
**Historical Archaeology from a World Perspective**

Pedro Paulo A. Funari

**Introduction**

During the World Archaeological Congress 3 in New Delhi, India (4th-11th December, 1994), Martin Hall, Sian Jones and the author organized a theme on “Changing Perspectives on Historical Archaeology”, gathering papers on four main topics: exploring epistemological problems: questions of definition of the subject (organized by P.P.A. Funari); the plurality of material culture: race, ethnicity, tribe, class and gender (organized by S. Jones); archaeology an the representation of modern identities: national, colonial imperial (organized by Timothy Champion); feminist historical archaeology (organized by S. Spencer-Wood). Overall there were fifty papers from scholars all over the world, dealing with a wide variety of historical periods, like ancient Palestine (Jones, 1994), Roman Britain (Hingley, 1994), early Medieval Ireland (Mytum, 1994) or contemporary Italian archaeology (Levi, 1994), and comprising not only Europe and the United States but also Africa (e.g. Pikarayi, 1994), Australia (e.g. Colley, 1994), Asia (e.g. Mani, 1994) and South America (e.g. Bárcena, 1994). There emerged a clear divide between most United States scholars, concerned with the period from the end of the fifteenth century onwards, and European and others who were ready to include in the historical archaeology label studies on Classical Athens (by an Australian, Zarmati, 1994, and by an American, Small, 1994), on Pre-Roman Iberian societies (by a Spaniard, Díaz-Andreu, 1994) or on Pre-Modern India (Mani, 1994). The first aim of this paper is thus to discuss the epistemological implications of an international historical archaeology, a worldwide discipline whose features, purposes, and goals are very much subjected to debate.

**Historical Archaeology, an American discipline**

It is fair to say that there has been a longstanding lack of communication between the two main archaeological traditions, European archaeology being linked to philology and history and American archaeology being an offspring of anthropology. As late as 1989, Bruce G. Trigger was keen to emphasize that European and United States archaeologists live in rather different academic contexts:

“Extraordinary as it may seem to those who have been trained in the Western European and Soviet tradition of archaeological research, history, both as a discipline and as a methodology, has always been viewed as largely irrelevant to prehistoric archaeology in the United States” (Trigger, 1989, p. 19).

Earlier, just when the archaeology of historic sites was becoming the newly created “historical archaeology” discipline, Iain C. Walker, trained in Great Britain in prehistoric European archaeology, published in the first issue of *Historical Archaeology* a paper on methods and

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1 Departamento de História, Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Caixa Postal 6110, Campinas, 13081-970, São Paulo, Brazil.
principles in historic archaeology and again chose to highlight the split between the two archaeologies:

“The major difference between the Old and the New World approaches to archaeology seems to the writer to be that while the latter is more concerned with classification and abstract concepts, the former is more concerned with ‘historical’ interpretation of prehistoric material. It is perhaps partly for this reason that ‘historic’ patterns in prehistory do not seem to be nearly as advanced here as those in Europe, and why in Britain and in modern Near and Middle Eastern excavations archaeology has come to mean much more than merely excavation” (Walker, 1967, p. 25).

Reading these comments, it is inevitable to remind Evelyn Waugh’s British sense of humour when she said that “we are all American at puberty; we die French”. However, it was not by chance that historical archaeology begun in the United States and the use of the term is still very much American, rather than English, who prefer to use different and more specific terms, like medieval, post-medieval, and so forth (note the use of historic by Walker in the title of his paper; cf. Austin, n.d., p. 3). In the United States, prehistoric sites were easily distinguished from historical (Euroamerican, colonial, or postcolonial) sites, as were Native American settlements, illiterate and literate societies, precapitalist and capitalist economies. These clear-cut binary oppositions should be linked to the realization by the Americans that as there was a study of the material culture of Indians, by prehistorians who looked for their way of life, there should be a historical preservation of our (i.e. Euroamerican) own heritage (Orser and Fagan, 1995, p.6). Native American villages were viewed as separate and distinct entities from European and European American settlements demanding different teams of specialist researchers (Lightfoot, 1995, p. 202). From its inception, then, historical archaeology would not fit in the traditional anthropological framework of American archaeology, but on the contrary it inevitably established links with history and other related disciplines. Ivor Noël Hume (1969, pp. 9 and 13) in his pioneer book on the subject went so far as to relate directly Classics and History to the new discipline, as did almost simultaneously Robert Schuyler (1970, p.84), when justifying its very existence:

“<First,> The past is worth studying as soon as it becomes in danger of being lost; second, the past of Roman Britain and Colonial America are being destroyed at much the same rate; third, the relics of Colonial America are to the United States what Roman remains are to Britain...I am not suggesting that anthropologists cannot be good historical archaeologists, only that initially they do not know the documentary sources essential to the study of historical artifacts”.

