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The ‘Great Unknown’

Western archaeologists have yet to make an interesting discovery: the existence of Soviet archaeology. Its real nature is almost unknown to Western colleagues because of a major language barrier and prolonged cultural and political estrangement. Some specific aspects of Soviet archaeology that are known to them are found repulsive, others astonish or attract them. Yet too little is known about Soviet archaeology for it to be evaluated reasonably and comprehensively.

Soviet archaeology adheres to a monistic view of causality and therefore appears to explain its data in terms of a single determinant, or, more properly, a main determinant among many. Hence foreigners expect it to manifest a zealously maintained bias and one-sidedness and are surprised when Soviet researchers in fact take various factors into account. It is also known that Soviet archaeology highly values a unity of opinion and a monolithic approach to methodological questions. Yet it appears to be able to reverse its interpretations and to hold old ideas and their opposites at the same time. This too causes amazement. Although Soviet archaeology is often ignored in the West, its influences have been incorporated, especially through the writing of Gordon Childe, into the work of some of the world’s leading archaeologists outside the USSR. More recently, Western trends in archaeology, especially the New Archaeology, have independently discovered some of its key innovative ideas as well as repeated some of its mistakes.

In an evaluation of the archaeological potential of Russia, the West German archaeologist K. W. Struve (1955: 12) called this country a ‘Great Unknown’ on which, he said, the solutions for many important problems of the most ancient history of Europe depended. A debate with a Soviet archaeologist, one of the authors of these lines, was considered by the Dutch anthropologist A. J. F. Köbben (1972:137) to be the beginning of a ‘dialogue between two worlds, still largely self-contained, wherein words have different meanings and categories have different contents’. On the other hand, Bruce Trigger, a Canadian, was surprised by how much there is in common in the interpretations, basic principles, and general orientation to be found in the USSR and the West. He called his paper on this matter ‘No longer from another planet’ (1978). This is hopeful. Yet the only consolation is that Soviet archaeology is not from another planet; it is still from another hemisphere, the world of the antipodes.
In 1977 one of the authors of this paper presented, as part of 'A panorama of theoretical archaeology' (Klejn 1977), a general survey of theoretical approaches in Soviet archaeological scholarship from the mid-1930s until the early 1970s. When the respected Norwegian scholar Gutorm Gjessing read the 'Panorama', he expressed the following reaction (1978: 633):

Marxist archaeology is very often dismissed in the West with the glib remark that it is just 'political propaganda', even by otherwise serious scholars who, however, are at best only dimly acquainted with the literature so designated . . . On the whole, I have a strong feeling that Western archaeologists could learn a great deal from their Eastern colleagues. It would therefore be highly desirable for Klein to provide us with another article dealing more extensively with the main trends in Marxist archaeology.

Responding to the call of the late Gjessing and the invitation of Glover and Trigger, we hope to continue a 'competent dialogue' (Trigger 1978: 198) in which both sides not only polemicize but also learn from one another.

Historical development

Contemporary Soviet archaeology was formed by a process of historical development and in response to specific and complex conditions. It originated as an amalgam of contributions from various sources. Today, features that appeared at earlier stages in its history remain active forces, alongside more recent developments. Without taking these factors and their historical background into account, it is impossible to comprehend the current state of Soviet archaeology and to evaluate its achievements and its problems.

In the Western literature, one encounters two extreme views concerning the history of Soviet archaeology. One states that, having floundered in '19th-century dogmas' (Thompson 1970: 302), it remains forever stagnant and unchangeable, under the influence of a priori solutions and 'revealed truths' that must remain entirely beyond dispute or question. According to the contrary view, Soviet archaeology has no stable methodological principles at all. It simply alters its course as required to please its political masters; thereby serving the needs of propaganda and changing direction as the political situation changes.

Both of these views are profoundly wrong. Soviet archaeology has developed in the past and continues to develop and there is a logic and a general direction to this process. There is also growth and progress. Naturally, changes in the structure of society and in the political atmosphere influence the development of archaeology in the USSR, just as they do elsewhere. Perhaps they affect it even a little more strongly because of the clearer perception of the important role that social conditions play in the development of scientific disciplines. Yet changes of this sort are not the only determinants of changes in Soviet archaeology. Other factors are also involved, such as the growth of financing for archaeological research, the extension of tools for archaeological investigation, the accumulation of knowledge, the attainments of related disciplines and events in world archaeology. To no lesser degree, autonomous laws of the development of science and the internal logic of the development of Soviet archaeology must be taken into account. Each stage has served as available raw material and also as a starting-point for the next one.

More than half a century ago, in the forge of revolutionary Russia, Marxism came into contact with what remained of the archaeological discipline of Tsarist Russia. In pre-revolutionary
Russia the study of the archaeological heritage of past millennia had been successful for its time. Archaeological congresses were held regularly and on a grand scale, adequate archaeological periodicals existed, and rich museums had been created, including the well-known Hermitage and the Moscow Historical Museum. Yet, with respect to archaeological thinking and methods of research, the Tsar's Russia, like America of that time, lagged behind the leading Western European countries. 'We have no Monteliuses,' V. I. Ravdonikas (1930: 34-5) was later to remark.

Nevertheless, the works of some Russian scholars, who were already established in the pre-revolutionary period, achieved worldwide recognition and influenced the development of research abroad. The work of V. A. Gorodtsov, which appeared, however, after the revolution (1927), was translated (1933) and carefully read by those American archaeologists whom Walter Taylor was later to label 'taxonomists'. M. I. Rostovtsev, who was to become one of the twentieth century's leading authorities on the economic and social aspects of Greek and Roman history, emigrated from Soviet Russia. Some other well-known archaeologists left as well. In the capital of the time, Petrograd (now Leningrad), the archaeologists who remained were united within the Academy of the History of Material Culture created by Lenin's decree on 18 April 1919. From the very beginning, this was a much larger and more developed institution with broader interests than the former Imperial Archaeological Commission. The Academy, which was headed by Academician N. Y. Marr, linguist and sometime archaeologist, later became one of the Institutes in the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. In Moscow, archaeologists gathered around Gorodtsov, who founded a large school.

Yet in the first decade of Soviet power, little was changed in studying the archaeological past. The old scholars worked with old methods and applied the old methodological principles. In the second half of the 1920s, a methodological reconstruction began. A new generation came into archaeology. These were a generation of enthusiasts for new ideas, at first still not very experienced either in Marxism or in archaeology, but keen and hard-working. The Marxist conception of social history became for the first time a tool of professional archaeologists, and a team of young scholars (V. I. Ravdonikas, S. N. Bykovskiy, F. V. Kipariso, B. L. Bogayevskiy and others) began to exploit the possibilities of this new analytical approach.

They tried to make the study of archaeological materials of value to society by making it useful to the Marxist discipline of history. In the process, they criticized their predecessors sharply and negatively. In many respects their criticisms were justified, but they were also surely excessive. First of all, they condemned the 'creeping empiricism' of the majority of previous archaeological studies and the preoccupation of the old generation with formal studies of artifacts, which came to be labelled 'goloye veschevedeniye' ('naked artfactology', or literally 'naked things-knowledge'). The Montelian typological method was abandoned as a product of bourgeois evolutionism which made fetishes of artifacts and improperly interpreted history in biological terms. Doubts were cast on the traditional subject matter of archaeology and even on the name of the discipline. It was suggested that they restricted the possibilities for the scientific use of archaeological evidence, separated antiquities from the present time, and concealed information about economics and the production of goods as the factors determining historical development. To circumvent these limitations, archaeology was transformed and renamed 'the history of material culture'. Even as such, it created dissatisfaction because of the possible alienation of objects from ideas. Attempts were made to eliminate the division of historical disciplines according to the nature of source material and, instead, to regroup these
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studies according to epochs and research topics (Bykovskiy 1932). Soon, however, these
innovations were rejected by the archaeological community.

