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STAŠA BABIĆ

Still innocent after all these years? Sketches for a social history of archaeology in Serbia[1]

The trends in theoretical archaeology over the past decades have brought into focus the issues of social embeddedness of archaeological inference (Hodder 1991; Johnson 1999; Thomas 2000) and the political consequences of our endeavor (Gathercole / Lowenthal 1990; Layton 1989; Trigger 1995, 263). Along these lines, several recent volumes have been dedicated to the issues of archaeological approaches to group identity in the present as well as past (Canuto / Yaeger 2000; Graves-Brown / Jones / Gamble 1996), and especially to nationalism and archaeological practice (Díaz-Andreu / Champion 1996; Kohl / Fawcett 1995; Meskell 1998). On the other hand, the recent social, political and military events in the central and eastern Balkans, by virtue of their devastating consequences and the habit of conflicting political parties to draw on the past to forward their agenda, are forcing us to reconsider the nature of archaeological practice in this region and its role in the nationalist fever which spread across parts of the peninsula. However, most of the accounts of the role of archaeology in the present state of affairs in Serbia come from external observers involved in the archaeological research of the region (Brown 1998; Chapman 1994; Kaiser 1995, among others). It is my intent here to offer the point of view of an insider with the immediate experience of living and practicing archaeology in Serbia throughout the past turbulent decades. My account is, of course, subjective and is probably not shared by all my colleagues in Serbia. It may come as a surprise, but I will argue against the judgment that "archaeology in the Balkans has unambiguous contemporary relevance" (Kaiser 1995, 113). Quite the opposite, my point is that academic archaeology in Serbia has had a marginal role on the general public's perception of the past, and consequently in the malignant nationalistic movements in the country during the 1980s and 1990s. In doing so, my intention is not to deny our responsibility, but to look for it in another direction. I believe it lies in the passive, reluctant and self-marginalizing attitude of archaeology and archaeologists in Serbia. This tendency to withdraw is a permanent characteristic of the discipline in Serbia. The reasons for it must be sought

for in its institutional establishment, in the influences and role models applied, and the resulting theoretical backgrounds advocated. Before explaining this in detail, a somewhat broader framework is needed in order to set the stage.

The Balkans

Especially over the past two decades, the Balkan Peninsula has increasingly been referred to as southeast Europe (see Kaiser 1995). This presumably is an attempt to evade the derogatory meaning of the geographical term "the Balkans". The ambiguity of the Balkans, however, has a long history and has a lot to do with the spatial-geographical position of the peninsula. Although it may well be traced into the late Roman times, the conventional division of Europe into East and West as a marked polarization into more and less – culturally as well as economically – developed halves is a relatively late concept attributed to the 18th century Enlightenment movement (Todorova 1997, 11). In addition to the geographical distinction, various levels of development came to be attributed to the two parts of Europe, thus adding a temporal value to the spatial dimension. The general tendency of disciplines dealing with human societies to deal with 'wholes' (Jones 1996) has perpetuated the polarization, and the tacit presumption that the East lags behind the technologically, politically and culturally developed West gained the power of a commonly accepted truth.

The Balkans, however, do not fit into this neat pattern. Squeezed between a "pure" West and a "pure" East, the region has gradually but constantly gained the attributes of a crossroad, a bridge linking, yet separating, the antipodes. "Stereotypes, more often than not, contain some element of truth" (Härke 1995, 46), but this does not make them satisfactory explanatory tools. In an effort to discuss the awkward position of the region and the images it produces and perpetuates, Maria Todorova (1997) identified the discourse of Balkanism, forming gradually during 18th and 19th centuries, to become fully articulated in the years before the World War I. Compared to Orientalism of Edward Said (1978), as a discourse of imputed opposition, Balkanism is about an imputed ambiguity. "This in-betweenness of the Balkans, their transitionary character, could have made them simply an incomplete other; instead they are constructed not as other but as incomplete self" (Todorova 1997, 17). This perception is shared by both external observers and insiders, leading to a sense of being at a crossroad of contact among civilizations. The internal self-stigmatization further leads to the construction of internal pattern of "nesting orientalisms" as a means to overcome the ambiguity of the Balkan position (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Bakić-Hayden / Hayden 1992). Thus a self-image is constructed among the Balkan peoples that they are "more genuine, more European than Europe itself." This sentiment has often been fervently mutually opposed and contested (Čolović 1997, 43, 45). The images of the past undoubtedly play an important role in these contests and too often end up in devastating armed clashes. Archaeologically produced narratives may be expected to contribute, as indeed has been the case so often (Díaz-Andreu / Champion 1996). This logical line of inference has been pursued in most of the accounts mentioned above (Brown 1998; Chapman 1994; Kaiser 1995), and the evidence has been produced for the