From the start, then, historic sites archaeology was an interdisciplinary endeavor (Larrabe, 1969, p.71), coalescing history and archaeology (McKay, 1976, p.95) and encompassing ethnohistory, and ethnography (Kutsche et al., 1976, p.13), aiming at tranforming anthropology departments into material culture departments (Deetz, 1977a, p.12). It would not take long time to enlarge the scope of historical archaeology research to include the study not only of elite heritage but also of ordinary people’s evidence, notably slaves’ material culture (Ascher and Fairbanks, 1971, p.3). In the beginning of the 1990s, Barbara Little and Paul Shackel (1992, p.4) considered that history was a vital element in historical archaeology interpretation and this in clear break with the overall anti-historical trend in prehistoric archaeology in the United States which is still pervasive (Randall McGuire, personal communication). This reinforces the divide between an anthropological prehistoric archaeology, on the one hand, and a more ambiguous historical archaeology whose definition
stress the study of the post-prehistoric period (Orser and Fagan, 1995, p.14) and which is considered as a historical discipline (Potter, n.d., p.5). The clear-cut prehistoric/historic periods divide, traditional in the United States scholarship and often reinstated by prehistorians and historical archaeologists alike, would however struck scholars elsewhere.

The European outlook

Archaeology in Europe sprang from antiquarianism and art history (Carandini, 1979, pp.34-48), on the one hand, and from Philologie and Altertumswissenschaft, on the other (Champion, 1990, p.89). The continue occupation of settlements from at least the Late Iron Age up to the present day, with easily distinguishible but at the same time enmeshed Roman, Medieval and Modern structures. If our ancestors in the United States were the pilgrims, French children used to sing their ...Gallic forefathers! - *Les Gaulois, nos fières aieux...* Perhaps the best word to describe European perception of the past is addition, viewing change as part of a continous process of adding new elements. The same French child of supposed Gallic descent would not be shocked by the fact that Charlemagne did speak Old German and was crowned Roman emperor! Continuity is thus a password to European Weltanschauung (Stierle, 1979, p.106 *et passim*), and it is symptomatic that Braudel’s long term (*longue durée*) concept would gain overwhelming acceptance in the Old World (cf. Schulin, 1987, for a German overview on the subject).

From the start, archaeology has been a philological discipline in two interrelated ways. First and foremost, the study of prehistoric, protohistoric or later sites in Europe depends on commanding the knowledge of languages used by written documents to describe them: Greek, Latin, and then modern vernacular tongues. So, the often quoted words by Mortimer Wheeler (1956, p. 17) that the archaeologist is digging up people, not things is followed by a Shakespearean quote: “Of our scraps and pieces we may say, with Mark Antony in the market-place, ‘You are not wood, you are not stones, but men’” (from *Julius Caesar*, act III, 149). There is, hoewever, no explicit reference to Shakespeare and to who was Mark Antony! In the same notable book, Wheeler (1956, p. 236) pledges for a humanistic approach to the discipline for the archaeologist must not be a “mere homunculus”, a contemptuous manikin. Again, there is no translation, as the Latin derogatory term should be known: classics should be a common background all over the western world (Rowse, 1948, p. 162). Archaeology is philological in another essential way too, in its methods, as it tries to *read* artifacts, art works and layers. The social world is polysemous (Shanks and Hodder, 1995, p.8) and archaeologists must *read* texts, material and written alike (Austin and Thomas, 1990, p.45). All terms with clear philological overtones.

History itself sprung from philology and any historian *eo ipso* must be able to read written documents, be they in Latin or in Old English. The same applies to the archaeologist, as history is a unified discipline and documentary and archaeological evidence must be assessed in tandem (Webster, 1986, p. 156). Throughout Europe, then, archaeology’s closest intellectual ties are with history (Hodder, 1991, p.10; cf. Olivier and Coudart, 1995), even considering that in the last decades archaeology developed as an independent field as the study of material culture (cf. Klejn, 1995, p.40). History itself is increasingly more anthropological, both disciplines looking for ordinary people’s culture (Gourevitch, 1991, p. 135 *et passim*), a traditional feature of archaeology and its study of common pottery and stone tools. The three disciplines increasingly acknowledged the narrative character of science (Ulin, 1994; Shanks and McGuire, 1996, p.82) as well as its subjective and poetic features:
ein Mischwesen aus Wissenschaft und Kunst, “science and art at the same time” (Strasburger, 1966, p.55; cf. Maier, 1984).

