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Wither Iranian Archaeology?
An Overview of the Iranian Perspective on Theoretical Archaeology

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Abstract

Dealing with the historical formation of the body of beliefs and ideas that constitute Iranian archaeology requires much more extensive treatment and documentation of the impact of the political history of Iran on the pocition of Iranian archaeology. It requires also a survey of the degree to which different groups of individual accepted the dominant interpretation of the past and an evaluation of the reliability of the dominant ideology Because there has never been an attempt to provide a critical evaluation of archaeology of Iran, the mechanisms of the various political, social, and economic factors constituting the formation of archaeology are completely unknown. This paper will not attempt to explain the current state of archaeological theory in general, but rather it is an analysis of the current state of the theoretical archaeology in Iran, in order, on the one hand to demonstrato the important reason for such non-theoretical archaeology in Iran, and on the other hand to reflect the maturity of the subject and the principal ideas which Iranian archaeologists will inevitably need for their future developments.

Keywords: Iranian Archaeology, Near Eastern Archaeology, Theorotical Archaeology, Culture History, Antiguarianism.

Introduction

It has long been recognised that archaeology has developed differently in various countries or regions of the world. As in other parts of the Near East the development of archaeology in Iran has been due to (1) in part the nature of the regional archaeological record and the resources available for archaeological research; (2) more fundamentally national or ethnic loyalties and adherence to political philosophies and cultural

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traditions; and (3) the crucial influence of eminent scholars. The goal of the present paper is to examine and try to account for variations in the questions asked and in modes of analysing and explaining data employed by archaeologists in Iran. This paper discusses the special factors affecting the development of archaeology in Iran, to see how far these can account for the features that distinguish the archaeology currently practised in Iran from that encountered elsewhere. For this, the first goal is to explain the present state of archaeology in Iran. To achieve this I also aim to delineate as clearly and dispassionately as possible the special characteristics, achievements, and the current problems of Iranian archaeological tradition. During the pre-Revolution period, the political ideology of the regime sometimes encouraged, but more often restricted, the development of archaeological research. As a result of severe restrictions an increasing number of archaeologists devoted their attention only to the refinement of typological definitions and chronological changes. As a result of the loss of contacts with colleagues abroad that began with the Revolution and continued for sometime thereafter, Iranian archaeologists still pursue their research in the directions set in the 1950s. During the sixties and seventies new trends were developed by the 'New Archaeologists' such as multi-disciplinary research, the questioning of diffusionary theories, and growing concern with problems of social structure, economic process, settlement pattern and urbanisation (Redman, 1991). While these developments were certainly welcome, they engaged the attention of relatively few archaeologists; in part, Iranian archaeologists, because of several restrictions, did not heed the voice of the 'New Archaeologists' such as Braidwood, for example, who was working in Iran at the time and who urged a change in direction of research toward hypothesis testing, processual analysis, and injection of anthropological theories into archaeological research. Anthropology in the Anglo-Saxon tradition which laid strong emphasis on scientific methods and technical analysis, has not affected archaeological approaches in this country. Instead, a parallel tradition of archaeology as historical research dominated the indigenous antiquarian tradition. It was affirmed as an academic discipline in the pre-Revolution period by archaeologists and historians affiliated with the Imperial regime. The structure of Iranian academic institutions has always tended to perpetuate the research orientations that are familiar to those in positions of authority. As a result the dominant research paradigm has always been toward problems of sequence and chronology rather than concern with broader cultural issues and a social archaeology. This tradition has carried on scarcely unchanged in the post-Revolution period as well. Thus, what we see today results from an archaeological evolution that began with the past repressive regime in Iran. I believe that archaeology in Iran will remain isolated from the main stream of World Archaeology, unless Iranian archaeologists redirect their energies toward updating archaeology through constructing a new organisation for it, and adopting new ideas. It is obvious that any new plan for archaeology in Iran should be based on a knowledge of its background, its development, and the most important factors affecting these processes. Unfortunately, Iranian archaeologists are not interested in the study of the history of archaeology (apart from a few descriptive articles, e.g. Negahban 1997), nor has there been any critical review of archaeology published. Thus researchers who need access to the archives encounter many difficulties due to deficiencies in the management system of archaeology, and a heavy bureaucracy dominates the whole administrative system of the country. However, since the Revolution the situation has changed; for instance, the appearance of a relatively

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good political and social context in Iranian society; the appearance of a younger generation of archaeologists; the availability of adequate financial resources; an increase in new archaeological departments in universities; and a growing attention of government to archaeology. Despite these, at present, Iranian archaeology is in a virtual state of crisis. The post-Revolution transformation has produced only a few changes and the most important features of the crisis (mostly inherited from the previous regime) and their main causes still remain unchanged. In this paper I will try to explain the main causes of this crisis in the archaeology of Iran and, as mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, to show why Iranian archaeology is so impervious to currents of thought in the rest of the world, especially technical and theoretical ones. I believe that the great gap between the archaeology of Iran and World Archaeology cannot be simply removed by carrying out empirical research in various fields, because the present structure of archaeology and its great deficiencies will prevent the contribution of such work from allowing further development. Therefore our first priority in doing archaeological research must be concerned with the way in which archaeology can be salvaged from its present pitfalls. Without a firm recognition of the circumstances under which archaeology operates, even the idea of modernising archaeology will be a meaningless matter. In this short sketch, I will try to achieve two things: first, by looking backward, to see how we arrived where we are today; second, by looking ahead (however risky, in a rapidly developing field) in order to describe some goals mainly in theory and method. Here I might as well be bold and suggest what I think is an ideal programme for the future.

