New Europe College
GE-NEC Program
2000-2001
2001-2002

DANA JENEI
MĂDĂLINA NICOLAESCU
IOANA TUDORA
ANA MARIA ZAHARIADE

MIHAELA CRITICOS
ANDREEA MIHALACHE
GHEORGHE ALEXANDRU NICULESCU
IOANA TEODORESCU

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

GHEORGHE ALEXANDRU NICULESCU

Born on the 20 November 1954, in Bucharest

Ph.D. in History, University of Bucharest (2000)
Dissertation: *The Romanic population on the territory between the Alps and the Middle Danube in the 4th-7th centuries AD*
Senior Researcher, "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology
Associate Professor, University of Bucharest

Fulbright Scholar, University of Arizona (1991-1992)
Herder Scholarship, University of Vienna (1993-1994)
HESP grant offered by the Soros Foundation (1997)
Scholarship offered by La Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris (2000)
Andrew Mellon Felowship, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (2000)

Participation in international symposia in Romania, Germany, Hungary, Republic of Moldova
Numerous papers and articles on ancient history and archaeology

MATERIAL CULTURE, TRADITION
AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

An understanding of the role material culture plays in the formation and reproduction of collective identities is much needed by archaeologists, especially by those working in the culture-history paradigm, who see themselves as historians and, one way or another, have to account for the reconstruction of the past with the collective actors expected of them.

The normative culture concept

In order to make collective identities from artifacts and features, culture-historical archaeology has for a long time used a fairly simple theoretical device: culture was understood as a set of interrelated rules followed by everybody and material culture as an outcome of following those rules with the result that "scharf umgrenzte archäologische Kulturprovinzen decken sich zu allen Zeiten mit ganz bestimmten Völkern oder Völkerstämmen".[1] Ethnic identity, the only collective identity that really mattered for Kossinna, appeared to be visible in the distribution patterns of artifacts and features.

From this perspective, the link between the archaeological record and ethnic identities seemed unbreakable and it was on this link, guaranteed by the passivity and conformity of people and their products to cultural rules, that the methodology of culture-historical archaeology was built. One could safely assume that every culture unit, i.e. every ethnic unit characterized by a distinct set of rules, would impose them on people and artifacts.

However, empirical evidence soon showed the archaeologists' task to be more complicated than that:

1. Distributions of types and features seldom overlap, so archaeologists had to assume that only some artifact or feature categories or types are ethnically "expressive".

287

2. Artifacts and features originating from historically known contexts can have a distribution that is in no way relatable to any ethnic entity; this has introduced a healthy consideration for how they entered the archaeological record.

However, these observations did not result in a challenge to the normative concept of culture within culture-historical archaeology. That occurred only in the early 1960s with the beginning of a new archaeological tradition in the United States (Binford 1962).

Replacing the "archaeological culture" concept is recognized as a difficult task by many, and, as research on the archaeological understanding of collective identities develops and diversifies, it is becoming clear that we are not likely to get such a simple theoretical device soon, indeed we may never do so. Rather, "we must be prepared […] to commit ourselves to a rigorous long-term pursuit of the anthropological study of material culture" (Dietler and Herbich 1998: 234-235). Thus archaeologists would have to deal with issues beyond the scope of culture-historical archaeology and which are unlikely to be accepted as legitimate concerns by most of its practitioners. It remains to be seen if culture-historical archaeology can give up the normative culture concept without losing its identity.

The profound changes in the conceptualization of society since the times of Kossinna and the progress made in understanding the formation processes of the archaeological record (e.g. Schiffer 1987) make it impossible that archaeological patterns could ever be directly related to social patterning. Cultural patterning can no longer be regarded as being directly expressed in the patterning of the archaeological record[2] and archaeologists must now also face the problems encountered by social scientists in the study of living societies, and not only the artificial order which has been imposed by them on the past. Most important is that of looking beyond the "*donné tel qu'il se donne*"[3]. Irrespective of what we hope to find out about ancient societies from artifacts and features, we should be aware that they were variously involved in accounts that imposed views on and about social reality.

This is particularly significant for the understanding of ethnicity and its relationship to material culture. Although contemporary nations have far more efficient means of imposing uniformity and far more difficult tasks to perform, ethnic identities, as with national identities, start as projects, and the way, and to what extent they succeed should be a matter of investigation.

Agency and beyond

As a reaction against different sorts of determinism – cultural determinism, the once fashionable structuralism and the again fashionable evolutionism – agency is at the forefront of debate in the social sciences and is also gaining momentum in archaeology (e.g. Dobres and Robb 2000), where it is used not only as a more realistic representation of social action, but also as an alternative to the passive role assigned to material culture within traditional archaeology and in other deterministic traditions. However, the danger Bourdieu noticed in interactionist interpretations[4] of imagining free agents, unfettered by any structural constraints at the moment of their interaction, remains and discussion about the agency of material culture has at times developed in the direction of fetishism[5], towards conceiving artifacts as real actors, to the point that artifacts are conceptualized as persons or as having messages of their own and even exchanging messages among themselves without any human participation (Schiffer 1999).