The emphasis on the study of languages led European archaeology to be characterized by historic periods and geographical specializations, like Classical, Prehistorical, Biblical, Egyptian, Medieval or Industrial archaeologies, even though early on Childe or Wheeler would not limit their interests to one period and area alone. The archaeology of Medieval and Post-Medieval periods would develop recently and Carandini (1979, pp. 322-3) probably offered the best European definition of these disciplines:

“We have prehistoric, classical, medieval and post-medieval archaeologies. They are defined, as we can see, by the main periods of our history: from community village, through the ancient city to the precapitalist town. Following this historic reasoning, industrial archaeology cannot be defined except as the archaeology of capitalist social societies” (italics in the original).

Each time period, with different modes of productions, should thus be dealt with by different branches of archaeology (prehistoric, classical, medieval, post-medieval and industrial). However, if this was the succession of historical periods in Europe, the scheme does not necessarily apply to the whole world. So, the leading Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1979, p. 86) emphasised that “ancient”, “medieval” and even “modern” periods would not apply world over, and followed Marx (1964) in suggesting that Asia did not witness true capitalism up to a very late stage: “In China, the absolute monarchy was established in 221 BC and continued up to 1912, even though there were differente dynasties, foreign invasions and so on. This is the interesting point: every new ruler finds the ruling framework already in place, seizing it as he takes over the central power” (Gramsci, 1979, p. 115; cf. a modern discussion in Larsen, 1989, p. 235 et passim). Gramsci was also following the steps of John Stuart Mill (1885, p. 136), who considered that “the greater part of the world has, properly speaking, no history, because despotism of custom is complete. This is the case over the whole East”. The Marxist French historian Albert Soboul (1965, p.5) considered that in France the 1789 “Revolution signs the inception of the bourgeois and capitalist society, destroying the seigneurial regime and the feudal ranks” (cf. Lefebvre, 1970, pp. 6-61). In general terms, modern bourgeois capitalist societies is the result of two main classes, capitalists and waged workers (Spinella, 1978, p. 11), again a fairly recent development in world history and the word itself “capitalism” enters the English vocabulary as late as the 1860s (Hobsbawn, 1985, p. 13; cf. Williams, 1988, p.51).

It is in this context that we should consider the traditional labeling of archaeologies in Europe. So, Medieval archaeology, with its first sprouts in the nineteenth century (La Rocca, 1993, pp. 40-1), would only really take off in the last decades of this century and post-medieval sites were to be studied even later. The first analytical study of eighteenth century archaeological material from Rome was carried out by classical archaeologists in the 1980s (Manacorda, 1984, p. 10). Medieval archaeology is now well established from Portugal (cf. Fontes, 1992) to Russia (Tchernov, personal communication; cf. Tchernov, 1996), industrial archaeology developed fast as “the social history of the working class” (Cerdà, 1991, p. 420), reaching most European countries (cf. Nunes, 1994), but post-medieval and preindustrial archaeology lagged behind, with the exception of Renaissance pottery studies (Lester and Lester, 1976; Bandini, G. et al., 1995; Battaglia, L. et al., 1995). Even if disciplinary boundaries continue to hold, there is a growing pledge for the synthetic study of society, including archaeology, history, anthropology, classical philology (Kristiansen, 1995, p.143) and other disciplines,
aiming at historizising both scientific interpretive frameworks and the “invention” of evidence, as understood by Shanks and Hodder (1995, p.11), both finding and creative power, as it is proposed by the French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu (1996, p.79: *es handelt sich darum, methodisch und systematisch eine doppelte Historisierung zu vollziehen. Erstens eine Historisierung des Subjekts der Geschichtsforschung, d.h. seiner Konzepte und Klassifikations schemata...zweitens, eine Historisierung der analysirten ‘Daten’*). European contextual archaeology is thus an interdisciplinary endeavour (Miller and Tilley, 1966, pp. 5-6) and the boundaries break down not only between disciplines but between the different archaeologies. The simultaneous study of Classical Athenian and United States cemeteries is a good example of the growing interest in overcoming old divisions and producing innovative results (Small, 1994; Small, 1995). A symposium on “Americanist approaches to the late prehistoric and early medieval European archaeology”, at the 62nd SAA Annual Meeting, in Nashville, Tennessee, 1997 witnesses the increasing interest in overcoming the American/European traditional divide (SAA, 1997, p. 23).

