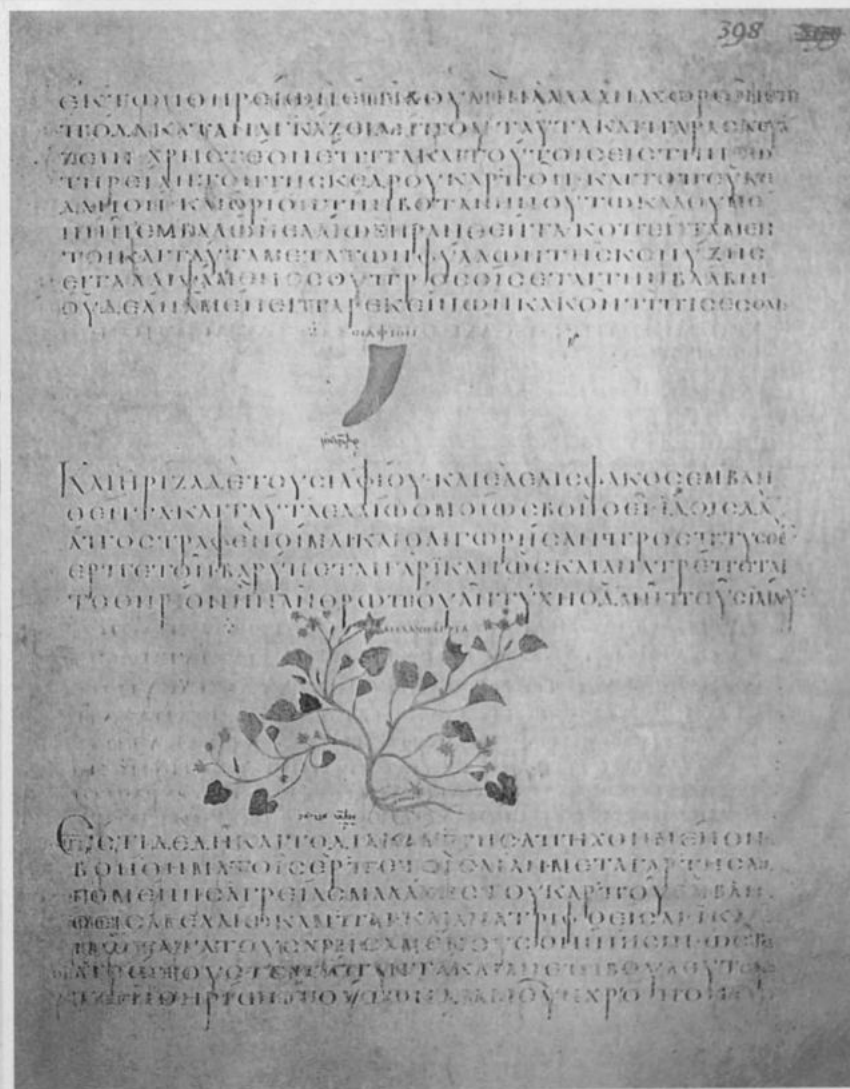


UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI «L'ORIENTALE»

ANNALI DI ARCHEOLOGIA E STORIA ANTICA

DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI DEL MONDO CLASSICO
E DEL MEDITERRANEO ANTICO

Nuova Serie N. 8



2001 Napoli

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Abbreviazioni

Altezza: h.; ad esempio: ad es.; bibliografia: bibl.; catalogo: cat.; centimetri: cm.; circa: ca.; citato: cit.; colonna/e: col./coll.; confronta o vedi: cfr.; *et alii*: *et al.*; diametro: diam.; fascicolo: fasc.; figura/e: fig./figg.; frammento/i: fr./frr.; inventario: inv.; larghezza: largh.; lunghezza: lung.; metri: m.; numero/i: n./nn.; pagina/e: p./pp.; professore/professoressa: prof.; ristampa: rist.; secolo: sec.; seguente/i: s./ss.; serie: S.; sotto voce/i: s.v./s.vv.; supplemento: suppl.; tavola/e: tav./tavv.; tomba: T.; traduzione italiana: trad. it.

Non si abbreviano: *idem*, *eadem*, *ibidem*; in corso di stampa; nord, sud, est, ovest; nota/e; non vidi.

