

that unite the chapters as well as the places where authors present specific and quite different interpretations. In sum, this is a wonderfully satisfying book for those deeply embedded in gender and violence theory, as well as for newcomers to the field.

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OLIVER J.T. HARRIS & CRAIG N. CIPOLLA. *Archaeological theory in the new millennium. Introducing current perspectives*. 2017. London & New York: Routledge.

The aim of this volume is to represent modern ideas of Western archaeology (presumably Anglo-American and Scandinavian) discussed in the twenty-first century. As I recently issued my own two-volume work, *History of archaeological thinking* (Klejn 2011, in Russian), which finished its survey at the eve of the millennium (the book languished in the publishing house for a long time), I have naturally noted the appearance of such a manual (and survey) with vivid interest.

Prior to the post-processual turn, of which this book may be seen as a continuation, theories of archaeology relied on a framework articulated around proof. Questions were formulated so as to be provable, and hypotheses could be tested and discarded. Strong proof for a hypothesis could strengthen a wider theory. How can the similarity of cultures at different stages of economic development and technology be explained? The idea of evolution suggests itself and is substantiated by traces of social development in earlier periods of more complex societies and by ethnographic analogy with non-Western cultures. How can the rapid change of cultures within a limited territory be explained? One explanation that we can posit is the arrival of a new people, the invasion of a new population. In order to prove this we can look for incoming material culture and possible vectors for movement. Proof in this case can be strong, weak or non-existent, but we can

make a hypothesis and test it to find an answer. The new ideas considered by the authors of this book are striking in the complete absence of testability and, therefore, of the notion of proof. All postulates are simply presented as facts. Is it true or not true that things are equal to people in historical events? Oh, this is not important for those who advance this postulate. Rather, it is important that we accept this interpretation and further hold it as truth.

An additional novelty introduced through post-processualism relates to sources of theory. Earlier theories of archaeology were generally advanced by archaeologists. Scholars of other disciplines sometimes influenced archaeologists, but archaeologists formulated their theories themselves. Mortillet, Montelius, Sophus Muller, Kosinna, Childe, Wheeler, Wahle, Marr, Ravidonikas—they were prominent archaeologists, even if some of them worked in other disciplines at the beginning of their careers. If we consider the boxes within which the authors bring forward leaders that formulated the main ideas of their new approach, we see from 32 figures only 9 archaeologists and 3 archaeological anthropologists, while 6 are specialists in literature and language, 5 are anthropologists, 4 are philosophers, 3 are sociologists, 1 is a political scientist and 1 a biologist. The book gives the impression that philosophical ideas developed to apply across the sciences can be taken without specific archaeological elaboration and implanted into the discipline, in their indirect state as it were. In other words, philosophising on familiar materials more or less relevant across various specialisms (including archaeologists) is taken for a theoretical movement. Such philosophising is much easier than elaborating archaeological theories and demands less preparation.

It is worth reflecting on just what is meant by the idea of theory. Here I will compare my own view with that put forward in this volume and another, that of Matthew Johnson (1999), published at the end of the last millennium. In my opinion, matters to which Johnson applies his discussion are not archaeological in general, and what he calls theory is not theory at all. I hold that theory, by all its modifications produced by differences of disciplines, has, in all disciplines, one logical base. Otherwise there is no sense in calling it theory. Each theory explains facts and produces new results. Strictly speaking, theory, whether it is in physics, sociology or archaeology is a *formal way of processing some information, based on an explaining idea*; it issues

from a group of facts demanding explanation and is proved by independent facts that must correspond to it (Klejn 2004: 226–321). Theory must have a certain logical mechanism leading from enigmatic facts to inferences and proof in relation to other facts. That is all. If there are no facts and no inferences, there is no theory.

In Johnson's book I find no such things. For Johnson, theory is "the order we put facts in" (p. 2). What, then, distinguishes it from classification? The authors of the new volume provide a similar definition. For them, theory is "the notion of *order*—how we organise our interpretations; how we recognise and define data; the different preconceptions, ideas and beliefs that we bring into dialogue with one another. This notion of ideas in dialogue is what makes theory so vibrant and so alive" (pp. 2–3). In other words, the same ordering idea as Johnson, plus some poorly defined bustle with "data [...] preconceptions, ideas and beliefs" (pp. 2–3). This vibrating turmoil around ordering is the only definition of theory available in either book. Under this definition one can substitute anything one wants, any consideration or idea. Everything fits, if only it is vibrating. On this rests the selection of theoretical approaches presented in the manual. The first chapter is terminated by a long argument on the nuances of philosophical terms, which are returned to throughout the book. They hope that the reader will follow them and join the game.

The manual is nevertheless useful as it gathers the main set of fashionable ideas by which a section of the modern generation of archaeologists navigate their data, interpretations and thoughts. As such, it

provides an excellent characterisation of the current state of this form of archaeological research, which deserves reflection. Does this all mean that there is no new theory and that everything has frozen after post-processualism? That the new generation are trapped by old ideas, and must look into other disciplines and philosophise around fashionable novelties? Definitely not. In my *History of archaeological thinking* I noted the successes of Darwinian archaeology and other new movements in the sphere of theoretical thinking. Innovation in computer technology and in communication promise a serious shift that may yet demand the restructuring of all archaeological thinking. This work already proceeds but not in this volume, where Oliver and Craig argue with one another on whether their excavated stones order them or whether they order us.

References

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