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L. S. KLEJN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEORETICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Better later than never. Ten years had to pass before L. S. Klejn's second article devoted to theoretical archaeology could become known to general public. The article is still topical and still appeals to the reader, despite the fact that through no fault of the author it was banned from publication. Compared to the previous article "A Panorama of Theoretical Archaeology" (1977), however, the later one seems to be less stimulating. I shall try to explain what I have in mind.

It is well known that most historical writings are devoted to wars and revolutions, i.e. the most dynamic and dramatic periods of human history. The periods of tranquillity, though much better to live in, provoke less interest both in writers and readers. The 1960s and the early 70s were revolutionary years in the field of theoretical archaeology. The struggle was in full swing, and the debates show striking similarity with reportages from battle fields, especially when the expansion of the "new archaeology" was at issue.

In the 1970s, as stressed by Klejn, the revolution was over, and a new period of stabilization set in that is naturally less interesting to the observer. This is the main reason why the second article is weaker than the first one. In the second article, the author continues to play the role of an observer (and actually a participant) by limiting himself to a simple description of the period. He fails to reach the level of any theoretical analysis of his beloved theoretical archaeology. This self-restriction is a misservice to both surveys, although this shortcoming became more evident when the author turned to less dynamic period. Only at the very end of his second survey does Klejn attempt to analyse the internal mechanism of the development of theoretical archae-

ology. He fails, however, to risk the last step, i.e. to proceed from the question of "What had happened?" to the question "Why did it happen this way?"

In order to take this step it is necessary to recall the most general rules of scholarly research. Any scientific or scholarly investigation consists of three steps: the registration of the external manifestations of the issue in question, their description, and their interpretation. This schema, naturally, includes all kinds of reverse connections. There are some disciplines (e.g. theoretical mathematics) in which the second and the third steps prevail, while in others the first and the second play a major role. The division of a theoretical research process into these three steps, albeit schematic, helps us to observe theoretical archaeology from an angle that at least stimulates a move in the right direction of finding an answer to the question "Why?", though falling short of providing the actual answer (Klejn attempted to undertake such an analysis in his "Panorama", but only with regard to Soviet works).

Indeed, theoretical research can be divided into two major groups, in accordance with our three-step schema. Writings in the first group focus on the first two steps, i.e. "registration-description". From the viewpoint of archaeology, this means the reconstruction of an ancient culture (either of the material culture, or the entire society, if a broad approach is taken). Theoretical works of the second group deal with the problem of interpretation, i.e. they attempt to identify mechanisms by which (or through which) recorded phenomena may be explained.

Being precise, one can define works in the first group as methodological, (which does not completely preclude their being theoretical). Here, I mean the use of mathematical methods and computers in archaeology, settlement archaeology, ethnoarchaeology, experimental archaeology, and behavioral archaeology. Develop-

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ment in this sphere always goes forwards, in contrast to the situation in those areas of scholarship where competition between various concepts prevail. Progress is naturally irregular and it is determined by the situation in the sphere of pure theoretical research (i.e. in the second group).

Purely theoretical concepts always exist in a competitive struggle, in the process of which various concepts at times merge and produce broader viewpoints, while other concepts disappear altogether and are absorbed. Two major opposing camps are to be observed among competing archaeologists-theoreticians. The first camp consists of researchers who insist that in the framework of archaeology the interpretation of phenomena, recorded by archaeological means, is possible and necessary. The second camp includes scholars who oppose interpretations as such and who think that their work should be limited to the various steps of reconstruction. Hard-line agnostics state that interpretations are totally impossible; at times they even deny the possibility of reconstruction ("new anti-archaeanism"). Modest agnostics, to whom L. S. Klejn belongs, move the problem of interpretation outside the framework of archaeology, for instance in the sphere of prehistory.

The main theoretical concepts in archaeology have had an interpretative character. These are

the theory of migration, diffusionism, the theory of stages, and so-called "new archaeology". The latter evolved not so much in the struggle with other theories of interpretation which continued to exist only as relics in the 1960s and 1970s or, as Marxist, were marginal, but in the struggle with the theories of sceptics.

It is here that we can observe phenomenon typical of a scientific process. Indeed a workable theory based on interpretation helps to better conceive and understand reality by simplifying it. A theory makes reality poorer, and therefore any initial enthusiasm over it soon becomes replaced by scepticism. This in turn, stimulates agnosticism, whose adherents begin to concentrate on the improvement of registration and reconstruction methods. They often, however, consciously or unconsciously use the achievements of the very same theory of interpretation which they reject, but which still determines the very model of reconstruction. Any new theory, therefore, should first survive a struggle with theoretical scepticism, rather than a struggle with old theories. This cyclic development of archaeological thought has in many ways predefined the crisis of the so called "new archaeology" and the return of the era of scepticism, with sceptics now armed with all the achievements of the "new archaeology".