ETHNICITY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND NATIONALISM: REMARKS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

Exactly when ethnicity has become the politicization of culture, a decision some may take to represent themselves or others as bearers of a certain cultural identity,[1] the old controversy over the relation between ethnicity and archaeology refuses to die. Nor is the discussion over that dealt with the relation between nationalism and archaeology, a topic that seems to concern nowadays more the historians than the archaeologists. In this paper, I plan to tackle three inter-related issued pertaining to those problems. What is new in the research on the relation between archaeology and nationalism? What is new in the research on ethnicity in medieval archaeology? What are the main developments in the study of ethnogenesis in the American anthropology and archaeology?

The interest in the link between archaeology and nationalism first emerged in the early 1980s and was immediately met with resistance. When, in the mid-1980s, Michael Shanks and Charles Tilly argued that the relations between archaeology and politics need serious consideration, many saw that as a direct attack on the status of archaeology as a (legitimate) academic discipline.[2] After 1990, the question of the social and political dimensions of the practice of archaeology gained a forefront position, with a special emphasis on the link between archaeology and nationalism. The first studies dealt primarily with what made the historical interpretation of the archaeological material dependent upon the political situation, with many examples from Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.[3] Soon, the emphasis shifted to the link between archaeology and the

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[1] As used in anthropology and sociology, the term "identity" was borrowed from mathematics and introduced into the social sciences in the late 1950s and 1960s to refer to the quality of being identical (or similar) to members of a group or category, and, at the same time, different from members of another group or category. See Siniša Malešević, "Identity: conceptual, operational, and historical critique," in *Making Sense of Collectivity. Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Globalization*, edited by Siniša Malešević and Mark Haugaard (London/Sterling: Pluto Press, 2002), pp. 195-215, here pp. 196-98; Antonia Davidovic, "Identität – ein unscharfer Begriff. Identitätsdiskurse in den gegenwartsbezogenen Humanwissenschaften," in *Soziale Gruppen – kulturelle Grenzen. Die Interpretation sozialer Identitäten in der prähistorischen Archäologie*, edited by Stefan Burmeister and Niels Müller-Scheeßel (Münster: Waxmann, 2006), pp. 39-58, here 39-40 and 53.

[2] Michael Shanks and Charles Tilly, *Social Theory and Archaeology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

[3] Božidar Slapšak, "Archaeology and the contemporary myth of the past," *Journal of European Archaeology* 1 (1993), no. 2, 191-95; Timothy Kaiser, "Archaeology and ideology in southeast Europe," in *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, edited by Philip Kohl and Clare Fawcett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 99-119; Pavel M. Dolukhanov, "Archaeology and nationalism in totalitarian and post-totalitarian Russia," in *Nationalism and*

beginnings of nationalism, especially the influence of Romanticism, the rise of the culture-history paradigm, and of the historical interest in ethnogenesis.[4] Now, the emphasis is more on the role of archaeology in the shaping of social memory as past that may be used politically. In fashion are studies of the mechanisms of social mobilization by means of the ancestors' myths.[5] Even more recent are studies concerning the pseudo-archaeological literature, e.g., of Erich von Däniken's claims of alien influence on earth based on such sites as the iron pillar in Delhi or the sarcophagus in Palenque, and the role of that literature in the construction of the imagined community of the nation, which raises weighty problems regarding the relation between "serious" (or scientific) archaeology and amateurs (including metal detectorists).[6] It is worth examining in some detail a few examples in order to illustrate those new trends.

Volume 27 for the year 2012 of the *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*, edited by Russell O'Ríagaín and Cătălin Nicolae Popa is entirely dedicated to the relation between archaeology and the construction (or deconstruction) of national and supra-national polities. One of the studies in this volume was written by an Australian historian of Bosnian-Croat origin, Danijel

Archaeology. Scottish Archaeological Forum, edited by John A. Atkinson, Iain Banks and Jerry O'Sullivan (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1996), pp. 200-13.

[4] Jean-Paul Demoule, "Archäologische Kulturen und moderne Nationen," in *Archäologien Europas. Geschichte, Methoden und Theorien*, edited by Peter F. Biehl, Alexander Gramsch and Arkadiusz Marciniak (Münster: Waxmann, 2002), pp. 134-43; Dietrich Hakelberg, "Nationalismus einer Elite. 'Heidnisches Teutschland' und 'vaterländische Altertumskunde' in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Zwischen Ausgrenzung und Hybridisierung. Zur Konstruktion von Identitäten aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive*, edited by Elisabeth Vogel, Antonia Napp and Wolfram Lutterer (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003), pp. 15-35; Sophia Voutsaki, "Archaeology and the construction of the past in nineteenth-century Greece," in *Constructions of Greek Past. Identity and Historical Consciousness from Antiquity to the Present*, edited by Hero Hokwerda (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2003), pp. 231-55; Margarita Díaz-Andreu, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology. Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Sebastian Brather, "Virchow and Kossinna. From the science-based anthropology of humankind to the culture-historical archaeology of peoples," in *Archives, Ancestors, Practices. Archaeology in the Light of Its History*, edited by Nathan Schlanger and Jarl Nordbladh (New York/Oxford: Bergahn, 2008), pp. 317-34.

[5] Goran Bilogrivić, "Hrvatska nacionalna srednjovjekovna arheologija do sredine 20. stoljeća: ideje budućnosti sputane vremenom," in *Zbornik radova s prve medievističke znanstvene radionice u Rijeci*, edited by Kosana Jovanović and Suzana Miljan (Rijeka: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci, 2014), pp. 207-15; Kirk Patrick Fazioli, *The Mirror of the Medieval. An Anthropology of the Western Historical Imagination* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2017); Iurie Stamati, *The Slavic Dossier. Medieval Archaeology in the Soviet Republic of Moldova: Between State Propaganda and Scholarly Endeavor* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019).