**Are there peripheral outlooks?**

North American and European outlooks are hegemonic worldwide and it is fair to say that the rest of the world try and emulate the scholarly developments in the two scientific cores. Asia and Africa are naturally closer to European archaeology (cf. the book edited by Peter Ucko, 1995), because of the continuity of their history, from late prehistoric times up to the present day, and also because of the influence of the former imperial powers. For Latin America, the picture is less clear, as the overwhelming prestige of American science is counterbalanced by European inroads (Prous, 1994; Funari, 1995; Politis, 1995). Latin America is however the only other part of the world where the term ‘historical archaeology’ is commonly used by archaeologists to refer to the post-prehistoric period (from the fifteenth century onwards), as pre-European and colonial settlements are easy to distinguish. However, the clear-cut binary oppositions prevailing in the United States were not present in Latin America, for the catholic Conquistador was no puritan pilgrim and the Indians were not foreigners in their own land but slaves or dependent workers. “Prehistoric” tools could continue in use for long time after the arrival of the Europeans, not only in the backlands but at the heart itself of the colonial world, in towns and landed properties (cf. Ximena, 1995, pp. 101-104). The only regional school of archaeological theory in Latin America, the so-called Latin American Social Archaeology, considers archaeology as history (Fonseca, 1990), but do not oppose prehistoric and historic periods, and, as a consequence, prehistoric and historical archaeologies are put together (cf. Vargas, 1990). Most archaeologists studying historical sites and subjects do work as prehistorians too (e.g. Kern, 1994a, on prehistory and 1994b, on historical archaeology; López, n.d.; Fahmel, 1993, *inter alios*).

**The revolutionary rôle of capitalism and a possible international outlook**

In this fragmented picture, would it be possible to claim an universal character to historical archaeology? The most comprehensive and articulate argument for a global historical archaeology has just been formulated by Charles E. Orser (1996), pledging for the definition of the discipline as the study of the modern world, characterized by a single economy that is colonial, international and expanding. There are four key concepts defining this new reality: global colonialism, eurocentrism, capitalism, and modernity, all interrelated developments
impossible to disentangle. In the Marxist tradition, world history is considered as being divided in two different epochs, capitalism and precapitalism:

“The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities, generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development” (Marx, 1973, p.74).

The two periods should consequently be studied by different specialists, historical archaeologists on the one hand, and a variety of scholars on the other (prehistorians, classical, medieval archaeologists, mayanists, egyptologists and so forth). This division is explained by the fact that capitalism is one system, but precapitalism is particularistic, communal society being different from ancient slavery and from medieval serfdom. This was also Carandini’s definition who, however, preferred a later dividing period, equating capitalism and the industrial revolution (cf. below). Only capitalism, then, is coherent and makes possible that a single logic can understand the whole world. Historical archaeology is then a multidisciplinary field linked to anthropology and history, which deals with the post-prehistoric past, and seeks to understand the global nature of modern life (Orser and Fagan, 1995, p.14). Accepting that the practices of modern peoples can have long traditions that extended backward in time beyond the proposed beginning of the new era in AD 1415, historical archaeology consider that most historical artifacts were commodities, objects created specifically for exchange (Orser and Fagan, 1995, pp.18 and 83).