Recent emphasis on the agency of/agency in material culture as a replacement for the perspectives on material culture based on style analysis is surprising given the two major attempts made in the 1970s to overcome the structure-agency duality (Bourdieu [2000]1972 and Giddens 1979). The work of Bourdieu, popularized from the 1980s onwards by post-processualists, seems to have been more influential. However, his highly complex theorization of social reality has entered archaeological research mostly as "concepts", in particular "habitus" and, more recently but to a lesser extent, "doxa". What social reality make these concepts easier to understand? They assume the existence of a group of interconnected persons, and if this group is not accurately specified, the holistic culture concept can step back in. This was not Bourdieu's intention. He denoted the term "field" to be the entity with which habitus and doxa are in complex and necessary relationships and emphasized that the relationship between habitus and the fields is the only one that allows proper consideration of individual agents and individual action (Bourdieu 1987 [1983]: 61). Interestingly, "field" appears to be almost completely absent from archaeological literature on ethnicity and this might allow for the survival of an unexamined socio-cultural (ethnic?) unit to which habitus and doxa are referred.

Habitus

By going beyond dichotomies, such as structural determination/ individual creativity or conscious action/individual or collective unconscious[6], the conceptualization of cultural transmission as habitus by Pierre Bourdieu (see 1980b, esp. pp. 91-95) seems the best available framework for understanding the variability and creativity possible in a given setting. It has the quality of emphasizing the relative autonomy of traditions and of offering the possibility to investigate their horizontal connections in respect of becoming a "style de vie" for a social group. In rejecting the representation of cultural transmission as the action of rules under the authority of tradition or of rational choice, the concept of habitus represents the tensions between the relative independence of practice and the pressures of the structured contingent which make human action regular, without being the product of rules, and patterned although individuals are unique.[7]

It seems significant that habitus is frequently understood as group habitus[8], although in coining this concept one of Bourdieu's main goals was to overcome the opposition between individual and society, habitus being the embodiment of the social and the individualization of the social (Bourdieu 1987[1986]: 43). Group habitus is an abstract set of dispositions which can only be experienced in individuals who, owing to their normally belonging to several social groups, and even if these positions tend to be clustered, never fully realize them. The crosscutting of social groups in the individual habitus is one of the most challenging facts archaeologists have to recognize. It is also worthy of note that paradoxical differences exist within social groups: if a good place in a group supposes an adequate habitus, a very good place usually means a position of authority from which one can act according to his or her habitus, even against the norms of the group.

Habitus allows an understanding of individual action without making humans the powerless reproducers of structure, or masters of their lives. Individuals appear as they are in real life, irreducible – except in special circumstances – to their groups, simply because they belong to several, and because their perception of that is shaped by a unique life experience. Hence, belonging to a group does not make one an interchangeable element of that group, nor does it determine actions. However, it orients them. Not only do individuals differ in their enthusiasm for integrating in groups – as in Groucho Marx's joke: "I don't care to belong to a club that

accepts people like me as members" – but groups themselves, even if they belong to the same category, also differ in how demanding they are towards individuals,[9] in how uniform they are supposed to be. It might be correct to assert that groups in contemporary societies are less demanding than they were in pre-modern societies, but this does not mean we should imagine them to be similar to modern totalitarian societies.

Agency and the anthropology of knowledge

An anthropology of knowledge of the kind suggested by Fredrik Barth (2002) is particularly suitable to the study of situated, interacting agents, within a group. What keeps an ethnic group together is not just shared knowledge about the group's identity. Particular kinds of knowledge and action lead to the articulation of persons in a collective identity, shared but not from the same perspective. Identity appears here as a symbol everybody recognizes while assigning a different content to it, following different traditions of interpretation. The problem of the relationships between collective identities and material culture thus becomes a problem of the relationship between the individuals producing and those using artifacts, their actions being oriented by their life experience and positions within traditions of production, use and interpretation.

Much of the work done within culture-historical archaeology focuses on discontinuities. These seem to be in particular need of explanation, whereas the continuity of a tradition does not require explanation, as this is what people normally do.

Tradition has the property of signifying both cultural transmission and a certain perception of the way it is carried out, in which the conceptualization of change is difficult. This ambiguity plays a role in the choice of "tradition" (particularly in "ceramic tradition") as a replacement for "archaeological culture" within the paradigm of traditional archaeology, a choice which appears to avoid the bankrupt correlation between ethnicity and culture, empirically impossible to sustain. However, it conveys other properties of the old paradigm as in the example of the relationship between cultural uniformity and ethnicity, in which cultural uniformity is seen as "natural", as the automatic conformity with rules, with no explanatory devices for internal change. Thus the holistic concept of culture is preserved, undiscussed – as *pars*

pro toto a material tradition can still be conceived as a product of those collective identities. [10]

The transmission of knowledge, as conceptualized by Barth, implies a relationship between "a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas", the media used to communicate them (words, artifacts, actions) and the "instituted social relations" which make the environment in which "it will be distributed, communicated, employed and transmitted" (2002: 3). This is an analytical distinction. The three aspects of knowledge

> appear together precisely in the particulars of action in every event of the application of knowledge, in every transaction in knowledge, in every performance. Their mutual determination takes place at those specific moments when a particular item of substantive knowledge is cast in a particular communicative medium and applied in an action by an actor positioned in a particular social organization: their systematic interdependence arises by virtue of the constraints *in realization* that these three aspects impose on each other in the context of every particular application. Specific micro-circumstances will thus determine how the mutual influences between the faces of knowledge are affected, and to the extent that we can identify repetitive, persistent effects of mutual constraint and influence in these particular realizations of knowledge, we have identified processes of mutual determination between the three named aspects of knowledge (Barth 2002: 3).

