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Evžen Neustupný

Czech archaeology at the turn of the millennium

European archaeological communities can be systemized on the basis of at least four criteria:

- adherence to a paradigm (or to several paradigms),
- attitude toward one of the principal archaeological mainstreams, i. e. either British or German archaeology,
- commitment to either a mainstream or a minority,
- inclination either to the West or to the East.

I am going to discuss these four factors in the reverse order and in doing so I will add insights into the state of affairs in the Czech Republic.

The West/East dichotomy

The categorization into “West” and “East” along the lines of the Yalta agreement of 1945 does not represent any meaningful division any more; this is even truer if we look at the future instead of looking back at the period of the Cold War.

If there is any division of this kind, it goes back to the Middle Ages when the West could be characterized as having a background of Gothic culture, while the East lived inside either the Orthodox or the Islamic tradition shared with the Eastern Mediterranean. This division must still be considered as it forms the spiritual background of various groups. It should be investigated whether it can or has influenced archaeology to any degree.

Turning to the Czech Republic, there is no doubt the tradition belongs to the West. For most periods of the Middle Ages the kingdom of Bohemia formed an important part of the medieval Roman Empire and Roman emperors quite often became kings of Bohemia. From time to time, Bohemian kings also became Roman emperors. This, among other reasons, demonstrates how closely the Czech nation and its archaeologists have always been tied to the medieval culture of Latin origin. Our closest contacts, friendly or unfriendly, were with the medieval groups who later formed the German nation, with the Austrians, some Italians, Slovenes, Croats, Hungarians, Slovaks and a portion of Poles.

Mainstream vs. minority communities

In the following paragraphs I am going to discuss the problem of archaeological mainstreams and minorities which I reviewed in somewhat greater detail in one of the last issues of *Archaeologia Polona*.

The division of archaeological communities into mainstreams and minorities has little to do with archaeology itself. Rather, it depends largely upon the population size of the hosting nation, its economic and cultural development, and sometimes even on its military capabilities.

Mainstream communities, large and economically strong, generate archaeology independent of other communities and have a pronounced tendency to isolation. All important issues are covered by local mainstream specialists. Sometimes they do not need outside archaeologists, mainstream or other, for anything but factual knowledge. Mainstream communities formulate their own paradigms, but sometimes they prefer to remain without a clearly articulated paradigm rather than to accept one from outside.

Minority communities are characterized by an insufficient number of specialists, which makes them dependent on other communities (mostly mainstream). They frequently accept paradigms (or non-paradigms) from their mainstream colleagues, modifying them in details. Apart from the data they provide, their achievements are habitually not considered in other communities. Minority communities are spread both in the West and in the East as defined above.

Czech archaeology is of the minority type. In spite of the devastation of the Czech economy during the Second World War and the lack of improvement during the Soviet rule backed by the Yalta agreement, Czech archaeology is not as impoverished as that of large parts of Eastern Europe. In fact, it is slowly expanding and thus creating favorable conditions for further development. The main problem inside the community is that the old institutional structure of the Russian type, introduced in the 1950s, still survives in a sector of the profession.

The minority status of Czech archaeology deeply influences its impact upon the discipline, as feedback relations are weak. There are few or no reactions from outside the community to the results of one's work, and the reaction from inside the community is also minimal because of the small number of archaeologists. This applies irrespective of whether an archaeologist writes something unusually clever or provokingly stupid, and also irrespective of whether he/she publishes in his/her language or in the language of a mainstream country. This may present one of the principal problems in European archaeology, as a large part of one's effort is wasted. However, this should not become a matter of either complaint or attempts at intervention, although archaeologists should be aware of the fact that the problem exists.

German vs. British archaeology

I am not going to analyze the reasons why the differences between German and British archaeology arose. Nevertheless, the situation in archaeology in transalpine Europe can be described in terms of the opposition between archaeologies of the two leading ar-

chaeological mainstreams in Europe. I dare say that this is the principal division of the present day archaeology in Europe as it influences many other national communities. At the same time, I do not assume that this division is the only one as there are also other mainstreams (or communities trying hard to become mainstream) who maintain their identity, but wield little influence. As I could have argued previously, this opposition is not purely paradigmatic.

One aspect of the responsibility of the principal mainstreams rests in the fact that their theoretical positions are often replicated by associated minority communities and, in this way, their abilities and/or non-abilities spread outside their own territory.

