

PART 3

Representation and ideology

Chapter 5

**Social change, ideology
and the archaeological
record**

Michael Parker Pearson

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Social and political changes in Europe since the sixties have included the revival and critical reappraisal of Marx's writings as a basis for understanding social changes and directing political activity. Some preach a 'purist' orthodox doctrine while others have developed more flexible 'revisionist' perspectives. The latter favour diversified approaches which allow the sorting out of 'dead wood' in Marx's thinking and the investigation of issues not previously considered in depth by Marxist analysts. The position taken here is that certain aspects of Marx's work need re-examination. These include: to what extent Marxist analysis should employ the methodology of the natural or the social sciences; whether ideology is determined by economy or exists in a reflexive relationship with it; and whether the theory of class struggle and contradiction is adequate for understanding social change, especially in classless, 'egalitarian' societies. These issues are important for developing an archaeological theory of social change which can be combined with existing anthropological theories of long-term change. An analysis of archaeological material from the Early Iron Age of Denmark explores the potential of such a theory.

Before we develop a model of long-term change in pre-state societies, we have to examine some of the issues within Marxist theory which have been raised recently. A theory of nineteenth-century capitalism will obviously require rigorous modification for dealing with societies which existed some

2000 years ago. Furthermore, the philosophical basis of Marxist theory for understanding human actions needs to be considered. Some scholars have interpreted Marxism as a 'natural science' of society while others would question the validity of an explicitly scientific approach to the study of human consciousness and participation in society.

Marxism as science

Knowledge deemed to be 'scientific' has several features. It is methodologically pursued and systematically related, uses generalizations, allows the prediction of events (and thence the ability to exercise greater control over future events), and is objective and free of personal values and social circumstances (Walsh 1967: 37). While it is generally accepted that the study of humanity should proceed methodologically and systematically, there is some controversy over the need for generalization, prediction and objectivity for understanding ourselves.

While some scholars of the human past would refuse to admit that they use anything more than the most basic generalizations (such as the need for food, clothing and shelter) and view each event as particular and unique, the majority of philosophers, social scientists, historians, economists and politicians explicitly or implicitly use concepts such as 'common sense', 'human nature' and 'rationality' to interpret, explain and influence the course of events which they observe and participate in. Amongst archaeologists there has been a tendency to concentrate on generalizations as having primacy over particular details. One aspect of this has been the so far unsuccessful attempt to derive universal and predictive laws of human behaviour from the testing of hypotheses against empirically ascertained facts (this is exemplified by Watson, LeBlanc and Redman 1971, and criticized by Flannery 1973). Marxist writers would recognize a number of universal generalizations and generalizations that apply to particular kinds of societies, as well as recognizing that the particular and the general cannot be separated or one given precedence over the other (Carr 1961: 65).

Marx's aim to advance the possibility of a world communist society has sometimes been taken more as a prediction of the future than an outline of general guides for future action. What Marx did predict was a crisis for capitalist society resulting from its internal flaws. A distinction can be made between the prediction of general processes of change and the specific events and outcome of those processes. Unique events cannot be predicted but can be interpreted within a general understanding of change. At the same time, the recognition of processes of change allows us to intervene and change our actions accordingly. History does not repeat itself since people can and do learn from past events and may take a different course of action to avoid the same outcome from a situation similar to one which occurred in the past. We are not helpless at the mercy of natural forces but are capable of recognizing and changing the rules by which we live. 'Human nature' is not fixed forever but has the capacity to be constantly modified.

The study of the human species beyond purely biological and physical explanations involves the relationship which is peculiar to the humanities. The distinction between the subject observing and the object observed is not absolute since the social position of the observer affects the observations which are made. This is even true for the archaeological study of long-vanished societies where the people under observation obviously cannot modify their actions in response to the investigations of a modern observer. Archaeologists still draw their interpretation of these past events in terms of the experiences and values which are part of their own particular social background. However, if all knowledge is value-laden it remains important to attempt to recognize and reconcile those historically conditioned biases which the observer implicitly employs.

In conclusion, the distinction between pure science and a subjective, particularist study of humanity is not a useful one to make. Marxist theory is both science and history and uses its predictive capacity to implement alternative action and change the course of events. This has major consequences for evaluating certain propositions central to Marxism: the role of ideology in the articulation of action and belief; the understanding of class struggle and class consciousness; and the inherent contradictions behind that conflict.

Ideology

The concept of ideology was given relatively little attention by Marx and Engels, and recent commentators have argued from the original sources about its true significance for orthodox Marxist thought (McCarney 1980; Seliger 1977). The two interpretations of ideology which are generally acknowledged to have been used by Marx and Engels are that it is 'false consciousness' (a set of beliefs which distort the true nature of social relations) and that, since the material conditions of life determine consciousness, ideology is the product of human action in the world.

