case at the 1984 International Congress on Biblical Archaeology here in Jerusalem; the choice of the name of the meeting itself clearly showed where the organizers believed the right lay in the current name game. The late Professor Yigael Yadin, in his opening speech, directly attacked what he called "the politically motivated objections" to the term Biblical Archaeology. Professor Ephraim Urbach, the president of the Israel Academy of Sciences, condemned what he saw as the scholarly isolation of Israeli archaelogists in the region, and in the lectures during the congress itself, the strong arguments put forward for retaining the name Biblical Archaeology and "the Land of Israel" in the scholarly literature could be seen as a clear counterattack.

But what were they counterattacking? That's a question that's harder to answer, since the ongoing archaeological controversy is always framed in an indirect way and the issues at stake and the positions that are represented are never clearly defined. The closest thing that I could find to a frank exposition of the opposing positions was contained in a 1982

issue of the American journal Biblical Archaeologist devoted to the subject "Biblical and Palestinian Archaeology: Retrospects and Prospects." In thinking about this conflict I went over the articles carefully, but to tell the truth, I found that the positions were quite hazy and it was a challenge to find any politics at all.

One of the articles, which can serve as an example of one side of the controversy, was written by Professor William Dever of the University of Arizona, who is the most outspoken opponent of the term "Biblical Archaeology." Dever himself has had a long career of excavation in this country, and it seems that his experience has led him to conclude that nothing short of a name change will purge the discipline of theologians and biblical scholars who are more interested in the Bible than in real archaeology.

Fine. So let's throw out the term "Biblical Archaeology." But what does Dever suggest we put in its place? He suggests first of all that what's needed is a "coherent, well-formulated body of theory." Unfortunately Dever does not suggest on what principles or philosophy that theory be based. His next suggestion doesn't help much. He stresses the need to "develop a methodology adequate to carry out the objectives implicit in the theoretical framework to be adopted by our discipline." And here we have only the next rung on a ladder of hypotheticals-- a suggested methodology to serve a theory that hasn't been developed yet.

The only sentence in Dever's article that seemed to express the core of his dissatisfaction was: "We have failed to provide the systematic articulation of presuppositions or the detailed research designs which make a discipline self conscious, intellectually honest, and rigorously systematic." This, of course, sounds nice and systematic, but when you take this statement apart, its meaninglessness is apparent. Would even the most conservative biblical archaeologist suggest that his discipline should be completely unaware of itself, intellectually dishonest, and totally disorganized?

Unfortunately, Dever's haziness does not settle the argument, for the ideas of the other side of the controversy are equally obscure. In the same issue of Biblical Archaeologist, Professor David Ussishkin of Tel Aviv University weighs in with an article entitled "Where is Israeli Archaeology Going?"-- and that's a question that many of the people working in the field are certainly anxious to know. Ussishkin's position is in many respects the opposite of Dever's; he thinks Biblical Archaeology is just fine. Any new techniques or modernization of theory that are needed have already been gracefully adopted, or at least they will be soon.

Of course Ussishkin has some of his own suggestions. "From now on," he believes, "the stress should be on slow digging and limited excavation aimed at the achievement of high quality." But I couldn't help asking myself how that quality is to be measured. By the slowness of the digging? By the smallness of the excavation area?

To add a little theoretical weight to his argument, Ussishkin then chose to quote his colleague at Tel Aviv University, Professor Anson Rainey, who "stresses the need to concentrate on digging rather than on

thinking about digging methods"-- as if thinking is an activity that archaeologists can profitably dispense with. And Ussishkin approvingly repeats Rainey's credo that "the proper goal of archaeology is to reveal as much as possible about the material life of ancient man."

This statement, of course, leaves unanswered the question of what is revealed about ancient man's (not to mention ancient woman's) material life through archaeology, or, for that matter, how it can be recognized. After reading this article I was left as uncertain of Ussishkin's position as I had been of Dever's; would an audience of chemists reading a theoretical article in a scholarly journal be enlightened that "the proper goal of chemistry is to reveal as much as possible about chemicals"?

