Debate

Migration Revived

by TIMOTHY CHAMPION

After a lengthy period of time in which migrations have been out of fashion in archaeological literature they have suddenly come to life again. Kristian Kristiansen (1991) and David Anthony (1990) have recently raised once again the question of migration as a serious problem for archaeologists. Much of Kristiansen's discussion is concerned with the specific cases of the Single Grave and Corded Ware Cultures and the possible value of the concept of migration as an explanation for their development but he has also opened up a number of much more general and theoretical questions; in particular he has posed questions about the very varied nature of population movements, the identification of such movements in the archaeological record, the role of migration as an explanation of observed culture change, and the reasons why migrations have played a significant part in the reconstruction and explanation of the prehistoric past by some archaeologists, and have been ignored or specifically rejected by others. Anthony is likewise concerned with the specific example of the expansion of Copper Age horse-using societies from the grassland steppes north of the Black Sea westward into Europe, but as a case study in the application of ideas derived from recent work on the nature, causation, and social and economic context of migrations.

I would like to take up some of these general points, especially the question of the explanatory role played by migrations, and the popularity that migration explanations have enjoyed at certain times in the history of archaeology. Before that is possible, however, it is first necessary to make some preliminary comments on problems of concept and terminology.

DEFINITIONS

One of the main problems in any attempt to focus discussion on the details of social change or population movement is the very ambiguity of some of the terms commonly used. Thus the term "diffusion", for instance, can mean simply the static pattern of culture traits in space, or it can mean the dynamic processes which produced such a pattern from a single origin; or again it can refer to a particular sub-set of such processes, specifically those which did not involve movement of large numbers of people or movement over long distances. The term "migration" has sometimes been used to refer to any movement of people, even of small numbers or a specific sub-group, in opposition to diffusion; sometimes as merely one specific mechanism of diffusion, in opposition to acculturation; sometimes to a particular type of population movement, for instance a predominantly peaceful one, in opposition to an invasion. Kristiansen (1991) has quite rightly pointed out the very great variety of population movements that could be subsumed under the term migration, and has indicated some of the main parameters of such variability. Some of these are characteristics of the group concerned in the movement or of the actual movement undertaken: size (involving relatively larger and co-ordinated groups or smaller groups or individuals), social composition (the whole population or only some subset), speed of movement, and intentionality of direction. To these we should surely add other important factors, such as the distance involved, whether the movement was designed from the outset or achieved without deliberate intent, and the existence or not of any return movement.

Perhaps one of the most critical variables of all is the degree to which the relevant movement is a regular or integral part of the social group's organisation, or alternatively is an unusual episode representing a major disruption to that organisation. Terms such as "normal" and "abnormal", "usual" and "unusual", or "regular" and "irregular" clearly have no absolute meaning in such a context, but will vary with the particular scale of analysis; they are not opposites, but either end of a spectrum of possibilities, and need to be applied with appropriate sensitivity to the specific cultural circumstances of the cases in consideration. Nevertheless, we ought to be able to distinguish, even in the most general way, between "regular" and "irregular" activities, whether involving the movement of some or all of the population: "regular" activities might include, for example, hunter-gatherer mobility, nomadic pastoralism, exogamous wife-taking, seasonal transhumance, kula rings, Greek and Phoenician colonisation, Near Eastern caravan trade, Roman or Inca imperial expansion, or the leap-frog migration generated by the segmentary lineage organisation of the Post-classic Maya (Fox 1987), while "irregular" movements might be thought of as isolated episodes, such as the migration of the Helvetii in 59 BC described by Julius Caesar, or the population movements of the European Migration Period.

