

ARCHAEOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND SUBSISTENCE

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Wherever and whenever one may wish to place the roots of the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology, the subsistence-based categories of savage hunters and civilized farmers still lie at the heart of the division of much contemporary intellectual labour. The sources of these categories can be traced back into the seventeenth century, although they were first systematically related to (pre)history and cultural difference in the mid-eighteenth century. The subsequent relations between these categories and the changing disciplines of ethnology, ethnography, and archaeology have not remained constant over time or space. However, the underlying assumption that subsistence practices are meaningful and useful societal categories has persisted for the past 250 years. The relationship between such concepts, the closely associated idea of social evolution, and anthropology and archaeology, in particular from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, is examined. It is suggested that finding ways of writing across such categories is a necessary step for the future of both disciplines.

This article traces the survival and use of subsistence categories, here mainly within British and American thought, for more than 250 years. Despite the presence and sometimes dominance of other categories, my argument is that 'subsistence' has always remained available as an intellectual and cultural resource for classifying others. The point to be made is that the establishment of subsistence as a societal category was contingent and related to aspects of intellectual and practical life very different from those in which they are mainly utilized today and that such historiography may help us rethink our attitudes towards the ways in which we classify societies.

Despite classical predecessors, it was in the mid-eighteenth century that progressive stadial schemes of human history based on subsistence became a distinct and widespread phenomenon in western Europe (e.g. Adams 1998: 9–38; Porter 2000: 424–45). The first published examples were from Scotland, Dalrymple's 1757 *Essay towards a general history of feudal property in Great Britain* and Kames's 1758 *Historical law-tracts*. Both were about the origins of landed property, and argued that population pressure on subsistence resources was important. The relationship between philosophies of history, concepts of property, the idea of improvement and its practical enactment is epitomized by Lord Kames, an improving landowner, a Commissioner running confiscated Highland estates, and a friend of economist Adam Smith. Similar links existed in France. Turgot, an early proponent of stadial schemes, was closely

associated with the Physiocrats, who categorized agriculture as the only source of wealth: all the rest of the economy was circulation (Gide & Rist 1948; Gudeman 1986: 71–89; Meek 1971). Further examples soon included Goguet's 1758 *De l'origine des loix*, Helvetius' 1758 *De l'esprit* and 1773 *De l'homme*, Quesnay and Mirabeau's 1763 *Rural philosophy*, John Millar's 1771 *Observations concerning the distinction of ranks*, and many others (Meek 1976). These works, mainly concerned with law and political economy, included secular 'universal histories' of three or four stages, from 'savage' hunters through 'barbarian' pastoralists and 'civilized' farmers, but it was the final stage, such as Adam Smith's 'Age of Commerce', which was their main concern.

Changes in attitudes that raised the profile of subsistence can also be seen within colonial practices. The 'discovery' of the Americas and the changed nature of cross-cultural encounter, including extensive colonial settlement, meant that one of the inevitable points of conflict was land (Pearce 1952). By the early seventeenth century the European appropriation of land was justified by both theology and the rational and moral demand for productive use. At least three further factors are relevant to the development of subsistence categories (Pluciennik n.d.). First, individualism became a philosophical methodology as well as a basis for Protestant morality. The latter enabled labour, worldly success, and social mobility to become moralized and naturalized (see e.g. Hill 1961). Moreover, 'atomic individualism' became a preferred method of reasoning from first principles, whether by Descartes or Hobbes. As with Hobbes's asocial individuals in his famous 'state of nature' in *Leviathan* (1651), such reasoning often took the form of quasi-historical conjectures.

Secondly, the seventeenth century saw the foundation of modern economics, with attempts to explain the newly prominent causes and effects of trade and industry (Appleby 1978; Dumont 1977; Schumpeter 1954). Associated with the growth of capitalist ideology was the changing valorization of property, wealth, and the process of its acquisition. This was often expressed through the trope of the origins of private property and its necessity within a developed, moral society, compared with those societies who held property in common or had no conception of ownership. America, that favourite source of example and later analogy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was seen as a place where fertility and abundance had been left unmanaged and unimproved. Thus, mercantilist economic doctrines also provided room to both classify and condemn 'savages'.

Thirdly, science, masculine reason, and 'natural law' became more widespread ways of explaining the world. Male mastery of the principles of fertility 'was a programme for the expropriation of a wide range of potentially dangerous powers – those of the labouring or landless poor, of women, of spirits' (Schaffer 1997: 130). In the colonial context, one might add 'lazy savages', such as Indians sunk in 'wicked idleness' (Purchas 1906 [1625], 1: 231). For many, the best evidence of reason and progress was the productive use of land in agriculture. Moral worth became transferred to *human* action on God-given fertility. Hunter-gatherers were thus constructed as those said to be completely lacking tangible evidence of improvement; namely agriculture, enclosure, and individual property.