This deterministic notion of the relationship of social practice to ideology has more recently been reassessed. Human practice is composed of a reflexive or two-way relationship between action and thought (Giddens 1979: 49–95; Walsh 1967: 48–71; Wilson 1979). Thought is taken here to mean not only the immediate conscious thoughts and motives of the individual actor but also the set of principles which provide categories of meaning and interpretation of reality. Reality is a social construction in which principles not only provide the initiative for action but are also capable of being modified as a consequence of action (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Ideology is an active part of human practice and is not external to what humans actually do. It should be clear that ideology is not the spiritual as opposed to material reality but is present in all material practice. The ideological sphere extends to include the vast majority of our activities — the nature of our work and leisure, house forms, food preparation, our use of the past, attitudes between men and women, and our need for certain kinds of commodities and energy for con-

sumption are just some of the areas in which we make conscious or unconscious political and ideological decisions every day. While the complexity of our reality has led us to specialise in different fields and disciplines, a properly integrative study of ourselves must break down the watertight compartments into which the social, political, economic and ideological are sometimes separated.

This has major implications for our understanding of material culture, the data source for archaeologists. Since artifacts are the product of human actions and are also used to carry out actions it follows that their meaning derives from their relationship with beliefs. Each and every artifact has an ideological component. Compare this with what Dunnell and Wenke (1980: 607) have to say on the matter:

As a body of phenomena, the archaeological record has one great virtue for the study of human history: it records only what actually transpired, and it does so without the complications introduced by human motivations, intentions, and rationalizations that plague the use of contemporary ethnographic data. Historical documents, in common with other linguistic sources, embody elements of values, ideals, and purposes of the writers and users of the documents.

Their distinction between two types of artifacts, written and non-written, cannot be maintained in such terms. Although the recovery of the two types of information rests on different methodologies of source criticism, those methodologies should not dictate that different approaches to the study of social change are the inevitable outcome.

In conclusion, artifacts cannot be divided up according to economic, social or ideological criteria. All practice and the technology employed to implement that practice is mediated through ideology with each item taking its meaning from the whole set of material conditions, social practices and belief systems (Ingold 1980: 8-9; Sumner 1979: 211). An agricultural implement is as much the product of ideology as is a crown or a written law code; they simply have different functions.

An important corollary to the action/belief duality is the basic approach for understanding change. We should understand society as continually changing with the constant reproduction of practices creating an 'illusion' of stasis. Society and its institutions exist only in so far as they are affirmed by everyday behaviour. If the legitimacy of these social institutions is questioned then practices will be reproduced in different and modified ways. Thus every action has the potential to change the existing belief system. If action and belief are constantly reproduced in essentially the same form then only the unintended consequences of actions or the influence of an outside force will produce any change at all.

It is often stated that Marxist analyses go beyond the study of surface appearances of social phenomena and discover inner relationships between things before examining the superficial relationships (Godelier 1977: 3). As with artifacts, so institutions embody the social, the economic and the ideo-

logical (whether medieval churches or twentieth century banks). There is no direct correspondence between, say, religion and ideology or economy and subsistence, and the configuration of relationships will be different in each particular society. In many pre-capitalist societies the economy is mediated through the religion (by means of supernatural spirits, deities and ancestors) while the economy is one of the main components of capitalist ideology (Friedman 1975; Godelier 1977: 152-65).

Class struggle

An essential premise of Marxism is that humans are motivated by self-interest and motivated to accumulate power in order to extend that self-interest. People's interests become antagonistic to others' since they are involved in social relations for the production of materials and food and for the reproduction of the social institutions which articulate that production. Since the interests of many individuals will coincide, they can be said to form an interest group (this does not mean that they have the realized capacity to act together in the defence, maintenance or extension of those interests; they need not be a community or co-operating 'action group' despite having the same position in the organization of production). These interest groups are arranged in antagonistic relations with each other through their integration in the system of production, exchange and consumption. They might consist of women producing food for consumption by males in 'egalitarian' societies, or a working class producing surplus for a dominant elite. Marx's famous dictum 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles' (Marx and Engels 1968: 35) may now sound anachronistic and hackneyed but statements that claim it to be empirically untenable (Moore 1963: 132) result from a superficial understanding of the concept. First the term 'class' can be replaced by 'interest group' for non-capitalist societies without economically segregated classes, though it is still important to define those 'interest groups' by their relation to the production, exchange and consumption cycle. Second, tensions between groups are not always manifested through open conflicts. Returning to the statement that society exists through reproduced practices which are considered legitimate by the members of that society, we must consider how conflicts are controlled and suppressed.

While people may be controlled by direct coercive force, the most effective form of political control is essentially ideological (Carlton 1977). The position of a ruling class might be legitimated in several ways; by misrepresenting the inequalities between the surplus-producing and the surplus-consuming groups; by representing the interests of the elite as universal for the whole society; and by justifying the status quo through hierarchical conceptions of the supernatural which 'explain' the hierarchical nature of social existence (cf. Kus, this volume). Ideology, then, is also thought which serves class interests (McCarney 1980) though this does not imply that each class has its own ideologically realized identity.

Seliger has pointed out that in modern capitalism the majority of the working class adopt the ideology of the ruling class (1977: 157–66). The lack of fit between class affiliation and ideological interests should however be regarded as a changing historical phenomenon. Polarities between interest groups are reached at specific times when social tensions are aggravated to the level of open conflict. Thus while classes or interest groups are shown to exist through their relationship to the cycle of production exchange and consumption, they may not choose to actively represent that position as a conscious expression of solidarity. Hodder's work on African societies brings out this point very clearly (1979); ethnic minorities, age groups, male/female groups, elites and tribal groups emphasize their identity through clothing, portable artifacts and other forms of material culture only at times of social and economic stress (cf. Gilman, this volume).

