

WHAT CAN THE ANNALISTE APPROACH OFFER THE ARCHAEOLOGIST?

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By way of an introduction, I shall provide a brief history and definition of the Annaliste approach. It should be stated at the outset, however, that the *Annales* phenomenon has evolved over three generations, it is not a single, coherent entity, and it is difficult to define as a school.

At the turn of the century in France one can identify three major antecedents for the Annaliste movement. There was Vidal de la Blache, a pioneering historian and human geographer, who in 1891 founded the '*Annales de Géographie*'. He believed in the individual and unified personalities of France, and in the persistence of the traditional ways of life of the peasants within these regions. Literary echos of his views can be seen in Zola's '*La Terre*'. Then there was Durkheim, one of the founding fathers of modern sociology; and third Henri Berr, a less well known philosopher-historian.

In 1929 the French historians Lucien Fèbvre and Marc Bloch founded the '*Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale*'. This lent its name to, and became the new unifying feature of, the new Annaliste movement. Fèbvre and Bloch's major contribution was in the study of the history of 'collective mentalities', to which I shall return later.

The godfather of the movement however was Fernand Braudel, a second generation Annaliste who became editor of the *Annales* in 1956. Under him it became one of the most influential journals in modern historical studies. Braudel is famous for his classic *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Braudel 1972), as well as other great works, but he was also a key figure in the development of postwar New History. He was opposed to traditional history which concentrated upon unique individuals, and which provided strings of political and military events. Instead he was attracted to the history of the relationship between man and his environment, he promoted the unification of historical and social studies, and he developed a concept of chronology about which his major works are structured.

The third generation of Annalistes is best represented by the works of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, who became editor of the *Annales* in 1967 and who is now one of France's most respected historians. Two of his more recent books are: *Montaillou* and *Carnival in Romans* (Le Roy Ladurie 1980, 1981). In these, without returning to the narrative history of the early twentieth century, he has restored the importance of short-term events and the individual.

Geoff Bailey (1983, 4) was one of the first archaeologists to suggest the value of applying an Annaliste perspective to archaeological theory. 1987, however, proved to be the year of the Annaliste archaeologist, with contributions from Mike Rowlands (1987), James Lewthwaite (1987, 1988), and Ian Hodder (1987). The year culminated in a Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) Conference symposium, organized by John Bintliff, on 'The Contribution of an Annaliste/Structural History Approach to Archaeology', which included papers by Graeme Barker (1987) and Anthony Snodgrass (1987).

It is necessary to pose the general question: is it acceptable that archaeologists should steal ideas from other disciplines, in this case history? The answer is yes, but it is not stealing. As Bintliff says, in his *Archaeology at the Interface*, the effects of a shift of emphasis of archaeology into a general social sciences perspective "would be momentous in the rate of evolution of archaeology as a discipline" (Bintliff, 1986, 28). For example, during the late nineteenth century archaeology became part of an impressive interdisciplinary alliance, including geology and physical geography, evolutionary zoology and biology, and social anthropology, creating a rapidly advancing research front. However, I am not promoting the uncritical direct transfer of historians' models into another flavour-for-the-day in archaeological theory. We have to be selective in what we take, also we have to give in return, in the form of debate with Annaliste historians on subjects of common interest, some of which I shall outline below.

In broadening the scope of their discipline Annalists have called for a Total History approach. They wish to integrate economic, social, cultural and political histories into a Total History, and to be well acquainted with all the social sciences. Braudel admits his "desire and need to see man on a grand scale" (Braudel 1972, 22), and this saturation approach is exemplified in his books which study history on a global scale, using large quantities of data drawn from a wide range of sources and different time depths. Critics, on the other hand, favour problem orientation as a compromise between what Le Roy Ladurie described as the broad over-view of the parachutists and the nose to the ground methods of the truffle hunters.

There are similarities between the Total History approach and the work of archaeologists. For example, the development of field survey has led to the unification of regional frameworks, multi-period chronologies, and inter-disciplinary cooperation. In this respect the Annalists could be encouraged to look at archaeological data. However, there are few examples of archaeology on a global scale, the obvious British exceptions being: J.G.D. Clark's (1978) *World Prehistory* and Andrew Sherratt's (1980) *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Archaeology*.