Stadial schemes were thus intellectual routes used by political economists and largely directed towards exploring their contemporary concerns and explaining the differential outcomes of early capitalist behaviour. Most of the writers concerned were not interested in (pre)history or ethnography *per se*, but rather in identifying the essence of human nature, wealth, commerce, property, and law. In Britain and elsewhere, the later seventeenth-century decline in the exclusive authority of the Bible (Hill 1993: 413–35) would enable these elements to be combined with secularized speculative histories to produce the moral and historical frameworks of social evolution.

The early nineteenth century hiatus: idealism, racism, history

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the ubiquitous stadial social evolutionary views of the eighteenth century are usually argued to have fallen into abeyance (Burrow 1966; Mandelbaum 1971: 93–5; Trigger 1998). The combination of ‘antirevolutionary reaction and revived religion’ (Stocking 1987: 45; cf. Harris 1969: 53–70) was hostile to the deistical or atheistical materialism of the French *philosophes* and the Scottish thinkers. More broadly, there was the rise of idealist philosophies of history, forcefully expressed by such influential figures as Hegel. His philosophy of history is explicitly racist and Eurocentric. India and China are dismissed as unimportant except as they are brought into ‘true history’ and knowledge by Europeans (Hegel 1956 [1837]: 101), and Africa and America are rejected in their entirety. Reason is expressed through state-level societies, and hence ‘early’ stages of human existence, whether categorized through modes of subsistence or otherwise, are irrelevant. Similarly, in France the progress of abstract Reason (as in Comte’s stages of religion, metaphysics, and then positivism – science) marked a turn from materialism, and included innate racial characteristics as part of the explanation for geographical, cultural, and historical difference (Stocking 1987: 28–30).

In general, nineteenth-century evolutionists were much more comfortable with racial explanations than their eighteenth-century counterparts (Bowler 1992; Stocking 1982; Voget 1967: 143–8; but see Popkin 1973). In many scholarly works the clear categories and terminologies of the later eighteenth century receded into the background. Nevertheless, generalized subsistence categories persisted in certain disciplines and in the minds of the educated public. Daniel (1964: 66) quotes the poet Coleridge’s comment from 1836, that ‘progress from savagery to civilization is evidently first from the hunting to the pastoral stage’, as an example of how widespread developmental ideas were among the literate in the earlier nineteenth century. Even though such ideas undoubtedly continued, it is plain that among anthropologists and archaeologists direct derivation from the eighteenth-century writers was unusual. An exception which proves the rule is John Stuart Mill’s (1965 [1848]) *Principles of political economy*, in which he offers a brief recapitulation of subsistence stages only in his preliminary remarks on the concept of wealth. Mill’s scheme is completely within, and surely derives from, the conventional eighteenth-century structure for treatises of political economy.

The 'revival' of social evolution in the mid-nineteenth century

The eighteenth century (and earlier) ideas of stages were 'meant to organize the past philosophically rather than historically' (Ferguson 1993: 47). By contrast, the nineteenth-century lengthening of chronologies and new forms of evidence led precisely to the foregrounding of empirical history, whether within anthropology, geology, or biology. When thinkers 'returned' to a social evolutionary perspective, they explicitly rejected a priori conjectural histories. Instead, anthropological 'cultural survivals' and archaeological stages based on typology and technology came to the fore. The well-known new chronologies, archaeological discoveries, and consequent re-temporalization of cultural and geographical difference (Bowler 1989; Chazan 1995; Daniel 1975; McGrane 1989: 88-111; Stocking 1987: 69-74; Trautmann 1992), allowed many overlapping developmental sequences. There was the beginning of a divergence between anthropology and archaeology, driven by different emphases and materials. The major ethnological focuses on the origins and development of socio-cultural phenomena were not obviously approachable though archaeological materials.

Archaeologists at first turned their backs on the subsistence-based schemes of the previous century. Instead, they adopted technological categories stemming from arrangements of material culture within national and other museums. The first practical uses of a stadial scheme were in Scandinavia, by Thomsen in his Stone-Bronze-Iron classification of artefacts, and in a regional survey by Nilsson in 1838-43 (Daniel 1964: 66; Klindt-Jensen 1975: 50-7, 65).¹ Rodden (1981: 63) points out that earlier observations of the lack of steel and iron artefacts among some peoples and the classical authority of Lucretius meant that 'the notion of a Stone Age, and subsequently of successive Bronze and Iron Ages ... was already well established prior to the nineteenth century'. Nevertheless, by 1825 Thomsen was equally explicit about the chronological implications of his scheme and its source in associations of archaeological finds (Klindt-Jensen 1975: 52). Nilsson, however, reproduced the eighteenth-century pattern of hunter-gatherer-fisher savages, pastoralist nomads, farmers, and finally civilization. This, and his ideas about the origins of property, show that he had in mind the concepts of eighteenth-century political economists and conjectural historians (Daniel 1964: 66; Rudebeck 2000: 97-9). Part of Nilsson's work was translated into English by Lubbock and published in 1868.