archaeological share in the formation and maintenance of the nationalistic frenzy in Serbia during the 1980s and 1990s. Before discussing these arguments in more detail, I will give a brief account of the history of archaeology in Serbia and its institutionalization.

Institutionalization

In Serbia, the institutional study of the archaeological past began around the middle of the 19th century, at the time of establishment of the independent state after the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans. The first legal acts protecting historical heritage and the foundation of the National Museum in Belgrade in 1844 are associated to the names of Jovan Sterija Popović and Janko Šafarik. The first controlled field activity occurred in 1865. In their efforts, these antiquarians strongly resemble the similar activities under way in Europe (Milinković 1998, 427).

The first archaeological teaching post at the Belgrade University was founded in 1881 and held by Mihailo Valtrović, who was trained as an architect at Karlsruhe University and was deeply involved in the history of classical architecture (Milinković 1990; 1998, 429). Right from the start, Valtrović devoted a significant part of his teaching activity to the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome, emphasizing the importance of arts in the history of mankind and "their ethical power for the peoples with *underdeveloped culture*" (quoted after Milinković 1990, 192, my emphasis). According to the preserved notes from his lectures, the definition of archaeology Valtrović offered his students runs as follows: "Archaeology is a scientific treatment of the art of classical epoch" (Milinković 1990, 193). In 1896, Valtrović turned his efforts to the reorganization of the National Museum in Belgrade, where he also held a position. Gradually, he left teaching altogether. His rather short, but significant activity at the University was marked by an effort to introduce rigorous scientific methods in the study of antiquities (Milinković 1990, 1998). The stress, however, was placed upon the educational importance of classical antiquity and its aesthetic and ethical values for the newly established state and its cultural development. His program was influenced by his basic training, as well as by the role models of the Western European universities of the time, especially the German ones, where the study of classics was held to be the essential component of higher education (Härke 1991, 204; Morris 1994, 18). In emulating the German example, however, Valtrović did not bear in mind the political program which was in its basis, but rather followed the path of the then-modern and well-organized university and state. In the words of Maria Todorova (1997, 13): "the Balkans were becoming European by shedding the last residue of an imperial legacy, widely considered an anomaly at the time, and by assuming and emulating the homogeneous European nation-state as the normative form of social organization".

In 1901, the teaching post was established for the first trained archaeologist, Miloje Vasić, who received his degree in 1898 from A. Furtwängler in Munich (Milinković 1998, 429-433). For the next five decades, until Vasić's retirement in 1955, the study of archaeology in Serbia was deeply and almost exclusively marked by his activity.

Under his direction, the systematic excavations at the settlement site Vinča near Belgrade started in 1908 and lasted, with an interruption during World War I, until 1934. The site is today unanimously interpreted as a late Neolithic settlement. Its first excavator, however, argued very fervently that it should be interpreted as an Archaic Greek trading post far in the Balkan hinterland (Babić forthcoming). He meticulously established relations between the finds from Vinča and the various elements of the material culture, economy, and cult of the Hellenic South. Very soon, opposing interpretations emerged, such as the ones of Milojčić and Garašanin, but Vasić held his grounds until the end of his life. The perception of the ancient Greek culture as a legitimate and desired source of stimuli and influences, present to a certain extent in other parts of Europe (Morris 1994; Shanks 1996), has been expressed much more enthusiastically among Balkan researchers, who have stressed the geographical proximity of Greece and the direct and intimate contacts throughout space and time (Babić forthcoming). Therefore, the "fatal attraction" of the Greek culture to one of the forefathers of archaeology in Serbia need not come as a surprise – this was a logical outcome of Vasić's training under the aegis of Furtwängler – the most prominent classicist of his time (Morris 1994, 28), as well as of the reverend attitude towards the classical antiquity. The path set by Valtrović was developed further, in an effort to connect the Serbian soil to the "cradle of European civilization". The newly established discipline of archaeology was an ideal tool for this purpose.