Antagonisms are mediated and contained through the ideological categorization of the material world. This takes the form of role-playing and identity consciousness which will be manifested, in part, in material form. Where that categorization is threatened, the need to legitimate the social order will be greater (Berger 1973: 55–6). This legitimation involves the demonstration of ruling-class power in a number of ways such as by constructing monuments, destroying large quantities of prestige objects or waging war for territorial gain.

Conflict between interest groups is not limited solely to economic and social divisions within societies. The spatial dimension of domination and exploitation must also be considered. This problem has recently been framed in terms of a global system in which a core area dominates a periphery (Ekholm 1980; Wallerstein 1979). Relations of economic dependence are built up by core areas over their peripheries by accumulating surplus through unbalanced exchange (the value of commodities and labour being substantially lower in the periphery). Where relations between polities do not involve a core/periphery situation, conflicts between those polities often stem from internal tensions between interest groups. Warfare has been described as the 'property' of ruling classes; the results of expansionist aggression include greater political solidarity, advances in technology and an expansion in production (Ekholm 1980: 164). If there is a likelihood of internal social divisions threatening the power of a ruling elite, warfare between polities is one possible strategy which the elite might use in order to defuse revolutionary conflict, legitimate their position and increase prosperity and solidarity within the polity.

Contradiction

An analysis of conflict between interest groups is not complete without an understanding of contradiction, its relationship to conflict and its role in causal explanations of change. Marx and Engels identified two contexts where contradictions appear. The first is the inter-relationship between forces of production and relations of production. It is important to note that although emphasis has been placed on changes

in the forces of production producing change in the relations of production, Marxism should not be taken as a technological or environmental determinism (otherwise termed 'vulgar materialism', cf. Friedman 1974). To elaborate on this, the innovation of technology capable of modifying the relations between the producers and the controllers of surplus does not occur independently of social conditions. We have to understand the existing conditions of social relations to explain why so often inventions and discoveries are made and adopted simultaneously yet independently. Once an innovation has been made and accepted, it can transform the nature of the social relations — a new subsistence technology might be contradictory to existing rules of property ownership and surplus production, with the result of transforming those rules and thereby changing the social relations. It has been suggested that contradictions between forces and relations of production have had a major effect only on capitalism and not on pre-capitalist societies (Giddens 1979: 154). There is certainly some truth in this but the difference is probably best seen as relative rather than absolute.

The second kind of contradiction exists between the appropriation and consumption of surplus and the social organization of its production. In class societies this entails the unbalanced exchange relationship which exists between the producers of a surplus and the appropriators of that surplus. The ruling class that appropriates the surplus might also control the productive technology, thereby strengthening its hold but at the same time increasing the contradictions.

There has been some confusion over the understanding of 'contradiction'. While it might appear similar to the concepts of dysfunction of maladaptation in functionalist theories (Rappaport 1978), it is in fact rooted in the action/belief duality discussed above. Contradiction and conflict are intimately linked; conflict is the active realization of contradictions, action which is related to a clash of opposed ideologies and their associated practices.

Anthropological models of social change

Although the time is ripe for a detailed critique of social evolution, I do not propose to develop it here (but see Giddens 1981). It should be sufficient to note that unilinear evolution, aspects of which were developed by Marx, Engels and Morgan (Marx and Engels 1968: 449–583; Morgan 1877), is no longer acceptable to most students of long-term change. Also subsequent multilinear theories of cultural evolution developed by the cultural evolutionists (see Service 1971; Steward 1955) can be criticized for their assumption of a causal, rather than constraining relationship between environment/technology and social organization as well as their isolation of general, ideal types of social stages (Wenke 1981: 84–7). We should be concentrating on social transformations and episodes of change and not in creating ideal stages said to lie between them. Marx's original formulation of contradictions producing conflict in the form of social revolution (Marx and Engels 1968: 181–2) is an important starting point. 'Social revolution'

should be taken in a broader sense than a revolt by an oppressed class; it may be taken to be a very rapid change in social relations after a gradual build up of tensions. In other words 'revolutionary change' is defined as a rapid transformation of social relations in a relatively short timespan. Such change might take the form of warfare between polities, a political coup, or the implementation of a new productive technology, as well as a class revolution. Whatever the actual nature of this revolutionary change, it can be described as a legitimization crisis threatening the overthrow of the ruling group, who must then devise strategies to deal with that situation by demonstrating and asserting their power.

There have been a number of attempts by anthropologists to develop explanations of change to account for the patterns which they observe over a very short time during ethnographic enquiries (Bonte 1978; Friedman 1979; Leach 1954; Rappaport 1968). In most of these cases the methodology is weak. In the absence of archaeological material and with little historical information the assumption is made that the spatial variation of political forms in a region represents a collection of survivals from different evolutionary stages. This clearly requires empirical examination from the archaeologist's point of view though it does offer potential insights into the processes of transformation.