Naturally I'm not suggesting that Ussishkin and Rainey are the official spokesmen for the theoretical position of Israeli archaeology, or that all American scholars believe what Dever has to say. It's just that their articles are good examples of the kind of vague discussion that is going on, with a great deal of emotion and perhaps even with good intentions, but not much substance. Of course the fact that it lacks substance doesn't make it any less real; there is something on the archaeological scene that is provoking all the theoretical talk. And from Dever's jargon and Ussishkin's references to up-to-date scientific methods, it's clear that what they're talking around is the so-called "New Archaeology."

And since this brand of archaeology and its possible application in the Middle East has interested me for some time, I thought it would be useful to look back over the history of archaeology as a scholarly discipline, see where New Archaeology fits into it, and to see what its scientific and political implications might be for Israeli archaeology today.

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Strictly speaking, "New Archaeology" first appeared as a journalistic description and was probably never originally intended to define a distinct discipline. It first appeared in print in a 1959 article in Science magazine by Joseph Caldwell; the article was entitled "The New American Archaeology" and it described the innovative and iconoclastic work of a young scholar at the University of Michigan named Lewis Binford.

The focus of the article was as much Binford's brash personality as any scientific breakthroughs he had made with his new approach to archaeology. Binford was undeniably bright and ambitious, but what set him apart from the rest of his contemporaries was his reluctance to accept blindly the archaeological dogma of his teacher and mentor, Professor James Griffin, one of the most formidable figures in American archaeology.

As Binford himself later described the birth of the New Archaeology in his book An Archaeological Perspective, it seemed at the time to be a clash of generations more than anything else. Binford wanted to do something different in the analysis of archaeological data, but when he began his professional career, he wasn't sure what it was. He tells a revealing anecdote about the first field season of New Archaeology in 1957 when, after having been placed in charge of the excavation of a prehis-

toric site, he didn't bring back the normal collection of flints and pottery and carefully-drawn plans of the campsite, but dozens of bags of stones he had collected from around the ancient campfire itself.

When Griffin emerged from his office to find that the hall was lined with his student's bags of stone, he asked Binford in disbelief: "What in God's name are you going to do with all that fire-cracked rock?"

Binford, as usual, had a ready reply. He recalls that "I answered knowingly, 'Count it and weigh it of course.' What I could possibly do with such data I didn't know, but it was part of the archaeological record and there must be something you could learn from it..." And although it was not consciously planned, this type of explicit quantification of archaeological material as a means of understanding the internal dynamics of ancient societies became one of the theoretical bases for the New Archaeology.

The fact that Binford chose something that was of no interest to his archaeological elders, and then based his own academic future on it makes the birth of the New Archaeology a clear political act, I think. It was political at least in the sense of the Webster's definition of "politics" as "factional scheming for power and status within a group."

And seen from that perspective, Binford's New Archaeology was anything but new, for the traditional growth of archaeology, from its beginnings, never came from pure scientific advance alone, but from political and social conditions as well. And many of its advances came from the challenge of a younger generation against the conventional historical assumptions of powerful political groups.

Most archaeology textbooks place the beginnings of archaeology as a science in the Renaissance, with the awakening of an interest in Classical antiquity. But what were the causes of that awakening? On a certain level, they were political, I suspect. If you remember that at the end of the Middle Ages, in the 13th and 14th centuries, the High Gothic movement, particularly in France, based its spiritual and temporal power on a rejection of the Classical past, then you can see why the growth of interest among southern European-- primarily Italian-- scholars in precisely the historical period that had been rejected can be seen as a conscious movement of protest.

Ciriaco de Pizzicoli of Ancona is one of the scholars commonly credited with the "invention" of archaeology as we now know it. In 1421, so the story goes, he happened to be examining the ruins of the Arch of Hadrian in his hometown when he realized that other such ruins, rather than written history, might provide a better way of getting to know the culture of ancient Greece and Rome. This story may be of no more historical value than the one about Newton and the apple, but it too signifies the beginning of an important scientific career. For the rest of his life, Ciriaco traveled through Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, and even Egypt, collecting ancient inscriptions and carefully sketching archaeological remains.