Given Lubbock's obvious awareness of Nilsson's approach, he must have consciously rejected such a subsistence-based scheme, preferring the framework of Thomsen (Lubbock 1865; 1870). Elsewhere Tylor made clear his reason for this avoidance of eighteenth-century writers:

Criticizing an 18th century ethnologist is like criticizing an 18th century geologist. The older writer may have been far abler than his modern critic, but he had not the same materials. Especially he wanted the guidance of Prehistoric Archaeology, a department of research only established on a scientific footing within the last few years (Tylor 1871, 1: 48).

Throughout the later nineteenth century there was an accelerating input of empirical data from archaeology, geology, and ethnography, and the eventual widespread acceptance of archaeological and typological periodization:

not only Stone (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic,² and Neolithic) but also Bronze and Iron (Daniel 1975). In archaeology, evidence for farming was noted, but not used to organize the burgeoning archaeological record. Meanwhile, for religion, morality, mythology, family, property, kinship, law, and the institutions of government there were no obvious archaeological correlates, although theoretically these would have made an equally acceptable way of organizing the 'simple to complex' classification at the heart of these Eurocentric histories and comparative ethnographies (Mandelbaum 1971: 96-7; Rowlands 1989). The point is a crucial one. Burrow (1966: 117) suggests that

palaeontology had shown a relationship between structural complexity and geological antiquity. Archaeology and [social] evolutionary theory might have become similarly associated, so that the chronological classifications of the one were the structural classifications of the other ... but there was no real correspondence between archaeological and anthropological classifications.

For almost fifty years, Lubbock refused to revive the senses of the eighteenth-century subsistence-based stages within archaeology. In the sixth edition of *Pre-historic times*, published in 1912, he adhered to the original distinction between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic, that is, that the latter was distinguished by polished stone tools.

For ethnologists, the characteristics which they wished to consider went beyond technology, but they wished to proceed through empirical proof rather than speculations derived from a priori assumptions about human nature. Tylor (1871, 1: 23-4), the first Professor of Anthropology in Britain, discussing 'The development of culture', suggested:

The principal criteria of classification are the absence or presence, high or low development, of the industrial arts, especially metal-working, manufacture of implements and vessels, agriculture, architecture, &c., the extent of scientific knowledge, the definiteness of moral principles, the condition of religious belief and ceremony, the degree of social and political organization, and so forth.

With such a long list of traits, Tylor pointed to the difficulties of correlation: while 'theoretical civilization [i.e. conjectural history] does in no small measure correspond with actual civilization ... [even] industrial and intellectual culture by no means advances uniformly in all its branches' (1871, 1: 24). Thus it becomes 'yet harder to reckon on an ideal scale the advance or decline from stage to stage of culture' (1871, 1: 25). Tylor initially showed little taste for rigidly defined stages, and subsistence did not receive one mention as a possible framework or main topic to be addressed in his first books (1865: 2-3; 1871). Neither did the terms 'savage' and 'barbarian' retain the same connotations of subsistence as they did for many eighteenth-century writers. Originally, both Tylor and Lubbock were content to use the terms as general relative measures of civilization. Tylor (and other comparative anthropologists) tended to accept the technological basis for archaeological periods before passing on to topics whose origins could, they felt, only be answered through examining contemporary and historically recorded peoples in terms of cultural survivals.

Continued use of the tripartite terminology of savage, barbarian, and civilized derived from a shared cultural background, rather than direct intellectual

continuity (cf. Leopold 1980: 36). Stadial schemes based on subsistence, while part of the subconscious assumptions of human progress, were not initially the basis from which the ethnologists and archaeologists of nineteenth-century Europe worked. However, in Tylor's (1881) *Anthropology* – and hence postdating Morgan's *Ancient society* (see below), included in his bibliography – savagery, barbarism, and civilization were formally defined, with the second stage once more characterized by agriculture (including pastoralism), and the last by literacy. Furthermore, the first two were generally equated to the archaeological periods of Stone and Metal (Tylor 1881: 23–4). Tylor was careful to distinguish between the wandering hunters, with their place in civilization 'below that of the settled tiller of the soil', and equally nomadic pastoralists, who, however, often belonged to 'one of the great religions of the world' (1881: 220).