INDICE

GIORNATA DI STUDIO CON IDA BALDASSARRE

AMNERIS ROSELLI, Breve storia del silfio	p. 11
DOMENICO SILVESTRI, Origine e fortuna del nome Africa	» 21
EMANUELE GRECO, <i>Tripodes</i> . Appunti sullo sviluppo urbano di Atene	» 25
BRUNO D'AGOSTINO, Lo statuto mitico dell'artigiano nel mondo greco	» 39

CONTRIBUTI DEL VOLUME

MATTEO D'ACUNTO, Il <i>gorgoneion</i> in pietra da Axòs e la modificazione del tipo a Creta tra modelli orientali e greci	» 47
LUDI CHAZALON, Un procédé graphique mésestimé: les personnages au regard <i>aphanès</i> sur la céramique attique	» 65
FABRIZIO PESANDO, La Sagra a Locri. Iconografia di una divinità fluviale	» 85
LUCA CERCHIAI, La tomba del Topolino	» 99
PAOLO BRACONI, <i>Emplecton</i>	» 105
MARCO GIGLIO, Picentia, fondazione romana?	» 119

EPIGRAPHICA

GIOVANNI MARGINESU, AEXXE in una iscrizione funeraria da Camiro (<i>DGEEP</i> 273)	» 135
SIMONA MARCHESINI, Il coppo iscritto di Bovino	» 139
GIUSEPPE CAMODECA, Iscrizioni pubbliche nuove o riedite e monumenti di Cumae - I. Foro e tempio di Apollo	» 149

GIUSEPPE CAMODECA, Albi degli *Augustales* di Liternum della seconda metà del II secolo » 163

ANNALISA TORTORIELLO, Gli adlecti inter patricos di Claudio » 183

RASSEGNE E RECENSIONI

NICOLA LANERI, Why "Archaeological Theory Today"?
rec. a Ian Hodder (ed.), *Archaeological Theory Today*,
Cambridge 2001, pp. 317; figs. 18; tables 2.
rec. a Enrico Giannichedda, *Archeologia teorica*,
Roma 2002, pp. 125 » 207

ANNA MARIA D'ONOFRIO, rec. a Maria Chiara Monaco, *Ergasteria:
impianti artigianali ceramici ad Atene ed in Attica dal Protogeometrico
alle soglie dell'Ellenismo*, Roma 2000 (Studia archaeologica 110) » 214

CARLO DE SIMONE, rec. a V. Scarano Ussani - M. Torelli, *La Tabula
Cortonensis. Un documento giuridico, storico e sociale*,
Napoli 2003, pp. 115 » 222

IRENE BRAGANTINI, rec. a G. Bonifacio e A.M. Sodo (edd.), *Stabiae:
Storia e Architettura. 250° Anniversario degli Scavi di
Stabiae 1749-1999*, Convegno Internazionale Castellammare
di Stabia 25-27 Marzo 2000, Studi della Soprintendenza
Archeologica di Pompei 7, Roma 2002 » 244

Riassunti degli articoli » 246

GIORNATA DI STUDIO CON
IDA BALDASSARRE

Il 13 marzo del 2003, a conclusione della attività di docente di Ida Baldassarre, il Dipartimento di Studi del Mondo Classico e del Mediterraneo Antico dell'“Orientale” ha inteso rinnovare il suo profondo rapporto con lei organizzando una giornata di studi.

L'iniziativa, introdotta dal saluto del Rettore, Pasquale Ciriello, è stata aperta da un commosso saluto del Preside della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Giovanni Cerri.

Sono quindi seguiti gli interventi raccolti in questa sezione, e quello di Paul Zanker, già Direttore dell'Istituto Archeologico Germanico di Roma sul tema “Dai miti ai simboli. Mutamenti iconografici nei sarcofagi romani del III secolo”.

BREVE STORIA DEL SILFIO

AMNERIS ROSELLI

Le fonti iconografiche

Conosciamo il silfio cirenaico soprattutto attraverso due tipi di documenti che sono attestati in numerosissimi esemplari e con minime varianti. Prima sulle monete di Cirene (fig. 1), in cui per lo più appare come un arbusto con un fusto piuttosto grosso¹, poi attraverso le statuette femminili in terracotta provenienti da Cirene e Apollonia che tengono in mano un rametto di silfio (con lo stelo un po' più esile di quello rappresentato sulle monete)² (fig. 2).

Nei manoscritti di opere farmacologiche greche, invece, del silfio è rappresentata esclusivamente la radice: così nel ms. *Par. suppl. gr.* 247, X sec., f. 5r le cui illustrazioni, di probabile tradizione ellenistica³, si riferiscono al testo di Nicandro (II a.C.) (fig. 3) e nel famosissimo ms. *Vind. med. gr.* 1, del VI sec., noto come Dioscoride di Vienna (ma in realtà il silfio è rappresentato in un fascicolo aggiunto, ff. 393 ss., che contiene la parafrasi di Eutecnio al testo di Nicandro) (fig. 4). Questo è tutto per la rappresentazione della pianta in natura.

