

Between Rationalism and Romanticism

Archaeological Heritage Management in the 1990s

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In this article it is argued that "heritage" both as a theoretical concept and a practice, is central to defining archaeology's role in society. Greater critical attention should therefore be given to this arena of archaeological practice on the part of theoretical archaeology and the heritage administration itself. Since archaeological heritage management is situated between interests in the present, these have to be defined as a first step. Three basic concepts and their role in shaping the development of archaeological heritage management are briefly analysed: the cultural environment, the cultural biography and cultural identity. It is argued that they are part of a development towards a more holistic perception and ideological use of the cultural heritage. This invites political manipulation. To avoid this, certain universal objectives in combination with ethical guidelines are suggested.

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT – THE LAST 150 YEARS

To understand the present context of heritage management, it will be useful to provide a brief historical overview (Kristiansen 1992, 1996b). During the last 150 years the protection of the archaeological and cultural heritage has undergone remarkable changes. It can be characterised as a development towards enlarging the physical and cultural context of protection. During most of the 19th century archaeological objects were the focus of research and protection. This was the great period of museum collections, classification, and of fast barrow and cemetery excavations by both pot hunters and archaeologists. The archaeological objects were removed from their original contexts and presented to the

public in the cities, much like the commodities of the new industries in the new warehouses.

The second phase of protection focused on the archaeological monuments themselves. This was due to several factors. An accelerating destruction of monuments by the expansion of agriculture made it increasingly clear that action had to be taken. This was supported by another trend. From the late 19th century onwards the middle classes began to visit cultural attractions in the landscape, including monuments. Several of the most important monuments were restored or reconstructed, and many more were recorded and protected. This was also the great period of inventorisation or archaeological surveying. It gradually led to the emergence of settlement archaeology, as the mapping of monuments and sites began

to provide a coherent picture of settlement organisation. This period may be said to have lasted until one generation ago, in some countries until the present day.

The third phase focused increasingly on the cultural environment of the monuments. This was the period of large-scale infrastructural changes in the industrialised societies. During the 1960s and '70s efforts were concentrated on enlarging the protection of the immediate surroundings of monuments. In Denmark a 100 m protection zone was enforced around all visible monuments in the landscape, while in other countries archaeological parks were established. The background was the same – an increasing understanding of the relationship between the monuments and their surroundings. The landscape provided an important dimension for understanding and experiencing the larger contexts. Thus new constructions or changes in the landscape were prohibited inside the protection zones – whether a 100 m zone or a larger park. This new perception of the context of monuments was also displayed in new museum exhibitions, which removed most of the objects and put them back into their context – houses, barrows, fields, etc. This one to one experience was most clearly played out in the many new experimental open-air museums, which today represent the fastest growing sector within archaeology. Again, changes in protection and presentation were linked to changes in new popular interest and behaviour.

We may conclude from this brief survey that the ideology of archaeological conservation has developed hand in hand with changes in archaeological research, and in the popular perception of both landscape and monuments. Archaeology was always part of wider changes in society. Thus landscape protection and the protection of historical buildings have followed similar trends in their development – from individual buildings to historical streets and town structures, from individual biotopes to larger habitats. Therefore we can expect that also the present situation in archaeological heritage management is a reflection of such

wider trends of conservation in the industrialised world. In fact the change in terminology over time is indicative of this. Antiquarians, cultural resource managers and cultural heritage managers mark a route from marginal isolation over a modernist resource perspective towards an ideologically loaded practice at the centre of identity formation.

THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT – A NEW INTEGRATING CONCEPT

In many countries archaeology was enrolled into the physical planning system that developed during the 1960s and '70s. The whole physical environment was now inventorised or surveyed, and it was evaluated according to natural, cultural, geological, etc., values, often based upon quantitative summaries of the evidence (KVHAA 1986). In this respect the heritage sector followed a similar trend as settlement studies in both geography and archaeology.

In some countries, like Denmark and England, this integration of archaeological heritage management and physical planning and protection led to an integration of archaeological conservation with nature conservation. A new large-scale perception of historical or cultural landscapes emerged out of this new trend. In some countries it led to a renewal of landscape studies – for example in Sweden and England.

Thus archaeological heritage management has moved closer to landscape and nature conservation during the last generation in most industrialised countries. It is now part of a more integrated perception of cultural landscapes (Macinnes & Wickham-Jones 1992; Bender 1993; Welinder 1993). In Denmark this has been called the third dimension in environmental politics (Auken 1994) – the first being protection against pollution, the second the protection of nature. Both of these protection strategies have been dominated by natural science and a lack of historical and cultural context. Therefore the third dimension is seen as representing a new level in the protection of both nature and culture. It is

considered a more integrated and holistic approach, but it also puts great demands upon the development of new types of research and knowledge. Historical archaeology is in part a product of this development, which considers landscapes in their historical totality. This means that in many countries archaeologists are now inventing historical roads, bridges, field systems, etc., as part of a long-term study of landscape history and landscape conservation. Monuments and buildings are seen as elements within this wider context.

