ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY AND THEORY:
SETTLEMENT AND SOCIAL RELATIONS IN CENTRAL ITALY A. D. 700 - 1000.

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Volume I - Text

Volume II - Appendices and Illustrations

Submitted in fulfilment of
the degree of Ph.D in
Archaeology and Prehistory

University of Sheffield.

September 1988

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SUMMARY

The first two chapters of this thesis trace the development of historical and archaeological thought in an attempt to arrive at an understanding of the reasons behind the present polarization of the two disciplines. It is concluded that this polarization is the result of the stress placed on a series of oppositions - structure/agency, society/individual, synchrony/diachrony, past/present. It is argued that a *rapprochement* between History and Archaeology is essential, especially for those who study the early medieval period where both have some relevance, and that this rapproachment is only possible through an adequate theorisation of the recursive links which connect each of the oppositions. This theorisation is the subject of chapters 3 and 4. The essential elements of the theoretical perspective produced are that all the traces of the past should be seen as material culture produced by agents working in and through societal structures. The link between the past and the present is also stressed, and the past is seen as a resource drawn upon in the creation and negotiation of social relations. I use this theoretical perspective in a re-examination of the nature of settlement patterns and social structures in early medieval central Italy. I suggest that the archaeological evidence used to support the notion of massive depopulation at the end of the Roman empire, refers more to the dominance of the feudal mode of production. This is not to argue that population did not decline. It did, and much of this thesis is concerned with attempting to isolate the mechanisms through which élites tried to exercise control over people. These included increased management of production through the use of the written text and the development of administrative sites. These efforts culminated in the tenth century with the "incastellation" of much of the rural population.

ABBREVIATIONS

L. L. *Liber largitorius vel notarius monasterii pharphensis* ed.
G. Zucchetti 1913 - 1932. Regesta chartarum Italie, Rome.

C. F. *Il chronicon farfense di Gregorio di Catino* ed. U. Balzani 1903.
Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, Instituto Storico Italiano XXXIII -
XXXIV, Rome.

R. F. *Il regesto di Farfa compilato da Gregrio di Catino* ed. I. Giorgi
and U. Balzani 1879 - 1914. Biblioteca della Società di Storia
Patria, Rome.

C. V. *Chronicon volturnense del monaco Giovanni* ed. V. Federici. Instituto
Storico Italiano, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia 58 - 60.

PREFACE

Giving History Back to People .

In recent years there has been a growing awareness, perhaps fostered by a recognition of the lasting impact that western colonialism has had on the lives of Third World peoples, that we can no longer think of the past (and indeed the present) as being composed of a series of discrete entities which operate largely in isolation of one another. At the same time we have become aware that when we write history we very often impose on "peripheral" peoples a fetishised version of Western history. More usually, however, the history of these peoples is largely forgotten amid the claims to fame of the great and glorious of the European past.

This awareness has stimulated a series of publications which seek to demonstrate that such people also possess a history; a history which at times meshes with that of the Western nations and at others does not (Hodder 1984; Sahlins 1987; Vallerstein 1974, 1980; Volf 1982). In essence there has been a move to allow that the people who have hitherto been denied history, as an academic and intellectual concomitant of the colonization process, have a past which is every bit as vital and necessary as our own.

This is no doubt an admirable and praiseworthy development, and might be directly linked to the liberation struggles and the general decolonization process. But we must ask to what extent do past and current epistemologies in fact deny history not only to the peoples of the Third World, but also to the vast majority of the past populations of Europe?

We all recognise the propensity of historians of the written word to produce histories which concentrate on the princes and battles, marriages and alliances of that small sector of the population who controlled a most powerful instrument of knowledge production and surveillance - writing. There have been moves to counteract this one-sided "political" history by using documents which seem to tell of the lives the ordinary person - charters, land deeds, pipe rolls etc. But these were the products of élite groups. We see the "lower orders" only through their distorted and biased vision (though see §3:5, and **Barrett 1981: 216**).

Until recently archaeologists have also been concerned with the trappings and culture of élite populations, but large scale field surveys combined with the excavations of small peasant sites have led some to conclude that it is through Archaeology that the past can be given back to "the people without history" (**Wolf 1982**).

While I am in broad agreement with the sentiments of historians and archaeologists who attempt this kind of work, in writing this thesis I have been confronted with problems which must prevent them from fulfilling their stated aim. The first is the epistemological premise on which so much History and Archaeology has been written from the

nineteenth century onwards. In essence this is an epistemology which is imbued with the tenets of positivism. The facts of the past are held to be real and to exist in the present world as remnants of the past. They offer us the chance, if we can collect enough of them, to see what the past was really like. This simply is not the case.

> "The past can only be told as it truly is, not was. For recounting the past is a social act of the present done by men of the present and affecting the social system of the present" (Wallerstein 1974: 9; and below Chapter 4).

In suggesting this we have to become aware of the essentially political nature of the archaeological and historical product which we produce in the form of texts and monuments (see Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 1987b; Stanford 1986). Like all practice in the present, Archaeology and History can never be "neutral" (see §1:4).

A further problem concerns the conceptual frameworks which historians and archaeologists have used in their reconstruction of the past. The early chapters of this thesis are an attempt to show that although we have been trying to write the history of all the people of any particular social formation, the conceptual frameworks we use and our picture of the relationship between the society and the individual, make that task impossible. Most historical and archaeological writing has been produced within a framework which subordinates the subject (the human person) to the object (the structure or society within which they live). People become variously the fulfillers of a Divine Plan; the Vehicles for the Implementation of System Needs; or the Impersonal Supports of Althusserian Structures. Despite Carr's (1961: 45) assertion that "the desire to postulate individual genius as the creative force in history is

characteristic of the primitive stage of historical consciousness", there has recently been a move to promote the Individual over the Structure (see **MacFarlane 1985**). While we cannot strictly call this a "primitive" stage in historical thought, it is a tendency which might be connected to the current espousal of the values of the Victorian entrepreneur and explorer (see §1:3).

In this thesis I shall attempt to show that there is a recursive relationship between society and the individual, as there is between all the oppositions which have simply served to oppose History – seen as the chronicling of events in time – to Archaeology – seen as the determining of the processes which lie behind the events. It is only when such oppositions are subverted, here through a use of the idea of **structuration** as developed by Giddens (1979, 1981) and some of the concepts used by Bourdieu (1977 and 1986), particularly that of **habitus**, that we will be able to write a history which allows the importance of human consciousness and action in the creation of history. Only then can history be truly given back to the people. But we must also acknowledge that structures and society, though the result of intended and unintended consequences of action, form templates which to a certain extent guide and control action. As Marx said, and as we will constantly reaffirm, the past (as structure) weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living (**Marx 1954**).

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

"About thirty years ago there was much talk that
geologists ought only to observe and not to theorise; and I
well remember someone saying that at this rate a man
might as well go into a gravel pit and count the pebbles
and describe the colours. How odd it is that anyone should
not see that all observation must be for or against some
view if it is to be of any service" (statement by C. Darwin
in 1861 quoted \F. **Darwin and A.C. Steward** (eds.) 1903:
195).

A Defence of Theory and Politics

A glance at the list of contents of this thesis will reveal an apparent

divergence from the title of the work - **Archaeology, History and Theory -**

Settlement and Social Relations in Central Italy A. D. 700 - 1000. Although

I will argue that this divergence is exactly that (apparent rather than

real) it might well be asked what the relevance is of several chapters on

the development of archaeological and historical thought to a thesis on

early medieval Italy. The point of this introduction is to justify the

detailed critique made of previous efforts (or lack of them) to produce an

archaeological/historical methodology, and the effort expended on the

development of an alternative theoretical perspective.

I find this is the only logical way to approach a piece of work which is

concerned with the distant past. By its very nature the past is not

immediately knowable. The events of the past are no longer with us, though

the past (*qua* the material products of action in the past) does exist in

the present. We must be very precise about the theoretical means we use to gain access to the past through that material culture. This applies to historians as much as archaeologists since, as I will argue, documentary evidence, like pottery and fresco cycles, is material culture and should be treated as such. The distinction which some medieval archaeologists, and (to their discredit) some prehistorians too, are beginning to emphasis between periods of history with documents and those without has been overstated. Such assertions depend on a positivist notion of the past and an untheorised conception of the written text.

An adequate explication of my theoretical position can only be presented through a demonstration of an awareness of those theories, stated and unstated, which have been part of my learning process as an archaeologist, and also of the ability to review and criticise them. If I were to say that they merely act as a foil against which to present my view of how Archaeology "should be done" it would be to overstate the case and to denigrate the effects that these approaches have had to the development of the theoretical perspective I will use in the course of this thesis. However they do act as a foil in the sense that it was through a critique of them (as well of course as reading the works of authors who inhabit an intellectual space beyond that which informs them) that I arrived at my present position. They are therefore important. They are important also because so much work in Archaeology and History today is being conducted within the paradigmatic framework they presuppose.

It is most important to question the applicability of such paradigmatic stances to Archaeology and History, especially today when the past, and

archaeology in particular, is being appropriated by Capitalism to further its reproduction, to the extent that Archaeology has been described as "Britain's latest and oldest growth industry" (The Guardian 11 January 1988).' The very fact that this is happening shows that Archaeology cannot be a "neutral" practice in the modern world. We cannot just stand aside and say "I am only interested in the past; what they do with the results of my work is no concern of mine". In taking such a stance we are in fact making a political statement even though the fact that our head is buried in the sand makes it a bit difficult for us to realise it.

The task of all historical disciplines today is to take up the task Marx set himself when he began his analysis of the capitalist mode of production - to show the transitory nature of this way of organising society and production. Archaeology and History are in a privileged position to do just this since they can show that things have been different in the past. Capitalism is not a naturalism. It is historically specific. In showing that that the past was different we allow that the future can be different, and in the face of a government which has proclaimed the "death of socialism" and means thereby the death of any alternative, that becomes a political statement (see Shanks and Tilley 1987: 186 - 208; and Hirst 1985d: 25). It points to Archaeology as political practice.

As well as justifying the structure of this thesis this introduction is intended as a defence against charges that archaeological theses are about archaeology defined as raw material from the past - data, facts. The persistence of this positivist conception of what Archaeology (we should really call it antiquarianism) is unfortunately makes such an introduction

necessary. I will not labour on the pernicious effects which this persistence has had for Archaeology both in theory and in fieldwork. That will be dealt with in the succeeding chapters.

Before attempting to write this work I consulted several archaeological theses to gain an idea of how it "should be done". There seems to be a fairly standard format, at least to those produced over the last two decades. First you justify the scope of the work by arguing that exploration of this previously unknown or undervalued field has a wider applicability to our understanding of what the past was really like. Then you outline the objective geological, geomorphological, and general environmental conditions of the study area – as it were setting the scene for the story. This points to the impact which environmental determinism and Higgsian economism has had on archaeological research in the last twenty years. Next you outline the previous work done in the specific geographical region chosen and perhaps in the development of the particular technique you wish to apply. Then you present your facts about that area/technique and show how they relate to the previous work done and to the environmental situation. The conclusion is a discussion of how this work alters our picture of the past in that area/time. "Once the stage had been draped with a physical space and an apportionment of its rural and urban, upper and lower-class settlements, narrative could begin..." (Kinser 1981: 77).

This thesis opens not with any physical, geographical, or climatic descriptions to set the scene upon which the action is to take place, against which the story will be told. I will attempt to weave those

elements into the text to show that they do not stand apart from human history, that they are not wholly objective, real structures which limit and restrict human activity. They did exist, but were bearers of meaning. Landscape and settlement patterns, too, are socially constructed.

There has generally been very little discussion of the theoretical premises which inform our work, and where such discussion does take place it is often introduced at the beginning and at the end. It is separated from the data. Much of the early part of this thesis is concerned with showing the inadequacy of this conception of the theory/data couplet and pointing out the essentially recursive nature of the relationship between them. The rest of the work is an attempt to construct a history of the early medieval past in central Italy, a construction predicated upon the historical and archaeological critiques presented in chapters 1 and 2, and upon the theoretical perspective developed in chapters 3 and 4. To the extent that the theoretical premisses used are made explicit, this is a work of theory.

However, although the past is gone and only exists in the present in the form of material cultural traces, language and custom, those traces nevertheless have to form the bases of our historical constructions. Although it is the archaeologist or historian who actually constructs the past in the present, such constructions must be based on the material evidence from the past. In effect we are treading the thin line between the present and the past, between a debilitating relativism and a dogmatic positivism (see Carr 1961: 29 for a similar assertion). This thesis seeks to demonstrate that it is indeed possible to follow this course.

CHAPTER ONE

History, Archaeology and the Subdivision of the Past

"Why on earth should we waste time on all this theoretical stuff, about class structure and social relations and historical method? Why can't we just go on doing history in the good old way, without worrying about the concepts and categories we employ. That might even involve us in the philosophy of history, which is something we prefer to abandon with disdain to philosophers and sociologists, as mere ideology" (Millar 1977: xi - xii).

"...sociologists have been content to leave the succession of events in time to the historians, some of whom as their part of the bargain have been prepared to relinquish the structural properties of social systems to sociologists" (Giddens 1979: 7 - 8).

§1: 1 *Introduction*

This thesis is concerned with a period of the Italian past which has traditionally been the preserve of those who study the written word. However, in Italy, as in much of the rest of Europe, the post-war period saw the rise of Medieval Archaeology, both as a discipline within university departments and as a distinct mode of practical field work. Much of the new information on the period is being produced through excavation and survey rather than from long hours spent in the municipal archives. As a result we have had to confront and re-evaluate the relationship between History and Archaeology as ways of writing and thinking about the past. I will argue that previous attempts to examine

this relationship have been hampered from the outset by their construction within a positivist epistemology.

The relationship has never been easy or satisfactory for either party. Historians have pointed to the 'dumbness' of the mute artefact and have seen the archaeologist "simply as an illustrator, to provide a few concrete relics to make vivid the written page - 'Here is Queen Mary's coronation chair; this is the portrait of Alexander; this is the jaw bone of a neolithic sheep'" (Renfrew 1979: 257). This position has perhaps best been presented by Philip Grierson in an otherwise interesting and illuminating article on Dark Age trade. Grierson (1959) suggests that the old adage that the spade cannot lie derives ultimately from the fact that it cannot even speak. This objectivisation of the archaeologist's craft in the form of the spade and the characterisation of the latter as an *instrumentum mutum* has been a persistent theme in the writings of those historians who deal with archaeological data. Thus a recent work on the Roman phases of the monastery at San Vincenzo al Volturno in Molise, Italy, contains the following comment:

> "Evolution from villa to village church or monastery is a
> frequent phenomenon of early medieval archaeology.
> Continuity is often surmised, but inevitably hard to
> demonstrate. At San Vincenzo, where continuity was broken,
> stages of change are hard to see, but the **spade's dumb
> mouth** gives us little help in understanding them" (Barnish:
> forthcoming 1988; emphasis added).'

In a similar vein, Crawford (1987: 4) accepts without reservation Alcock's assertion that the "archaeologist who chooses to work in a historic period 'must recognise his dependence on historians' (Alcock 1983: 57)".

Historians have been further mystified by the activities of prehistorians who have attempted to write the history of the greater part of the human occupation of the European continent without what the former consider to be the indispensible aid of documents (Finley 1975: 88) and so have largely ignored the subject altogether.

For their part archaeologists have proclaimed themselves the saviours of the common man of the past whom they see as rendered mute by the social factors underlying textual production. Archaeologists point to the text as élite production, as "distorted" ideology, and as saying little or nothing about the vast majority of the population. Only Archaeology, they argue, can give history back to the people (see Preface).

Following on from the perception of text as distorted communication, some archaeologists have argued that we would do better to ignore this data set altogether and construct our histories from archaeological evidence alone. Thus in a recent book on the transition from Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England, Arnold (1984) makes a virtue of the fact that his work deliberately avoids historical evidence. He even goes so far as to say that the archaeological and historical evidence are not concerned with the same subject matter. He attempts to justify this assertion by using the following somewhat obscure simile -

> "An analogous problem would arise if an attempt was made to integrate the information contained in a railway time table with the rubbish found along the trackside which had been thrown from the train windows. Independently these sources tell us much about the railway system and the railway users. But there is very little room for integration unless the chronology of the discarded rubbish is accurately established"(*ibid:* 163; emphasis added).

Hodges' contention that "it is the archaeological record, not the fleeting gasps of contemporary observers, which provides a source of data on the pattern and process of the Anglo-Saxon conquest of southern and eastern Britain" (1986: 70) should be read in much the same light.

Essentially what Arnold and others[2] advocate is that, given the uncertainties and vicissitudes of interpretation and dating connected with documents of this period, archaeology should stand by itself (Arnold 1984: 165; Hope-Taylor 1977: 309. See also Hobsbawn 1979 for a critique of these "counterfactual" arguments).

These feelings have been expressed in a manner which is both more forceful and more polemical by one of the great theorists of modern archaeology - David Clarke.

Clarke was primarily concerned with the development of Archaeology as an independent discipline "struggling to find its dimensions and assert its separate existence from bordering disciplines of greater maturity" (1978: 19) - especially History. Clarke contends that archaeologists should set about the task of developing models and modes of data analysis which are specifically archaeological[3] - that is, they are to be used for the classification, explication, and explanation of archaeological "facts".

> "Archaeological data are not historical data and consequently archaeology is not history....archaeology is archaeology is archaeology...Archaeology is a discipline in its own right, concerned with archaeological data which it clusters in archaeological entities displaying certain archaeological processes and studied in terms of archaeological aims, concepts and procedures. We fully

appreciate that these entities and processes were once historical and social entities but the nature of the archaeological record is such that there is no simple way of equating our archaeological percepta with these lost events" (*ibid*: 11, emphasis added).

An initial reaction to this zealousness in the defence of Archaeology is to suggest that he "protests too much" though it might be considered perfectly natural that an "immature discipline" like Archaeology should seek to establish a place for itself within the present structure of academic research. An essential aspect of this thesis, however, is to assert that the mutual stand-offishness of large numbers of historians and archaeologists does nothing to advance the study of the past. It does nothing to break down what Renfrew (1979) has characterised as this "dialogue of the deaf".

We may sympathise with Arnold's reservations about the inadequacies of the historical documentation for the fifth century in Britain, and with those of Grierson for the capacity of the spade to be anything more than an *instrumentum mutum*. Such cautions have been noted before (Myres 1986: 1 - 20; Sawyer 1978: 2 - 20), and certainly will be again, but should the information be so summarily dismissed just because we feel that it presents us with apparently insurmountable problems?

An indication of how a "marriage of convenience" (or in the present situation, one of necessity) between History and Archaeology could be arranged, will be presented in Chapter 3. Here we must recognise that the separation of Archaeology and History in the study of periods with some form of documentary record has contributed greatly to the proliferation

of histories of the great and the glorious on the one hand, and the production of typologies of ring headed pins and cremation urns or reports on the latest selection of carbonised seeds from a tenth century deposit in a Tuscan hill town on the other. Both are vital to our attempts at "piecing together the past", but on their own, devoid of context or attempts to place them within a body of theory, they are certainly "dry bones, signifying nothing" (Collingwood 1946: 305).

This first chapter has two main aims. Firstly to demonstrate that before we can understand the relationship which exists between History and Archaeology we have to appreciate how it arose. Before we can propose a methodological and theoretical standpoint which can bring together the two disciplines in a more holistic approach to the past (i. e. through a realisation that all those remains from past societies should be treated as material culture)[4] we have to be aware of the practical and epistemological bases on they rest.

A short historiographical exegesis will show that, with some honourable exceptions (see §1;4), the cult of the fact and the objectivity of the "evidence" lies at the heart of past and current historical constructions. A similar exegesis for Archaeology carried out in this chapter, and a critique of "new archaeology" (outlined in the next), will show that given the stark division drawn (at least by the practitioners of the *new archaeology*), between "fact ridden" History, and the "scientific, rigorous" Archaeology, we arrive at the somewhat surprising conclusion that much historical and archaeological work is founded upon the same epistemology.

This leads directly to the second aim of this chapter which is to suggest that the reason for a lack of willingness on the part of historians and archaeologists to seek, or even visualise the possibility of a *rapprochement* between the two disciplines is found partly in the institutionalisation of nineteenth century academic divisions (see §1:4) - in other words in the politics of universities facing cuts and closures - but mostly in the epistemology which has for so long dominated both, namely positivism. It will be argued that only when this epistemology is subverted and replaced that a genuinely new direction for both disciplines, working together, can be offered. Some initial pointers in this new direction will be provided in chapters 3 and 4, and the theoretical perspective presented there informs the whole of this work.

§1: 2 *The "Scientific" Method and "Universal" History*

The Renaissance is well known as the period which gave the world many great masterpieces of art and architecture (see **Panofsky 1972**). It was also a period of intense philosophical enquiry into a whole range of subjects from the aesthetics of building design to early "scientific" enquiry[6], the latter the at least partial result of the pervasiveness of an increasingly secular spirit.

One of the more immediate results of the activities of the Universal Men of the Renaissance was the accumulation of a vast corpus of information on many subjects. The problem became how to cope with this information and how to organise it in such a manner that it made sense. The

"scientific method" was the result of endeavours to resolve these difficulties.

Medieval historiography and "science" were bound to the then dominant mode of explanation for all phenomena - the direct intervention in the life and works of Man by a Divine and all seeing Being. It was the task of scholars to discover the Divine Plan by which God ordered the world and the activities of Man. There was no question of humans determining their own future. Even those who sought to change the order of things were simply instruments manipulated by God to ensure the implementation of His will (Collingwood 1946: 52 - 56)[6].

The development and application of the "scientific" method in the subsequent centuries served to assure men that they were capable of organising and directing their collective and individual destinies (Trigger 1978: 57). The method was essentially inductive in that the first task of the scholar was to generate or collect as much data or facts as possible. Through the ordering of these by comparison and contrast some general propositions would emerge. If these propositions stood up to the test of experiment and the application of more facts then they might be treated as laws. Historians of the time argued that the use of this methodology (which owed its popularity to successes in the hard or physical sciences) might enable them to discover the laws of human nature and society.

Although nineteenth century schools of history produced an unparalled quantity of "facts" about the past (see §1:3), facts as such were rarely

ignored by seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophers of history. Instead they were welded into some grand scheme, some Universal History. Thus we have Kant's notion of history as the working out of a plan of Nature (note here the persistence of elements of what we might call a medieval historiographical tradition) which involves the progressive emergence of human rationality brought about by human passion, ignorance, and selfishness. It is these base qualities which provided Man with the urge to move away from the state of Nature (a state which bears a close resemblance to idealist conceptions of primitive communism - see Bloch 1984), but in so doing is actually the tool in the realisation of Her plan - the ultimate attainment of human rationality.

Despite Kant's unduly pessimistic notion of human wickedness as the driving force of historical development, he did make an important contribution to historical thought when he asserted that real historical inquiry could be achieved only through the combination of learning and philosophy. In this he echoed the calls of Vico a century earlier.

Vico, who was writing in Naples at the beginning of the eighteenth century proposed that it was not enough to demonstrate the veracity or otherwise of any statement in the sources (for what follows see Vico 1968 and Collingwood's discussion of the works of Vico - 1946: 63 - 71). He suggested that we could learn about the past even from those statements which we had shown to be "untrue". In essence he pointed out that the most important question a historian could ask of the sources was not whether it was true or not, but what it means.

The way this meaning was to be extracted shows the historical thinking of Vico to have been far in advance not only of the positivist history of the nineteenth century, but also of most subsequent historiography. He advocated the analysis of non-documentary sources such as linguistics and mythology (in a way which superficially prefigures the work of the great twentieth century workers in these fields like Levi Strauss and Saussure), along with a study of the folk customs and elements of peasant and primitive societies, to provide a context within which to place the evidence of written sources, and thereby extract meaning from them. In this way we can learn about things which have not even been written down in the sources but which are implied by them.

We can, perhaps, suggest that Vico's philosophy of history, and the methodology derived from it, owed much to the persistence of elements of Renaissance polymathism. It is a methodology which has not been much favoured with the advance of positivism (see §1:3 for further discussion) and indeed is still rarely found in modern historical works. It is founded upon a theory of knowledge which is the antithesis of that which informs positivism. Its recognition of the importance of the historian in the determination of what constitutes a fact about the past, and the insistence on the breadth of resources upon which we must draw when we attempt to write a history which is not strictly document bound, is to be emphasised, and has strong similarities with the methodology which will be proposed later in this thesis.

> "The ideal of universal history was swept aside as a vain
> dream, and the ideal of historical literature became the
> monograph" (Collingwood 1946: 127).

Although working primarily within what we would call disciplines outside
history, both Marx and Hegel to a large extent continued within the
tradition of "grand history", and Marx certainly spent much time
considering the philosophy of history[7]. With the growing dominance of the
positivist paradigm in the nineteenth century, however, such
considerations became rare and the advances made by Vico and Kant, and
continued by Marx, along with the whole notion of the philosophy of
history was dismissed as "baseless speculations" (Collingwood 1946: 126).
It was the positivist approach to the past which contributed to the
profound and long lasting division in the study of the past, and which
determined the way in which history would be written for the following
150 years. It is somewhat paradoxical, as I have already suggested, to
find the *new archaeology* wearing a mantle which has now been cast off by
most historians, despite the pleas of 'good old fashioned' Fergus Millar
(see the quotation at the start of this Chapter).

Nineteenth century historians, imbued with positivist fervour, took the
'scientific approach' to a logical extremity, but an extremity that was
only logical in terms of their imbalanced concentration on the first part
of the positivist programmatic. Facts were collected on an unprecedented
scale. It is to this time that we owe many of the first complete
collections of classical inscriptions in Britain, the most thorough

translations and editions of medieval monastic chronicles, and, within the emerging discipline of Archaeology, we get the first major typological schemes for stone tools and other aspects of material culture (Clarke 1978: 8 - 10; Grayson 1983).

But along with the degeneration of the philosophy of history went a neglect of the second part of the positivist programme. Historians felt compelled to collect the facts but seemed unwilling or unable to move on to the next stage - the generation of propositions and laws about human society from all this information. History became more and more concerned with the minutiae of detail and neglected the grand sweep of eighteenth century "Universal History". In this context it is illuminating to note the praise lavished by an anonymous reviewer on a book published in 1833 by the Scottish lawyer William Blair. **An Inquiry into the State of Slavery Amongst the Romans** was highly commended because Blair "has no splendid theory to illustrate, no object but that of diffusing the valuable knowledge which his industry has enabled him to collect" (Quarterly Review 50 [1834]: 399 - 412).

Concerning the longeveity of this mode of historical thinking, it is useful once again to turn to the quotation from Fergus Millar presented at the start of this chapter. Along with his desire for a return to the good old days, Millar, in the Preface, congratulates himself on having "rigorously avoided reading works on kingship or related topics, or studies of monarchic institutions in societies other than those of Greece and Rome". He has not "contaminated the presentation of the evidence" and has thus succeeded in achieving the ultimate goal of the historian - that

is "to subordinate himself to the evidence" (Millar 1977: xi - xii). The facts really can speak for themselves!