This distinction is particularly important when it comes to explanation, since "regular" migration could be regarded as a process, while "irregular" migration is more akin to an event. The former lends itself to uniformitarian explanations in terms of social processes; as examples of this, we might suggest our normal understanding of the expansion of urban societies in the Mediterranean through the mechanism of Greek and Phoenician colonisation, the wave of advance model for the introduction of agriculture to Europe, Childe's explanation of the spread of metalworking in prehistoric Europe through his concept of detribalised bronzesmiths in search of raw materials, or Fox's account of the leap-frog migration stimulated by segmentary lineage organisation as the critical factor in Maya post-classic

state formation. "Irregular" movement on the other hand, is more suited to "historical" explanations in terms of individual events. Such explanations are common in mythological and legendary accounts of the past such as the medieval Irish *Book of Invasions*, which lists four successive waves of migration into Ireland each accounting for some features of the landscape, economy, or social organisation of the country before the people were destroyed by disasters such as plague or flood, but similar explanations are also to be found in more modern archaeological writing; it would be easy to list many examples, such as the Beaker Folk or the Urnfield People.

EXPLANATORY ROLE OF MIGRATIONS

We can now turn to some of the problems regarding the role played by migrations in the accounts that archaeologists have given of the past, and in the first place to the limited epistemological question of their explanatory role. It is important here to realise that different archaeologists have set themselves different tasks, and have therefore taken different views of the logical relationship of the concept of migrations to their particular aims. We might distinguish two different types of approach to the past, which do not exhaust all the possibilities but are characteristic of much recent work. The first would be that of the New Archaeology, or processual archaeology: it emphasizes explanation of the variability of the material record, the testing of hypotheses, the invalidity of hypotheses which cannot be tested, and the role of social processes in our understanding of past social change. The second would be more suited to post-processual archaeology: it emphasizes a more narrative and historically specific account of past societies, the role of individual actors in society, and the importance of events as much as processes, and is more concerned with giving meaning to the past than with testing valid hypotheses.

For exponents of the former approach, processual archaeology, the concept of migrations has a limited but vital role. The many types of movement described above as "regular" are precisely the type of processes favoured as explanations by such an approach. Though they would fall into the definition of migration discussed by Kristiansen and Anthony, they would not normally be referred to a such. In such a context, migration would refer to an "irregular" movement, or a specific event rather than a process. For the prehistoric period it is notoriously difficult to find evidence for such events independent of the observed changes which the migration is supposed to explain (though it is quite possible that research in physical anthropology or DNA might produce such evidence). All prehistoric migrations, in the narrow sense of "irregular" events, are therefore entirely hypothetical, with the obvious exceptions of the initial human colonisation of an area, or recolonisation after abandonment (though even these movements might be classed as "regular" parts of human mobility if the scale of analysis is large enough).

To give a specific example, a recent book on the prehistory of Europe (Champion *et al.* 1984) did not use the concept of migrations to explain the past. It did, however, put great weight on many forms of movement of people, either explicitly or implicitly, as explanations of prehistoric change: examples would be hunter-gatherer mobility, exchange of raw materials and prestige items, expansion of early agriculturalists, Mediterranean colonisation. All of these can be supported to some extent by empirical or historical evidence or ethnographic analogy, and all are essential processes rather than unique events.

Hence we can understand the rejection of migrations in such an approach. Migrations do not fit with the emphasis on process, it is difficult or impossible to find evidence to support them, and such a concept is not an appropriate hypothesis for use as an explanation. We can also understand the apparent paradox that processual archaeology, having rejected the correlation between human groups and material culture assemblages ("cultures") and thus removed one of the major empirical objections to migrations, nevertheless did not accept the opportunity to adopt such an idea. The processualist objections to migration explanations are far deeper than that.

Hence also we can understand the emphasis that Anthony (1990) gives to migration as a process, capable of being understood at a general rather than a particularistic level. This is essential if migrations are to be reintroduced into processual archaeology, though he has no clear solution to the problem of finding empirical evidence that could support such hypothetical migrations in preference to other explanations of culture change.

On the other hand, in an approach which stresses the interpretation of the past or giving meaning to the record, there are very different possibilities for the use of migrations. It is still necessary, of course, to consider the merits of conflicting explanations and to balance the evidence in favour of them, but the emphasis on interpretation allows much greater scope for invoking explanations for which there may be no immediate possibility of providing evidence.

In this way, different intellectual orientations to the project of understanding the past will produce very different attitudes to the value of the concept of migrations.