Another important characteristic of the Annaliste approach is the study of the history of mentalities. This was developed by Fèbvre and Bloch following the lead of the sociologist Durkheim and the ethnologist Lévy-Bruhl. For Fèbvre sixteenth century man could only be understood when considered in the context of his contemporaries not when viewed in relation to modern man. We should study past peoples' beliefs, attitudes and perceptions without analogy to our own society's ideological world views.

It is a commendable theoretical stance, and archaeologists have recently also turned their attention towards the history of mentalities. For example, Renfrew's (1982) *Towards an Archaeology of the Mind*. But what about a methodology? Annalists are unfortunately reticent about methodological discussions, but they seem to base their hopes on the application of quantitative methods, especially in the analysis of serial data. Their methodology has recently been strongly criticised by the French historian Roger Chartier (1988). Cognitive Archaeologists will have to develop their own procedures, and this is happening, for example, in the field of ancient art, where Tim Taylor (1987) has applied the Gestalt psychologists' approach to perception, learning and thinking processes to ancient and prehistoric art.

Braudel's organizing scheme for his Mediterranean volumes has been of great interest to both historians and archaeologists. Although he incorporated a new concept

of time, which had perhaps previously been developed in the social sciences during the 1930's, and in biology by Haldane (1956), it is not merely a chronological scheme. He defined three levels which are both chronological and operational. The superficial level is one of short-term historical events and individuals; the middle level comprises conjunctures (cyclical phenomena) which occur over medium-length time-scales; and the basal level is of long-lasting structures. I shall now look at these in more detail.

The short-term, rapidly changing, level of historical events, chance occurrences and individual men and women comprises what Braudel viewed as the traditional approach to history, and it was against this that he reacted. He played down its importance, seeing events and individuals as the "ephemera" or "trivia" of the past. He says, on the final page of his Mediterranean book, "When I think of the individual, I am always inclined to see him imprisoned within a destiny in which he himself has little hand, fixed in a landscape in which the infinite perspectives of the long term stretch into the distance both behind him and before. In historical analysis as I see it, rightly or wrongly, the long term always wins in the end" (Braudel, 1972, 1244). Statesmen were for him, "despite their illusions, more acted upon than actors", and "resounding events are often momentary outbursts, surface manifestations of these larger movements and only explicable in terms of them" (Braudel, 1972, 21).

Braudel has since been criticized by historians for his neglect of this level, and later developed a communications model which looked at the ways in which the ideas of significant individuals or inconsequential events do create waves or longer lasting phenomena in society. Le Roy Ladurie (1981) reinstated the importance of this level in his book *Carnival*, where he described the significance of a people's uprising at Romans between 1579 and 1580.

This all serves to remind prehistorians in particular of their lack of recognition of the individual and the event in the past. In Hill and Gunn's (1977) *The individual in prehistory* the work of individual potters, basket manufacturers, and flint knappers is investigated by looking at the variability in style in technologies, and by isolating unique artefacts; but this still falls a long way short of the individuality defined by ethnoarchaeological studies in Hodder's (1987) *Archaeology as long-term history*. In prehistory we come in on the point of seeing successful individuals, and events when they mushroom into medium-term processes. For Classical archaeology, Bintliff (1987), on the other hand, with his Beotian project, feels optimistic that he can look at short-term events through Roman inscriptions and relate them to archaeologically defined medium- and long-term historical processes. The Annalists remind us, at least, to give some role to the short-term level in archaeological theory.

Braudel's middle level is concerned with what economists call conjunctures. By this he means the wave-shaped cycles of change of middling duration, seen in economic and social history; such as population cycles, agrarian cycles and economic cycles. Le Roy Ladurie (1974) in his *The Peasants of Languedoc* defined a great agrarian cycle occurring over two hundred years, beginning with the preconditions for growth, followed by a surge in population and production, then maturing and finally recession.

There do not seem to be any problems in applying the concept of conjuncture to archaeology. Archaeologists have already identified similar quantitative trends, including: logistic and exponential growth curves for population increase, battle-ship curves for rises and falls in the popularity of styles, growing separation of hierarchical levels in settlement pattern studies, increasing dependence on certain resources, and Parker Pearson's (1984) study of cyclical growth in the pre-state societies of Jutland.