My argument here is that the strong cultural (but not necessarily scholarly) legacy of eighteenth-century stadial thought eventually allowed the 'mapping' of two of these stages, hunters and farmers, onto the archaeological substrate of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic. The suggestion that there was an important difference – technical, social, mental, moral – between pre-farming and farming societies was strongly reinforced by classically derived predispositions towards the separation of nature and culture, for example, in the arts and humanities. Thus even when, towards the end of the nineteenth century, scholars began to question the universality and synchronism of archaeological stages, the belief persisted in the necessary contrast between non-agricultural and agricultural (and pastoral) societies. In contrast, other schema such as kinship, exchange (gift versus commodity), religion (e.g. animistic, totemistic, polytheistic, monotheistic), or even race, despite its importance in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thought, were never perceived as coincident with these pre-existing categories, although evolutionary sequences could be adduced for each. The shifting connotations of the terms savage, barbarian, and civilized, but the consequent rapid adoption by Tylor of Morgan's subsistence-based scheme, supports this view.

Improving the natives: American materialism

It is instructive to contrast the British situation with that of the United States, where a much closer link between eighteenth-century ideas of subsistence, property, and morals persisted throughout the nineteenth century, often expressed in policies to 'civilize' Indians through the allocation of individually owned plots (Gates 1971). From the late eighteenth century onwards the introduction of farming was seen as one solution to the 'Indian problem'. Thomas Jefferson told an Indian delegation in 1808: 'Let me entreat you therefore on the lands now given you to begin every man a farm, let him enclose it, cultivate it, build a warm house on it, and when he dies let it belong to his wife and children after him' (Horsman 1968: 132–3).

By the 1820s the realities of removal and the desire for land had enabled the language of inherent Indian inferiority and racism to gain the upper hand (Horsman 1968; 1975; Prucha 1969; 1971). Influential voices, however, continued to maintain the eighteenth-century idea of improvability. In 1844 the

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Thomas Crawford, urged that Indians must 'learn to build and live in houses, to sleep on beds; to eat at regular intervals; to plough, and sow, and reap; to rear and use domestic animals' (cited in Prucha 1971: 86). The desired moral outcome would be reached by enforced material and subsistence practices. Practically, however, such arguments held little sway in the face of land hunger, the gold rushes, and the *de facto* appropriation of land in the accelerating push westward.

This materialist bent and the belief in the basic importance of subsistence were continued by one of the key figures in America for ethnography and archaeology. Lewis Henry Morgan and his influential book *Ancient society* (1877), required reading for staff entering the Bureau of American Ethnology (Resek 1960: 150), epitomize this emphasis. Although most of Morgan's book is concerned with the development of political, social, and legal organization, the framework is his famous seven 'ethnic stages' (1877: 9-19), defined by the addition of various inventions, many of which relate to subsistence. Morgan is explicit about food procurement and production as his preferred basis of classification.

It is probable that *the successive arts of subsistence* which arose at long intervals *will ultimately*, from the great influence they must have exercised upon the condition of mankind, *afford the most satisfactory bases for these divisions*. But investigation has not been carried far enough in this direction to yield the necessary information (Morgan 1877: 9, emphases added).

Morgan devotes the whole of his second chapter to the 'Arts of Subsistence':

The important fact that mankind commenced at the bottom of the scale and worked up, is revealed in an expressive manner by their successive arts of subsistence ... It is accordingly probably that the great epochs of human progress have been identified, more or less directly, with the enlargement of the sources of subsistence (Morgan 1877: 19).

Morgan does not directly refer to previous stadial schemes. However, his insistence on subsistence and the associated terminology strongly suggests a relationship to eighteenth-century thought. Stocking (1975: 86) notes that in the United States, the legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment continued as the 'dominant philosophical tradition in the nineteenth century'. Kehoe (1998: 175) records that Morgan's closest friend was 'Josiah McIlvaine, a Presbyterian leader steeped in Scottish Common-sense Realism and the conjectural histories of Adam Smith, Ferguson, Kames, Monboddo, and their compatriots in Edinburgh and Glasgow'. Morgan's transmission of this legacy, to Marx and Engels among others (Engels 1948 [1884]; see Bloch 1983: 32-62), would prove influential in twentieth-century Europe.

The 'rebirth' of subsistence in archaeology

The interests of comparative anthropologists *qua* social evolutionists were apparently inimical to archaeological data – the complaint later expressed as 'archaeologists can't dig up kinship systems' (cf. Binford 1962: 218-19). Evidence of subsistence practices had, however, been noted for a long time. In 1862 Worsaae had contrasted the 'hunting and fishing tribes' of the middens

of southern Scandinavia with 'a higher civilisation with domestic animals, with agriculture and with better formed implements' (Daniel 1975: 88). In France, de Mortillet's 1872 definition of the Robenhausian included farming and polished stone tools, as well as pottery, barbed and tanged arrowheads, dolmens and menhirs. Boyd Dawkins (1894: 248) contrasted the nomadic Palaeolithic hunters with 'Neolithic man' described as

a herdsman and tiller of the ground, depending upon his domestic animals and the cultivated fruits and seeds rather than on hunting; master of the potter's art, and of the mysteries of spinning and weaving, and seeking the materials for his tools by mining. He lived in fixed habitations, and buried his dead in tombs. There is obviously a great gulf fixed between the rude hunter civilisation of the one, and the agricultural and pastoral civilisation of the other.