The approach then being taken with respect to ethnic history required a negative attitude
towards hypotheses of cultural diffusion, migration and conquest as explanations of historical
change, since these were assumed to have unfortunate political implications. As a result, a new
theory of language invaded archaeology. This teaching, called by its founder, Marr, ‘Japhetic
theory’ or ‘the theory of stages’, explained all sociocultural changes without exception,
including linguistic ones, as revolutions produced by economic changes, especially in productive
forces. At first, in the process of establishing itself under conditions of sharp ideological
struggle, the new teaching saw its main task as being to uphold the concept of pre-class society,
as expounded by the classics of Marxism, with the help of Lewis H. Morgan’s work. The new
generation of archaeologists tried to conform and to illustrate both of these conceptions,
Marxist and Morgan’s, using archaeological evidence, to defend them against sceptics, and to
refute pre-revolutionary Russian and Western notions about primordial and ancient mankind.
During that period, prehistoric society and later historical stages were regarded almost
exclusively as socioeconomic formations, and not in terms of their ethnic or cultural
dimensions.

One could not avoid at that time the vulgarization of Marxism. On the basis of their
superficial understanding of the Marxist concept of the primacy of production as an historical
force, the young archaeologists proposed ‘new methods of archaeology’, which in fact involved
the simplistic inference of superstructural phenomena (social relations, ideas) directly from the
remains of implements. This was called ‘the method of ascending [order]’. It involved inferring
the superstructure of ideas from the material elements of production that were preserved as
implements in the archaeological record, without the help of ethnography and without
reference to the direct reflection, or imprint, of ideas in the archaeological record, as, for
example, in the form of figurines and petroglyphs (Artsikhovskiy 1929).

At the same time, basing their work on the Japhetic theory of Academician Marr concerning
‘revolutionary transformations’ of language, the leading theoreticians of ‘the theory of stages’ in
Soviet archaeology began to treat even evident cases of ethnic changes in the archaeological
record as sequences of stages in the life of one and the same population (Ravdonikas 1932).
The most ancient population of each region became an immovable autochthonous mass that
from time to time experienced incredible transformations in culture and language in response to
changes in technology. For example, in the Crimea, Japhetic-speaking Cimmerians became
Iranian-speaking Scythians, who in turn became German-speaking Goths and finally Slavs.

However simplified this conception of history may have been, it revealed to researchers some
aspects of the distant past that hitherto had been ignored. These included sudden qualitative
transformations in culture, internal causes of development, the possibility of explaining changes
without having to invoke migrations and cultural diffusion, the influences that the development
of technology had on the totality of social and cultural development, and the ways in which
social relations were reflected in material culture. The latter stimulated the careful examination
of ordinary artifacts, assemblages and site plans. It is important that the concepts of ‘development’
and ‘progress’ were maintained in the USSR at a time when Western scholars, influenced
by the tenets of a fashionable scepticism, swept away all traces of evolutionism and thus lost
sight of this perspective.

Theorizing based on this original conception was continued only until about the mid-1930s.
The most fruitful results of this paradigm appear to have been the discovery of Palaeolithic dwellings in the USSR and, although only realized much later, S. A. Semenov's analysis of use-wear patterns, which also involved experimental archaeology. Beginning in 1934, in all branches of Soviet historical scholarship there was a demand for concrete historical research, which was linked to a critique of so-called 'schematic sociologizing'. This encouraged archaeologists to undertake empirical studies of a descriptive nature and generated a thirst for detailed knowledge and scholarly respectability. Monographs were published on a variety of topics, as were accounts of archaeological research. The activities associated with the analysis of archaeological data were rehabilitated, together with the term 'archaeology' itself. This process began in the mid-1930s, with the appearance of the bulletin (later journal) Sovetskaya Arkheologiya (Soviet Archaeology) and the establishment of kafedras (chairs, departments) of archaeology in a number of (now seven) universities. It ended in the mid-1950s, when the Institute of the History of Material Culture in the Academy of Sciences of the USSR was renamed the Institute of Archaeology.

Until the end of the 1930s, a large amount of work was devoted to the collection of archaeological data. Nearly 300 expeditions were working annually. Scholarly knowledge was expanded by the publication of some 8,000 works between 1918 and 1940 (see Sher 1965; Vinberg et al. 1965). A substantial collective monograph was edited that interpreted the primordial and ancient history of the USSR (Artamonov 1939) and mature university handbooks of archaeology and prehistory were also published (Ravdonikas 1939; Artsikhovskiy 1940). There was an especially rapid increase in knowledge of the ancient past on what had been the peripheries of the former Russian state; in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Siberia. These were studied especially intensively in order to promote the cultural enhancement of many native peoples who formerly had been deprived and retarded. A number of rich and brilliant ancient cultures were discovered in these areas: the state of Urartu, the barrows of Trialeti and Pazyryk, and the first capital of Parthia — old Nisa, among others. It became increasingly difficult to ignore this diversity and to force all archaeological data into a rigidly-ordered universal scheme. Changes in interpretations became imminent and this gradually led to a methodological reconsideration of how data were to be analysed. This process was furthered by certain events outside the realm of scholarship.

In the late 1930s and especially during the years of the Great Patriotic War and the Cold War, the national existence and sovereignty of the peoples of the USSR were threatened. Soviet scholarship responded vigorously to the resulting growth of national self-consciousness, the expression of national pride and the fostering of the best indigenous traditions. This led Soviet researchers to examine carefully the problems of ethnogenesis (S. P. Tolskov, P. N. Tretyakov, M. I. Artamonov, etc.), which required finding ways to separate ethnic distinctions from other forms of cultural variation in order to be able to trace the ancestral roots of various nationalities. Great attention was once again paid to concepts such as ethnicity, migration, cultural diffusion, continuity and assimilation. This happened at the same time that in the West migrations lost credibility and ceased to feature in the interpretation of archaeological evidence. 'The theory of stages', which limited the perspectives of Soviet archaeology concerning these matters since it denigrated migrations and ethnicity, was at first ignored and then, in 1950, was suddenly and summarily rejected de jure. Researchers discovered new characteristics in the ancient world, which, while not losing its typological unity, nevertheless became more diverse and colourful. It now consisted of various ethnic groups. The past was drawn nearer to living
people because it was found to be peopled by 'our forebears', the ancestors of the Slavs, Balts, Finno-Ugrians, Iranians, Armenians, Germans, Turks and others. The most ancient historic and prehistoric periods were filled by events and, if not by actual identifiable persons, at least by identifiable collectivities.