As established in other cases, individual influences, "intellectual baggage and theoretical approaches to the evidence" (Ucko 1995, 4) exercised by prominent figures may greatly affect the state of a discipline, especially in a relatively small scholarly community such as the one in Serbia of 1920s and 1930s. The memories of former students of Professor Vasić speak of a highly authoritarian figure, fervent in character, who didn't easily put up with opposition (Babić / Tomović, 1994). In fact, Milutin Garašanin, the next pivotal figure of archaeology in Serbia, defended his thesis on the Neolithic character of Vinča at the Ljubljana University, since it was utterly unacceptable in Belgrade under the rule of Vasić. With his retirement in 1955, the long epoch of this domineering figure finally ended.

Following the guidelines set by Díaz-Andreu and Champion (1996, 5-6), let me now briefly consider the relation of archaeology and national politics in Serbia during the first decades of its institutionalization. The legal acts on protection of heritage, the foundation of the national museum, and the archaeological teaching post at the university do coincide with the establishment of the independent Serbian state by the end of 19th century. The main objective of these newly-formed institutions was "to provide the basis to resist the colonial and dynastic oppression" and to "create a more broadly based popular sovereignty that promotes political freedom as well as social, economic, and intellectual development" (Trigger 1995, 277). Their program was Romanticist and educational in the broadest sense, typical of the formative stage of the national state. Following the German role model, the emphasis was laid upon the glorious European past, embodied in the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome. An effort to account for the local archaeological material was primarily aimed in connecting it to the common European past, via its Greek origins. The emerging intellectual elite emulated the West European examples, in the strife to "shed off" the underdeveloped status, and this seems to have been the priority on the agenda.

However, the effort was not successful, the public profile of archaeology in Serbia in the end of 19th and the first decades of 20th century was rather low, and the pioneering works of Valtrović and Vasić remained largely unknown to the general public.

Ivory tower

In 1958, three years after the retirement of Vasić, a teaching post at the Belgrade University was assigned to Milutin Garašanin (Milinković 1998, 436). He put his efforts into drawing a comprehensive pattern of the prehistoric periods in the Central Balkans. The profound German influence, firmly set in the previous decades of archaeology in Serbia, and still apparent in many parts of Europe at the time, is strongly felt in his work. Following the methods of comparative typology derived from classical archaeology, as the ones expressed in the writings of Merhart (Härke 1995, 49), and aiming at a chronological system corresponding to the one of Reinecke (Härke 1991, 187), he constituted a pattern of pre- and protohistory of the region which is still very much in use today. Yet, although adhering to the culture-historical approach as practiced by the German archaeologists, Garašanin has been constantly aware and quick to warn of the devastating consequences of Kossinna's work and its subsequent consequences (Babić / Tomović 1994, 69-71). In addition to the German strain, the obvious influence of V. Gordon Childe, "still currently by far the most profound influence on international archaeology" is felt in his work (Ucko 1995, 5). When in the 1960s the great excitement of New Archaeology started among the North American and British archaeologists, Garašanin displayed an attitude very much like the one among the Germans, described by Heinrich Härke (1991, 191) as "old wine in new barrels" (Babić / Tomović 1994, 63-65, 68-69). Deeply devoted to the archaeological vocation, Garašanin still publishes, upholding the standards of the culture-historical approach at its best. The majority of the practicing archaeologists in the country today, myself included, have been his students.

