

LIFE AFTER THEORY: PROVINCIAL RUSSIAN ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE LATE BRONZE AGE

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Abstract: It took 25 years after the dissolution of the Soviet system. There is no more Soviet ideology in archaeology. What is the methodology of archaeology has replaced Marxism? During the Soviet period the main problem of archaeology was to reconstruct the cultural and historical development of ancient societies. Development of Soviet archaeology and new “processual” archaeology in the sphere of theoretical notions underwent similar stages. Some Russian and foreign scientists distinguished similar tendencies. It should be noted that national socio-archaeology and “new archaeology” have similar theoretical and methodological approaches. Establishing of common sociological concept in Soviet archaeology was a regular stage of development of scientific knowledge in the sphere of investigation of ancient cultures by means of archaeological sources. This concept integrated the most important achievements of not only Russian (argument of P. N. Tretyakov, adopted by G. Childe, went down in history as Deetz/Longacre argument). In the late 1980’s, archaeology has become Neo-Marxist methodology. A separate direction in the theory of archaeology of this period was the “samizdat”, which collected materials of bourgeois’ content. But at the present time in Russia there are no theoretical constructs. We see the crisis of Russian archaeological theory.

Key words: history of archaeology, theory of archaeology, New Archaeology, Soviet Archaeology, Archaeology of Volgo-Ural region

Abstrakt: Život po teorii: Provinčnà ruská archeológia neskorej doby bronzovej. Skoro 25 rokov po rozpade sovietskeho systému môžeme konštatovať, že v archeológii už nie je viac sovietskej ideológie. Aká je metodika archeológie nahradená marxizmom? Počas sovietskeho obdobia bol hlavným problémom archeológie rekonštrukcia kultúrno-historického vývoja starých spoločností. Vývoj sovietskej archeológie a nová „procesná“ archeológia v oblasti teoretických predstáv prešla obdobnými etapami. Podobné tendencie evidovali i niektorí vedci z Ruska a zo zahraničia. K tomu je dôležité poznamenať, že národná sociálno-archeológia a „nová archeológia“ majú podobné teoretické a metodologické prístupy. Vytvorenie spoločného sociologického konceptu v sovietskej archeológii bolo pravidelnou etapou rozvoja vedeckých poznatkov v oblasti výskumu starých kultúr pomocou archeologických zdrojov. Tento pojem integroval najdôležitejšie úspechy nielen ruského okruhu (argumentácia P. N. Tretiakova, ktorý bol prijatý G. Childom, a vošiel do histórie ako argument Deetza/Longacra). Ku koncu 80-tych rokov 20. storočia bola prijatá neomarxistická metodika. Samostatným smerom v teórii archeológie tohto obdobia bol „samizdat“, ktorý zhromažďoval materiály buržoázneho obsahu. Ale v súčasnosti v Rusku neexistujú žiadne teoretické konštrukcie, v čom vidíme krízu ruskej archeologickej teórie.

Ключові слова: dejiny archeológie, teória archeológie, nová archeológia, sovietska archeológia, archeológia volžsko-uralského regiónu

1. Introduction

Individual archaeological theory was developed on the territory in the USSR, starting from 1920–1930, it turned to formation approach and historical materialism. In 1960–1980 Soviet archaeology began its transformation from Marxism to Neo-Marxism. Archaeology in the USSR had a special aspect: development of theory, methodology and

methods of research was determined by peculiarities of publication and keeping of manuscripts. Theories beyond the frameworks of formal historical materialism were spread by means of self-publish books (“samizdat”), which considerably reduced academic community familiar with alternative theoretical approaches. “Samizdat” is a form of existence of theories and texts that were not officially censored. In scientific circles distribution of such theories were out of official control. In the USSR considerable amount of scientific works that didn’t pass censorship and, correspondingly, not published scientific works were distributed as handwritings.

For the last few years there were two changes of theoretical constructs: survived after the crises processual archaeology transformed to postprocessual archaeology. Being a part of world archaeological science, Russian archaeology also undergoes theoretical development crises. Nowadays it’s obvious that the crisis of Russian archaeological theory of the end of 1980’s-1990’s coincided not only with ideology change period, but with global change of theoretical constructs: rejection of “dehumanization” of knowledge and quantitative constructions (Kristiansen 2014, 11–34). New concept of postprocessual archaeology is being formed turning back to anthropological approach and addressing to Neo-Marxism. As we can see, the models of archaeological theory are transformed by means of crisis as form of new concept establishment. In 2000’s postprocessual archaeology undergoes crisis again. The “noughties” in the theory of archaeology had a slogan: “The death of archaeological theory? The Death of Archaeological Theory?” J. Bintliff (2011, 7). The same topic was maintained in discussion in the University of West Bohemia Evžen Neustupný, Kristian Kristiansen in 2012.

