

Editorial

Exactly a hundred years ago the young philologist Gustaf Kossinna presented a paper *Über die vorgeschichtliche Ausbreitung der Germanen in Deutschland* at the 16th congress of the German anthropological society at Kassel (later published in *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* 1896, nr 6: 1-14). It was here that he first put forward his views on the Germanic peoples in prehistory and in particular where for the first time he postulated that ethnic groups could be identified by the definition of specific groups in material culture. These views were not totally original, but it was the way that they were expounded by Kossinna and his followers which had a key importance for the direction of development of much of central European archaeology throughout the whole of the twentieth century. Despite several paradigmatic changes on the surface, much of the Central European archaeology is still practiced firmly in what may be termed the "cultural historical" mould, and work done in this tradition has throughout the twentieth century formed a high percentage of the academic writings produced by central European scholars.

There are grounds for believing that it was in Central Europe that the concept of archaeological cultures had its genesis, and it is here that it has maintained a stronger hold than in, for example, British prehistory. The notion of "archaeological culture" however has played and still plays a central role in archaeology in many parts of the world. Despite a constant difficulty of definition, it is one of the few theoretical concepts which has been widely accepted and used in archaeological reconstructions of the past.

Recent changes in the face and scope of European archaeology prompt a re-thinking of this concept, asking questions concerning both its ontological and epistemological nature, and the methods of its use (and misuse) in historical generalizations. Discussions on the idea of archaeological cultures are of course as old as archaeological thought itself is. It seems justifiable to ask ourselves whether we are now able to answer questions concerning what the term "archaeological culture" really means. The concept of culture can occur in different contexts and there exists a pluralism of opinions about what archaeological cultures are: they occur as chronological descriptions, descriptions of finds, they are used as labels of somewhat amorphous nature, or as specific well-defined and meaningful units.

Among the most important questions and problems concern the reasons and mechanisms of changes in the development of the concept of archaeological

cultures and of the conceptualisation of particular archaeological cultures. We should also reconsider perhaps the methods of distinguishing “archaeological cultures” and their relationship to the socio-cultural reality they represent; in particular it is difficult to escape the question of the relationships between “archaeological cultures” and cultural identity (“ethnicity”), philosophy, ideology, politics and ethics. A general question which we would like to pose is: “do we still need archaeological cultures?” If so, “in what terms?”

The post-modernist approaches to cultures see them as composed of other features than simply material ones, of economic, social, political, ritual, and psychological considerations, of ritual and time. This approach is also to seek new meanings, to see culture as human creativity, and as an intellectual identity. What place do (or did) archaeological cultures have in this sort of social relationships? “Culture groups”, “sub-cultures” or “supercultures” are various forms of social communication without relation to what would normally be referred to as “ethnicity”. Variants within the contents and concepts of culture can represent a great potential, but they are essentially restrictive. It is possible to understand this importance only by studying it in the context of its own culture. It is significant to each particular society and to every particular period. Definitions of “archaeological cultures”, cultural identity and/or “ethnicity” cannot however exist without discussions on contemporary concepts and contents.

This volume includes papers written in several different research environments, and reflects various approaches to the problems being discussed. It would be presumptuous to propose that it contains papers touching more than a few aspects of this complex question, nevertheless some of the Polish contributions present material and concepts and discuss literature which may be less well-known in the English-speaking world and worthy of further discussion. Polish considerations of the concept of archaeological cultures owe much to the approaches of the German schools of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but in addition, after the Second World War the approach to archaeological cultures was for several decades concerned with questions of ethnogenesis (particularly of the Slavs) and the ethnic qualification of archaeological sources. Attempts to break out of the sometimes circular arguments which this created produced results which were in many ways innovative.

On reading through these various papers, one is struck by the emphasis which appears in several of them on questions of ethnicity (see “*Archaeologia Polona*” volume 29), it seems that – despite the intentions of the editors – we still find it very difficult to break free of certain mental stereotypes. Another interesting feature is the frequency of the use in the discussions presented here of examples drawn from the Neolithic period. Is this accidental, or are we beginning to see the development in parts of Europe of new trends in archaeological reflection which

are taking shape in precisely the study of this period? In Poland, archaeologists studying the Neolithic working in local philosophical and methodological traditions have had many creative ideas. Another trend which has been visible in recent decades (in some of which Polish archaeology as a whole was to some extent perhaps rather introverted) is that to a greater extent than in the case of the study of many other periods of Poland's prehistory, these archaeologists have been eager to work with and in paradigms from beyond our state's borders. There is a further aspect to this question however, in that it is in the Neolithic which we see a large number of distinctly-different pottery style-zones, restricted in geographical extent and chronological terms and sometimes associated with particular house and/or burial types. In central Europe after the Early Bronze Age we see the appearance of fewer but more diffuse cultural phenomena ("Urnfields") or pottery style-zones or cultures of large extent (the so-called "Lusatian Culture", or the "La Tene Culture"). What is the explanation of this phenomenon? Why does cultural diversity expressed as pottery form and decoration give way to less archaeologically – tractible material in later prehistory?

Bożena Wyszomirska-Werbart and Paul Barford

* * *

The volume is respectfully and fondly dedicated to the memory of Professor Kazimierz Godłowski, whose unexpected and regrettably premature death robbed Polish and European archaeology of an unsurpassed specialist in the continental European tradition, with wide horizons, experience and knowledge. In many of his works Professor Godłowski paid especial attention to problems of cultural differentiation and the socio-cultural content represented by the variability of material phenomena observable by archaeologists; undoubtedly he would have been one of the most obvious authors to contribute to the special section of this issue. We therefore begin the volume with an obituary to the memory of this great scholar written by Professor Michał Parczewski of the Jagiellonian University, Cracow.

* * *

In addition to the special theme, "*Archaeologia Polona*" is particularly fortunate to be able to publish in this volume a thought-provoking essay "Cognitive issues in Archaeology" by J-C. Gardin on the logicist archaeology. This essay neatly summarises many aspects of this school of thought which is, besides the Processual and Post-Processual schools, one of the other major trends in European archaeology.

Professor Gardin was invited to Poland in March 1996 by the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Prehistory of the University of Poznań. His expositions of these topics in Warsaw and Poznań were attended by historians, archaeologists and philosophers and gave rise to long and detailed discussions.

* * *

This periodical was founded forty years ago in 1957 by the director of what was then the Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Professor Witold Hensel, one of the leading figures in Polish post-War archaeology. Professor Hensel was the editor of the first 28 volumes of *Archaeologia Polona* until his retirement in 1989. On 29th March 1997 Professor Hensel will celebrate his eightieth birthday. The editor would like to take this opportunity to express his best wishes to him on this occasion.

Zbigniew Kobyliński