Development of Archaeology and Archaeological Research in Iran

The starting point of the Iranian archaeology was the same as for other Near Eastern archaeological research which relates to western scholarship interests, firstly to discovery of the lost civilisation of the Bible Lands, then to display interesting objects in museums (e.g. Daniel, 1981,. Fagan, 1985, Steibing, 1993). Up to 1927 the archaeology of Iran was exclusively under French control. All excavations were directed to the discovery of the visible ancient city of Susa; as a result much remarkable material found its way to the Louvre Museum. Soon after 1928, though the termination of French monopoly opened the gates to all, the previous trend in museum interest collection remained dominant, with some transformation in ideas and techniques. Development of regional chronologies prevailed in the archaeological research; nevertheless, we should note that investigating a number of prehistoric sites formed the basic goal of this period of archaeological activities. It was only at the beginning of the 1960s that the American 'New Archaeologists' started problem-oriented and hypothesis testing approaches, mainly in the Neolithic period. Such approaches initiated a new era in the archaeology of Iran. Advanced methods of stratigraphy and careful control over the context of material remains was widely used, and research designs to solve problems concerning the economic relationships of human communities received more attention rather than a more description of cultural material (e.g. Hole et al. 1969). In the post-Revolution period (started in 1979) the revolution brought all foreign excavations to an end, and many changes occurred in the organisation of archaeology which has led to a 10 year cessation of work. Fortunately it has become active again by the parliament approving of new laws and a reorganisation of various archaeological centres under the 'Cultural Heritage Organisation' (CHO) in 1989. Though this organisation began immediately to reform and reorganise archaeological activities, nevertheless, the unfamiliarity of Iranian

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archaeologists with the new thoughts of the 'World Archaeology' and many deficiencies associated with the system of archaeology, means there are few immediate prospects for the development of a programme of archaeological excavation; for this we may have to wait for a long time

The Impact of the 'New Archaeology' on the Archaeology of Iran

The discussion that follows aims to characterise the methodological and theoretical aspects of the work carried out by American 'New Archaeologists' in Iran during the 1960s and 1970s. The question of why this trend has not led to a fundamental change in the traditional orientation of Iranian archaeology will be discussed later in this paper. Firstly an important point should be mentioned here, that Iranian archaeology from its origins in the French tradition up to the present time (about 150 years) has always been pragmatic, so that nowhere in the literature can one find a general definition of archaeology or a body of archaeological theory. This is in sharp contrast to American anthropological archaeology which has generated a large number of theoretical works (for theoretical themes of American archaeology, see Willey and Sabloff 1974, 1993, Binford 1977). The American 'New Archaeologists' introduced the following approaches to Iran: (a) a multi-disciplinary approach; (b) the consideration of environmental factors; (c) the consideration of the values of ethnoarchaeology; (d) the employment of general systems theory (a systemic view of culture) with its quantitative methodology; (e) the concept of an explicit scientific method with hypothesis testing. These were the fundamental directions of the 'New Archaeology' of the 1960s in America (Willey and Sabloff 1974, pp. 183-197) and at the same time in the Near East (Redman, 1978) and Iran (for the case of Iran, see Niknami, 1999). In methodology the innovations of the 'New Archaeology' in Iran followed from contemporary theory in American archaeology. However, because of the typical characteristics of the archaeological approach of Iranian archaeologists (pragmatic rather than conceptual) emphasis on methodology prevailed over the development of theory. Before the arrival of the 'New Archaeology', traditional explanations of cultural change in Iran were based usually on (according to the Ghirshman school) factors such as art, religion, politics, history and typology (see for example Ghirshman, 1954 & 1977). The 'New Archaeology' in contrast placed an emphasis on the environment and technology (such as the work carried out by Braidwood and his colleagues in Iranian Kurdistan, (Braidwood et al, 1961) and by Hole's team at Ali Kosh (Hole et al, 1969). They applied sophisticated methods of recovery and scientific analysis. Such methods enabled them to recognise important evidence of environmental adaptations, subsistence systems, trade, and the like. In their interpretation of processes by which human society evolved over time 'New Archaeologists' focused on explanation instead of simply description. The environmental approach with its concern for ecofacts and artifacts, and its goals of reconstructing past culture as part of the ecosystem concentrated on regional surface survey, especially simpler one-period sites, and settlement pattern studies. In excavation a large multi-disciplinary staff of environmental archaeologists such as ethnobotanists and zoologists attempted total recovery of floral and faunal remains through improved methods of sieving and flotation of excavated areas in order to analyse the food production economy (e.g. Hole et al, 1969). Palynologists attempted to determine the degree of climatic change (e.g. van Zeist and Bottema, 1977). Urban geographers sought through 'central place' analysis to estimate population size for the region and to build models of exchange and distribution of

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products (e.g. Wright, 1975). The appreciation of the value of ethnography was relatively new. A general lack of anthropological training has prevented Iranian archaeologists from equipping themselves for ethnographic observations. Furthermore, the wealth of historical texts leads them generally to comparative methods which focus largely on a direct historical approach (see Flannery, 1967 for a similar explanation). The first step of using ethnography as a tool of archaeology was taken by the 'New Archaeologists'. Their studies compared models of anthropology and prehistory with analogies drawn from the study of modern societies. Kramer (1982) studied a modern village in Western Iran to understand socio-economic change of the region in the prehistoric period.