This is confirmed by the observation that certain knowledge contents and communication styles are required in social situations characterized by a constant referral to the social position of the agents.[11]

The perspective suggested by Barth "makes us give the necessary close attention to the knowers and to the acts of the knowers – the people who hold, learn, produce, and apply knowledge in their various activities and lives" (Barth 2002: 3). It is a change from the systemic conception, which offers archaeologists the hope to reconstruct the whole from an undeterminable part of its transformed fragments, to an investigation of how

> the forms of *coherence* or systematicity [are] achieved in various traditions of knowledge, depending on how items in the corpus are constituted, how these items are householded in the social organization, and the degree of precision and force with which messages are cast in the media and representations that are employed. (Barth 2002: 3)

Material culture as a medium of communication raises particular questions. Artifacts mean nothing by themselves:

> It is only when they are interpreted through practice that they become invested with meanings and may then act as props for the strategies of social life. (Barrett 1994: 167)

Therefore the reliance of culture-historical archaeologists on material culture continuities as "natural" should be replaced with an examination of the relations existing between these continuities and the continuity of interpretation, something likely to appear as pointless to those who still believe that the "true meaning" is hidden somewhere in the artifacts.

Knowledge and its transmission are affected by constraints arising from the properties of the medium in which the knowledge is cast and which affect the ideas that can be conveyed through forms of representation that are felicitous, limited, or impossible in respect of those ideas in that medium (Barth 2002: 3). This cautions us against going too far with the textual analogy that allows for use of analytic techniques that are otherwise inaccessible, but also subjects us to the risk of forgetting that artifacts are not only very poor texts, but have a specificity which lies in the realm of non-verbalized routines (Wittgenstein 1969: #204), that is, that of non-verbal cultural transmission, of non-verbal cognition, a world differently controllable by authority than that of the discourse.

Barth's perspective on the transmission of knowledge is particularly suited to the understanding of how meanings come to be attached to artifacts, during daily interaction or during special ceremonies in which they are expressed according to the social position of the participants. These events are not restricted to the interaction which takes place in the production process or to that linked with it in various ways. They extend to all the uses and all the interpretations of uses the artifacts might have. In archaeological analyses of ethnicity, as well as in ethnoarchaeological work, material culture traditions are treated as being of the same kind as production traditions. Thus, if we are to understand the roles artifacts play in signifying identity, we should follow the process of apprenticeship and the influences on the production of particular shapes and particular designs (e.g. Wallaert-Pêtre 1999). Traditions of production are just one part of the story. There are also traditions of consumption and traditions of interpretation – meaning stabilizing traditions – which, again, can be closely related to the production processes or be fairly independent

thereof. The recent focus of ethnoarchaeological research on production tends to obscure this, despite the fact that one might expect the archaeologists' everyday practice of attaching meanings to ancient artifacts to prevent this.[12] This is not just something characteristic of a discipline that needs to create meaning. It happens every time an artifact is perceived outside the tradition of interpretation in which it was created. Even in simpler societies, differences in knowledge are salient and essential to the functioning of society (see Barth 2002: 1-2). They are to be found everywhere in complex societies. We should therefore expect that which must be known in order to produce artifacts and that which constitutes their interpretation in the same society not to be the same thing. We cannot expect someone with access to secret lore to see the artifacts involved in its reproduction in the same light as someone who is not initiated therein.

This process of attaching meaning is obvious in the widespread use of imported objects as status markers. Besides evoking power by the control of the outside world (Helms 1988) and status by the quality of the materials and craftsmanship, they are symbolic blanks, empty containers waiting to be filled with local meanings which, to be efficient, must transcend the local, communicate with the world outside and above.

Style and tradition

After more than twenty years of debate on style among archaeologists, which – as noticed by Dietler and Herbich (1998: 245) – has reproduced the structure-agency debate in the social sciences, some (e.g. Boast 1997) have come to think that the concept of style is worse than useless.[13] Others try to interpret it within an evolutionary framework, while others attempt to recast the old debate in terms of doxa-agency, falling into the trap of the structure/agency duality, a duality also present in the primordialist-instrumentalist polarization of the discussion on ethnicity.

The study of uniformities in material culture from the perspective of style is still necessary. The widespread belief that, through uniformities, we can gain access to social uniformities should not be abandoned, though the question as to what kind of uniformities and how they come into being is a matter that needs further investigation. If action and practice are given the attention they deserve, then we cannot ignore the fact that they are patterned, structured, at least in the sense given by Bauman.[14]

Much discussion about the patterning of material culture among archaeologists from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s has revolved around the concept of style (see Hegmon, 1992, for a review and Carr, 1995, for a collection of articles on the subject). Stylistic behavior is universal[15] and it has no inscribed social correspondent except sociality itself.[16] As a particular way of doing things, style gains meaning in the process of referral to how things have been done and how they should be done.[17] This leads to the failure to define style as having only a particular social function, such as communication, as boldly suggested by Wobst (1977): the range of functions, i.e. meanings, which can be attached to ways of doing things is wider (for a critique of Wobst's views on style see Hegmon 1992: 520-521 and Sterner 1989: 451). Shared meaning, instead of being at the origin of style, "is ultimately the result of style – in fact, of only some rather specialized and not well-understood stylistic phenomena" (Davis 1988: 381).