Millar falls in among the ranks (sic) parading under the banner *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.

> "When Ranke in the 1830's...remarked that the task of the historian was 'simply to show how it really was" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*), this not very profound aphorism had an astonishing success. Three generations of German, British, and even French historians marched into battle intoning the magic words '*Wie es eigentlich gewesen*' like an incantation - designed, like most incantations, to save them from the tiresome obligation to think. The Postitivists, anxious to stake their claim for history as a science, contributed their influence to this cult of facts...Facts like sense impressions, impinge on the observer from the outside and are independent of his consciousness. The process of reception is passive; having recieved the data he acts upon them" (Carr 1961: 8 - 9, emphasis added)

The historian became a spectator of a sequence of events which "from the beginning of time, pass, as it were, in review before us,...what spectacle can be imagined so magnificent, so various, so interesting?" (Hume 1826, iv: 531).

However, rather than being a most magnificent spectacle, to portray history as the procession of scenes before the eyes of the historian/observer is to produce a "dead past", full of events but devoid of a single human thought (Hirst 1985c: 44). Writing history from this perspective follows from two fundamental errors - the first centreing on the nature of historical facts and their relationship with those of science; the second concerning the possibility or even desirability of

achieving the subject/object, thought/event separation demanded by positivist objectivity. I will briefly discuss the first point and then elaborate on the second at greater length since it is important to the rest of this thesis and helps us understand why history has been characterised as idiographic and particularistic by the proponents of the new archaeology and why they have felt it necessary to encourage a separation between the disciplines, a separation which is now being reproduced for the study of the early medieval past (see §1:1), and which it is the aim of this thesis to break down.

In the positivist conception of the scientific method a fact is something which exists "outside" the scientist's mind and becomes apparent through perception. Facts are the product of direct observation of events which often permit the possibility of experimental replication[8]. By definition, however, past events no longer exist and therefore access to the facts about these events cannot be immediate. Neither are they usually repeatable through experiment[9]. Rather all that remains to us from the past are its representations in material culture (Hindess and Hirst 1975: 309). Such representations do not speak for themselves and tell us what the past was really like. They are texts which have to be read and like any text are amenable to a variety of readings (the implications of this are discussed in detail in Chapter 4).

The position of historian/observer within this explanatory framework means that we produce a past in which things happen to people. People are the objects through which the predetermined plan of some super-organism/structure/nature is worked out. The notion of the person

actively working and striving for some particular goal(s) and influencing

his/her own destiny is effectively unconsidered or denied. As we shall

see in succeeding chapters this is a phenomenon which has characterised

much archaeological and historical thinking, whether explicitly phrased

or not.

On a political and moral level, by taking the stance of what has been

called the "austere ideal" of "objective relativism" (Ingold 1986: 103) the

historian (or archaeologist)

> "places himself above the cut of mankind...He alone
> purports to recognize 'other cultures' for what they really
> are, not the folk condemned to live incarcerated within
> them. Setting himself up as the spectator of all time and
> culture he establishes the facts of cultural enthnocentrism
> ...and anticipates that somehow this enlightened
> information will liberate students of anthropology [here we
> can read history] from the depressing limitations of their
> own cultural environment. Anthropologists [historians], at
> least will be free and enlightened souls, even if the rest
> of mankind is doomed to cultural bondage" (Ingold 1986:
> 103).

At an even more basic level, it can be argued that the desired

subject/object division can never exist. It can rarely be possible for

historians to approach their data with a mental and conceptual *tabula*

rasa, without preconceptions about the past, and desires for the present

and future. The historian, too, lives in the world of the present (Carr

1961: 24 - 25) and as such, opinions, both about what constitutes a

historical fact and about what these facts mean, will be largely

determined and coloured by her/his character, a character which is a

product of his/her past existing in the present (Hodder 1986: 16; Ingold

1986: 108).

In the context of historiography we might, thus, amend Marx's famous dictum in the **Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte** to read as follows

> Men write their own history, but they do not write it just as they please; they do not write it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

Failure to accept that "the practical requirements which underlie every historical judgement give to all history the character of contemporary history" (Croce 1941: 19) is in effect to allow the imposition of a fetishised and reified picture of the present on the past (see also Shanks and Tilley 1986: 65). Again Marx sums up the essence of the problem in the first page of **Grundrisse** which deserves to be quoted at length since it has relevance not only to the point under discussion but also on issues which form the focus of later parts of this work.

> "The individual and isolated hunter and fisherman, with whom Smith and Ricardo begin, belongs to the unimaginative conceits of the eighteenth century Robinsonades, which in no way express a reaction against oversophistication and a return to a misunderstood natural life, as cultural historians imagine.... It is, rather, the anticipation of 'civil society', in preparation since the sixteenth century and making great strides towards maturity in the eighteenth. In this society of free competition, the individual appears detached from natural bonds etc. which in earlier historical periods make him an accessory of a definite and limited human conglomerate. Smith and Ricardo still stand with both feet on the shoulders of eighteenth century prophets in whose imaginations this eighteenth-century individual ... appears as an ideal, whose existence they project into the past. **Not as a historic result but as history's point of departure"** (Marx 1973: 85 emphasis added).

This is the inevitable result of what some call with pride the "commonsense approach", though it is accurately caricatured by Marc Bloch as "the dangerous modern poison of...empiricism parading as commonsense" (Bloch 1959: 13 - 14). Unless we recognise our own past in the present, and also the capabilities of persons in the past to do the same, we will impose our present on their past.

Those who refuse to accept this should consider the importance attached by the present government to the "values" of Britain's era of Imperial "greatness", and ponder what has motivated historians and archaeologists to attempt to trace the "origins of English individualism", the quality which helped make Britain "great", back to the thirteenth century (MacFarlane 1985) or even to the age of King Arthur (Hodges forthcoming 1989), that folk hero of the Victorian imagination[10].

They should further consider the illuminating account given by Finley (1980) of the reasons behind the awakening of interest in Ancient slavery. Finley counters claims that such interest developed in the period of the Enlightenment. He characterises the work of this period on slavery, and that of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, as essentially "antiquarian"[11]. Finley excludes the nineteenth century economists, or *Nationalökonomen*, from this epithet, and shows that it was the post-war situation in Europe, especially in Germany, which prompted discussion of the role of slavery in the Ancient World. Much of this discussion, (especially that connected with the Mainz project directed by Joseph Vogt), was part of "an intentional political act" (*ibid:*

62) linked to the post-war division of Germany, and was intended to

counter Communism in general and Marxist historiography in particular.

§1: 4 *History, Sociology, Archaeology: Event, Structure, Process*

> "In 1800 the categories (or 'disciplines') which are today
> standard - history, economics, sociology, anthropology,
> political science - did not for the most part exist as
> concepts and were certainly not the basis of sharply
> differentiated groups of teachers and researchers. The
> somewhat tortuous process by which certain combinations of
> concerns and concepts took particular forms resulted in
> major 'methodological' debates... Among the debates, one of
> the most influential was that betwen so called nomothetic
> and idiographic knowledge, between the possibility and
> impossibility of generalizations about human behaviour,
> between the universalizers and the particularizers"
> (Wallerstein 1979: 152).

It seems too much of a coincidence that this "tearing apart of the

sciences of man" ran parallel to the rise of positivism in science and

history. It might be argued that the logical consequence of amassing data

about the past from Renaissance times, with a quantitative leap in the

nineteenth century, was a fragmentation of the field of study. The volume

of data was so large that no one group of scholars could hope to cope

with it all and so the various disciplinary subdivisions which are

fossilised in contemporary educational establishments were born.

Such an explanation might provide part of the reason for the subdivision

of the past, but it is only part and perhaps not even the most important

part. In any case it is a functionalist explanation and so suffers from

the circularity inherent in all such. It also implicitly asserts that

developments within academic research are the result of processes

internal to that field and hence it denies interaction between academia, academics and the world around them (see note 13 below). A more sophisticated version of the same type of argument is presented by Collingwood (1946: 128 - 9) regarding the emergence of sociology. It deserves to be discussed in a little detail, as does a counter view put forward recently by Eric Wolf (1982). They illustrate the processes by which the disciplines emerged and allow us to understand why, in the middle decades of this century, archaeologists turned to disciplines other than History for support in the their quest for "maturity", for techniques to be used to "decode the past" and make the "mute stones speak", and for the confidence to assert the possibility, and for some the obligation, to write history without the help of History. However, a consideration of the work of the *Annales* historians in France, and Collingwood's philosophy of history will show that Archaeology's abandonment of History was based on a lack of awareness of more recent historiography and a consequent dependence on an outmoded picture drawn from the last gasps of the practitioners of a dying creed (see §1:4, and Chapter 2).

I have already mentioned that many nineteenth century historians collected facts with relish, as demanded by the first part of the positivist programme, while neglecting the second - the production of general laws (see §1:3). This situation was partially the product of the adoption of the positivist programme, and partially the result of the development of a more rigorous historical methodology by which the "truth" of historical facts could be ascertained. Thus Collingwood suggests that the end result, of the practice of philological criticism[12] was, on the one hand to focus the historian's attention on the collection

and criticism of historical data, and on the other to the neglect of the search for general laws of human behaviour, society etc. (Collingwood 1946: 130 - 131). Positivist philosophers pointed to this inadequacy in the historian's approach, and it was an awareness of this weakness, Collingwood argues, which prompted Auguste Comte to propose a new science whose task would be the generation of the very laws neglected by historians. Sociology in this case is seen as a kind of "super-history" (ibid).

Eric Wolf, while not totally denying the importance of internal academic debates in the emergence of this new discipline, argues that its development was fundamentally connected with the political and social conditions of the mid-nineteenth century.[13] The rise to dominance of the capitalist mode of production in the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth, served to pit the new class of industrialists and entrepreneurs against the landed Establishment and the ever more heavily exploited urban proletariat. The result was a period of intense social and political unrest, which raised the question of how social order could be maintained or restored, if at all. Sociology developed in the hope of answering these questions. It had "an eminently political origin...Saint Simon, Auguste Comte, and Lorenz Stein conceived the new science of society as an antidote against the poison of social disintegration" (Wolf 1982: 8; also Abercrombie et. al 1980: 1).

Whatever the reasons behind its emergence (and the alternative explanations presented above are not mutually exclusive) the development of sociology served to reinforce the position of historians as the bearers

of the first part of the positivist programme. This separation of the two aspects of the positivist programme resulted from, and reproduced, other fundamental distinctions which isolated History (seen as the chronicling of facts distilled from the records produced in the past) from the study of Society (seen as the analysis of the structures which made up any particular social formation and the reasons why these changed). It is to this break in the nineteenth century that we can trace the synchrony/diachrony, event/structure, inductive/deductive, and object/subject divisions.

As we shall see in the next chapter, these oppositions have been held to isolate History from an Archaeology which proclaims its concern with *process* rather than *event*. The paradox in this division exists because processual archaeology is founded upon the same positivist epistemology as idiographic history. The paradox can be resolved only when the oppositions referred to above are deconstructed. This can be done through an awareness of the recursiveness of all the binary couplets, and between theory and data (see **Giddens 1979, 1980; Ingold 1986;** and **Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 1987b**).

To summarise (and partly to anticipate the arguments of the next chapter): we have a situation where History is characterised as idiographic, particularistic, and obsessed with the "cult of facts", and where Archaeology, through its relationship with American anthropology, is seen as a nomothetic, generalising, processual science. While this opposition has a basis in reality given the nature of much historiography, those who perpetuate these attitudes fail to recognise

firstly the positivist bent of much twentieth century archaeology, and secondly the existence of forms of historical analysis which have taken moved rapidly away from an overriding concern with the event. This can best be illustrated by a brief consideration of one of the most influential schools of thought in modern History, which has until recently been totally ignored by modern Archaeology, - the *Annales*, and by a discussion of a methodology designed to take History (and Archaeology) beyond positivism, offered by someone who has been called "the only British thinker who has made a serious contribution to the philosophy of history" (Carr 1961: 21) - R.G. Collingwood.

What has become familiar to us as the Annales'[4] school of history was founded in the 1920's by Lucien Fébvre and Marc Bloch as an explicit reaction to the predominantly positivistic bent of historiography in France - the *histoire Sorbonniste* (Clark 1985: 181). This traditional history was political history, a logical consequence of a positivist refusal to make subjective comments on the "facts" of the past and the production of a history of external events, "not the history of the thought out of which these events grew" (Collingwood 1946: 132). As with all narrative history, the *histoire Sorbonniste* "rested covertly on the twin beliefs in the dominance of exceptional actor-heroes and on the influence of the instant and dramatic in men's lives. The threat of the contingent was overcome by the imposition of narrative order" (Clark 1985: 180).

Fébvre and Bloch drew much of the impetus for their new approach from this reaction but more immediately from their interaction with historical

geographers, sociologists, economic and social historians, and psychologists (Lloyd 1986: 244). They elevated the status of collective and social entities over the claims to glory of the individual who had been the focus of the "great-man" type of traditional narrative history.

The essence of work by the early *annalistes* was to determine the nature of the relationship between the individual (here meaning all persons, not just the "great-men") and society. They saw a recursive relationship between the two (much as I will suggest in chapter 4) and had a similar perception of the relationship between the structures of a society, which they attempted to locate, and the events and great men of traditional history (Clark 1985: 181). They sought to determine the ideological world view of a particular space and time; to study the practical activities of man through which such world views are formed and transformed; and to determine the geopolitical structural contexts of such mental universes and practical activities (Lloyd 1986: 244 - 5). This was to be history where the dialectic between Man, Structure, and Nature was emphasised, for Fébvre was no environmental or structural determinist. Rather he stressed the notion that environments too were socially constructed, that they were "as much vehicles of endowed meaning as brute facts about the external world" (Clark 1985: 182). It was also a history which acknowledged its relationship to the past through its construction in the present. Fébvre summed this up eloquently when he stated that

> "..history...systematically gathers in, classifies and
> assembles past facts in accordance with its present
> needs..It consults death in accordance with the needs of
> life" (1973: 41).

The energy and vision of Fébvre were largely responsible for the institutionalisation of the *Annales* in 1947 in the form of the Sixth Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, now the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (**Kinser 1981: 63; Hexter 1972: 497**). He was succeeded in 1956 as president of the school by perhaps the best known *Annaliste* - Fernand Braudel. In 1950 Fébvre reviewed Braudel's masterpiece *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* as an example of how history should be written (**Fébvre 1950**).

With the emergence of Braudel as the leading figure in the *Annales*, the movement changed direction, if not in research or in the objective of total history, then certainly in terms the conception of the society/individual, structure/event oppositions which had figured so strongly in the works of Bloch and Fébvre. Braudel felt that his was a structural history, and asserted that he was "a 'structuralist' by temperament" (1966,ii: 250, quoted in **Kinser 1981: 64**)[15]. Kinser (1981: 77) suggests, however, that "the conceptual novelty of *La Méditerranée* lies not in Braudel's 'structural' history but in his geohistory", in the sense that Braudel succeeded (where others had failed) to link the effects of environment and ecology with social activity. This success was not without its casualties - the foremost being people.

The analytical and explanatory framework used by Braudel in both his great works - *La Méditerranée* (1975) and *Civilisation and Capitalism* (1982) - hinges on a hierarchical conception of time, around and from which hang similarily ordered notions of space, history, and "determination" (**Braudel 1982: 17**). This temporal hierarchy is so well

known by now that little time (*sic*) need be spent in detailed description. A brief summary will suffice for our present purposes.

The first level is that of the *longue dureé* (Braudel 1980: 27), Kinser's geo-history. Although Braudel in 1946 described this as the history of "man in his relationship to the environment" (reprinted in 1975: 20, emphasis added) it is really a history of the environment and the limits it places on human activity (see 1980: 31). This is a time of almost imperceptible passing "in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles" (*ibid*). "This great structure travels through vast tracts of time without changing..." (1980: 75)

The second level is that of the history of "groups and groupings", "social history", the study of "economic systems, states, societies, civilisations....warfare" (*ibid*: 20 - 21). Here the rhythms might last from a few years to a few decades, a mere second compared to the millenia of geohistory, and are more perceptible to the historian. This is the history of *conjunctures*.

Finally there is the history of the event - *l'historie événementielle*. Braudel characterises this not as the history of man, "but of individual men". He then uses a series of metaphors to emphasise the essential transience of these "surface disturbances", these "brief, rapid, nervous fluctuations" (*ibid*) in comparison with what, for him, are the real objects of history - the structures of *longue durée* and *conjoncture*. Ideally the historian's aim should be to discover the dialectic which

deconstructs the oppositions between these levels. But it is at this point that the *monde Braudellien* falls apart.

Braudel presents us with a series of deterministic structures which are independently real, in the sense that they **determine** the actions of the people who make up the history of the event, and (to a certain extent) that of the *conjuncture*. It is apparently fruitless to trace in detail the thought and consciousness of groups and individuals as expressed in text (and material culture). They live in a world of false consciousness and illusion. The reality is not freedom to act, but an illusion of freedom in the midst of structural (we might with reason say environmental) determinism. People

> "grasp the passage of time only 'narratively' from the headlong rush of day-to-day happenings, and most of....real history therefore escapes them. Naturally they think of their affairs in terms of intention, choice and self-determination...But they fail to recognise those forces which are separate from them and which fashion what they do" (Clark 1985: 184).

Despite their delusions of power and grandeur, statesmen like Philip II himself, or Don John of Austria, were more acted upon than actors (Braudel 1975: 19).

The real actors are the climate, the environment, and Malthusian constraints. These become personalised in Braudel's texts and ascribed with agency. Although Braudel recognises the dialectic between structure and agency, it is rarely activated to rescue people from structure. The temporal and spatial hierarchy he uses becomes disarticulated and is rendered purely descriptive, with little explanatory or analytical force.

Determination by the *longue durée* means that although "the lower classes are no longer ignored by historians, they seem condemned, nevertheless to remain silent" (Ginzburg 1982: xx). They are people with an environment, ecology and climate, but without history (see Preface). In his reaction to a positivist history of the event and great men, and under the guise of producing a total history, Braudel transforms the object of history from Man to Nature and ascribes agency to the impersonal forces of the latter[16]. The "great men" of history get lost in the forest of the environment. Unfortunately, so does every one else.

This leads onto a second feature of Braudellian history. Following Bloch and Fébvre, Braudel expressed dislike of traditional positivist influenced history, and although his own history takes us well beyond the history of the event, it does not totally escape the grasp of positivism and the cult of the fact. Braudel builds up his structures from a wealth of facts. He assembles a compendium of detail about the environment, the economy, exchange, etc. The resultant structures are presented as objective and real. "Braudel's own realism consists in a desire to show how the world was in times past, irrespective of how it was seen by those who lived in it". "What has interested Braudel is nature rather than culture, things rather than words...the routines of material life themselves are regarded in terms of intrinsic rather than conferred properties" (Clark 1985: 190 – 91, emphases added). Culture, people and signification are again denied in the face of positivist constructions.

Despite these criticisms (and they are essentially of a middle phase of *Annales* historiography)[17], the fact of *Annales*-type history itself, and of

the nineteenth and early twentieth century antecedents - especially the

historical geography of Paul Vidal de la Blanche (see **Clark 1985: 180 -**

81; Kinser 1981: 66 - 69; Lloyd 1986: 243 - 244) - demonstrates that

change was occurring in History. Despite the concern with positivism

displayed in §1:3 above, and the conception of History among many new

archaeologists (see chapter 2) there were movements in History, as old as

positivism itself, which sought to challenge the "cult of facts" and the

history of the event, and to analyse structure and process. As we have

seen, Braudellian history perhaps over-efficiently tackled the latter

while failing to cast off positivism totally. The former was the target

of the man who has become something of a *guru* for those still small

group of archaeologists who have shifted from the nomothetic and

generalising side of Wallerstein's couplet to the idiographic and

particularising side - R. G. Collingwood.

> History, as the will of Structure, orders itself and does
> not depend for its orderliness on the human agent's will
> to order it. Plans emerge, and get themselves carried into
> effect, which no human has planned; and even men who think
> they are working against the emergence of these plans are
> in fact contributing to them.... The duty of the individual
> is to become a willing instrument for furthering its
> objective purposes. If he sets himself against it, he
> cannot arrest it or alter it, all he can do is to secure
> his own condemnation by it, frustrating himself and
> reducing his own life to futility.

The above is a rewriting of Collingwood's (1946: 53) summary of the

elements of medieval historiography to the dictates of a Braudellian

structural primacy[18]. Here the event is not the product of human agency

since the action which produced the event is structurally determined. But

are we really the unwilling supports of structures whose existence we cannot even perceive let alone understand and change? Collingwood's philosophy of history was antithetical to this. For him the object of history was not event or action but the thought which precipitated an action. The work of the historian

> "may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there; he must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent" (Collingwood 1946: 213).

Although Collingwood is never explicit about the definition and position of structure in society, the primacy given to the person as creator of his/her own destiny is obvious. People, through their thoughts, rather than structures, make history and are therefore its proper objects of study.

If "all history is the history of thought" (*ibid*: 215), the historian is placed in an unenviable position compared with the scientists. We must accept a double "separation" from the object of our study. Not only are the people who had the thoughts no longer alive to be placed in the historians witness box, but their thoughts are not "objects of immediate perception" in the material culture residues which provide the historical (and archaeological) evidence for their existence[19]. "History without access to means of thought is impossible" (Hirst 1985c: 48). The problem is to find a means of access.

Collingwood suggests that the only way the historian can grasp the reality of the experience, consciousness, and perception of the formerly

active historical agent is to relive that experience in his mind. Thus they become "objective, or known to him, only because they are also subjective, or activities of his own" (Collingwood 1946: 218). The historian reconstructs the thought of the past actor by making that thought his own.

> "The object is not to enter into the experience of the subject, but to comprehend *objective mind*, to understand thoughts which are not simply subjective. The account of the thought in question must be sustained by constructing evidence as to what it is and by isolating its specificity by posing questions as to its context... The object is not to 'be' Caesar or Nelson, qua individual, but to reconstruct the individual qua actor and his situation" (Hirst 1985c: 52, emphasis added).

What is meant by "objective mind"? Basically it is the evidence we have for past actions and events since thought "identifies itself in its products and objectifies itself as those products" (*ibid*: 48; for a further discussion of this conception of the relationship between "mind" and product, and for a discussion of the "active" nature of material culture see chapter 3). By seeing products of the past as embodying the thought of people in the past we can breathe life into the dead history of events. A corollary to Collingwood's ideas on how we gain access to the past is that if mind is objectified in material culture, then it must be true of all material culture, not just the documentary text.

To imagine otherwise is to say firstly that those who produced texts were thinking, sentient and purposeful people and secondly, concerning the production of non-documentary material culture, that Man acts like the "dummys" which are the supports of Althusserian structures (see chapter

3). The position is untenable. We must repeat - if mind objectifies itself in its products, it will do so in them all.

It might be objected at this point that in attempting to rethink himself into the position of past human actors the historian will carry with him much of the conceptual apparatus necessary for living in the modern world. Rather than providing ammunition for our hypothetical objector, this point simply re-emphasises the point made by Fébvre (1973: 41), Croce (1941: 19), and numerous others, that all history is written in the present. Ve construct the past, from its material traces.

To outline a point which will be developed in more detail below (chapter 4), we may take this arguement further and argue that History (and Archaeology) are not politically neutral devices in the modern world.

> "Neutrality is an impossibility,...because given the structures of historical and contemporary societies, any simple straightforward truth about political institutions or events is bound to have some political consequence and to damage some group interest" (Kaye 1984: 222).

As archaeologists and historians we create a product, an artefact, which can be used either to reinforce a consenualist and conservative present, or to subvert the present by showing (through a demonstration that the past was different) that other ways of living are possible (see Shanks and Tilley 1987a, 1987b for a theoretical discussion; Hewison 1987, and Lowenthal 1985 provide provocative analyses of the growth and appropriation of the past in our present).

Collingwood's arguments have met with much praise and a corresponding amount of criticism. The latter centres around his "relativism" and what some see as his production of "empathetic history". Carr suggests that Collingwood, in his reaction to the

> view of history as a mere compilation of facts, comes perilously near to treating history as something spun out of the human brain.... we are offered here the theory of an infinity of meanings, none any more right than any other" (Carr 1961: 26).

This is to exaggerate and misunderstand Collingwood's philosophy of history. He sought to locate the different propositions, world views etc. from which stem different histories, not to make them all equal but to assess their value as knowledge about the past in terms of the questions asked (Hirst 1985c: 45 - 46).

Collingwood's position is relativist. It has that value. Carr's stems from a clinging to notions of objectivity and reality. Relativism does not mean that we write the past just how we please. It means that we accept our position in the present, and the position of material culture as traces of the past. It means that we have to be explicit about the questions we ask, and about the conceptual baggage we bring to bear on the data, consciously or unconsciously. The data have to be accounted for; they cannot be manipulated.

It is more difficult to counter the charges of empathy levelled against Collingwood. The language he uses (see the quotes in the pages above) seem to tar him with his own brush. We could suggest that he was harking back to the arguments of Vico and to the work of Fébvre and Bloch on the

necessity to situate the historical "fact" within a material and conceptual context in order to give it meaning, or to extract meaning from it. Only by constructing historical contexts would Collingwood's history be possible. This is the position taken by one of Collingwood's adherents in Archaeology. Hodder argues for such a contextual history (1986: 77 - 102), and archaeology (1987a, 1987b). Perhaps this is special pleading but there remains one further criticism of Collingwood's work which is less frequently voiced, perhaps because it runs counter to the claims that he decisively broke the links with positivism. This is discussed in chapter 4, but we can note here that Collingwood's aim, through the methodology he proposes, was to "construct a picture of things as they **really were** and of events as they **really happened**" (1946: 246). Although steps had been taken away from a Rankian past, echoes of that past still persisted.

§1: 5 *Conclusion*

We started this chapter with the aim of trying to find out why and when History and Archaeology had taken separate paths in terms of their methodologies, as a prelude to constructing an alternative methodology which would reunite them, something felt to be especially necessary for anyone working in the early medieval period. It was asserted at the beginning that we would arrive at the paradoxical conclusion that, despite the division, both disciplines invoked positivist epistemologies.