The contrast between the two archaeologies, i. e. that produced in Germany and that produced in the US and Britain, is paramount. Its importance for European archaeology in general lies in the fact that many non-mainstream communities show predominant inclination to either Germany or Britain. To be more specific, Austrian, Bulgarian and Croatian archaeology always showed a strong tendency to emulating German archaeology, while many colleagues in Scandinavia worked in the same direction as British archaeologists.

Central European archaeology, of which Czech archaeology formed a part, grew in the last quarter of the 19th and the first quarter of the 20th century from the common Central European tradition, superficially called German, although it was created by many Central European nations. The contribution of Czech archaeologists was not negligible in this intellectual stream.

Further development of the common Central European tradition led in Germany to unrestricted nationalism, whose open manifestations only ended in 1945. Czech archaeology, by not succumbing to nationalism, formed an exception in the Central European region from the 1920s to the 1940s. But, from a theoretical point of view it had not achieved much new. In this respect, however, post-war archaeology in Central Europe was much more similar to pre-war archaeology in Czechoslovakia than to any of the others. In other words, there was much interest in chronology, the perfection of typology, and diffusion (the study of "influences"). At the same time, there was some work done on a restricted number of migrations, a limited interest in ethnicity, an obligatory interest in ecofacts (in the post-war period), some simple settlement history, and almost no other theory, especially no interest in methodology, social theory and symbolism.

All this lasted until the beginning of the 1960s. Then, in the second half of the century a kind of globalization occurred in archaeology and brought spiritual contact and, in many regions, accord with American and British archaeology. All this happened in spite of the Soviet political and ideological pressure.

American and British archaeologies, however, only grew to such magnitude after the middle of the 20th century. They developed quickly as they were not slowed by historical baggage. The 1960s brought New Archaeology with its sophisticated, logic-based methodology (including mathematical methods), plus an intense occupation with the environment of ancient people, their economy and society. Postprocessualism in Britain later introduced deep interest in symbols and in the role of the individual.

We are now witnesses to a reshuffling of the scene in the sense that many archaeologists are attracted by Anglo-Saxon archaeology mainly because its program can be positively formulated. These paradigms are systems of ideas that can lead one's research. At the same time, there is a strong opposition directed against the postprocessual movement

because it seems to be over-theoretical, too influenced by postmodern rhetoric, and over inclined toward certain ideologies.

The paradigms

The importance of paradigms in the development of archaeology is often overestimated. First of all, paradigms in social sciences are not universal. Quite often, several paradigms coexist at the same time, or a strong paradigm coexists with a condition that can be described as a non-paradigm. Strongly articulated paradigms are usually limited to one or a small group of communities, and foreign mainstreams cannot accept such paradigms if they are to retain their mainstream identity.

Moreover, there are many archaeologists who spend their lives more or less outside paradigms by solving problems such as chronology, the basic description of their discoveries, and basic classification. Also, much work done in museums and in the sphere of monument management is clearly not paradigmatically conditioned to any large degree. Most archaeologists have become active just in these two branches of archaeology.

German archaeology produced a very strong paradigm, that espoused by Gustaf Kossinna, but this went to ruins with the end of the Second World War. Since that time, Germany has remained without a clear paradigm. People from outside often suggest that Germany should adopt one of the Anglo-Saxon paradigms, but this would be in contrast with its mainstream status.

Both procesualism and postprocesualism contained so much new and so much valuable that they should not be forgotten and left without notice. Processualism has brought mainly the logical structure of archaeological thinking, mathematical methods, interest in ecofacts and economics in general, and interest in social systems. The great virtue of postprocessualism has been its study of symbolism and the emphasis it put upon the individual (without any positive results).

In the 1950s and later, the state of affairs in Central European archaeology seemed unsatisfactory to several Czech specialists who developed tendencies parallel to New Archaeology in the Anglo-Saxon world. Yet, their views remained minority positions with all the consequences.

As in many other countries, most archaeologists in Bohemia and Moravia work outside paradigms in the rescue sector. Several decades ago, Czech archaeologists were largely influenced by the literature written in German, but they have been moving toward English recently, especially in the western part of the country. Of course, this shift implies paradigmatic influencing. If Czech archaeologists express paradigmatic views, the nearest current is simple and spontaneous procesualism, but a "historizing" paradigm is still widespread. Only a few colleagues consider the pros and cons of postprocessualism.

Conclusions

If conclusions from the development of archaeology in recent years are to be drawn, it must be analyzed from many points of view, not just by reference to either of the various paradigms or to the West-East concept. It has become obvious that the real situation is much more complicated, and it cannot be expected that the solution adopted by European archaeologists could be similar or the same everywhere. The acceptance of one paradigm by all mainstream communities, East and West, would make European archaeology poorer.