[6] Garret G. Fagan, *Archaeological Fantasies. How Pseudoarchaeology Misrepresents the Past and Misleads the Public* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006); Robin Dericourt, "Pseudoarchaeology: the concept and its limitations," *Antiquity* 86 (2012), no. 332, 524-31; Cătălin Nicolae Popa, "The significant past and insignificant archaeologists: who informs the public about their 'national past'? The case of Romania," *Archaeological Dialogues* 23 (2016), no. 1, 28-39.

Džino.[7] It contains two interesting examples of just how archaeology can contribute to nation-building. The first example concerns the Austrian-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, when the imperial government in Vienna was suddenly faced with the task of forging a local identity. On one hand, this identity had to be palatable and common to all inhabitants of the province (Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Muslims, the latter later called Bosniaks) while, on the other hand, it had to provide an alternative to the attempts of both Serbs in Serbia and Croats in Croatia to draw Bosnians on the side of their respective nationalisms. The new identity was to be Bogomil and to it were linked the medieval monuments known at *stećci,* which became overnight a sort of "national" symbol of Bosnia.[8] Under Austrian-Hungarian occupation, archaeology witnessed an extraordinary development, but not a single church was excavated. When a male burial with rich grave goods was found underneath a *stećak* in Arnautovići (near Visoko, north of Sarajevo) during Carl Patsch's excavation of 1908, the discovery was initially and deliberately ignored, in spite of growing speculations regarding the identity of the man buried there—no other than King Trvtko I (1377-1391). The reason for this bizarre attitude, Džino explains, was that the grave has been found next to a church, which directly contradicted the interpretation of the *stećak* as Bogomil. Instead of being dated, as it should have, to the 14th century, the church in Arnautovići was quickly labeled early Byzantine and dated to the 5th or 6th century.

Džino's second example involves an amateur archaeologist from the United States (but of Bosnian origin) named Semir Osmanagić, who in 2006 "discovered" first one, and then several pyramids in Visoko, not far from Arnautovići. The pyramids in question are in fact the Visočica and other neighboring hills—all natural. The pyramids have been "dated" to 27,000 years ago, which incidentally makes them the oldest in the entire world. This is pseudoarchaeology, of course, but what concerns Džino (and my argument) is that the "discovery" was received with great enthusiasm by Bosniaks (Muslims), while both Serbs and Croats remained mildly amused, if not altogether hostile,

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[7] Danijel Dzino, "Commentary: archaeology and the (de)construction of Bosnian identity," in *Archaeology and the (De)Construction of National and Supra-National Polities*, edited by Russell Ó Ríagáin and Cătălin Nicolae Popa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 179-88.

[8] For Bogomils, see Erika Lazarova, "Bogomilism: a dualist heresy or a dualist Christianity? Religion as *sobornost* or as a personal faith," in *Samuel's State and Byzantium: History, Legend, Tradition, Heritage. Proceedings of the International Symposium "Days of Justinian I," Skopje, 17-18 October, 2014*, edited by Mitko B. Panov (Skopje: "Euro-Balkan" University, 2015), pp. 56-65. For the supposed heresy in Bosnia, see Yuri Stoyanov, "The medieval Bosnian Church - heresiological stereotypes and historical realities," in *Quadrivium. Iubileen sbornik v chest na 60-godishninata na prof. d-r Veselin Panaiotov*, edited by Zvetanka Ianakieva (Shumen: Faber, 2016), pp. 576-84. For *stećci*, see now Dubravko Lovrenović, *Stećci: bosansko i humsko mramorje srednjeg vijeka* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2013).

to this day. Over the last 15 years, Muslims have transformed Visoka into a pilgrimage site, complete with spaces for identity displays. Osmanagić has established the Foundation of the Sun Pyramid of Bosnia, the logo of which shows the flag of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the central triangle turned into a pyramid.

Some could perhaps reject Džino's second example as not truly relevant to a discussion about the relation between archaeology and nationalism, since at stake is obviously pseudoarchaeology. But in an article published in the same year in which Osmanagić "discovered" the Visoka pyramid, Alexandru Dragoman and Sorin Oanță-Marghitu, two young Romanian archaeologists, drew the scholarly attention to ceremonies of initiating children into the youth organization of Communist Romania (the so-called "pioneers").[9] Such ceremonies often took place in history museums, especially in their sections dedicated to ancient and medieval history. The role of the archaeology and history museums in the construction of national identities and nationalisms has just begun to be explored.[10] There can be no accident that one of the symbols most frequently used in Romania during the 1970s and 1980s was the Thracian gold helmet from Poiana Coțofeneşti. In fact, in 1966, the same year in which the youth organization was introduced to Communist Romania, the Romanian actor Amza Pellea appeared as King Decebalus in the box-office hit *The Dacians* wearing a helmet similar to that from Poiana Coțofeneşti, which is in fact 500 years older than the Roman-Dacian wars depicted in the movie. An even more interesting case is that of the exhibit organized in Warsaw in 1963 on the anniversary of the millennium of the Polish statehood. One of the items on display in the exhibit was the reconstruction of a loghouse presented as typically "Slavic." Between 1963 and 1965, the Polish archaeologist Edward Dąbrowski excavated a 13th-century castle in Międzyrzecz, near Lubusz (western Poland). After visiting the Warsaw exhibit, Dąbrowski labeled the castle "Polish," because in its foundations he had just discovered a timber frame that reminded him of the "Slavic" loghouse in the exhibit.[11] The chain of reactions in this case takes one from archaeology to nationalism and back to archaeology.