Less rigorous in his method, and by far less explicit, was Dragoslav Srejović, undoubtedly another of the most influential figures in Serbian archaeology in the last decades. He held the teaching post at the university from the early 1960s up to his untimely death in 1996. The methodological aspect of his research follows the well-known path of typological-chronological inferences characteristic of the culture-historical approach, but his interpretations often run along more poetic lines. Guided by his restless nature, he trespassed the boundaries of academic disciplines, never giving a simple answer on the question as to what his archaeological procedure was (Babić 1998). The tone of his lectures, and of his writing indeed, is best summarized in his own words: "I've tried to see people and events behind the dead objects. In this way, I have anticipated some future archaeology, a kind of poetic archaeology ... The truth is behind the objects, not in the objects themselves" (Srejović 1995, 153). For the best part of the last five decades the students of archaeology in Serbia have been exposed to these two powerful and imposing personalities, dangling between self-conscious culture-historicism and the poetics of archaeology. One influence, however, has not been felt in the post-war archaeology in Serbia – that of dogmatic Marxism.

Contrary to this statement, Timothy Kaiser (1995, 109-113; also Brown 1998, 73), in his account on the current state in Balkan archaeology, stresses Marxism as the main ideological influence on the discipline in the region. The references given come mainly from Romanian literature[2], but Garašanin is also cited as adhering to Engels' evolutionary pattern (Kaiser 1995, 111). On the other hand, immediately after World War II, Milutin Garašanin was asked to comment on *The origins of the family, private property and the state,* and in critical tone, he stated that Engels' account does not correspond to the archaeological data (Babić / Tomović 1994, 117-118). However, he has applied the idea of stages of evolutionary development, which made Kaiser list him among the "marxistically" informed archaeologists. This idea, on the other hand, is immanent to the culture-historical approach (as is, for that matter, to New Archaeology and its neo-evolutionist premises), and is not exclusively and intimately linked to dogmatic Marxism. Its implementation has worked to "document the archaeological record of human achievements back to their oldest and simplest beginnings and hence to demonstrate the historicity of the conjectural developmental schemes of Enlightenment philosophers" (Trigger 1995, 268). The extensive German catalogues and encyclopedias, amply illustrated with chronological charts, such as Müller-Karpe and Pauly-Wissova (Härke 1991, 203), basic references for prehistorians and classical archaeologists in Serbia up to the present, express the same desire to produce seriation and comprehensive lines of development.

Looking back at the days of presumed ideological pressure of dogmatic Marxism upon archaeology in the Balkans, in the recent book of interviews, Professor Garašanin says "there were certain attempts to influence us, but not pressures in the real sense" (Babić / Tomović 1994, 117-118). A similar conclusion is reached by Novaković (this volume) in his account of the Marxist influences on Slovene archaeology in the period when the same ideological apparatus was in operation all over former socialist Yugoslavia. The focus of state ideology was indeed placed on more recent historical periods, while "in general, traditional humanistic disciplines remained 'suspicious', particularly because of their long tradition and ties with bourgeois society". The attitude towards them was even that of "the open denial of their possibilities in rebuilding the society". The general middle-class background of the discipline and its practitioners seems indubitable, in spite of a number of variations (McGuire 1992, 55-56), and the "bourgeois ties" of the leading archaeologists in Serbia in the post-war period can hardly be more obvious: the biographies of Garašanin – an offspring of a family of politicians and statesmen extremely important in the pre-war period (Babić / Tomović 1994), and Srejović – firmly set in a middle-class milieu (Tasić 1998), rendered them "suspicious" enough. Coupled with the state emphasis on the more recent historical sequences, not taken as a legitimate object of archaeological research,

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2 Generalizing from one Balkan country to the other is often practiced in the accounts from the region. However, as argued by Hodder (1991), the sweeping overview of archaeological practice in Europe misses much of the particularities, especially if guided by the idea of stages of development of theory in English-speaking archaeological community, from culture-historical, to processual and postprocessual, each characterized by a distinctive set of premises (Hodder 1991, 11 ff.). The objection may be put forward that this line of inference is in itself an excellent example of the shortcomings of generalized evolutionary approach.

