continue to attract public attention must be due to the inquisitive and romance-seeking minds of human beings. As Edward Thomas once said, "The past is the only dead thing that smells sweet".

References


Examination of the relationship between archaeology and politics has always been avoided. This neglects the fact that nothing is isolated from politics, least of all archaeology, which is by definition a socio-historical discipline. Although often supposedly non-political, archaeology should not be expected to avoid the scientific commitment of presenting the results as they appear in the course of archaeological investigation for fear of serving foreign interests.

Recently, Gero (1985) has discussed the relationship between prehistoric studies in some countries and the strengthening of nationalism entailing the submission of archaeology to the conditions of the society that supports it.

If one conceives the State as a political outcome of antagonistic groups within society, archaeologists have to face situations where the interests of different groups conflict. In these cases archaeologists have to take a stand that transcends the ambit of archaeology as a strictly academic discipline, by setting the problem in a broader political context. This paper presents four situations in four different countries, where archaeologists have recently taken such a stand, and so illustrates the relationship in practice between politics and archaeology.

The case of Chile

During the first part of 1985, Chilean scientists, including archaeologists, took interest in the fact that the Chilean Government had signed an agreement with the U.S.A. concerning the enlargement of the only airport in Easter Island, which belongs to Chile and is situated 3700 km from the mainland. Easter Island is one of the largest open-air museums in the world. Although 3592 archaeological sites have been identified to date, of a total area of 180 km², only 20 km² have been surveyed (Cristino et al. 1980).

Supported by this publication, Chilean archaeologists disagreed with the official declaration which pronounced the state of archeology in the island as satisfactory. Based on the fact that in two years eight researchers surveyed nine 3 x 25 km quadrats, Chilean archaeologists calculated that at this rate of work, by 1985 they would still be far from having enough information which would permit an adequate estimate of the necessary attention and protection of the archaeological heritage of Easter Island.

In view of the importance of Easter Island to the archaeological heritage of Chile and the world, the archaeologists of Chile have declared themselves against the proposed enlargement of the airport. Such enlargement will only benefit NASA while threatening the archaeological heritage of the island and the sovereignty of the whole nation.

Despite this protest, the decision has been taken to go ahead with the project. So Easter Island will be turned into a military base for operating strategic weapons belonging to the USA. This could involve the Island and the whole of Chile in the so-called "Star Wars Program", currently the focus of East-West conflict. The voice of Miguel Rupé, an archaeologist native to the Easter Island but educated in the USA, and presently Governor of the island, that the NASA project will not in any way endanger the archaeological heritage of the island and that investigations will continue with the help of foreign research teams. It is worth mentioning the participation amongst these of the Norwegian Professor Arne Skjold and the explorer Thor Heyerdal. The former declared to the Swedish newspaper "Dagens Nyheter" (2-2-1986), just a few days before leaving for the Island, that he disagreed with the protests against the enlargement of the airport.

As a result of this affair, there has been a change in the attitudes of Chilean archaeologists. For the first time in this country, archaeologists presented their case not only as the results of their research but also as a claim for the protection of archaeological heritage, a task traditionally assigned to conventional political structures.

The case of Cuba

European archaeologists know little about archaeology and protection of cultural heritage in Cuba. The economic blockades that were forced upon Cuba by the USA has been, amongst other factors, the cause of this. This isolation has been maintained for many years after the political, economic and social changes that were introduced in this society after the 1959 Revolution. Only through personal enquiries has information become available on the interesting work that has been done in Cuba. In this context it is apposite to point out two meetings that took recently, the "First Symposium of Conservation and Restoration of the Cultural Heritage" held in Havana last June and the "Third Local Conference of Researchers of the Archaeological Heritage" which also took place last year.

This interest in preserving the archaeological heritage was raised through the efforts of Cuban archaeologists and was confirmed at an official level by the promulgation of the Law in 1977. Whereas only eight museums existed
before the Revolution, more than 240 exist today (Cosme Benos, personal communication).