THE WIDER CONTEXT OF MIGRATION THINKING

Archaeology is not, however, just a narrowly academic discipline, but operates in a broader context of social and political life. It provides ideas and images of the past for use in other contexts and is itself influenced to a greater or less extent by factors outside archaeology. If we are to understand the popularity at certain times of migration ideas, then we should also look to the wider social context of those ideas. There has been little interest in why they were once popular, but in trying to look at the wider context of archaeological thought, we encounter some problems.

The first problem is the prevailing method of writing the history of archaeology. This has adopted an extremely progressive tone, singling out for praise and notice the great men and the great discoveries which have paved the way to the current state of archaeology. It is an approach which is highly teleological, and has little time for those whose work does not lie on the straight and narrow path of progress, and whose ideas are not now adopted into the mainstream of current archaeological thinking. Such writers are marked out for criticism or abuse. It

is also an approach which is internal to the subject and takes little account of the social, economic, and political context in which archaeology is done, except occasionally to criticise the political perversion of archaeological ideas. It should be our task not to single out those who have blazed the trail of archaeological progress, but to try to give a sympathetic understanding to all past writers, including (perhaps especially) those whose ideas have been rejected.

The second problem is closely related: it is the lack of aware ness of archaeology as a form of cultural production. Archaeology is a form of practice which is deeply embedded in a social, political, and cultural matrix; it is to some extent isolated by the institutional structures within which it operates (such as the growth of an academic sphere which writes largely for itself rather than for a wider public), but it is to a greater or lesser extent influenced by, and in turn itself influences, a whole range of other cultural practices. To understand the development of archaeology as a whole, or even the work of a single individual, it is necessary to explore the nature of these cultural relationships.

The third problem lies in the recognition that archaeology is a textual practice, that is, much of the communication of ideas, information, and argument is done through the medium of text. Not exclusively, of course, since we also use drawings, maps, charts, photographs, film, reconstructions, museum, displays, the artefacts, and monuments themselves, and even theme parks to transmit ideas about the past, but the predominant mode is still the written text. We have begun to pay some attention to the way in which museums and monuments are used as vehicles of communication, but unlike many other disciplines we have not yet given much thought to the nature of the archaeological text. Elsewhere, especially in geography, anthropology, history, and economics, various people have begun to explore the nature of their texts, paying particular attention to such concepts as style, genre, and rhetoric; in the natural sciences there has been a special emphasis on the use of language and its effects on the scientific writing and thinking. These are subtleties which have scarcely yet entered in to our perception of the nature of archaeology.

These comments have been very general, and would apply equally to the investigation of any theme in the history of archaeology. To illustrate their specific relevance to the theme of migrations, let me quote a few examples. In the traditional histories of archaeology, what we might perhaps call the ultimate case of migrationism, typified by von Däniken's extraterrestrial invaders, are relegated to the lunatic fringe and deemed scarcely worthy of serious notice by archaeologists; likewise, the marginally more acceptable theories of the hyperdiffusionists (or perhaps more specifically the hypermigrationists) such as Elliot Smith and Perry are abused and ridiculed as damaging diversions from the road of progress. I would contend that a more appropriate approach would be to ask why (at least to judge by quantity of book sales) invaders from outer space are more attractive than the theories of archaeologists, or why for most of the 1920s the hyperdiffusionist view was so popular and how it related to other concerns of the time. Secondly, on the question of the importance of language, I would mention two recent attempts to consider the general problem of migrations (Adams *et al.* 1978, Rouse 1986). Neither of these pays sufficient attention to the meaning or possible range of meanings of such terms as diffusion, migration, or invasion. Not only can the words apply to a variety of specific social processes and events as discussed above, but the precise word chosen can also be important, since each has its own connotations or overtones which can often only be fully appreciated with a full understanding of the broader social context of their use.

In our analysis of archaeological ideas we need to take great care of the precise language used not only to appreciate fully what is being said, but also to understand why it is being said and how words come to shape our concepts. It follows from this, and from what has been said above about the critical importance of the cultural context of archaeological practice, that we cannot give a general account of how the idea of migrations has been used in archaeology without detailed analysis of individual authors and their writings. Clearly that is not yet possible without a great deal more research, but I will make a start on such a project, in order to demonstrate the possibilities, by looking at a few examples from British archaeological writing, and in particular I will try to show that one of the common ideas about explanation by migration, linking its rise to European imperial expansion and militarism and its decline to the post-war emergence of a more peaceful form of political interaction, may not be an adequate account.