The paradox is now doubled since, through our brief analyses of the work of the *Annales* school and the philosophy of Collingwood, we can see that History has changed. A new **critical** history, emphasising total history and its construction in the present, has emerged from the dusty tomes of narrative. Although it still contains elements of positivist thought, which occasionally emerges in full cry (see **Millar 1977**) most historians now **construct** and **write** rather than **tell** and **narrate** the past. This is a situation which seems to have passed archaeologists (and some historians) by. We shall see, in the next chapter, the nature of the attacks launched on History by an Archaeology which has "lost its innocence" (**Clarke 1973**), but we can conclude this one, by quoting Le Roy Ladurie's humorous and biting assessment of the situation –

> "More recently, however, old Chronos came under attack. The social sciences [for this read Archaeology], wishing to preserve a reputation for hardness and purity, began to operate a closed shop against history, which was accused of being a 'soft' science. The attack was characterised by a great deal of ignorance and not a little gall on the part of the attackers, who had affected to forget that since Bloch, Braudel and Larousse, history too had undergone a scientific transformation. Clio had stolen the clothes of the social sciences [Archaeology] while they were bathing, and they had never noticed their nakedness....while the death of history was being loudly proclaimed in certain quarters, it had simply gone through the looking glass, in search not of its own reflection, but of a new world" (1981: 26 – 7)

CHAPTER TWO

Archaeology, Anthropology, and Science

"the native peoples of Pacific Islands...present to anthropologists [and archaeologists] a generous scientific gift: an extended series of experiments in cultural adaptation and evolutionary development...From Australian Aboriginies, whose hunting and gathering activities duplicate in outline the cultural life of the later palaeolithic, to the great chiefdoms of Hawaii, where society approached the formative levels of the old fertile crescent civilisations, almost every phase in the progress of primitive culture is exemplified." (Sahlins 1963: 285).

"...to reduce the history of a people to a process of cultural adaptation analogous to organic adaptation under natural selection is to deny those concerned any history of their own. As pawns in the service of culture they live to execute and replicate a design not of their own making, trying out solutions to problems they cannot recognise, and expiring in the attempt. What 'survives' is not their life but its trappings" (Ingold 1986: 119).

§2: 1 *Introduction*

The most influential and dominant movement in British Archaeology today has trans Atlantic origins. Lewis Binford claims the *"new archaeology"* as his baby, and describes how he initiated and ran the "first field season consciously conceived as the New Archaeology" — in 1958 (Binford 1972: 133), and how he and Mark Papworth in the following decade carried the Good News to the Traditionalists thoughout the United States, while suffering the pillorying and disbelief which appears to be the common fate of those who preach a new creed. The new archaeology is presented as Archaeology approaching or having arrived at a state of "maturity" (see

Clarke 1978: 11 – 12, and Chapter 1: 4 – 5 above) which allows it to take its place in the hallowed halls of science.

Using the methodology proposed by the *new archaeologists* it was proposed that objective lawlike statements could be made about the past on the basis of the material evidence (see §2: 4). Archaeology could become a science in opposition to humanistic, particularistic History. But what was actually **new** about the *new archaeology*? To find out we have to examine the methodological and epistemological bases on which archaeology rested up to the 1960's. We will see that assertions of "newness" are based on a consolidation of several pre-existing approaches, on a confused and misleading conception of what History is, and on the need to be taken seriously, i.e. to be seen as a science, in a world which elevates the scientist to the status of "heroic figure dispelling myths with incisive rationality" (Shanks and Tilley 1987a: 31).

§2: 2 Evolutionary Archaeology and the Archaeological Culture

In tune with the data collection fetish of the nineteenth century, archaeologists of the period amassed vast stores of artefactual material. These "facts" were "explained" using analogies drawn from the material cultural repertoire of the "natives" in the colonies, and from the writings of the classical authors on the people who inhabited their borders (Clarke 1978: 2 – 7). The real move forward (into the second part of the positivist programmatic if you will) came with the development of Thomsen's "Three Age System" – the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages. It's "explanatory" value lay in its presentation as a unilineal "evolutionary" system through which past

societies were supposed to have progressed, until the dizzy teleological

heights of western civilisation were reached. The sequence was seen as

universal and was one of many developmental schemes which

> "turns history into a moral success story, a race in time in
> which each runner in the race passes on the torch of
> liberty to the next relay. History is thus converted into a
> tale about the furtherance of virtue, about how the virtuous
> win out over the bad guys. Frequently this turned into a
> story of how the winners prove that they are virtuous and
> good by winning" (Wolf 1982: 5).

The whole system was permeated with the notion of progress, with us at the

top. If we wanted to see what the other stages in the race looked like then

we only had to climb down from the summit from which we viewed the rest

of humanity, past and present, spread out before us like Hume's 'magnificent

spectacle' (see 1:3) and look at the present day primitives. We could

compare their material culture with that found in an appropriate stage in

the archaeological record. We could easily show by direct analogy, what the

customs, traditions and institutions of the people in the past were like.

It was during the great nineteenth century expansion of industry and

technology that the system was developed and reached its height. When

combined with the concomitant interest in evolution, the demonstration of

the great antiquity of man, and belief in the capacity for never ending

human progress which were the results of the work of Darwin and

associates, it produced what has become known as the first phase of

"evolutionary" archaeology (Grayson 1983; Ingold 1986).'

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, increasing social and political conflicts cast doubts upon the possibility or even desirability of human progress. National and racial identity were invoked to provide a degree of philosophical underpinning for some of the newly emerging and threatened states (Wolf 1982: 8). Archaeology itself served to heighten the mood of pessimism through the discoveries of the remains of once great civilisations, while "the validation of the antiquity of Western European cave art was interpreted as ruling out aesthetic progress" (Trigger 1978: 65).

Rather than the grand sweep of the "natural histories of mankind" which were the hallmark of the first brand of evolutionary archaeology, the discipline was now seen as offering the possibility of constructing a history of the people of Europe, people who were in need of a past to combat the uncertainties of the age (Trigger 1978: 80). Racism now entered the field of explanation. Thus we have the belief in "culturally creative and passive races" and the idea that

> "it was the duty of culturally and biologically superior peoples to eliminate groups whose low state of development rendered them biologically incapable of further progress (Trigger 1978: 79, emphasis added).

It was only a short step from here to the Nazi's use of the work of Gustav Kossina to justify their political and ideological programme for the rest of Europe[2].

It was in this period and social and political environment that the notion of the archaeological "culture" made its initial appearance. The

concentration of archaeological fieldwork on particular regions produced an abundance of data which appeared to demonstrate the "reality" of geographical variation in the material cultural products of the past, and by analogy, in the peoples of the past. This cultural history rendered largely redundant the idealist concept of the psychic unity of Man and of evolutionist universal "stages" of human development.

However, little attempt was made to explicate and understand the internal constitution and functioning of the "cultures" identified. In a concept drawn from a world increasingly determined to see the uninventiveness of most people in the past, there was little scope for consideration of human beings as active subjects in the creation and maintainence of their society, their "way of life". Rather, archaeologists were concerned to trace the relationships between the culture units that they isolated. The explanations proffered were of the *deus ex machina* and *ex oriente lux* varieties - i.e. migration and diffusion.

It was this cultural historical approach which the *new archaeologists* were so much at pains to distance themselves from (see §2: 4). In so doing they accepted the methodology and epistemology of a second brand of evolutionary archaeology which made its appearance in the United States in the 1950's. They failed to see that, despite an anti-Marxist McCarthyite paranoia, this type of archaeology was indebted not only to evolutionary anthropology but also to the work of one of the greatest British prehistorians and "philosophers of archaeology" - V. Gordon Childe.

In his presidential address to the *Prehistoric Society* in 1935 Childe

provided an explicit rejection of the old cultural historical approach -

> "It is an old fashioned sort of history that is made up
> entirely of kings and battles to the exclusion of scientific
> discoveries and social conditions. And so it would be an
> old-fashioned prehistory that regarded it as its sole
> function to trace migrations and locate the cradles of
> peoples" (1935: 9 - 10).

Childe was a Marxist, and he used concepts drawn from the works of

Marxist writers in his archaeological reconstructions, particularily those

on the relationship between the structures or levels of society[3]. His

efforts to trace in the archaeological record the "stages" of social

evolution which he found in Marx and in the work of contemporary

ethnographers (1951: 22) prompted him to move from the study of the past

in terms of a series of archaeological cultures to a study of the societies

which produced the material remains. In particular he contrasted the great

number of archaeological cultures, which could be identified on the basis of

geographically and temporally bounded artifact groups, with the fewer ways

of organising societies. He concluded that many adjacent cultural groups

shared the same social organisation and that it was the task of

archaeologists to discover what this organisation was. The societies Childe

reconstructed were regarded as systems composed of interrelated and

interdependent parts which functioned adaptively to maintain the system as

a whole within a given environment. This emphasis on system adaptation and

coherence played a fundamental role in a renaissance of evolutionary theory

in American anthropology (and through that in archaeology) which took place

in the 1950s. Its position in the *new archaeology* stems from the latter's

connections with anthropology.

Childe maintained that the archaeological record was not ~~/~~ to be studied in the

way the palaeontologist studies the fossil record of past living

organisms. The archaeologist could tackle the archaeological records as if

they were simply material objects which had to be ordered and arranged, but

the prehistorian was forced to treat these objects

> "always and exclusively as concrete expressions and
> embodiments of human thought and ideas - in other words of
> knowledge" (Childe 1956: 1).

Here Childe comes close to reaching the same sort of conclusion concerning

objective mind as Collingwood. However, he eventually rejected the "idealism"

of this position (Gathercole 1984: 153). Whereas Collingwood suggested that

to reach the "inside" of an event (to decode objective mind) we must

recreate it in our own minds (1946: 213 - 215), Childe asserted that

archaeologists cannot study ideas, intentions, and emotions. All they can

study is behaviour. The archaeologist can recreate past thought in his own

mind, but it is the "objective thought" of a society and not the "subjective

thought" of an individual (Trigger 1978: 86).

As with all explanatory frameworks which emphasise adaptation and function,

there is little room for purposeful action here, which is somewhat

surprising given Childe's Marxism. Instead individual action is determined

by the rules of the regulative system or by assigned roles in society

(Hodder 1986: 70; Kus 1984: 104). All action is behavioural response. We

have another very effective erasure of the human subject from the

historical process.

The archaeologist's task then is to reconstruct the objective conditions which demanded system response, through the welding together of as many facts as possible about the productive base and the environmental background. General laws were then sought linking material culture and the economic subsystem with modes of ordering society through types of social relations. From where were these laws to be derived? For Childe, as we have already intimated, it was from the work of anthropologists and the application of the Marxist theory of modes of production as outlined in the Formen (Marx 1973: 471 - 479) and later by Engels in the Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, and the mechanism of change from one mode to another as outlined in the Preface to A Contribution of the Critique of Political Economy (Marx 1970: 19 - 23).

Childe's work allows us to see how archaeology became a discipline which opposed structure with process and system coherence with event. By stressing the role of culture as a "homeostatic regulating mechanism" and as the "extrasomatic means of adaptation for the human organism" (Binford 1972: 22 after White 1959: 8) emphasis is placed upon stability rather than change. In such explanatory systems cultural development was treated as discontinuous. It was broken up into phases (each of which was seen to adapt to its own environmental situation), which were then put back into a temporal sequence of social development (Hodder 1986: 27; Shanks and Tilley 1987a: 34 - 35). An illusion of continuity was created through the ordering in logical time of discrete phases or stages (see Gregory 1982 for the distinction between "logical time" and "historical time" sequences). Although diachrony was proposed, synchrony was emphasised. Although human activity

became the legitimate object of archaeological research it was behavioural response not the activity of self monitoring and thinking persons[4].

Despite the criticisms of his work, Childe's archaeological method and theory were in many ways far in advance of even those people who subsequently developed his ideas of social and systems archaeology (see Bintliff 1984: 21 for an elaboration of this argument). What I have done is to extract those aspects of Childe's work which were to be heavily drawn upon by those who took up the mantle of "social archaeology", and which were to play a part in the *new archaeology* - the use of evolutionary theory and of "covering laws" derived from Marxism and anthropology. Other parts of Childe's work, however, were underplayed and neglected in the decades after his death, especially his explicit use of Marxist theory (hardly surprising in American archaeology given the post-war "reds under the beds" mentality), his materialism and to some extent his attempts to infer elements of the ideational superstructure from the productive base. It is interesting, but perhaps not surprising that these are the aspects of Childe's work which have been taken up and developed by archaeologists disillusioned with structural and environmental determinism and ahistoricism, of evolutionary and *new archaeology* (see §2: 3 and §2: 4).

§2: 3 *The Ecological Theatre and The Evolutionary Play*

The post war years in the United States saw an unabashed adoption and advocation of evolutionary schemes, which paralleled those produced in the wake of Darwin's original application of the principle of natural selection through variation to the human species (see §2:2) and the independent work

on the development of human societies by Spencer and Tylor (Ingold 1986: 88 - 89). The father of the movement was Leslie White. In fact he is credited with having rescued "the concept of evolution, in its original sense of progressive development, from the temporary oblivion into which it had passed following its appropriation in quite another guise by Darwinian biology..." (Ingold 1986: 81)[6].

White saw evolution as concerned with the temporal unfolding of cultural forms one from another in an orderly and predetermined sequence - "one form grows out of, and into, an other" (White 1945: 230). Just as species in the natural world develop from earlier ones in a definite order, so do cultures in an "unfolding of immanences" (Ingold 1986: 82). As well as adopting this Lamarkian view of the emergence and development of cultural institutions, White explicitly separated evolution and history. This separation was to become an important part in the *new archaeologist's* programmatic (see §2: 4). He regarded history simply as a "chronological sequence of unique events" (White 1945: 222) and the historians task as the tracking of "isolable traits, whose several encounters and combinations in the formation of individuals are the actual events out of which it is composed" (*ibid*: 235 - 6).

White's opposition of evolution and history was endorsed and reproduced in the work of Julian Steward (1955), and later by Marshall Sahlins and Elman Service (1960). Although no-one stated the opposition as explicitly as White, Sahlins and Service saw a progression from "incoherent homogeneity to coherent heterogeneity" as the core of evolution. They used ethnographic and archaeological data to produce cross cultural generalisations linking

the environment, economy, and social institutions. The evolutionary scheme they advocated is based primarily on differences in the division of labour and other aspects of what could be termed the economic subsystem, and ultimately on man/environment relationships. This scheme comprised the categories:

1. Bands
2. Tribes
3. Chiefdoms
4. States

Specific types of economic activity derived from the work of Karl Polanyi (1957) were held to be constituitive of the stages in Sahlin's and Service's evolutionary schemes, as were distinct forms of political organisation. Thus bands and tribes, characterised by forms of reciprocity, were hunter/gatherers and, though essentially egalitarian, there were some achieved status positions. Chiefdoms were usually based on sedentery village agriculture with ascribed status positions in an elementary stratified structure, where surplus product was redistributed. States, however, saw the development of classes and market exchange (Earle 1977: 213; Renfrew 1973c: 542 - 543).

Following the work of White, Sahlins suggests that this sequence is a model of general evolutionary process in that it is concerned with the "progression of classes of forms, or in other words, the succession of culture through stages of overall progress (1960: 43). He attempts to dissolve White's opposition of evolution (to be equated with Sahlins general evolution) and history by referring to the latter as specific evolution - "The historic development of particular cultural forms is specific

evolution, phylogenetic transformation through adaptation.." (*ibid*). The failure of this attempt will be demonstrated below.

The main cross cultural generalisations which form the bases of all the neo-evolutionary schemes concern adaptation to environmental conditions, with each of the stages presented as a suitable adaptive response (for the consequences of this discontinuous treatment of time and cultural development see **Hodder** 1986: 27). For stages in the evolutionary taxonomy which are characterised by some degree of stratification and hierarchy of social positions, this concern with adaptation, stability and homeostasis produces a picture of élites as beneficial and necessary for the maintainance of the *status quo* of the social system (**Abercrombie** *et. al.* 1980; **Rowlands** 1984: 112). This can be seen most clearly in Sahlins and Service's description of the characteristics of the chiefdom stage of cultural development.

Service (1962:144) defined chiefdoms as "redistributional societies with a permanent agency for coordination". This "agency" was the institution of "chief" along with his family and retainers, which Sahlins came to see as "a bloated political establishment" (1974: 145). Such agencies supposedly arise in response to the needs of the system to cope either with great environmental diversity which encouraged specialised production[6] or else to coordinate the pooling of individual efforts into large scale cooperative production –

> "Most chiefdoms seem to have risen where important regional
> exchange and a consequent increase in local specialization
> came about because ecological differentiation was combined
> with considerable sedentariness" (Service 1962: 146).

"by thus supporting communal welfare and organising
communal activities the chief creates a collective good
beyond the conception and capacity of the society's
domestic groups taken seperately. He institutes a public
economy greater than the sum of its household parts"
(Sahlins 1974: 140).

The "public economy" created through chiefly aegis is seen to act as a
buffering mechanism protecting the society from environmental
perturbations. The institution of chief and the mechanism of redistribution
weld the *specialised*, and therefore ecologically unstable, productive units
into a *generalised* system which is equated with a state approaching that
of climax vegetation in ecological succession theory (Gall and Saxe 1977:
257 - 261).

This version of Rousseau's *contrat sociale*, which emphasizes the benefits of
social hierarchy for the governed, is perhaps an inevitable and appropriate
product in cultural ecological models where there is little room for people
actually thinking for themselves and acting on the basis of their thoughts.
As with Childe's concepts, the individual acts out a prescribed role within
a system and like that system, his/her reponses are induced by the need to
maintain the *status quo* both between the social system and the environment
and (by implication) within the social system as well[7]. Such models stress
stability rather than change through breaking the cultural sequence into
discrete units and showing the adaptive response of each stage. Change is
explained, not by the invocation of old fashioned ideas of invasion and
diffusion (ideas which in fact these models were designed to make redundant
(Renfrew 1973c)) but by the response of the system to pressures brought to
bear on it by environmental change or other external factors.

Fundamental problems exist with those *stage evolutionary* schemes proposed by Sahlins and Service, as there do with all those which attempt to pigeon hole the past. These are problems that few archaeologists have paused to consider in their rush to ascribe the chiefdom label to the British Iron Age or Viking Age Denmark. The problems centre on the insistence on stability within stages and discontinuity between them, and the lack of a convincing explanatory device to account for change in the social system over time. An example of such problems can be found in Sahlins' description of an aspect of the specific evolution of Hawaiian society (1974: 142 - 148).

Sahlins tried to determine if there were any political crises (what he calls crises révélatrices) within the social system - an example of the chiefly, redistributional stage of social organization - which might illuminate disjunctures and incompatibilities within the system, for example "the vertical contradiction betwe͡n the household economy and the chieftainship" (*ibid*: 143).

There were such crises. They arose when the "ruling chiefs showed a propensity to 'eat the power of government too much'" (*ibid*: 144). This evocative phrase refers to situations in which the "otherwise unobtainable concrete benefits" conferred upon the direct producers by the control functions of the elite are outweighed by the burden of the exactions demanded by the chief as his due for carrying out such "tasks". In explicitly ecological models it is not surprising that such crises should occur at times of environmental stress (see Sahlins' earlier discussion of the political crises in Tikopian society - 1974: 143). In Hawaii such

situations could lead to the overthrow and killing of the chief but not to structural change in the system. The rebellion usually took the form of a court assassination, with the chief being replaced by another member of the elite. During the change-over of power the political domain of the old chief would fragment, especially at the periphery, and the exactive burden on the direct producers eased. In thus

> "Delivering itself of oppressive rulers, the system did not consequently rid itself of basic contradictions, transcend and transform itself, but continued instead to cycle within the confines of existing institutions".

"The rebellion was not then a revolution" (*ibid*: 146).

The crises and contradictions they reveal were not the cause of change from one systemic state to another. Sahlins concludes the discussion by suggesting that the "the great disadvantage of the Hawaiian organization was its primitiveness: it was not a state" (*ibid*: 148) but no explanation is offered to explain how the transformation to statehood might have been made. For this we must move from specific evolution to the general evolutionary sequence powered through "thermodynamic accomplishment" (1960: 33), environmental change, and adaptation.

The history/evolution, specific/general evolution oppositions which are central to these works can be seen as the end products of the positivist scientific method, and can be laid beside the distinction between idiographic and nomothetic knowledge referred to in chapter 1. Thus the former is ultimately concerned with the collection of empirical "facts" about particular social systems and the environment in which they operate. This is the work of the ethnographer as opposed to the anthropologist, or

the historian as opposed to the archaeo-anthropologist. By contrast general evolution may "be apprehended through generalising nomothetic enquiry" (Ingold 1986: 90).

One result of this misconception of History by anthropologists (and later archaeologists) was to replace a false conception of history with an absence of history (Thomas n.d.1; Trigger 1978: 38 - 41). These schemes exist only in logical time. White's "history" and Sahlin's "specific evolution" represent historical time but as we have seen from Sahlins' discussion of the *crises révélatrices* in Hawaiian society (see above) the separation of history and evolution, and the theory/data separation which it prefigures, means that there can exist within historical time no mechanism which adequately accounts the cultural change perceived. These are to be found within the model constructs which form the evolutionary taxonomy. Explanation is yet again removed from the realms of the society or societies under study and the people left redundant as creators of change. Explanation derives rather from the analytical constructs built on the basis of "objective" adaptive features from all over the globe, ignoring those aspects of social systems which do not fit the prescribed model and removing each from its cultural and historical context. Does this really provide a secure explanatory basis for Archaeology as a "mature" discipline? It lies at the heart of the movement with which we started this chapter and which purports to bring that maturity to Archaeology.

The ulimate aim of the *new archaeology* is to be a nomothetic science of the past (and thus of the present), generating laws applicable across time and space. The use of cross cultural generalisations, the adoption of the concept of homeostasis, and the idea that societies "adapt", moved easily from neo-evolutionary theory into the *new archaeology*. The use of such concepts permeates the whole of Binford's work,[8] and the essence is summed up in his assertion that "American archaeology is anthropology or it is nothing" (1972: 20). It should be clear that the problems which plague the *new archaeology* are similar to those characteristic of evolutionism described in the preceeding sections.

In a paper in one of the most important books on archaeological theory and methodology in recent years, Binford (1983a [1982]: 45) takes Ian Hodder, Mike Rowlands and John Gledhill to task for their "statements of posture and paradigmatic bias", for their advocation of the "wearing of a particular pair of glasses with which to view the world", with the implication that "one pair of glasses will permit us to see the world more clearly" (*ibid*). However, how can Binford's own functionalist, ecological and systemic paradigm, (general theory, "pair of glasses", call it what you will), be differentiated from, and raised above, all other paradigms?

Binford recognises that his general theory is only one of many and that the way we believe the past to have been, as well as the way we see the world today, is coloured and influenced by our position in the present. Examples

of such general theories presented by Binford include Marxism which might explain such transformations

> "as deriving inevitably from the dialectical interplay of social forces; a creationist may see the self-same events as the hand of God at work in all things; those of other cultural persuasions will emphasise the causal role of human choice, population pressure, cybernetic looping and so on" (Binford 1983b: 193).

But how can Archaeology as a science allow such relativism? If we view the past in terms of our general theories, then we can all interpret the archaeological evidence, which is taken as given, differently. What becomes of truth and objective reality in this mass of competing and contradictory different coloured glasses? The *new archaeology* introduces positivism and a scientific approach to rescue the discipline from "subjective relativism".

Scientific procedure offers the possibility of determining the validity of the arguments linking the evidence with the general theory. Binford introduces the term "middle range research" from sociology to define the procedure by which such arguments are to be tested (1983a [1982]: 47)[9]. Middle range theory is the hoped for result of such research (see below). The use of the scientific approach will serve to invalidate those general theories which are inappropriate or simply "wrong" (ibid: 46).

The real problem is that although the archaeological record exists as a static contemporary phenomenon, it is the product of a dynamic process - human action (or behaviour as Binford prefers to call it) - in the past. How do we move from statements about the statics of the archaeological record - the ordering and description of data - to discover the dynamics

of the action/behaviour which resulted in the production of that data. How do we convert the spade from an *instrumentum mutum* to an *instrumentum vocale*?

> "The practical limitations on our knowledge of the past are not inherent in the *nature* of the archaeological record; the limitations lie in *our methodological naiveté*, in our lack of development of principles determining the relevance of archaeological remains to propositions regarding processes and events of the past" (1972 [1968]: 96; emphasis added)[10].

In attempting to cope with this problem archaeologists, as we have seen (§2: 2 and §2: 3) use analogy and inference, along with the unstated covering law of uniformitarianism which gives explanatory value, to breath life into the inanimate residues of the past.

In itself the use of ethnographic analogy and inference based on it did not unduly worry Binford. Their misuse did. The methodology used in drawing analogies was seen to be "unscientific". The process usually goes something as follows. A feature or artifact, or a patterned distribution of these, is found on an archaeological site. The excavator is at a loss to account for the archaeological remains uncovered in commonsense terms and so (s)he searches the ethnographic monographs and the anthropological literature looking for morphologically similar features or artifacts. Having found something which approximates the archaeological remains, the anthropological example is then used as an explanation for the form and function of the excavated features.

Binford is highly critical of this type of analogy. In fact he maintains that it is not an analogy at all since this is

"not strictly a demonstration of formal similarities between
entities; rather it is an inferential argument based on
implied relationships between demonstrably similar entities
(1972 [1967]: 34).

In other words it is not morphological proximity which defines an analogy

but rather the inferred comparability of the behaviour which produced the

past and the present material cultural product.

If archaeology is to rise above the level of a pseudo-science, he suggests,

then this use of analogy must be only the first step. To progress Binford

asserts, we must adopt the methodology of the natural sciences (1983b: 22).

We must be explicit about the inferred relationships and present a

postulate that the same kind of human behaviour was responsible for the

creation of similar cultural forms. Under Binford's rubric, a series of

hypotheses connecting behaviour and the archaeological record must be

formulated and then tested (1972 [1968]: 60). The testing procedure has to

take place in the present and involves examining the ethnographic texts

again (or any other source from which the analogy was derived) and

searching for features which are connected with the proposed behaviour and

which should be represented in the archaeological record. We then go back

to that record and decide whether such analogous features are found.

Analogies are not therefore to be used simply to provide interpretations

for otherwise incomprehensible aspects of the archaeological record. Rather

they serve

"to provoke certain types of questions which can, on
investigation lead to the recognition of more comprehensive
ranges of order in the archaeological data. In short we ask
questions about the relationships between archaeologically
observable phenomena that had possibly not been placed in
juxtaposition or viewed as orderly (ibid: 49).

More generally, Binford asserts that if we want to establish a link (a general law, if you will) between past behaviour and the product which remains in the present, then that link must be sought in circumstances where both sides of the couplet are open to **objective** observation, recording and analysis. There are three situations in which these "Rosetta Stones" (1983a [1982]: 49) can be found-

1. Through observations of living peoples.
2. Through experimental archaeology.
3. Through historical documents.

For Binford the factor which links these areas where behaviour and product can supposedly be observed, is that they all exist in the present. Thus he suggests that alongside the old idiom which suggests that we study the past in order to learn more about the present, should be placed another and opposite one which would assert that "we study the present in order to understand the past" (1983b: 23).

If analogy is used in this way, and is drawn from the three areas identified as suitable for the purpose by Binford then this **middle range research** will lead to the development of **middle range theory** which can link observation and experience to ideas in an objective manner such as to overcome the paradigmatic bias and different general theories which individuals seek to impose on the archaeological record. The aim was to produce a "science of the archaeological record" (1983b: 21). Through analogy, ethnography could help in this aim but although Binford earlier asserted that "ethnology and archaeology are not separated by a wide and

unbridgeable gap (1972: 8) he came to believe that the two subjects were ultimately different since the ethnologist studies "relatively stable systems" synchronically whereas archaeologists are concerned with systems that change over time (1983b: 194). In the end therefore the middle range theory developed must be archaeological (1983b: 16). We have to develop it for ourselves on the basis of our own data. Archaeology is no longer anthropology or it is nothing. Rather "archaeology is archaeology is archaeology" (Clarke 1978: 11) or it is nothing! Binford assures us that only through the rigorous methodology of middle range research will disciplinary maturity eventually be reached.