His interest in these ruins was as obscure to his contemporaries as Binford's fire-cracked rock was to his. And when a priest of the estab-

lished church asked him what he thought he was doing, he came up with a much more profound answer than the one Binford had given in the same situation. Ciriaco told the priest: "I'm restoring the dead to life." And they were precisely the same dead whom the conventional historians had condemned to death that he chose to resurrect.

There are many examples of the same attitude scattered through the history of archaeology. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the antiquarians and "county historians" of England first began what we might consider the scientific study of prehistoric remains. And in one sense, the sudden growth in interest in the distinctive burials and standing stone monuments of the countryside can be seen as a symbolic local chauvinism in response to the growing, centralizing power of the Crown. Henry VIII saw no danger in the activities of the Society of Antiquaries so long as they turned over to him any treasure that they found. The Stuarts saw the threat more clearly. In the early 17th century, James I banned the Society of Antiquaries as a subversive political group.

Even closer to modern times we can find an archaeological movement as an expression of political and social protest. In the 19th century, what might be called "evolutionary" archaeology directly challenged the biblical idea of history. Of course it didn't take the researches of the geologist Lyell or the naturalist Darwin to bring evolution onto the archaeological scene. Humanistic concepts of "progress" that first surfaced during the Enlightenment meshed naturally with the technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution. History could now be seen, not as a series of Divine interventions, but as the result of the steady, positive influence of human reason improving mankind's standard of living--a process that the 20th century archaeologist Gordon Childe would describe as "Man Makes Himself."

Every archaeology student learns how Christian Thomsen, the Keeper of Antiquities at the National Museum in Copenhagen in the early 19th century, arranged his collections in an ascending technological order of Stone, Bronze, and Iron "Ages," and how his successor J.J.A. Worsaae demonstrated that the same pattern could be found to be valid at stratified archaeological sites. But what many students don't learn is that these scientific advances had a social context; the "New" archaeology of technological stages rather than historical epochs showed that the dramatic technological changes then transforming the world through steam and steel, through railroads, suspension bridges, and factories, were a natural and even inevitable part of history.

The political, social, and religious impact of this technological thinking was perceived as a clear threat to the religious establishment in Europe, but it wasn't just a case of black and white. Archaeology was not totally rejected by those with unwavering faith in the biblical story of Creation or God's sovereign role in history, for by the 1840's, the same tools of excavation and classification that were being used to attack the Bible in Europe were being used to bolster it in the Middle East.

With the expansion of the British and French colonial empires into the regions that lay between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, "Biblical Archaeology" was born. Paul Emile Botta, the French consul in Mosul,

a city on the Tigris in what is today modern Iraq, and Austen Henry Layard, the British consul, almost simultaneously discovered the impressive ruins of the palaces and temples of the Assyrian Empire. Under the ruling conceptions of the archaeologists working in Europe, the sites such as Nimrud Khorsabad, and Kuyunjik could have served as examples of an ancient society at a highly elaborate Iron Age stage of development. But because some of the inscriptions contained in the Assyrian palaces mentioned kings and battles known previously only from the Bible, they served the interest of the biblical faith. Rather than beginning an independent investigation of the technological development of human history in the Middle East, Biblical Archaeology embarked on the rather intellectually unadventurous exercise of verifying and elaborating biblical history.

Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the foundation charter of the Palestine Exploration Fund. That organization might be mistaken for a terrorist group today, but in 1865, when it was founded, there could have been no mistake. The most prominent British churchmen, industrialists, and civic leaders were present at the opening meeting in Westminster Abbey and the goal of their organization, as explicitly stated, was not independent investigation, but "Biblical Illustration." And one must keep in mind that this was not just an innocent intellectual conception of less sophisticated times. Biblical Archaeology was from its very inception consciously set apart from the brand of archaeology simultaneously being practiced in Europe.

At the same time that the geologist Charles Lyell was attempting to determine the connection between geological strata and stages in human evolution, the Palestine Exploration Fund and its supporters had different ideas about what archaeology and geology could prove. In their opening prospectus they also mentioned the importance of geological studies in the Holy Land. But the only specific example they mentioned was the possibility that the discovery of ancient volcanic activity around the Dead Sea might "throw a new aspect on the narrative of the destruction of Sodom and Gommorah."