The first example is the work of the hyperdiffusionists, Elliot Smith and Perry. As I have said above, it is not a case of defending or rehabilitating them, but of understanding them, and I shall look in particular at the ideas expressed in William Perry's book *The growth of civilization* (1924). From a careful reading it is clear that the idea of the unique origin of civilization and its diffusion from a single source is one part of a network of ideas arising partly from opposition to existing themes in anthropology and partly from the social and political context of the time. The key to this is his opposition to the idea of social evolution which had dominated much of nineteenth-century anthropological thinking, and its notion of progress, in particular progress achieved through competition as a form of social natural selection, and its perceived implication of the human species as inherently aggressive. They therefore emphasized the importance of food production as offering an opportunity, the almost accidental nature of the rise of civilization, and the rarity of its occurrence, and the possibility of decline (degradation) as well as rise (incidentally, all ideas with which we would now be in sympathy, though we would put the number of times it happened at nearer ten than one). They also emphasized the essentially peaceable nature of the human species as represented in early food-producing societies; warfare was seen as the by-product of the expansion of civilization, in the warrior aristocracies on the fringes of the civilized world. In contrast to the evolutionary vision of the past as a path of human progress, we have the past recreated as a neolithic utopia, a golden age from which the modern world has sadly declined.

These ideas must be understood against the background of the growing disenchantment felt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as industrial recession, agricultural depression, the problems of imperial responsibility, and ultimately the traumatic effects of the First World War caused people to recon-

sider their notions of social progress. In Perry's own words, "It is commonly assumed that violent behaviour is "natural" to men.... I am convinced that this is one of the most profound mistakes that can be made, and that, until this error is eliminated from current thought, there is little hope for any solution of the greatest problem that confronts us as civilized men and women, namely, the elimination of violence from the relations between states, and indeed from all human relationships" (Perry 1924, 191–2). The idea of a neolithic golden age was also taken up by such writers as H.J. Massingham, who was not only an enthusiastic colleague of Perry and Elliot Smith, but also a writer about the English countryside and agriculture, heavily involved in an attempt to undo the damage of industrialization and restore the rural economy of England by returning to a form of environmentally friendly farming and a rural society of small scale owners. These ideas are an important part of the ancestry of modern ecological thought (Bramwell 1989) and the green movement, but were also given a form of legitimation by the apparent demonstration of the possibility of such a peaceable, non-industrial early agricultural utopia, a society which by the construction of such monuments as Avebury had even left the countryside more beautiful than it had found it.

Perry's ideas of migration, then, can only be understood as part of a complex reaction to the theories of social evolution and the political problems of the time. Migration was not part of an imperial vision of the world; far from it, it was part of a vision of the past constructed in direct opposition to the problems created by modern European society and its industrial and imperial growth.

My second example concerns the interpretation of British prehistory. Clark (1966) in his paper on the invasion hypothesis in British prehistory speaks of an "invasion neurosis" which had affected British archaeology throughout the earlier part of the twentieth century, and related it to the known historical invasions of Britain and to the imperial vision of the British as conquering "citizens of the world". While this may be partly true, I am not sure that it is the full story. My impression (which is based on something less than a full survey of all the literature) is that although there was for much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a prevailing tendency to explain British prehistory by reference to material known on the continent, for most of this period the connection was not normally perceived as an invasion; other, more general terms, such as migration or even influence were used, though the precise mechanism was seldom specified. The term "invasion", though certainly used earlier (e.g. Crawford 1922), only seems to have become common after about 1930 (Estyn Evans's (1930) LBA sword-bearers, Hawkes and Dunning's (1931, 1932) two Belgic invasions, Piggott's (1938) EBA aristocratic invaders into Wessex, the Marnian invasions in various papers of the late 1930s).