Per il prodotto lavorato, o meglio per la lavorazione del prodotto, invece, il pezzo celeberrimo sembrerebbe essere la coppa di Arkesilas del Cabinet des Médailles di Parigi (fig. 5), datata intorno al 560⁴, un pezzo tanto celebre quanto difficile da interpretare. Essa dovrebbe rappresentare la pesatura del silfio di fronte al sovrano e alla presenza di quanti sono impegnati alla sua lavorazione e conservazione. C'è accordo sull'identificazione di Arkesilas, il personaggio seduto sulla sinistra, col sovrano di Cirene, e ampio consenso sulla interpretazione del personaggio di destra, di più ampie dimensioni e in posizione speculare rispetto al re, a cui si riferisce il *paragramma* σλιφόμαχος interpretato come “colui che impasta il silfio”⁵; anzi è proprio questa parola che permette di identificare il materiale che viene pesato e conservato. (Anche gli altri 4 personaggi del registro superiore sarebbero designati da termini che alludono alle loro funzioni: c'è, partendo da destra: 1) colui che scava (la radice?) (ὄρυξός<ς>), 2) il facchino (φορμόφορος), 3) colui che sovrintende alla pesatura (ἐπίσταθμος), 4) colui che dichiara al re che il peso

¹ La documentazione è ricchissima a partire dal VI secolo, mentre in età tolemaica e romana la pianta viene rappresentata sulle monete più raramente, cfr. E.S.G. Robinson, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Cyrenaica*, (rist. anast. Bologna 1965), specialmente pp. ccli-cclviii; tra la bibliografia più recente cfr. J.-P. Bocquet, ‘Contribution de la numismatique à l'histoire des sciences médicales. Les monnaies de la Cyrénaïque et le silphium’, in *Archéologie et Médecine*, VII^{èmes} rencontres internationales d'Archéologie et d'Histoire d'Antibes, octobre 1986, Éditions A.P.D.C.A., Juan-les-Pins 1987, pp. 443-457; A. Laronde, ‘Le silphium sur les monnaies de Cyrène’, in: *Scritti di antichità in memoria di S. Stucchi* (Studi Miscellanei 29), Roma 1996, I, pp. 157 ss.; Luni 2002, pp. 351 ss.

² Attestate a partire dal V secolo e in un arco cronologico molto ampio, fino all'età ellenistica. Cfr. M.E. Micheli - A. Santucci, *Il santuario delle Nymphaei Chthoniai a Cirene. Il sito e le terrecotte*, Monografie di Archeologia libica XXV, Roma

2000, in part. cap. V (di M.E. Micheli), ‘Le terrecotte: i soggetti femminili’, pp. 43-80. Foglie di silfio si trovano anche in una stele di Sulcis, cfr. P. Bartoloni, *La stele di Sulcis. Catalogo*, Roma 1986, n. 980, tav. CXXIV.

³ Cfr. Nicander, *The Poems and Poetical Fragments*, edited with a Translation and Notes by A.S.F. Gow - A.F. Scholfield, Cambridge 1953, Appendix III, pp. 222-223; e ora le osservazioni di J.-M. Jacques, nella sua recente edizione di Nicandro (Nicandre, Tome II, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2002), p. CXL; Tertulliano, *Scorp.* 1, dice di aver posseduto un Nicandro illustrato.

⁴ Cfr. M. und A. Hirmer, *Die griechischen Vasen*, München 1976, 38/XV e p. 60. Per l'interpretazione della scena il riferimento classico è a F. Chamoux, *Cyrène sous la monarchie des Battiades*, Paris 1953, in part. pp. 258-263 (“Sur le silphium”); si vedano poi Neumann 1979, pp. 85-92; Stucchi 1987, pp. 29-34; Luni 2002, pp. 359-362.

⁵ Cfr. da ultimo Neumann 1979, pp. 89-90, con bibliografia.

Why "Archaeological Theory Today"?

Ian Hodder (ed.), *Archaeological Theory Today*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 317; figs. 18; tables 2.

Enrico Giannichedda, *Archeologia teorica*, Roma 2002, pp. 125.

"Se il prezzo è tradire l'idea, lo scopo è già fallito in partenza!"

L'idea... l'idea non è un passato, o un futuro... è presente nell'azione..."

(from *La storia*, Elsa Morante 1974, pp. 213-4)

In 1989 Tilley (106) asked himself and the entire field of archaeology "Why archaeology?". The answer he gave was related to the idea that a renewed approach to archaeology had been brought to light: an archaeology in which the main interpreter – the archaeologist – is directly involved in a holistic interpretation and communication of archaeological remains in the present. That period was also the acme of "post-processualist" thought with an increase in numbers of publications, conferences, and university courses concerning a different theoretical approach to archaeology. Almost 15 years after that publication the title of my *rassegna* (overview) reflects on Tilley's article and tries to understand if theory is really important in the process of understanding ancient social and cultural processes.