Although Rappaport employs a cultural ecology and systems theory framework in his interpretation of warfare and pig feasting rituals in the New Guinea Highlands, his evidence may be better explained within a Marxist approach (for a critique of his theoretical assumptions see Diener, Moore and Mutaw 1980). A short summary could be as follows. The social relations are centred on the antagonistic interests of males and females. Women produce the food crops and bring up the pigs (which are treated as prestige items) for the men. These contradictory antagonisms are regulated and expressed through the strong role-playing, or category definition and separation, between the sexes. This role-playing is given expression in food taboos, dress types and other forms emphasizing the differences between male and female styles of life. In such a way open conflict is prevented but tensions develop as the growing pigs require more and more food. As the women are increasingly less able to provide this food they complain to their husbands who then initiate a territorial war with neighbouring clans. After several fights a truce is called with the organization of a pig feast for all the clans in the area. Alliances are made between clans and pigs are 'sacrificed' (eaten not thrown away) to the ancestor spirits of the clan and to allies. The men manipulate the warfare and feasting in order to reaffirm clan and tribal identity, thereby healing the internal tensions between men and women. The cycle is estimated to last between five and 25 years and might possibly be a minor cycle within a much longer one which could have far-reaching effects.

Leach's study of the Kachin proposed a series of cycles each about 150 years long in which the tribal societies oscillated between egalitarian and chiefly organization. He

describes the changes between hierarchical and egalitarian forms as a long-phase oscillation between polarized beliefs. Friedman's re-analysis of the same material has received strong criticism from Leach (1977: 163) but has greater explanatory value because the context of change is located not in the realm of beliefs but in the relationship between practices and beliefs. Friedman places the cycles described by Leach within a long cycle of state formation — the successive short-term discontinuities culminating in a longer-term transformation. Within each cycle contradictions build up as debts and inflation increase, along with a decrease in surplus production and greater environmental degradation. The result is a rebellion which establishes an egalitarian society. In turn the contradictions underlying the exchange of cattle and prestige items as bridewealth on the one hand and as competitive feasting on the other again result in debts accumulating between lineages. These debts are directly related to status and a chiefly status rests on the obligations due from other members of the community. These obligations are formalized in terms of relations with ancestors; in the egalitarian form all lineages mediate equally with the community ancestors (except that some will acquire greater influence over the spirits by creating debts from others); in hierarchical societies the chiefly lineage appropriates the community ancestors for its own and controls ancestral help for villagers in return for surplus as tribute.¹

Other authors have presented similar models of transformations though in much less detail (Ekholm 1980: 156; Moore 1963: 36–9). The existence of similar transformations can be sought for in the archaeological record, a task which will be carried out below. Before doing so it is necessary to consider the relevant 'bridging' theory to link prehistoric material culture with its context of changing social practices.

Material culture, mortuary practices and ideology

Social inferences from burial practices have become increasingly common amongst archaeologists in the last 15 years (e.g. Brown 1971; Chapman, Kinnes and Randsborg 1981). A major aim has been to build law-like generalizations or universal inferences about the relationship between the variability of treatment of the dead and social factors, generally the assumed living status of the deceased (Binford 1971; Saxe 1970; Shennan 1975; Tainter 1975). Whether the status is in terms of ranking, class or kinship (Van der Velde 1979), it is generally thought to vary with differential treatment of the dead on the basis of a wide number of ethnographic observations. The recent work of social anthropologists on ritual and death rituals in particular (Bloch 1971; 1977; Huntington and Metcalf 1979; Lewis 1980) has suggested new approaches to burial studies by archaeologists. For example Klejn (1979) and Pader (1982) point out that burials are only indirectly linked to social ranking and class divisions via ritual expression. As ritual actions, mortuary practices may play an active role in the living society and influence the distribution and use of power. The empirical observation of cases where status is not overtly affirmed in death has led to developments towards a

dynamic, historical perspective on mortuary variability away from the synchronic, 'snapshot' observations of ethnography (Pearson 1982a).

The relationship between society and burial practices has to be understood as the relations between living and dead before making social inferences (Pearson 1982a: 110). They can be expressed as follows:

1 Burials may be socially prescribed outlets for the advertisement and display of the social position of a group or individual. Since the dead do not bury themselves the pomp and ceremony associated with a deceased individual will reflect on the survivors. It is their decision how to stage the funeral and consequently whether to use it as a platform for acting out the social principles which they believe in. At that funeral the deceased individual's achievements are summed up not simply as a display of status but as a display in terms of certain socially acceptable values. A king may be buried as a commoner — an example which we have from modern Saudi Arabia (Huntington and Metcalf 1979: 122) — in order to show that all, whether high born or lowly, are equal before the supernatural deities, and hence support the ideological legitimization for a class society.