To classify all these interpretations, including the earlier ones, as "invasions" loses much of their meaning and subtlety. Instead, I would suggest that we should see the prime emphasis of these earlier accounts being not so much on the process which introduced continental material to Britain as on the heterogeneity of the British past which represented an amalgam of many different elements. Notions of British identity have constantly been renegotiated, but one prevailing theme in the later nineteenth century was the diversity of our past; much was owed to the Anglo-Saxons as the founders of many of our traditions of law and government, but Anglo-Saxon England had successfully incorporated later comers such as the Vikings, Normans, Huguenots, and others, and this concept could be extended as well to the pre-Saxon Celtic and Roman populations; the process was not, however, total, and the social rejection of the Jews in particular was matched by their exclusion from the mixture of the past. A vision of our past as one which blended many diverse elements into a unity would therefore favour interpretation of the prehistoric past in terms of external influences, and the concept of migration should therefore be connected as much with notions of national identity as with imperial ambitions.

Why the specific term "invasion" should have become so much more popular after 1930 needs a different sort of explanation. Perhaps in this case it was the increasing militancy of the European states at the time, and the increasing sense of British isolation from events in Europe, that predisposed archaeologists to think in those terms.

My final example goes back again to Clark's 1966 paper, and his explanation of the decline of the "invasion neurosis" as due to Britain's declining imperial status and a return to "open-minded re-examination". He says, however, "When all is said the object of British archaeology is surely to tell us about the lives of the people who, generation by generation, age by age, in unbroken succession occupied and shaped the culture of the British Isles". Though this may be related to fading imperial power, it is specifically related to a redefinition of British identity with emphasis on continuity and isolation rather than diversity and constant external influence. It is perhaps no coincidence that this was written in the 1960s when Britain was faced with the problems of post-war Commonwealth immigration culminating in race riots and apocalyptic warnings about the future if the tide of migration was not stemmed. Exclusion, not incorporation, was the key to national identity.

This brief discussion has done no more than sketch a possible interpretation of a few examples, but it demonstrates the importance of a detailed analysis of the cultural context of archaeological ideas, and of a sympathetic attention to the nuances of language.

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Research History of the Single Grave Culture – a Commentary

by C. J. BECKER

In the latest number of Journal of Danish Archaeology Kristian Kristiansen contributes to the debate whether prehistoric immigrations can be established from the archaeological sources alone, and as an example chooses to renew the old argument about the Jutland Single Grave Culture (SGC). The question of the first appearance of this culture in Denmark has played a central role in our whole conception of the cultural development in the country's Neolithic, and as well as being important for the interpretation of related groups both in other parts of Scandinavia and in much of central and eastern Europe. Its importance can be attributed to a well established internal relative chronology, the large number of finds, and not least to the fact that there is such a rich and well studied material from the other (mainly earlier) group, the Funnel Beaker Culture (TRB). The problems are now, as earlier, the exact dating of the two groups in relation to each other, and the question of their economy and material/mental culture. During the last decades discussion has revolved chiefly around the first question. Did a massive immigration of a new people take place, or were there for some reason only radical changes in the economy, burial customs, and entire material culture of the old population? The immigration theory remained the dominant one until the early 1960's, while subsequently the alternative view received much support especially from archaeologists of the younger generation. The question has still not been finally answered. KK's article is therefore an important contribution to the discussion. My comments on it will be confined to making supplementary points and criticisms of the author's conclusions.

KK divides his comments into three sections. First comes a review of the theoretical models that in the 1960's and 1970's inspired Scandinavian archaeologists to try new interpretations, and were one of the main reasons for the emergence of a different, and to many older colleagues surprising view of the cultural development in especially the Scandinavian Neolithic. Such a review is helpful as a guide through the history of research. One is given among other things an adequate explanation of why "migrations" as a concept do not necessarily involve radical changes in culture, and why they are left unmentioned in new scholarly and popular descriptions of the cultural history of the Neolithic. Even the National Museum exhibition (up to now) follows this line, except with the Pitted Ware Culture.

KK's next section deals with the Jutland SGC, and it is mainly here I have comments to make. The third section deals with related Corded Ware groups in the rest of Europe and beyond, and would be difficult to discuss in brief despite its qualities and interesting viewpoints.