This *rassegna* is an attempt to provide an up-to-date overview of archaeological theory through the review of two of the most recent publications in this particular branch of archaeological research: "Archeologia teorica" and "Archaeological Theory Today". More specifically, the review of the book edited by Hodder has been designed to briefly summarize each contribution while giving some of the most recent references related to the topic tackled in each of its articles. In so doing, I hope to give to young students and scholars an opportunity to further investigate the theoretical approach they are more interested in.

"Archeologia teorica" in Italy.

Thinking back to my years of studying at Italian universities, I can remember the concern of several scholars towards the increasing importance given to theoretical archaeology by native English speaking archaeologists. I vividly remember one of their typical phrases: "Why should we give so much importance to archaeological theory when we have Croce and Gramsci as our leading masters?". Such a statement is partially true, because as shown by

d'Agostino (1991), the history of theoretical archaeology in Italy is on one side strongly related to an art historical approach mostly followed by Classical archaeologists, that is based on a Crocean aesthetic theoretical background, from which art is viewed as "a prelogical intuition expressed in a directly mediated way in the form of a poetic fragment" (*ibid.* 1991: 54). On the other side, Italy has also been characterized by a social archaeology, followed mostly by scholars working in pre-historical periods, which is grounded on a strong Gramscian view of ancient pasts. Gramsci, within his re-elaboration of Marxist thought, viewed cultural phenomena as dialectical expressions of the relationship between dominants and dominated (*ibid.* 1991: 56-57).

Within this perspective, we do not have to forget a fundamental and charismatic figure of Italian archaeology, such as Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, who was able, since the 40s, to enlarge the archaeological debate in Italy through his innovative epistemological approach of analysis (Cuzzo 1996; Barbanera 1998). For him, archaeologists and art historians need to interpret the material culture of ancient societies not just as potential representation of hegemonical power of the dominants over the dominated, but rather as a form of cultural communication and social interaction between the agents that were involved in the process of production and consumption of the given objects. Together with Bianchi Bandinelli we have also to encounter, within the tradition of archaeological theory in Italy, the creation, during the early 70s, of the periodical 'Dialoghi d'Archeologia' that shortly became an important milestone in the archaeological debate of those years.

During the last 20 years, Italy and other non-English speaking countries have been only minorly involved in the broad arena of theoretical practices in archaeology. Thus, only a few scholars have written on these topics (see Cuzzo 1996, Terrenato 2000) and, in most of these cases, they have tried to define historical traditions of the archaeological thought more than practicing archaeological theories themselves (see Guidi 1988, Barbanera 1998). More recently, several new courses on "Methods and Theory in Archaeological Research" have been introduced within the curriculum of Italian universities. However, in some cases the epistemological meaning of theoretical archaeology has been misinterpreted by confusing method for theory in the practice of archaeological research, for, as correctly stated by Ellis (2000: XV),

theory is "how the results of archaeological research are interpreted", while method is related to "how archaeological research is conducted".

When turning to Giannichedda's book, "Scetticismo e scoperta del tempo", an example of this confusion between theory and method can be found in Chapter 4 (p. 59-68) in which the methodology of C_{14} dating is included as a section within a broader, intellectual discussion about the concept of "time" in archaeology. However, in acknowledgment of "Archeologia teorica's" value, it is one of the first books by an Italian author in Italian that is completely dedicated to archaeological theory, and this fact needs to be taken into consideration when we review and read it. Furthermore, it is an important epistemological window to the understanding of potential applications of archaeological theory for students and scholars who cannot follow the increasing literature in English or other non-Italian texts.

The book follows an historical analysis of the entire course of archaeological research, beginning with the Enlightenment and ending with the most recent neo-evolutionary ("new-archaeology" and "processual archaeology") and post-modernist ("post-processual archaeology") approaches. Its contents summarize the transformations that occur within archaeological thought, highlighting the most important moments and their links with contemporaneous social and cultural changes. I have found to be of particular interest the social and political connections between archaeology and the "outer world", which correctly emphasize the political, social, and cultural role of the archaeologist within the community in which s/he works (Tilley 1989; Laneri in press). Giannichedda's choice of starting point for his historical analysis (2.1 "Le verità liberate"; pp. 29-32) is also quite interesting, in which the liberation from a "creationist" approach, typical of a Christian cultural background, is considered to be one of the most important steps towards the "creation" of modern archaeological thought. Giannichedda is obviously aware of the limits of his analysis (1.1 "Contro gli specialismi"; pp. 11-13); however, this may be problematic. For example, within his analysis of the cultural background of "post-processual" archaeology, the role played by Levy-Strauss is emphasized, but without considering important authors such as Heidegger, Barthes, or Foucault, and in so doing, the book is transformed into more of an attempt to draw general lines of knowledge about the phenom-

ena of archaeological theory rather than a work on archaeological theory itself.