The adoption of general systems theory (a systemic view of culture and focusing attention on various sub-systems by studying the nature and the extent of archaeological record as well as archaeological patterning as a reflection of human behaviour) has not been as widespread in Iran as it has been in contemporary American archaeology. In method this approach used the techniques of sampling, retrieval techniques (noted above) and multi-variate statistical analysis (for a general discussion on systems theory see Flannery, 1968 & 1976; Binford and Binford, 1968; Clarke, 1978). Such analysis only becomes feasible as computers are fully applied to the manipulation of archaeological data. Iranian archaeology has not used computers even simply as a mechanical tool to record basic information from field records. The initial computer programming of excavated material including pottery and other artifacts was employed by Lamberg-Karlovsky at Tepe-Yahya from 1971, but there has been little testing of results and no published reports of further developments (Lamberg-Karlovsky and Beale, 1986, ch. 1). An explicitly scientific method was a basic trend in the current American orientation. It assumed that the testing of general "covering laws" and the explanation of cultural patterning in the scientific sense should be the major objective of archaeology (Watson et al. 1971; Renfrew 1973). This viewpoint has not been adopted by the archaeology of Iran. An important reason for this failure may be the historical orientation of Iranian research that is not amenable to scientific (deductive) methods (see below). However, the general influence of this idea is seen in the development of research design, in the emphasis of problem solving strategies, and in the testing of hypotheses that increasingly characterised some American projects in Iran in the 1970s.

These projects used natural sciences in areas such as radiocarbon dating, geological analysis of sediments, and the like, but other contemporary scientific methods such as the thermoluminescence and neutron-activation analysis capable of dating and studying the exact source of ceramics, for instance, have never been introduced into Iranian archaeology. In summary, it may be said that perhaps the single most important contribution of the 'New Archaeology' to our field in Iran, is that it has raised the right questions. It has focused on the potential of archaeology for understanding cultural change in general, rather than emphasising on a direct historical approach. It has also brought to light mass of new evidence for the elucidation of a spatial-temporal range and succession of material culture in Iran. Despite this, It is clear that the external influences had only a minimal impact on archaeology in Iran; the 'New Archaeology', which first developed in American circles more than thirty years ago, made a somewhat belated impact on Iranian archaeology in the seventies. Not all its agenda has been adopted, because of the unresolved problems of the philosophy of the 'New Archaeology; non-methodological and theoretical structure of Iranian archaeology and because it was pioneered by anthropologists on relatively recent and

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simple New World sites, it is not totally applicable to the long historical sequences of complex Iranian mounds. I argue that Iranian archaeology was simply left behind, 'out of date', and generally atheoretical.

The Iranian Perspective on Theoretical Archaeology

Dealing with the historical formation of the body of beliefs and ideas that constitute Iranian archaeology requires much more extensive treatment and documentation of the impact of the political history of Iran on the position of Iranian archaeology. It requires also a survey of the degree to which different groups of individuals accepted the dominant interpretation of the past and an evaluation of the reliability of the dominant ideology. Because there has never been an attempt to provide a critical evaluation of archaeology of Iran, the mechanisms of the various political, social, and economic factors constituting the formation of archaeology are completely unknown. Archaeology in Iran from its beginning has always been used as an ideological link with national patriotic aspirations. It was a tradition which not only affected Iran and all the Near Eastern countries to highlight their past in order to add the necessary colour to the dominant ideology, but also, as the post-Napoleonic period has witnessed, a marked increase in nationalistic trends backed by romanticism prevailed throughout Europe at the time (Trigger, 1984, p.358). Renfrew (1980) distinguished this great tradition of archaeology in the Mediterranean lands and the Near East as one which regarded the principles of archaeology as simple and self evident, and archaeology forms one element in the characterisation of a nation's cultural superiority. Thus, archaeology very quickly entered into the service of the glorification of the past, and a very definite patriotic content was included. In the Near East this ideological use of the past had two aspects: one is the encouragement of nationalistic feelings which focused interest on archaeological ruins and history and a complete set of cultural phenomena, the other, is an active international concern for the discovery of biblical monuments reflecting the interest of European narratives. As a consequence very little attention was paid to any original approach which might escape this imposed position. Cultural history and history of art became the main research goals and at the same time there was no particular encouragement for Iranian archaeology to follow contemporary Western theoretical orientation. Human history as a central issue in countries like England with a leading international political role at that time (Trigger, 1984, p.304) was of no concern to Iranian history. The archaeological aspects of the debated issues such as the idea of progress of archaeology and its relation, for example, to social structure (Trigger, 1989), social evolutionism, the environmental determinism of Ratzel (Earle and Preucel, 1987), the historical particularism of Boas (Harris, 1968), which were all of particular interest among scholars at the time, left the archaeology of Iran completely unaffected. One of the main effects on archaeological thought in Iran during the pre-Revolution period has been the country's political situation under the regime headed by the Pahlavi Dynasty (1921-1978). Certain attitudes were oriented by authorities who blocked the introduction of theories and the development of models opposed to the official ideology. Related to this political environment, the system of universities and archaeological centres favoured certain kinds of traditional research rather than theoretical innovations of rational and methodological archaeology. Archaeology was classified among the humanities which isolated it from the influences of natural sciences. Furthermore, at a time when the trend in other parts of the world was for prehistoric studies to seek inspiration from anthropology and the natural sciences, the subject of prehistory attracted little attention or was even