Although social correlates of stylistic uniformities can be observed only in the present, archaeologists have for a long time neglected this kind of research considering it irrelevant to the understanding of the past. Indeed, the differences between pre-modern societies and contemporary societies in the production and use of identical or stylistically similar artifacts are dramatic. Mass, industrially produced, and rapidly changing styles can hardly be compared with non-industrial styles,[18] their quantity and variety have precluded any comprehensive comparative study, with the notion of style being restricted mostly to art and fashion.

These differences justify ethnoarchaeological research. From the beginning of its development there existed an inbuilt tension between its focus on what seems comparable with ancient societies, i.e. contemporary pre-industrial societies, and the already developed critique of the inference by analogy,[19] a tension which continues to raise doubts about the usefulness of the discipline. However, before rejecting ethnoarchaeology, we should not forget that much archaeological interpretation relies on analogy with the limited, biased, methodologically undisciplined personal experience of the archaeologist, transformed in rigid common-sense reflection, while historical and ethnographic accounts say very little about material culture.[20]

If previous ethnographic work has largely ignored material culture or treated it as an unimportant aspect of daily life, with some notable exceptions, ethnoarchaeologists have tended to emphasize the role of material culture, oblivious to what the natives might think about it, and

paid less attention to the rest of the society, which frequently appears in their papers only in the form of short systematic descriptions. This is particularly damaging to studies on material culture and identity where the production and use of artifacts may appear as the paramount and even unique method of constructing various identities or appear as meaningless in this respect, while other means of constructing identities are ignored.

Ethnicity, power, and material culture

Ethnoarchaeological research has also paid little attention to the relationship between material culture and power, although culture-historical archaeologists recognized the manifestation of political and religious authority in their antiquities quite some time ago. Objects and styles used by the dominant groups have been identified, their diffusion under particular social conditions documented, but they have been understood mostly as passive expressions of status. This is particularly the case with the political elites, who display a cross-cultural taste for imports. These uses of material culture were believed to have little to do with the ethnicity, thus reinforcing the nationalist notion that ethnicity, conceived as conformity, is located in "popular culture".

This belief in cultural uniformity as a generative background for ethnicity has been successfully challenged by Fredrik Barth (1969, 1995). His understanding of ethnicity as "the social organization of culture difference" maintains that instead of searching for a deep ethnic configuration that structures a cultural whole and is recognizable in all its forms, we should expect ethnic difference to be signified by only a part of the cultural repertoire, in which "overt signals or signs – the diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, often such features as dress, language, house-forms, or general style of life –" and "basic value orientations: the standards of morality and excellence by which a performance is judged" can be analytically separated (1969: 14).

There is no stable relationship between the two and "one cannot predict from first principles which features will be emphasized and made organizationally relevant by the actors" (Barth 1969: 14). Later, Barth points out that the "overt signs" should not be considered arbitrary (1994: 14). All cultural creation, including the production of artifacts, is a reaction

to the already existing: "every artifact is the product of human intentionality, but that intentionality itself is conditioned by the existence of previous objects" (Csikszentmihalyi 1993: 21).

Archaeologists studying styles have looked for ethnicity in the coherent formulation of the two categories distinguished by Barth, assuming that the "overt signs" are expressions of the "basic value orientations", possibly understood as "deep style", though they should perhaps be understood as diacritics as well: what distinguishes them from the "overt signs" is mainly their nature of evaluative principles, and if they are structured, it does not denote the "cultural structure" of that society.

Styles used as diacritics are well documented by ethnoarchaeological research, although Barth's suggestion (1994: 16) that difference in scale might explain why complex societies tend to use a few salient, contrasting diacritics, while small groups are more likely to rely on shared images, has not yet been tested empirically. It is not only the size of complex societies that makes the use of shared images less likely owing to communication problems. In contemporary societies these problems can be solved by education and mass media. Their internal differentiation, however, signified by styles, makes the task of devising an encompassing ethnic style particularly difficult, and a limited number of symbols provides a more accessible solution.

In all societies there are some people more involved than others in the articulation of societies by "the social organization of culture difference". An understanding of ethnicity could start from what these people are doing, while avoiding a voluntaristic perspective. Every human being is born and educated with a multitude of ways of thinking and acting, which makes judgment of their actions as only the result of autonomous deliberation implausible. In other words, individual deliberation develops and manifests itself as a social product. It is more realistic to see in "the social organization of culture difference" a result of the action of privileged actors acting in an environment that shapes their views on the possible and the desirable, taking into account that this action can have unintended consequences. These limitations may lead us to reformulate the study of the involvement of political actors in creating and maintaining identity as whatever action might be attributed to them for that purpose. A trap that must be avoided is that of conscious versus unconscious action. Whatever their justification, some actions are recognized by us as significant to group identity, and consequently it does not matter whether they are performed explicitly for that purpose.