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[9] Alexandru Dragoman and Sorin Oanță-Marghitu, "Archaeology in Communist and post-Communist Romania," *Dacia* 50 (2006), 57-76.

[10] Pavel Sankot, "La construction de la Tchécoslovaquie, le Musée national et l'archéologie," in *L'archéologie, instrument du politique? Archéologie, histoire des mentalités et construction européenne. Actes du colloque de Luxembourg, 16-18 novembre 2005* (Dijon/Glux-en-Glenne: CRDP de Bourgogne/Bibracte, 2006), pp. 43-53 ; Hanna Pilcicka-Ciura, "'Początki Państwa Polskiego' - wystawa Państwowego Muzeum Archeologicznego w Warszawie (23.06.1960 r.)," in *"Chrzest Polski w źródłach archeologicznych". Wywiady*, edited by Katarzyna Zdeb (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Naukowe Archeologów Polskich, Oddział w Warszawie, 2016), pp. 94-101.

[11] Zbigniew Kobyliński and Grażyna Rutkowska, "Propagandist use of history and archaeology in justification of Polish rights to the 'recovered territories' after World War II," *Archaeologia Polona* 43 (2005), 51-124, here 111-12. See also Stanisław Kurnatowski, "Early medieval Międzyrzecz," in

Even less studied is the staging of historical authenticity through heritage tourism (which includes such things as visits to archaeological sites, sometimes during the excavations) and its links to nationalism. It has become clear, for example, that the vast majority of visitors going every year to the Viking Center in York are not doing so in order to learn how life was in the early medieval town, but to obtain visual confirmation for what they already knew from TV shows (such as the very popular series *Vikings* that ran on History Channel) or from video games.[12] Not much is known about how archaeology influences such media, but it is equally clear that when playing the Middle Ages, early 21st-century European use ethnic stereotypes. For example, during the Viking Festival that takes place every year in Wolin (Poland), most Poles identify not with the Vikings, but with the Slavs, while Lithuanian participants play the role of the Curonians (a warlike, Baltic tribe that lived in the early Middle Ages on the Lithuanian coast to the Baltic Sea).[13] Such ethnic distinctions predicated upon stereotypes are clearly marked in the material culture: the Vikings dress up like Vikings, the Slavs carry Slavic weapons, and Lithuanian women wear jewelry imitating that found in Curonian graves. There is plenty of anachronism, as some artifacts are combined, but copy others found on different sites from different chronological levels.[14] Nonetheless, participants in the Viking Festival in Wolin are far more careful with historical details that Sergiu Nicolaescu, the Romanian director of the movie *The Dacians*.

In an article published 14 years ago, the Romanian archaeologist Ioan Marian Țiplic raised for the first time in Romania the question of the relation between archaeology and nationalism. He asked two fundamental questions,

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Polish Lands at the Turn of the First and the Second Millennia, edited by Przemysław Urbańczyk (Warsaw: Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, 2004), pp. 89-124; Karin Reichenbach, "The research program on the beginnings of the Polish state between Polish Western thought and historical materialism: structural developments and political reorientation," *Przegląd Archeologiczny* 65 (2017), 19-34.

[12] Chris Halewood and Kevin Hannam, "Viking heritage tourism: authenticity and commodification," *Annals of Tourism Research* 28 (2001), 565-80, here 570. For heritage tourism and archaeology, see Alexander Herrera Wassilowsky, "Turismo patrimonial, identidad y desarollo en el Perú," *Indiana* 34 (2017), no. 1, 199-230. For the depiction of archaeology in such video games as *Destiny* and *World of Warcraft*, see Kathryn Meyers Emery and Andrew Reinhard, "Trading shovels for controllers: a brief exploration of the portrayal of archaeology in video games," *Public Archaeology* 14 (2015), no. 2, 137-49.

[13] Andrew Curry, "The Viking experiment," *Archaeology* 60 (2007), no. 3, 45-49; Gregory Cattaneo, "The Scandinavians in Poland: a re-evaluation of perceptions of the Vikings," *Brathair* 9 (2009), no. 2, 2-14. For Curonians, see Audronė Bliujienė, "The Curonians of the Lithuanian coast," in *A Hundred Years of Archaeological Discoveries in Lithuania*, edited by Gintautas Zabiela, Zenonas Baubonis and Eglė Marcinkevičiutė (Vilnius: Lietuvos Archeologijos Draugija, 2016), pp. 268-85.

[14] For Curonian female dress accessories of the Viking age, see Audronė Bliujienė, *Vikingų epochos kuršíu papuošalų ornamentika* (Vilnius: Diemedzio, 1999), a book duly consulted by many participants in the Wolin festival.