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completely ignored. Other factors encouraging traditional archaeology have included economic limitations in the field of education and research on the prehistoric period. A partiality to some foreign researchers and their fashions prevented the genesis of an indigenous alternative. As we have seen, the concept of the 'New Archaeology' was introduced to the archaeology of Iran by Braidwood's interdisciplinary approach which was continued by the work of Hole and Flannery. They applied their theories, methods, and programmes to the quantitatively and qualitatively rich archaeological material available in Iran, and so tested them against the theories and methods of previous traditions, e.g. testing Childe's hypothesis concerning the beginning of agriculture in the Near East (Redman, 1978). Despite the presence of a great number of Iranian archaeologists working with those teams, and their familiarity with the application of physical, chemical, biological, and mathematical techniques, such a tradition did not take root in Iran and anti-theoretical traditions continued to be dominant. There are a number of possible reasons responsible for the neglect of theoretical phenomena in the archaeology of Iran, possible explanations include:

1) The academic system of Iran was until recently isolated and always had difficulties in renewing itself or accepting innovations of any kind. Archaeological departments have not been affected by theoretical considerations. Art historians were, and still are, dominant in all departments. There are no courses emphasising generalised approaches, or the teaching of the methodology, epistemology and philosophy of archaeology, as well as environmental archaeology, computing or quantitative methods. In general, archaeological courses do not reflect the major advances in archaeological knowledge or methods, and they do not consider excavation techniques and some basic concepts such as typology and stratigraphy. It is typical that university textbooks which refer to modern archaeological literature have not appeared in Iran, and still make no specific mention of the work of the pioneering archaeologists. The attitudes of the leading archaeologists as well as their work are completely unknown through academic training courses. The inadequacy of training programmes along with the limited employment of professional archaeologists in the archaeological services prevent the infusion of new ideas into the profession. Furthermore, as I have mentioned earlier the ideological and nationalistic character of the discipline in Iran offers perhaps a much more acceptable explanation for the underdevelopment of theoretical archaeology in Iran. Selecting between changing paradigms was never a question of academic choice and archaeologists from their limited social position have a limited potential for affecting this historically formed ideological structure;
2) Organisational factors; this is a major general drawback of archaeology in Iran. The division of the archaeological community into two separate branches, CHO and universities, without any common platform for discussion and exchange of ideas;
3) The specific concentration of Iranian archaeologists on huge excavation projects mainly in relation to State aspirations. These enormous projects have always diverted archaeologists' attention from the theoretical questions (now as before, there are extensive projects being undertaken but no priority is given to archaeological field research and theoretical issues);
4) The theoretical discussions in archaeology have mainly been developed by scholars concerned with the prehistoric period. In Iran, in the absence of any conscious tendency by archaeologists to study

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this period, the theoretical debates focusing on questions about the nature of explanation and the explanation of the processes of social change have been completely ignored. On the other hand, the archaeologists of the historical period are more interested in the historically documented materials, and do not feel such concerns to be relevant to their field;

5) It can be argued that the wealth of data and availability of archaeological material may be responsible for the limitation of theoretical thinking in Iran. Everywhere a great number of finds appear. Unlike some countries (e.g. America) where a lack of archaeological finds can result in a major theoretical development, in Iran archaeologists have been usually more inclined to become antiquarians and art historians;

6) The isolation of Iranian archaeology from the external influences in the both pre and post Revolution periods can be a major reason for the lack of theoretical consideration in archaeology. This problem was increased under the political and economic crisis of the country after the Revolution which made access to new literature and archaeological sciences more difficult and sometimes impossible. Another reason is the difficulty many Iranian students of archaeology have in reading complicated English theoretical texts with any certainty of understanding them properly. It should be mentioned here that the important theoretical works such as those by the 'New Archaeologists' in America or by Clarke in Britain have never been translated into the Iranian language, or seriously and critically presented and discussed in the archaeological literature. The recent Postprocessual trends in British theoretical debate are also completely unknown, and Feminist and Gender perspectives have not yet found their way into archaeological research and publication in this country;