This crisis (Russian archaeology) came out in rejection of social reconstruction of ancient societies. Archaeology is no more in the system of historical sciences served as the basis for Soviet (Marxist) ideology (Guljaev – Beliaev 1995, 97). This led to the situation when archaeological theory in modern Russia starts to take initial steps, after rejection of Marxist conception of history. Again the scientists face the problems of approaches to interpretation of archaeological source. Majority of archaeological researches was focused on presentation of numerous archaeological finds. In the modern period in the theory of archaeology and approaches of Eastern Europe countries and Russia to archaeological source there are similar tendencies (Krekovič – Bača 2013, 263), which can be characterized as follows: “The vast majority of this information is sustained by the typical rhetoric of the culture history approach, with artefact types locked in time and space, and social change seen as a result of diffusion, migration or invasion. Re-evaluation of this massive archive is in its infancy...” (Gaydarska 2016, 51). During the same time period general crisis of archaeological researches takes place. Archaeological excavations in Russia are minimized. Currently it’s obvious that the crisis of Russian archaeological theory coincided with ideology change period, as well as with global change of theoretical development.

2. Development of archaeological theory in the Soviet Union

Soviet theory of archaeology began to develop at the end of 20’s – first half of 30’s of the 20th century. Main focus of Soviet scientists was on the idea that archaeology can be free-standing science independent of conceptual models of history, paleoethnology and ethnology. A.Y. Brjusov used to prove that archaeology can independently reconstruct social structure of ancient societies. In this context socio-archaeology, appeared in 1930’s in the Soviet Union, and New Archaeology (processual archaeology) had similar theoretical foundation (excluding relation to formation approach) and relation to archaeological source. In the mentioned time period socio-archaeology applied natural-science methods in archaeology. Common sociological vector of Soviet archaeology theory was as follows: economy, production forces constitute foundation of social life. Archaeological researches had a purpose to investigate processes of development of material production, production forces and industrial relations in accordance with Marxism postulates (Marx 1970). However, tools of trade acted as foundation, thus potential of tools of trade in society formation was overestimated; in a similar way it was observed in the works of emerging archaeologists. Prime importance was attached to the analysis of nature of settlements – permanent or temporary dwellings, construction and planning solutions, tools, functional meanings, separation of “alien items”, and estimation of geographic factors impact on economy development, nature of extinction of settlements. All mentioned things let perform reconstruction of social organization of the society with the help of “ascent method” from production forces (tools of trade) to production relations.

Sociological approach generated basic methodological provisions of early concepts of Soviet archaeological theory. The idea of integrated study of sources for comprehensive investigation of the matter was put forward

already in classic (fusion of written and archaeological data) and evolutionary approaches (application of natural sciences data). Special focus on examination of tools of trade as leading category in human activity was typical for scientific approach (V. A. Gorodtsov). At the same time there emerged a tendency to search laws of development of archaeological phenomena. Such schemes are the basis for hypothetico-deductive method (basic for processual archaeology). According to G. S. Lebedev (1992, 21), works by V. A. Gorodtsov (1995, 27–30) can serve as an example of development of hypothetico-deductive method; it was suggested that the method should be referred to as “ascent method”, V. A. Gorodtsov, and hypothetico-deductive method by Gorodtsov – Deetz (The result was that similar development trends of Soviet socio-archaeology and processual archaeology appeared).

Further theoretical constructions of Soviet archaeology were interrupted by repressions of 1930–1940. The result was that, generally, the historical science sustained irreparable losses. Letters of archaeologists from the USSR addressed to E. H. Minns (Cambridge University Library) can serve as remarkable example of the extent of mentioned events. Almost half of the researchers was repressed: K. E. Grinevich, N. E. Makarenko, S. S. Magura, V. V. Arendt, G. I. Borovka, N. P. Bauer, N. P. Likhachev, S. A. Teploukhov, A. A. Zakharov. In the result of the repressions archaeological theory developed in two directions. First direction is an official historical doctrine based on formation approach to history. Archaeology in the USSR had similar with Czechoslovak science way, E. Krekovič and M. Bača (*Krekovič – Bača 2013*). However, Soviet archaeologists were short of theoretic comprehension to fill Marxist and formation systems with archaeological content. Theoretical constructions of Soviet archaeologists of 1960–1980 dedicated to the matter of archaeology and nature of archaeological source, structure of archaeological knowledge, basic category of “archaeological culture”, etc., couldn’t make alive formation scheme and discussion on pre-capitalist modes of production and on «Non-Historic Nations». Second, alternative direction of archaeological theory in the Soviet Union was represented by doctrines of «samizdat», not published scientific works. In 1980’s quite often such works were created under the influence of “bourgeois” archaeological theory. In 1930’s – 1940’s “samizdat” was represented by not published manuscripts of repressed and exiled from Moscow and Leningrad archaeologists, whose works didn’t contain Marxist ideological basis. In 1980’s “samizdat” was represented by deposited manuscripts containing discussions of different approaches to the theory of archaeology. The only research in the USSR dedicated to methods of reconstruction of economic activities in English and American “new archaeology” by M.A. Kolesnikov (1989) can be treated as a bright example. Scientific materials of his thesis research were not published and the work in this field was recommenced only in the end of 1990’s by I.A. Shuteleva (2001).