without necessarily seeking answers.[15] What role does archaeology play in the construction of national identities? What is the relation between the rise of the national states and that of archaeology, as an academic discipline? More than a decade before that article, while still living in Romania, I wrote a study of the image of the Slavs in the historical and archaeological literature of Romania, in which I drew attention to another fundamental question: what is the relation between the Communist state and archaeologists?[16] In other words, did the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu order archaeologists where and what to dig and how to interpret their finds, or did archaeologists offer to Ceauşescu ready-made ideas about how archaeological discoveries ought to be interpreted politically? In an excellent article on the propagandistic use of archaeology in providing a justification for the post-World War II borders of Poland, Zbigniew Kobyliński and Grażyna Rutkowska proposed four possible scenarios for describing the relations between archaeologists and the Communist state. In one of them, the state imposes upon archaeologists certain research topics which are politically acceptable and influences the interpretation of the research results. Another possibility is that archaeologists acknowledge the ideological goals of the state authorities and, without any pressure from the latter, decide by themselves to fulfil their goals, in order to get access to funding and professional promotion. In the third scenario, the state authorities see that certain topics of archaeological research offer certain political advantages and, as a consequence, offer financial support for that research, while at the same time trying to influence or to manipulate its results. Finally, the last possible scenario has both archaeologists and state authorities acknowledging their common need to find a justification on archaeological grounds for the political situation at a given moment and take advantage, each on its own, from such circumstances.[17] Most research projects dealing with topics pertaining to the anniversary of the millennium of Polish statehood in 1963 may be regarded as fitting the fourth scenario, which explains why in Communist Poland the only major topics of archaeological research were the Slavic ethnogenesis and the rise of the medieval state. However, the territories included into Poland after World War II (such as Silesia and Eastern Prussia), having been evacuated by the German population, were now settled

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[15] Ioan Marian Ţiplic, "Probleme generale ale arheologiei medievale la început de mileniu," *Studia Universitatis Cibinensis Historica. Seria Historica* 3 (2006-2007), 27-45.

[16] Florin Curta, "The changing image of the Early Slavs in the Rumanian historiography and archaeological literature. A critical survey," *Südost-Forschungen* 53 (1994), 225-310, reprinted in *Text, Context, History, and Archaeology. Studies in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Bucharest/Brăila: Editura Academiei Române/Istros, 2009), pp. 131-216.

[17] Kobyliński and Rutkowska, "Propagandist use" (see above, n. 11), p. 53. See also Grażyna Rutkowska, "Czy archeologia służyła ideologii PRL? Tematyka archeologiczna na łamach 'Trybuny ludu' w latach 1948-1970," in *Hereditatem cognoscere. Studia i szkice dedykowane Profesor Marii Miśkiewicz*, edited by Zbigniew Kobyliński (Warsaw: Wydział nauk historycznych i społecznych Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2004), pp. 308-33.

with people coming from other parts of the country. The local newspapers engaged the archaeological research in order to give those people hope that they too belonged to the Polish nation and that they lived in lands that used to be Polish before the arrival of the Germans. As a consequence, both the Slavic ethnogenesis and the borders of the medieval state were pushed to the Oder River to the west and to the Baltic Sea to the north.[18] It would nonetheless be a gross mistake to take the attitude of the archaeologists as a deliberate surrender to the ideological demands of the state. Each one of those archaeologists truly believed in what he or she wrote; in other words, those people were genuine nationalists, not opportunists. Archaeology may be used for nationalist purposes not only by the state, but also by archaeologists, albeit at a local, not national level.[19]

As a number of scholars have noted over the last decades, no other concept is better suited to gauge the nationalist attitude of any archaeologist than ethnicity.[20] The word itself is no older than 1953.[21] Ethnicity is now understood as neither culture, nor society, but as a decision that people take to depict themselves or others symbolically and socially as bearers of a certain cultural identity. It is not innate, but we are born with it. It is not biologically reproduced (despite the common conflation of "race" and ethnicity and the popularity of

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[18] Kobyliński and Rutkowska, "Propagandist use," p. 120. The idea that the Polish territory by the Baltic Sea (Pomerania) participated in the Slavic ethnogenesis on Polish soil was only recently abandoned; see Marek Dulinicz, *Frühe Slawen im Gebiet zwischen unterer Weichsel und Elbe. Eine archäologische Studie* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 2006); Sebastian Messal and Bartłomiej Rogalski, "The 'Slavonisation' of the southwestern Baltic area: preliminary report on the investigations in the Pyritz region," in *The Very Beginning of Europe? Cultural and Social Dimensions of Early Medieval Migration and Colonisation (5th-8th Century). Archaeology in Contemporary Europe. Conference, Brussels, May 17-19, 2011*, edited by Rica Annaert, Tinne Jacobs, Ingrid In't Ven and Steffi Coppens (Brussels: Flanders Heritage Agency, 2012), pp. 89-100.

[19] For a similar conclusion drawn from the analysis of the life and work of Georgii B. Fedorov in the Soviet Republic of Moldova, see Stamati, *The Slavic Dossier* (see above n. 5).

[20] Patrick Plumet, "Les 'biens archéologiques', ces faux témoins politiques. Archéologie, nationalisme et ethnicisme," in *Archéologie, pouvoirs et sociétés. Actes de la table ronde*, edited by Gilles Gaucher and Alain Schnapp (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984), pp. 41-47; Michael Dietler, "'Our ancestors the Gauls'. Archaeology, ethnic nationalism, and the manipulation of the Celtic identity in modern Europe," *American Anthropologist* 96 (1994), 584-605; Neil Asher Silberman, "Promised lands and chosen peoples: the politics and poetics of archaeological narrative," in *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, edited by Philip Kohl and Clare Fawcett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 249-62; Iain Banks, "Archaeology, nationalism and ethnicity," in *Nationalism and Archaeology. Scottish Archaeological Forum*, edited by John A. Atkinson, Iain Banks and Jerry O'Sullivan (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1996), pp. 1-11; Eduard Krekovič, "Ktol bol prvý? Nacionalizmus v slovenskej a maďarskej archeológii a historiografii," *Študijné zvesti* 36 (2004), 51-53.

[21] Anne-Marie Fortier, "Ethnicity," *Paragraph* 17 (1994), no. 3, 213-23. For early definitions of ethnicity, see Wsevolod Isajiw, "Definitions of ethnicity," *Ethnicity* 1 (1974), 111-24; Talcott Parsons, "Some theoretical considerations on the nature and trends of change of ethnicity," in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, edited by Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 53-83.