There were further changes in the archaeological study of the past during the second half of the 1950s and until the middle of the 1960s. The Soviet state, and it was pioneering in this matter, introduced new legislation that required construction companies to ensure that areas were carefully explored before they began to build on them and to devote a certain portion of their finances to archaeological research. On this basis, beginning in the 1950s, huge building projects (canals, dams, water reservoirs, swamp drainage, housing developments, railways and the like) led to an enormous increase in the amount of archaeological excavation and an unprecedented accumulation of archaeological data. The annual number of expeditions reached 500 by the mid-1950s. The annual volume of publications increased one and a half times during the 1950s and doubled again during the 1960s. In the 1970s, as many as 3,000 works were being published each year and the general archive of accumulated Soviet archaeological literature amounted to 50,000 books and articles. The old methods of analysis were no longer applicable to such an abundance of evidence, and mathematical processing became necessary. This altered our criteria of objectivity and the logical structure of research. A volume of papers, based on a conference held in 1963, was published which summarized achievements in this respect (Kolchin and Sher 1970).

Archaeological thinking was also influenced by changes in the whole atmosphere of the country, which had built a society exemplifying true socialism. The 1950s saw the rejection of dogmatism and quotation-juggling. From the middle of the 1960s, voluntarism — the imposition of subjective authority — in solving social and economic problems was being thoroughly overcome. The reputation of science and scholarship improved, as did their respectability and responsibility. More attention was devoted to maintaining objectivity in research and, naturally, to questions of methodology. Shortly after, a gradual lessening of international tension began, which led to the detente of the 1970s.

It is not difficult to detect the corresponding changes in the discipline of archaeology. The struggle of various peoples' ancestors as depicted on palaeohistoric maps (for example, those between the Slavs and the Germans) slowly became less important. Disputes concerning 'palaeohistoric rights' to particular territories waned. In any case, Karl Marx (1960: 276) had ridiculed the very principle of 'historic rights'. The concept of the autochthonous development of cultures increasingly lost its privileged position and that of migration lost its centrifugal direction. At first, migrations were obligatorily treated as occurring within the contemporary borders of the country, which was itself a large field. Then they were countenanced from outside the borders of the country, but only from territories now in the possession of friendly states. Finally, they were seen as moving from any distant homelands. Faith diminished in the formerly respectable, seemingly stationary and autochthonous schemes of ethnogenesis (Tretyakov 1966: 119; Artamonov 1967: 30-2). Even the methodology on which they were built was called into question (Klejn 1955; Mongayt 1967). Still more important, self-criticism influenced the very hierarchy of research tasks. To start with, imbalances were rectified between the geographical locations of the various archaeological branches and the distribution of the leading peoples of the USSR at the present time (Rybakov 1957). Then there was a call to omit the division of the ancestors of each people into 'primary' and 'secondary' categories
and to reject in general the troublesome domination of ethnogenesis among the topics of research (Mongayt 1967).

Broader realities also began to influence heavily the topics of study of the most ancient past. These included the growing role played by the USSR in international affairs, the extension of connections with the developing countries of Africa, Asia and the Americas, problems of preserving the environment and the struggle to maintain peace. Discussions of the perspectives of development of socialist countries and the Third World were undertaken by historians as well. These discussions concerned the international importance of the Soviet experience in building socialism and moving towards a classless society and the relationship between universal laws and particular, individual situations. The transport of human beings into outer space created a new concern with the problems of the uniqueness of mankind.

The range of interest of Soviet scholars was significantly broadened and a central place was given to studying the origins of human beings (anthropogenesis) and of society (sociogenesis). Among the topics of greatest importance were themes such as the origins of thought and speech, of art, and the origins and essence of culture and civilization. Some concepts lost ground, such as the autochthonous scheme of Slavic origins. Some remarkable contradictions in the interpretation of facts appeared although, surprisingly, all of these were based on the same Marxist philosophical methodology. It became apparent that the root of these contradictions lay in the lack of sophistication of theory specifically pertaining to archaeology. Sociology was adopted into the family of sciences in the USSR as a result of the need to find scientific solutions to contemporary social problems. This resulted in the realization that historical materialism cannot function as applied sociology. More generally, it began to be realized that, as a broad philosophical theory, historical materialism is not able, by itself, to solve specific problems with respect to substantive disciplines. In addition, each discipline requires its own specific body of theory. Once again, theoretical studies in archaeology were intensified. Some old debates were revitalized, among them those concerning 'the Asiatic mode of production' and the significance of local differences with respect to the general typology of modes of production. Some new debates developed, for example, concerning the number and significance of 'leaps' on the path from ape to man: how many leaps were there and which ones were the most crucial?

Attitudes toward theories of non-Marxist Western scholars also changed. Increasingly, they received serious and thoughtful critical analysis. This put into practice Lenin's statement that every important trend in bourgeois science usually exaggerates, carries to an extreme, or otherwise distorts a quite real feature of some fragment of the objective world that is under investigation. Hence there is a reasonable basis behind each such trend, as well as a bias and a limitation; it is a reflection of reality as well as its distortion. A dialectical materialistic critique, as opposed to a vulgar materialistic one, has to uncover the genuine basis for such trends, determine their relationship to reality and establish the limitations of the discovered features. The critique must discover the bias of the theory as well as its social and epistemological roots (Lenin 1910/1973: 65–6; 1914/1973: 161; 1915/1973: 322). Soviet archaeologists now are not afraid to recognize the value of some theoretical positions and methods elaborated in the West, and to master and apply them. This does not, however, mean the end of ideological struggle, it gives it a new character. It becomes less sharp in form but more profound in substance.
Differentiation of trends

Within Soviet archaeology, different theoretical conceptions as well as different general attitudes toward theoretical archaeology are being elaborated, debating and competing with each other. This differentiation results from the complex and contradictory nature of the research problems being studied and from the existence in the USSR, as in any social environment, of various attitudes towards these problems, be they radical or conservative, spontaneous or carefully thought through, closed or open to multiple contacts. People come to social disciplines such as archaeology with differing expectations and demands, having been reared in different family traditions and social contexts, and having experienced life in society differently. This situation largely has prompted the crystallization of a number of research trends in Soviet archaeology. Each trend has its own distinctive view of the subject matter of archaeology and about archaeology’s relationship to the other social sciences, as well as about its structure and method. Each also seeks to elaborate certain topics in distinctive ways, encourages the development of specific topics of archaeological research, establishes its own connections with other disciplines and has its own style of work.

Research trends in contemporary Soviet archaeology can be assigned to two broad groupings: three established trends to one, four innovative ones to the other. We have labelled these Group I (Trivium) and Group II (Quadrivium). All these trends share in common a belief in the law-governed, sequential development of history as a response to changes in socio-economic formations (modes of production). These laws are considered to apply, in principle, universally to all mankind, but also as being combined, in specific situations, with chance factors. In this ‘law-governed and chance-formed’ development, the elaboration of productive forces leads to an accumulation of internal contradictions in culture and brings about, although not immediately and not as a sole determinant, the qualitative transformation of social structure, daily life and the ideas of human society. The primacy of production, the orderly change of modes of production, and dialectical development by qualitative leaps are the fundamental principles of historical materialism on which Soviet archaeologists base all their theoretical and concrete research, source evaluations and historical interpretations. These principles are applied, however, to archaeological problems in different ways. We shall now consider the seven trends.

Group I

1 Archaeological history. A large group of Soviet archaeologists considers archaeology to be a specialized branch of history: ‘history armed with a spade’, to use the catch-phrase of A. V. Artsikhotskii. Such a discipline must automatically pursue the same aims as the main body of historical knowledge: the reconstruction of all aspects of the historical past. In so far as ancient artifacts as well as written records were produced by former societies, these scholars believe that they necessarily carry historical information that can be extracted by employing common sense and the ordinary theoretical apparatus of historical knowledge.