the discipline was considered not only unnecessary, but also potentially subversive. In accordance with the policy of the Yugoslav state, especially after the conflict with the Soviet Union under Stalin, to tolerate and marginalize rather than overtly prosecute, except in cases of drastic opposition (Marković 1996), archaeology remained confined to a very small circle and its public presence was almost non-existent (Díaz-Andreu / Champion 1996, 12)[3]. Spectacular finds, such as Lepenski Vir in 1960s, did stir up public attention, but only briefly and superficially. These spectacular events have almost exclusively been linked to the personality of Dragoslav Srejović, and I will get back to this point below. In general, however, archaeology in Serbia in the years preceding the devastating inflammation of nationalism in 1980s was characterized by its marginal social position stemming from its political uselessness from the point of view of the state. The major consequence came to be in further self-marginalization and perpetuation of an atheoretical refuge, encouraging description rather than interpretation (Trigger 1995, 270). Additionally, this was a response to the previous adoption of the German model, and the awareness of its lethal political consequences, as expressed by Milutin Garašanin. This was the case in Germany itself (Härke 1991; 1995; Jones 1999), but also in the countries where the culture-historical approach was endorsed from this source (Hodder 1991; Ucko 1995, 11). Paradoxically, this refuge of scholars into an ivory tower of empiricist, descriptive research has allowed for political uses of the past to blossom on the fringes of the discipline (Jones / Graves-Brown 1996, 7, 18; Díaz-Andreu 1995, 55).

Opposing evidence

The increasing awareness among professionals over the last decades of the political embeddedness of archaeological inference coincided with the challenge to understand and account for the horrors of the last Balkan wars. The challenge was met by John Chapman (1994), in his account on ideologically motivated destruction of heritage in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. A short passage of this paper is devoted to the then current situation in Serbia, characterized by hyperinflation, funding crisis for research projects, the mass emigration of scholars, and the oppressive university law passed in 1992. Under these circumstances, a conference was nonetheless organized "by Professor Dragoslav Srejović of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in September 1993, ... on the four late Roman general-emperors of rural stock born within the territory of modern-day Serbia ... (and) proved a great success" (Chapman 1994, 124). The author correctly detected the over-enthusiastic tone of the conference and its public display, elaborated to a somewhat dubious extent. The event raises several interrelated issues relevant to this paper: the construction of cultural identity on

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3 The recent anecdote may well illustrate the still present archaeological low profile, even among the academic colleagues: an excellent expert in Roman and later Latin literature, holding a university post, told me that to him being an archaeologist means "being a classicist, but very rich and British at the same time." Serbian prehistorians with low income are not considered.

the base of archaeological material, the modes of communication and the reception of the results.

The complexity and ambiguity of the Balkan cultural identities, superbly identified by Todorova (1997), has been largely augmented during the 1980s and 1990s. The re-negotiation of the European character of the Balkan peoples was the major issue among the conflicting parties, and a device in constructing the pattern of "nesting orientalisms" mentioned above (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Bakić-Hayden / Hayden 1992). The vicious circle is best summarized by Boris Buden: "Europe is not only the place where we have always been, but also the goal to be achieved ... It is the object of our adoration and desire, and equally the object of our disappointment and anxiety" (quoted after Čolović 1997, 44)[4]. It is worth comparing this conclusion with the prologue to the volume published as the result of the conference held in Belgrade in September 1993: "The symposium 'The Age of the Tetrarchs' commemorated the period in which the territory of Serbia had a key role in the *history of European civilization* ... the most important period in the *history of the classical world*, during which *emperors born in the territory of present-day Serbia revived*, within a few decades, the power of the weakened Roman Empire, enhanced the *importance of their native region* and made it the *centre of the civilized world*" (Srejović 1993, my emphasis).