DNA analysis to track ethnic "ancestry"), but individuals are linked to it through metaphors inspired from family life (homeland, brothers, sisters, *patrie*). Finally, it is not just cultural difference, but ethnicity cannot exist without reference to some cultural traits.[22] Very few would now disagree with Max Weber that ethnic groups are human groups, the members of which "entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists."[23] Most archaeologists studying the Middle Ages agree with this definition or at least with the idea that social identities (including ethnicity) are not a mirror of social realities, even though they could themselves be perceived as real. Ethnicity is thus a mode of representation and political action, an issue to which I shall return below.

Ethnicity may well be a matter of choice and cultural construction (as argued by instrumentalists), but once in action, an ethnic group operates like a status group, the existence of which is represented by means of primordial attachments ("blood").[24] For archaeologists, however, it is far more important that, since all social identities are social constructs, any social identity—gender, class or ethnicity—may be treated as subjective belief in commonality. How then can ethnicity be distinguished from other forms of social identity, all of which are subjective and "constructed"? When thinking of ethnicity, most people (archaeologists included) have in mind food, dress, architectural traditions, in short—lifestyles. Is then an ethnic group the sum of the symbols employed to distinguish it from other ethnic groups? In my opinion, the answer must be negative, even if the vast majority of archaeologists seem to think otherwise. To choose certain symbols in order to mark the boundaries of an ethnic group is, after all, a political decision in the same way that, say, choosing a certain type of dress to convey claims to a certain social status is a political option. Pierre Bourdieu believed that symbolic displays mark one's place in the social order and name a sense of place for others. If social constructs such as ethnicity are not a mirror of social reality, then they can certainly participate in its construction in

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[22] Brackette F. Williams, "Of straightening combs, sodium hydroxide, and potassium hydroxide in archaeological and cultural-anthropological analyses of ethnogenesis," *American Antiquity* 57 (1992), no. 4, 608-12.

[23] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), p. 174; English translation from *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, translated by E. Fischoff et al. (Berkeley/London: University of California Press, 1968), p. 389.

[24] Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of Ethnicity* (London: Sage, 2004), p. 25; Di Hu, "Approaches to the archaeology of ethnogenesis: past and emergent perspectives," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 21 (2013), 371-402, here 391.

accordance with the interests of those in power.[25] Symbols are indispensable for social action and communication; they are both object of and for political action.[26]

What does this all mean for archaeology? I strongly believe that material objects with symbolic meaning are an integral part of power relations, since symbols of ethnic identity are often displayed in collective ceremonies or other social activities, the goal of which is political mobilization. The symbolist approach championed by Abner Cohen and Teun van Dijk focused particularly on the analysis and interpretation of symbols, and the ideologies and discourses used by political groups and elites to sway mass support as well as to capture the public imagination in order to generate social action.[27] Paul Brass even defined ethnic identities as "creations of elites who draw upon, distort, and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent, in order to protect their well-being or existence, or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups and for themselves."[28] The choice of symbols (that is, of what specific, material objects should represent ethnicity) is never arbitrary. The material culture that archaeologists study cannot therefore be treated as a passive reflection of ethnic identity, because it is after all an active element in its negotiation. In other words, the right question is not "which pots are Slavic?' but "why are these pots (and no other) used at a given moment and in given circumstances to mark the boundaries of the group named 'Slavs'?"

This question reflects in essence the stakes of the "style debate" of the 1980s and early 1990s.[29] Often viewed in opposition to function, style was initially approached as an "extra something" that is used to do something more than just the job at hand. James Sackett introduced the idea of a practical variation in the properties of material culture that makes no difference in terms of function. Style, in his view, was not an "extra something," but a feature embedded into the artifact, a way to do things that reflects the mutual identity of the

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[25] Pierre Bourdieu, "Social space and symbolic power," *Sociological Theory* 7 (1989), 14-25, here 19.

[26] Abner Cohen, *Two-Dimensional Man. An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Societies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 23; Malešević, *The Sociology*, p. 115.

[27] Abner Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture. Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Teun A. van Dijk, *Communicating Racism. Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1987).

[28] Paul Brass, "Elite consumption and the origins of ethnic nationalism,' in *Nationalism in Europe. Past and Present. Actas do Congreso internacional os nacionalismos en Europa pasada e presente. Santiago de Compostela, 27-29 setembro de 1993*, edited by Justo. G. Berameni, Ramón Maiz Suárez and Xosé Núnez Seixas (Santiago de Compostela : Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 1993), pp. 111-26, here 111.

[29] Michelle Hegmon, "Archaeological research on style," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992), 517-36.

members of a group.[30] By contrast, Polly Wiessner believed that style was a form of non-verbal communication through doing something in a certain way that communicates about relative identity.[31] Since identity displays are often extravagant, stylistic messages are never crystal-clear or uniform. A certain amount of ambiguity is desirable and can, in fact, help rather than prevent the message to get through. Style is always intentional, not unconscious. It communicates about affiliation at the individual or at the group level. Wiessner called the latter "emblemic style," the material correlate of ethnicity. Emblemic styles often appear when changing social relations set off displays of group identity, especially in situations of inter-group competition for resources or when chiefdoms emerge. Through an ethnoarchaeological study, Michael Graves has demonstrated that Kalinga potters in the Philippines use style (pottery decoration) to signal their community affiliation and to mark boundaries against other communities. Such signaling typically occurs when resources are scarce and the competition with potters from other communities increases.[32]