2 Funerary rituals, as social and political statements, embody economic as well as religious aspects. Funerals and the rituals associated with death and the ancestors are times for the transference of property and responsibilities according to the conventions of property rights and laws (Goody 1962). Also at these times agricultural surplus may be transferred into gifts for the living and the dead — funeral feasts and grave goods. Items placed with or destroyed alongside the deceased can be considered as the wasteful economic consumption of materials which might have some other socially valued capacity. Where large amounts of precious commodities are 'sacrificed', destroyed or given to the dead, or where large amounts of labour are expended on large monuments dedicated to the dead, the economic and religious spheres are inseparable.

3 Funerals can provide political legitimization through conspicuous consumption of commodities. Groups may compete in attempts to outdo each other in the lavishness and importance of a ceremony. This kind of gift exchange can take many forms — weddings, feasting, giving away precious things — and serves to build up obligations between people. However funerals are more than just one of many contexts for conspicuous consumption. The context of death is a major interface in mediations between mortals on the one hand and ancestors and deities on the other (Bloch 1977; Huntington and Metcalf 1979). It can be argued that since the funerary remains of many pre- and non-capitalist societies are far more impressive than other forms of material culture such as house forms, ancestors and

deities are an important channel for the legitimization of power. Mauss's statement complements this: 'Among the first group of beings with whom men must have made contracts were the spirits of the dead and the gods. They in fact are the real owners of the world's wealth' (1954: 13). Friedman (1979) has shown that feasting among the Kachin as sacrifice to ancestors builds up debts between the living. Gregory's (1980) analysis of sacrifice in traditional societies, especially in Papua and among the Kwakiutl of north west America, concludes that gifts are given to the supernatural by groups competing against each other. He states that this competition does not put people in debt (*ibid.*: 647) though the outcome is a ranking system of differential status which surely must entail obligations from one to the other. Through processes of competition and indebtedness certain groups or individuals can gain power over others who cannot compete on similar terms. Ancestors and gods are a 'third party' through which social prestige is mediated between people. Far from being simply indicators of status, gifts to the dead may be an important part of the mechanism on which status is founded. Even if the items were possessions of the deceased in life they are still part of a gift transaction to the deceased in their new role as corpse. Like warfare, the consumption of large amounts of wealth in sacrifice can initiate increases in production. As obligations become greater and greater the prestige of one or a few individuals increases as does the capacity to procure larger surpluses (within environmental constraints) which can be transformed into more prestige goods for sacrifice or disposal with the dead.

Social change in early Iron Age Denmark

This analysis of over 600 years of change in Iron Age Jutland (a region of Denmark) incorporates all the surviving forms of archaeological evidence in order to examine the model of transformational development outlined above (a more detailed account can be found in Pearson 1984 where a full bibliography is given).

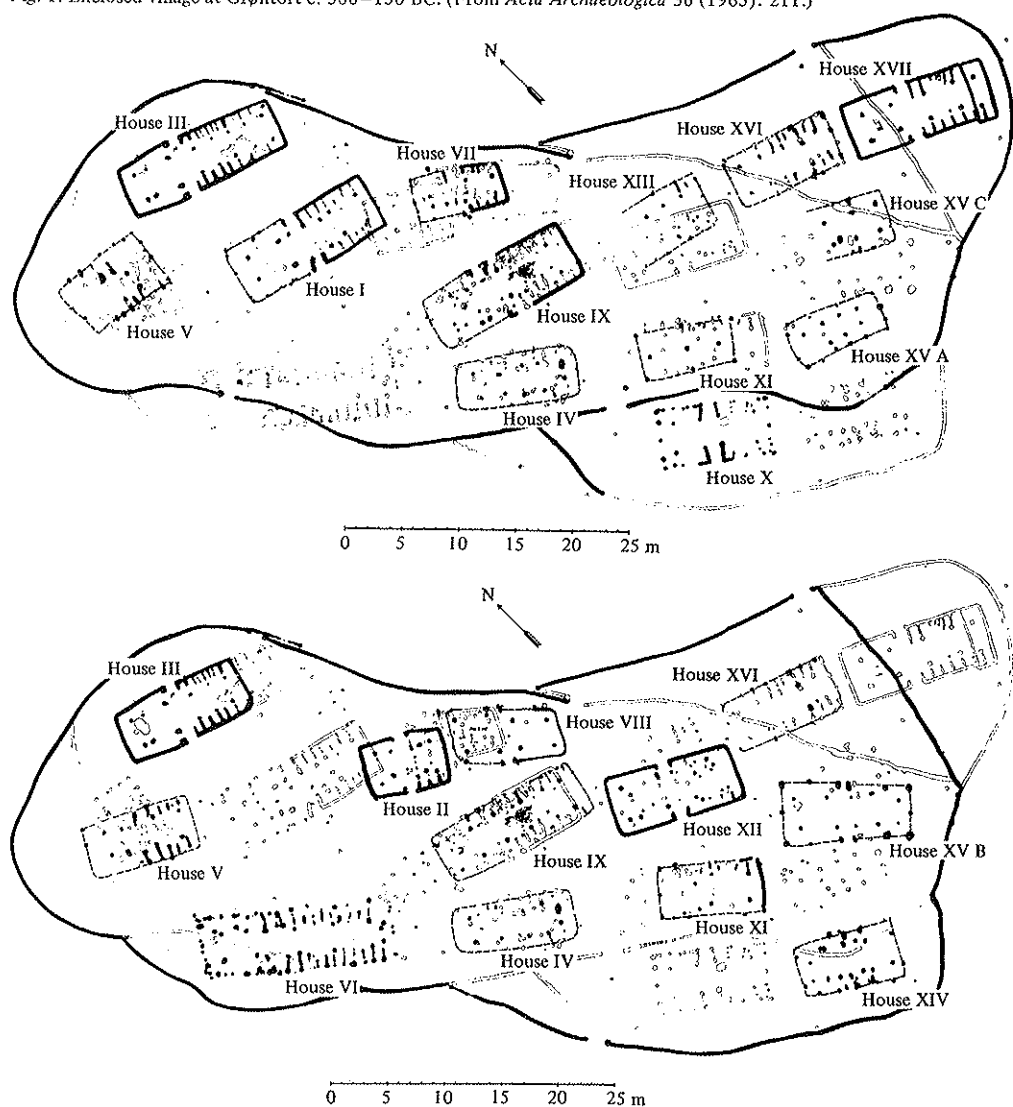
The earlier Iron Age of Denmark (c. 400 BC–250 AD) cannot be understood without considering its position in the core/periphery relations between the expanding Mediterranean world and the 'barbarian' north during the late first millennium BC and the early first millennium AD. As colonizing Mediterranean polities expanded their territory and influence (as Greek city states and later the Roman Empire) they supplied local centres on the periphery with prestige commodities (presumably in return for political co-operation and raw materials). These items, of iron, bronze, silver and gold, included drinking sets, coinage, dress fabrics and fittings and weaponry, and were supplied to a small section of the population (see Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978 on central western Europe during the sixth to fifth centuries BC). To the north of the Celtic world, in the area known as Germania from classical sources (this includes Jutland), the importation