In the process of creating their archaeological branch of history, the partisans of this trend do not consider it necessary to elaborate any set of specifically archaeological concepts that could logically distinguish this discipline from the mainstream of historical knowledge. ‘At any stage in the study of archaeological monuments,’ declared Bernshtam, ‘one must proceed from the entire corpus of historical data’, analysing ‘archaeological ones along with the data of
written history, ethnography, language, arts, and folklore.' At any stage! This means without previous separate analysis.

The 'archaeological history' approach achieved considerable results, especially by accumulating materials about broad topics that ranged from the Palaeolithic to the medieval period. In particular, regional studies that sought to produce accounts of the history of the peoples of the USSR were intensively pursued along these lines. Valuable enterprises of this kind are the Corpus of Archaeological Records of the USSR and the multi-volume Archaeology of the USSR, which are being published as a result of the initiative of Academician Rybakov.

Yet considering archaeology simply as a kind of history leads not only to the notion that there is no need for specifically archaeological theory, but also to the neglect of proper archaeological methods. The latter include the evaluation of sources of data, rigorous principles of typological and cartographic analysis and the criteria for establishing cultural continuity (Formozov 1977; Klejn 1978a). Formozov (1961: 120-1) observed that, as a result of this tendency, 'the method completely abandoned publications of archaeologists. Biological methods of analysis were not exchanged for historical ones, but just gave up their place to simple impressions of the finds, sometimes interesting but rather subjective.' In the works of some major archaeologists and their students, an extensive field experience, an impressive and scrupulous knowledge of the facts, especially on a local level, and a careful analysis of them are combined with an inadequacy and laxness in the methods that reveal connections and structures in archaeological data. In other words, the intensive historicization of archaeology is achieved at the expense of some aspects of professionalism in certain circles and even in whole schools.

2 *Archaeological ethnogenetics.* From the depths of 'archaeological history' there emerged, and in practice differentiated from it, a quite self-conscious trend that may be labelled 'archaeological ethnogenetics'. This trend was most fully developed in the investigation of the ethnic origins of the Scythians (M. I. Artamonov, B. N. Grakov) and Slavs (M. I. Artamonov, P. N. Tretyakov, I. I. Lyapushkin, V. V. Sedov). Although those who espoused this trend argued continuously among themselves about particular reconstructions, they all continued, and still do, to equate archaeological cultures unequivocally with specific ethnic groups (Artamonov 1971). They also assume the existence and stability of 'ethnic indicators' and the proposition that cultural similarities have ethnic significance.

The advocates of 'archaeological ethnogenetics' reached interesting conclusions with respect to the analysis of particular cultures, by isolating constituent components that could be considered as 'ethnic indicators' and by relating various cultures to each other using these indicators. Yet the equation of archaeological cultures with ethnic groups appeared to be vulnerable from many points of view. It was somewhat uncomfortable to know that Gustaf Kossinna was the pioneer of this approach and that over the years this equation had often been used but never substantiated. Meanwhile, ethnographic research had undermined the credibility of this proposition, which led to a long and acrimonious debate concerning the problems of archaeological cultures and ethnicity. Even in the works of those who support this equation there is indirect evidence for its decline, in the increasingly frequent declarations of the polyethnicity of certain cultures. In some cases, these are the very cultures that played a decisive role in particular interpretations of ethnic origins, as, for example, the Cherniakovo culture in the autochthonous concept of Slavic origins.

3 *Archaeological sociology.* This trend has developed from 'archaeological history' in connection with the institutional differentiation of sociology as a field of study in the USSR.
It has been elaborated mainly in connection with the study of the rich, dynamic and colourful cultures found in the southern and southeastern parts of the USSR, in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Within these cultures had evolved the earliest agricultural economies and the first urban and state societies in the USSR. The scholars of this circle extensively utilized the experience of foreign archaeologists, in particular the general schemes of ‘cultural materialism’ from those of V. G. Childe to those of R. J. Braidwood and R. M. Adams, and the vocabulary of the New Archaeology. This approach adopts an idealized sociological model of ancient society, as a system made up of functionally interconnected components. It is assumed that the interconnection of archaeological facts isomorphically reflects this structure. Yet, in reality, this view is an illusion. The archaeologist simply projects an a priori model onto the archaeological material. The task of building a proper archaeological theoretical apparatus remains unsolved. It is not by chance that such concepts as ‘archaeological culture’ or ‘type’, which are used by archaeologists of many trends, in practice find no place in the theoretical tool-kit of archaeologists of this circle, although recently they sometimes talk about these concepts in purely theoretical articles. Such concepts emerge only when archaeologists proceed by analysing their data from the inside rather than from the outside; that is, by first studying patterns in the objective characteristics of the material evidence itself, rather than assuming that patterns of social development are reflected in them.

The archaeologists of this circle, especially their leading representative, V. M. Masson, prefer to call their activity ‘sociological archaeology’. In some instances, this term is used to cover all interpretations of archaeological data (1974: 3); in other instances it refers to the reconstruction of ‘economic, social, and ideological structures of ancient societies . . . on the basis of archaeological materials with respect to establishing both laws and particular phenomena and processes’ (1976: 12). Yet, in reality, this approach concentrates on the development of structural explanations, on formulating laws and on studying concrete processes of development, whereas it fails to demonstrate how these processes are reflected in archaeological materials. It therefore cannot elaborate rigorous methods of reconstruction. The name, self-chosen, appears to be inaccurate. In reality, they do ‘archaeological sociology’ rather than ‘sociological archaeology’. Their activity is a kind of projection further back into time of ‘historical sociology’, which is partly cultural history and partly political-economic history, on the basis of a single, and in no case all-embracing, category of sources.

One common feature unites the preceding three trends in contemporary Soviet archaeology: they all seek a foundation, as opposed to an example or inspiration, for their theoretical apparatus outside archaeology; in history, linguistics and sociology respectively. One might say that this constitutes ‘non-archaeological archaeology’. Directly and consciously or not, they deny the need to create a special theoretical apparatus for archaeology that could serve as a bridge between field data and their interpretation. Such a position proceeds naturally from the identification of the subject-matter of archaeology with that of history and sociology and from the belief that archaeological evidence does not differ qualitatively from written historical, ethnographic, linguistic or other forms of evidence. It is assumed that the ‘historical information’ concealed in the archaeological record can be recovered directly; although, since the data are not fully preserved, some supplementary factual materials must be drawn from related disciplines. Hence a theoretical apparatus is borrowed from these disciplines as well as a ready-made set of concepts, instead of archaeologists using the general concepts of better developed disciplines as an example upon which to build their own. If it were reasonable to
assume that the subject-matter in all these disciplines were the same, such a borrowing could be correct and might be effective. Yet the assumption is wrong.

Group II

4 **Descriptive archaeology.** The primary objective of this trend is the strict characterization of archaeological materials. These researchers are prepared to treat very broadly the label ‘descriptive archaeology’ as it applies to their work. The term ‘descriptive’ is not used simply in the sense of seeking to describe, or limiting itself to the description of, archaeological data but implies a strictly objective tendency that is based on factual materials. As such, it is contrasted with ‘normative archaeology’ which, in their opinion, is based on norms and a priori interpretations (Marshak, cited in Bochkaryov and Raspopova 1971: 304).