By the 1920s the idea of a general co-occurrence of farming, pottery, and polished stone tools in the Neolithic was the conventional wisdom within and beyond archaeological circles (e.g. Burkitt 1921; Wells 1930 [1920]: 100–1). But this 'neolithic package' was not necessarily taken to act as a substitute for the original definition of 'neolithic' referring simply to polished stone. For example, neither Keller (1878) nor Munro (1890) draw any such conclusion. Instead, archaeologists continued to reinvent the social evolutionary wheel.

Childe (1951: 22) claimed that it was in 1925 (in *The dawn of European civilization*), drawing on ideas from Grafton Elliot Smith from 'ten years earlier', that he first equated the Neolithic with food production, and that in 1930 (in *The Bronze Age*) he extended his idea of using socio-economic definitions for archaeological stages (Childe 1951: 24–5) – the promised linking of anthropological categories with archaeological markers. In 1935 he suggested that 'the terms palaeolithic, neolithic, etc. should be indicative of economic stages' (Childe 1935: 9). He was probably referring to Smith's 'Primitive Man', a lecture given in 1916. Smith, like Dawkins, noted that under the rubric 'Neolithic Age' were included characteristics such as the presence of polished stone tools, domesticated animals, and cultivated crops, pottery, weaving, and evidence of religious beliefs and funerary cults (Smith 1916: 474). However, there was much overlap and geographical variation, and 'nor is the domestication of animals and the practice of agriculture necessarily connected with the manufacture of flint implements of Neolithic type' (1916: 475). Although Smith emphasizes the importance of agriculture, he does not unequivocally equate 'farming' with 'the neolithic', for which he often retains the old definition of polished stone tools. None the less he (1916: 498) proposes that 'the event which wrought the greatest and most far-reaching influence in the development of civilization was the acquisition of the art of agriculture'.

Among the immediate effects of the adoption of an agricultural mode of life were the adoption of a really fixed mode of existence, and the possibility of a large population subsisting in settled communities upon the produce of a very much more restricted area of land than had been necessary hitherto when men were herdsmen or hunters. This alone transformed man's methods of existence and laid the foundation upon which the fabric of his material prosperity was built up. But it was even more fruitful in the realm of ideas (Smith 1916: 499).

He goes on to discuss the development of religion.

Thus Childe's claim that it was in 1925 that he explicitly distinguished the Neolithic as 'food production' may be literally true, but he hardly emphasized the fact and such ideas had been expressed before. A more considered statement about subsistence as the major division was made by Peake (1927). His comments occur in the context of a discussion on what might be meant by 'civilization'; for Peake, as for many others of this period, the terms 'savage' and 'barbarian' had lost any specific content they may once have had:³ 'Dictionaries inform us that to civilize is to raise man from a savage or a barbarous condition, but this is only to define one unknown in terms of two others' (Peake 1927: 21). He (1927: 21-2) concludes:

It will, I think, be safer to divide mankind into producers and exploiters. The first group includes those who produce food and other commodities, whether by herding and breeding domesticated animals, to be used for food and clothing, or by raising crops for the same purpose. The second consists of those who gain their livelihood by exploiting the resources of nature, whether by hunting beasts and birds, large or small, or by collecting shell-fish, nuts, berries, or edible roots. The former group have, at least, started on the road to civilization, while the others are clearly uncivilized, even if we hesitate to call them barbarous or savage.

Childe's contribution was, *contra* conventional wisdom, not so much to distinguish the *Neolithic* by food production, as to extend such an equation of 'functional-economic classification' of stages to the *other* conventional archaeological periods – the Bronze Age with regular trade and specialized craftsmen, the Iron Age with 'cheap' tools enabling clearance, settlement, and population expansion (Childe 1935: 7-9). However, the authority of Childe, and interest in the 'origins of agriculture', soon assured the archaeological success of definitions of an 'Old World' Neolithic predicated on the presence of farming.

Subsistence and anthropology

Subsistence categories had initially been seen as only a minor part of the 'sciences of man' being developed in Europe. In America, though, it lay at the root of Morgan's scheme and was linked to political and moral issues. For the first half of the twentieth century the categories of hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists were taken as basic and self-evident, in comparison with the details of how culture 'worked' in such fields as kinship or other forms of social structure. On both sides of the Atlantic a shift developed towards intensive and detailed fieldwork, often within a single 'tribe' or related adjacent groups, and with a specific focus such as kinship, myth, or language.