It's clear that Biblical Archaeology had a definite body of theory and a clearly outlined program of study from the very start. Its goal was not to construct a new scheme of the development of human history from material remains and it was not even to see <u>if</u> the Bible was true. It was to use the new science of archaeology to see <u>how</u> the Bible and the biblical worldview could be explained to the general public in modern, material terms.

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Biblical Archaeology might have continued to develop along very different lines than European archaeology and it might even have come into conflict with it long before now if certain social and political trends hadn't affected the development. By the end of the 19th century, the value and inevitability of "progress" looked quite different than it had seemed at the beginning of the century.

Soot, slums, and the restlessness of the working classes all over Europe showed that technological development didn't necessarily bring happiness. And there was also the colonial experience that brought Europeans

into direct contact with "less developed" societies. The ease with which European armies overwhelmed local resistance in the places they chose for their imperial possessions led many European historians to reconsider whether steady technological progress worked equally, for everyone. Perhaps evolution applied only to the more talented races or nations, as defined in the late 19th century; and perhaps history was actually the story of the influence of those talented races over the less talented ones.

This view of the past was a boon to European nationalism and a basis for the increasingly popular theories of racial determinism, especially in Germany. The archaeological theories of Gustav Kossinna are perfect examples of this kind of thinking. In his highly influential book, Die Herkunft der Germanen (1911), Kossinna traced the origin of European civilization to the exclusive influence of the Aryans. In fact, Heinrich Himmler later demonstrated how this archaeological theory could be put to work. "Prehistory," Himmler proclaimed, in his appreciation for the work of Kossinna and his scholarly supporters, "is the doctrine of the eminence of the Germans at the dawn of civilization." And it's unnecessary to elaborate the inevitable fate of the less talented races in this peculiarly patriotic scheme of human history.

Racialist, diffusionist theories were not the exclusive obsession of the Germans; many British scholars also shared them, but as usual-- so a racial determinist might say-- they expressed them with a little more elegance and restraint. Instead of literally seeing their ancestors as the prime movers in history, they identified the role of other ancient peoples who did what they were now doing, by metaphor.

It's almost laughable today to read through the works of the "Hyperdiffusionist" scholars of the Manchester school, like G. Elliot Smith and W.J. Perry, who traced every advance in human civilization-- writing, fortification, religion-- back to Egypt. Their flow charts of diffusion stretch from the Nile Valley as far as Peru and Cincinnati, showing how every important technological innovation had an original Egyptian copyright. But in its day this theory was no laughing matter. It was wholeheartedly accepted by archaeologists whose reputation is still held in high esteem today. Arthur Evans, the excavator of Knossos and the discoverer of the Minoan civilization of Crete, traced the beginning of civilization on the island to a group of early immigrants from North Africa-- the same group that had founded Egyptian civilization-- whom Elliot Smith fondly called "The Children of the Sun."

So by the end of the 19th century, the view of historical development held by many European archaeologists had itself become almost biblical. Like the story of the wanderings of Noah's sons described in the Book of Genesis, they saw a central, chosen group as the historical focus and as a legitimation of the present political supremacy of the modern peoples whose inheritors they were. Perhaps this change came because archaeology was no longer a protest movement; it had itself become part of the Establishment. And I think it's important for students of Biblical Archaeology to realize that some of the developments of this period that are today seen as purely scholarly advances were profoundly influenced by the diffusionist view of history.

In fact, the scholar generally recognized as the "Father of Palestinian Archaeology," the British excavator W.M.F. Petrie, was an unashamed diffusionist, and you don't have to quote his more outrageous (and now completely discredited) suggestions about the movements and conquests of ethnic groups-- like the introduction of iron into Canaan by Siberian blacksmiths, or the monopolization of the country's agricultural produce by Minoan grain merchants-- to see how his diffusionist ideas have deeply influenced modern archaeologists here.