This trend is similar in some aspects — its objectives, its practice, and some, though not all, of its principles — to the ‘descriptive archaeology’ of J. -C. Gardin and M. Borillo in France, to Northern European ‘archeography’ and to the ‘analytical archaeology’ of David Clarke in Britain. In the USSR, as in the West, a special language is being elaborated to facilitate strict description. Also as in the West, this is connected with the use of computers, and the associated introduction of statistical and combinatorial mathematical methods, to process vast amounts of archaeological data. The systematic description of artifacts that was required by such developments led advocates of this trend to take account of the substantive individuality of archaeology and to note the ways in which it differs from related social and historical disciplines.

The main feature determining the individuality of archaeology as an historical discipline is the material record itself. In contrast with any other historical record, the material one does not contain evidence fixed by means of language. Nevertheless, it carries and conveys to us historical information. Hence there exists, in reality, a sort of ‘language’ of material remains that is comprehensible to the archaeologist. (Kamenetskiy, Marshak and Sher 1975: 4).

The development and formalization of this language required the direct application of basic analytical concepts of archaeology such as ‘artifact’, ‘attribute’, ‘type’, ‘class’, ‘assemblage’, and ‘archaeological culture’. Proponents of the descriptive approach in Soviet archaeology have initiated the development of strict operational definitions, algorithms for the systematic analysis of archaeological data, seriational techniques and some other valuable methodological innovations.

Centres of ‘descriptive archaeology’ were established initially in major universities and museums. The latter was a natural result of the continuous need to process the vast amounts of material in museum collections, while in universities it was relatively easy for archaeologists to collaborate with representatives of the physical sciences, biology and linguistics who had mastered mathematical methods earlier, and with professional computer programmers. A few researchers in the leading archaeological institutions of the Academy of Sciences who also adopted this approach were usually associated with university or museum research groups. The opponents of this trend accuse it of adopting unduly limited objectives, of exaggerating the correlation between formal material traits and their historical significance, and therefore of over-estimating the possibility of determining such significance by means of a strict, almost automatic, formal analysis of archaeological data.

5 **Archaeotechnology.** Between the 1950s and the 1970s, the potential for carrying out collaborative technical studies within the institutions of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR
was put to use in a slightly different, and very fruitful, direction. This involved the intensive investigation of the material composition of artifacts and the means and traces of work (Semenov 1957). This 'archaeotechnological' approach is fulfilling one of the objectives of the scientific and technical revolution in Soviet archaeology by extensively exploiting the findings of petrography, metallography, dendrology and other natural and technical disciplines. At the same time, archaeologists have learned to use the mathematical and technical devices associated with these disciplines.

This approach is sharply opposed to the vague, humanistic 'archaeological history' method of interpreting artifacts, which tends to be highly subjective. The advocates of this trend (the school of S. A. Semenov and E. N. Chernykh) are also sceptical about the traditional methods that have been so intensively formalized by the 'descriptivists'. 'Only more or less probable hypotheses and guesses may be proposed with the help of typology and cartography', Chernykh (1966: 3) has asserted. 'Their verification is possible only by means of really objective methods of investigation.' This is the typical defence of 'really objective methods' such as spectrographic analysis, X-ray diffraction, C14, archaeomagnetic dating and the like.

'New methods in archaeology', the typical title of collective works produced by this trend, have been successfully applied to the study of stone tool industries (by S. A. Semenov and G. F. Korobkova), ancient metallurgy (by E. N. Chernykh and B. A. Kolechin), and ceramics (by A. A. Bobrinskiy) among others. All of these are highly specialized methods of investigation, so that one needs, in addition, syntheses and the translation of the results into the language of history.

6 **Archaeological ecology.** This sixth trend appears to come nearer to realizing these objectives. Ancient societies and the sum of their artifacts are considered as a single system that was once in dynamic interaction with its environment. The investigation of this interaction is seen by 'archaeoecologists' as a decisive requirement for reconstructing the ancient past of humanity. They fashion models of functioning and developing ecosystems, of which archaeological cultures are a part.

Some aspects of these models are very attractive. These include the integration of contributions from various disciplines, their clarity of structure and their solid foundation. In contrast to analogous Western trends, as exemplified by the work of Grahame Clark and Colin Renfrew, Soviet scholars locate the source of sociocultural development not in nature or in the relations between the subsystems but in the sphere of 'social production', which includes the productive forces and the relations of production (i.e., Dolukhanov 1978). Yet our 'archaeoecologists', like the adherents of the New Archaeology and 'archaeological sociology', have not been able to escape oversimplification. In their models, archaeological cultures are made to take the place of the living cultures of the past without the necessary complex corrections being made to bridge the gap between these two different orders of reality.

In Soviet archaeology, it is the 'archaeoecologists' who are the most anxious to establish co-operative links with geological research and to utilize archaeological data together with the findings of geomorphology, palaeobiology and climatology. In many respects, these research tools unite 'archaeoecologists' and 'archaeotechnologists', as devotees of 'new methods'. They also share with the 'descriptivists' the use of natural science and mathematical terminology.

The representatives of the last three trends are distinguished from the followers of Group I by their belief in the individuality and autonomy of archaeological sources. Yet they are all united when they attempt to tackle the problem of theoretical constructs. The latter trends also
search for them outside archaeology, though in the natural and physical sciences rather than in history, linguistics and sociology. While fruitful in terms of analytical studies, such a strategy does not solve the main task, which is to establish precise theoretical mechanisms that are carefully adapted to the subject matter.

7 Sequential investigation of the past and theoretical archaeology. The seventh trend (which is supported by the authors of this paper) seeks to create an extensive theoretical apparatus that would permit the formal material characteristics of artifacts, including their parameters, the structure of their interrelationships within assemblages and the dynamics of their changes, to be correlated by means of a strict system of reasoning with the lives of people as they are reflected in this material and with the historical development of ancient societies, in terms of their economies, social structures and idea systems. To achieve this objective, archaeologists must begin with a strict definition of the archaeological record and its specific detail and then proceed, by evaluating the system of concepts and principles necessary to interpret these data, to establish a multi-stage procedure of archaeological investigation. Such a trajectory requires the clarification of the fundamentals of archaeology, namely, the research tasks, aims and methods that are uniquely suited for the study of archaeological data.

The archaeologists who adhere to this trend stress the uniqueness of archaeological sources, namely, the remains of antiquity. They see historical reality as being reflected in this material very one-sidedly, in many respects indirectly, and certainly not isomorphically. The information in the archaeological record is concealed by a complex code, the key to which, because of a gap in time, has been lost and forgotten. The intuitive understanding of 'the language of things' is descriptive and it is not sufficient merely to know the 'alphabet' and 'grammar' formally. One has to be able to translate from this 'language of things' and frequently also to decipher the forgotten script in which the language was written (Klejn 1978a).

Archaeologists who support this trend believe, in partial agreement with G. P. Grigoryev, that archaeological records themselves bear no historical information, strictly defined, in a pure form. The information they do contain has to be transformed into historical data by means of special analytical techniques. The historical past is presented to the archaeologist as a qualitatively unique reality that some people have characterized by the concepts of 'archaeological universe' and 'archaeological process' (Bochkaryov 1975: 39–40).

The proponents of this trend argue that the investigation of the past must be strictly organized according to a multi-stage procedure, of which archaeology embraces many, but not all, of the stages. They believe that each of the six trends described above exaggerates the importance of one of the stages in this procedural succession and treats it as if it were the whole of archaeology. The trends belonging to Group I do it with the stages belonging to the non-archaeological part of the succession. The development of theoretical archaeology must make it a means of revealing the multi-stage structure of the procedure and for determining the place of each stage in this structure. This is why the archaeologists who embrace this trend are so deeply engaged in studying archaeological theory.