Whatever the response of Tylor, Smith, and Childe, ironically for Morgan (much more an ethnographer than archaeologist), already before World War I unilinear evolutionary schemes had fallen out of favour in America for various reasons (Hinsley 1981; Stocking 1976). Boasian idealism and mentalist concepts of culture dominated in America during the early decades of the last century. Boas and his students' fieldwork and theory was part of a preferred holistic, particularistic, or even relativist approach to cultures (in the plural), rather than the comparative universalist approach of Morgan,

who became a target of attack (Kuper 1988: 42; Resek 1960: 155–8). In 1920 Lowie published *Primitive society*, in effect a delayed riposte to Morgan's *Ancient society* (Lowie 1949 [1920]: v). Typically, subsistence and technology *per se* were rejected as largely irrelevant to Lowie's concerns with social organization: 'The economic factor appears to have potency but potency of a strictly limited kind, liable to be offset and even negated by other determinants' (Lowie 1949 [1920]: 191), that is, diffusion and cultural tradition. Historical particularity was needed to explain specific conjunctions of cultural traits and the way they interrelated. The direct historical approach was urged in ethnology and archaeology (Dixon 1913: 562–6); and the culture area concept encouraged the consideration of regional chronologies and spread, rather than origins and development (Willey & Sabloff 1974). Lists of traits could be mapped geographically and explored stratigraphically. In this context, 'subsistence' style became just one such trait, and for those looking at North America, the assumption that agriculture had spread from Central America downplayed the issue of its invention. None the less, in general textbooks such as Kroeber's *Anthropology* (1923, reprinted 1933) the underlying importance of the forager-farmer split continued. For example, in the diagram of the 'development of native American culture', details of culture traits *within* agricultural societies are given, while hunter-gatherer groups are assigned to a dark and undifferentiated area described as the 'nomadic non-agricultural horizon (survives till present time in marginal areas)' (Kroeber 1923: fig. 36, opp. p. 342).

Subsistence categories thus persisted within the cultural background and theoretical subconscious. For example, Wissler began his introduction to the anthropology of the New World with the sentence: 'The most tangible and objective of human traits are those having to do with food' (1922 [1917]: 1). Archaeologically, Kroeber (1923: 426) emphasized the implications of the 'full' Neolithic with domesticated animals and plants and polished stone.

Much more important than the ground stone axe in its influence on life was the commencement, during the Neolithic, of two of the great fundamentals of our own civilization: agriculture and domestic animals. These freed men from the buffeting of nature; made possible permanent habitation, the accumulation of food and wealth, and a heavier growth of population (1923: 414).

Such subsistence categories thus still lay behind the apparent 'eclipse' of social evolution in the early twentieth century. Ethnographers were encouraged to produce relatively synchronic regional analyses deriving from detailed personal fieldwork, rather than grand syntheses and universal history. In effect, the individual field of analysis had intentionally shrunk in time and space. But this did not necessarily contradict or destroy the importance of subsistence as a category: it was simply outside their present field of vision. For many others the bi- or tripartite divisions remained as a general framework, offering a chronological or even moral hierarchy. Explicit social evolution was alive and well in archaeology, in textbooks, popular publications, and the public imagination (e.g. Smith 1932; Wells 1930 [1920]), not only as a general (pre)historical trajectory from foragers to farmers, but also with a sense of progress which still gave a moral dimension to the empirical sequence. However, the emphasis in ethnography (and much archaeology) was now on details, whether

as fieldwork monographs or the elucidation of stratigraphic sequences and cultural complexes.

By 1939 Lesser (1985: 78) could say to the American Anthropological Association that 'social evolution, in the form given by Morgan, Tylor, Spencer, and other "classical evolutionists," is today as dead as a doornail in social anthropology'. In the same year, however, Leslie White attacked Lowie, defended the 'great American evolutionist, Lewis.H. Morgan', and expounded his curious muddle of Spencerian, Darwinian, and Morganian evolution (1939). These were among the first signs of an attempted rehabilitation of a social evolution strongly linked to subsistence. This would be followed by neo-evolutionism and variously explicit forms of vulgar 'techno-environmental' materialism from the 1950s onwards (Bloch 1983: 124-40; Trigger 1989: 275-328). This shift was expressed most influentially by both White and Steward – the latter (once again) defining 'core areas' of cultures as 'the constellation of features which are most closely related to subsistence activities and economic arrangements' (Steward 1955: 37).