We must question this. Is the "archaeology is archaeology is archaeology" approach really the way to achieve the "maturity" which will allow us to take our reserved place in the hallowed halls of science? Is the desire to be a "science" a valid pursuit for Archaeology? Will it really help us to "know" the past better? Nomothetic archaeologists would contend that it is only through positivist scientific methodology that any "valid" observations about the past can be made. But has this suggestion a solid basis which would raise it from the level of an assertion (again informed by a profound paradigmatic bias) to that of a statement of fact? The answer given here will be no, since it will be shown that the possibility of writing objectively about the past through a scientific epistemology becomes seriously undermined, if not destroyed, when we apply a detailed critique to Binford's conception of the scientific methodology necessary for Archaeology.

Binford's areas for conducting the middle range research necessary to establish the maturity of Archaeology are fraught with problems which frustrate his ambitions. Regarding ethnography the strong possibility must always remain that the patterning observed in the archaeological record is the result of processes which have no equivalent in living peoples. Where can we find the classical and medieval peasant in anthropology and in the world today? Is it in the peasant communities of Guatamala, China, the Philippines or even the west coast of Ireland? Analogies drawn directly from these areas would be deemed almost laughable by most archaeologists and historians because we have to recognise that these societies have been formed as part of a modern world system - a system dominated by capitalism, which is both historically specific and which can determine the form and nature of even those societies which lie on its periphery (see **Smith 1984** on the dialectical nature of the relationship between Guatamala and the modern capitalist world system).

Modern and anthropological peasants are not like medieval peasants because they have been "contaminated" through contact with, and infiltration by, a social formation dominated by the capitalist mode of production, while the medieval peasants lived within their own historically specific social formation and mode(s) of production. The same must be true of modern and ethnographic hunter/gatherers since the fact that we know about them and work among them places them within the modern world. The "isolated hunter and fisherman" is just as surely a product of "the unimaginative conceits" of the twentieth century archaeo-anthropologist as it was of the "eighteenth century Robinsonades" (Marx 1973: 83).''

If experimental archaeology concerns "the re-creation of happenings and processes *that we know must have occurred in the past*" (Binford 1983a: 24, emphasis added) then we are not so much carrying out an objective scientific process as consciously imposing a conception of what we **think** must have happened onto the past. At the simplest level we can be sure that houses burned down and we can recreate that event and study the debris, but if we already know this then why do we need to reconstruct the happening? We want to know the reason behind the fire. Was it accidental or was it part of a deliberate process, perhaps of purification or an event marking the end of a particular settlement and a move to another - in other words symbolizing a clean break with the past.

Further can the level of behaviour, or the type of event which we can thus reconstruct, really tell us much about the actions of people which take place outside the basic productive/technological aspects of everyday life. If this is really all we feel we can say, or worse if it is all we want to know, we imply that the Hawksian ladder really exists and that the rungs are still too far apart for us to climb them. The prospects for Archaeology seem bleak. Instead of a mature science it might be classified as the new "dismal science".

It is strange to find someone who finds such faults in what he considers to be the historical method (Binford 1972: 114 - 121; see Trigger 1978: 37 - 41 for the erroneous view of History held by many who espouse the *new archaeology*) holding the historical sources in such reverence. Like anthropology, they can tell us about the social life and activities of the past which are inacessible directly to archaeologists. Despite Binford's

recognition that the historian has to accept the "problem of understanding the motives that individuals might have had for producing a written record of the past" (1983b: 20), we can detect an underlying respect for just such documents when he asserts that

> "so long as we have historical documents which preserve observations, made by people actually present, about the dynamics of places in the past, we have the option of excavating those places and, **walking through history, as it were, alongside an historical character,** trying to relate what we find in the ground to what he reports as having occurred there" (*ibid*: 26, emphasis added).

The whole essence of middle range research and the theory it should produce is founded on the premise that "the only place we can observe dynamics is in the modern world" (Binford 1983b: 23). With the reservations outlined above this could justify such work being carried out among living peoples and through experimental archaeology. But to suggest that the historical record, which is as much a static product in the present of dynamic action in the past as the archaeological record is, can fulfill the same role, must surely remove some of the "scientific rigidity" which Binford claims for his methodology for producing an objective past. He accords a naive, uncritical primacy to documentary evidence, a direct result of the impact on his work of the ahistoricism of the neo-evolutionists (see above §2: 3).

Raab and Goodyear (1984: 255 - 6) show that Binford's middle range theory is methodological rather than theoretical. It concentrates on building logico-empirical bridges between the statics of material culture and the dynamics of human behaviour, but usually in the context of the formation of the archaeological record. The very term "middle range theory" suggests that it is meant to act as an intermediary between, and arbiter of, general

theories. But how is the connection between supposedly separate general and middle range theories made? The latter tell us how the archaeological record was formed, while the former purport to account for the perceived major changes in human social structure and organisation over the millennia spanned by the archaeological record. But within Binford's theoretical structure there is no obvious mechanism by which we can move from one to the other.

The link between the two can be made only when we realise that the distinctions between general theory, middle range theory and the data, relate to the dictates of scientific positivism rather than to any necessary structure for archaeological research. Data and methodology are theory dependent. Theory informs our constitution of archaeological facts, the methodology by which such facts are produced and interpreted, and also what it all means in terms of long term processes of social change.

This brings us to a fundamental problem with the programmatic of the *new archaeology*, a problem shared with all archaeology written within the positivist tradition. It concerns the ambition to establish theory which mediates between a **given** data base uncovered by archaeologists, and a **given** series of behavioural patterns recorded by ethnologists/ethnoarchaeologists. Are archaeological and ethnographic data "real and given prior to investigation" (Hindess and Hirst 1975: 311)? Do they represent unambiguous, empirical facts which we simply have to discover, record, and then relate to each other through middle range theory? Or is this simply another assertion which derives from a specifically positivist scientific

paradigm? If we wear another pair of glasses perhaps we would see these "facts" in a different light.

Facts, whether historical, archaeological, or ethnographic do not exist independently of general theory, but are contingent upon it (see Price 1982: 714). Any attempt, therefore, to establish middle range theory which starts by denying this contingency, and which places itself between facts and general theory, must fall at the first hurdle in the race to become a science. As we have already stated, the facts of the past are not like the facts of the natural and physical sciences, and they cannot therefore be analysed using the methods of those sciences. To do so is to lapse into all the epistemological errors of nineteenth century historical thought (see chapter 1).

Binford sought to develop a methodology that could distinguish between the conflicting claims to legitimacy of different general theories. We have shown that this approach fails since it is itself constructed according to a particular paradigmatic stance.

> "man as the creator of his own destiny and man as the observer, outside of nature, capable of seeing truth directly has fallen...Man, both as a subject of study and as an observer, has been returned to the world of nature instead of being seen as standing above or outside it" (Binford 1983a [1982]: 47; emphasis added).

It is a paradigm which ascribes needs to systems. These are needs which must be fulfilled if the system is to remain in equilibrium, dynamic or otherwise, with the environment. The society is reified, the individual is forgotten. The fulfillment of these needs requires the emergence of a particular institution, agency, or mechanism. It is what Bidney calls the

"'fallacy of misplaced concreteness' by which one comes 'to
mistake a conceptual abstraction for an actual, vital agent'
overturning the relation between people and culture by
regarding the former as vehicles for the life of the latter"
(1953: 137).

Is this really the type of explanation for social institutions which we

need in archaeology? Is this all that Archaeology as Science has to offer -

an ahistorical, depersonalised past?

S2: 5 *Archaeology as Science: Why?*

One of the main aims of the last two chapters has been to challenge the

assertion that the methodology of the natural sciences is appropriate to

History and Archaeology, and to show how this idea has increased the

separation between the disciplines in recent times. But we also have to ask

why Archaeology (or History for that matter) should wish to be seen as a

Science? It might be that the offer of direct access to an "objective" past

appeared irresistible, even if, as we have seen, the door which was thus

opened led not into the "real" past but into an unconsidered, reified

present-past.

However, living as we are towards the end of the twentieth century, we can

propose another explanation for this fetishism of science. In the computer

age and the age of instant communication, to assert that something is a

science confers on it an air of respectibility and modernity. Science

appears to have become the new superorganism which runs and directs our

lives without us really understanding it. It provides the mechanism by

which "the people may appreciate concrete benefits otherwise unobtainable"

(Sahlins 1974: 140; see &2:3 for the original context of this statement).

And given the stress placed by the present government on science within

the British universities at the direct expense of the humanities, we should

not be surprised that Archaeology should chose the obvious way open to it

to survive..

Similarily, Shanks and Tilley (1987a) assert that the desire to be seen as

a science is connected with a drive for power and prestige within the

discipline of archaeology. In seeking to reinforce a separation between it

and idiographic and particularistic History, archaeologists have adopted the

methods and image of science, thereby giving credence to the

> "myth of the supremacy of science as the ultimate mode of
> human understanding, the scientist as heroic figure
> dispelling myths with incisive rationality. Given the
> increasing dominance of science and technology in
> contemporary society, to be cast in this image was to gain
> intellectual respectability and power, the power to be
> gained by producing or purporting to produce objective
> knowledge relevant to the modern world, relevance being
> conceived in terms of both ethical and political neutrality
> and therefore inherently conservative" (*ibid*: 31).

In the same light too, we should view the jargon which has been a feature

of so much of the work of the practitioners of the *new archaeology*. As the

new superorganism, Science has adopted some of the traits which have

characterised religions, most notably, in this context, the use of words and

concepts which are peculiarily its own. We all recognise the need for what

we might call a "discipline language" to accommodate the analytical concepts

and constructs through which research is conducted, but given Science's new

role within present day society such a language functions in another

altogether more "sinister" fashion. Just as a Mass said in Latin served to

increase the mysticism of that occasion, so the use of scientific jargon can increase the aura of Science by restricting access to the knowledge which gives it it's efficacy and power.

We must be vitally aware that claims to produce an objective scientific approach to archaeology will not necessarily lead to a better archaeology, or to a more "realistic" knowing of the past[12]. To assert this is of course another statement of paradigmatic bias in that it is informed by a world view which doubts the overwhelmingly beneficial nature of science. It is based upon a fundamentally different epistemology to that of positivist science. It demands the deconstruction of the damaging oppositions between structure/event, society/individual, synchrony/diachrony, past/present etc.; asserts the "active" role of material culture and human individuals in creating and recreating social formations; emphasises the contingency of data and the recursiveness of the theory/data connection; and stresses the importance of the location of the author in the present for constructing the past. The attempts by generations of archaeologists and historians to produce an objective past by taking up a stand outside the data has only had the effect of imposing a pernicious brand of positivism – pernicious because it pretends to offer us what it can never produce (for an elaboration see chapters 3 and 4).

In the end, however, we have to ask does it all really matter? Why should we care which paradigm or general theory is used to view the past? Indeed some might agree with the structuralists, the ecological functionalists and the creationists and argue that we really are structure/system/divinely bound. "What is for us won't go past us" they might argue. However, we

should care and seek to oppose such ideas since they impose notions of stasis and inevitability about the world onto our thought. We need not act, they seem to say. In fact we need not try to act, (in the same way that the writers of medieval historiography felt we could not) because even if we try to change things in the world today, we are simply pawns in some Divine Plan, Supports of Structure, or Vehicles for the Implementation of System Needs. If we feel that is how the past really was then we encourage apathy and conservatism in the face of our own problems. If, however, we recognise that it is not reified constructs which think, act, and create change, but humans acting either individually or in cooperation, then there is hope for the future. Otherwise we will either muddle through or the system will destroy us.

§2: 6 *Conclusion*

The *new archaeology* claimed to be able to make a science of Archaeology. This claim has been accepted by many within the British, American, and, increasingly, European archaeological establishments. The extent of the impact of this idea can be seen from the fact that it has even penetrated studies of the early medieval period, until recently the preserve of antiquarianism. Thus one of the few books on the immediately post-Roman period in Europe written from the *new archaeological* perspective contains on the first page the assertion that

> "The last decades of social thinking and research have led, above all, to an understanding of the systematic nature, often unconsciously determined, of human behaviour. Moreover, they have highlighted the part played by adaptation in human society, with regard not only to tradition, but also to other social groups and to the natural environment. For instance few scholars today would

underestimate the decisive role played by population and economic factors in social institutions" (Randsborg 1980: 1 - 2; emphasis added)[13].

However, the failure of *new archaeology*, and its rejection by a small but growing number of archaeologists (see the papers in Hodder (ed.) 1982b; Miller and Tilley (eds.) 1984; Shanks and Tilley 1987a and 1987b) derives from an awareness that the type of science proposed creates ahistoricism and a depersonalization of the past - all things that the *new archaeology* owes to it's own antecedents (see above §2: 3 and §2: 4).

I attempted in chapter 1 to illustrate the type of history - *l'histoire événementielle* - which the *new archaeologists* felt inadequate. They saw a chronicling of events and personages, and a lack of concern with structure and process. They substituted for this a concentration on process, especially that of the formation of the archaeological record, and excluded people from the past. They failed to recognise, as Le Roy Ladurie (1981: 26 - 7) comments, that History had changed. Historians too were interested in structure, process, and event. The *new archaeology* reacted against a History which was dying; it set itself up in opposition to an anachronism.

As we have noted this "new history" was also infected with positivism and structural/environmental determinism. The reaction of historians like Le Goff and Duby at last presents a History which attempts to deconstruct the oppositions which have been seen as separating a postulated Archaeology and a perceived History. Recursiveness and dialectics are acknowledged - structure and agency; society and the individual; past and present can be reconciled (see chapter 3).

This is clearly not enough. What about the evidence? Historians read documents, archaeologists study artefacts. What must be added to the theoretical perspective of the new history is a theory of material culture. Although the *new history* can see that documents are texts to be read, that the environment too is socially constructed, and despite the interdisciplinary nature of History from Vico to Braudel, the document (where they exist) is still the primary source for the construction of the past. Although Braudel in both his major works (1975 and 1982) lays great stress on the city as a dynamic force in European history, it is the city of objective text, charter, testimony and deed. It is rarely the city constructed and endowed with meanings which fascinated Rykwert (1976) on one level, and Italo Calvino (1979) on another. What we must do to allow a *rapprochment* between Archaeology and History to take place is to construct that theory of material culture, to transform the spade into an *instrumentum vocale*, and to give document and artefact equal voice. A real dialogue, not that of the deaf, can then begin.

CHAPTER THREE

Material Culture and Man

"... a central and basic feature of English social structure
has for long been the stress on the rights and privileges
of the individual as against the wider group or the
State...[This] is the view that society is constituted of
autonomous, equal units, namely separate individuals, and
that such individuals are more important ultimately, than
any larger constituent group" (Macfarlane 1978: 5).

"Material culture as a coded sign system constitutes its
own 'material language', tied to production and
consumption. It does not simply reflect the significative
structures of language in another form. Like language it is
itself a practice, a symbolic practice with its own
determinate meaning product which needs to be situated and
understood in relation to the overall structuration of the
social" (Shanks and Tilley 1987b: 101, emphasis added).

§3: 1 Introduction

The traces of the past which exist in the present is material culture -

pottery, flints, iron tools, charters, mosaic and fresco cycles, buildings,

cities etc.. In constructing the past from its material representations

(Hindess and Hirst 1975: 308 - 313) we are forced to confront two,

associated problems - one methodological, the other conceptual.

The former refers to our attempts to decode the traces, to make them

speak to us about the past. We have seen above (chapter 2) that the

principal methodology for giving voice to material culture has been

inference and analogy. Binford is right in this. The force of the new

archaeology lies in methodology rather than theory (Raab and Goodyear

1984). Its pretensions in the latter direction are flawed by its positivism. It opposes past and present, structure and agency etc. in its attempts to be objective. The methodology can be used if we realise that we construct the past; that the data are not separable from our theories about them, and about how the world was, is and how we would like it to be. The method, combined with what Hodder (1986, 1987) has defined as a *contextual archaeology* (see §3:4) can be used not in the reconstruction of the past 'as it really was' but in the construction of something which stands for the past (see chapter 4). If we dissolve the past/present opposition, restore dialectics to theory/data, use analogy, inference and context, then we can and should write history, but history for and in the present.

The second problem concerns our conception of what material culture is. Are we to see it in objective, functionalist terms as the end result of attempts to satisfy human needs - pottery holds food, water and wine; ships transport pottery and produce; élites and peasants consume? Is a pot no more and no less than a container for produce? Is a church no more and no less than a container for people involved in a certain ritual practice? Is the *Chronicon Vulturnese* simply a compilation of the charters of a monastery in south central Italy? Or are such aspects of material culture endowed with, and the bearers of, meaning and signification important for the production and reproduction of social relations'. Which side of this opposition we come down on is dependant upon how we see another, perhaps fundamental, opposition - that between the society and the individual[2].

This opposition has been referred to frequently in the preceeding two chapters. The versions of systems theory used by Childe, the neo-evolutionary school of American archaeology, and the *new archaeology* have an inherent conception of the individual as almost epi-phenomenal to historical directionality. People fulfil systems needs, and behave in response to external, environmental stimulii. The same is true, as we have seen in chapter 1, of Braudellian history. An alternative picture is that presented by historians like Alan Macfarlane and archeologists like Grahame Clark. For them the opposition is resolved in favour of individuality[3].

The importance of these considerations for how we theorise material culture stems from the implication in systems theory and structuralism that men are not active but behavioural. Where Man is seen as a functional device for satisfying system needs, material culture becomes the product of motor responses. It is the deep structures within the human mind which generate material culture, not the individual working within structure. Similarily there is the assumption that such deep structures are shared,

> "everyone in society is assumed to have the same
> structures, to see them from the same angle and to give
> them the same meaning" (Hodder 1986: 48).

Not only does structuralism deny creativity in material cultural production and signification, it produces a consensualist picture of society and social relations. People share the same mental template; if change or innovation occurs it is as a result of adaptive response.

When we turn to the other side of the individual/structure opposition we find equally damaging results for the conceptualisation of material culture. Here the individual is dominant and transcendant (see the quotation from Macfarlane at the start of this chapter). In terms of material culture, this implies that each artefact or document is a largely autonomous expression of the thought process and mentality of the agent responsible for its execution (**Shanks and Tilley 1987b: 97**). If we see material culture as simply the reflection of individual consciousness, we have to suggest some means by which the individual projects "do not cancel each other out in some meaningless chaotic resultant, but somehow coalesce into a synthetic unity" (**Benton 1984: 9**). The primacy given to the individual over society makes such a task very difficult.

Recent debates on the relationship of Archaeology to History serve to illustrate the problems which can be caused by an inadequate (or more likely unconsidered) theorisation of the individual/society and material culture/man oppositions. These debates have largely been among archaeologists and are the product of the new confidence which came to the subject through the assertions of objectivity and science of the *new archaeology*. Some early medieval archaeologists have suggested that in terms of testing theories and finding out what the past was **really like**, historical archaeology can "proceed to those parts where prehistory cannot go" (**Hodges 1982b**). It is further asserted that medieval archaeology can and should attempt to write *history* without the help of documents (**Arnold 1984a**).

But such assertions of the strength of early medieval archaeology only serve to illustrate a confused and double sided relationship with History, and display a similar confusion over the nature of material culture. On the one hand it is suggested that the presence of documentary evidence allows us to reach those parts of past social systems which are inaccessible to most archaeologists - *méntalite*, social structure and ideology. The implications of this suggestion are profound and go largely unrecognised. In essence, what is suggested is that those **artefacts** which appear to communicate with us most directly - **texts** - have a primacy in our constructions of the past. It is an acceptance that "facts" as presented in the documents allow us to reproduce a Rankian past. It takes archaeology back to the bottom rungs of the Hawksian ladder of inference (cf. **Hawkes** 1954: 161 - 163; **Smith** 1955: 3 - 7). Epistemologically/philosophically it does little to change Archaeology's relationship with History.

On the other hand, medieval archaeologists are being told that they can and should write *history* themselves, without the aid of texts (cf. **Arnold** 1984a; **Hodges** 1982a; **Hope Taylor** 1977; and **Rahtz** 1983). The capacity of prehistorians to produce subtle and complex "histories" without the use of documents has emboldened early medieval archaeologists to attempt the same (**Hodges** 1982b; **Randsborg** 1980; **Arnold** 1984a). This has been combined with an emphasis on the"defects" inherent in historical textual data - their production by a literate élite, their scarcity and laconic nature for the early periods, and their frequent conflation of mythical/heroic time with historical/chronological time.

Glassie (1975: 8 - 12) accepts these arguments in suggesting that the naturally prejudiced nature of documents means that they can only be used as a "qualifying supplement" after social structure and practice have been reconstructed using other material data, in this case surviving vernacular buildings. However, Arnold puts the position in a more polemical fashion

> "There are...great dangers in attempting to wring truth from the historical material which is frequently in the form of heroic tradition and is rarely contemporary. Such documentation is likely to be distorted and it is a matter for debate whether archaeological patterning can be fitted to the nebulous information it provides. The historical events of the period might be capable of providing a basic chronology, but the dates can often only be extracted through interpretation of the documents.." (Arnold 1984: 6).

The documentary sources are seen as providing a framework of facts - names, dates, places - within which archaeological evidence can be fitted. When the historical evidence is found to be incapable of producing this it is summarily dismissed. Further, it is implied that archaeological evidence is not "distorted" in this way.

The archaeological evidence is seen as not being consciously produced with communication across time and space in mind. It is not open to manipulation either in the past or in the present. It is a **given** which offers us fairly direct access to the "real" past (as opposed to the "distorted" past of History). All that is necessary to gain access is an interpretative technique. Usually this is **commonsense**, though the more "sophisticated" and *au fait* might prefer the methodological rigour of *new archaeology's* middle range theory.

So although there is a recognition that the additional data set provided by documentary texts should privilege early medieval archaeology, the view on the one hand that the historical sources are primary and given, and on the other that the archaeological data are passive and unconscious productions means that little can be done to bring the two data sets together. They are seen as being the products of different types of mental processes - the one produced for communication, the other for utilitarian purposes. The epistemological boundaries between the disciplines thereby remain valid and insurmountable.

As stated at the outset, to escape from such confusions, we have to produce a theory of material culture, and to do this we have to specify the nature of the relationship between the individual and the social framework within which (s)he lives.

§3: 2 *Structural Determinism or Individualistic Voluntarism?*

> *No man is an Island, entire of itself*
> *Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.*
> *- J. Donne* "Devotions Upon Emerngent Occassions No. xvii".

We can immediately appreciate that Man is at one and the same time a single unitary organism, and a member of a larger collectivity. The opposition which has been drawn between these is very much in the order of the "chicken and egg" type questions - which came first, or rather which informs the other? There are at least two established schools of thought; a third is emerging.

The first "school" sees society as a collection of preformed individuals. This is essentially Macfarlane's position (1978). Individuals are said to possess the necessary social apparatus. The implication of this assertion is that the qualities which Man needs in order to *get on* are to a large extent innate or naturally given. When Men come together in society these larger organizational units contain nothing that is not already present or latent in the constitution of each and every one of its members. Here the object – society – is subordinated to the subject – the individual.

The dissemination and acceptance of this view of the individual/society opposition owes much to the work of the nineteenth century philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer (Spencer 1876). Spencer's views on the nature of the relationship between society and the individual was formed within a tradition of Enlightenment philosophy and by his commitment to a version of Lamarckian "transformism"[4]. This early alternative to the Darwinian conception of the evolution asserted that not only would Man's natural traits be passed on to his progeny, but so would those which (s)he had acquired in the course of his or her life. This tends to weaken the force of Spencer's suggestion that individuals come preformed to the collectivity and points immediately to a more reflexive relationship between the individual and society (see §3:3).

The antithesis of Spencer's view is that held by those who believe that through the interaction, co-operation and association of the individuals who make up society, an essence is created which amounts to more than the sum of the parts. This essence seems to emerge almost by autogenesis and exists at a level above that of society's constitutive elements. It is

a reified emergent property which would continue to exist even were we, in thought, to remove the constitutive individuals (Ingold 1986: 227). Here, therefore, the object - society - is accorded priority over the subject - the individual.

One of the principal theorists of "society" was Durkheim. For him individuals are born into a preconstituted society, which they enter as *tabula rasa* upon which the *mores* and values of society are impressed. Society is seen to direct the actions of individuals in accordance with some higher purpose of its own. This purpose is carried out by the individuals, without their knowledge, and is mediated through social institutions. These institutions regulate and constrain human conduct (Giddens 1979: 50 - 51; and Ingold 1986: 228 - 229). Social life is the revelation and working out of Society's plan, though Durkheim believed that none of society's regulative and constraining rules "can be found entirely reproduced in the applications made of them by individuals, since they exist without actually being applied" (1964: 7).

People are not born with a knowledge of "how to go on" in society (Bourdieu 1977; Hodder 1986: 72); it is impressed on them, by society itself.

As with the discussion of the Spencerian position, on further inspection this apparently clear cut assertion of the acquired nature of human behavioural characteristics tends to slip out of focus. In his discussion of egotism and altruism, for example, Durkheim suggests that conduct of the former kind is "determined by sentiments and representations which

are exclusivly personal" while the latter is conduct as the execution of the will of society (1933: 197 - 198). A logical consequence of this distinction seems to suggest that Man is "naturally" egotistical.

> "Altruism is not the expression of dispositions inhering in the nature of the individual but the suppression of these dispositions by a higher purpose....In short, altruism attests to the regulation of the individual by society, or the subordination of the pyschological to the social" (Ingold 1986: 280 - 281).

Man, therefore, has innate instincts, among them egoism, which are held in check by, and subordinated to, the higher needs of society. The apparent solidity of the Durkheim's subordination of the individual to society has started to fray at the edges and again suggests the need for a more coherent conceptualisation of the individual/society opposition. This conception leads to a deconstruction of the opposition itself (see §3:3).

Althusser's works have been among the most debated of those who work within the Marxist tradition[6]. His two main works (1969 and, with E. Balibar, 1970), and most of the rest of his philosophical writings, were centred on a commitment to counter the humanism and idealism which characterised the then dominant phenomenological and existential versions of Marxism (such as that of Sartre - 1976). He also opposed the reductionism which he saw as inherent in the writings of Marxists who take Marx's assertion that

> "In the social production of their existence, men inevitabily enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of

material life conditions the general process of social,
political and intellectual life" (Marx 1970: 20 - 21)

as their fundamental guiding principle.

What is deduced from this passage is that in all social formations the
economic infrastructure **determined** the form and nature of the political
and ideological superstructure. Not only was the economy the dominant
level in any particular social formation, but within the economic base
itself it was the forces of production which determined the social
relations of production

> "At a certain stage of development, the material productive
> forces of society come into conflict with the existing
> relations of production...From forms of development of the
> productive forces these relations turn into their fetters.
> Then begins an era of social revolution" (*ibid*; see also
> Marx and Engels 1973: 39).