From the beginning of the fifteenth century (cf. Chouraqui, 1975, p35), then, it would be possible to say that capitalism was fast changing the face of the world and already at the early stages of colonization even remote settlements in the very fringes of empires used imported artifacts from very distant continents (Orser and Fagan, 1995, p.89). Although the link between capitalism and historical archaeology had been established in the United States almost from the inception of the discipline, and developed by different authors (e.g. Deetz, 1967b; Leone and Potter, 1988, p.4), Orser was the first to offer a complete framework to understand the modern world, directly or indirectly affected by capitalism (contra Thurman, 1996). Africans in the Americas, Native Americans enslaved, large-scale tribal disturbances in Africa, the presence of European fortresses in Asia, Africa and the Americas, all this was the result of capitalism and could not be explained without it. Pottery from everywhere, everywhere else: as never before, this was one world, the world forged by capitalism and its agents, the Europeans (Orser, 1996, p. 77 et passim). A single example would be enough: the so-called “Colono” ware pottery. Ivor Noël Hume (1962) defined as “Colono-Indian” pottery an unglazed low-fired earthenware in tidewater Virginia (USA), used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but later on scholars proposed that the pottery was made by African slaves and Indians as well (Lees and Kimery-Lees, 1979, p. 11) and this means that it was the material result of both peoples struggles against colonialism and Eurocentrism (Orser, 1996, p. 121). Colono-ware, even though non-European in typology, could not be African, nor Native America alone, it was the material product of a new world (Orser, 1991, p.116).
Non-capitalist features of the modern world: Latin America, a case in point

The leading modern economic history scholar Ruggiero Romano (1984, pp. 131-2) would be one of the most qualified and coherent supporters of an interpretive framework stressing the continuities from medieval to modern times. In a by now classic paper on American feudalism, Romano proposed that:

“The two feudalisms (European and American) existed, but differed. American feudalism had four elements: (a) an economy without (or with an insufficient) monetary base; (b) an economy without (or with insufficient) freedom of access to or withdrawal from the (labor) market; (c) the same in the case of the commodity market; (d) an economy not supported by a large dependable interior market”.

In Europe itself, during the first centuries of the modern era, in the so-called Mercantilist period, there continue to be several feudal hindrances to the freedom of movement, as people and commodities were restricted by local and national barriers. The King of Spain could forbid from 1552 to 1559 the export of Spanish textiles, just to try and stop the increase in their prices. Later still, in 1685, 90% of the consumer price of wood going from Dresden to Hamburg by boat in the river Elbe was due to feudal taxes and customs, and the trip itself would last four times what it could, were it not for the local lords delaying customs offices (Deyon, 1989, pp. 28 and 50). Rent-collecting lordship continued to exert extra-economic means of control of peasants, further supplemented by complementary means of influence (Toch, 1986, p. 165). Even the accumulation of capital in the hands of merchants tended to be invested in land, reinforcing non-capitalist rural relations (Bernardo, 1995, pp. 450-451). Medieval institutions continued to prevail in the Modern World (McIlwain, 1941) and ordinary people and elites did preserve a non-capitalist, premodern Weltanschauung (Mauro, 1970, p.352) and, thus, economic behavior.

The economy of premodern times, from the fifteenth to the mid eighteenth century, should be considered as essentially precapitalist, both in Europe and in the colonial world, after several scholars (Cardoso and Brignoli, 1983, p. 73). In Eastern Europe there was an increase in the restriction of freedom of movement from the mid fifteenth century, reinforcing serfdom, whose abolition would be delayed for some centuries. Fiefs continued to prevail in many European regions in the seventeenth century, like in southern Italy (cf. Lepre, 1981). In the Americas, the colonial slave mode of production by definition could not be capitalist (Gorender, 1978; Cardoso, 1982; cf. Beozzo, 1978, p. 287). The relations of production in Latin America were not capitalist (Chaves, 1996, p. 132) and served, on the one hand, to the primitive accumulation of capital in some countries but, on the other, reinvigorated feudal, or at least non capitalist, domination in the Iberian Pensinsula (Wittman, 1969, p.81). Even the capture of slaves in Africa should be interpreted as a continuation of late medieval practices: when, by 1433, Henry the Navigator authorized the seizure of slaves in the regions surrounding Cape Bojador, it was soon followed by a demand of a fifth of the revenue earned in the slave trade, and the commerce was thus embedded in the Portuguese fiscal system (Miskimin, 1975, p. 162).

Probably, the most accomplished characterization of the premodern features of Latin America was carried out by Mexican medievalist Luis Weckmann (1992; 1993), whose books on Mexico and Brazil provide extensive and detailed analysis of feudal continuities. Let us turn our attention to Brazil, considering that in Mexico as elsewhere in Hispanic America economy and society were affected by an important Indian presence from the inception of colonial rule up to the present day (Odália, 1974, p. 58); the consequences of this will be
briefly mentioned later. Colonial Brazil owned not only its very name to Medieval mythology, as the Isle of Brazil was located in Medieval maps to the west of Ireland from AD 1325, but also some important features: town councils; the cult of the Virgin; the medieval social structure (manorial property, nobility, the Order of Christ, *morgadio*, or eldest son birthrights; *encomiendas*); church institutions, music, dances and games; administrative and commercial rules; technology; scholasticism; popular Christian devotion (Weckmann, 1993, p.18).