Lewthwaite's (1987) article, 'The Braudelian Beaker: a Conjuncture in Western Mediterranean Prehistory', approximates the Beaker phenomenon to a wave shaped conjuncture of between four hundred and seven hundred radiocarbon years duration. Obviously this is a distortion of the time-scale envisaged by Braudel for this level, but that does not matter.

The final, most famous, and most controversial level in Braudel's scheme is the long term or 'longue-durée' and its structures. For Braudel, structures are the permanent, slow-moving or recurrent features of Mediterranean life. They exist in real life and act as an almost timeless constraint upon human behaviour. It is unclear what his views were on the creation of structures, but certainly an important element for him was the influence of the landscape.

I do not intend to enter into a detailed discussion of structure and structuralism, but I should point out that a number of questions are relevant in analyzing Braudel's scheme. These include: how do definitions of structure and structuralism vary between linguists, anthropologists, historians and archaeologists; do structures exist or are they just tools for interpretation; how are they formed; what is their relationship to events, conjunctures and social systems; and how can you identify them in the archaeological record?

Snodgrass (1987) is sceptical about the contribution of Classical archaeology to this level, due to the relatively brief duration of the entire Classical civilization, but an example of how the concept of structure has been applied is Haudricourt's (1962) hypothesis on the contrasts between 'Eastern' and 'Western' domestication of animals, ideologies and life-styles. My own view is that one must establish the continuity of any long-term processes before a structure is suggested. For example, Lewthwaite (1981) has criticized assumptions of continuity and analogy between Medieval transhumance and prehistoric extensive pastoralism. Braudel's assumptions about the role of the environment over the long-term can also be criticized by archaeologists. The landscape is not stable, and neither is the environment deterministic. It is increasingly man's influence upon the landscape which is seen as a factor in its changes. The view of regional personalities as static can also be questioned, as Van Andel and Runnel's (1988) 'Essay on the emergence of civilization in the Aegean world' suggests.

More generally, historians have complained about the artificiality of Braudel's divisions, the relationships between the levels, the emphasis he places on structure at the expense of the individual, and the over-identification of particular time scales with specific categories of phenomena, such as the middle level with socio-economic cycles. Braudel's model is also descriptive rather than explanatory concerning causes and processes of change over history. He speaks only vaguely of "destiny" and "the swing of the pendulum". Obviously archaeologists should not follow his scheme slavishly, but it does offer some help.

It usefully reminds us, especially prehistorians, not to neglect the study the history of the long-term. It encourages us to join in debate with historians. And it gives an answer to the problem of how to describe historical processes occurring at very different time-scales, by providing a convenient and flexible analytical framework for structuring our complex and varied data.

Annaliste historians also provide good examples of the style in which history and archaeology should be written. Owen Hufton (1986: 212) describes Braudel's writing as "at its worst grandiloquent . . . at its best, however, it is passionate and

intoxicating, and through it he depicts the Mediterranean . . . as a mistress both bewitching and seductive". Le Roy Ladurie's (1980) *Montaillou* actually headed the non-fiction bestseller lists in France. As Albert Ammerman says, "Too often our writing today is technical and flat . . . The rise of technical competence within archaeology during recent years has been a positive development. But the equally rapid increase of insipid prose in the literature has not" (Ammerman, 1988, 232).

So, in summary and conclusion: what can the Annaliste approach offer the Archaeologist? It reminds us of the importance of being aware of movements in other disciplines, and that we can join in with debates at an inter-disciplinary level. The history of the Annaliste approach suggests that we should take our own historiography more seriously. The Total History approach reminds us of the scope of our own data and interests, and should encourage us to study archaeology on a global scale. We will have to evolve our own methodologies in the study of past mentalities, but we should remember that the Annalists have been interested in this for some time. Braudel's great scheme has attracted much interest in archaeological circles. It can be criticized both in detail and at a general level, but it does provide a useful analytical framework for our data and interests, and it should encourage future discussion on how archaeologists deal with and divide up time. Finally, the Annaliste approach shows us, through a number of renowned literary works, that the past can be written about in style.

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