This argument was taken to its logical reductionist limit with the
suggestion by Marx that "The hand mill gives you society with the feudal
lord; the steam mill society with the industrial capitalist" (1956: 137)

Although Marx and Engels used the anthropological works then available in
their analysis of capitalist and precapitalist social formations (see
Bloch 1984 for a full account), anthropology was still in its infancy
(Wolf 1982: 13 - 14; Bloch 1984: 1). Through almost a century of
anthropological fieldwork we now know much more about a broader range of
"primitive" societies than Marx could ever have. One of the principle
results of this accumulated knowledge was the realisation that the

"economy" did not always appear to play a pivotal role in structuring social relations and in determining societal superstructures.

Work in this field has been dominated by French scholars, most notably Maurice Godelier[7]. They have focussed on the role of kinship as a means of structuring social relations in anthropologically known societies. Godelier has extended the argument to question the very validity of the notions of infrastructure and superstructure as descriptions of a hierarchical reality. In his work he attempts to show that kinship, for example, operates in what would be defined as both infrastructure and superstructure. The same is true, under different contingent historical circumstances, of other instances in the social formation[8].

Godelier concludes that in all cases the level or instance of the social formation which dominates will be that which at the same time functions as relations of production. In this way he appears to preserve the Marxist determination by the economic through the postulation of a hierarchy of functions as opposed to one of levels. He sums up thus -

> "After this analysis in which we have seen kinship relations, religious relations and political relations respectively forming the economic structure of society, we reach the [following] conclusion.....the distinction between relations of production and superstructures is, in its underlying principle, a distinction between functions and not between institutions" (1986: 141).

Godelier thus tries to square the anthropological evidence with a version of the economist reading of Marx. The same can be said of the work of Althusser and his followers, though characteristically they go much further and, in some cases, seek to negate the value of what they call

"empiricist" disciplines like Anthropology and History to Marxist theory and politics (see **Hindness and Hirst 1975: 312**).

Althusser sees society as being formed of a series of regions or objective levels which he terms "instances" - the economy, politics and ideology (or forms of social consciousness). Where he differs from those who adhere strictly to an economic reductionist reading of Marx, is in the role played by the economic instance in structuring the social formation. Whereas for others the economic is always **dominant**, for Althusser there is a complex relationship between this and all the other instances such that the economic **determines** only which of instance will **dominate** the structuring of the social formation, and then only **in the last instance**[9].

Asa consequence the social formation is "overdetermined". Change cannot be simply the result of contradictions between the forces and relations of production. Rather this contradiction is also expressed in the other instances of the social formation so that a whole web of contradictions can build up within the social formation. If these are not dissipated then a revolutionary juncture can occur with an attendant switch to a different mode of structuring the structures of the social formation. This is predicated upon the rise to dominance, though always through the "agency" of the economic, of another instance (see **Althusser and Balibar 1970: 186 - 189; and Giddens 1979: 155 - 160; Callinicos 1987: 10**)[10].

For Althusser, as for Levi-Strauss (see above note 6), the structure is "imminent in its effects" (**Althusser and Balibar 1970: 188**). These effects

are no more and no less than the actions of people, or in the case of Archaeology and History, the material outcomes of those actions. The only relevance they have in Althusserian Marxism is to demonstrate the existence of structure. The real subject of historical analysis becomes the structure. People are seen as being mere bearers or supports of the structure.

> "The true subjects of the practices of social production are the relations of production. Men are never anything more than the bearers/supports/effects of these relations" (Althusser and Balibar 1970: 180).

How then does Althusser deal with the belief that people, perhaps especially revolutionary Marxists, hold that they can actually effect change within the social formation in which they live through struggle? He asserts that this perception does not in fact correspond to "reality", but arises from their constitution as subjects through ideology (Althusser 1977b)''.

Althusser reaches this conclusion as a result of his conception of ideology, which departs from the "false consciousness" model so often used within Marxist philosophy and historiography. Ideology is seen as a necessary constituent of any social formation. Rather than being a reflection of reality, it helps to constitute reality and to create "subjects" through the practical organisation of day to day life. "Ideology is not the conscious creation of human subjects; it is only through and in ideology that conscious subjects exist" (Giddens 1979: 179). Ideology allows the subjects to perceive of themselves as individuals, not simply the supports of structure. Its reality is mediated

through the societal institutions and apparatuses which contribute to the formation of the subject. In the early medieval world the dominant "Ideological State Apparatus" must have been the church (see chapters 7 and 8).

For Althusser ideology was the "social cement" which ensured the cohesion of society. But this view of ideology betrays the persistence of elements of what Larrain calls the 'negative conception of ideology' (1983: 91). Thus if the agents are unaware of the structures which operate "behind their backs", then the ideological representation of the way their world is ordered must to an extent be illusory or mythical[12]. "Reality" is only obvious to the scientist, objectively placed outside.

We have returned to a conceptualisation of change as the more or less fortuitous coincidence of disjunctures between the levels of the social formation. Class struggle and human agency are dismissed amid a series of overdetermined reified levels. There is no notion of the role of politics - as human activity rather than structural level - as having transformative capacity. The classic Marxist proposition that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx 1975: 32) has been replaced by one which proposes instead that *The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of revolutionary transitions brought about by the coincidence in time of contradictions in reified structural levels within social formations!* -

> "by failing to construct practice other than negatively, objectivism is condemned to....reify abstractions, by the fallacy of treating the objects created by science....as realities endowed with a social efficacy, capable of acting

as agents responsible for historical actions or as a power
capable of restraining practices" (Bourdieu 1977: 26 - 27).

§3: 3 *Society and the Individual: a Recursive Alternative*

"[There is a] permanent oscillation, ...[a] potential
disjuncture in Marx's own writings between his ascription
of the primary motor of historical change to the
contradiction between forces and relations of production,
on the one hand...and to the class struggle on the other
hand...The first refers essentially to a
structural...reality....The second refers to the subjective
forces contending and colliding for mastery over social
forms and historical processes" (Anderson 1983: 34).

Anderson concludes his discussion by asking "How are these two distinct

types of causality to be articulated in the theory of historical

materialism" (*ibid*). I will suggest that the answer is to be found within

the works of Marx.

Deconstruction is currently fashionable but Marx had effectively

demolished the myth of individualism and that of the structure bound

agent long before the former became the ideological cornerstone of the

"New Victorians" or the latter found its way into French philosophy and

historiography. For the former we need go no further than the first page

of *Grundrisse* where Marx states that, in their conceptualisations of the

"individual and isolated hunter and fisherman...Smith and Ricardo still

stand with both feet on the shoulders of eighteenth prophets in whose

imaginations this eighteenth century individual...appears as an ideal,

whose existence they project into the past. Not as a historic result but

as history's point of departure" (1973: 85. For the full quotation see

chapter 1).

This point has also been made by Foucault, as part of a series of works (e.g. 1972, 1974, 1977) which attempt to construct genealogies for many "natural" Western institutions and ideas. These do not aim to trace points of origin but to show their essential transcience as concepts. Thus when considering the concept of Man-as-ego, Foucault argues that it is "an invention of recent date" which, with changes in the structure of discourse, could be "erased like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea (1974: 387). As with many of the institutions he examined, the turning point for the emergence of the ego-centred subject was the rise of the capitalist mode of production in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

> "This was the period in which the 'sciences of man' –
> those sciences which privileged humanity as a centre and
> telos of their domain, were constructed, soon to take their
> reconizable modern positivity. This was the appearance of
> Western humanity as a subject in and of discourse.
> Sometime at the end of the eighteenth century humanity
> appeared" (Shanks and Tilley 1987b: 66; see also Lowe 1982:
> 24).

This is not necessarily to return to the orthodox Marxist premiss whereby forms of consciousness are determined by the mode of production (Marx 1970: 20 – 21); it rather demonstrates that they are inextricably linked. The concept of individualism, of the free agent exercising free will and conferring meaning, is "an ideological component of capitalist social relations" (Shanks and Tilley 1987b: 77) as much in present historiography and political thought as in the nineteenth century (see note 13, chapter 1).

As for the structure bound agents, another quote from Marx serves as an excellent deconstructional tool –

"History does nothing, it 'possesses no immense wealth' it 'wages no battles'. It is man, real living man, that does all that, that possesses and fights; 'history' is not a person apart, using man as means for it's own particular aims; history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims" (1956: 125)

Marx thus reaffirms the capacity of human beings to act, and stresses the efficacy of their actions in the historical process. He is completely in tune with those criticisms of structuralism which see it as ahistorical, as emphasising consensus and stability, and as removing power from people (see Bourdieu 1977; Hodder 1986; Ingold 1986; Shanks and Tilley 1987b).

The very fact that Marx assigns causal importance to both sides of the structure/agent antimony shows that he believed that each was important. The effective dissolution of the opposition comes in one of the most famous passages from his work -

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (in an extract from The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte reproduced in Fischer 1973: 168).

Marx thus suggested that human agency, productivity and creativity takes place within the bounds of structures, which are themselves the product of human actions (creativity, productivity etc.)[13]. The alternative causal importance Marx allowed to each side of the structure/agent opposition can be balanced through a holistic reading of his work[14].

The dissolution of the society (structure)/individual opposition which I have claimed to find in the works of Marx, has recently been developed as a third, and perhaps dominant, school of thought on this relationship. It is strange, though hardly surprising, that the most prolific advocate of this position - Anthony Giddens - developed his approach in reaction to what he perceived as a structural determination in Marx's writings (see Giddens 1981; Wright 1983). That determination does exist in parts, and in readings, of the texts. In many respects, however, the position advocated by Giddens would be acceptable to all but the most orthodox Marxists, and so it is to his work that I will refer in outlining a recursive alternative to "structural determination and individualistic voluntarism".

The central element in what Giddens calls his "theory of structuration" (for what follows see Giddens 1979, 1981) is the *duality of structure*. He asserts that, rather than human agents being either Althusserian supports of structure, or existentialist free agents, there is a recursive relationship between agent and structure. Structures are both the sedimented product of past human action, and the field in which present social practice takes place - "the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and outcome of the practices which constitute those social systems" (1979: 69)[16]. Structures therefore do not simply constrain; they also enable.

Social practices are carried out by knowledgeable agents who do not come into the world preformed, as *tabulae rasae*. They are born into a world structured though its accumulated stocks of knowledge, rules, resources,

and practices. Agents acquire knowledge of *how to go on* in the world though practical experience, through living. The basic categories, divisions and interpretations which characterise the social world are inculcated at the level of **practical consciousness**. These acquired habitual practices form the basis for living; their execution reproduces the social structures which inform their character. Bourdieu calls this **habitus** (1977) and it is the process whereby arbitary concepts become naturalised.

This is neither to return to a conception of structures as essences which "act behind the backs" of agents, nor a move in the direction of determination by a Freudian unconscious (**Giddens** 1981: 27). For every agent has some degree of knowledge of the rules and resources which are there to be drawn upon - "all social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them" (1979: 72). This is the **discursive knowledge** held by agents. This conception immediately mitigates against those "dominant ideology" theories which impose an intellectual division onto a perceived social hierarchy (see **Abercrombie et. al. 1980**). It does not allow that élites are the sole producers and transmitters of ideas, material culture, and social practice which are simply taken on board by passive, receptive, uncreative lower orders. In so doing it opens the way for considerations of contradiction, disjuncture, manipulation, and resistance.

The agent's knowledge is, however, bounded, not any by lack of intelligence but by the *opacity* of the system and by the unacknowledged conditions and consequences of their actions. Penetration of the social

system is never complete at any level of the social formation. The causes and consequences of action can therefore never be the subject of effective reflexive monitoring. Although this might be seen as positing the social system and its structures as an essence which transcends the individual, it is more an acknowledgement of the power and pervasiveness of *habitus* and an acquired stock of tacit knowledge.

The stress laid upon *habitus* in the reproduction of social structures, and the implied importance attached to the unacknowledged conditions and consequences of action does not allow us to suggest that structural change or transformation in social systems is simply a matter of chance. To assert this would again deny agency and take us back to our revolutionary transitions as the product of contradictions of reified structural levels (see §3:2). To make this point clear we must rethink what we mean by **power, change,** and **society.** Again the work of Giddens in particular, and social theorists in general, provide the starting point.

Many of the theories of society we have examined stress stability and consensus. Change is seen as episodic and, given the epistemological bases on which these theories rest, lacks adequate explanation. Part of the reason for this is to be found in their conceptualization of society as a **bounded** and **real** totality, made up of a number of discrete and distinctive levels or subsystems. Most social theories agree that

> "To make general sociological statements requires that we isolate a society and observe regularities in the relationship between its parts" (Mann 1986: 14).

The conception of society as a functioning, organic, totality brings with it a notion that when change occurs in one level or subsystem it may be effective in others and lead to total structural transformation, or may be absorbed within the adaptive, structural bounds of the system. This can be seen in both the "deviation amplifying mechanisms" and "positive/negative feedback" of systems theory (see **Clarke 1978**), and in the overdetermination of contradiction in Althusserian Marxism. In both cases changes are either system wide or are absorbed.

If we see human practice as having a recursive relationship with structure; if we see the subject as creating and being created by the institutions which are the product of routinised practice, then our conception of both "society" and "change" has to be altered. We should see that because of discursive and parctical consciousness human beings don't simply **reproduce** relations of power, kinship relations etc. Their intelligence, knowledgeability, ability to *go on* in the world leads to the possibility of the

> "reordering or transformation of structures because
> meanings and principles for conduct are **re-evaluated** in
> **practice**, in the negotiation and manipulation of social
> agents, in the historical and conjunctural circumstances of
> practice, and through the contingent effects of the
> unintended consequences of action" (**Shanks and Tilley 1987**:
> 72, emphasis added).

Mann makes a similar point when he suggests that outside the institutionalised practice which constitutes structure, human agents develop relations of power which may come to overtake the existing structures -

> "This may happen as a direct challenge to existing
> institutions, or it may happen unintentionally and

'interstitially' - between the interstices and around their
edges - creating new relations and institutions that have
unintended consequences for the old" (1986: 15).

The logical conclusion to these points is that society, as it is
conventionally seen, is an illusion. It is in fact an illusion produced by
the imposition of a reified Western construct on the past. Rather we
should see human agents as constructing and participating in a series of
interacting networks of social relations of varying duration and density.
These relations create, transform, and subvert emergent and established
structures. There is little reason, therefore, to suppose that change will
occur simultaneously in all structures at once. Intentionality,
contingency, unintended consequences and causes come together at
conjuctures to effect change in each or any. Change is constant in time
and differential in its object and effects.

> "No society can be absolutely stable, nor will social
> changes of even the most drastic sort alter every aspect
> of action, thought and feeling. Stability and change are
> both relative terms, neither can be conceptualised except
> in terms of the other and both reside in all social forms"
> (Shanks and Tilley 1987b: 177)[16].

This is a very important point and one which will play a significant part
in this thesis. I will argue that just as the Roman Empire should not be
seen as having been constructed to an imperialist masterplan, but was
rather the product of a series of *ad hoc* accommadations to contingent
historical circumstances (see **Freeman** n. d.; **Barrett** n. d.), so too the
structures which formed its later stages were transformed through
practice at different rates. This has important consequences for

perceptions of, and the ability to draw upon, appropriate, and manipulate, the past in the early medieval period.

If we allow that agents are not dummies but that they have discursive knowledge and a degree of understanding of the consequences of their actions for reproducing/transforming structures, then we depart from a singular conception of power. This concept is a concomitant of dominant ideology theories. It is a conception which sees power as having a fixed locus or source in the upper strata of society, from whence it is dispersed downwards in the form of coercion and subjugation. This is essentially **power over**.

A more holistic conception of power defines the latter as "the ability to pursue and attain goals" (**Mann** 1986: 6) or as " the capability of actors to secure outcomes where the realisation of those outcomes depends upon the agency of others" (**Giddens** 1979: 93). This is **power to**. In this sense power is not a resource to be drawn upon at will. Rather resources are the media through which power is exercised. "The exercise of power is not itself a type of act; rather power is instantiated in action, as regular and routine phenomenon" (**Giddens** 1979: 91). Power is inherent in day to day action, in the reproduction, negotiation and transformation of social relations.

Giddens (1979, and 1981) specifies two types of resource which are routinely drawn upon in the exercise of power. He suggests that control of, or access to, **allocative** resources – that is material, natural products – has only been of prime importance in the reproduction of

power relations within capitalism. In all pre-capitalist societies, he suggests, it was rather **authoritative** resources - control over persons - which constituted structures of domination (1979: 100). In the latter the development of written forms of recording are of fundamental importance since they increase the capacity to store and control information and knowledge relevant to the administration of both people and resources (1981: 94 - 5; see also **Goody 1968, 1977**, and below chapter 9 for a discussion of this point in relation to the charters of ninth and tenth century central Italy).

Giddens' analytical distinction between these two types of resources is, however, flawed. We have to ask why control of persons should of itself be of any interest? We can either postulate an innate lust for power, or bring the two types of resource together and suggest that the "beneficiaries of increasing time-space distanciation of authoritative resources are typically ruling classes who use their increasing command of authoritative resources to increase their material welfare" (**Wright 1983: 33**). I will later argue that this can be seen to be the case in the later part of the ninth and tenth centuries in Italy (see chapter 7).

If power is involved in day to day social interaction, we can assert that power relations are always two-way, if rarely symmetrical. Each individual can to a greater or lesser extent draw upon resources in order to attain their needs,wants or goals. The ability to draw upon such resources is dependent on the agents position within present structures. An individual or representative of an institution like the Church may have the ability/authority to call upon an accumulated stock of resourcs

depending on tradition, law, and/or custom. The bi-lateral relationships

of daily interaction owe their symmetry or assymetry to the "tradition of

all the dead generations" (Marx 1954). This is again to make the point

that although agents have discursive knowledge and the capacity to make

choices and initiate action, they are born into a world where the actions

of their forebears have created structures which their own actions either

reproduce or transform.

All this is not to deny the fact or significance of the power over

definition. In fact as Shanks and Tilley suggest

> "Power may be usually connected with the sectional
> interests of individuals or groups involving exploitation,
> domination and subjection, and resistance to these
> practices, but this is it's usual effect rather than part of
> its definition (1987b: 73).

The oppositional side of this notion of power is that of resistance. When

brought into play, resistance is itself an exercise of power and

demonstrates at the practical level the bi-lateral nature of power in any

social relation. The concept of resistance is often mentioned but rarely

worked through in detail. It need not take the form of overt struggle.

There is a "vast and relatively unexplored middle ground...between

passivity and open collective defiance" (Scott and Kerkvliet 1986: 1; see

also Scott 1986, Turton 1986). It can simply mean lack of full co-

operation. It can also take the form of the refusal to follow a path or

set of guide lines laid down by an authority; or it can mean to work

outside of, and on the edges of, established structures. This is a concept

which has great relevance to the construction of central Italian history

which I will shortly present. It allows us to picture a set of relations where, although authorities at the local level could draw upon great resources as a basis for their power, the choice and capacity to resist and work outside the system was not totally eroded (see chapter 9).

We thus have a theory of the relationship between agents and structures, between individuals and the "society" they live in, which takes us beyond the functionalism and ahistoricism which we have identified as the failings in other conceptions. Agents live, work, and act within created structures; they are themselves the creators and transformers of those structures. We can thus move away from the notion of individuals as supports of structures which act behind their backs, and from that which Ingold has caricatured as the notion of structure as "an accumulating deposit.. on the surface of which the individual subject leads out a solitary and narcissistic dance" (1986: 215). We reintroduce history, dynamism and diachrony into a field concerned with structure, system, synchrony and stability. For archaeologists and historians, working as they do with the long and middle ranges of historical process, this is most important. It remains to show how this affects our conception of material culture.

§3: 4 *Material Culture as Sign System*

Since material culture is the medium on which archaeologists base their constructions of the past, there has always been some connection between the social theory propounded and a conception of the nature of material culture. By and large this connection has largely been untheorised and

presented as a **given** at the commonsense level. In Archaeology's earliest days, when data collection was the prime concern, the artefacts themselves were of comsuming importance, and any interpretation was based on the construction of typologies in a manner very similar to that used in the biological sciences (Clarke 1978). With the emergence of the cultural historical approach, the clusters of artefacts defined as "cultures" were seen to equate in a fairly immediate fashion with a human group.

> "We find certain types of remains - pots, implements, burial rites, house forms - constantly recurring together. Such a complex of regularly associated traits we shall term a 'cultural group' or a 'culture'. We assume that such a complex is the material expression of what today would be called a people" (Childe 1929: v - vi).

With the emergence of evolutionary and *new archaeology*, the view developed that culture, in most of the senses of the word, was functional. It was part of Man's apparatus for remaining in equilibrium with the environment (Clarke 1978). This was held to be true even for those aspects of material culture which were seen as stylistic or symbolic. These features, often the residue after function has been analytically separated out, served to promote group solidarity, cohesiveness and identity. They functioned to ensure a cohesive socially reproductive unit in the face of external change and flux (see **Binford 1972: 200; Edmonds and Thomas 1987**).

In all these approaches, although material culture was **theoretically** the starting point, and an historical construction the product, the relationship between material culture and its producer got lost along the

way. In line with positivist epistemology, the objectivisation of the trace of the past served to alienate it from its context of production, consumption and distribution. Its objectivity in the present seporated it from its producer in the past. As such material culture became, paradoxically given what I have said at the start of this paragraph, to be seen as somehow peripheral to the constitution of past societies themselves. Its role in constructing historical and archaeological texts in the present was recognised. Its efficacy in the past was ignored. Material culture was seen as "passive". It reflected the past in mirror like objectivity (see Hodder 1982a).

Although we stated above that there must be a link between our social theories and our perception of the nature of material culture, this was largely denied by functionalist archaeology. As part of scientific objectivism, it was proposed that the data could be separated from our theories about it. Data classification "was held to be a neutral device and independent of theory" (Shanks and Tilley 1987b: 83). But as we have stated many times, what we have to recognise is that if we change our conception of how societies are structured then we must also examine our perspectives on the material residues of those societies (Edmonds n. d.).

If we think of human agents creating and being created by structures, and of practice reproducing and transforming the latter, we move from people as passive responders to active creators.

> "A direct implication of ascribing an active intelligence
> to past peoples, as opposed to a passive stimulus-response
> conception is that the remains we recover are to be
> interpreted as creations by people in accordance with
> their representation of the natural and social world. This

is not determinate response but an active intervention; the
social production of reality" (Miller and Tilley 1984b: 3).

If we accept that "humans construct their reality, through practice
working in and through structure, then we cannot exempt any single realm
of social experience from this. Production is social activity. Material
culture is endowed with meaning and signification and is used by agents
in the creation and negotiation of social relations, including those of
domination and subjection. To separate this from the process whereby
agents construct reality (and themselves) is to relegate it to the
product of motor response. Is there any valid reason to make such an
arbitrary separation? Similarily if we assert that that some material
culture is the bearer of meaning, while some is purely functional, we have
to justify the separation.

Such a division is that frequently reproduced in art history where works
of "high culture" are examined in terms of their signification. But are we
saying that élite products are important in the constitution of society,
while "everday" products like pottery, glass, cities etc. are not. Again
this is to fall into the trap of the dominant ideology thesis which
ascribes intelligence and creativity to a small controlling élite, and
passive subservience to the masses. Such a conception is politically
dangerous and morally unacceptable[17].

Continuing to develop the vital concepts of recursiveness and duality of
structure, we can see that material culture is both the product of actions
which are articulated through social relationships, and at the same time

the means by which those social relationships are constructed, reproduced and transformed. If we see all material culture as active[9] in the creation and negotiation of social relationships this must apply equally to the documentary evidence which after all also represents "socially determined individual production" (Marx 1973: 84). This recognition takes us beyond those approaches which seek to integrate archaeological and historical data by fitting the latter into a framework of given facts provided by the former. Rather than dismiss the "distorted" historical text for its deviation from a presumed reality, texts as élite productions must be situated within a theoretical perspective which allows us to see how their apparent biases and distortions are in fact attempts by an élite to impose a dominant world view, to legitimise relations of subordination and domination and to reify that which is transient and historically contingent.

This consideration of text as material cultural product forces us to consider its inverse - material culture as non-documentary, non-verbal discourse. This is the implication of assertions of the "active" nature of material culture and of its efficacy in creating and transforming social relations through its "activation" in practice. Developing this arguement and drawing upon some of the methodological elements of semiotics, we can suggest that, as with the relationship between signifiers and signifieds in linguistics, so meaning is inherent not in the object of material culture (the sign) but in its relationship with other signs. This leads us to consider the importance of an archaeology of context.

The contextual archaeology argued for here, following Hodder (1986, and 1987), is one which requires that we seek out relations of similarity and difference in the material cultural product through a detailing of variation along a number of parameters, the most important of which are temporal and spatial (Hodder 1986: 128 - 134). In so doing we create genealogies for different aspects of material culture. Placing these side by side reveals, not only the differential appearance of disjunctures and changes within the total material culture residue (Thomas 1989 forthcoming), but also places that residue within its own text - con-text. The importance of this contextual archaeology is dual. It can show that structures are created, reproduced, and trasformed in differential time and space. This is not to suggest an inflexible, deterministic, link between material cultural product and the structures it is reflexively involved with. The mutability of that link, and the historical nature of meaning, is in fact demonstrated by, and mediated through, contextual archaeology's second importance - its creation of a series of relational signs, the construction of a material language of "silent" discourse which is historically and spatially specific.

§3: 5 *Texts in Context*

An important question in historical archaeology, and very significant for this thesis, is what is the relationship between this non-verbal discourse, orality, and the written text? I have already given an answer of sorts to this question in suggesting that documentary evidence should be seen as material culture. We can take this further by emphasising the changing nature of textual production, distribution and consumption.

Literacy cannot be seen as a "monolithic entity" which has the same meaning and implications in all societies over time and space. Rather "its potentialities depend upon the kind of system that obtains in any particular society" (Goody 1968: 3). We have to appreciate how the spatial and hierarchical location of literacy contributed to the reproduction and transformation of particular social systems. We have to show how literacy worked within historically defined groups. We have to explode the myth of literacy[19].

The situation of literacy within context shows how, like all material culture, it is constitutive of and constituted by social relations. This can be illustrated by taking two examples of relevance to this thesis.

Right up to the achievement of mass literacy in recent times the ability to read and write was restricted to a relatively small number of people. Even in the vastly bureaucratic Roman Empire the existence of large numbers of inscriptions and other forms of written evidence should not encourage us to believe that literacy was for the masses or was even common. Although we might assume "a widespread recognition of literate norms in education and society...in practice genuine literacy is not universal (Stock 1983: 7). Scribal hands and formulaic layouts can be detected among the thousands of papyri from Roman Egypt dispelling the myth that literacy was normal and that Greek was the dominant form of verbal discourse. The élite learned, spoke, and wrote in Greek or Latin; the masses were illiterate and probably spoke in different tougues (Jones 1964: 995 - 997; see also de Ste Croix 1983: 16 - 17). We might reasonably suggest that this cultural division was one way the upper

class constituted themselves as a separate order. Their proximity to the source of imperial, economic, political and social power through their control over the santioned form of State discourse served to reproduce their relationship with the core; while their constitution as a class in and through language, material culture and text served to reinforce their domination of the rest of the social order.