The ambiguity of the text, and of the conference in general, is largely the result of the effort to play for disparate audiences, from the state-operated ministries in quest for funds, the domestic public largely uninterested in archaeological work, and the international scholarly public[5]. However, the reluctance of the Serbian audience, general as well as scholarly, to seek role models from the classical antiquity in the Roman sphere (Babić forthcoming) resulted in limited interest and short-lived excitement, and the public remained largely unaware of the Tetrarchs. But the ambiguous tone was picked up and influenced the reception of Srejović's writings on another subject.

In discussing the work of Maria Gimbutas on the Indo-European invasion marking the beginning of the Copper Age, and tracing the origins of her ideas back to her personal experiences, John Chapman (1999, 104) stated that: "... this biographical interplay between life experiences and academic output should not be used to criticise Gimbutas's hypotheses on warfare and cultural change." This is so mainly because Gimbutas was just one of many central and eastern European prehistorians who have relied upon Indo-European invasions at the end of the Balkan Neolithic and Copper Age to account for markedly less complex material culture and settlements. As a single example, it is worth quoting the late Dragoslav Srejović on the Neolithic of Serbia: "The Middle Neolithic is a period of peace and good neighborly relations in the whole of the Balkan Peninsula. The former discrepancies in economic activities which caused

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4 Čolović compares the Serbian attitudes towards Europe with the ones noted by Boris Buden among the Croats and states that "the conclusions are almost entirely valid for the Serbian case" (Čolović 1997, 44).

5 "The symposium ... together with the accompanying publication, will present to the Yugoslav and foreign public ... the monuments from the age of the Tetrarchy" (Srejović 1993).

friction between the individual culture groups were no longer present" (Srejović 1988, 17).

Srejović goes on to argue that the establishment of cultural boundaries between individual (Early Neolithic) cultures precluded all territorial expansion, and that once in place, the Vinča culture developed independently until the period of great migrations marking the start of the Copper Age in the Central Danubian region (Srejović 1988, 18). The same underlying contrast drawn by Gimbutas is present in Srejović's writings: a peaceful, autochthonous population (related genetically to the inhabitants of modern Serbia) and a warlike invading force from the north Pontic steppe (the homeland of the Red Army). It is important to disentangle modern nationalist assumptions from the archaeological remains which should be studied more carefully to assess the probability of wars, invasions, territorial expansions and changes of population[6].

The passage from Srejović referred to by Chapman runs as follows: "The further development of the Vinča culture is well known. During the 5th and 4th millennia the Vinča culture developed, spread, and sometimes adopted the achievements of the adjacent cultures, but it preserved its integrity and developed independently until the period of the great migrations, which marks the beginning of the Copper Age in the central Danubian region" (Srejović 1988, 18). Genetic links and Red Army are conspicuously absent from this passage and, to the best of my knowledge, from all the other works published by Srejović on the Neolithic of Serbia. Migrations, however, are present, as a standard tool of culture-historical explanatory kit from Gordon Childe on (Jones 1997, 24-26). Maria Gimbutas is excused as "just one of many" to fall into this methodological trap, but Srejović is warned to study more carefully and to put aside his nationalist assumptions.

The example of Dragoslav Srejović illustrates the paradox of archaeology in Serbia and its public reception. An attempt to articulate appealing images of the past, Serbian and yet European, based on sound archaeological evidence, but accompanied by one imperial eagle too many, was met by a mild reception of the Serbian audience. On the other hand, the outside observers, coming from backgrounds where archaeology *does* matter, reached the verdict that the nationalist assumptions became "more or less standard in the professional literature" (Kaiser 1995, 109). The paradox is generated from the fundamentally different attitudes towards the discipline in Western Europe and Serbia, where long years have been spent in producing typologies and chronological charts, evading equally the dangers of Kossinna's ghost and the potential pressures of the state-proclaimed Marxist ideology. The realization of the power as well as responsibility of the discipline to influence the public never came about. For the same reason, academic archaeology remained out of the scope of interest of nationalist ideology, and the figures harnessed to mobilize the public are picked up from another sources (see Čolović 1997).