7) As it has been suggested, some ideologies such as Marxism have played an important role in generating theoretical discussions in archaeology (e.g. Hodder, 1991a). Marxism in Iran has never been an effective alternative to the dominant ideology especially at a public level (because of deeply held Islamic beliefs), although its influences on academic approaches may be considerable. After the Second World War the Communist Party, loyal to Russian political and ideological strategies, formed a minority group. An awareness of Marxism in society and in science has been advocated by intellectuals in the realms of sociology, but not in archaeology. Among a large range of Marxist literature which has been translated into the Iranian language, only one work of Childe (Man Makes Himself) has been translated and published. It is for these reasons that archaeology is treated within a historical framework leading to essentially descriptive research. A survey of Iranian archaeological journals published since 1965 (Art and Public; Archaeology; Journal of Historical Studies) and two important journals published since the Revolution (Athar; Journal of Iranian Archaeology and History) shows that all articles are merely descriptive (reports of archaeological material recovered from excavations, or studies of collections or individual objects), with no attempt at widening the analysis beyond a few typological series. The articles reporting excavation show a total lack of theoretical consideration. The cultural historical viewpoints (the interpretation of archaeological data within a historical or culture-history framework) means that archaeology is traditionally used to illustrate historical research on

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ancient Iranian cultures, confining archaeological research to establishing chronologies, or defining typological and stylistic variations. Sometimes a small movement towards the new ideas in archaeology has been started by a minority group which is active and influential wherever the younger generation has attained posts of responsibility as researchers or lecturers. Their initial interest has been less towards adaptive and evolutional theories and more towards scientific methods. Thus, one cannot talk of theoretical debate in Iran, or of the development of ideas through propositions, critiques, and replies; at least it does not appear in the published record. The reasons for this situation relate to the non-theoretical structure of the Iranian archaeology, the political and ideological conditions of society, and the lack of a general awareness in understanding the potential of theoretical thinking in the development of archaeology. This brief discussion shows that the lack of theory in Iranian archaeology is not simply the result of the isolation of Iran from the centres of theoretical innovations; it is also the result of historical processes that from an early date tied the reconstruction of the past to a specific political idea. What can be said from this discussion is that the work archaeologists do in Iran is generally identified with political ideological purposes, denying archaeology as a discipline, its real explanatory potential and of its ability to make a contribution to social developments. It will be only within this social context that one can envisage a reaction against the traditional paradigms and overcome the lack of influence of the 'New Archaeology' in Iran.

The Culture History Paradigm in Iranian Archaeology

In Iranian archaeology, the main areas of interest have always been chronology, typology, and cultural history, for the purpose of establishing the continuity of Iranian history, and the origins of ethnic groups, and their culture, and the definition of the influences and contacts between them. While such considerations have a theoretical basis, the theory is completely tacit. In this paradigm discussion about methodological questions is generally concerned with traditional problems such as the nature of typological change, the definition of traditional archaeological entities (e.g. culture groups), and the reconstruction of relative sequences. Archaeologists in Iran still continue to work within this paradigm, even to the present day. They are in fact antiquarians, representatives of an archaeology which emphasises a direct approach to objects, and analyses of monuments outside their contexts. They were, and are still, not generally interested in ecofacts and the natural properties of artifactual entities. Though the radiocarbon dating method was extensively used in Iran by foreign expeditions, it is rarely used by Iranians for such purposes. Yet the methods of probabilistic sampling and planning of excavation as well as using scientific prospecting methods (e.g. geochemical and geophysical) have not taken root in Iranian archaeology. Under such circumstances Iranian archaeology has missed opportunities for applying new methodologies by which new questions may arise and help to undermine the culture historical paradigm. Of the many foreign archaeologists who have worked in Iran between the two World Wars, Ghirshman, a French archaeologist who carried out a large number of excavations throughout the country, has had a considerable impact on Iranian history (Ghirshman, 1954). He wished to turn the study of monuments into a specific means of acquiring knowledge about the past, and to establish stylistic rules which would permit each object to be attributed to a period and to a place. His publications concentrate primarily on aesthetic interpretations of

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antiquities. His theoretical approach did not simply stop at diffusionist interpretations to explain the "Indo-Iranian" phenomenon (a prime interest of the Iranian Court) but tried to demonstrate the superiority of their civilisations in contrast to indigenous cultures (see Ghirshman, 1977). The typological method in the antiquarian school of Ghirshman was based on several fundamental assumptions: (a) distinctive artifact types may be used to identify cultures; (b) the distributions of such artifact types reflect cultural domains; (c) cultural domains reflect the presence of tribal or ethnic groups.