With the breakdown of the educational structures towards the end of the Empire, the literate percentage of the population must have fallen even further - literacy is an essentially learned process. Thus in the early medieval west effective literacy was restricted to a small élite. Further it was spatially restricted to cities and certain religious institutions - the monasteries and the papacy. The result was that down to the thirteenth century, written traditions were largely islands of higher culture in an environment which was not so much illiterate as nonliterate (Stock 1983: 7).

The association of the written form of discourse with these socially and spatially restricted groups to some extent formed the basis though which they were important in establishing and maintaining relations of power. Documents produced by the religious élite in the scriptoria of churches and monasteries appeared to have a direct · connection with the supernatural - with an authority beyond that of this world. Just as the miller Menocchio Scandella in Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (1982: 9) told his inquisitors that because they cannot understand what is going on in court, "the speaking of Latin is the betrayal of the poor" and complains that if they "want to say four words they have to have a

lawyer", so the production of these early medieval texts in an arcane
language served to increase their mysterious nature and to maintain a
gulf not only beteween those who could read and write, but also between
those who spoke this language and those who spoke the vernacular. Their
production and preservation in cities points directly to the links with
the institutions of power which resided there, for example the secular
courts (see **Vickham** 1986).

In both these cases the situation of the text within context shows how
the power of the text derives from and reproduces its associations with
existing and past power structures. Documents have associations beyond
that of objective, or even distorted record (see **Vickham** 1986: 117). They
are artefacts used in the differentiation and constitution of self, class
and society, and are therefore implicated in the negotiation and
manipulation of social relations.

§3: 6 *Conclusion*

> "No work sees the light which hoary old age
> does not destroy or wicked time overturn:
> only letters are immortal and ward off death,
> only letters in books bring the past to life.
> Indeed God's hand carved letters on the rock
> that pleased Him when He gave his law to the people,
> and these letters reveal everything in the world that is,
> has been, or may chance to come" (from *On Writing* by the
> early ninth century Carolingian poet Hrabanus Maurus.
> Quoted in **Godman** 1985: 249).

In arguing for a "social history of language, a social history of speech,
a social history of communication", Burke makes four points about the

relationship between language and the societies in which they are spoken or written -

> 1. Different social groups use different varieties of language.
>
> 2. The same people employ different varieties of language in different situations.
>
> 3. Language reflects the society (or culture) in which it is spoken.
>
> 4. Language shapes the society in which it is .spoken (1987: 3 - 4).

He is essentially pointing to the same recursiveness between language and social relationships which we have just argued for texts and artefacts. They are all forms of discourse through which social relations are constituted and transformed. They gain their meaning in relationship to each other, not in and of themselves. This consideration provides both the necessity, and the methodology, for bringing Archeology and History together. Only through the use of both, where they exist, can the context which gives meaning be established. This is not to argue that we negate the specialisations proper to both. The documentary evidence still has to be discovered and interpreted as has the archaeological evidence. But these specialisations should not blind us to the necessity of breaking down the disciplinary barriers. The archaeological and historical evidence do not speak in the same way about the same things, but just as "the depth of social meaning in the world derives partly from the use of multiple channels for its transmission" (Shanks and Tilley 1987b: 104) so our constructions of the past will be all the stronger forthe contextualisation of the products of those different transmissions. We may use "letters in books [to] bring the past to life" but Man's hand has

carved letters on rock too, and despite Hrabanus Maurus' assertions to the contrary, this work has not been totally destroyed by "hoary old age" or overturned by "wicked time".

It is the archeological evidence which must be brought to the fore. Not because it is objective or any more real than the rest of material culture, but because it has so far been denied a voice (mostly we might add by archaeologists). We can suggest that assertions that the mute stones cannot speak, or that the spade has no mouth, derive from our inhabiting a world dominated by the written and, increasingly, by the spoken word. "Victor Hugo prohesied that the book will bring about the death of architecture...[He] put the prophecy in the mouth of Claude Follo, the archdeacon of Notre-Dame, who could still read his cathedral and its surroundings as one might read a hieroglyphic scripture...Once the mysteries could be spelled out...from printed words, the desire for a built *summa*, for the cathedral and the monument, would atrophy and so dispose of the whole notion of a man made environment charged with meaning" (Rykwert 1982b: 131). If this really is the case, and it would seem likely, then our concentration on the written from of discourse becomes just another modern contingency which we impose on the past in our attempts to appropriate it. But the past was different. In world's on "the margins of literacy" the "silent" discourse of the material world had a louder voice. We must try to locate it, listen to it, and then we must try to write about the past.

CHAPTER FOUR

Writing History

"The past, then, is gone; it can't be recaptured in itself, relived as object. It exists now only in its connection with the present, in the present's practice of interpretation" (Shanks and Tilley 1987: 26)

"The [archaeological] record appears as a text, which...can only be translated in our own terms. However self critical such 'translations' may be they can never confront the real conditions of authorship by which the text was constructed. Whilst our concerns and motivations in archaeological and historical writing do indeed derive from contemporary conditions...we cannot deny the real nature of historical conditions" (Barrett 1988: 14, emphasis added).

§4: 1 *Introduction*

A constant theme of this work has been that the historian and archaeologist are situated in the present, and that they deal with the material traces of a non-existent object - the past. It has been argued that history is written in and for the present. The implications of this suggestion are profound and politically dangerous, as we will show later (§4:3). I therefore want to expand on that statement, draw out its implications, and thereby clarify it.

We shall approach the subject by asking what historical constructions based on these premisses mean? If we eschew the position of historian as independent outsider, observing, collecting, collating, and analysing "facts" from the past (as the arguments outlined in the preceeding chapters suggest we must) what will be the status of the history we write? If we refuse the

mantle of archaeologist searching for and constructing laws of human behaviour, what relationship does our history have with the "truth", with how it really was in the Rankian past?

§4: 2 *History as Platonic Sign*

In chapter 1 we outlined Collingwood's belief that a Rankian past "as it really was" could be 'avoided by attempting to rethink the thought of the agent responsible for the recorded events (see §1:4). This suggestion, however, does not really take us beyond the belief that we can come to know the true past. It simply proposes an alternative (to the positivistic accumulation of self communicating facts) model for achieving access to that past. Although Collingwood very correctly asserts that it is "the historian himself who stands at the bar of judgement, and there reveals his own mind in its strength and weakness, its virtues and vices" (1946: 218 - 219), he still follows von Ranke in suggesting that the task of the historian is "to construct a picture of things as they really were and of events as they really happened" (*ibid:* 246). For Collingwood the past was knowable through a methodology which integrates "(a) the **documentary** character of historical thought; (b) the work of **imagination** in the interpretation of the documentary data; (c)...the desire that the constructions of the imagination re-enact the past" (Ricoeur 1984: 6, emphasis added).

Again we have to ask what is the status of this knowledge? Is it really the truth about the past, about what went on there? In essence this access to the past is illusory since it is achieved through the expedient of erasing

the distance (here time becomes space) between the past and the present through the process of re-thinking and re-enacting in the historians mind the real thoughts of individuals in the past. "Collingwood's entire enterprise collapses when confronted with the possibility of passing from the thought of the past as *mine* to the thought of the past as *other*" (Ricoeur 1984: 14). The net result of the bringing together of an awareness of history as constructed within the historians mind, and the persistence of the idea of the past as really knowable, is the imposition on the past of the values and *mores* of the present. It is to produce history under the Platonic sign of the Same (Ricoeur 1984).

It should be obvious, given the discussion of the epistemological basis of the *new archaeology* presented in chapter 2, that it too writes history under the sign of the Same. The search for and the production of laws of human behaviour (the maximisation of resources, the principle of least effort, central place theory etc.) to explain the traces of the past results in the construction of a history in which the seeds of capitalism have been sown, and from which a teleological present can grow (see **Thomas 1989: forthcoming**. For Central Place Theory see **Christaller 1966**; and **Hodder and Orton 1976**. For a critique see **Haselgrove 1986**. A combination of CPT and other "laws" of human behaviour formed the basis for the Cambridge school of "economic archaeology" in the early 1970's - see **Higgs (ed.) 1972** and **Higgs and Jarman (eds.) 1975**)).

This link between history written under the sign of the Same and teleological constructions is also to be seen in those histories which seek to find an origin, for example, for modern capitalism. Such histories are

written with their ends (in this case capitalism) as the object to be explained. The answer is prior to the question. Late Antiquity, the Germanic invasions and the feudal mode of production become simply unique antecedents, deprived of any historical specificity or importance in their own right, which "explain" the uniqueness of west European capitalism'.

> "History is the history of origin and the universalisation
> of capitalism. All other patterns of development exist as
> histories only relative to the history of capitalism, they
> exist as evidences of arrested development or conquered
> divergence. The unique becomes the universal" (Hirst 1975:
> 449).

The difference and otherness which was the past is denied and its political import in the present by subsuming it within a genealogy of the present.

Recently some authors have asserted that it is only by emphasising the temporal distance between the past and the present (in terms of anthropology this would be the spatial distance) that we can avoid the ethnocentrism and eurocentrism which has dominated archaeological and historical discourse. This spatial and temporal distantiation allows us to emphasis difference in past concepts and values. Its principle objective is to show the transience of all the values and institutions which we hold so dear (!?). To take such an approach is to allow the past to be different, and to emphasis its distant, exotic Otherness (see Derrida 1978; Foucault 1972, 1977; Thomas 1989 forthcoming and n.d.,b; Shanks and Tilley 1987a and 1987b)[2].

These attempts to make the past remote from the present have the value that we do not necessarily impute present day values to past social

contexts. Further they have immense political value in the sense that if we allow that the past could have been different and was not the logical process by which a Kantian western rationality was reached, then we imply that the future can be different too. We thereby lend the lie to those political philosophies which use the past to assert and reinforce the timelessness of their values and ways of life. In terms of the assertion that all history has the character of contemporary history (Croce 1941: 19), history written under the sign of the Other has great political potency.

But in the very construction of a "negative ontology of the past", we create a rather dubious link between the past and the present. Our constructions of the past as Other are presented as so many deviations which always remain relative to an alleged model. That model is twentieth century capitalism. In this respect it suffers from the same flaws as some histories written under the sign of the Same (see the discussion of Hirst's critique of Anderson's work, above). With Ricoeur, we must ask "how could a difference which is always relative to an abstract system and is itself as detemporalised as possible, *take the place of* what, today absent and dead, was once real and living" (1984: 24).

While not rejecting the possibility and indeed the validity of writing history under the signs of the Same and the Other, Ricoeur suggests that they should both be subsumed under the other great Platonic sign - that of the Analogue (1984: 25 - 36). In essence what is implied here is that the history we write does not necessarily equate with what happened in the past. It instead stands for that past, because the real past is never fully

knowable from our position in the present. Given this premise even a Rankian version of the past can be subsumed under the sign of the Analogue by rewriting the phrase "the facts such as they *really* occurred" as "the facts such as they really occurred" (*ibid*: 35).

More interestingly, however, to write history under the sign of the Analogue allows us to take fuller account of what has become known as theoretical practice. The term derives from Althusser's conception of a fundamental opposition between (Marxist) science and ideology. Disregarding the complexities of the relationship which exist between these terms in Althusser's own work (these are well discussed in **Benton 1984:** 35 - 39), the essential contention implied by the notion of an epistemological break between science and ideology is that the "raw materials of theoretical practice are never 'pure data', but are always the product of previous social practice of one kind or another" (Benton 1984: 37). Althusser further argues that theoretical practice takes place entirely within thought; although "it may **in some sense** involve **reference** to an external, independent reality...,nevertheless [it] takes place without, so to speak, directly touching upon, or taking up, that independent reality" (*ibid*). It was theoretical practice in this sense, and its concomitant denial of History and Anthropology which so aroused the fury of Thompson (1978). It presents a radical separation between theory and data in many ways complementary to that offered by Fergus Millar in his plaintive appeal for a return to the good old ways of writing history (Millar 1977: xi - xii).

In their work *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* Hindess and Hirst (1975) attempt to theorise the modes of production preceding capitalism. They

explicitly state that their "book is a work of theory" (1975: 1) and rigidly oppose their enterprise to "the theoretical empiricism which characterises the academic social sciences and history" (ibid: 2). They see this empiricism as being founded upon the premise that historical and anthropological facts are seen from the same epistemological standpoint as scientific facts. They are real and given and their "truth" exists independently of the observer/historian/social scientist[3].

Hindness and Hirst then proceed to construct ancient, slave and feudal mode of production concepts using a large body of historical and, to a lesser extent archaeological, evidence. This might seem to show their whole work up as essentially contradictory, but the enterprise is saved by their contention that the facts about the past are not "given" but are "the product of definite practices, theoretically or ideologically constructed under definite real conditions" (1975: 2). In so saying they seem to considerably dilute the force of Althusser's science/ideology opposition. As we have seen this understanding of historical facts as "constructed" is not the sole prerogative of the social theorist. Many historians hold the same view of the traces of the past. Indeed Hirst points to Collingwood's conception of the relationship between the historian and his data, as being worthy of some admiration (Hirst 1985c).

What Hindess and Hirst in effect produce through their version of theoretical practice is a construction of the past through the interpretation of "facts" within a determinate body of (Marxist) theory. It is a history but not in the sense of theoretical empiricism which they so abhor. Rather it is one in which the constructed nature of the facts within

theory is emphasised. In this they, perhaps unwittingly, achieve that unity of theory and data which Althusser's conception of theoretical practice totally disallows. They also produce a history which differs fundamentally from that proposed by Collingwood. They make no truth claims for their constructions - "It is only in its contemporary use that history can have a non-historicist and non-relativist status, a lasting value beyond given dead events and a significance for us beyond that of being the equivalent effects of causes of à particular type" (Hirst 1985c: 51). It is in effect history under the sign of the Analogue.

§4: 3 *Protecting the Past*

Ricoeur's advocation of an Analogical past would appear to take us a long way from the *wie es eigentlich gewesen* banner followers. But in subsuming even that Rankian past under his analogical rubric, Ricoeur could be construed as producing a profoundly debilitating and politically dangerous relativism. What is it which separates such an all encompassing history from fiction? If we assert, as we have done, that the past is a polysemous text, does that mean that we can say what we want about it, and appropriate it how we wish? If we cannot escape the political nature of our construction of the past, then how can the abuse of history, whether as practised by the Fascists (see **Manacorda** 1986 for an account of the nature of archaeological and historical practice under Mussolini's regime), or by those who espouse Victorian values for the present, be isolated and dismissed within a body of history written under the sign of the Analogue? The point can be made clear by considering that even those historical constructions which make no truth claims about their vision of the past,

create a text in the form of historical narrative which can be read as reconstruction. The constructed fact takes on an unintended solidity in language and text. The historical text itself becomes an aspect of material culture with efficacy in the present (Stanford 1986).

The contention that we cannot know what the past was really like must now be considered something of a truism. But is access to the past thereby totally barred? The answer to this question depends on how we conceive of knowledge. If we desire "objective" knowledge, that is knowledge of the past, then we can never succeed. But is this a valid conception of historical knowledge. Indeed is it what other disciplines claim to possess in relation to their object? Do they claim to know the "reality" of that object? It would seem not. Astronomers, for example, can construct texts about objects which are not open to perception. These objects also only exist in their traces - in this case light and radiation. Through these traces astronomers have knowledge about their object. This has obvious parallels to considerations of what should constitute historical knowledge.

We can never know the real past. But the desire to do so is based on the spurious quest for an objectivity which scientists increasingly admit is unattainable. We can know about the past. Its traces exist. They had efficacy in context in the past and can have efficacy in the present.

Having asserted that we can know about the past, how do we protect the past, as a text to be read and interpreted, from abuse? The answer to this is in fact provided by the very nature of the past as text.

The quest for objectivity, for a knowledge of the real past, can be seen as the search for a single meaning in material culture. A polyphonic material product would immediately defeat objectivism. The traces of élite culture dominate the past in the present. Both History and Archaeology have for long been concerned with these traces and in constructing objective history from them. Our concentration on them has resulted in our extending their authority over other discourses. In the past such authority might never have been so complete or gone so unchallenged (see Barrett 1988: 10). Discordances, denials and counter claims must have existed in the past. To argue otherwise is to side with the dominant ideology theorists who see total incorporation of a passive, subordinate mass by an intelligent, creative élite. The denial of other voices in our concentration on the stentoriousness which objectivism demands, serves paradoxically to defeat the latter's object, to remove it from its grasp.

An acknowledgement of the polyphonic nature of the past as text means that we can attempt to hear the other voices and to find the other meanings.

> "One does not have to maintain that these confused voices sound better than the others and express the ultimate truth. For there to be a sense in listening to them and in searching for what they have to say, it is sufficient that they exist and that they have against them so much which is set up to silence them...." (Foucault 1981: 8).

The contextual approach to the past which a rapproachment between Archaeology and History demands means that

> "the voices of the previously inarticulate break to the surface...the polyphonic popular discourses come to life and display themselves in all their marvellous diversity" (Flaherty 1986: 426).

Our concern to allow the past to be different, to break the teleological chains with the present, to situate historical constructions in the present, and to deny the objectivity of the past, has paradoxically placed us in the position of having to defend this territory from those who would like to see history collapse into, and be indistinguishable from, myth and fiction; from those who would "call the Holocaust a Zionist lie, or the Japanese invasion of the Asian mainland an 'orderly expansion'" (Anchor 1987: 134).

Evidence for the past does exist. Although these material traces are open to interpretation, are texts to be read, and although the evidence does not therefore have any objectivity, "it does nevertheless exist in the real world - it is tangible and it is there, like it or not. Whatever our perceptions or world view, we are constrained by the evidence, and brought up against its concreteness... even within our own subjective perspectives, we often find it difficult to make our coherent arguments correspond to the evidence. At some point too much special pleading is recognised..." (Hodder 1986: 95 - 96).

The past can be further protected if we take account of the way we construct historical narrative and consider the relationship between theory and data. This is essentially recursive. There can be no one way determinate of the former on the latter. The one informs the other (Carr 1961: 29). For example if we work within a theoretical perspective which asserts that agents constitute themselves in and through language, text and material culture this is not to impose a hard universal precept on the past. We have to examine the data. The relative importance of text, material culture, and language in the constitution of the subject and social

relationships is historically specific and reveals itself in the structured material culture residue which exists in the present. Thus we have to assess the relative accessibility of text, we have to determine the locales of its production, and the extent of its circulation and distribution. We have to see how far it permeates the network of social relationships which we call society.

We can see that for most of human history all of these variables were restricted spatially and socially, and can therefore suggest that material culture and language was of greater importance in constituting social beings. We can also attempt to show how text constituted the élite as a separate order (see chapters 5 and 7). We can further try to trace the implications of the increased dispersal of texts outside their centres of production and consumption, for example in the ninth and tenth centuries in the area under consideration in this thesis (see chapter 9). We can suggest that because levels of literacy were still low, the copy of the text made for the peasant participant in a land deal took much of its significance, not from an understanding of the words which were written in it (they could not be read) but from its associations, from its connections to the sources of social power, from its status as an artefact. The evidence can show us that literacy "became a factor in social mobility; the lower orders could neither read not write, but their lives were increasingly influenced by those who could" (Stock 1983: 8). The people without history lived on the margins of literacy.

The appropriation of the past as propaganda ignores the recursiveness of the theory/data link. It privileges the former and places the latter within

it. When this happens the fit can never be good. Gaps appear in the seams and "too much special pleading" is recognised.

Therefore although we can agree that we do write history under the sign of the Analogue in the sense that we write **about** the past rather than **of** it, we have to assert that a Rankian past, a Fascist past, a Nazi past are not acceptable. They ignore those aspects outlined above which protect the past from their appropriation. They listen to the voice of the "objective" dominant discourse and do not seek out the diversity of sounds which reach us and which must have charaterised the past itself.

§4: 4 *Conclusion*

> "We often grasp the human past as a single whole which, throughout the course of time, retains its specific character. We recognise ourselves in remote ancestors...From this point of view, the past shows great unity, striking continuity and coherence...Human history has been represented as a progress with only accidental or momentary interruptions" (d'Hondt 1986: 345 - 6).

This thesis is concerned with one of these "accidental or momentary interruptions" which cause blips on the chart of human evolutionary progress. We have seen in previous chapters how this notion of progress has permeated History and Archaeology from at least the Enlightment. It is a product of typological constructs and stage systems which are imposed on the past. When they are transformed from analytical devices to reified constructs, the "band, tribe, chiefdom, state" schemes of evolutionary and *new archaeology*, and the modes of production/social formations stages of

Marxism, produce this conception of a unity in history, connecting past, present and future in a seamless totality.

The early middle ages in Europe are seen as a period of "barbarism" and regression. They are opposed to the 'glory that was Rome', the emergence of Foucauldian humanity in the Renaissance, and to the 'civilisation' of a capitalist present and/or socialist future (Wallerstein 1979c). The relativism and eurocentricism in these oppositions are readily apparent. The "Dark Ages" were **different**. They were not like the Roman or the modern periods, although they drew from one and are being drawn upon by the other⁴. The aim of the next chapters of this thesis is to demonstrate this through the use evidence drawn from one area of Italy, and through the situation of that evidence within a series of analytical devices taken from Marxism, structuration theory, etc..

I shall not be able to tackle all the problems and potentialities which were outlined in the previous chapters. To write a total history is seldom, if ever, possible within the bounds of a thesis. That is another task. What should be remembered, however, is that what I write in this thesis is imformed by a theoretical perspective which seeks to overcome the problems of objectivism, to deconstruct oppositions, and to locate the writer of history in the present. It also seeks to take advantage of the potential to listen to the polyphonic chorus of the past offered to us by notions of textuality and by the awareness that power is dispersed in the fabric of human social relationships. This latter in fact has perhaps not received the attention it deserves for the very simple reason that to listen to the other voices of the past we have to have many ears, many specialisations.

Such are seldom available for a thesis. But its understatement in the next
few chapters is not intended in any way to diminish its importance. We have
already seen that it is vital. Again it is simply another task which will
have to await another day.

‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡ ‡

If the time span for this thesis is presented as AD 700 - 1000, then it
must be stated at the outset that consideration of the subject under
question here - an understanding of central Italian society through its
material cultural residues (pottery, churches, settlement patterns, texts
etc.) - within these strict time limits is impossible, and if not that then
in any case valueless. Archaeologists and historians have frequently
justified the existence and importance of their disciplines by claiming
that we need to know the past to understand the present (Hodges 1988: xi).
Even if this aphorism has been perverted in the face of the necessity for
developer funding of archaeological projects, it also applies to the
historic past. We cannot hope to understand the relations of power and
domination, of kinship and fraternity, if we are ignorant of the pre-
existing social and political situation. In the early middle ages in Italy
as much as anywhere "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like
a nightmare on the brain of the living" (Marx 1954: 225). In this thesis
therefore archaeological and historical evidence will be presented to allow
the construction of a picture of society in central Italy from late
Antiquity to the end of the first millennium AD. Within this extended time

span a more finely focussed construction of the nature of social relations between AD 700 and 1000 will be situated.

Equally, and to a certain extent conversely, if our aim is to look at the nature of early medieval society in **central Italy**, it is immediately apparent that such a task would be very difficult given the size of the area to be covered - somewhat larger than that of Wales -, and the localization of the evidence within the greater area.

The problematic nature of the evidence is the result of factors inherent in the body of data itself, its modes of preservation, recovery and storage. However, it is also the result of more personal factors connected with the archaeological experience of the author. This consideration of central Italian society will therefore draw very heavily upon resources with which the author is best, indeed intimately, acquainted. These resources are provided by the results of recent multi-disciplinary projects conducted around two of the great early medieval monasteries of Italy - Farfa in Sabina (Lazio) and San Vincenzo al Volturno (Molise). Although they will form the core of the evidence provided in support of the arguments presented in this thesis, an attempt will be made to set these within a framework built up from a consideration of work carried out elsewhere in the region and, where necessary, outside it. At every level of analysis - comparisons between the monasteries themselves, between the spheres of influence of each monastery, and between the whole arbitrarily defined region and the rest of Italy - contrast will be emphasised as much as comparison. Only in this way can the construction of a homogenised and consensualist picture of Italian politics and social life be avoided.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Legacy of Empire

"The greatest, perhaps, and most awful scene in the history
of mankind" (Gibbon 1985: 690).

"Of Rome, capital and wonder of the world, golden Rome,
only a barbarous ruin now remains.
Its military glory has been levelled by the sword,
and only a lifeless part of its muddy rooftops is visible"
(from *Lindisfarne* a poem by Alcuin, quoted in Godman 1985:
129).

§5: 1 *Introduction*

Any work which purports to construct a history from the material traces of
the early middle ages must take account of the causes and consequences of
the disintegration of the vast edifice that was the Roman Empire'. This is
obviously not the place to speculate in any great depth on the reasons for
this collapse. It has been done many times before, and by others much more
learned and knowledgeable of the relevant data than the present author.

Some brief outline of events and possible causes, and more particularily of
consequences must, however, be presented. This necessity derives from our
contention that the structures of a social formation are reproduced,
transformed, and disappear differentially over time and space (§3:4). The
transformed and reproduced structures of the Roman Empire formed the
"present" in which the early medieval past was lived. Some structures may
have been reproduced. We have to detect this in the evidence. Others may

have been **transformed**, assigned new meanings, interpreted differently. Again

we must check the evidence. Consideration of the questions of reproduction,

transformation, and disappearance of these structures is important since

arguments over the survival or otherwise of the institutions of the Empire

have formed an inevitable backdrop to most discussions of the early middle

ages in Italy.

Controversy rages over the fate of the cities. Did the collapse and

transformation of the political and military structures (of power, control,

and domination) of the Empire have as a concomitant the demise of the

network of cities on which these structures were based? (see **Wickham** 1980:

80 - 92, and n.d.; **Hodges and Whitehouse** 1983: 20 - 53 and **Hodges** n.d. for

contrasting views). Similarily what was the fate of the villa system in

Italy with the disappearance of an over-arching economic directive? There

is also disagreement over the persistence or demise of the political fabric

of the Empire. What for example happened to that symbol of Roman civic and

political life - the Senate; and what was its relation to the institution

bearing the same name of which we hear mention in the ninth century (**Brown**

1984: 11 - 12)? More prosaically, though perhaps structurally more

important, what became of another of the features often associated with

great Empires - high (in relative terms) levels of urban and rural

population?[2].