Precapitalist relations would continue for the centuries to come (Chilcote, 1991, p. 30; Gadelha, 1989, p. 155). Raimundo Faoro (1976, pp.20-25), even though he did not accept to characterize Brazil as feudal, proposed that a non-capitalist patrimonial system prevailed and Francisco Iglesias (1974, p.260) considered that “the administration of Portuguese Brazil was a transplantation of institutions which had begun and developed for centuries in Europe”. The landlord was a *pater familias*, head of a patriarchal extended family (Einsenberg, 1983, p. 124), and it is thus no surprise to find out that in a sixteenth century document Pereira Coutinho would describe his property as “my own fief” (Weckmann, 1993, p. 98; cf. Schwartz, 1988, p. 218). The seignorial ethos did not look for profit or was guided by entrepreneurial rationality, but aimed at satisfying subjective needs relating to honor and prestige (Ferlini, 1991, p.36): “sometimes, only one generation is enough to transform a merchant into a sugar cane landlord” (Mattoso, 1983, p. 17). Franchise, the granting of privileges (Alden, 1970, p. 35; Batista, 1995), and personal subordination (Vianna, 1987, p. 130; Andrade, 1996, p. 161) are all European feudal terms still in everyday use in Brazil to describe social relations, to the astonishment of foreign observers (Samara, 1991, pp. 10-11; Diffie, 1970, p.3; Ferlini, 1986, pp. 150-160; cf. the “surprise” noted by Kuznesof, 1983, p. 184 and Da Matta, 1983, p. 184). For centuries ordinary people were considered as *vassals* (Velho, 1996). Some would argue that African slavery in the Americas was the result of this non-capitalist outlook, for it would be the inability of colonists to conceive of Europeans as chattel slaves which forced them to enslave non-Europeans (Elts, 1993, p. 1422).

The Catholic roots of colonization stems from its characterization as a crusade (Lacombe, 1985, p. 52) and priests and colonists alike were prone to mysticism, with special attention to monstrous creatures and the Devil (Nogueira, 1984, pp. 87-98; Carrato, p. 122; Araújo, p. 145; cf. Morrone and Fortino, 1996, p. 76) , as well as to the devotion to Saints (Gaeta, 1995, p. 17; Campos, 1987, p. 21; Mott, 1994, pp. 44-59). Indians were understood in the classic and medieval traditions (Lestringant, 1994). This Catholic background would go a long way to explain the differences between the non-egalitarian ideology in Brazil and elsewhere in Hispanic America, on the one hand, and the United States bourgeois rationality, on the other (cf. Azevedo, 1995; Azevedo, 1996). The emphasis on continuity from the Middle Ages is overwhelming, not only in such authors like Gilberto Freyre, who proposed the so-called lusotropicalicological approach (cf. Bastide, 1972, pp. 228-238; cf. Briggs, 1997), but even Marxist and materialist authors admit the importance of non-capitalist features in post-colonial and even contemporary Brazilian society. Richard Graham (1995) proposes that patronage was pervasive in the nineteenth century (cf. Graham, 1970, p. 222; Toledo, 1996) and the patriarchal structure is still dominating today, with strong seignorial overtones, if we are to accept the analyses of several scholars, most of them Marxist (e.g. Fernandes, 1995; Da Matta, 1991; Chauí, 1992; Ianni, 1978; 1980).

If we turn now our attention for a while to Hispanic America, we find most of these features (cf. Roniger, 1987, pp. 75-6 *et passim*) compounded by the persistence of economic, social and cultural Indian features. Archaeological studies established that some areas continue to
use a precolonial pattern of animal consumption, while others preferred Old World taxa, both ways, however, continuing Native American or Iberian foodways and traditions (de France, 1996, pp. 44-45). Thousands of tons of documents in Spanish and Latin are still to be studied (Lee and Markman, 1977, p. 57), as are Maya glyphs and thus the divide prehistory/history is still more blurred than elsewhere (cf. Chase and Chase, 1996, p. 810). In this context, would then the definition of a world historical archaeology as the study of capitalism to be a non sequitur?