Petrie's greatest archaeological advances were the recognition of the stratification or the superimposed "layering" of city levels in Middle Eastern mounds, and the recognition that changing styles of pottery, once placed in their proper chronological order, could be a crucial clue to the dating of the layers of every city mound, or tell. But if we remember that Petrie visualized the successive city levels and their destructions as the acts of specific peoples, and that the distinctive styles of pottery could be likewise linked to ethnic groups, then we can see that his criteria for classifying all pottery styles into successive phases of "rise," "flourit," and "decline" betrays a conception of ethnic biography with which many anthropologists and sociologists would take issue today.

So wherever European archaeologists were active at the end of the 19th century, they seemed to apply their own, modern understanding of how the world works to their archaeological finds. In some respects, it seems today almost like a parody-- a melodramatic Gilbert and Sullivan colonial opera of national will played out through conquest and violence-- again and again throughout human history.

No historical period or people was immune from this kind of thinking. And just as an example of how outrageous it could get, I'd like to quote a sentence from R.A.S. Macalister's Textbook of European Archaeology published by Cambridge University Press in 1921. In it, Macalister refers to a crucial transition in the Stone Age (which is today seen to be quite unconnected with ethnic changes) through an overt colonial metaphor:

"Just as the early [British] colonists in Tasmania used to organize battues [i.e. hunting parties] in which the unfortunate aborigines were the game, so the incoming Upper Paleolithic people 'shot at sight' whenever a Mousterian man made his appearance, until the ancient race was almost wiped out."

There's no trace of a belief in "progress" in this statement, just a cold, cruel view of human history as sequential genocide. And if it is remembered that this same archaeologist, R.A.S. Macalister, was one of the most important figures in the early history of archaeology in Palestine, and we look back over his work at the biblical site of Gezer, where he represented the city's history as a series of "Semitic" periods, we can see how deeply he too was affected by the racial outlook.

The Bible, at least as it was interpreted by many in the late 19th century, fit in perfectly with this diffusionist kind of thinking, representing the ethnic biography of the people of Israel. But that was not the only diffusionist theory that was pursued in the Holy Land. In 1911-1912, Dr. Duncan Mackenzie, the chief assistant to Arthur Evans at Knossos,

excavated the ancient city of Beth Shemesh (Hebrew: "House of the Sun") in order to seek evidence of the early arrival of the elusive Children of the Sun.

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As long as Palestine remained a colonial possession of Great Britain, the brand of archaeology practiced at its ancient sites was effectively shielded from the archaeological controversies and debates that came to preoccupy the archaeologists working in Europe itself. On a certain level the establishment of a tightly controlled Department of Antiquities in Palestine produced what might be called a "Golden Age" of excavation in the 1920's and 1930's, but it was golden only in ambitiousness and size. Supported by lavish funding and a seemingly insatiable interest in the Bible, huge British and American expeditions attacked the most famous ancient sites in the country-- the biblical cities of Ashkelon, Beth Shean, Megiddo, and Samaria. The finds from the biblical period were spectacular but on a theoretical level, nothing was changed. Objects and architecture continued to be used solely to illustrate the biographies of ancient ethnic groups, their invasions and conquests.

At the same time in Europe, though, the ethnic conception of history was coming under increasingly bitter attack. The extreme diffusionist view of history eventually became almost indistinguishable from Nazi-style racism, and in reaction, non-Nazi archaeologists and historians began to search for a new explanation for the mechanics of culture change that did not have to do with race. The first conceptual breakthrough in the search came even before the rise to power of the Nazis. In 1925, a year in which the archaeology of Palestine was still thoroughly diffusionist, an obscure Australian scholar with no professional credentials to speak of-- Vere Gordon Childe-- published a book entitled The Dawn of European Civilization, in which he introduced some of the basic approaches to culture change that are used by the "New" archaeologists today.

Childe was an active socialist and if it hadn't been for some unlucky reverses in his political career in Australia in the early 1920's, he might never have become a professional archaeologist. Philosophically dedicated to the cause of the improvement of the status of working classes all over the world, he, like Lewis Binford several decades later, saw the accepted interpretation of history standing in the way of social progress. Childe rejected what he saw as the artificial separation of the cultural contribution of various races, and in his review of archaeological finds excavated all over Europe, he interpreted culture change as the effect of interaction between groups. For him, archaeology became a study of cultures rather than of "Culture," and as his career proceeded, he spoke less and less about ethnicity and more about the the interaction between artifacts and the mechanics of society.