3. Problems of extension of theoretical approaches in Soviet Archaeology

Development of theory, methodology and methods of research of particular archaeological material was determined by peculiarities of publication and keeping of manuscripts in the USSR. Writing and publication of manuscripts was carried out routinely, according to approved plan of publishing. The manuscript had to undergo mandatory review and check for ideological conformity in the Censorship Commission before publishing. Publishers in the USSR were all government institutions, that’s why it was not possible to violate procedure of publishing of scientific works. All this led to development of a number of specific norms and phenomena.

Firstly, if a scientist worked in a state scientific, educational institution or a museum, government also owned copyright for the results of scientific research and heritage of the scientist. As personal funds got into different archives, their further destiny was not possible to trace, which was an advantage for unfair researchers, who published archival manuscripts under their names. In such a way manuscripts of “B. A. Koishevsky files” were published; artefacts investigated by M. S. Smirnov and M. I. Kasyanov etc., enumeration can be continued.

Secondly, published works on archaeology were not enough, as they came only to the libraries of Academy of Science which branches existed not in every region and cities of the USSR. Works on theory of archaeology, which approaches were not related to Marxism or contradicting to it, were insufficiently published. Introduced depositing of manuscripts almost didn’t change the situation. Publications of L. S. Klejn can be treated as an example. His rare, published in those years articles and monographs on theory of archaeology became “samizdat”, they were copied and rewritten endlessly. The same happened even with works, published in 1990’s (*Klejn 1991*). Paradox of Soviet scientific system was that with Marxism dominating in history and archaeology, it was required to know and demonstrate critical attitude to “bourgeois” approaches in archaeological theory. In 1931 historian

S.N. Bykovsky defined Soviet archaeology as Marxist-Leninist history of material culture, ideologically opposing it to bourgeois archaeology. To bourgeois archaeology in the Soviet Union they assigned archaeology of Western Europe and America which denied Marxist point of view to dialectical nature of society development, replacing it with migration theory (*Bykovsky 1995*, 132n). The notion of bourgeois archaeology was used as opposition to Soviet archaeology.

Thirdly, considerable part of manuscripts on theory of archaeology was not published in the USSR (which includes ideological reasons). Works by L. S. Klejn take special place in this group, which first were published abroad («Metaarchaeology», «*Kossinna im Abstand von vierzig Jahren*») and then in Russia. Considerable part of works by L. S. Klejn not published during Soviet period was issued after 40 – 50 years. But even in this case the manuscripts were known and read by number of archaeologists – opponents as well as apologists.

4. Archaeology of “Post-Stalin” period: meeting ideological limitations

Theory of archaeology in the USSR was not developed in isolation from global trends. In the beginning of 1950's in the Soviet Union basic researches of leading scientists were translated into Russian, for instance, V. Gordon Childe (*1952*), G. Clark (*1953*).

Starting from the end of 1970's in Soviet archaeology interest to foreign theoretical constructions increased, which was reflected in many analytical surveys. They gave to Soviet scientists the idea about theoretical approaches of British social anthropology, theory and methodology of English-American ethnography. But the most prominent were the works dedicated to Marxism in American and British archaeology practice (*Guljaev – Chernykh 1989*), theoretical approaches in national and world archaeology (*Masson – Bochkarev 1978*).

A number of researchers (*Gogolina 1997*) believe that the basis for theoretical evidences of national archaeologists was critical analysis of constructions of foreign (mainly English-American) archaeology. However, it's mentioned that a number of theoretical principles and methodical approaches, borrowed from western archaeology, were associated with the theory of economic and cultural type (treating of material culture phenomena connected with production and life-support system).

From beginning of 1980's in the Soviet Union foreign researches on theoretical archaeology are translated and published more actively, for example J.-C. Gardin (*1983*), C. Renfrew (*1984; 1989*).

At the end of 1980's – beginning 1990's theoretical archaeology in the USSR experienced significant impact of western theoretical constructions. This impact was carried out by correlation of ethnographic and archaeology sources. Second problem was connected with social reconstruction of ancient societies, where Soviet archaeology was influenced by processual archaeology. The approach applied by processual archaeology was methodically new. Innovation of the method was in using of three structural levels of analysis: micro-level (analysis of individual constructions, identification of their functional purpose and existence time); level of entire archaeological site (settlement as an integral and complex social organism); macro-level (regional investigation of synchronous archaeological sites).