Overall, this book seems to be more of a summary of important publications that have already outlined the history of the archaeological thought (see Hodder 1991 [1992], Trigger 1989 [1996], Cuozzo 1996, Johnson 1999), rather than a key text for the application of archaeological theory in the interpretation of material culture. When I initially read the title, I expected a book that used archaeological theory as a tool to define new possibilities in the field of archaeological research, and even more importantly, as a potential reference book that young Italian students and scholars could refer to in their research. Instead, the entire book is a repetitious work of historical knowledge, which also in some parts demonstrates a confusion of terminology, as can be seen with those of "archaeological systems" and "functionalism" (pp. 78-79). I believe that functionalism in archaeology, even for the "new archaeologists", is related more to how the ancient material culture, viewed in a very broad sense, interrelates with the construction of the social-cultural system, religious beliefs, dominants vs. dominated, ethnical divisions, cultural distinctions, etc., of a given ancient society, rather than thinking in a reductive way that, for the "new archaeologists" "il sistema è ritenuto credibile solo perché la società funzionava" (p. 78).

Throughout the entire text Giannichedda gives the ancient material culture a secondary role, focusing more on historical aspects of theoretical approaches to the study and interpretation of the archaeological record. Probably the fact that the book is too short (120 pages)¹, "Archeologia teorica" does not provide the opportunity for the author, nor for the readers, to further investigate the importance of archaeological theory in creating the premises for broadening the practice of interpreting material culture in the present. Despite these criticisms, "Archeologia teorica" should be considered as an important textbook that can present young Italian students with a first glimpse into the broad and fundamental issue of archaeological theory. And finally, the references mentioned at the end of the book can help to broaden the student's knowledge with the hope that other Italian authors will be interested in a critical approach to the study and interpretation of ancient material culture.

"Archaeological theory today"

The book edited by Ian Hodder provides an interesting contrast to Giannichedda's, for archaeological

university system in Italy, in which text books cannot be larger than 100-150 pages.

theory is instead considered as a form of a multi-vocal experience that is necessary for opening up the dialogue between the archaeologist and ancient material culture, as well as to create diverse forms of archaeological knowledge (see "Introduction"). This book has the aim to cross all those boundaries that have, until recent times, limited the archaeological discourse as viewed from different theoretical perspectives (for example "new archaeology" vs. "post-processual"). Despite the total lack of non-native English speaking authors amongst the contributors to the volume (8 from American universities and 6 from British institutions), "the opening of [the] debate to a wider range of voices" that Hodder hopes for in the future of the discipline (p. 11) seems to have already reached a success within this book. But, I still think that in light of the dramatic political events of the last few years (terrorist attacks, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the war in Iraq), an important challenge for the upcoming future of the discipline is to establish an increasing dialogue between "Western" and "non-Western" archaeological traditions, in which the "Western" archaeologists would have the opportunity to listen to the archaeological experiences of the "others".

Bearing in mind these important premises, "Archaeological Theory Today" is a book that investigates archaeology through wide forms of philosophical and intellectual backgrounds. For example, behavioral, evolutionary, cognitive, symbolic, social, phenomenological, post-colonial, and communicative perspectives are used by the volume's contributors to define possible keys for the interpretation of ancient material culture². In some cases, such as the contributions made by La Motta-Schiffer (Chapter 2) and Leonard (Chapter 3), these intellectual perspectives are transformed into models necessary to define ancient cultural processes and the archaeological records related to them. But, in the majority of the contributions, the theoretical frameworks contribute as general intellectual tools for the definition of the social, cultural, and ideological interactions that happen between people and objects. All of the contributions, as I will highlight throughout my review, are linked together by a subtle thread that connects the diverse theoretical approaches. Even though recently there has been a noticeable decrease in the differences from one "archaeological school" to another, from amongst the 11 contributions the empirical-scientific approach (the first four) and the

social-cultural approach (the rest of the articles) can still be clearly differentiated in the interpretation of ancient material culture.

From amongst the first four chapters La Motta and Schiffer's article is dedicated to the branch of archaeological research known as behavioral archaeological, which was introduced by Schiffer at the beginning of the 1970s (for a brief and clear introduction to Schiffer's theoretical background see Giannichedda 2002: pp. 80-83). Here it is applied in an attempt to re-analyze the importance of environmental influences on cultural phenomena, an approach that since the late 1960s and early 1970s (Vayda 1969) has been heavily emphasized in several anthropological and archaeological publications, and how "the interactions between people and material objects ("behavior")" (p. 14) can be studied to aid in the understanding of variations in the archaeological record. The authors successfully overcome those stereotypes usually mentioned by other scholars when referring to a traditional form of behavioral archaeology and that assumed "behavioralists ... [are] concerned solely ... with the discovery of 'universal' laws of human behavior" (p. 17). In this way La Motta and Schiffer are able to define "behavioral systems" in which the interactions between people and objects are directly related to the different activities performed within the boundaries of a given "behavioral system" and to the natural, environmental resources that are available (see figs. 2.4 and 2.5). In the article the authors also stress three important aspects of social and cultural systems: communication, technology, and the formation processes of the archaeological record. Thus, the archaeological record should also be considered as a "cultural deposition" directly related to the strategies of "waste-generating activities" of the communities that create, consume, and ultimately deposit the objects (p. 43). Furthermore, for the authors, "cultural formation processes are behavioral phenomena that need to be explained, not just distorting processes to be controlled" (p. 47).