Such questions have generally been addressed in purely functional terms

(see **Ward-Perkins** 1984 for a discussion of the changing fabric of Roman

cities from such a perspective), and have been used to try to fix a single

point of change. The **constructed** nature of buildings, cities, and

institutions are more rarely addressed (though see **Rykwert 1976**), a strange

fact for a discipline concerned with the study of material culture. A

discussion of some of these problems will form the skeleton of this

Chapter. This is fleshed out with a consideration of the importance of

considering meaning and signification in the material and ideological

worlds. I will to a large extent leave in abeyance those more "political"

controversies, (e.g. that concerning the fate of the Senate) and concentrate

instead on the more infrastructural aspects of the collapse of the Roman

Empire and the emergence of early medieval social formations.

There are two main justifications for paying particular attention to the

fate of the villa system, to changes in settlement pattern, to the vagaries

of the balance of trade throughout the Empire and within Italy, and to the

fate of the cities -

1. The explicitly constitutional and political history of the late Empire

    has been thoroughly researched and studied and, as an archaeologist,

    there is little that I can contribute directly to the debate. Nor would

    I wish to, since this *histoire événementielle* is really nothing more

    than Braudellian "surface disturbances, crests of foam" when studied in

    isolation (an isolation which reinforces their supposed importance)

    from their structural context. That context must be provided and it is

    to that end that I direct my attentions[3].

2. If we accept that material culture is meaningfully constituted (see

    chapter 3) then the settlements which people construct in the

    landscape, their use of that landscape, and the form of the cities they

live in serves to produce and reproduce their *habitus*, their *Weltanschauungen*, how they "go on" in the world (Giddens 1979; Bourdieu 1977; see also Le Goff 1985b: 76 - 83 for a "practical example"). It is no mere passive reflection of the social world. It actively serves to create and re-create social relationships. As such it merits considerable attention and not merely as an index of changing patterns of trade and other, what we might call, economic factors. As Wickham points out, a study of settlement pattern and change can "work as an integrating device for 'total' historians, but only if we work within a proper epistemological and methodological framework" (1988: xxvi).

In this chapter, therefore, I will outline the historical and archaeological evidence for the constitution and demise of the Roman state. This will be set within a framework which stresses the importance of modes of production and world systems analyses (see §5:2). The aim is not to dismiss political narrative history. It is to use History and Archaeology together to construct a more complete history, a history of the élite, and of those denied history - both in the literary artefactual constructions and in conventional historical and archaeological narrative (see Preface).

§5: 2 *Modes of Production in a World System*

The essence of Wallerstein's work has been to emphasise the interaction which always exists between societies at different levels of socio-political development, and to categorise the nature of such linkages (see Wallerstein 1984b)[4]. Like Mann (1986) and Giddens (1979 and 1981), he challenges the notion of "society" as a bounded functioning totality. Instead he speaks of

social systems, characterised by the fact that life within them is largely

self contained, and the dynamics of their development is largely internal.

Wallerstein believes that there have only ever been three such systems:

1. Small scale reciprocal mini-systems - societies covering a very restricted geographical area within which everthing necessary for the survival of the group is done. "We might think of such systems as bearing the motto: one economy, one policy, one culture. That is to say, the boundaries of the division of labour, the structures of governance, and the values, norms, and language which are current are more or less the same" (Wallerstein 1984b: 148). Historically and anthropologically these might be seen as small scale gathering and hunting groups.

2. Large scale redistributive world-empires containing many different socio-political and ethnic groups united under an overarching and centralised political structure. In these systems there were non-productive classes who depended for their reproduction on the tribute or tax demanded from producers in both the core and periphery. Thus there was a more extended division of labour than in the mini-system. I shall have more to say about this concept in relationship to the Roman Empire in a moment.

3. World economies, like world empires, contain within their bounds many different units, but here without any necessary political cohesion. The polities are all independent, the world system interconnections being created through economic ties. Although Wallerstein suggests that there have been other world economies in the past, a close reading of his work shows that what he says about such social systems relates to the capitalist world economy. As such it's direct imposition onto the past is to write history under the sign of the Same (see chapter 4).

Archaeologist's have found Wallerstein's formulation compelling since the

material evidence for long distance trade and the transmission of ideas has

forced then to move away from *Die isolierte Stadt* concepts (see **Renfrew and**

Cherry eds. 1986). Archaeological applications, often uncritical ones, have

proliferated in recent years, but so has criticism. Much of the latter has

centred around what many see as crude economic determinism in the

mechanisms connecting the polities of the world economy, and the

subordination of economic to political linkages in the theorisation of world

empires. On the one hand, critics argue that political, cultural and military

factors were significant in modern European expansion and imperialism, and on the other that the economic and social impact of world empires were not restricted to their political boundaries[6]. A more fundamental problem with Vallerstein's world systems model, however, lies in his inadequate conceptualization of the mode of production concept.

Although Marx himself was notoriously vague about the way he used the term (Rigby 1987: 24; Benton 1984), it is now accepted that a mode of production is constituted by the combination of the forces and relations of production. The forces of production can be considered as any instrument, raw material, and human agent used in the production process. The inclusion of the human agent as a productive force is problematic, though necessary (see Foucault 1977: 25 - 26). The problem arises in that the human agent brings to the work process skills and knowledge, in other words ideas, which the most "orthodox" of Marxists see as belonging to the superstructure of society. We have already referred to Godelier's mediation of the problem through a conceptualisation of functions and not institutions (Godelier 1986, and §3:2. See also Rigby 1987: 19). This distinction between function and institution points to the status of the mode of production as a concept to be used in the analysis of "concrete" social formations rather than as a reified reality in itself.

Relations of production can be considered as those social relations which determine access to, and/or ownership of both the forces of production and the product which is the result of the operationalization of such forces. Again as we have seen above (§3:2), in Marxist orthodoxy the forces of production are held to determine the social relations.

This very strict economism has largely been rejected within Marxist thought, often with the help of confirmatory alternative quotes from Marx, in favour of the relative importance of the relations of production (see Callinicos 1987: 42ff; Rigby 1987). It is the different forms of appropriation of surplus labour through the relations of production which are constitutive of the variations of the mode of production concept. In the ancient mode the extraction of surplus labour is predicated upon citizenship and position within the state. The surplus labour appropriated takes the form of taxation. In the feudal mode, by contrast, rent paid to a landlord is the embodiment of the relations of production, and also contributes to their reproduction (see Vickham 1985 for the essential difference between tax and rent as modes of surplus appropriation).

In the historical past there have probably never been societies with a single mode of production. The notion of an articulation of different modes in the constitution of an historic social formation becomes important. The concept is one of the most useful to be drawn from the work of Althusser and his followers (see Benton 1984; Hindess and Hirst 1975) though it was never explicitly formulated by Althusser himself (Foster-Carter 1978: 52 - 54). The essential features are, that of the modes present in any one social formation, one will dominate and determine the form of the latter. This articulation is not to be seen as a static state but as a process in time through which the contradictions between the dominant and co-existing modes, expressed in terms of the perceived wants and interests of social actors, results in the displacement of the dominant mode and its replacement by another (see Foster-Carter 1978 for a theoretical outline, and Vickham 1984 for an example).

The weakness of Wallerstein's development of the mode of production concept

rests on his postulation of a necessary equivalence between his taxonomy of

social systems and modes of production -

> "A mode of production is a characteristic of an economy, and
> an economy is defined by an effective ongoing division of
> productive labour. Ergo, to discover the mode of production
> that prevails, we must know what are the real bounds of the
> division of labour of which we are speaking. Neither
> individual units of production nor political or cultural
> entities may be described as having a mode of production;
> only economies. Given this premise....there are only four
> possible modes of production, only three of which have been
> known thus far in empirical reality. They are reciprocal
> minisystems, redistributive world empires, a capitalist world
> economy, a socialist world government" (Wallerstein 1984c:
> 162 - 163).

This minimalist[6] conceptualization of modes of production explicitly denies

the possibility of the articulation of modes of production **within** social

formations. It imposes a singular concept on vast regions of the past, and

reduces the manifest differences in the way societies operate to the level

of contingency (Foster-Carter 1978: 74). Where, for example, would feudalism

fit into such a limited taxonomy? Is it a world empire or a capitalist

world economy? Although Wickham (1985) suggests that feudalism was a world

system, this is based on a very different conception of the latter from

that presented by Wallerstein. Wickham's assertion is empirically based -

"there have been few if any class societies that have not experienced some

form of landowning and coercive rent taking" (*ibid*: 168). The feudal mode

of production co-existed with other modes in many parts of the world over

time.

Wallerstein's world systems model remains (relatively) useful as a reminder

of the expansive nature of social systems, but its conflation with a

minimalist mode of production concept severely limits the power of the latter as an analytical device for the generation of knowledge about historic social formations.

In this chapter therefore I will work within a theoretical construction which, while acknowledging the "world" nature of the late Roman state, also utilises the mode of production concept. stressing especially the notion of articulation. Such a theoretical approach proves equally useful when the social system is world - (i.e. Mediterranean) wide, and when it became geographically more restricted, as in the late Roman state from the fifth century onwards. It is argued that Wallerstein lays undue emphasis on the purely "politico-military" connections of world empires. Relationships of trade and exchange, both of material products and ideological constructs such as *Romanitas*, will be introduced as a necessary element for world system integration, transformation, and disintegration.

§5: 3 *Modes of Production and Ideological Incorporation in the Late Roman World System*

The expansion of the Roman sphere of influence from a small settlement on seven hills around the River Tiber to gradually encompass the whole of the Mediterranean littoral and large sections of north west Europe and the Near East was essentially the result of a long series of military victories by Roman armies. "The most important single factor in the whole of Roman history is quite simply the success of the Roman army...Roman history is the virtually unique story of a nation trying to catch up with the situation produced by the incredible success of its army (Mann 1974: 509). Although

Freeman (n.d.) argues that only rarely can we propose the desire or need for resources as a *leitmotiv* for Roman expansionism, it has proved difficult to disentangle economic, political, or military motives from the élite produced sources[7].

This begs the question of how what has been called "one of the most successful conquering states in all history, but...the most successful **retainer** of conquests" reproduced itself (**Mann 1986: 250**). Once conquered, how were all the polities retained under the overarching political and military structure of the Roman state. I will argue that a "sense of belonging", inculcated at the routine level through material culture and language, is of prime importance in this regard. The recursive nature of the relationship between this phenomenon and exploitative social relations served to reproduce and transform the Roman world system.

At its height, in the early first century AD, the Roman Empire covered a vast area and incorporated a huge population, composed of many different ethnic groups, speaking different tongues, with different standards of literacy, different religions, and different world views[8]. The army was obviously important in enforcing cohesion, but the sheer size of the structure meant that physical might was not sufficient in itself. Other factors, such as the need to maintain communications with the army and their posts in the Provinces, resulted in the construction of a series of roads 'all leading to Rome' and serving to physically connect the periphery to the core. Further the incorporation of men from the "allies" into the Roman army, their share in the spoils of conquest, and exposure to Roman "ways" could be considered another integrating factor. The army was an

institution where the individual sense of destiny was linked to Rome and the Emperor though the routinised action of daily life. Barrett (n. d.) suggests that this inculcation was structured around features like the military calendar which contained only army festivals, those of the Roman gods, and the cult of the Emperor.

The taxation and trade structures characteristic of exploitative core/ periphery systems were also integrative. Hopkins (1977: 5) has spoken of the "complementary flow of taxes and trade" as a key to the unification of the empire. The archaeological evidence in Italy and in the Provinces provides a good illustration of the nature and volume of this trade and some pointers as to its probable effects.

Many Roman ship wrecks, containing cargoes of Italian produce, have been found off the coasts of southern France and Liguria (Potter 1987; Lamboglia 1952). The cargo carried wasprimarily in Dressel 1 amphorae. This type of amphorae was first produced in the late second century B.C. and production peaked around the middle of the first century B.C (Rathbone 1983: 163). It was produced on the western seaboard of Italy in and around places like the great port of Cosa (Manacorda 1978). The production centres correspond well with the major centres of argicultural production in Italy - in Campania, Etruria, and Latium (Potter 1987: 157). Exports of fine Italian pottery such as *Vernice Nera* and *Terra Sigillata* are further exemplars of the nature and direction of trade in the late Republican/early Imperial periods. In Italy the drive to produce for export seems to have resulted in some fundamental changes in the settlement pattern and the organisation of

production. The effects of core-periphery relationships are never simply on the latter side of the relationship (Smith 1984).

Archaeological surveys on the west side of the Italian peninsula have demonstrated the emergence of a series of large villas (the physical manifestation of the slave mode of production) replacing a smaller type of productive unit - the familial farmstead (see Attolini *et. al.* 1982, 1983; Moreland 1986, 1987; and Potter 1979. See Carandini 1979: 140 - 208 for a description of the SMP, and Hindess and Hirst 1975: 109 - 177 for a theoretical overview). The wealth and opulence of the richest of these complexes can be guaged from the polychrome mosaics, the painted decoration, the ornamental garden, and the sheaf size of the villa at Settefinestre. The source of the wealth is to be found in the wine presses and other vine processing facilities found at this and nearby villas (Carandini (ed.) 1986)[9].

Rathbone, in his review of the edited volume by Carandini and Schiavone (1981) suggests that the villa system slightly post dated the shift from production for local consumption to the production of cash crops (especially vines) for export, and questions the significance of the slave mode of production for the export boom of the second and first centuries BC. (1983: 164). Instead he sees the latter as the product of the pooling of resources from the familial farmsteads.

The archaeological evidence from recent surveys, however, seems to demonstrate a very close link between production for export and the emergence of the (slave run) villa system. Thus Attolini *et. al.* (1982) show

that in the area they surveyed in the *Ager Cosanus* the third century BC pattern of small homesteads was replaced by large villas by the late second century BC (see also **Dyson 1978** for the same area). Those small settlements that remain might be seen as dependent on the villa estates, though the problem of the status or existence of the small peasant proprietor is one that dogs both Roman and early medieval studies (see **Vickham 1982: 34 - 40** and **1984: 10**)[10]. In the same area Celuzza and Regoli (1986) report a similar pattern for the *Valle d'Oro*, and the results from the Farfa survey in Lazio show essentially the same, though perhaps on a slightly smaller scale (see fig.3) (**Moreland 1986, 1987**; and also **Muzzioli 1980**).

The core areas exported quality finished goods, produced in a highly organised and differentiated system - an articulation of the ancient and slave modes of production - to the peripheral Provinces. The standardization of production (**Morel 1981**; **Peacock 1982**) points to the use of mass production techniques as described by Rathje (1975) and also to devices which reduce the impact of labour value on the total production cost - slaves. Thus the wine which was imported into southern France from the estates of central Italy might be exchanged in the former for raw materials including metal ores and slaves (**Potter 1987: 159**; **Vallerstein 1974**)[11]. The net result was the emergence of a system-wide division of labour, mediated and reproduced through the mechanism of unequal exchange, and producing some degree of system integration. The participation in "trade", even in these unequal terms, created allegiances which brought Rome and the Provinces together, but only on the level of contingency. Legitimation was necessary for these structures to be reproduced.

One of the fundamental features of the expansion of the Empire was the spread of urbanism, the ancient mode of production, and its articulation with pre-existing modes. "The history of classical antiquity is the history of cities but of cities founded on landed property and on agriculture" (Marx 1973: 479). What was the nature of the relationship between the city and its *territorium*? One conception, that the two existed in a relationship of harmonious reciprocity (Adam Smith quoted in Finley 1983: 7), is disputed even by the writings of the ancients themselves. De Ste. Croix quotes several examples, from the writings of Galen and Libanius amongst others, to show that the relationship was seen as parasitic (1983: 9 - 19). The cities functioned as the nodal points for the extraction of surplus labour from a dependent countryside and for the channeling of a portion of that surplus, taken in the form of tax, to the core. We can map a social hierarchy onto the spatial one of town/country relations.

The Provincial cities might be best represented as cores in the periphery, in many ways identifying more closely with the Imperial core than with the surrounding population. The bureaucracy resident in these peripheral cores were the linchpins in maintainence of the structure of the Roman empire.

But to see cities in this purely functional sense is to undervalue their integrative import. They become cities where the population act out behavioural roles, fulfilling world system needs (see chapter 3). But cities were constructed; they were the bearers of meaning and signification which were important for how people saw the world and their place in it. They were Roman cities, a physical manifestation reinforcing the power and authority of Rome (see below).

Residence in a **Romanised** city, the use of **Roman** luxury goods, the speaking of the **Roman** language, the reading and recitation of **Roman** histories, the cultivation of **Roman** crops in regions on the edge of their environmental tolerance range, linked the city based bureaucracy with the heart of the Empire, with Rome itself[12]. The ruling class constituted themselves as such through their day to day activity mediated through Roman material culture, language and text (the products of trade). Their "Romaness" was a product of the "activiation" of material culture (in its widest sense) and language. It served to legitimate their (as mediators of the State) exaction of surplus labour in the form of taxation (see **Drennan** 1976; **Li Causi** 1975; and **Kurtz** 1984 for the way in which connection with the perceived locus of power legitimizes social relations).

This is not to posit a superstructural dominance in social reproduction. It is an acceptance of the interpenetration of base and superstructure (**Godelier** 1986). It must be emphasised that such ideological incorporation was socially situated. It served to integrate the high and middle level cadres. Like many "dominant ideologies" it reinforced social relations within the élite (see **Abercrombie** *et. al.* 1980 for a critique of the dominant ideology thesis).

Similar observations have been made on the basis of recent archaeological discoveries beyond the *limes* in north west Europe which show the extent of trade connections outside the Empire (**Hedeager** 1978, 1987)[13]. Using the theoretical approaches of anthropologists like Gregory (1982) and Godelier (1977), several authors have stressed the importance of this contact and the significance of Roman material culture products (having been

transformed from "commodities" to "gifts" in their movement across the *limes*) in initially subverting existing social relations, then reproducing new ones, and finally, with the cessation of the trade network, in stimulating internal conflict and external movements (Hedeager 1978, 1987; Hodges and Whitehouse 1983; Randsborg 1980, 1988).

The significance of material culture in creating and transforming social relations in the most peripheral regions reinforces the argument we have made for its efficacy in the "cores in the periphery" - the cities. But what of the countryside? The degree to which it affected the consciousness and culture of the peasant producer cannot be ascertained with clarity, but the restriction of some items of élite material culture and language to the cities and to their outposts in the countryside - the *pars urbana* of the villas - argues for lesser penetration and assimilation at this level. This must be qualified. Roman material culture is found on even the most ephemeral sites throughout the Empire. Some of the smallest sites located during the Farfa survey had a few fragements of *Terra Sigillata* or *Vernice Nera* (Moreland 1989). Material culture is not "activated" by élites alone. The use of Roman material cultural products - pottery, lamps, etc -, the possible adoption of the Latin language, and proximity to the source of social power in the cities and villas may mean that the feeling of being "Roman" extended to the level of the peasant producer.

But the peasantry were at the sharp end of the ancient mode of production. Here a sense of belonging may have been tempered by the expolitative nature of the regime. So we might perhaps speak of a "dual consciousness" at the lower levels - a dual consciousness formed through the persistence of

peasant values and ways of life, and their intermeshing with elements of *Romanitas*. The former was reproduced in the course of daily life, in action, as were the social relations with dominant orders; the latter "percolated" down through the system in a necessarily weakened form, was assimilated, has efficacy, but remained peripheral. Such dual consciousness must also have existed in the peripheral élites but here sharing in the spoils of exploitation meant that the non-Roman consciousness was pushed further into the background.

Social relations between the élites and the peasant producer can still be seen as largely founded on production. "Incorporation" here was primarily through the "dull compulsion of economic labour", though material culture can be said to have had some efficacy.

The commitment of peripheral élites (and it must be remembered that there are peripheries in the core too) to the concept of *Romanitas* could be depended upon as long as the perceived benefits of "belonging" outweighed the effects, upon both themselves and the masses, of the exploitative nature of unequal exchange. When the committment weakened, or the exactions grew too oppressive the system lost its integrating force and fell apart.

§5: 4 *Trade and Tax: A Changing Core-Periphery Relationship*

Ostia was the great early Imperial port and warehouse of Rome. Its temples, shops and warehouses are testimony to the wealth and grandeur of the Imperial core (Ward-Perkins 1970; Meiggs 1973). However, recent studies have cast the light of transcience on the fortunes of the city and, by

implication, on that of Rome itself. Analyses of pottery found in recent excavations have demonstrated increased importation of Spanish oil, wine, and *garum* into Italy by the late first century AD (Potter 1987: 170). This importation can be connected with the free distribution of wine, grain, and oil to the plebs in Rome under Antoninus Pius (Keay 1984: 402). The volume of imports can be gauged from the millions of Spanish amphora which make up Monte Testaccio in Rome. The main period of importation was AD 140 – 160, and followed by a slow decline (*ibid*; Rodriguez-Almeida 1984). Italy's status as a net importer is further reflected in the cessation of Dressel 2/4 amphora production in the early second century AD (Rathbone 1983: 163). However, this was only a taste of things to come.

Africa had been exporting oil to Italy from the late first century AD. The penetration of the Italian market by this commodity is demonstrated by the finding of many *Tripolitana* and *Tunisian* amphorae on sites in the Farfa survey area (Moreland 1989). The real measure of the strength of African production for export, however, is to be found in fine pottery. ARS (African Red Slip) really began to penetrate the Italian markets in the second century and soon became dominant (Carandini 1981a; Hayes 1972). The switch from the Italian produced *Terra Sigillata* to these African imports as the most ubiquitous fine wares on sites through out the Italian peninsula, is the most evocative testimony to the power of the African production centres. As Carandini points out, by the third century Italy was already living on borrowed time. "Rome and Italy were by now only a small part of the zone of influence and penetrating force of the African production centres. From the sorrow of the Italian economic miracle there followed the African economic miracle" (Carandini 1981b: 17).

A manifestation of the changing relationship between Rome and the Provinces is to be found in the Emperors and senators who came from the Provinces (Mann 1986: 269). Their commitment was assured, for the time being at least. But the functioning of the cities was in the hands of a lower order - the *decurions* or *curiales* (Jones 1964: 737 - 757). They formed the city councils and were responsible for most aspects of the day to day running of the city. As the Emperor Majorian said they truly were the "sinews of the commonwealth and the vitals of the cities" (de Ste Croix 1983: 473). Their position as tax collectors made their commitment to the Empire fundamental.

From the second century onwards, however, the status of the middle stratum élites (primarily the *curiales*) was progressively eroded. It was no longer a matter of pride and prestige to be seen as a member of the *curia* or city council because the burdens of holding such public office greatly outweighed the former glory which such a position gave. More and more decurions tried to gain exemption from the task, through acquiring a position in the Imperial service, though buying or acquiring a position which entitled the holder to senatorial status, through entering the army, and even through becoming a priest (Jones 1964: 740 - 755). One of the prime reasons for this lack of commitment to public service and to the Empire can be found in the requirement that the *curiales* had to "underwrite the imperial levies and taxes (Jones 1964: 748).

The burden of late Roman taxation - especially the land tax or *annona* - is infamous (see Vickham 1984; Jones 1964; Hopkins 1980). This was by far the largest source of revenue for the Roman state and was initially taken

directly from all free cultivators, though after AD 370 it was levied on the owner of the land with the tenants paying the landlord (Wickham 1984: 10). Although Whittaker has recently argued that the land tax amounted to no more than 5% of average yields in the fourth century, this represented only a portion of the tax paid (Barnish 1986: 175; Wickham 1984: 11). Figures from the East in the third decade of the sixth century suggest that between one quarter and one third of the gross production of tenants went in tax. In northern Italy a document from Ravenna dating to c. AD 555 suggests that of the surplus extracted by the landlords they kept only 43% as the rent on the property. The other 57% went to the late Roman state as taxation (Jones 1964: 820 - 21; Wickham 1984: 10 - 11)[14].

The necessity for such high levels of taxation stemmed ultimately from the need to fund two institutions which were "essential" to the existence of the Roman state - the army and the civil service. The already heavy drain the army placed on state resources was exacerbated by a series of campaigns against the internal threat of the Bacaudae in Gaul and Spain in the early fifth century and that of the Barbarian invasions from the late fourth century[15]. Similarily, although Jones (1964: 1057) calculates that the total number of Imperial civil servants was never more than 30,000, de Ste Croix argues that, due to their ability to extort large sums from direct producers, the burden of these people on the state finances was out of proportion to their overall numbers (1983: 492).

Whatever the reasons, and both de Ste Croix (1983: 492) and Jones (1964: 933) both stress the Church as another drain on the Roman treasury (aerarium), the high level of taxation meant that avoidance must have

increased, collection made more difficult, and the resources required to underwrite the shortfall became much greater.The "onerous burden" of collecting increasing taxes for the central government and fulfilling other *curial* duties, their detestation by much of late Roman society, and the increased state control, undoubtedly did much to erode the power of *Romanitas* and to alter the perception of the middle order élite as to their commitment to the world system. It comes as no surprise therefore to find such people amongst those who defected to the barbarians in the fourth and fifth centuries and who are presented as being indifferent to the disintegration of the empire (de Ste. Croix 1983: 486 - 487; Collins 1983: 24).

Wickham (1984: 14), de Ste. Croix (1983: 470) and Jones (1964: 755 - 757) make it clear that the tears of the modern historians for the oppression of the curial class are out of place. There can be no doubt that these men had profited greatly from their position as the "sinews and vitals" of the empire. But when, as Wickham says in another context, they "lost interest in the state, it simply disappeared" (1984: 29).

The Barbarian invasions therefore took place in a context where the structures of the Roman world system were already being transformed and broken down. This is not to minimise their importance. The levels of taxation which did so much to oppress the peasantry, and to frustrate the ambitions of the *curiales*, were at least partly the product of Barbarian pressure on the frontier. More than this however, they presented the discontented with an alternative. There were other ways of living.

Pirenne in his now famous argument, asserted that the Barbarian kings sought to preserve the economic and cultural fabric of the Roman state. He argues that they were not responsible for the demise of classical antiquity. Blame for this was laid at the door of Eastern invaders, who swept through the southern shores of the Mediterranean in the seventh century and disrupted the trade networks which were the lifeline of that civilisation (Pirenne 1939). Superficially he seems correct. The Ostrogoths in Italy appear to have been scrupulous in preserving what they perceived as classical culture. Roman laws were left intact, the Senate preserved, and taxes collected (Wickham 1981: 21). The Lombard king Agilulf (590 - 616) surrounded himself with Roman advisers, and is depicted on a gold helmet fitting amid a wealth of Roman imagery and language. "Agilulf, clearly was concerned to establish, through a fairly eclectic set of images, a late Roman aura for his kingshp" (ibid: 34). Indeed part of the reason for the practical invisibility of the Goths in Italy in terms of material culture stems from their almost complete assimilation of Roman ways.

They might not have found the process too difficult. The German peoples themselves had become at least partially Romanised. Their service in the army, and the changes which the use of Roman material culture and subjection to Roman rule had precipitated in their own nations meant that they would have taken on at least some of the trappings of "civilisation". But the activities of the Ostrogoths, and to a certain extent the Lombards, in "preserving" Roman institutions was itself imagery. It was a drawing on the past for present political expediency. It was a superstructual phenomena which belied a reality of massive transformations. The structure which the "preserved" institutions served, and from which

they had once drawn their efficacy, had drastically altered in form and focus, and now existed as a relict shell to be appropriated and transformed. The scale and nature of these changes, and the necessity to revise Pirenne's thesis, has recently been demonstrated thorugh the study of material culture from sites all over the Mediterranean (Hodges and Vhitehouse 1983).