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6 The same volume is described as establishing genetic links between the Neolithic inhabitants of Serbia with the modern ones on yet another occasion (Kaiser 1995,109).

Unreliable sources, or: Standing stone gathers moss

One of the rare insider's accounts on the state of archaeology in Serbia during the 1990s (Bogdanović 1998) superbly describes the self-marginalization and indulgence in our own "scientific" shelter, summarizing the outcome in the statement that "the public is informed that archaeology exists, but from unreliable sources". The newspapers and electronic media in Serbia over the last decades have published a number of sensational archaeological, historical and ethnographic discoveries, mainly evolving around catchy, yet elusive mythological, numerological and occult images (Čolović 1997). My intention here is not to draw a comprehensive list of this coverage, but to situate it in respect to academic archaeology. The journal *Račanske mitološke sveske (Mythological Notes from Rača)*[7], devoted to research into the unknown, may offer some flavor. In its recent issue (3/2000) the journal lists its already published contributions, such as the ones on Cyrillic alphabet being identified in the decoration of Neolithic pots, on Iron Age bangles indubitably pointing to Slavic-Serbian symbolism, Serbian Neolithic calendar, and other fascinating stories. One can hardly speak of the theoretical or methodological consistence of these writings. Over the years, the professional academic archaeologists remained silent in respect to them, considering them scientifically irrelevant. Isolated efforts, which realized the need to respond to these images, ended in pessimistic tones, as expressed in the statement by Milutin Garašanin: "It is very hard to inform the public of our work. The newspapers will always publish sensationalist stories rather than scientific arguments" (Babić / Tomović 1994, 72 ff.).

More rigorous in approach, strikingly resembling that of Kossinna, and closer to the academic community, are the publications of Janković (1998, the most eloquent example), which push the Slavic/Serbian past well beyond the established dates. This resulted in the Department of Archaeology in Belgrade's refusal to grant him promotion over many years. Yet again, the dissatisfaction with the political consequences of Janković's writing and the debate on his inferences remained largely confined to the immediate archaeological community, and have never been publicly articulated.

Strangely though it may seem, none of the images offered by these unreliable sources caught public attention enough to be included in the vicious repertoire of nationalist symbolism (Čolović 1997). Once again, it seems that the history of the discipline in Serbia from the time of its establishment rendered it incapable of influencing public images of the past one way or another. Consequently, the Neolithic Vinča alphabet remained out of scope with the ideological machinery and was relegated to the kinds of newspapers publishing reports of two-headed donkeys and winged babies spotted in the villages around Belgrade. On the other hand, the urge to fill this void and to publicly articulate critical accounts on the nation's past – which was realized by historians (Stojanović 1998) – was not recognized among the archaeologists.

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7 Many thanks to Aleksandar Palavestra for pointing me to this publication.

Presumed innocence

This contribution to the volume has been driven by the wish to argue that the ways of interaction between archaeology and society are as diverse as they are important. In 1973, David Clarke wrote of the loss of archaeological innocence through the embrace of scientific procedure. The later years witnessed the increased awareness that the shield of scientific objectivity cannot protect the discipline from its responsibility in dealing with the past. Numerous instances of active manipulation of archaeological material to achieve political and especially nationalistic ends have been analyzed and recorded (Díaz-Andreu / Champion 1996; Kohl / Fawcett 1995; Meskell 1998).

The case of Serbian archaeology may demonstrate that the lack of awareness of public relevance of the discipline and the complete neglect of the responsibility to take an active part in the creation of the publicly-accepted images of the past lead to equally devastating consequences. Therefore, my answer to the question posed in the title is that silence and indignation run dangerously close to malpractice. Critical and theoretically informed discipline is badly needed. It must be capable and willing to take an active part in the social pattern for, "while (academic) archaeology can avoid nationalism, nationalism cannot do without archaeology..., and that can mean a lot of pressure" (Slapšak / Novaković 1996, 290). The pressure is building up and if the lack of response, which has already permitted malignant ideas to spread, continues to grow, the case against the innocence of archaeology in Serbia will reach beyond reasonable doubt.

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