Classical Marxist dialecticism was the focal point of Childe's emerging theory, in which economic changes-- in the "means of production" and in its control by sub-groups within every society-- were, for him, the motive factor in cultural change. And while Marxism as an archaeological philosophy was politically uncomfortable for many of his British and American contemporaries, the theoretical struggle against Nazi racism was imperative. And certain scholars like Grahame Clark at Cambridge, for in-

stance, sought sociological and anthropological bases for their non-ethnic theories.

If Marx was too dangerous, perhaps the work of the British social anthropologists Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown would do. These scholars had carried out extensive anthropological fieldwork in Polynesia, and they had independently come to the conclusion that culture was a functional part of human life. Although their ultimate conclusions differed, they both argued that the distinctive forms of artifacts, religion, and social systems that every people adopts have nothing to do with that people's inherent genetic "character," but serve as a functional survival system in response to a specific environment. And in fact, under the influence of functionalism, many European archaeologists began to doubt that ethnic groups-- at least as defined in traditional written histories-- could be distinguished in the archaeological record at all.

So by rejecting the traditional diffusionist theories in reaction to the excesses of the Nazis, a "new" kind of archaeology was born. It saw the motive force in human history not in race or ethnic conquest, but in the economic and social responses of people everywhere to their environment.

In the post-World War II world, this functionalist approach, pioneered by Childe and Clark, really began to catch on. With the rebuilding of Europe and renewed hope in human progress, archaeology returned to the idea of "Evolution" that had been abandoned in the pessimistic atmosphere of the late 19th century. Once again archaeologists began to search for universal laws of human development, this time in the seemingly uniform responses of human societies to environmental challenges. And the tools that we generally associate with New Archaeology-- pollen analysis, animal bone classification, and regional environmental studies-- were adopted by the functionalists during this period. But they were not adopted just because they were "new" or implicitly more "scientific," but because they fit into the understanding of culture as a response to the environment, and in order to understand a culture, one had to undertand to what sort of environment it was a response.

Biblical Archaeology in this period was, in a certain sense, more "intellectually honest"-- as Professor William Dever would put it-- than many of the biblical archaeologists who are calling for the adoption of the techniques of New Archaeology today. The environmental studies of the European and American archaeologists were not adopted in the excavations in Palestine because there was a fundamental difference in the basis of their interpretation of history.

For Americans working in the Holy Land, for the most part biblical scholars and historians, an environmental explanation of Israelite culture and religion was an insult to their faith. One need only look over the basic premises in the writings of the leading American biblical archaeologists of the period-- W.F. Albright's From the Stone Age to Christianity and G. Ernest Wright's Biblical Archaeology-- to see that for them, universal anthropological interpretations actually undermined an appreciation of the "uniqueness" of the Israelite religion as it could be illustrated in the material artifacts.

The need for such an illustration was especially pressing in some American Protestant circles in the 1950's, with the decline of traditional religious faith and the rise of the "Biblical Theology" movement. This movement's attraction lay in understanding God through His interventions in human history. And since most of these interventions, at least as recorded in the Bible, took place in the Holy Land, the American biblical archaeologists embarked on a series of digs at famous biblical sites like Shechem, Gibeon, and Gezer to add new archaeological information to the historical analysis of the biblical faith.

In the same post-World War II world, another version of biblical archaeology began to flourish; with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the organization of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums, a new group of archaeological officials assumed direct control over the country's archaeology. The development of Israeli archaeology and its close connection to modern historical understandings is a study in itself. But it may be enough to say that this archaeological development was in many respects similar to that which occured in the 19th century nation states of Europe, where social and political considerations encouraged an intensive effort to substantiate "roots" through excavation, and to construct a modern national biography.