He distinguished many types of distinctive artifacts as characteristic of cultures throughout Iran and divided them into indigenous and invader categories. His model did not try to equate languages and ethnic groups with specific archaeological culture groups or even with individual types of artifacts. What he attempted was to identify, on the basis of a detailed knowledge of the past cultures, periods of continuous development and periods of discontinuity. This school and its Iranian followers, however, made many attempts at solving particular problems within the 'Indo-Iranian' question by concentrating on the origins and later displacements of various tribes. Solutions proposed were mostly based on the consideration of art styles, religious belief (mainly grave rituals), and artifact typology. The archaeological interpretation of this school in terms of diffusion and migration seems to be derived to some extent from Kossinna's approach which after the First World War had a profound influence on German archaeology (Trigger, 1989, pp.163-167). An important question here is the differences in the archaeological material between various types of grave goods, and their possible associations with different population groups (e.g. the identification of social strata and groups). Questions of this type are based on specific artifact types, and on the definition of symbols, rank, and power in a given period. Such analyses never questioned whether material culture is suitable for reconstructing social stratification. Archaeology in Iran has always attempted to clarify social questions on the basis of the archaeological material (e.g. interpreting social position in a given period according to data on inscriptions) rather than a detailed examination of the entire material culture. Despite a recent reassessment (e.g. Renfrew 1987) of the 'Indo-European' question which suggests that the solution to this question is certainly not to be found in archaeology alone, but will require collaboration between archaeologists, linguists, ethnologists, and mythologists to develop new theoretical models, the bias in favour of diffusionism is still evident in the present day archaeology of Iran. The culture-history paradigm has continued without any change in all fields of archaeology until recently. The study of Palaeolithic archaeology and environmental data has long been completely neglected in Iranian Archaeology (for the story of Palaeolithic archaeology in Iran see Niknami, 1999). Neolithic archaeology which was oriented by Braidwood to the new ideas of the early 1960s has reverted to traditional ways. Iranian archaeologists of the Neolithic period are often well aware of the work done by Hole and Flannery, but their own projects are carried out with a minimum of theory or more often no theory at all. Other fields of archaeology such as the Bronze Age and Iron Age have continued in the same way as laid down by the Ghirshman antiquarian school. Some of the results are the pursuit of typology and chronology as an end in itself, and an overemphasis on the rich burials. There is no model building or theoretical interpretation in this field. Protohistoric archaeology has its share of traditional antiquarian approaches, but on the whole it presents a varied picture. Much of this is due to the influences of scholars such as Dyson (1972) and Young (1967), who started wide ranging projects involving protohistoric archaeology in Iran during the 1960s and 1970s. They produced a

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cultural historical interpretation of chronological and spatial patterns of artifacts discovered. From a theoretical point of view, Dyson's socio-political interpretations of protohistoric patterns in Northern Iran were more important because he tried to use historical and anthropological concepts to overcome the limitations of the traditional definition of an archaeological culture. Such attempts have never been continued after they left Iran. Historical and Islamic archaeology have close links with historical, linguistic and documented subjects. They present a fragmented picture which makes it difficult to speak of historical or Islamic archaeology. These fields of archaeology were, and still are, dominated by art-historical approaches, which set them apart from all other branches of archaeology. A problem of historical studies is the uncritical use of historical and written sources for the interpretations of evidence. Both fields are concerned with the material remains of the full historical period. Also there has been no development of approaches to an analysis or interpretation of evidence, or theories or methodology to overcome the limitations of the different types of evidence available. Historical archaeology in Iran seems to be more conservative; its main focus has always been on the sophisticated palaces and architectural remains and has neglected the people who lived around such areas. In general, historical archaeology in Iran is seen as subsidiary to history, and descriptions are written within a framework of historical context. Some productive research strategies have been conducted in this field, such as Whitehouse's excavation at Siraf, for example (Whitehouse, 1970). At the time these were something of a reaction to the architectural and art historical approaches to the surviving material of the historical period, to the exclusion of other parts of the archaeological record. Their impact on Iranian archaeological approaches seems to have been negligible, and there has been no continuation of this area of archaeological interest. Finally, the statement of Clarke (1972, p.18) that the historical periods could offer an important testing ground for theories of interpretation, since archaeological data could be set alongside independent sources of information, has never been considered by Iranian historical archaeologists.

Conclusions and Prospects

There are many possibilities for developing a radical discourse; economic priorities still lead most archaeological activities; although Iran has important ecological problems, environmental studies are still descriptive in approach, and no socio-economic ecological perspective has been developed; the cultural heritage and the problem of what to do with it, has not been considered from an alternative position; neither has a programme of the role of archaeology in education. After the Revolution there has been an increase in the number of excavations, but the results and the specific process of research remain under the control of traditional archaeologists. Most importantly, one should mention the absence of communication between archaeology and the rest of society; archaeology has no role in the social, economic, and political debates in society. The archaeological community generally remains more interested in the maintenance of its isolated elitist position, rather than offering a critical view of the past in relation to the present. The remedy for the archaeology of Iran should be considered in two directions; first, upgrading field methods as already mentioned. It is a fact that Iranian archaeology has not experienced each of the four competing paradigms or approaches that Clarke saw in the archaeological scene of 1972 (Clarke, 1972, p.43). They have included the morphological, the anthropological, the ecological, and the geographical paradigms. Some aspects of such paradigms were brought to Iran by the 'New Archaeology' but caused