Weakening of Soviet ideology resulted in Russian scientists' moving off the principles of Marxism in archaeological theory and in attempts to lean on Neo-Marxism. However, existing in world archaeology approaches to theory and methodology couldn't fill in appeared lacuna.

5. Russian Archaeology of Volga-Ural Late Bronze Age in the modern period of development

Practically complete rejection to develop theoretical problems of archaeology was a logical extension of emerging trends after the dissolution of Soviet system. Gradually history of archaeology held greater place in researches of Russian scientists. It was a subject of world archaeology history (*Guljaev 2010; Klejn 2011*), history of Russian archaeology (*Klejn 2014; Tikhonov 2013*), history of provincial archaeology (*Mel'nikova 2014*). Currently existing in Russia works on archaeological theory, such as L. S. Klejn and N. N. Kradin (*Kradin 2000; 2006*) do not meet requirements of understanding of growing source base. A wide range of individual publications on theory of archaeology do not

comply with increased demand for systematization of archaeological material. A number of natural-science analyses are not in demand for reconstruction of ancient societies. Crisis tendencies are especially obvious in the most abundant in archaeological artefacts and materials – in the Late Bronze Age of Volgo-Ural region. Researches on the latest decade are based on classifications and in some cases – on periodization of 1970's – 1980's. (*Alaeva 2015; Epimakhov 2010*). Scientific works are made as simple description or statements of facts, large amount of archaeological cultures, burial and settlement sites, ceramic complexes. Dominating method in investigation of the Late Bronze Age in provincial archaeology of Volga-Ural region is presented by comparative and typological method. According to adopted in archaeology concept of “archaeological culture”, in the first half of the XX century theory of multiple archaeological cultures of the Late Bronze Age in Volga-Ural region was developed. Nowadays this theory is in crisis. Syntashinskaya, Abashevskaya, Alakul, Fedorovskaya and Srubnyay archaeological cultures as well as multiple types in specified archaeological cultures have no stable chronological correlation and succession which is proved by results of natural-science researches. Theoretical issues of the Late Bronze Age, specified by T. Earle, K. Kristiansen (*Earle – Kristiansen 2010*), are almost not mentioned in modern researches of Russian scientists. Not investigated topics can be specified as follows: problem of development of own technology to produce bronze, ceramics, bone and stone tools of trade, based on existing experience in Volgo-Ural region; problem of openness of communities of the Late Bronze Age in Sothern Transurals to accept new people and technologies (it's interesting due to geographical location of the researched area: between European part of Eurasia and Central Asia). Development of the society during the Late Bronze Age was also major problem: social changes and economic development within this short period of the Late Bronze Age. The issue of anthropologic influence on the landscape of the Late Bronze Age societies, including destructive effect on the landscape during bronze production and agricultural activities.

Increase in scope of archaeological researches, salvage archaeological works doesn't let Russian archaeologists conduct deep theoretical analysis of obtained variety of archaeological sources.

6. Conclusion

Moving off formation approach and historical materialism in Soviet theory of archaeology proceeded step by step. It began in Post-Stalin epoch with growing of translated works of western anthropologists and archaeologists into Russian, analytical surveys of “bourgeois” theories. This process led to transformation of Marxism in archaeology by increasing of amount of alternative publications “samizdat”. These tendencies had to result in the rise of “Neo-Marxism” or processual archaeology and then postprocessual archaeology in the theory of Russian Archaeology after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to gradual failure and absence of demand for theory of archaeology in modern Russia. Therefore, as it turned out, for theory of archaeology in Russia Marxism was the only system-forming theory.

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Résumé

Moderná fáza vývoja ruskej archeológie je charakteristická takmer úplným odmietaním budovania autentickej archeologickej teórie. Nadobúdanie nového archeologického materiálu a jeho prezentácia sa stali hlavnou črtou ruskej archeológie v post-sovietskej ére.

Druhoradé postavenie či dokonca úplná absencia archeologickej teórie v modernom Rusku je prekvapivým zvratom v jej vývoji. V sovietskej ére bola teória archeológie intenzívne živená: od dynamického vzostupu socio-archeológie v 30. rokoch 20. storočia cez sformovanie marxistického historického konceptu v 60. a 70. rokoch, po rozvoj alternatívnych prístupov k archeologickej teórii v 80. rokoch 20. storočia

Ideologický pluralizmus po páde sovietskeho režimu mohol mať priaznivý vplyv na rozvoj alternatívy k marxistickej teórii archeológie – neo-marxizmu. V Rusku však došlo k totálnemu zániku marxizmu a v dôsledku toho aj k zániku možných alternatív v archeologickej teórii.