One of the main objectives of a new perception of the cultural environment is to adopt and reinforce the protection and management of the cultural environment within other relevant legislation and planning. This means that the ministry of agriculture, the ministry of transport, etc., have to adopt the principles of the cultural environment within their planning and legislation and also carry some of the costs to do so. This is part of a wider international trend towards integrated planning, as reflected in the Habitat Conference, or earlier the Rio Conference on biodiversity. Now, finally, the time has also come for culture to be integrated, for reasons that are rather more ideological than rational.

This new development does not mean that we should stop recording and protecting individual monuments; it simply means that the perspective of conservation has been enlarged to encompass the whole settlement and landscape history – the cultural habitat. Thus there has developed a two-way strategy for the protection of the cultural and archaeological heritage, which we may call “broad and narrow”. The “broad” represents wholeness and is regulated mainly by planning measures, the “narrow” represents individual monuments and is regulated by protective legislation. This trend has many parallels to developments within research and interpretation during the last ten years, and to developments in the political and ideological landscape of the cultural heritage. Let us first consider research and interpretation.

THE CULTURAL BIOGRAPHY – A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF MONUMENTS AND LANDSCAPE

During the last ten years a remarkable reorientation of landscape and settlement studies has taken place, shifting from an obsession with quantification and regularity – central places, etc., – to an obsession with human experience and “lived” interpretation of individual landscapes and monuments. This has taken several forms – from Chris Tilley’s (1996) phenomenology of landscape, to Richard Bradley’s (1993) *Altering the Earth* about the history of individual monuments, to the cultural biography of a Dutch Bronze Age landscape by Nico Roymans (1995).

What they have in common is a holistic approach to landscape interpretation, an attempt to understand the landscape as a cultural construction with changing use and meaning over time. This is best described by the term “cultural biography”. In opposition to previous ecological and economic explanations of land use, landscape is seen as a social as well as a cultural construction, being part of the cosmology of society. Landscape is thus used to promote or reinforce social strategies – the placing of barrows, settlements, ritual places, etc. is in some periods more important than purely economical considerations. And meaning changes over time. Barrows may become marginalised into a cultural periphery to create a distance between the heathen past and the new Christian cosmology. They take on new meanings of myth and folklore and sometimes return to the centre of culture, for example, during the last century when they were given new meanings as symbols of cultural identity, as local or regional meeting-places of political parties, and finally as tourist attractions (Kolen 1995; Ashworth & Larkham 1994; Burström 1996; Burström, Winberg & Zachrisson 1997).

This is nothing peculiar to archaeology. Similar interpretative trends are seen in geography, ethnology and other cultural-historical disciplines. They run parallel to the developments in cultural heritage manage-

ment described above, which basically reflect the same tendency. A merging of the two would seem obvious: the cultural biography of monuments and landscapes has an immediate potential for story-telling or narratives, for understanding the relation between past and present in a long-term perspective, and for understanding the cultural and economic history of destruction and preservation. They suit perfectly well the communicative needs of the many new tourist centres at significant monuments, which have been established these past years. And a brief survey of some of the latest centres in Scandinavia demonstrates that the heritage sector has grasped the message; they present wonderfully, illustrated narratives of the kind just described. Post-processual or contextual archaeology is finally integrated and accepted in practice.

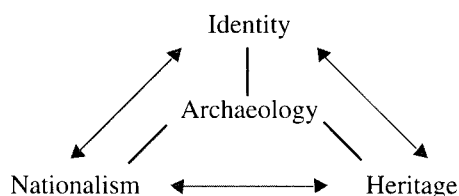
But stories also have meanings and implications in the present. We have to ask ourselves what the wider consequences of such an approach could be – whose interests are we serving when taking on board the new bureaucratic concept of cultural environments, and unravelling their cultural biographies? Why are these stories, rather than the stories of settlement patterns and economic and social organisation of the 1970s so interesting right now? These are questions not asked often by the academic front runners, since they are part and parcel of the new trends. A critical archaeology is, however, emerging with regard to these topics, reflected in recent books on nationalism and archaeology, and on identity and cultural heritage (Graves-Brown *et al.* 1996; Diaz & Champion 1996; Kohl & Fawcett 1995; Atkinson *et al.* 1996; Vargas & Sanoja 1993). This leads to a discussion of the ideological framework of some present theoretical and interpretative trends.