This creates an apparent contradiction of a subjective definition of ethnicity, by which it is a self-ascriptive category (Barth 1969: 13). However, this definition did not aim to claim that ethnicity is the product of purposeful action, but to challenge the "objective" views on ethnicity, based on lists of traits. There was nothing "ethnic" in cultural signifiers before it was introduced, for whatever purpose.

The extension of the range of actions involved in the maintaining of ethnic meanings beyond the purposeful allows for consideration the full diversity of the views generated by social positioning that people have about collective identity. One can then reasonably ask whether behind what commonly is attributed to the power of "tradition" there is only one form of power or authority. Is the power at the origins of styles responsible for assigning and maintaining their meaning of one nature? And is it so for all people?

If ethnicity is built through human action and not a generative principle inscribed in the origins of the group, then we should expect collective identities to be constituted by a succession of actions, promoted by authoritative discourses, within one or several traditions. Most ethnoarchaeological works I have read do not attempt a horizontal description of what supports group identity, of how, if ethnicity is believed to be expressed in material culture, traditions of manufacture and use are related to the other traditions supporting group identity. Instead of assuming the coherence of traditions inside an ethnic unit, we should investigate how traditions and the ways of reproducing them are related within a group, or even structured, if that proves to be the case. I see no reason why they should not be effective in supporting the identity of a group without being related, or parts of a structure, or manifestations of a "deep structure".

Contemporary archaeology has repeatedly attempted to study ethnic phenomena either in isolation or in contrast, without examining the different forms of interaction between "us" and "them". These forms of interaction are thought to be something peripheral to the continuous expression of ethnic identities, although "our" identity is expressed in order for "them" to perceive. It seems more reasonable to give up the assumed stability and predictability of such expression and to consider the effects of the interplay between internal developments and outside events might have on it. The outside events could be of a variety of natures and they should be considered from the perspective of the paramount importance of the dichotomizing essential for the continuity

of ethnic identity. Restricting these observations to material culture, we can expect the phenomenon of imports completely or partially replacing local repertoires to affect the capacity of ethnic signifying of some artifact categories, and, particularly in complex societies, unpredictable interactions in the world of the meanings attached to artifacts.

Could the internal dynamics of group identities change the signification of particular categories of artifacts? We have reason to believe that this may happen, particularly in those circumstances in which traditions that support identity have a low degree of coherence, thus making them available for appropriation by emerging social groups and individuals.

Contrary to the view shared by most culture-historical archaeologists, traditions have a relative autonomy and specificity, which in many ways makes them incompatible. What could the mostly non-verbalized traditions of crafts from pre-industrial societies have in common, for instance, with those which legitimate power in the form of oral or written epic poetry? In Bourdieu's terminology they are different fields, as is knowledge, implicit and explicit, and the habitus required for them. What could link them? If we are able to demonstrate the existence of "deep style" then we will have to explain how it came into being and it is probable that we will conclude that it is the result of articulating actions and not from/of unconscious reproduction. Although there are many cases in which the relationship between political leadership and material production are explicit (Helms 1993), the common ground on which identity is built has no cross-cultural basis. The study of ethnic coherence must examine the articulation of these traditions, with the limitations imposed by their nature, and significant differences are to be expected between household production and other forms of production organization or between forms of religious or political authority.

Ethnicity and the past

If group identity that transgresses family and class borders can be called ethnic identity, then can we say that this concept covers all the major features of such phenomena from the present and the past? We have no means to prove this. Traditional concerns about ethnic identities have placed them above and beyond how societies actually work; apparently we can ignore almost everything about a society and still be certain about its identity. In a nationalistic framework this is explained

by the primordial nature of identity and is used to infer endlessly about the past using the alleged cultural intimacy with "our" ancestors. Whether we use "the best" or the most academically popular definition of ethnicity, we cannot work out its properties outside the historical context. We have to pursue our research using a highly flexible concept that describes not what ethnicity is, but what it is about, allowing us to discover phenomena dissimilar in many ways to what we are accustomed to see as "peoples" or "ethnic groups".

The use of the term "ethnic" groups identities into a category of phenomena of the same order. This does not mean societies, but only ways of distinguishing social realities, developed in particular circumstances and fulfilling various functions in relation with other group identities and other social phenomena. These social phenomena, some of which are taken for human universals by culture-historical archaeologists, may interact with the workings of ethnic identity. Personhood, for instance, includes the fractal person concept described by Roy Wagner. This is different from the "Western" view of the individual opposed to the society (Gell 1998: 140) because it represents individuals as existing "reproductively by being 'carried' as part of another" and as engendering "others by making themselves genealogical or reproductive 'factors' of these others."[21]

Culture-historical archaeologists have also to give up the comforting idea that an understanding of the past is possible without any concern for the present, that we can detach ourselves from our societies and look "objectively" at those from the past, that antiquities have nothing to do with the meaningless everyday artifacts we are surrounded by. Only in living societies can we observe how material culture is involved in the formation and maintaining of ethnic identities. Despite vigorous claims to the contrary, culture-historical archaeology does bring the present into the past, though unfortunately not by studying contemporary material culture and identities, but by unreflectively using dominant views on society, i.e. mostly nationalist views, which function as the social theory that such archaeologists reject.