of Celtic prestige goods (drinking sets, dress styles, cauldrons, elaborate waggons and weaponry) preceded the arrival of similar Roman commodities (during the first century BC to first century AD, Celtic and Roman imports overlapped but in different areas of Denmark and the north European fringe).

The first transformational cycle that can be recognized dates from the beginning of the Pre-Roman Iron Age (c. 400 BC) until the end of the first century BC. The millennium before (the Nordic Bronze Age c. 1800–500 BC) has been interpreted as a period of hierarchical 'chiefdom' forms of social organization (Kristiansen 1981: 244–5). Towards the end of the Bronze Age the increasing shortage of bronze (*ibid.*: 248) was undoubtedly one of the factors responsible for the collapse of the ranking structure which had supported the

'chiefly' elite. The result was some kind of social revolution after which status differences were given little material expression or simply did not exist. The large-scale excavation of a settlement at Grøntoft in western Jutland (Becker 1965; 1966; 1971) revealed a cluster of farmsteads, the earliest ones undefended and the later ones enclosed in a small palisade. Each one possessed a hearth and stalling for animals. None of them possessed outbuildings and the differences in size between each farm was negligible. Assuming that the farm byres were fully occupied by cattle, that the main storage features have not escaped archaeological detection and that each farm was occupied by only one family group, the inhabitants appear to have had more or less equal productive capacity between farm units (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Enclosed village at Grøntoft c. 300–150 BC. (From *Acta Archaeologica* 36 (1965): 211.)



A couple of large cemeteries of this date (c. 400–200 BC) have been extensively excavated (Becker 1961), while there have been many small excavations of cemeteries in the region. The material residues of the mortuary practices indicate that for the majority of the population the death rites included cremation of the corpse and disposal of the ashes and dress remains in a clay pot which was covered by a small circular mound (mound construction appears to have ended by the first century BC). The lack of differentiation between individuals in terms of dress remains, pot types and mound types, as well as the lack of covariation of any of these features with spatial location within the cemetery, indicates a very strong conformity.²

Votive depositions, mainly in peat bogs and lakes, undergo interesting changes. The classes of items used as 'gifts to gods' include wooden ploughs, human sacrifices, dress fittings, neck rings, waggons and cauldrons. The ploughs and human corpses cannot individually be dated securely but date mainly between c. 400 BC and the birth of Christ on the basis of pollen analysis and carbon 14 dating. Many of the human corpses had been killed before being dumped into the bogs and lakes. An interesting feature of the well-preserved bodies is the fineness of physique and skin (Glob 1977: 163). This would indicate that at least some of these people were not involved in manual agricultural production and must have lived off other people's surplus. There are many possible interpretations of this enigmatic discovery — that captured rival elite members or witches, shamen and priests were ritually murdered, or that emerging elites living off the surplus of others were periodically overthrown.

A clear trend emerges for the votive artifacts which are relatively well dated. Between 400 and 200 BC bronze and iron dress fittings and pottery were used as gifts. Most of the dress fittings are the same as those found at graves at that time. Much rarer are the bronze 'crown' neckrings. Most of the larger ones have no traces of wear and the form in general is not found in burials. It would seem that they had special ritual significance, possibly for marking some kind of social position.