CULTURAL IDENTITY – ORIGINS AND MEANINGS

During the same period as the changes described above took place, a new sense of historical or cultural identity emerged world wide, placing the relation between globalism

and localism on the academic agenda in the social and cultural sciences. The identity wave has taken many forms – from cultural revivals and reconstructions among indigenous peoples or minority groups, to national chauvinism and racism. But they are part of a world-wide trend of reorientation of historical and cultural values. Before entering a discussion on the possible consequences for heritage archaeology, it may be useful to look briefly into the origins and meanings of the concept of identity (Rowlands 1996).

Identity originates from the Latin “idem”, which means “same”. The emergence of identity as establishing cultural or historical sameness and difference is found in the Enlightenment period, in the works of John Locke. Later on, in the Romantic period, it moved from an intellectual framework into a cultural and ideological one – as a *right to identity*, represented in the works of Herder. It soon gained popular ground, and we now witness the interlocked formation of three concepts with world-historical implications: identity – nationalism – heritage. If we arrange them in a triangle, we can insert archaeology and landscape in the middle, as historical concepts giving meaning and historical life to the triangle.



However, there is no linearity in the use and meaning of identity and heritage. Their meaning depends on historical cycles of ideological and political climate, described by Jonathan Friedman in his recent book as cultural and civilisational cycles of centralisation-fragmentation and modernism-postmodernity, respectively. The dominance of one or the other cycle has, according to Friedman (1994), created different global cultural climates. Thus periods of political fragmentation

and reorganisation correspond to periods of cultural identity and the particular, while periods of modernism and centralisation correspond to international identities and the general. Thus the present postmodern climate of culture and identity is a reflection of these global trends, which followed upon a longer period of modernity and internationalism after the Second World War.

I prefer the concepts "Rationality" and "Romanticism" to describe the two trends, concepts that are more familiar to European tradition. They can be defined in the following way, with respect to the cultural heritage:

<i>Rationalism</i>	<i>Romanticism</i>
– elite movement	– popular movement
– systematization/ specialisation	– holism
– centralisation	– decentralisation
– natural science	– humanities

This is a simplification which shall help us to recognise the dominant trends. Colleagues in literature or the history of philosophy may object to this borrowing and widening of the concepts. I do maintain them, however, because they more than any other concepts embody key characteristics of the wider trends in society which are the object of our study. In a recent article Michael Shanks even applied the concept of a critical Romanticism to account for the role of "experience" in bridging archaeological interpretation and heritage (Shanks 1995), just as Christopher Tilley's (1996) interpretative experiences from walking "prehistoric" landscapes have much in common with the classical Romantic landscape fascination in art, poetry, and travel accounts. I further wish to stress that the concepts should be treated as historically dynamic entities – thus the seeds of Rationalism are often sowed during a period of Romanticism, just as irregular cycles may occur. Romantic or Rationalistic periods can be prolonged in regions of political or economic backwardness, for example the former eastern Europe.

On the basis of these categories, it may be

suggested that Romantic periods are periods of change and social transformation of values, of declining control beyond the national state. Rationalistic periods are periods of consolidation of a new order, of control and dominance above the national state. If we apply these wide definitions we can detect three cycles of Rationalism and Romanticism respectively since the Enlightenment period, our present situation being back to a Romantic stage, with many similarities to the period between the two World Wars, and even the Romantic period after the Napoleonic wars in the early 19th century. In archaeology we locate the origin of the discipline in the Romantic period, but its basic principles are defined by a Rationalistic mind, that of C.J. Thomsen. From 1850 onwards the Rationalistic trend takes over again, exemplified by the application of principles of natural science, the recording and classification of monuments and material culture by Sophus Müller and Oscar Montelius. Many new regional museums are established, laying the foundation for a return to a Romantic trend in archaeological interpretation and practice, exemplified by Gustav Kossinna and new cultural-historical interpretations of historical ethnicities. Modernity and Rationalism take over again after the Second World War, leading to the reintroduction of scientific methods of classification and interpretation, represented by Mats Malmer and Lewis Binford. As mentioned earlier, we are now back to a Romantic or post-modernistic period of cultural history and interpretations of ethnicities and nationalism.

So returning now to the archaeological heritage, what consequences do these developments have for the future?