According to their doctrine of the succession of cultures (Klejn 1973a, Shehukin 1979), data are revealed to archaeologists as a diachronic succession of cultures replacing each other on the same territory and thus forming the equivalent of a stratigraphic sequence through time. In Russian, this is called a 'column' or 'pillar'. It is the task of archaeologists to convert sets of columnar sequences into a system of developmental sequences ('path sequences'), composed of cultures that are related or tied together genetically; not in a biological sense, but culturally,
by means of co-traditions. The cultures that belong to a single developmental sequence may occur in different local ‘columns’ and the traditions connecting successive cultures in the same region do not always belong to the same developmental sequence. Yet genetically-related cultures usually occur in bunches, permitting each culture to be assigned to a single sequence or treated as a blend of a few of them.

The application of this approach frees the investigator from the illusion of a purely autochthonous order of development and helps to distribute such processes geographically as well as temporally. This converts the empirically-given material into a framework for reconstructing the real cultural-historical process. Only after doing this can one genuinely study the processes of development in the past, their laws, causal mechanisms and significance. Yet, strictly speaking, all of this lies outside the limits of the archaeologist’s competence. It belongs to the field of palaeohistory (prehistory, protohistory, ancient history) and historical sociology.

This forces the archaeologist to consider anew the problem that is near to being the key one in contemporary historical knowledge: the participation in the synthesis of data from various kinds of sources (Klejn 1978a). A synthesis comprises at least two stages. The first, which is intradisciplinary, involves overcoming the fragmentary nature of archaeological data and building archaeological systems. The second, which is interdisciplinary, seeks to overcome the one-sidedness of these data. When archaeologists systematically study antiquities, they create a new source or record in the form of a verbal message that is recorded mainly in written texts, diagrams and photographs for example. Only after this goal has been achieved does this record, together with the original written sources, pass into the mental laboratory of historical synthesis (Lebedev 1973: 57).

This theoretical position has allowed new syntheses to be proposed concerning the origins (mainly through migration) of some cultures of the Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Ages (G. P. Grigoryev, L. S. Klejn, V. A. Safronov, N. N. Nikolayeva); former solutions concerning the origin of the Slavs have been critically revised (Klejn 1955, 1969; Machinskiy 1976); and the problem of the Goths has been solved using materials from the Cherniakhovo culture of the Ukraine (Shchukin 1977). The elaborated set of methodological principles for tackling the ‘Varangian problem’ using archaeological data (Klejn et al. 1970a; Bulkin 1970) has eliminated discrepancies which earlier had confused this topic (Artamonov 1967: 166). This has allowed these studies to advance and led them beyond the traditional limits of the ‘Varangian problem’, thereby eliminating it.

The opponents of this trend claim that ‘theoretical archaeology’ is unnecessary and unreasonable in terms of Marxist scholarship (Brentjes 1978), or at least that it is not sensible for it to become a separate branch of archaeology with its own specialized personnel (Rybakov 1979: 341). On the other hand, in some respects the positions of the seventh trend are close to those of ‘descriptive archaeology’ (in respect of the subject-matter of archaeology, cf. Gening 1975) and of ‘archaeotechnology’ (in treating archaeological periodization separately from sociohistorical syncretism; cf. Chernyk 1965).

The seven colours in the spectrum of contemporary Soviet archaeology are not always manifested in a pure form. Fruitful co-operation, conjunctions, and even amalgamations of positions often result from the interaction of these trends. This frequently leads to disagreements being smoothed over or set aside (cf. Kolchin and Sher 1970).

This diversity of trends presupposes vivid and sharp discussions. Yet they are discussions among scholars who support a single philosophical methodology, with the exception, of course,
of some annoying misunderstandings that may occur in any such interactions. Not only the basic principles but also the final goals of Soviet archaeologists of all generations and trends are shared in common. As Lenin (1974: 203) once said, 'unity in the main, on cardinal matters, and in substance is not hurt, but rather is guaranteed, by the variety of details . . . in the methods of the approach'.

Under the sign of history*

The word 'history' possesses a magical power in the Soviet Union, mainly because of its ideological connotations. The Marxist philosophy of the social sciences and humanities is called historical materialism. 'The principle of historicism' lies at its foundations. Dialectical materialism understands this principle as requiring that phenomena be studied developmentally and, in particular, in terms of causes and conditions influencing their growth.

Quite naturally, history is accorded the primary and leading role among the social sciences and humanities. The Russian academic tradition recognizes no such sharp, and linguistically defined, separation between the social sciences and humanities as is found in Anglo-Saxon countries. History is not confined within the limits of the humanities; instead its influence radiates throughout all the social disciplines, including the social sciences. In addition, for nearly half a century there was no separately constituted sociology that might have sought to play such a leading role. Nor are the anthropological sciences distinguished as a separate complex. Prehistory is regarded, not as a separate discipline bridging the gap between natural and social history, but rather as the history of primeval society and therefore as an integral part of general history. It is a branch of history of the same order as classical, medieval and other kinds of history.

In contrast to Western archaeology, Soviet archaeology is not divided into self-contained branches such as prehistoric, classical and Near Eastern archaeology. It is intimately connected to history, and only to history. In the universities, departments or chairs of archaeology always embrace classical, oriental and medieval as well as prehistoric archaeology and they are always located within historical faculties. Likewise, in every Soviet republic that does not have its own research institute of archaeology there is a division of archaeology within the local institute of history. When archaeologists defend their dissertations, they receive the title of Candidate of History and then Doctor of History.

This arrangement is fruitful in many respects. A historical orientation clearly defines the various tasks archaeologists must perform in order to reconstruct the past. It also prevents archaeologists from wasting time trying to achieve unrealistic goals, such as modelling their discipline on physics or chemistry. This allows them to exploit fully the specific potential of archaeological data, in particular their distribution in time. This orientation also discourages the custom of regarding contemporary ethnographically observed peoples as living fossils and equating archaeological and ethnographic phenomena. The unity of the various branches of archaeology, together with their common ties to history and emphasis on a historical approach, helps archaeologists to understand better from a holistic perspective the culture-historical process and the evolution of culture and society.

* A part of this section was written by M. B. Shchukin, Cand. Hist.
Yet these connotations of the term 'history' create circumstances favouring historical absolutism, that is, the aggrandizement of the role and content of history as a discipline, and sometimes also dogmatic speculations. Some influential scholars often cite a statement by Marx and Engels that there is 'only one science, a science of history'. These scholars have not observed that, according to a footnote by the editors (Marx and Engels 1955: 16), this sentence, together with all its content, was later deleted by the authors themselves! The principle of historicism is being reinterpreted by some scholars in a sense that demands the close connection with history of as many disciplines as possible, to the point of their inclusion into it, so that history may embrace and partly absorb all of them. Such a fate is proposed for archaeology (Istorizm 1976; Rybakov 1978; Zakharuk 1978).

Not all are swept off their feet and convinced by this aberration (cf. Klein et al. 1970b). Yet it strengthens the influence of the panhistoric approach in Soviet archaeology and makes its arguments seem more impressive to the public. This may explain why the historicizing tendency is so strong and pervasive. It may also provide some idea of how difficult it is to criticize, refute and overcome this tendency. We have already described some of the consequences of the 'historicization' of archaeology in relation to some of the influential schools of theory and method. Let us now consider how these consequences are reflected in some of the more general features of Soviet archaeology, or considerable parts of it.