At the time, in the 1950's and 1960's, there was a certain tension between the American and Israeli biblical archaeologists that manifested itself in occasionally heated discussions about the virtues of their respective digging techniques. But in retrospect, those excavation techniques were really not so different; while the Israelis concentrated on uncovering complete building complexes and the Americans preferred to dig deep sections <u>through</u> the strata, both schools were wholeheartedly historical in their archaeological approach. Even though they had somewhat different orientations, both were anxious to substantiate and illustrate biblical history. Both shared the belief that the Bible was the central focus of archaeology in this country, and neither had much interest in the functionalist, anti-textual inclination of their European and Americanist counterparts.

And because they had little interest in the ongoing debates about historical philosophy, a dangerous situation resulted, I believe. Because everyone works with a theoretical framework-- even if it is unrecognized-- the Israelis and the Americans continued to use the archaeological concepts that were current when the archaeology of Palestine lost touch with European developments. And the guiding concepts of that brand of archaeology saw the history of the country, whether it was used for religious instruction or national heritage, as the record of the diffusion and conquests of specific ethnic groups.

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Last month, the Association of Archaeologists in Israel held a conference at Tel Aviv University to discuss current theoretical problems and to weigh some new approaches that might be fruitful to pursue. One of the speakers, Professor Ze'ev Herzog of Tel Aviv University, compared the present archaeological uneasiness to the situation described in Thomas Kuhn's <u>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</u> as the breakdown of an accepted paradigm. According to Herzog, the conventional use of archaeology

as historical confirmation is no longer productive and the new paradigm that is emerging-- adopted in large measure from European and American New Archaeology-- will interpret archaeological data in a more anthropological way. But I thought at the time that Herzog was missing an important element in the picture; it may be a mistake to interpret archaeological advances in scientific terms alone. Because if the history of archaeology can teach us anything, it's that changes in historical perceptions have always arisen from particular social contexts.

The growth of New Archaeology, for instance, which is now exerting increasing appeal for the younger archaeologists working in this country, must itself be seen historically-- as a definite response to challenges from the environment, as some "New" archaeologists themselves would say. For it certainly isn't the case that New Archaeology is the final, conclusive answer to how scholars should go about examining history. Its appeal, I would maintain, is that it somehow fit more comfortably with the tenor of its times.

If we try to reconstruct the political and social environment in America at the time of Lewis Binford's first experiments with the New Archaeology, I think it will be clear where he got his central theoretical concerns. In 1957, the year in which Binford began his new way of thinking about archaeology, American intellectuals were deeply involved in the civil rights movement and, at the same time, in apprehension of the threat posed by the Soviet sputnik, turning to the physical sciences to begin the space race. And I think that reflections of both these academic concerns can be seen in the direction that New Archaeology took.

No less than the Renaissance scholars who promoted interest in the officially rejected Classical period, or the 17th century English antiquarians who attacked the power of the King, Lewis Binford fought the battles of his own time with archaeological concepts. While the archaeological functionalists had simply ignored the question of race in the archaeological record, Binford went on the offensive, seeing "peoples" as "systems" and charting their growth and change through the use of statistical methods and deductive hypotheses of the types used in physical sciences.

Now while there's no question that American science ultimately succeeded in "winning" the space race and putting men on the moon, there <u>is</u> a question how applicable statistical quantification and experimental methodology is in measuring or evaluating human cultural change. Of course, for historians of archaeology, the ultimate "truth" or applicability of new theories are not as important as how widely they catch on. And in that respect, the New Archaeology of the late 1950's is extremely important. Lewis Binford himself is no longer a rebel, but one of the most respected archaeologists in the world. And his students and supporters hold positions of responsibility throughout the discipline.

And I would maintain-- though this is itself difficult to quantify-- that New Archaeology has succeeded so impressively because it fit in with its times.

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So with an understanding of New Archaeology as a response to the so-

cial concerns of 1950's and 1960's America, I've come to the conclusion that two factors must be separated in the current theoretical controversy in Israeli archaeology.

The suggestions of the American archaeologists working here to adopt the techniques and terminology of New Archaeology may be a response to their own environment. Since most are primarily biblical scholars, their position today on American university campuses may be what is at the heart of their concern. In the period following the collapse of the Biblical Theology movement, and especially at universities where there are thriving departments of anthropologically-oriented New Archaeology, the position of biblical archaeologists, in America, has become increasingly uncomfortable in recent years.