The "style debate" has informed recent attempts to identify changing regional representations in the stylistic variability of everyday artifacts. Asbjørn Engevik, in a study of 5th- and 6th-century, bucket-shaped pots and cruciform brooches in southwestern Norway (the region of Rogaland around Stavanger), discovered that bucket-shaped pots made in the region to the north from the Hardangerfjord employed a paste tempered with asbestos, while those made south of that fjord were of a fabric tempered with soapstone. The technological variation has nothing to do with the distribution of asbestos and soapstone resources, respectively. His conclusion was that the technological variation was in fact an emblemic style.[33] Ethnic differences, in other words, are constituted simultaneously in the mundane, as well as in the decorative, and become

[30] James R. Sackett, "The meaning of style in archaeology. A general model," *American Antiquity* 42 (1977), no. 3, 369-80; James R. Sackett, "Style and ethnicity in archaeology: the case for isochrestism," in *The Uses of Style in Archaeology*, edited by Margaret W. Conkey and Carol A. Hastorf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 32-43.

[31] Polly Wiessner, "Style and social information in Kalahari San projectile points," *American Antiquity* 48 (1983), 253-76; Polly Wiessner, "Is there unity to style? In *The Uses of Style in Archaeology*, edited by Margaret W. Conkey and Carol A. Hastorf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 105-21.

[32] Michael W. Graves, "Kalinga social and material culture boundaries: a case of spatial convergence," in *Kalinga Ethnoarchaeology. Expanding Archaeological Method and Theory*, edited by William A. Longacre and James M. Skibo (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), pp. 13-49.

[33] Asbjørn Engevik, *Bucket-Shaped Pots. Style, Chronology and Regional Diversity in Norway in the Late Roman and Migration Periods* (Oxford: Archeopress, 2008); Asbjørn Engevik, "Technological style, regional diversity and identity. Asbestos regions and soapstone regions in Norway in the Late Roman and Migration Periods," in *The Archaeology of Regional Technologies. Case Studies from the Palaeolithic to the Age of the Vikings* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), pp. 225-41.

"naturalized" by continuous repetition in both public and private life. It is particularly that repetition that is of crucial importance for archaeologists, because it usually leaves material traces. For example, the salvage excavations carried out in 1979 and 1980 in the Apothekaren block in downtown Lund (Sweden) have produced evidence of non-glazed cooking and storage pottery of Ango-Scandinavian origin.[34] The interpretation of this material holds that a relatively large number of potters came to Lund from eastern England in the aftermath of the breakup of the North Sea empire after the death of King Canute. Like the minters who struck pennies in the name of Sven Forkbeard and Canute, those potters were most likely members of *familiae* of lords from the old Danelaw, who moved to southern Sweden after 1035. A similar phenomenon is attested in Sigtuna (near Stockholm, in Sweden), where a sudden change in pottery fabric recipes is documented for the period between ca. 1000 and ca. 1190 and had been linked to the arrival of immigrants and merchants from Novgorod. This was not "Rus'" pottery *per se*, but it appeared in the private space of urban dwellings, as well as in buildings associated with local markets, which were in use during the 11th and 12th centuries by merchants coming from Novgorod.[35] Ethnic boundaries were created over a relatively short period of time for a relatively small number of "foreigners." Another case of emblemic style is that of the pottery with prick-like comb-punch decoration (*Kammstich*), which was found in Avar-age graves dated between ca. 630 and ca. 800 especially in the northwestern area of "Avaria" next to the present-day border between Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and the Czech Republic. According to Peter Stadler, this is also the region with the highest density of pots with so-called "potter's marks" on the bottom. A combination of all traits pertaining to ceramic wares by means of an analysis of N-next neighbors produced a distribution map, which has indeed confirmed that both potter's marks and pots with prick-like comb-punch decoration appear primarily in the northwestern region of the Carpathian Basin.[36] As that is also the region associated with the earliest, post-Avar assemblages that have been attributed to the rise of Great Moravia in the early 9th century, both the *Kammstich* and potter's marks may have been emblemic styles for a group within the Avar qaganate which underwent after 800 a social and political transformation that led to the rise of a new polity and the creation of a new (Moravian) ethnic identity.

The creation of new ethnic identities, a process known as ethnogenesis, is not a popular topic in European archaeology. Sebastian Brather, in an article

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[34] Mats Roslund, *Guests in the House. Cultural Transmission between Slavs and Scandinavians, 900 to 1300 AD* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007), p. 145.

[35] Roslund, *Guests*, p. 427.

[36] Peter Stadler, "Avar archaeology revisited, and the question of ethnicity in the Avar qaganate," in *The Other Europe in the Middle Ages. Avars, Bulgars, Khazars, and Cumans*, edited by Florin Curta (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), pp. 47-82, here p. 73.

meant to be a reply to my own ideas about ethnicity and its archaeological study, claims that ethnic affiliation in the Middle Ages was not as important as it is today to citizens of national states.[37] In Europe, ethnogenesis is almost automatically linked to the self-determination of national states.[38] In America, the emphasis is on "agency," and the topic is regarded as quite appropriate for a critique of assimilationist and integrationist Eurocentrism.[39] The problem in America is not that raised by Brather ("was there ethnicity in the Middle Ages, and can archaeologists get to know it?"), but one of distinguishing between etic and emic criteria ("how can one be sure that, when studying ethnicity, one does not actually use an artificial concept or, worse, one perpetuates hegemonic discourses regarding the classification of people into already established groups?"). As a consequence, ethnogenesis is a very popular topic in American anthropology and archaeology. Over the last 16 years, there have been 27 dissertations written on this subject, with the largest number at the University of Pennsylvania and Arizona State University.[40]

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[37]Sebastian Brather, "Ethnizität und Mittelalterarchäologie. Eine Antwort auf Florin Curta," *Zeitschrift für Archäologie* 39 (2011), 161-72, here 171. For a rebuttal of Brather's theoretical position, see Florin Curta, "The elephant in the room. A reply to Sebastian Brather," *Ephemeris Napocensis* 23 (2013), 163-74.