THE HERITAGE SECTOR – CONSEQUENCES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The cultural heritage is experiencing a period of increasing popularity and importance, leading to the new developments in theoretical perspectives and practice described above. However, as has now been demonstrated, this

is not the result of some internal logic or rationality alone. It is part of much wider global changes in ideological climate, which explains similar trends in research and management among different cultural-historical disciplines. It was politically manifested in the introduction of the cultural heritage as a basic human right at the Vienna meeting of the political leaders of Europe in 1993. In the "Vienna Declaration" resulting from the meeting, four cornerstones for the "European House" were defined: democracy, the rule of law, human rights and cultural heritage. In its national, regional and local diversity, cultural heritage was endorsed as a fundamental right that must be protected against nationalistic misuse and thoughtless destruction.

To counterbalance such misuse, it can be helpful to define some general objectives. Although a debated issue (e.g. Lipe 1984; Beckman 1995; Darwill 1995; Carman 1996), I shall propose that the protection of the cultural environment is governed by three basic objectives, namely:

- to protect the cultural existence for present and future generations, that is, an ethical-existential purpose (cultural reproduction). This definition makes no priorities or value judgements between good and bad,
- to develop the dimension of understanding and experiencing the cultural heritage, as a precondition for human life quality,
- to protect and extract the scientific information inherent in the cultural environment, as a precondition for describing and interpreting its history.

Such universal objectives help to establish a more neutral platform for acting, and may be used to put down the more extreme claims on the cultural heritage. However, this is only a first step. There are more subtle methods of ideological and political misuse and manipulation. The situation is complex since the heritage sector is defined by its relationship to the state, as a guardian of its national heritage. Although the proper protection of this heritage is based to some extent upon international conventions, there is still a lot of scope for

choosing different paths, for serving different interests (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996).

Different answers have been given to this complexity: from promoting pluralism to promoting a political agenda, from promoting some kind of neutrality to promoting interest in local communities or indigenous peoples. At the international level Unesco's World Commission for Culture and Development in their 1995 report propose a new global cultural ethic. They further promote pluralism and a consideration or even integration of culture in economic politics and development.

One way to overcome some of these various ideological pressures has been the formation of regional and national archaeological societies, most recently the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA), whose objectives include an attempt to develop both practical/professional and ethical guidelines for conservation and excavation. I have no immediate or politically correct answer to the complexity confronting archaeological heritage management today, but I suggest that certain practical and ethical rules be followed. Firstly, we have to identify the various interests and their implications for an archaeological heritage management in order to know where we are heading. Secondly, the heritage sector has to develop a critical and integrated approach towards its own practice and history, in order to make qualified judgements as to which directions to choose and the implications of such choices. Thirdly, both universities and the heritage sector are badly in need of re-organisation to meet the demands of the present as defined above (Kristiansen 1996a). A more integrated knowledge is needed, transcending the disciplinary boundaries of archaeology, and adding perspectives from human geography, ethnology, architectural history and landscape history.

Thus the heritage sector has to position itself between various interests. As demonstrated above, identity and heritage embody an ideology of descent, which may ultimately lead to ethnic cleansing. It is the responsibility of the archaeological community at large to

demonstrate that no direct, unchangeable links exist between the past and the present. Language, social institutions, etc., have been transformed so deeply and so many times since antiquity that our so-called forefathers of one, two, or three thousand years ago would seem more strange and foreign to us than a foreigner from even the most remote corner of the globe today. Links between the past and the present are emotionally and politically constructed for purposes of the present. Understanding the past should be an exercise in understanding the otherness of today's immigrants, of other cultures and ethnicities.

We should further establish as an ethical rule that archaeology and the archaeological heritage cannot and should not be employed for political or ideological claims in the present, since there is no objective or non-ideological way to distinguish between a "good" and a "bad" use of the past, for reasons mentioned above. Although such claims may eventually be historically grounded, conflicts and problems of the present should always be evaluated and solved in their present context, whether legal, social and/or political.

Finally, I wish to point out that the archaeological heritage has no voice to defend itself against exploitation, whether political, economic, or scientific. Therefore, it needs a defense for its right to exist in all its variety by pure virtue of its survival. It represents the

physical traces of human existence and history that cross-cut present national and ethnic borders, and therefore cannot be owned or monopolised neither by nations nor individuals. It belongs to Mankind. I propose that the archaeological heritage sector, among its many responsibilities, also has the role of defending this more universal right of existence, balanced against the historical, ideological, and theoretical insights described above.

Thus, in the end, I come to the conclusion that a responsible heritage management has to establish a platform of more universal aims and objectives – at least to begin with. This has to be followed by a critical awareness of its role in the national, regional or local contexts within which it operates. Conclusions cannot be given beforehand, but I have presented certain guidelines and suggested some ethical principles.

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The reader may find his or her way to relevant literature and references in the above select bibliography, covering most of the themes touched upon in this article. We still lack a history of archaeological heritage management, which means that my historical generalisations are based mainly on a Danish and North European background.