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no changes in the thinking of Iranian archaeologists. For the future, archaeologists should be expanding the application of scientific techniques, rather than concentrating on the recovery of objects and architectural structures. The new methods mainly concern the analysis of organic material, metal objects, stone implements, the recording of intrasite distribution patterns and systematic field surveying. It should be mentioned, however, that these new archaeological techniques must be used in a critical way and should be related to specific questions or some theoretical framework for the reconstructing of past societies. At the same time, specific research programmes should be prepared with explicit hypotheses on the environment, economy and society, as well as social theories of historical change and the discussion of specific aspects within archaeological theories. Second, turning to theoretical archaeology; archaeology itself at the end of the present century has become a particularistic, historical, quantitative and artifact-based discipline (some aspects were predicted by Clarke in 1972). It is also subjective, and anti-positivist, multi paradigmatic and pluralistic, more politically, and ideologically conscious, both as a humanistic and a social science (Shanks and Tilley, 1987a, see also Hodder, 1991b). This trend needs collaboration with other disciplines such as philosophy, social anthropology, sociology, history, ethnology, etc. A glance at the bibliography of the archaeological literature in Iran shows the gap between Iranian social thought in other disciplines and archaeological researches undertaken. The adoption of such an archaeology (from a theoretical point of view) requires the following necessary developments:

1) In an initial stage of development of archaeological theory, one of the central questions will be to find an adequate definition of the subject and its object of study. As we have already seen, the main goal of the 'New Archaeology' was to define archaeology as the science studying the material remains which societies in all times and places have created for their existence. In this respect, the objects of study of archaeology are the material remains themselves. Since all archaeological materials are not of the same order and therefore cannot be grouped into the same type of categories, this implies that each material has a special meaning in itself. The problem that arises is that one object may possess more than one cultural meaning. Only the contextual relations of the objects can help to replace them in a cultural structure. The object conceived as a message would consist of a semantic value, which implies a direct meaning (e.g. flakes, bones, etc), and an associated value which arises from its contextual relations. Thus the aim of the theoretical discursive analysis, should be to define the dimensions of structural complexities, in order to reveal their structural function. The definition of structural categories will allow us to provide an economic and social meaning (Hodder, 1982). The knowledge of archaeology in Iran must refer to the meaning and the structural and contextual positions of the material objects. This can only be achieved through the building of a scientific archaeology, which means a discipline with a particular theoretical framework. Its aim should be to formulate the logical representations of past social and cultural facts, and the real object of study of archaeology should be to propose coherent representations which by validating theories and with empirical support, explain the historical meaning of the nature, properties and presence of archaeological materials (Hodder, 1989, 1992, see also chapters in Preucel and Hodder, 1996). In order to achieve this true scientific knowledge, archaeology will need a specific paradigm. This

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paradigm is urgently needed in Iran where the archaeological object is still admired and inductivist position is still dominant;

2) Iranian archaeologists should be aware of the recognition of the political and social context of the practice of archaeology and assess the implications of such a recognition. Shanks and Tilley (1987a, 1987b), through their critical discussion of contemporary European archaeology, have provided a specific answer to the above problem. In their view contemporary archaeology with its various characteristics and claims (i.e. its separation of theory from practice, its divorcing of the past from the present), is an element in the structure of power and knowledge by which the capitalist economies of Europe have come to dominance. In contrast, archaeology should be a means of exposing these ideologies, of reassessing the role of the past in the discourse of the present, and engaging in a critique of modern society; archaeology is nothing if it is not critique (Shanks and Tilley 1987b, p. 213). To facilitate our attempts to attain our objectives we have to discuss the problem of having a political ideology-based archaeology, and the political facts should not distract us from the problems of theoretical archaeology. Archaeological research should reflect the political aspects of Iranian society, aiming at demonstrating how the archaeological past influences present-day society, and how present ideologies form our constructions of the past. On the other hand, archaeologists also must be more aware of their political and ideological influences in modern society, and must explicitly analyse and express the fundamentals of their scientific goals and research. Fortunately, in Iran in recent years, there have been debates (among the younger generation of archaeologists) leading towards a critical reassessment of current attitudes of archaeology. Such debates should provide the way for a reappraisal of the state and aims of traditional Iranian archaeology, and to challenge the political misuse of archaeology. At the same time the ideological nature of ethnic studies which have deep roots in Iranian archaeology and are still very much alive, should be exposed and criticised;

3) This sense of creating a modern archaeology finds expression in the universities, but this leads to the question of the potential of archaeology in society. The theoretical and methodological foundations of the discipline should be discussed with the aim of developing a modern framework in which a more scientific and socially relevant archaeology can be undertaken. The creation of a number of posts and departments of archaeology in universities will open the possibility of institutionalising the concept of theory, and this will give it a firm basis in the country. Some archaeological courses at universities should incorporate several areas of the theoretical knowledge needed to devise a new framework, such as the basics of philosophy, economics, general sociological and anthropological theories, and a new set of questions produced by these theories. The increase in publications and conferences on theory will help the development of the concept;

4) This needs to be seen against the background of the political boundaries of the Near East which were drawn up after the First World War, and which do not coincide with archaeological ethnic boundaries. This problem has generally given rise to the chauvinistic political views which often employ historical and archaeological data in order to prove their particular propositions. The revival of this trend today among some Central Asian countries (see, for example, Kohl and Tsetskhladze,