[38] Joachim Herrmann, "Verterritorialisierung und Ethnogenese im mittleren Europa zwischen Völkerwanderungszeit und Mittelalter," in *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, edited by Herwig Friesinger and Falko Daim, vol. 2 (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischer Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990), pp. 221-33; Speros Vryonis, "Some ethnogenetic theories of Greeks, Roumanians, Bulgarians, and Turks in 19th-20th centuries," in *Septième Congrès international d'études du sud-est-européen (Thessalonique, 29 août-4 septembre 1994)* (Athens: Comité national grec des études du sud-est européen, 1994), pp. 765-91; Tomohiko Uyama, "From 'Bulgarism' through 'Marrism' to nationalist myths: discourses on the Tatar, the Chuvash and the Bashkir ethnogenesis," *Acta Slavica Iapponica* 19 (2002), 163-90; Rajko Bratož, "Anfänge der slowenischen Ethnogenese. Fakten, Thesen und Hypothesen," in *Die Grundlagen der slowenischen Kultur*, edited by France Bernik and Reinhard Lauer (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 1-38; Alena Kliuchnik, "Ethnogenesis theories concerning the Belorussians," *Annual of Medieval Studies at the CEU* 17 (2011), 191-98. See also Andrew Gillett, "Ethnogenesis: a contested model of early medieval Europe," *History Compass* 4 (2007), no. 2, 241-60.

[39] Terrance Weik, "The role of ethnogenesis and organization in the development of African-Native settlements: an African Seminole model," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 13 (2009), no. 2, 206-38; Arlene Fradkin, Roger T. Grange, and Dorothy L. Moore, "'Minorcan' ethnogenesis and foodways in Britain's Smyrnéa settlement, Florida, 1766-1777," *Historical Archaeology* 46 (2012), no. 1, 28-48; Craig N. Cipolla, *Becoming Brothertown. Native American Ethnogenesis and Endurance in the Modern World* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013); Barbara L. Voss, *The Archaeology of Ethnogenesis. Race and Sexuality in Colonial San Francisco* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015). American historians have no qualms about the term "ethnogenesis": Evan N. Dawley, *Becoming Taiwanese. Ethnogenesis in a Colonial City, 1880s to 1950s* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2019); Adam R. Hodge, *Ecology and Ethnogenesis. An Environmental History of the Wind River Shoshones, 1000-1868* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

[40] Laura Matthew, "Neither and both. The Mexican Indian Conquistadors of colonial Guatemala," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 2004); Meredith Dudley, "The

Moreover, a number of recent books have boldly proposed ideas that many archaeologists of the European Middle Ages are still reluctant to consider. For example, Christopher Stojanowski has advanced a model for the integration of archaeological and microbiological data, and noted that the biological distance (measured on the basis of dental variation) allows for the genetic integration, but also separation of different groups of Native Americans in the southeastern part of present-day United States between the 15th and the 18th century.[41] Human reproduction is a strategy largely guided by education in the family, cultural heritage and life experience. In short, finding a mate is a "stylistic" option not unlike the emblemic styles linked to ethnic identity. In the early 16th and in the 17th century, the genetic micro-differentiation was the result of a sudden demographic collapse coupled with mass migration from Georgia into Florida. In the 17th century, the ethnogenesis of the Seminoles took place, as a consequence of the fusion of small groups that survived the demographic catastrophe. In the 18th century, the ethnogenesis was by contrast based on the differentiation (division) of groups. The migration of separate communities from Georgia into parts of Florida devoid of any population led to their cultural contact and blending, to the extent that all those groups were friendly to the Spaniards and hostile to the English, while maintaining a favorable attitude towards Christianity. The cultural contact and blending encouraged inter-group marriages, which in turn led to the shaping of a new identity.

According to Scott Ortman, ethnogenesis can sometimes be the point of divergence for language, genetics, and culture.[42] The ethnogenesis of the Tewa (a group of Pueblo people in the valley of Rio Grande in New Mexico) was based on (and triggered by) a religious reform movement, followed by a migration into the

historical ecology of the Lecos de Apolo, Bolivia. Ethnogenesis and landscape transformation at the intersection of the Andes and the Amazon," Ph. D. dissertation, Tulane University (New Orleans, 2009); Craig N. Cipolla, "The dualities of endurance: a collaborative historical archaeology of ethnogenesis at Brothertown, 1780-1910," Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 2010); Scott G. Ortman, "Genes, language, and culture in Tewa ethnogenesis, A.D. 1150-1400," Ph. D. dissertation, Arizona State University (Tempe, 2010); Jill Benett Gaieski, "The St. David's Island Project: an ethnogenesis in progress," Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 2013); Charisse Carver, "Population structure and Frankish ethnogenesis (AD 400-900)," Ph. D. dissertation, Arizona State University (Tempe, 2015); Dawn A. Seymour, "When we were monsters: ethnogenesis in medieval Ireland, 800-1366," Ph. D. dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi (Hattiesburg, 2017); Iyaxel Ixkan Cojti Ren, "The emergence of the ancient Kaqchikel polity: a case of ethnogenesis in the Guatemalan highlands," Ph. D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University (Nashville, 2019). Only three of all dissertations defended in American universities between 2001 and 2021 deal with ethnogenesis in the European Middle Ages.
[41] Christopher Stojanowski, *Bioarchaeology of Ethnogenesis in the Colonial* Southeast (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010).
[42] Scott G. Ortman, *Winds from the North. Tewa Origins and Historical Anthropology* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012).