Of course, the present has no ready answers for us. We have good reason to believe that we cannot simply extrapolate the relationships between material culture and identities we observe in contemporary complex societies. Their patterns of mass production and consumption, the control of collective identities through specialized and efficient means, have created a wide array of uses of material culture for constructing

personal and collective identities, all imposed or suggested through education systems and the mass media, where restrictions on the meanings artifacts can have – from registered trademarks to national monuments – are so clear and redundant that we are not able to use them to understand the relationships in simpler, pre-modern societies.

While both archaeologists and ethnoarchaeologists – particularly those following the *chaîne opératoire* approach – emphasize practice in recent approaches, frequently research still focuses on the search for the expressions of collective identities in material culture as recognizable patterns, with little attention paid to the social life of things, especially to what archaeologists are best trained and equipped to document, i.e. long sequences of objects issued from the same technological tradition or having other similarities, and material genealogies that create the impression of gradual change and that everything else goes along with it, including the traditions of their interpretation. We need a perspective which will enable us to understand the change in traditions, their relationships and their interpretation. The essentialist approach should be replaced with concern for historical and political specificity in the production and use of material culture: "objects are not what they were made to be but what they have become" (Thomas 1991: 2). The identity of things is not to be conceived as given in their fixed material form, but as assigned and more or less stabilized in a context of interaction between different traditions. We cannot fail to notice that the same can be said of social groups.

It appears that we should stop expecting a replacement for the once trusted but now bankrupt interpretative device of culture-historical archaeology: the equivalence of cultural uniformity with ethnic identities. Even if we discover how material culture is involved – in all sorts of societies – in building and maintaining ethnic identities and we can state confidently that a settlement belonged to people with this identity, and a cemetery to people with that identity, what can we really say about them knowing this identity? The answer would be almost nothing if we refrain from attributing to them all the characteristics nationalist traditions have ascribed to ethnic units, because societies and people are not born by identities; these are just used in ways we have no means to infer from them. Therefore, the quest for ethnicity appears meaningless without an understanding of society, unless we really require classificatory boxes with more attractive labels than A, B or C, which will be filled only by current ideologies The focusing on identity of culture-historical

archaeologists is limited to the origins, following the implicit idea that this is where the generative principles are to be found, although "[e]ven an ethnic group that exhibits considerable continuity and stability over long periods of historical time will nevertheless change in fundamental ways" (Kohl 1998: 232). If we want to discover something else than what nationalist ideologies know already without the need for archaeological research, we should examine the processes by which identities persist as labels while the traditions supporting them and their uses change.

NOTES

1 Kossinna 1920[1911]: 3.
2 See Patrik 1985 on the "physical" and "textual" models of the archaeological record.
3 Bourdieu 2000[1972]: 238-239 – "Poser que la science ne peut être qu'une conceptualisation de l'expérience commune […] c'est […] identifier la science de la société à un *enregistrement du donné tel qu'il se donne*, c'est à dire de l'ordre établi. On est en droit, encore une fois, de se donner pour objectif de produire un *account* des *accounts*, à condition d'avoir clairement à l'esprit la fonction qui est impartie, dans la pratique, à tout *account*: le pouvoir constitutif qui est accordé au language ordinaire ne réside pas dans le language ordinaire mais dans le groupe qui l'autorise et lui donne autorité [….]"
4 Bourdieu 2000[1972]: 238 – "[…] en ne prenant en compte dans l'analyse que ce que les pratiques et les représentations doivent à la logique des interactions symboliques et, en particulier, à la représentation que les agents peuvent se faire, par anticipation ou par expérience, de l'action d'autres agents auxquels ils sont directement confrontés, l'intéractionisme réduit les relations entre des positions dans les structures objectives à des relations intersubjectives entre les agents occupant ces positions: en excluant ainsi tacitement tout ce que doivent à ces structures les interactions, et les représentations que les agents peuvent en avoir, il assume implicitement la théorie spontanée de l'action qui fait de l'agent ou des ses représentations le principe ultime de stratégies capables de produire et de transformer le monde social […]"
5 For the use of the concept of fetishism as an opening towards an internal critique of archaeological practice see Cumberpatch 2000.
6 See Bourdieu 1987[1986]: 20 – "[…] des conduites peuvent être orientées par rapport à des fins sans être consciemment dirigées vers ces fins. La notion de habitus à été inventée, si je puis dire, pour rendre compte de ce paradoxe".
7 See Bourdieu [2000]1972: 227-228 on rules and their use for understanding societies of which we know little: "Aussi longtemps qu'il ignore les limites inhérentes au point de vue qu'il prend sur l'objet, l'ethnologue se condamne à reprendre insconsciemment à son compte la représentation de l' action qui s'impose à un agent ou à un groupe lorsque, dépourvu de la maîtrise pratique d'une compétence fortement valorisée, il doit s'en donner le substitut explicite et au moins semi-formalisé sous la forme d'un *répertoire de règles* ou de ce que les sociologues mettent dans le meilleur des cas sous la notion de « role », c'est-à-dire le programme prédétérminé des discours et des actions convenant à un certain « emploi »".