Evading the study of source material

Publishing houses crave for history. Yet, while they are ready to print books on ancient tribes and peoples, they are not interested in publications dealing with purely archaeological data and the analysis of such data. Thus the splendid series 'Materials and Studies in Archaeology of the USSR' (the well-known MIA), founded by Artamonov in 1940, became smaller in size when it reached volume 30 and then lost its standard size and serial cover. Still later, it quietly transferred its series name from the cover and title-page to the back page and disguised the meaning of the name in an undecoded abbreviation (already in MIA, vol. 129, 1965). Finally, in 1973, before reaching vol. 200, the series died.

Archaeologists have become infected with the same kind of thinking. In fact, the basic idea (a microbe that later ruined the series) was introduced and discussed briefly by Artamonov in one of its volumes, when he stated that archaeologists had to publish the compiled source materials only after they had been synthesized and interpreted historically and then only together with their interpretation (Artamonov 1959: 5–8; for a detailed discussion Hołubowicz 1961). For many reasons, including the avoidance of 'artefactology' and severe and prolonged shortages of paper, the formula 'inferences together with materials' becomes 'inferences instead of materials'.

In a passionate article, written with bitter sorrow, Formozov (1977: 10) states that

[this is a whole] trend in scholarship. Some people suppose that the seeming alienation of archaeology from contemporary problems, its non-relevance, may be compensated for only by treating problems in a broad setting, with bright and colourful pictures, summarily outlined, and by offering clever solutions to the most difficult problems. Therefore preference often is given not to scrupulous reports on excavations, not to detailed analyses of pottery or flint implements, not to scientific reports, but instead to generalizations, to sensational finds, to problems of the ethnic origins of the peoples of the USSR, to monographs under the label of 'ancient history'. Often such monographs are based on reports,
publications and classifications of materials, but sometimes they are published without such materials and are not supported by references to such material. The general reader with pleasure learns from these books that happily all the problems of the ancient history of his people have been solved. A professional archaeologist leafs in vain through these same volumes trying to find even a few data on which the most crucial conclusions have been based. Formozov (1977: 11) summarizes the situation as follows: this "has led to a very dangerous development. The elaboration of the data base as a foundation for our studies goes to ruin. Showmanship intrudes into scholarship. The most unfortunate aspect is that most archaeologists are totally unaware of the substance of the problem." Yet this paper by Formozov was published in the leading journal, Sovetskaya Arkheologiya, and the author was made a member of the Editorial Board of that journal. This is a favourable sign.

By-passing relative chronology

Another consequence of the tendency to move from archaeological sources directly to history may be seen in the particular manner in which the problem of chronology has been treated by Soviet archaeologists. The approach that is employed in the USSR is so prevalent and seems so natural to all concerned that it may be accepted as one of the characteristics of the archaeological mentality in this region, or even viewed as a phenomenon of unconscious scholarly behaviour as distinct from the theoretical level.

When a representative of Central European archaeology, say an East German, a Pole or a Czech, meets a Soviet archaeologist, it is clear from the start that, while they share a common methodological base, they discuss chronological problems in different theoretical languages. If they are both specialists in La Tène, Roman or early medieval archaeology, the colleague from Central Europe will use concepts such as La Tène C2, La Tène A, Roman periods B1a, B2 and C1, Middle and Late stages of the pre-Roman period. He will speak about fibulas Almgren 67, Almgren 236 and Kostrzewski A, J, G/H, M/N, dippers Eggers 142 and 144, glass beaker Eggers 238 and combs Tomas B and Tomas 11. His Soviet counterpart would use descriptive terms for the same artifacts: a fibula with a high catch-guard, with a bound foot, etc.; temporally he would speak about the first to the second centuries or the end of the second to the beginning of the third century. The prolonged research of many archaeologists has built a single system of relative chronology for the whole of Central and Western Europe. Yet, in contrast to the sequence of stages, which is clear enough, it is a more difficult task to locate the boundaries between these stages on the scale of absolute chronology. The familiar schemes of relative chronology can still contract and expand on an absolute time frame and absolute dates can move up and down in relationship to the pattern of relative chronology and the artifacts and assemblages fixed with respect to it. It seems that relative chronology is absolute and the absolute one is relative.

Western or Central European archaeologists divide the procedures of chronological determination sharply into two main types, which deal with relative and absolute chronology. For Soviet archaeologists, it is completely different. Often they are afraid of falling into the sin of "artifactology". Therefore they try to avoid the construction of relative chronologies and attempt, as quickly as possible, to utilize absolute ones, in order to do history. In the majority of cases, they too calculate the frequencies of association of artifacts within assemblages, but they do not always realize the chronological implications of this, since absolute chronological
dates are immediately assigned to the proposed stages, most of them bracketing two or three centuries. Hence it seems that cultural change is studied only in terms of centuries.

What do we achieve at the end by taking such short cuts? In order to transform our studies into properly historical ones, we by-pass the stage of formal typological elaboration (one does not usually show the 'kitchen' to the general public) and our results are simply expressed in terms of absolute chronology. Two procedures are thus conflated. Insufficient attention has been paid to formal studies; hence we have not constructed a sufficiently detailed relative chronology. We have at our disposal only conventional, approximate and weak absolute dates. As a result, we lose the opportunity to correlate the changes observed in material culture with established historical events. We fail to discover the demanded historicity.

**Vertical structures without horizontal ones**

The archaeologists of Central Europe are accustomed to think in terms of wide pan-European chronological horizons. This type of thinking is alien to Soviet archaeologists. One of the reasons for this is the inadequate development of systems of relative chronology. Another is the preference for studying the most ancient history of each single country or region rather than the inter-regional situation of each epoch. A third reason is grounded in the nature of the archaeological record. The tempo and nature of cultural development in the forest zone, the steppes, the Caucasus, the Ukraine, the Urals, Central Asia and Siberia are simply too different to permit significant comparisons to be made between them.

It is possible to note in the archaeological record of the USSR similar artifact traditions or connected assemblages that permit synchronization. In fact they are being revealed, but only individually, with respect to particular instances, rather than in a systematic fashion. The only attempt to overcome this situation and build a comprehensive system embracing the antiquities of early medieval Eastern Europe was A. K. Ambroz's (1971) work, which did not win recognition. In recent years, some progress has been witnessed and the paradigm of thinking about chronology has begun to change. Yet progress is uneven and the new system has not become common. As before, the chronological view of Soviet archaeologists remains 'vertical' and deeply embedded in the historical sequence ('column') of specific regions, such as the Kama Basin, the North Caucasus or the Crimea.

*Molecular* v. *atomic* levels of research

In Soviet archaeological studies, the fabric of the culture being reconstructed is coarser than elsewhere in Europe. In the USSR the set of units is coarse-grained; further west it is fine-grained. This particular characteristic of Soviet archaeological thinking is explained not only by a passion for historical generalizations. True, Formozov (1959: 8) argued that it was impossible and unnecessary to trace the history of every little prehistoric tribe. Yet there were also opposite opinions (Kleijn *et al.*, 1970b).

In this case, the archaeological data also exert their own influence. Soviet archaeology is distinguished from that of other European countries by its excavations being dispersed over a much larger area and by a lower density of professional archaeologists in some regions. A careful look at archaeological maps of Europe will show that recorded sites are less dense in the USSR than elsewhere. Let us compare cultures of a specific type. In the early 1940s, the Single Grave
culture was represented in Denmark by 1,800 assemblages, 27.9 sites for every 1,000 km². In the mid-1970s, our Pit-Grave and Catacomb cultures were represented by 8,700 assemblages, of which only 850 were published; that is, by 1.7 sites for every 1,000 km². Every year, 800 new assemblages are added, but the result remains far below the site density of Denmark (Klejn 1978b: 229–30).