Tewa Basin (north of Santa Fe, at the confluence of the Rio Grande and Rio Chama Rivers) from Mesa Verde (southwestern Colorado). The material culture and architectural forms that came to the region with this migration were not those of Mesa Verde (the region from which the migrants came), but a recycled version of what was in place in the Tewa Basin several generation before the migration. Ortman believes that this curious situation may be explained as the result of the fact that the migrants have interpreted the cultural practices, the language, and the material culture in use in the past in the Tewa Basin as the culture of their own ancestors. In this way, the migration was presented as a "return to the homeland of the ancestors," which took the form of a religious movement meant to reject cultural and social innovations in favor of a return to a "purer" historical age. All sites in the Mesa Verde were suddenly abandoned, the buildings and all furnishings therein burned, and those who opposed the reform were killed. The Tewa ethnogenesis is dated between 1150 and 1400 and was based on cultural practices preserved in a latent form, as well as on the previous knowledge of the archaic lifestyles in the Tewa Basin.

Another topic of great popularity in American anthropology is ethnogenesis as a form of resistance to oppression. Laurie A. Wilkie and Paul Farnsworth deal with the slave population on the Clifton plantation in the Bahamas. This was a population made up of African Blacks, local Creoles, and Blacks brought from plantations in America, all living together at Clifton between 1812 and 1833.[43] The slave household was the main bastion of resistance against the chaotic and meaningless life of a plantation slave. Ethnogenesis, in this case, was a process of production and reproduction in daily life of a number of traditional cultural practices from Africa even by people who had no knowledge of them before arriving on the plantation. In other words, ethnogenesis, according to Wilkie and Farnsworth, was a form of collective action through which people strove to regain strength, peace, and dignity, all of which were refused to them on the plantation. Similarly, the archaeology of the "ethnogenetic bricolage" proposed by Christopher Fennell illustrates how some colonists and enslaved people in various parts of the New World participated in parallel acts of religious and magical non-Christian practices.[44] Uninhabited by concerns about the political interpretation of their conclusions, American archaeologists do not see any conceptual incongruence between faunal remains and ethnicity, or the social network analysis of pottery and ethnogenesis.[45]

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[43] Laurie A. Wilkie and Paul Farnsworth, *Sampling Many Pots. A Historical Archaeology of a Multi-Ethnic Bahamian Community* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).

[44] Christopher Fennell, *Crossroads and Cosmologies. Diasporas and Ethnogenesis in the New World* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007).

[45] Lance K. Greene, "Ethnicity and material culture in antebellum North Carolina," *Southeastern Archaeology* 30 (2011), no. 1, 64-78; John P. Hart and William Engelbrecht, "Northern Iroquois

How does research on the nexus between ethnicity, archaeology and nationalism look like in 2021? To judge from the titles of the publications that came out in Eastern Europe and the United States over the last year, a number of surprisingly common trends are apparent, along with significant divergences. Archaeology is increasingly perceived as the most important, if not the only way to understand the ethnicity of immigrants in the (medieval) past.[46] Archaeologists have taken a front seat in all debates about ethnic identities. Instead of state authorities or the ideological pressure of various political regimes, the emphasis in Eastern Europe is now on individual archaeologists, the role of their life experience and of their education in the ethnic interpretation of the archaeological record.[47] Meanwhile, in the Unites States, it is the ethnic identity of the archaeologists themselves that has now come under lens.[48] In other words, agency is restored to archaeologists, who are now regarded as much more capable of original work and decision making than before. Finally, gender perspectives are now applied to the study of the relations between ethnicity, archaeology, and nationalism. In both Eastern Europe and the United States, there is a conspicuous interest in women archaeologists.[49]

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ethnic evolution: a social network analysis," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 19 (2012), 322-49.

[46] Sarah Trabert, "Understanding the significance of migrants' material culture," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 20 (2020), no. 1, 95-115; Attila Türk, "A régészet szerepe és eredményei a korai magyar történelem kutatásában," *Magyar Tudomány* 182 (2021), 129-41.

[47] Marcela Starcová, "Jan Eisner a jeho pŭsobení na Slovensku v letech 1919-1939," in *Dejiny archeológie. Archeológie v Československu v rokoch 1918-1948*, edited by Martin Neumann and Jana Mellnerová Šuteková (Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, 2020), pp. 133-53; Bořivoj Nechvátal, "Tři případy akademika Jaroslava Böhma (1901–1962)," *Archaeologia historica* 45 (2020), no. 2, 962-67; V. K. Zhertovskaia, "N. I. Repnikov - issledovatel' srednevekov'ia v gornom Krymu." in *Istoricheskie, kul'turnye, mezhnacional'nye, religioznye i politicheskie sviazi Kryma so Sredizemnomorskim regionom i stranami Vostoka. Materialy V Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferencii (Sevastopol', 2-6 iiunia 2021 g.)*, edited by V. V. Lebedinskii (Moscow: Institut Vostokovedeniia RAN, 2021), pp. 99-101.

[48] Laura E. Heath-Stout, "Who writes about archaeology? An intersectional study of authorship in archaeological journals," *American Antiquity* 85 (2020), 407-26.

[49] Catherine Fowler, *Dutton's Dirty Diggers. Bertha P. Dutton and the Senior Girl Scout Archaeological Camps in the American Southwest, 1947-1957* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah press, 2020); Florin Curta, "Marxism în opera Mariei Comşa," *Arheologia Moldovei* 43 (2020), 285-96.