Many speakers, of varying theoretical persuasions, shared one broadly similar means of interpreting their evidence. This was the assumption that political and power relations formed the 'bottom line' of any analysis. Through the expression of religious ideology, the construction of material culture, or the performance of ritual, actors could be seen as seeking status, claiming to define the world on their own terms (successfully or otherwise) and attempting to control the reproduction of social practices. Such an approach seems to me to be valid, although I wonder to what extent we can extend our own notions of power, status, or hierarchy back into a past whose values we cannot really understand. Simon Kaner's exclamation: 'I don't know -- I wasn't there!' does seem a rather restricted hermeneutic approach. However, we should avoid producing a new form of reductionism, where an undifferentiated notion of 'power' replaces that of 'function' as a concept which is taken for granted rather than being a focus for analysis in itself.

In stressing the idea of power and status, we are of course reading major concerns of our own lives into the archaeological record. So perhaps Durkheim had a point after all. His rigid separation of the sacred from the profane may be misleading for archaeological purposes, but the distinction is not entirely vacuous. The attempt to link beliefs with forms of social organization has some validity, albeit a limited one. As Doug Bailey argued, academic disciplines are rather close to religious systems, and are likely to express, even in distorted forms, the concerns of the sub-cultures which produce them. Do we not have our own consecrated spaces (museums as opposed to churches), sacred texts (Analytical Archaeology ...?) and closed systems of belief? In our profane lives we are concerned with the politics behind who is hired and fired, or contradicted and confirmed in debate. Is it any wonder, therefore, that our 'sacred knowledge' includes models of power relations that are all too familiar?

When not at the conference, much of my time was spent at Blackfriars, the Catholic Priory nearby. The quiet and peace of the Priory, which can provide spiritual sustenance even for an atheist academic, was punctuated by the satisfaction of rather more worldly concerns, through the consumption of large amounts of excellent food and wine. This particular mixture of the sacred and profane proved most enjoyable, but difficult to combine with the maintenance of concentration in the conference's dark, warm and exceedingly comfortable lecture-theatre.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Anthony Sinclair for comments on this piece.

NEWS FROM THE ACTIVES MUSEUM:
BOMB ATTACK ON EXCAVATED FORMER GESTAPO AND SS HEADQUARTERS

Frederick Baker

The exhibition of the Actives Museum's excavation of the former SS and Gestapo headquarters in Berlin has been bombed. At 9 p.m. on March 3rd 1989 a five litre petrol device shattered the windows of the exhibition building and started a fire. The prompt action of the watchman stopped the fire reaching the display panels (Der Tagesspiegel 1985). No organisation or individual claimed responsibility for the attack, although police suspect the bomb to be the work of neo-Fascists (Die tageszeitung 1989b).

The response to what Frank Dingel of the Actives Museum described as "a provocation for a trial of strength" (pers. comm.) has been to take a copy of the exhibition 'The topography of the terror' to East Berlin, where it was well received (Dingel 1989), and then to the former concentration camps of Buchenwald, Brandenburg and Sachsenhausen. The visit to East Berlin is particularly important, since only five years ago Erich Honecker imprisoned two architects for taking part in an international competition to build a memorial to the victims of the Gestapo and the SS - who ironically include Honecker himself, imprisoned by the Gestapo as a communist (Baker 1987). International support has also increased with the World Archaeological Congress joining ARC as an institutional supporter, and Austria's Chancellor Franz Vranitsky visiting the site. On a more local level the Actives Museum has responded to the increased activity of the far right by combining with other anti-Fascist groups in Berlin in the setting up of a telephone line to report racial harassment and racist graffiti (Die tagesszeitung 1989a).

The long term future of the site is now being decided by a commission appointed by the Senate of West Berlin, who duly published their interim report on October 23rd. Encouragingly the commission supports many of the Actives Museum's proposals for the site, suggesting that it should be left largely unchanged with the construction of educational and research facilities adjacent to the present exhibition space (Aktives Museum 1989).

References


Der Tagesspiegel 1989 "Brandanschlag auf Ausstellung auf ehemaligen Gestapo-Gelaende:"

"Der Tagesspiegel" 11-3-89.


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This book constitutes volume three of the collected shorter works of Lewis Binford, being preceded by An Archaeological Perspective (Binford 1972) and Working at Archaeology (Binford 1983a). The entire canon so far also contains two collections of papers mostly written by others: New Perspectives in Archaeology (Binford and Binford 1968) and For Theory Building in Archaeology (Binford 1977); as well as three full-length books: Namakata Lithic archaeology (Binford 1976), Bones (Binford 1981) and Funnel Remains from Klades River Mouth (Binford 1984); and a collection of lectures: In Pursuit of the Past (Binford 1983a). Accordingly, this book does not stand alone and should perhaps be treated as one of a set (The Complete Works of Lewis R. Binford and some of his associates), edited [mostly] by the author.

This book consists of twenty-nine papers published over a period of years concerning the research interests of an individual who has made -- and will no doubt continue to make -- important contributions to the archaeological literature and to archaeological theory. The type of paper reproduced varies from book reviews (of Reading the Past [Hodder 1986]), private letters (to H.T. Bunn), papers prepared but (?) not given (Chapter 27: "Technology of Early Man: an organisational approach to the Oldowan") and papers from other books and journals to linking chapters written specifically for this volume. Subjects range from personal perspectives on the recent history of archaeology, questions on the meaning and significance of 'style', ethnoarchaeological research and its implications for the formation of the archaeological record, the application of quantitative approaches, to the analysis of bone assemblages and the reinterpretation of Lower Palaeolithic material.

The book has a specific aim in view which differs from that of the other volumes in the Binford set. This is to address the issue of debate in archaeology and "to guide the brave student into a disputatious field of great diversity and enormous breadth" (p.xiii). To illustrate the breadth of archaeology, Binford lists some of the various types of archaeology of which he is aware: contextual, behavioural, social, Marxist, historical, demographic, Southwest, Palaeolithic, nationalist, humanist, classical and realist (p.3). Such a listing would not be of great help.