Hunter-gatherers return – again

Modern hunter-gatherer studies often trace their genealogy to the *Man the hunter* conference at Chicago in 1966 (Lee & DeVore 1968; e.g. Kelly 1995: 14; Ingold 1988; but see Bird-David 1994: 583-7; Damas 1969). It was only subsequent to this period that courses devoted exclusively and explicitly to 'hunter-gatherers' appeared in many university anthropology departments (E. Wilmsen, J. Woodburn, pers. comm.). One of the most obvious results of *Man the hunter* was a series of like international conferences which offer a partial snapshot of current concerns, and show a steady move towards issues of social change, history, politics, and ideology, and away from ecological functionalism (Bender & Morris 1988). The outcome of the 1993 conference (Schweitzer, Bieseke & Hitchcock 2000) and session titles for the forthcoming conference in Edinburgh in 2002 (CHAGS9 2001) suggest that this trajectory is continuing.

However, such a shift has not been so readily apparent in (especially pre-historic) archaeology for a variety of reasons. Processual archaeology, influenced by Steward and White, was strongly wedded to ecological functionalism and evolutionary perspectives, while post-processual 'social' archaeology and theoretical concerns tended to concentrate on later European prehistory (especially the Neolithic farming societies). The often less rich material culture record for earlier periods reinforced the perceived importance of environmental and ecological factors. Nevertheless, work initially set up to uncover commonalities between modern hunter-gatherers and archaeologically attested forager groups (e.g. Lee 1979; Yellen 1977) led to a strident and polarized but ultimately beneficial debate centred around 'revisionism' (e.g. Solway & Lee 1990; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990; see Kent 1992 and references). Initially mainly focused upon peoples of the Kalahari, the debate forced archaeologists and ethnographers to confront issues of pristineness and the role and extent of contact with other groups; of flexibility and shifts between reliance on foraging or other strategies; of hunter-gatherer histories, including colonialism

and 'encapsulation' (Woodburn 1988); and of the appropriateness of contemporary groups as analogues. None the less, many archaeologists felt able to avoid considering the broader implications of these debates because they were concerned with societies prior to the availability of farming, the presence of colonialism or other world systems. Despite shifts to more socio-cultural concerns (cf. e.g. Jochim 1976; 1998) then, many recent archaeological approaches to hunter-gatherers, however nuanced, are still concerned largely with the consequences of ecological conditions and subsistence-focused decision-making (e.g. Bettinger 1991; Kelly 1995; Rowley-Conwy 1995).

In ethnography, by contrast, there have been repeated attempts to return to the question which has haunted hunter-gatherer studies since their re-inception in the 1960s, namely, what is it that hunter-gatherers might *usefully* be said to share beyond their apparent reliance on largely unmanaged resources?⁴ At the *Man the hunter* conference one of the senior participants, Murdock, in his survey of extant hunter-gatherer groups, excluded three groups: mounted hunters, incipient tillers (i.e. those who engaged in any form of horticulture), and sedentary fishermen. Of the latter he wrote, demonstrating the circularity of his desired definition: 'The Indians of the North Pacific coast, for example, seem to me to fall well beyond the range of cultural variation of any known hunting and gathering people' (Murdock 1968: 15). Such peoples as the Kwakiutl or the Calusa of Florida (Marquardt 1988) have long proved a problem for those wishing to retain at least in part an essentially 'simple' baseline definition of hunter-gatherers including characteristics such as egalitarianism, band-level social organization, or an ideology of sharing.

However, many archaeologists had found Woodburn's (1980; 1988) concept of delayed-return societies a useful tool, along with the idea of complexity applied to hunter-gatherers (Arnold 1993; Price & Brown 1985; Rowley-Conwy 1983), both of which could be applied to small-scale societies of varying subsistence type. On the other hand, ethnographers attempting cross-cultural comparison seemed to be focusing on the other end of the 'spectrum'. The influential work of Bird-David, for example, at first aiming to characterize all hunter-gatherers (1990: 194-5) through the idea of the 'giving environment', then restricted the focus to 'immediate-return' groups with a 'cosmic economy of sharing' (1992a). Such moves towards 'culturalist' formulations (see also Bird-David 1992b) could be construed as a result of academic specializations themselves based on pre-given subsistence categories, and hence as attempts to prolong a separate hunter-gatherer category in an increasingly hybridized world. Bird-David subsequently explored the notion of the 'immediacy of sociality' within hunter-gatherer groups, but admitted that probably 'such relationships and structures exist in other societies', although perhaps less prominently (1994: 599). I do not wish to disparage the value of this work, but suggest that distortions are inevitable when attempting to embrace large numbers of hunter-gatherers and exclude others (cf. Kelly 1995: 33-5). As Barnard noted almost twenty years ago, there is a plausible argument to be made that hunter-gatherer is not a 'meaningful category' (1983: 208-10). These difficulties of definition are largely of our own (and our predecessors') making and ultimately refer back to the lengthy histories discussed above.