8   One extreme example is G. C. Bentley who goes as far as to consider "structured habitual practice" as "a deep structure" (1991: 170; see 1987: 29).

9   See, for instance, Nock 1932 on the differences between being a pagan and being a Christian.

10   The usual conceptualization of tradition as a simple "handing down" (The Random House College Dictionary. Revised edition, 1975) obscures the variability of cultural transmission between the static and the fluid, operating in different modes, such as those sketched by Henry Glassie (1995: 406-409): tradition by repetition, by dismemberment of the entities and preservation of the essences and by preservation of "a certain spirit".

11   Bourdieu 2000[1972]: 232 – "On est en droit de supposer que c'est tout le contenu de la communication (et pas seulement la langue employée) qui se trouve modifié, inconsciemment, par la structure de la relation entre les locuteurs. […] c'est tout un langage, un type de plaisanteries, un ton, parfois même un accent, qui se trouvent comme objectivement appelés par certaines situations et qui sont tout au contraire exclus, en dépit de tous les efforts d'évocation, en d'autres situations. […] Charles Bally montre bien que le contenu même de la communication, la nature du langage et de toutes les formes d'expression employés (maintien, démarche, mimique, etc.), et surtout, peut-être, leur style, se trouvent affectés par la référence permanente à la structure de la relation sociale entre les agents qui l'accomplissent et, plus précisément, à la structure de leurs positions relatives dans les hiérarchies de l'age, du pouvoir, du prestige et de la culture […]"

12   The increased emphasis on style as *modus operandi*, as opposed to the previous approaches to style as *modus operatum*, to which the archaeologists' interest in pattern recognition corresponds, should not prevent us from observing that finished products are involved, in antiquity as now (perhaps even more so now), in the construction of social relations between people who ignore altogether how they were produced. Of course, the *modus operandi* approach is also appropriate for the study of the social life of artifacts, not only for their production.

13   It is true that some approaches to style lead one to suspect that the holistic culture concept has survived in "deep styles", in "vernacular styles", in assumptions that bounded structures of some sort underlie ethnic groups.

14   Bauman 1999[1973]: 41 – "[…] we assume for the moment, that we all agree on what we mean when using the term 'structure', as, broadly, an antonym to 'disorder'. In this broad sense we can say, that culture as a generic quality, as a universal attribute of mankind as distinct from all other species, is the capacity to impose new structures on the world".

15   Against this view see Boast 1997: 174 – " […] 'style' in not a universal, but a contemporary way of speaking about the world, a way of speaking that is dependent on a Cartesian dualism that few of us would accept as more than an historically situated 'view of the world'. […] style is not a characteristic of

304

material culture, but is a result of a contemporary way of conceptualizing material culture." I do not see why we should feel compelled to oppose style to function as Boast claims (1997: 175): style does not demand that "we look at things in the world as first doing a job and then carrying meanings."

16   See Mauss 1930: 470 — "Le domaine du social, c'est le domaine de la modalité" (apud Dietler and Herbich 1998: 238).

17   See Sackett (1977: 370) "a highly specific and characteristic manner of doing something […] always peculiar to a specific time and place" and Hodder (1990: 45). See also Kroeber 1948: 329: "for things to be done well they must be done definitely" (quoted by Sackett [1990: 35-36])

18   Should we expect in pre-modern societies instrumentalizations of styles as "imposition de la dernière différence légitime, la dernière mode" or through the transubstantiation operated by "la griffe"? (Bourdieu 1980a: 202 and 204)

19   Wylie 1985: 80 – "Analogical inferences are all, by definition, 'ampliative'; they inevitably claim the existence of more extensive similarities in their conclusions than has been or could be established in the premises, thus, they are always liable to be in error".

20   See David and Kramer 2001: 1-2

21   Wagner 1991: 163, apud Gell 1998: 140. For a questioning of the cross-cultural variability of the person concept see Shweder and Bourne 1984.

305

REFERENCES

Barrett, J. C. (1994), *Fragments from Antiquity: An Archaeology of Social Life in Britain, 2900-1200* B.C. (Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell).

Barth, F. (1969), "Introduction", in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Bergen, Oslo, London: Univ. Vorlaget; G.Allen & Unwin), 9-38.

— (1994), "Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity", in H. Vermeulen and C. Govers (eds.), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries"* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis), 11-32.

— (1995), "Ethnicity and the concept of culture", Program on Nonviolent Sanctions and Cultural Survival Seminar Synopses. Available at http://data.fas.harvard.edu/cfia/pnscs/DOCS/s95barth.htm.

— (2002), "An Anthropology of Knowledge", *Current Anthropology* 43(1): 1-18.

Bauman, Z. (1999 [1973]), *Culture as Praxis.* Revised edition (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage). First edition published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.

Bentley, G. C. (1987), "Ethnicity and Practice", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29: 24-55.

Bentley, G. C. (1991), "Response to Yelvington", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33: 169-175.

Binford, L.R. (1962), "Archaeology as Anthropology", *American Antiquity* 28 (2): 217-225.

Boast, R. (1997), "A Small Company of Actors", *Journal of Material Culture* 2(2): 173-198.