Human behavior is also considered to be an important phenotype that "is transmitted partially through learning" (p. 71), according to the evolutionary perspective clearly explained in Leonard's contribution in Chapter 3³. After a brief premise on "what is Darwinian theory" (pp. 67-68), Leonard defines variation, cultural transmission, and natural selection of human phenotypes, that following Ernst Mayr's words, are "the totality of characteristics of

¹ I believe that Giannichedda's work is strongly related to the "adaptation" of publishers and scholars to the newly introduced

² Archaeology of death is probably one of the few, if not the only, topics not touched on by the book edited by Hodder. The recent publication on this subject by Parker Pearson (1999) may

be helpful for those interested in this specific subject.

³ For further investigation on evolutionary archaeology refer to O'Brien 1996.

an individual" (p. 68). One of the most important aspects of Leonard's work is how he perceives evolution. According to Leonard, evolution is both a variation of human phenotypes and never slows down or stops, in contrast to some evolutionary ecologists who believe that evolution increases at an exponential rate throughout the history of a given community (p. 79). Within his analysis, Leonard considers the archaeological record as a witness to these variations and transmissions of cultural knowledge to natural adaptation. In so doing, he leads to a strong adaptive theory that in some parts does not take into account the cultural domain of human beings as being as important as natural selection or technological choices related to economic efficiency. In fact, in several cases archaeologists can meet forms of social and cultural resistance to technological variation and innovation which are imposed by dominating groups and that are not related to, but rather work against, economic efficiency (see for example the attempt made by the Chinese government to stop and control the World Wide Web at the beginning of the 1990s).

Evolutionary theories are also considered within the theme of cognitive archaeology, tackled in Chapter 4 by Mithen. Following a cultural framework already established during the 1990s (see for example Renfrew and Zubrow 1994 or in Giannichedda's book paragraph 7.3: pp. 110-111), the author tries to define how the mind of ancient human beings operated using the issue of "mental modularity" that considers the mind as "constituted of multiple, self-contained modules, each devoted to a different function ... and designed by natural selection to solve ... specific adaptive problem[s]" (p. 101). Mithen moves on from the idea of mental modularity and Paleolithic human beings' adaption to nature by considering the mind as a complex structure that differs from the brain in that, as already stated by Leonard in the previous chapter, it continues its evolutionary process through time (pp. 106-110). These processes of the mind are visible within the "world" of material culture, which needs to be considered as an external extension of human brains and bodies. Within Mithen's analysis of cognitive evolution we are involved in the evolution of language, of complex social interactions, of the recognition of sexual differences, of social learning and cultural transmission, and of human creativity. Although the issues touched by his analyses are extremely interesting, in the case of sections like that on "human creativity" (p. 115), it is extremely complicated to follow the logic of the relationship between the archaeological data and the theoretical framework.

For Renfrew in Chapter 5, cognitive archaeology is considered as an important tool in the interpretation of the symbolic value of ancient material culture. Renfrew's clearly written article also brings the dispute between "processual" and "post-processual" theoretical tradition in archaeology to a halt (p. 124). He recognizes the importance of a holistic and contextual archaeology, as stated by Hodder in several of his publication (see for example Hodder 1992), and in particular believes that "the relationship between signifier and the thing signified" should be taken into consideration only in the presence of a strong archaeological context for the material culture analyzed (p. 124). Thus, following both Hodder (1991) and the papers edited by Appadurai (1986), it is the "active role of material culture" (p. 126) that can give archaeologists important tools for a holistic interpretation of the transformation of cultural and social system during ancient periods. Within these perspectives, Renfrew reinforces the symbolic value of ancient material culture in the creation of a narrative that in numerous cases can embody similar or stronger values than the spoken and/or written language itself. This important concept brings cognitive archaeology to a level that crosses over the dichotomy of "mind" versus "matter" (p. 129), leading to a social praxis of symbols embodied by material culture and related to non-verbal forms of communication. In fact, "the symbol cannot exist without the substance" (p. 131) and vice versa.