Conclusion

Subsistence categories have never gone away. Even when idealist philosophies of history based on cultural and racial essentialisms predominated, they continued to be utilized and available in formulaic introductions to economics and in literature. While the mid-nineteenth century 'revival' of social evolution in Britain initially focused on other attributes, its expression in America was firmly rooted in eighteenth-century materialism, and subsistence was correspondingly emphasized. Although by 1881 the ethnologist Tylor readily accepted much of Morgan's view, it was not until the early twentieth century that explicit attempts were made to correlate certain archaeological periods with broad subsistence-based socio-economic categories. Arguably the poor resolution, methodological difficulties, and relative theoretical underdevelopment of nineteenth-century archaeology meant that it simply could not address the agenda set by ethnology, and technological and typological classifications persisted. Two of these proved easily equated to old subsistence categories, and eventually fixed the chasm between foragers and farmers in archaeology. Meanwhile, North American archaeologists were concentrating on the detailing of regional sequences and culture areas, for which any forager-farmer divide *per se* was of small interest (Willey & Sabloff 1974: 86-7). However, by the 1950s there was an explicit return to social evolutionary models by influential figures within a four-field anthropology, and a subsequent renewed emphasis on subsistence and hunter-gatherers.

It seems that whatever re-theorizations take place, there is a periodic return within both disciplines to social categories which have been omnipresent in some form of cultural discourse since the Enlightenment, though with roots going back to at least the seventeenth century. Subsistence has underlain our ethnographic and archaeological discourses for the past several centuries. I point this out not to reject the methodology of comparison across categories (cultural, geographical, material), but to emphasize the value of concepts which provide analytical tools to crosscut pre-existing divides such as those between foragers and farmers or pastoralists. Discussion of regional variability (e.g. Kent 1992; 1996), and the increasing recognition of 'hybrid' strategies among contemporary 'hunter-gatherer' groups, also remind us that we should not treat foraging aspects of 'subsistence' as a pristine and bounded category any more than the societies we study. This holds an especially important lesson for archaeologists, with less obvious access to cultural variation and a consequent tendency to have recourse to generalized types such as those defined by subsistence (cf. Kent 1989). In places and periods such as my own research area, the northern Mediterranean in the earlier Holocene, the 'transition to farming' may not be the most interesting, informative, or appropriate framework within which to write prehistories. Yet the contrast between a largely typologically and ecologically described hunter-gatherer Mesolithic and a socio-culturally described farming Neolithic, and the associated narrative framework of transition understood in subsistence terms, is still dominant in the literature. To write regional prehistories and ethnographies using axes of socio-cultural variation other than subsistence will be not only a welcome, but also a necessary, step if we seriously wish to challenge preconceptions about how to write comparative histories and ethnographies of human societies.

NOTES

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¹But note Vedel-Simonsen's 1813 *Aperçu sur les périodes les plus anciennes et les plus remarquables de l'histoire nationale*, which had 'already argued for 3 periods of Scandinavian antiquity – a Stone, a Copper or Bronze, and an Iron Age' (Lowie 1938).

²This was first suggested in 1872 but not generally accepted until fifty years later (Zvelebil 1986: 5).

³But note that in *Social evolution* Childe (1951: 22–9) happily uses 'savage' and 'barbarian' as 'ethnographic' distinctions drawn directly from Morgan.

⁴The question is phrased like this because, along with the growing inclusion of non-foraging sources of food and other resources in ethnographies and ethnoarchaeologies of contemporary groups, over the last twenty years many authors have pointed to forms of resource manipulation and management, if not domestication or cultivation, practised by recent foragers.

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Archéologie, anthropologie et subsistance

Resumé

Quels que soient l'endroit et le moment où l'on situe les racines des disciplines de l'archéologie et de l'anthropologie, les catégories de chasseur sauvage et de fermier civilisé qui sont fondées sur la subsistance demeurent au coeur de la division d'une grande partie du travail

intellectuel. Les origines de ces catégories remontent au dix-septième siècle, bien qu'elles n'aient été appliquées systématiquement qu'au milieu du dix-huitième siècle à la (pré)histoire et aux différences culturelles. Les relations consécutives entre ces catégories et les disciplines en changement de l'ethnologie, l'ethnographie et l'archéologie ne sont restées constantes ni dans le temps ni dans l'espace. Cependant la présupposition sous-jacente que les pratiques de subsistance sont des catégories sociales significatives et utiles a persisté pendant les 250 dernières années. J'examine le rapport entre ces concepts, l'idée d'évolution sociale qui leur est proche, l'anthropologie et l'archéologie, en particulier depuis le milieu du dix-neuvième siècle jusqu'au présent. Il en ressort que la découverte de nouveaux modes d'écriture en travers de ces catégories est un pas en avant qui sera nécessaire pour le futur des deux disciplines.

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