Bourdieu, P. (2000[1972]), *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique.* Précédée de trois études d''éthnologie kabyle (Paris: Seuil). First edition published by Droz, 1972.

— (1980a), *Questions de sociologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit).

— (1980b), *Le sens pratique* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit).

— (1987[1983]), "Repères", in *Choses dites* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit), 47-71. Translation of an interview with J. Heilbron and B. Maso published in Dutch in *Sociologisch tydschrift* 10(2), 1983.

— (1987[1986], "Fieldwork in Philosophy", in *Choses dites* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit), 13-46. Translation of an interview with A. Honneth, H. Kocyba and B. Schwibs, published in *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 16 (61-62), 1986 and in *Theory, Culture, and Society* 3, 1986.

Carr, C. and Neitzel, J. (1995) (eds.), *Style, Society and Person* (New York : Plenum Press).

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1993). "Why we need things", in S. Lubar and W. D. Kingery (eds.), *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press), 20-29.

CUMBERPATCH, C. G. (2000). "People, Things and Archaeological Knowledge: An Exploration of the Significance of Fetishism in Archaeology", *Assemblage* 5. Available at http://www.shef.ac.uk/assem/5/cumberpa.html.

DAVID, N. and KRAMER, C. (2001), *Ethnoarchaeology in Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

DAVIS, W. (1988), "Comment" on N. DAVID, J. STERNER and K. GAVUA, 'Why Pots Are Decorated', *Current Anthropology* 29 (3): 380-381.

DIETLER, M. and HERBICH, I (1998). "Habitus, Techniques, Style: An Integrated Approach to the Social Understanding of Material Culture and Boundaries", in M. T. STARK (ed.), *The Archaeology of Social Boundaries* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press), 232-263.

DOBRES, M.-A. and ROBB, J. (2000) (eds.), *Agency in Archaeology* (London: Routledge).

GELL, A. (1998), *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

GIDDENS, A. (1979), *Central Problems in Social Theory* (London: Macmillan).

GLASSIE, H. (1995), "Tradition", *Journal of American Folklore* 108(430): 395-412.

HEGMON, M. (1992), "Archaeological research on style", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21: 517-536.

HELMS, M.W. (1988), *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
— (1993), *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade and Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press).

HODDER, Ian (1990), "Style as historical quality", in M.W. CONKEY and Chr.A. HASTORF (eds.), *The Uses of Style in Archaeology* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press), 44-51.

KOHL, P.L. (1998), "Nationalism and Archaeology: On the Construction of Nations and the Reconstructions of Remote Past", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27: 223-246.

KOSSINNA, G. (1920[1911]), *Die Herkunft der Germanen. Zur Methode der Siedlungsarchäologie*. Second edition (reprint of the 1911 edition with additions and 9 maps (Leipzig: Curt Kabitsch).

KROEBER, A.L. (1948), *Anthropology* (New York: Harcourt & Brace).

MAUSS, M. (1930), "Les civilisations: éléments et formes". In *Civilisation, le mot et l'idée* (Paris: Centre International de Synthèse), 456-479.

NOCK, A.D. (1932), *Conversion* (Oxford, Clarendon Press).

PATRIK, L.E. (1985), "Is there an archaeological record?", in M.B. Schiffer (ed.), *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, vol. 8 (Orlando: Academic Press), 27-62.

SACKETT, J.R. (1977), "The Meaning of Style in Archaeology: A General Model", *American Antiquity* 42: 369-380.
— (1990), "Style and Ethnicity in Archaeology: The case for isochrestism", in M.W. Conkey and Chr. A. Hastorf (eds.), *The Uses of Style in Archaeology* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press), 32-43.

SCHIFFER, M.B. (1988), *Formation Processes of the Archaeological Record* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press).

— (1999), *The Material Life of Human Beings: Artifacts, Behavior and Communication* (London: Routledge).

SHWEDER, R. A. and E. J. BOURNE (1984), "Does the Concept of Person Vary Cross-Culturally?" in R.A. SHWEDER and R. LEVINE (eds.), *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 158-199.

STERNER, J. (1989), "Who is signalling whom? Ceramic style, ethnicity and taphonomy among the Sirak Bulahay", *Antiquity* 63: 451-459.

THOMAS, N. (1991), *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonization in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

WAGNER, R. (1991), "The Fractal Person", in M. STRATHERN and M. GODELIER (eds.), *Big Men and Great Men: Personification of Power in Melanesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 159-173.

WALLAERT-PÊTRE, H. (1999), "Potières et apprenties *vere* du Cameroun. Styles techniques et processus d'apprentissage", *Technique et culture* 33: 89-116, 215-216, 218.

WITTGENSTEIN, L. (1969). *Über Gewissheit/On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. ANSCOMBE and G. H. von WRIGHT (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

WOBST, H. M. (1977), "Stylistic Behavior and Information Exchange", in *Papers for the Director. Research essays in honor of James B. Griffin* (ed. Charles E. CLELAND) (Ann Arbor; Michigan University Press), 317-342. [University of Michigan. Museum of Anthropology. Anthropological Paper 61].

WYLIE, A. (1985), "The Reaction against Analogy", in M.B. SCHIFFER (ed.), *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, vol. 8 (Orlando: Academic Press), 63-111.