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1995, ch. 10) with strong governmental support, may force Iranian archaeology to take part in a pointless competition, with its political consequences. To avoid this, as far as the ethnic groups of Iran are concerned, we have to demonstrate that only after detailed studies can the problem of ethnic attributions be revised. Only then can the tentative steps be taken from specific archaeological problems towards the important issues of correlation between archaeological cultures, assemblages, languages, and ethnic groups;

5) Finally, one cannot overlook the fact that from about the 1980s, there have been a wide range of programmatic announcements drawn up in the Iranian literature presenting paradigms for the humanities according to Islamic philosophy (it has deeply affected the circulation of some academic research particularly in sociology). The influence of this philosophy is more complex, and yet what is stated in Islamic syllabuses is not in fact incorporated in the research practice of archaeologists. Nevertheless, the attempts to define the aims of archaeology as an independent discipline, and evaluations of Islamic ideas and their impact on theoretical questions, should be a major obligation of archaeologists. In summary, it has been shown that there is a limited range of archaeological theories and research directions in Iranian archaeology. In addition theoretical ideas from the 'New Archaeology' and from the international literature have made no serious impact on the archaeology of Iran. The basic questions that remains to be answered are why they have not generated theoretical debates and why the work of Iranian archaeologists does not reflect them. Obviously the interdisciplinary approach, which played an important role in the 'New Archaeology's' research (in modern archaeology too) has not found its place in Iranian archaeology. It should be remembered that the background to the development of archaeology in Iran is historical research, and archaeology here is considered part of the humanities. The last and current generation of Iranian archaeologists has been trained in this tradition (even those who were trained in the U.S.A. in the 1970s), and in fact many of them devote much of their time to studies in history, historical geography, and art history. The anthropological approach with its quantitative analysis of metrical attributes, which forms the basis of the 'New Archaeology' has yet never influenced conventional archaeology in Iran. Furthermore, the role of Iranian archaeologists in joint archaeological research with western projects has not been scientific, rather it has been an executive role, or, in some exceptional cases, their unfamiliarity with the characteristics of contemporary archaeological research, and also language barrier, have affected the quality of their scientific contributions. In addition, political and ideological constraints have always played an important role in this respect. During most of the period considered in this chapter, these constraints remained fundamental because ideology has always been part of the institutionalised section of the political system. This circumstance has threatened archaeology in many ways; the ambiguity of its place (as pure humanistic science or as experimental science) within the academic system of Iran, is still a major problem for archaeology. This resulting in many limitations for archaeologists either in attracting funding for research and high quality students to study archaeology (in comparison to the other subjects, archaeologists are generally dissatisfied with their job). Needless to say, without a multilateral reformation of archaeology

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in this country, the present organisation of archaeology with only a few archaeologists, trained mainly in the old fashion, cannot offer much change in the direction of research. However, we are now optimistically looking forward to social and political change in Iranian society. At the moment many areas of public and intellectual life have become more highly politicised than ever before, an atmosphere within which even school children are more interested in, and running, critical debates. At the same time, compulsory educational programmes are being encouraged to reach even the remotest parts of the country. The potential of science and technology to explain the world and improve it are appreciated. There is a growing tendency to recognise the ability of science to solve the problems of the world. Innovation in technology attracts major support as the basis of economic development and general public welfare. These attitudes gradually change the social and intellectual climate of society and will provide a suitable social context for developing radical theoretical debates. The expansion of universities in the post-revolution period are giving rise to a new generation of archaeologists, who have been heavily influenced by the democratic sense of this period, and by contemporary social and political debates. Unfortunately the university system in Iran from an early date has always been conservative, authoritarian, and dominated professionally and politically. These Factors have impeded an innovative intellectual climate, academic progress and individual freedom to choose the particular orientation for a discipline. Despite many reforms in recent years no great change can yet be seen. It is, however, part of the responsibility of the new generation to engage in such discussion of university problems. In more general terms, the future expansion of archaeology in Iran can be expected as one aspect of economic development, creating massive programmes of urban development, engineering, agricultural, and industrial projects. These lead to growth of rescue excavations and eventually a public awareness of archaeology. Finally we hope that the current political and economic development in Iran awakens the responsible organisations to understand the importance of archaeological heritage management, which in turn will offer the opportunity to consider theoretical matters such as the presentation of the past and construction of meaning. Given the present situation with increasing opportunities for international contacts (e.g. sending students of archaeology to Western countries) we will undoubtedly see the growing impact of foreign research that will certainly lead to a development in methodological and theoretical debates. It is hoped the ensuing debates will encourage further research, but only if the most basic issues and questions can also be subjected to discussion without any kind of restrictions. As already mentioned, a new generation of archaeologists is emerging. They will not accept the traditional phenomenon of archaeology as the increase of tangible finds; they prefer the refinement of observation that will enrich Iranian archaeology and its perception of the past. Now, we have to wait and see if Iranian archaeologists will actually change their previous positions. We must first deal with the debate that has gone on in American, British, and Scandinavian archaeology since the 1960s. We can then move in other directions making extensive use of our own domestic philosophy to originate particular hypotheses for our regional problems. Thus the outcome may be rather different from the

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American 'New Archaeology' and the British 'Postprocessual Archaeology'.

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