"Agents act, and agency is the capability, the power, to be the source and originator of acts; agents are the subjects of action" (Rapport and Overing 2000: 1). Agency in archaeology has become one of the main issues to be tackled by archaeologists in recent times (see Dobres and Robb 2000). Chapter 6 is dedicated to this subject and Barrett, following Gramsci's idea of power and hegemony, Bourdieu's theory of practice and the *habitus*, and Giddens' structuration theory, tries to apply these philosophical approaches to archaeology. After a brief historical introduction to previous research in the field of social (or better cultural) archaeology, and specifically criticizing Childe's theory of society and the idea of the "archaeological record" (pp. 142-147), the author further investigates issues concerning "the archaeological study of human society" (p. 147). In Barrett's opinion, until only recently archaeology has been most concerned about an objectification of ancient societies created through "the recognition of past social organizations through their material record" (p. 148). In his mind archaeologists should change this theoretical framework and introduce the more complex role of the individual

within society, or in other words, the relationship between "agency" and "structure". Agency plays an active role in the construction of the social structure of a given community, and consequently, in the production of the material culture. Thus, agency is "the power to act", which does not necessarily mean a dominating power, but rather a practice that supports the "being-in-the-world" of the agent (an individual or a "conscience collective" of the group; Rapport and Overing 2000: 1). This practice (action), that lies within an historical time (*tempo*; pp. 152-153), can be found as record in the archaeological context; but in order to understand it, we have to define all of those elements (memories, past experiences, expectations, desires, and communicative patterns; p. 152) that are fundamental in interpreting the material culture. While the opening up of a discourse about the social action of ancient individuals and communities in the past is clearly a fundamental aspect of archaeological research, as has also been demonstrated in other publications (see Schiffer 2000), I still see agency in archaeology as a hazardous operation because of the potential risk to shift archaeological investigations from societies to individuals, and in my mind it is quite complicated to recognize evidence of individuals within the "archaeological record".

"Being-in-the-world" (pp. 170-172) is also an important component for Thomas in his analysis of landscape archaeology in Chapter 7. Only recently has landscape archaeology seen an increasing interest from both archaeological and anthropological perspectives (see Ucko and Layton 1999), and Thomas' contribution is both an excellent summary of these previous interpretations and a precious tool for further investigations. Landscape is a very complex term that can have many different meanings, such as "the topography and land forms of a given region, or a terrain within which people dwell" and so on (p. 166), but it can also be "an object, an experience, or a representation" (p. 166), or even sounds and smells. In general, landscape is related to how individuals and groups perceive part of their "external world" at a given chronological time. In fact, landscape is a cultural phenomenon and Thomas follows a phenomenological perspective to better define general ideas about how ancient communities perceived and experienced the landscape, how they socially and culturally referred to it, and how can we interpret these perceptions. Within this perspective, Thomas considers "personal and group identity, moral order, and social organization ... all embedded in human relationships with the land" (p. 176). This is the case with the relationship between "monuments" (natural

and artificial) and human rituality as demonstrated by ethnographic examples such as with the Australian Aboriginals, and archaeological examples like the concept of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments in Britain (p. 177-181, fig. 7.1).

Landscape also embodies properties related to the recognition of boundaries that shape human beings' identities, such as social, cultural, and gender characteristics. Meskell's contribution in Chapter 8 is devoted to the very important topic of the interpretation of identity, considered from an archaeological perspective, and how archaeologists can "try to understand social domains in their cultural context" (p. 197). Other publications have concentrated on this specific issue, but usually analyzing cultural and ethnical identity and identifications (see Graves-Brown, Jones, and Gamble 1996). Meskell is instead more interested in defining "gendered identities" (pp. 194-197) viewed from a provocative "third wave feminist approach" (p. 197)⁴. In so doing, she concentrates on the use of the human body in the past, and especially in the Egyptian world of the New Kingdom (ca. 1550-1070 BCE), to better define the "linkage between identity and the cosmological order" (p. 199). Her post-structuralist approach deconstructs the symbolic value of important elements of material culture like human nudity and erotic positions that were probably used in the past to establish rules for the definition of boundaries within the social and ritual life of the ancient Egyptians. Another significant point brought to light by the author is the influence of the cultural background of the interpreter in the definition of the social, religious, and cultural properties of ancient material culture. In this way "Judeo-Christian sentiments might radically erase the connections between family and sexuality, the sexualization of children, or the possibilities of sexuality in the next life" of the ancient Egyptians (p. 202).