The activities of Cuban archaeologists have extended beyond the national borders and today these professionals are working in cooperation with their colleagues in Nicaragua.

The case of Nicaragua

The protection of the archaeological heritage in this country has been institutionalised by the foundation of the “Board for the Management of Historical Inheritance” in 1980, a year after the takeover by the Sandinista Government. Before the political changes which took place in this country, archaeology was in the same “perilous” situation as is experienced by the majority of other countries in Latin America. This is characterised by the lack of an official policy of support for the development and the advancement of archaeological studies.

These Latin American countries have yet to develop the discipline in their own framework: research problems and associated fieldwork have been determined by foreign research teams using foreign interpretative models that to a great extent are speculative and misleading. The dominant research group comes from the USA, France, Britain, Italy and more recently from Japan (Norna 1985). This state of affairs has created divisions, both in terms of thematic orientation and in the legitimate ambition to systematise and plan a methodology expressing Latin American people’s own interests. Latin American people want to study Latin American culture directly.

Peruvian archaeologist can be summarised as a refusal to accept this law, as they consider it a threat to the archaeological heritage. The reasons for their dissent are:

1. Consideration of the archaeological findings that are not declared officially as “private property”.
2. By not giving the archaeological heritage the character of public property, it deprives the common citizen of reliable knowledge about the past history of Peru.
3. It promotes the export and commercialisation of cultural goods with the intentions of exhibitions at embassies, donations to other countries or museums abroad. Moreover, the law sanctions clandestine excavations by legitimising archaeological objects thus retrieved as private property, thus threatening the integrity of the national archaeological heritage.
4. The creation of a Board of Cultural Heritage of the Nation that includes representatives of Institutions without specifying their professional competence and grants voice and vote to two representatives of a non-existent association of so-called private museums and collection. According to archaeologists these are exactly the ones the law always tried to control.

Conclusions

We can point out some general features and extract common denominators on the position of Latin American archaeologists and the characterisation of the current state of archaeology as a discipline in this region.


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References


BOOK REVIEWS


Reviewed by Robin Boast

Of the state of recent books on ceramic variability and material culture studies. Artefacts as Categories should stand out as one of the more useful. This is not so much due to Dr. Miller's admittedly archaeological bent for this study, but to his concern with the minutiae of ceramic variability as an active representation rather than as statistical noise. Not that this book is at all short of formal analysis, but Artefacts as Categories is primarily a study of people and their material objects. Those who are interested in yet another material culture study of 'pots to people' will be disappointed. For those of us who are interested in the 'people to pots' approach, Dr. Miller's book is a delightful read.

The major goals of this book that are of primary interest to the archaeologist, though only a few of the many explored, are, first, to explain the limitations of the manner in which archaeology posits the relation between material and society, and, second, to show the richness of the archaeological data available that is usually ignored. Dr. Miller does both in an extensive and provocative way, but tends in the end to leave one a bit puzzled.

Dr. Miller draws his data from Dangbara Village in the Malwa region of Central India. This setting may seem to be an uniquely convenient social venue for the study of categorization and material form, for India is well known for its richness of both material form and social context. But this would be to overlook the purpose of this work. The purpose of this work is to demonstrate to us stubborn archaeologists the fuzziness and polysemic nature of material form in social use. For this purpose, the chosen setting proves most acceptable.

We are provided, for the strict formalists among us, with a reasonable formal analysis of the ceramic variability found within Dangbara Village. Formal attributes and their organizational structure, as well as an extensive functional analysis, are provided in Chapters 3 and 4. The most interesting aspect of this work comes when this formal analysis is compared and qualified (in Chapters 6 and 7) with the ritual and symbolic frameworks within which this pottery is used. It is in these chapters that the informal use of aspects of the variability is shown to have the strongest influence over the ultimate categorization of the pots within the society.

An example of this interplay between the informal use and formal variability is seen in the example of the use of the 'parti' or the facet that is found on water vessels. Although restricted to containers, these 'parti' are the major distinguishing feature for this class of pots. The presence or absence of one or two 'parti' distinguishes most of the pots,