Throughout his published statements, Professor William Dever repeatedly stresses the need for biblical archaeologists to be taken seriously by their Americanist colleagues, and this is clearly a problem of and in America alone. A homogenization of biblical archaeology with the rest of what's going on in American archaeology may solve the social (not to say political) problems of American biblical archaeologists. But I don't agree that a blanket adoption of the principles of New Archaeology by Israeli archaeologists would solve the problems of the discipline here, any more than a former Israeli finance minister's proposal to adopt US dollars as the official currency of the State of Israel would have cured the problems of the Israeli economy.

No, "dollarization" isn't what's needed in Israeli archaeology; I believe that it is more a matter of adopting the general style and attitude of American New Archaeology rather than its specific substance. And that style and attitude is in the tradition of the most important archaeological advances throughout history: responding to changing social and political concerns through attention to the same themes in the archaeological record.

If we take, for instance, the understanding of the basic mechanics of culture change in this country and look back to where and when they were developed, we may see that the dominating theories today may be still those established by Europeans working in Palestine at the turn of the century. And while archaeologists in Israel may no longer believe in such diffusionist delusions as "The Children of the Sun," I would argue that the explanation of basic changes at periods of historical transition still leans heavily on explanations of large-scale population change.

That is not to say that changes of population never occured in antiquity; the establishment of the State of Israel in modern times is an example of how such an exchange might have worked. But if migration and diffusion are going to be used as explanations, the context of those changes must be explained in the same terms that a modern sociologist would use to study the phenomenon of Israel in the 20th century-- not by using the notions of "active" or "chosen" peoples formulated in other times and with other motivations by scholars like Petrie, Macalister, and Albright.

Another issue to be considered by Israeli archaeologists is evolution, for New Archaeology is often called neo-evolutionary in its attempt

to formulate, as I've already said, uniform laws of cultural development. The plausibility of such a formulation is arguable, yet it should not be simply accepted or rejected, but taken as a challenge for the building of a new theory. Whether one accepts the idea of "progress" or rejects it, one's position on the question should not be a purely archaeological one. It should be based on a personal, philosophical conviction of how culture in the world in general and in Israel in particular works today.

I know that there are problems of projection of present values onto ancient societies, and I'm not suggesting that modern archaeologists, like the diffusionists of Petrie's and Macalister's time, merely transfer today's conditions onto the past. What I am suggesting, however, is that archaeology be somehow made relevant to the present, and there is no lack of important social and political issues now facing the Israeli public. The coexistence and interaction of ethnic groups (or lack of it), the use of power and its efficiency in protecting a social system, and even the meaning of nationhood to different groups living on the same piece of territory might all be productive issues for archaeological investigation.

From its beginnings in the Renaissance and through all of its great advances, archaeology has been closely linked to the changing social concerns in all of the societies that have practiced it. And now in 1986, it may be time for Israeli archaeologists to begin to declare their independence from inherited archaeological concepts.

The <u>real</u> source of the current archaeological dissatisfaction among many younger archaeologists here may lie in the changing concepts of the society at large, not just the archaeological concepts. Israel is not the country it was even 10 years ago, and I think that it's obvious that its archaeological understandings be developed in cognizance of the social scientific thinking of 1986, not of the 1840's, 1890, or even 1948.

What is not needed is an adoption of American or European methods that spring from the specific social problems in those societies. And what is certainly not needed is surrender to the proposition that everything is fine, and that, as a local theoretician has urged, archaeologists spend more time digging and less time thinking about digging.

I'm sure that changes are inevitable in Israeli archaeology and I'm sure that those theoretical changes will be connected to the wider changes in the 1980's and 1990's in Israeli society itself. And unless there is an incredibly powerful stubborness, unlike any that the history of archaeology has known anywhere, the concerns of the living society will become a part of its search for the past. And when that happens, there will no longer be a need for a debate between "old" and "new" archaeology.

For <u>any</u> archaeology that is developed here in response to the problems and challenges of the modern society-- insteasd of its myths-- will be, by definition, "new" in the oldest and most valuable archaeological sense.

Best Regards,

Neil

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