Around 200 BC the nature of the votive deposits changed. A very large and ornate bronze cauldron was found in a low hill at Bra (it was definitely not part of a burial and despite its location is best interpreted as a votive deposit). In the very south of Jutland at Hjørtsspring a 19-metre-long wooden boat had been deposited in a lake and contained eight iron swords, 138 iron spearheads (with another 31 of wood and bone) and about 150 wooden shields, amongst other wood and metal artifacts.

Finally from the first century BC a few exceptional votive finds have been made: a gold torc, a pair of Celtic waggons with elaborate metal fittings and the famous gold and silver cauldron from Gundestrup.

There is evidence of radical changes in settlement layout and burial practices in the first century BC (and possibly earlier). The completely excavated settlement at Hodde developed initially as a single farmstead with an extra 50% more

cattle space than other farms and a number of small outbuildings including a 'strong room' with its own palisade and deep foundations.³ Around this large farm a number of small farmsteads were established (see Fig. 2) (Hvass 1975). Rare black burnished pottery was also found mainly, though not exclusively, in the compound of the main farmstead.

The changes in burial practices exhibit a similar trend. Certain cremation graves often containing the black burnished pottery were placed in new locations away from the earlier large cemeteries. Some of these contained the burnt remains of waggons and cauldrons — e.g. Kraghede (Klindt-Jensen 1949) and Husby (Raddatz 1967). Others contained large and varied weapon assemblages with finely made Celtic swords.

The changes in different contexts of material culture appear to fit together quite well. Votive deposits became increasingly elaborate and prestigious, presumably requiring more and more surplus for their production and importation. With the exception of pottery and a few of the bog corpses, these deposits finished at the same time as the same kinds of prestige goods were destroyed in individual cremation rites. If these goods had been given initially to supernatural deities, it would seem that their later occurrence in burials represents a transference of supernatural status to the ancestors of a restricted social group that was able to raise the surplus to acquire the imported commodities (either as raw material or finished product). The appearance of the large farmstead at this time complements the picture. The developing contradictory tendencies in the increasingly unequal competition for supernatural appeasement or aid produced a legitimization crisis where the egalitarian structure was infringed by incipient class divisions. The transition from 'gifts to gods' to 'gifts to ancestors' would appear to represent the stabilization of the new ruling group using its own dead to present a supernatural order which legitimated their new-found superiority.

By the end of the Pre-Roman Iron Age different parts of Jutland had begun on different social trajectories. For the second transformational cycle, events in southern Jutland between the beginning of the Christian era and 250 AD are considered in the framework of one of these trajectories.

By the beginning of the first century AD a few inhumation burials appeared as a new mortuary rite. Their regular association with black burnished pottery indicates that this new rite was adopted amongst many, though not all, of the newly established elite. These graves stand out by their relative simplicity and absence of material wealth. The standard inhumation assemblage at this time included a few black burnished pots, a small iron knife, an iron fibula, a couple of iron implements (such as razors or shears) and occasionally a gold finger ring and a pair of spurs (the latter two items are very rarely found in cremation graves). The differentiation between cremation and inhumation rites is further emphasized by the frequent survival of a mound over the inhumations (either constructed over the grave or a reused prehistoric earthwork). None of the inhumations have weaponry placed with the dead (unlike the cremations) while there is spatial

Fig. 2. Enclosed village at Hodde c. 100 BC. (From *Acta Archaeologica* 46 (1975): Figs. following p. 158.)



segregation of inhumation and cremation graves both within and between cemeteries.

This transition to a modest disposal of material items at funerals indicates that elites stopped competing in conventional terms of grave gift giving and now emphasized stylistic, ritual differences between elite and commoners. Rather than compete on the same terms as everyone else, they adopted a set of ritual practices which set them apart as a distinctive group. There is good evidence that the prestige items previously placed in graves and votive deposits were still in circulation yet not given as gifts to the dead. In other words the change in consumption patterns is not simply the result of declining availability of those prestige items. Settlement excavations have uncovered, at one site, the remains of a cauldron in a large farmhouse, and at another, the remains of a Celtic wagon in the first century AD levels of a large farmhouse (Jensen 1980). In addition, many cremations with weaponry date from this period but virtually all of them are accompanied by pottery which is not black burnished, indicating that other groups were now using the ritual conventions initiated by the elite a century before (cf. Miller 1982). The rejection of the need for conspicuous disposal of prestige items with the dead (though not rejected by an emulating secondary group) accompanied the imposition of ritual sanctions to demarcate social position in clearly recognizable categories. The elite, once established, did not need to legitimate their power by expending large resources.

The trend observable in cremation rites since the first century BC of separating male and female graves either in different cemeteries or within the cemetery continued into the first century AD. It was not however practised in inhumation cemeteries. Male cremations were often accompanied by weaponry although through the first and into the second century AD the number of weapon graves and the quantities of weapons in each grave declined. Swords, a prominent feature of first century BC graves, were increasingly less a component of later weapon graves. This would support the interpretation of emulation of previous ruling class mortuary practices if swords had been owned only by the upper stratum.