The use of material culture for the purpose of ethnical distinctions also correctly concerns the authors, Yentsch and Beaudry, of the next contribution in Chapter 9. For them "material culture is universal; its use, style, form, substance, and symbolic meaning are culturally relative" (p. 218). Therefore, material culture and the meanings assigned to it by the people who created it, but also by those who interpret it, can define cultural and ethnic boundaries. The two authors expertly explore topics related to historical archaeology in America to better define how the absence or the presence of certain objects are able to

⁴ For further debates on topics concerning gender archaeology refer to Hays-Gilpin and Whitley 1998.

establish the ideological framework of an entire nation. The article investigates several themes already touched on by some of the previous contributors, such as landscape, gender identities, cognitive analysis, symbolic meanings of material culture, the relationship between people and objects, class consciousness, and so on, but their main focus is on the importance of material culture considered "as manifestations of discourse" (p. 225) and consequently, on re-opening the theoretical shell of structuralism. This contribution reinforces the important idea that artifacts are part of a "text" that can facilitate the communication between individuals and/or groups, as also mentioned by Giannichedda (6.8 "Lo Strutturalismo": pp. 98-101), and thereby material culture can be used as a metaphor to indicate something that is "other" (see Tilley 1999).

The relationship between "western" and the "other" in colonial encounters is the subject undertaken by Gosden in his very well thought out contribution on Postcolonial archaeology in Chapter 10. He views colonialism as "not about the meeting of different cultural forms, colonizer and colonized, who maintain their own separate identities, but about the creation of hybrid and creole cultures resulting from sustained colonial contact" (p. 241)⁵. Bearing this perspective in mind, the author tries to define possible strategies to accomplish the knowledge and information of cultural heritage within local communities and to create forms of communication that acknowledge the worldwide negative impact of colonialism and, at the same time, to redefine the notion of "hybrid and creole cultures" (p. 248). In fact, in order to live, human beings produce relationships, culture, and create histories, and therefore find it necessary to establish networks of communication. A lack of communication represents the collapse of an entire social and cultural system. A cultural framework is based on the recognition of the society in which it has been created, but, as a fundamental step in this process, it is also grounded upon the acknowledgment of the outside ("the other"). The visibility of the differences as well as the common hybrid traits between two cultural and social identities represents at once a form of cultural and social intercourse.

Archaeological representation and communication are the two topics considered by Moser in the following Chapter 11. Within her contribution we encounter the fact that the visual representation of ancient worlds can be poetic and inspiring even for the scholars of the academic world (see Malyneaux 1997). Moser's article correctly investigates this topic that is usually not well considered by traditional archaeolo-

gists. In the meantime, the creation of a visual representation of ancient pasts can build bridges between academia and the general public. Thus, archaeologists should be more involved in the re-production of the past in the present and in the "popular dimension of archaeological representation" (p. 263) such as those produced for movies, videogames, and other mass-accessible media. In the second part of her contribution the author interprets, from an iconographic point of view, the conventional modes of visual representation of the past as depicted by several artists dating from between the sixteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thereby, the author is able to connote the importance of the use (and abuse) of the past for the construction of a cultural "knowledge" of that past.

The conclusive chapter 12 written by Shanks is also concerned about practicing archaeology in the present... about archaeology as a form of art... about archaeological objects as a reference to a cultural discourse (see Jameson, Ehrenhard, and Finn 2003). The author, using a very stimulating narrative approach, travels through the history of archaeological discoveries searching for a relationship between time and space... between history and the re-establishment of archaeological objects within a different mnemonic (museumological) cultural milieu; in other words, the re-enactment of ancient pasts through the consumption of the archaeological objects. This process can be done from an elite perspective or instigated by a mass-popular cultural motivation. The objects, transformed into commodities, become part of cultural identities that strongly support the distinction between "global and local cultural forces" (p. 291). According to Shanks' aphorisms, this "interpenetration" needs to be reinforced by a political discourse based on "poetics of assemblage" or an exploration of hybridity (p. 298-299), in which once again people and objects are indistinguishable as they are part of the same machine that brings the past into the present. For the author, "archaeology is a mode of cultural production in which work is done upon the remains of the past" (p. 294).

Archaeological theory: what future?

Archaeological theory is still probably one of the most important branches of archaeological research, as demonstrated by the two publications considered within this rassegna along with the massive amounts of other works developed in this direction over the

⁵ For more about the impact of "western" culture on the creation of a knowledge of ancient cultural heritage in the Mediterranean and Middle East refer to Meskeil 1998.

last 10 years (see references). Archaeologists can no longer be involved in the study of ancient material culture without considering important social, cultural, ritual, symbolic, and other aspects directly related to it. Hodder's book has illustrated that all of the relativistic approaches in archaeological theory typical of the mid-to-late 1990s are disappearing, and theory is more and more concerned about material culture and its relationship with people (people-objects). In the future of archaeological theory I would hope to witness a stronger emphasis in the direction of communication as well as the attempt to break the boundaries between academia and the general public. Otherwise, there will be a serious risk of creating larger numbers of publications that are merely works of self-referential, intellectual exercises. I also hope that the future of archaeological theory will see the stronger participation of countries, Italy included, that until now have not been thoroughly involved in the practice of an archaeological discourse.

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