Towards a world perspective

In 1955, an archaeologist found at Tarragona, in Eastern Spain, a sink in marble, probably used in the Synagogue, bearing a trilingual inscription, in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, a menorah or candelabrum in the center, the tree of life, two peacocks and a shofar, the sacred horn (Cantera and Millás, 1956, pp. 350-354; López, 1986, p. 54; FIGURE 1). The inscription in Hebrew reads “Peace to Israel, and to us, and to our children”, in Latin Pax Fides or “Peace Faith”; the Greek letters are unclear. Although undated, it was probably of early medieval date (seventh century AD). In the Cathedral of Seville, there is a key offered, according to the local tradition, to King Fernando III, when he came into Seville for the first time in the 23rd of November, 1248, soon after the conquest of the town by Castillan troops. An inscription in Spanish reads “God will open <and> the King will come in”, and another one in Hebrew reads “the king of kings will open, the king of the whole land will come in” (Cantera and Millás, 1956, pp. 385-387; FIGURE 2). At the Palma de Mallorca Cathedral there are in store since at least 1634 two rimmonim or pomegranates used originally to store the Torah, and one of the inscriptions in Hebrew states that they were “in the Synagogue of the Jewish, at Camarata”, most probably thus from a Sicilian temple. The artefacts were used before the 12th of January 1493, when the Jews were expelled from Sicily, and the style of the rimmonim is influenced by Arab, Eastern and Byzantine traits (FIGURE 3). These artefacts testify continuity and change at the same time, having in common the fact that they were used in three different multicultural contexts. The sink was part of a late ancient oikoumene, in which the Synagogue was part of a Roman and Byzantine Mediterranean; the key was offered to a Spanish Christian king by a Jewish community which lived with Muslims for some centuries; and the pomegranates are part of a late Medieval Mediterranean world which comprised Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, and Muslimms.

There were thus, long before the discovery of the Americas by the Europeans, different multicultural worlds, starting with the Mediterranean oikoumene (FIGURE 4). “Granted that the Roman Empire was a preindustrial society - it nonetheless exhibits signs of complexity, order, and system in its institutions, to an extent which makes labels like ‘primitive’ inappropriate unless they are carefully qualified” (D’Arms, 1981, p. 13). Roman society was not a “market society”, a society in which producers were market-dependent, dependent on the market for the access to the means of life, labor, and self-reproduction, and subject to market imperatives (cf. Wood, 1994, p. 25). However, there was a Roman economy: throughout Roman history cost and profit have been carefully taken into account (Nicolet, 1988, p. 275 et passim). Studying different subjects, several scholars were amazed by the importance of the market place in the Roman world, as the study of local markets or mundinae show (Gabba, 1988, pp. 144-149 et passim), or the fact that the settlement pattern followed circulation and exchange constraints (Corbier, 1991, p. 629). Estates could calculate “profit” and “loss” and the accounting system was designed and used in the the context of economically rational management (Rathbone, 1993, p. 387 et passim; cf. Kehoe, 1993, p.
483). If there was a free market (de Salvo, 1992, p.69), Roman wageworkers were not necessarily free people (Bürge, 1990, 135 et passim). The supply of different consumption products was not completely governed by market forces and the rôle of the Roman state was decisive (Funari, 1996, p. 85 et passim).

After the political breakdown of this oikoumene, the Mediterranean continued to act as a promoter of cultural exchanges and communication and if the Mediterranean unity of the ancient world continued after the Germanic invasions (pace Pirenne, 1939) and the northwards shift of Europe’s focus from the Carolingians onwards (White, 1962, pp. 76-78) would not shatter the cultural Meriterranean koine which enabled the production of the three Jewish artefacts in the Medieval period. However, less than a century after the expulsion of Jews from Southern Europe, they continued their practices in America, interacting now with Native Americans and Subsaharan Africans (Andrade, 1962, p. 59)

Acknowledgements


REFERENCES


**ILLUSTRATIONS**

1. Drawing of the white marble sink from Tarragona, Spain (75 x 14 x 44 cm).

2. Key stored in the Cathedral of Seville, Spain (20 x 5.3 x 4 cm); photographs from the original publication by Cantera and Millás.

3. Rammonim or pomegranades from Palma de Mallorca, Spain (31 x 10 cm); photographs from the original publication by Cantera and Millás.

4. Largest ancient oikoumene: the Roman Empire.