While the use of weaponry as grave gifts declined between the first and second centuries AD there was a gradual increase in the procurement of imported metalwork (as raw material and finished product) from the Roman world. Iron and bronze dress fittings on the corpse were increasingly replaced by silver and gold amongst a small minority of the population (Table 1). These imported items would necessitate the channelling of surplus into long-distance exchange transactions (the surplus presumably being agricultural and cattle products). The restriction of these imports predominantly to inhumation graves would suggest that their circulation was confined to a small ruling class which maintained alliances with other elites north of the Roman frontier. Although we know little of the system of land tenure, the large farms had the potential at least to extract a larger surplus than the others. This would have had the result of excluding smaller

farmers from the prestige exchange sphere. Social differences became more and more marked by this circulation of prestige items. The increase in competition for gifts to the dead would have had the effect of building up debts from small farmers unable to compete in the same terms. The tensions created by this situation of increasing inequality would have arisen out of the contradiction between the ideological acceptance of an elite protecting the interests of the community and the increasingly obvious self-interest displayed by the elite.

During this period there were also changes in the categorization of material forms. The simple ceramic designs of the early first century AD were incorporated or replaced by more elaborate and diverse motifs. The distinction between male and female cremation also changed. They were no longer spatially segregated and a number of burials had combined male and female artifact sets. Black burnished pottery became more frequent as a component of ordinary cremation graves while some cremations of the late second and early third centuries possessed all the accoutrements previously restricted to inhumations. Many of the clearly categorized organizational principles ordering funerary ritual had become blurred or redundant. Social tensions could no longer be represented and channelled through material categorization as the ideological basis of power was increasingly threatened.

The burial evidence for the last phase of the cycle points to a legitimization crisis. Many of the lavishly equipped graves were equipped with weaponry — possibly a symbolic demonstration of the ability to use force at a time of crisis. Furthermore, the graves with most items and with the greatest amounts of silver within this 250-year period were constructed at this time.

By the middle of the third century there was a rapid and total transformation of material culture (ceramics, metalwork, funeral ritual and farm construction) including the organization of production. The vast majority of burials were inhumations and displayed a much greater homogeneity than before. Likewise the farms were now of approximately equal size, similar to the previous large farms. Although this change appears to have been revolutionary, the exact form that it took (such as uprisings or external aggression) is unknown.

Conclusion

The Early Iron Age of Scandinavia (c. 400 BC–250 AD) was a time of social discontinuity after the clearly hierarchical ordering of Bronze Age society. The initially egalitarian structure of the Early Iron Age was changed through a series of rapid transformations over half a millennium into a hierarchical and class-divided system. Between c. 600 and 900 AD Denmark entered what is conventionally known as a Dark Age though the sparse material available (coins, writing, precious-metal hoards, territorial defences) points towards an increasingly centralized and powerful elite (Randsborg 1980). Documentary and archaeological evidence exists from the tenth century of large Viking kingdoms. This formation of early states was the culmination of 1500 years of discontinuity

Table 1 Grave finds of imported prestige items, 1st century BC to mid 3rd century AD.

	Samian ware	Gaming counter set	Bronze casserole/ladle/sieve	Bronze cauldron	Gold coin	Gold rivet/firing/item	Gold locket	Gold ring	Silver spoon	Silver cup	Silver rivet/firing/item	Glass bead necklace	Glass vessel	Silver fibula with gold plate	Silver fibula	Bronze fibula with gold plate	Bronze fibula with silver plate
1st century BC								1			1						
Early 1st century AD			1		1		1	1			1	1			1		
Late 1st–2nd century AD								1			9	3	1		3		
2nd century AD		1	1			2	2	3	1		7		1	1	3		1
Late 2nd–early 3rd century AD	1	3	10	10			1	9		4	51	4	4	1	3	1	2

social change from a small-scale agricultural egalitarian society.

This study has attempted to outline one way of transforming material remains into social insights. The relationship of ideology and material culture has been investigated to understand how social values and identities can be given material expression and then why only at certain times. Strategies of legitimation through conspicuous consumption, manipulation of ancestors or identity consciousness are some of the forms that this expression may take. One particular aspect of social and material life, mortuary practices and the relations between living and dead, has been developed as a potential medium for the ideological manipulation of power amongst the living. The long-term changes in mortuary ritual were compared with the evidence from settlements and votive deposits and used to document and interpret a series of revolutionary watersheds which drastically transformed Scandinavian society. Comparison with similar precise chronologies for the prehistory of other parts of the world will allow us to find out whether cycles of rapid, discontinuous change have been the most important and frequent form of social development for the human species.

Notes

- 1 From the archaeologist's point of view it is interesting to note that Friedman omits the role of burial practices, firstly in 'creating' ancestors and secondly as a major form of feasting and conspicuous consumption through which debts are accumulated (see Gilhodes 1922; Hanson 1913).
- 2 Only one grave, that may date to this period (300–100 BC), stands out. It was found at Mollerup in the last century and contained two La Tene silver cups and a bronze vessel (Brøndsted 1960: 30–1).
- 3 Certain assumptions need to be examined. The larger byre might not have been fully used, and even if it was, the difference between it and the small farm byres might not have been enough to allow a substantial difference in subsistence output. Although there was only one hearth in the living area we cannot be sure

that there was not a larger family unit consuming the surplus of the increased production.

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