Thus, elsewhere in Europe in recent decades archaeologists have been encountering problems that remain far in the future for us. At present, close groupings of settlements and cemeteries are being revealed there. This phenomenon reflects not simply the degree of archaeological familiarity with various regions but instead a real, though still only approximate, picture of ancient settlement. Archaeological cultures remain large-scale taxonomic units in Soviet archaeology, while in Central Europe they are gradually being broken down into relatively small groupings of sites: *skupienia* in Polish, *Siedlungskammern* in German. Most frequently, these new units are located within the borders of a micro-region and are separated from each other by uninhabited zones. Thus research moves from the ‘molecular’ to the ‘atomic’ level. Research on the ‘atomic’ level leads to the conclusion that not all site-clusters within the limits of a single culture are contemporary with each other. They form mosaics that are in a constant state of flux. Differences are being revealed in the material culture of these site-clusters. The borders between cultures begin to appear diffuse. The historical picture being reconstructed at the ‘atomic’ level is much more dynamic and complex than was the previous one. In future, the accumulation of materials across the vast extent of the USSR must also lead Soviet archaeologists to the ‘atomic’ level of research. The students of the Tripolje culture and of the early Slavs are already near it. Then many problems now being discussed concerning the origin and evolution of various archaeological cultures may receive completely new and unexpected solutions.

Such are some general consequences of the ‘historicization’ of archaeology. We, the authors of this paper, do not approve of the alienation of archaeology from history (Klejn 1973b). Even less would we like to estrange archaeology from a historical methodology. Unlike our opponents, we speak of applying a historical approach within archaeology, rather than to it. In an effort to apply this principle, we formulate the main problems (of continuity and change of cultures), elaborate concepts that can characterize this development (the doctrine of successions) and consider the concepts themselves (e.g., monument, artifact, record, source) as evolving entities. We believe that this application of the principle of a historical approach does not alienate archaeology from history; on the contrary, it makes archaeology more useful for history.

**Retrospective and perspective**

In the West, it is not easy to comprehend the phenomenon of Soviet archaeology. Without such an understanding, it is next to impossible for mutually beneficial exchanges or co-operation to occur. Yet the ice has been broken. In his review of Klejn’s survey of Soviet theoretical literature in ‘Panorama’, Trigger (1978: 197) concluded that ‘Soviet archaeological theory has undergone a process of development which . . . is very different from our own. We can assume that, even if these changes to a very large degree have been influenced by political constraints, Soviet archaeologists have been able to evaluate and profitably learn from them.’ Such efforts to consider and comprehend make us glad.
Soviet archaeology has traversed a difficult path, as has the whole of the USSR. Of sixty-odd years of its history, nine have been consumed by destructive wars. We read with delight the Danish archaeologist Glob's excellent book on the Single Grave culture. Yet we read it with sorrow also, for it was finished in 1942-3, published in 1944. At the same time, in besieged Leningrad, Academician Zhebelev died from hunger, as did G. V. Podgayskiy, one of the authors of the well-known Clan Society of the Eastern European Steppes (Kruglov and Podgayskiy 1935). His co-author, A. P. Kruglov, fell in action, together with many colleagues. They could not have finished works on Single Graves for they, in their youth, fell into graves, single and common, from Leningrad to Sebastopol and from Moscow to Berlin. Twice we experienced years of post-war devastation and there was also the famine of the 1930s. We have also weathered severe social crises. Twice during their short history, our science and scholarship have experienced total isolation from the rest of the world, lasting altogether for thirty years, first because of boycotts and blockades intended to contain the 'Red infection', then as a result of the Cold War.

Yet other things happened too. There was a gigantic cultural revolution; a real one involving the mass liquidation of illiteracy, of oppression and of semi-savagery, which embraced hundreds of millions of people over a huge area. Incalculable numbers of people strove to become cultured, and for the first time began to crowd into museums. In an unprecedented rush of economic, technical and cultural development, national minorities and ethnic groups in formerly colonized, remote regions began to progress until they reached and even exceeded the level of the metropolis. Nothing of this sort ever happened within the British or any other empire.

We do not wish to exaggerate the achievements of Soviet archaeology. We believe that the most important developments will occur in the future and that for their sake we must work hard and remain steadfast. Yet we note with pleasure, pride and hope that already now, when our Western colleagues look, even through a slightly-opened window, into the world of Soviet archaeology, they find what they see exciting and its accumulated treasures of ideas original and useful. K. C. Chang (1973: 319) writes, of a contemporary discussion in English of some theoretical problems by a Soviet archaeologist (Kleijn), 'it contains many interesting and instructive ideas that I do not find in contemporary American archaeology'. Colin Renfrew (1970: 174) states in an analogous situation: 'Undoubtedly our ignorance of Soviet theoretical writings . . . must be very much to our own disadvantage'.

Isolates are not customarily leaders. Nevertheless, the USSR has often led in many fields: in sociopolitical ideas, arts, sports and various sciences, including certain aspects of archaeology. We have done this notwithstanding survivals of backwardness, a printing industry inadequate to our needs, language barriers and isolation. Why have we led? Of course we have a large population which is plentifully endowed with talents. Our country is large and it has had a rich history, hence cultural treasures abound in our soil. Yet this is not all. As a New Archaeologist, Mark Leone (1972: 18), once said: 'One of the reasons Gordon Childe is the best archaeologist the field has produced is that he possessed and used a powerful paradigm, Marxist materialism.' Some features of Soviet archaeology excel those of 'rival archaeologies' (Chang's expression; 1967: 137), in other features, however, it yields to them. Though we are naturally partial to it, we do not wish to declare it 'best of all'. Yet we know that it is based on the same powerful paradigm that made Childe the best archaeologist that our field has produced. This explains many successes and points the way to progress further. The paradigm is alive and strong. The point is to be able not only to possess it but also to use and develop it. We try, and because of this we cherish our hopes.
The final stylistic revision of the paper was done by B. G. Trigger, who accepts responsibility for any unintended distortions of meaning resulting therefrom.

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Attainments and problems of Soviet archaeology


Abstract

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Attainments and problems of Soviet archaeology

Soviet archaeology developed in the context of the Russian revolution as what remained of the archaeology of Tsarist Russia came into contact with Marxism. In its early stages, Soviet archaeology sought to reconstruct social relations and other superstructural phenomena directly from archaeological remains. Beginning in the late 1930s there was increasing interest in ethnogenesis. In recent years, Soviet archaeology has become more complex and diversified. This paper examines seven trends in current Soviet archaeology. Three are old and well-established: archaeological history, which views archaeology as merely another source of historical data; archaeological ethnogenetics, which traces the prehistory of national groups; and archaeological sociology which studies the evolution of social systems. Four trends are newer and somewhat more controversial: descriptive archaeology, which stresses the formal description of archaeological material; archaeotechnologies, which studies how artifacts were made and used; ecological archaeology; and theoretical archaeology, which seeks to clarify the research tasks, aims and methods that are uniquely suited for the study of archaeological data. By stressing specifically archaeological problems, these new approaches seek to make archaeology a more effective instrument of Marxist analysis.