The continuity of long distance trade which Pirenne saw as giving a Braudellian unity to the Mediteranean (Roman) world had, as we have already intimated, been in a state of flux thoughout much of the Imperial period. The switch in the balance of trade which Potter (1987) detects in the late first and second centuries with the rise of Spain as a major oil and wine production centre, took another turn with the "African economic miracle" (Carandini 1981b: 17). This was a prolonged miracle. The excavation of a deposit, dated to between 430 and 440, in the Schola Praeconum in Rome, shows that Africa still dominated the oil supply of Rome. Here 42.5% of amphora fragments (63% by weight) came from African products (Vhitehouse et. al. 1982). The other major supply centres were in Asia Minor and Syria. Similarily, at Luni, the late fourth and early fifth century saw an increase in the numbers of African imports, while on Catalan sites the percentage rose from 13.6% in the early fourth century to 34.9% by the mid fifth (Keay 1984: 424).

"Africa is the province of the western Mediterranean whose fate approximates most closely to the popular view of catastrophic invasion. The Vandals, led by their remarkable king Gaiseric, were quick to throw off the façade of allied status and seize Carthage and other cities of what was once one of the richest of Rome's provinces. The Roman population was relentlessly taxed, the Catholic hierarchy was

persecuted, and naval raids were launched against Roman targets throughout the Mediterranean" (Brown 1988: 3 - 5).

These barbarians, at least, are presented as conforming to our picture of them. Some archaeological evidence has been introduced to support these claims of disruption and chaos. Thus, in contrast with the situation presented by the Schola Praeconum data, Vandal period amphorae are rare on Italian sites (Keay 1984: 424). Added to this is the evidence from North Africa itself where both British and Italian excavations have shown a progressive decline in the numbers of African amphorae on the home market (Fulford 1980: 71). Taken together this has been presented as representing a decline in production, consumption, and distribution. The contemporaneous rise in the percentage of East Mediterranean imports (from 10% in 425 to 20% by 475) is said to demonstrate an increased reliance on external supplies (Fulford 1980). The implications of Barbarian disruption are not hard to see.

But this picture is contradicted by a mass of historical and archaeological evidence. The available historical sources suggests continued prosperity right up to the time of the Byzantine invasion in 533. Cereals and olives were still cultiviated and, although some Roman estates were confiscated and others came under royal control, in certain parts the Roman system of land holding remained intact (Cameron 1982: 29 - 62; Clover 1982: 1 - 22; Keay 1984: 417 - 20). Indeed de Ste Croix suggests that some serfs achieved freedom, and that from the point of view of the *coloni*, "the regime the Vandals set up...was less extortionate than the Roman system existing there" (1983: 482).

Fulford (1980) correctly argues that the principal factor of importance stemming from the Vandal invasion, was the cessation of payment of the *annona* to Rome, for the first time in four hundred years. This new freedom, he argues, allowed the new rulers to engage in trade on a more Mediterranean wide basis, as the importation of East Mediterranean amphorae is said to show. However, his assertions of a weakness in the productive capacity of Vandal Africa flaws the argument. A different picture is presented by a recent study of the pottery evidence from late Roman Spain.

Although some African amphora types undoubtedly did go out of production around the time of the Vandal conquest, new forms took their place. The quality and scale of production implies the persistence of centralised control over a large number of production centres. This control was presumably that of the new Vandal rulers (**Keay 1984: 423**). Keay further shows that although the percentage of African amphora in Carthage did drop, this does not reflect difficulties in production. Rather the Vandals shifted their exports to the west Mediterranean, especially Spain (see **Keay 1984: 441 fig. 193**). Here the percentage of African imports reached a peak of 39.9% during the period of Vandal rule. Political relations between the Visigoths and the Vandals were good, and Keay suggests that gold and other precious metals were exchanged for African produce (*ibid:* 426).

Hodges and Whitehouse (1983) use the evidence from Rome, Carthage and Luni to argue that long distance trade continued throughout the period of the Barbarian invasions, and thereby support a modified version of one of Pirenne's contentions. They are obviously right in this, but the detail of the evidence presents a more variegated story which belies notions of

Mediterranean unity. The concentration of Vandal trade on the west Mediterranean can be seen to reflect and reproduce a separation from the old core, the development of regional identities in the west at this time, and an east/west split in the *Mare Nostrum* (Keay 1984: 429).

Trade across the Mediterranean did continue. The evidence of some African amphora and fifth centry ARS on Italian sites, and east Mediterranean imports in Carthage testify to that. But this was more a symptom of things to come than a real measure of a fifth and early sixth century "reality". Brown is surely incorrect to conclude that "The upheavals of the fifth century had not destroyed the relatively uniform life of the Mediterranean" (1988: 9).

In 533 the Byzantine commander, Belisarius, led 18,000 troops into Africa and within a year had regained control of the region. As is now widely accepted, the re-imposition of Imperial rule effectively ended Carandini's African economic miracle. A large proportion of the agrarian surplus was now taken in taxation. The army had to be supported, and the extensive construction programme, including the renovation of the harbour at Carthage, initiated by the Byzantines had to be paid for (Hurst 1979: 41ff; Keay 1984: 427). It all resulted in a dramatic drop in African exports, an initial concentration on production for local consumption, and the eventual demise of even that sector. A concomitant of this was the growth in dependency on the East Mediterranean. The percentage of imports from that area had risen from between 10% and 20% around 425 and 500, to close to 30% by 533 (Fulford 1980; Hodges and Whitehouse 1983). The results of the Italian excavations in Carthage present an even more dramatic picture with a rise

from 16% in 475 to 50% in 550 (Panella 1983). Nor was the impact of the East felt only in Africa. In Spain, imports from the East Mediterranean accounted for 20% of the mid sixth century total, and fine table wares from Asia Minor (*Late Roman "C"*) now appear along the east coast of Tarraconensis (Keay 1984: 428).

The balance of trade had shifted again, with east Mediterranean dominance becoming apparent. Altough undoubtedly helped by the Justinianic conquest of parts of the west Mediterranean, the 20% share of the pre 533 market held by eastern imports, the numbers of eastern products entering Rome in the early and mid fifth centuries, and their growing importance in Spain, all point to a more fundamental change (Whitehouse *et. al.* 1982; Keay 1984; Hodges and Whitehouse 1983).

It has been argued that the decline in large scale trade networks was a function of lack of demand. The demise of the cities and a drastic fall in the level of population are presented as reasons (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983; see chapter 6 for a discussion of the population problem). But the archaeological evidence from the Italian sites seems to contradict this. That ARS was still in demand is shown by attempts to imitate its forms in the Farfa area, at San Vincenzo, and at San Giovanni di Ruoti (Moreland 1989; Patterson 1989; Freed 1981). The answer must lie in production. The events of the Vandal invasion and the Justinianic reconquest, and the structural changes which flowed from these actions, might well have disrupted production of ARS in the fifth and sixth centuries (Freed n.d.; Roberto *et. al.* 1985: 145) . But despite some east Mediterranean inspired commerce, the volume of trade in general declined markedly by the sixth

century, and had all but disappeared by the seventh (Wickham n. d.) This wider phenomenon has to be explained.

Ultimately it was a symptom and consequence of the demise of the Roman world system. The intricate exchange networks which criss-crossed the Mediterranean, carrying everyday commodities from region to region, was a product of Empire. It was not a "natural" system. As Wickham (*ibid*) points out

> "very similar products are natural to every part of [the Mediterranean]; very few are a speciality of a particular area...It is not a defeat for a pan-Mediterranean economic system that Italy consumes its own oil or makes its own pottery and that Africa or Anatolia does likewise, it is natural. Only something as vast, all-powerful, and (above all) intrusive as the late Roman state could produce a world in which anything else happened on any more than a marginal level".

The infrastructural development of the Periphery which was a consequence of core-periphery exploitation, eventually furnished the Provinces with the capacity to produce for themselves, and so reduced dependency on the core, as we have argued. Trade became a by-product of taxation. Pottery was carried in grain ships etc.. With the collapse of the tax structures of the state, that form of trade - in commodities -, and production for trade, lost it *raison d'être*. The Justinianic period of Eastern export dominance may have been the last gasp of this system, perhaps an attempt by the Eastern power to take advantage of the recognition of the reality of the loss of central control with the dissolution of the western empire in 475 (Keay 1984: 429). Even if it was that, the nature of trade was changing as a response to the new conditions prevalent throughout the west Mediterranean at least.

Trade in mass produced commodities is not the only form of exchange devised by man. Anthropologists from Mauss, through Polanyi, to Godelier and Gregory have shown this. As Hodges and Whitehouse (1983: 23 - 4) argue the very mention of traders at towns and ports in Gaul and Spain in the sixth century may show they were the exception rather than the rule. They may have been engaged in what Wallerstein dismissively calls the "exchange of precosities" (1974), a quasi-gift exchange system. Keay argues that the sixth century east Mediterranean amphorae found in the Tarraconensis carried "luxuries rather then essential foodstuffs". Their consumers were the "members of the Visigothic court and administration in Barcino and Tarraco" (1984: 430). Similarily, Filipucci, has suggested that many of the Byzantine imports entering Italy in the sixth and seventh centuries should be seen as prestige goods (n. d.; see also Farioli n. d.). As such, they might be seen as the product of directional trade between élites, mediated through merchants tied to court, church or monastery (see Whittaker 1983a). They would have been important in structuring and reproducing power relations in social formations which now lived by and large at a normal "subsistence" level. They gained their efficacy from their exoticness, and perhaps more importantly from their connection with the locus of a major temporal power. The parallel with the situation described above for the Danish Iron Age is striking. But the parallel must not be taken too far. Although the state had collapsed, its traces remained both in the minds of people and in the material culture around them. The importance of these considerations will be discussed in the following chapters.

> "It is difficult to imagine a situation when the formal order
> of the universe could be reduced to a diagram of two
> intersecting co-ordinates in one plane. Yet this is exactly
> what happened in antiquity: the Roman who walked along the
> *cardo* knew that his walk was the axis round which the sun
> turned, and that if he followed the *decumanus*, he was
> following the sun's course. The whole universe and its
> meaning could be spelt out in his civic institutions - so he
> was at home in it" (Rykwert 1976: 202).

Throughout this chapter the importance of "ideological integration" has been

stressed as a prime factor in reproducing social relations and system

integration. From the second century onwards, as we have seen, a whole

series of factors served to undermine Peripheral commitment to the Roman

system. The people may have considered themselves Roman. The inculcation of

habitus over so many generations meant that things could hardly have been

otherwise. But this did not stop them from perceiving what was going on

around them. It did not lessen the effects of exploitation, and, as we have

seen, when a choice was presented many were only to willing to accept it.

The development of a productive base and the capacity to produce necessary

material culture in the Provinces diminished economic dependence and

weakened the efficacy of Roman material culture. Material culture produced

in the provinces was still based on Roman models, and was often directed at

a core "living on borrowed time" (Carandini 1981b: 17), but it could be

perceived as being "ours" rather then "theirs". At the level of Bourdieu's

habitus it reinforced altering perception and awareness.

This is perhaps seen most clearly in the cities. Throughout the western

empire the cities were in decline. The scale of the problem can be seen in

the decay of the cities in the heart of the Empire - Italy and in Rome

itself (Arnold 1984; Wightman 1985; Ward-Perkins 1984). Before c.AD 300

the erection of a new building or statue was part of the process by which a

man identified himself as one of the *honestiores*. This "public spiritness"

declined rapidly from at least the start of the fourth century, and stems

ultimately from the lack of prestige, and the increasing burdens which

became connected with holding civic office (Ward-Perkins 1984). A

consequence of the *curiales* "opting out" was the neglect of the fabric of

the city and the cessation of private building programmes. The increased

state control of city life from the third century onwards did not result in

a compensatory spate of civic constructions. State finances were hard

pressed, but more significantly the new élite in the towns were not local

civic officers, but imperial servants.

> "Their status had nothing to do with local office and local
> munificence and, though it is certain that many of them did
> build on a grand scale to enhance their standing, they no
> longer produced the traditional buildings of public
> munificence, but more private ones: large town houses, villas,
> and churches. Though they might wish to impress their home
> town, they had little need to court it" (*ibid*: 17).

The same was true, on a perhaps more dramatic scale, in the Provinces. Not

only were the towns in decay, but their composition was changing. Many of

the upper classes retired to their country estates (Jones 1964: 762), the

councils were in decline and the Church was a rising civic power. In some

senses the debate over the continuity or demise of classical towns is

irrelevant. Some did disappear, but many survived. What is important is how

the cities were perceived, what they were felt to mean. They were hardly

Roman any more. They had lost much of their grandeur and signification.

They were given new meanings of course, and the construction of churches in

and around them contributed fundamentally to this (see **Krautheimer 1983**; **Vard Perkins 1984**), but as "active" material culture they now symbolised decay, the decay not just of the city but of the world system.

But they were more than symbols of decay. The structure remained but it had been transformed. The signifier (city) now related to a different object. The new meanings they were endowed with, the new institutions which dominated them, the new buildings they contained, point to the emergence of a new structure. A new set of social relations was becoming dominant and structuring the social formation. This was a social system on a much more restricted scale but it was a kind of core-periphery relationship nevertheless. This time temporal distance was substituted for that of space. The past was not forgotten, nor could it be. The present was acted out on its remains. That past - the conceptual core that was Rome - was drawn upon, appropriated, and transformed in the reproduction of the feudal mode of production.

CHAPTER SIX

Population, Pottery, and Social Structure in "Dark Age" Italy

"...the fundamental characteristic [of the first feudal age]
remains the great and universal decline in population...Even
in the provinces formerly under Roman rule, human beings
were much scarcer than they had been in the heyday of the
Empire. The most important towns had no more than a few
thousand inhabitants, and waste land, gardens and even
fields and pastures encroached on all sides amongst the
houses" (Bloch 1965: 60).

§6: 1 *Introduction*

In attempting to model, describe, and explain the collapse of "civilisations"

through the use of catastrophe theory, Renfrew has recently drawn up a

check list of traits held to be characteristic of this process. The list is

the product of a cross-cultural study of a range of social formations which

experienced relatively sudden and rapid "state collapse" (Renfrew 1979b).

Although Renfrew's cross cultural approach does not draw on evidence from

the Roman empire, many of the traits he outlines seem appropriate to the

decline of the empire in the West.

The fourth trait specified by Renfrew -

"Settlement shift and population decline:

a. Abandonment of many settlements
b. Shift to dispersed pattern of smaller settlements
c. Frequent subsequent choice of defensible locations - the
   'flight to the hills'
d. Marked reduction in population density" (1979b: 483)'.

- brings us to a problem which is central to this thesis - population levels. While Wickham suggests that "what historical sources we have in the eighth century, primarily the *Liber Pontificalis*, give no impression that the countryside had been abandoned...and generalised demographic collapse is a difficult enough process even to imagine, let alone account for or locate in the evidence" (1979: 86), Hodges and Whitehouse maintain that "Depopulation..is not impossible; the ruined towns and the wasted countryside suggest that it happened in the Mediterranean at the end of the Roman period - and the burden of proof rests with those who maintain that it did'nt" (1983: 53). The importance of a resolution to this problem stems from the fact that the level of population is fundamental to our conceptions of the nature and diffusion of power in early medieval Italy. An exposition of the data used to reconstruct late Roman population levels, and an exposure of the assumptions inherent in what we might call "demographic catastrophy" arguments, is essential since, as I shall argue, that evidence in fact points to other, equally fundamental, changes in the structure of Italian society.

§6: 2 *Population and Field Survey*

Any assessment of the level of post-Roman population in Italy, and the importance of any variations in that level from Roman times, must start with the establishment of a baseline from which to work. That baseline must be approximate population figures for that latter period itself[2]. If we are trying to reconstruct regional patterns then the principal source must be the material collected in the course of the field surveys. This material is mainly pottery, though tiles, mosaic fragments and sculpted stone are also

found. The principal dating tool are the fine wares and, as we shall see, our reconstructions of regional settlement hierarchies and numbers is almost totally dependent on the latter.

A starting point must be the data from the South Etruria survey, initiated by the then Director of the British School at Rome - John Ward-Perkins.[3] The information from the individual projects has been collated in two recent publications and it is to these that I will generally refer (see Potter 1979, and Hodges and Whitehouse 1983. Also, see Appendix II for a breakdown of the figures).

The number of sites recorded on each of the South Etruria surveys shows an appreciable rise throughout most of the early Imperial period. Thus Potter (1979: 132) lists rises of between 22% and 76% between the Republican period and the first century of the Imperial era. Although the 76% figure for *Sutrium* is exceptional in that it comes from an area which was opened up to farming and settlement only in the late first century BC (Duncan 1958), even when it, and the lowest figure, are excluded, this still represents an average rise of 39% in the number of sites recorded over the whole *campagna*.

Potter's figures show that this rise continues into the second century, with an average rise (again excluding the highest and lowest figures) of 25.7% over the region. He does detect some interesting regional variation, which we shall see repeated in other areas (see below for the Biferno valley in Molise). Thus the growth of Imperial settlement closest to Rome is appreciably slower than in earlier periods and compared with the more

distant *Ager Cosanus* and *Sutrium* (Potter 1979: 133). Potter argues that the areas near Rome had been effectively settled in the first century AD. The second century expansion of settlement in the *Ager Capenas, Sutrium,* and the *Ager Faliscus* therefore represent the taking into cultivation of more "marginal" land. In this respect it can probably be connected to the export boom of that period referred to in the last chapter, and to the dominance of the slave mode of production.

Other surveys in Italy by and large confirm this picture of sustained early imperial growth. The conquest of the Sabina for Rome by Manius Curius Dentatus in 290 BC saw a marked rise in the numbers and material cultural quality of the sites located by the Farfa survey teams (see fig. 3). All the pre-Roman sites remained in existence, but many others were founded, particularily further into the Sabine hills, around the monastery of Farfa itself (Moreland 1986, 1987). Combining the results from the 1985 and 1986 seasons, it is clear that the peak of Roman settlement in the Sabina was in the first and second centuries AD (see Appendix IIIA)[4]. There was a 21% increase in the number of sites between the end of the first century BC and the end of the 2nd century AD. A more detailed analysis of the material from the 1986 survey allows a clearer picture of the development of the settlement pattern (Appendix IIIB). A slow build up in the number of sites form the "Sabine" baseline was interrupted by an 80% increase in the first century BC, and by one of 55% in the first century AD.

It is only in the post medieval period that the area would ever be as densely settled as it was in the early Empire. Again this probably demonstrates the participation of the Farfa area in the general

production/export boom of late Republican/early Imperial Italy. Muzzioli envisages a series of slave run villas in the Sabina, concerned with the specialised production of oil, wine, fruit and vegetables for export or for consumption in major population centres like Rome (1980: 41). Easy access to the Tiber ports, and the ease of water transport down to Rome, must have ensured the rapid assimilation of the Farfa area within the productive hinterland of Rome (Angle et. al. 1986; Quilici 1986; Leggio 1986a and 1986b. See Jones 1966: 311 - 312, and Greene 1986: 39 - 42 for the low cost of water versus land transport of produce).

The surveys in the Liri valley, that around San Giovanni di Ruoti, and that in the Biferno valley all show a similar picture (Wightman 1981; Roberto et. al. 1985; and Barker et. al. 1978)[5].

By the second century the figures for the numbers of sites found in the Farfa area have started to fall markedly, with analysis of the 1986 results showing a 42.8% reduction between the end of the first century and the end of the second (Appendix IIIB). The rapidity of the decline slows somewhat between the second and third centuries, but is still consistent through to the fifth century. The small numbers of sites represented in the 1986 sample might cause some suspicion about the validity of these results. The trend established is however consonant with that produced through combining the results of both seasons work, and with the preliminary results of the 1987 season. More interestingly, support for the figures produced at Farfa as representing some form of "reality" comes from a comparison with the aggregated results of the South Etruria surveys. Thus, while pointing to periods of rapid and slow decline, Hodges and Whitehouse

conclude that there was an overall fall of 86% in the number of sites in South Etruria between AD 80 and 450 (1983: 40). A similar calculation for the 1986 Farfa data produces the figure of 85.8%!

This is a well attested phenomenon over much of central and southern Italy, though as expected there are exceptions. The survey at San Giovanni shows an increase in the number of sites from the first century BC through to the middle of the second century AD. From then on a decline sets in culminating, as at Farfa, with only one or two sites by the mid fifth century (Roberto et. al. 1985: 141 fig. 43). In South Etruria the down-hill slide starts at the end of the first century AD (Potter 1979: 132 - 3), while both the Gravina area and the *Ager Cosanus* exhibit decline in settlement numbers from the second century (Vinson 1972; Attolini et. al. 1982, 1983; Celuzza and Regoli 1986). The real exception here is the Liri valley which instead shows an increase in the number of sites from the second century and into the third (Wightman 1981: 284). The San Vincenzo survey has not yet been fully published but the pattern appears to diverge from that in the nearby Liri valley and more closely approximates that in the neighbouring Biferno (see fig. 4) (see Hayes 1985 and 1989; Roberts 1989).

The evidence seems clear. After a boom period for settlement, production and exports up to the first century AD, most of central and southern Italy experienced a marked decrease in the numbers of settlements, and by implication therefore in the population. But is there really such a direct and inflexible link between population size and site numbers? We must now take into consideration a whole series of cultural and natural factors

which might serve to weaken this implied link, and to dilute our picture of catastrophic population collapse.

§6: 3 *The Younger Fill: A Biasing Factor?*

One of the best known geomorphological features in the river valleys of the Mediterranean basin is what has become known as the *Younger Fill*. This refers to a deposit "buff and grey in colour and...consisting largely of silty fine sand; its gravel is subrounded or rounded...(Vita-Finzi 1969: 101). It represents an episode of stream deposition generally believed to date to the post-classical period. Various theories have been proposed to explain this phenomenon, but they can basically be divided into those which alternatively emphasise "natural" and "anthropogenic" causation. The former was that originally proposed by Vita-Finzi himself in 1969. He argued for a climatic deterioration at the end of the Roman period, resulting in increased erosion from hill slopes and subsequent deposition in valleys. This explanation has been favoured by, among others, Potter (1976, and 1979: 27 - 8).

The alternative theory is that the Younger Fill was the product of the collapse of the infrastructure of the Roman agricultural system. With the neglect of dams, terraces, and water regulating systems towards the end of the Empire, it is argued that erosion increased and that the silting up of the harbours at places like Luni and Ephesus were some of the catastrophic results of this process (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 57 - 8; Ward-Perkins *et. al.* 1986: 123 - 40; Foss 1979)[6].

The implications of this phenomenon for assessing the scale of any changes in population levels between the late Roman and early Medieval periods stems from the possibility that, if the Younger Fill can be correlated with events taking place in the late- and post-Classical periods, then many Roman sites could lie buried underneath alluvium in the river beds. If these sites were primarily of the mid and late Imperial periods, as some writers have suggested (Potter 1976), this could account for some of the apparent decline in the number of recorded sites. Thus Vita-Finzi writes

> "A consequence of widespread alluviation which is obvious
> enough to have escaped general notice is the obliteration
> of ancient remains in areas where one might expect them to
> pullulate...One is led to wonder whether the role of malaria
> and other obstacles to settlement in the past might not
> have been exaggerated..where the search for sites, though
> thorough, has remained literally superficial" (1969: 116).

That we have to consider the impact of this phenomenon is obvious from the case of the city of Olympia in the Peloponnese which was buried beneath silt in the sixth century (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 56 - 7), and by the location of sites buried beneath the alluvium in the area around Luni (Ward-Perkins et. al. 1986). In the Farfa area at least two of the Roman sites located had material which was very heavily abraded, and had obviously been moved some distance from its source, and several pieces of rounded tile and pottery were found in river cut sections and in old stream courses. In Tuscany, the Montarrenti survey revealed evidence that prehistoric sites were also buried beneath the river deposits (see Hodges, Francovich et. al. 1986: 306). But the Younger Fill would only have a significant impact on our reconstructions of late Roman and medieval populations if the assertion that it is a purely late Roman phenomenon can be sustained.

More recently it has been argued that examples like those referred to a moment ago, are in fact the results of a process which takes place at different times in different places according to the complex interaction of local and regional human and "natural" actions. In South Etruria, Potter has claimed that deposition was taking place by the second century (1976). In Tuscany a major period of soil erosion and deposition in valley courses has been recorded for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries at Montarrenti, and a similar phase of medieval date has been located in the bed of the river Farfa in Lazio (D. Gilbertson *pers. comm.*). In the *ager Lunensis*, Delano-Smith has outlined the many factors which contributed to increased soil erosion and deposition in the late medieval period (Vard-Perkins *et. al.* 1986: 127 - 130). On the island of Melos in the Aegean, depositional phases are known from as early as 1100 BC (Renfrew and Vagstaff 1981: 92 - 3; Vagstaff 1981).

So even if there was a period of alluviation which might have buried mid and early Imperial sites, this was not the only such episode. The much discussed agrarian expansion of the eleventh to fourteenth centuries must have resulted in the clearance of large areas of forest and opened them up to erosive processes. In parts of central Italy clearance of the forests had been going on for at least two centuries before this (Vickham 1985a; Toubert 1973: 339 - 348). The effects of this in terms of soil erosion are not yet quantifiable, but we can suggest that post Roman soil erosion and deposition may have destroyed and covered early medieval as well as Roman sites.

This is not to minimise the problem. It is simply to demonstrate that we must be aware of our lack of understanding of the percentage of sites which may have been so destroyed and to point out that settlements of both periods may have been so affected. The situation will vary from region to region according to a whole range of factors, and detailed interdisciplinary analyses are required to arrive at any sort of assessment of the scale of the problem. For the moment we can conclude that the destruction of sites through erosion and burial should not significantly bias our assessments of relative late Roman and early medieval population levels. If therefore the apparent decline in the numbers of sites from the mid Imperial onwards is not a product of geomorphological process, does it reflect a reality? To answer this we must consider in detail the nature of the archaeological evidence and the assumptions made about it.

§6: 4 *Pottery as a Reflection of Population or as Active Material Culture?*

Sites located during archaeological field surveys are generally dated through the fine wares found on them – *Vernice Nera, Terra Sigillata*, and *African Red Slips*. Detailed studies of all these major groups have been completed in the last two decades, and through pan Mediterranean comparisons drawn from a host of excavated sites, most fabrics and forms are well dated – some to a few decades, some even to a few years (Morel 1981; Hayes 1972, 1980; Goudineau 1968). This work allows us to produce more detailed explications of the process of settlement pattern changes in early medieval Italy than that presented in the original South Etruria reports (Potter 1979).

But the use of fine wares as a dating technique can bias our reconstructions of settlement pattern and process. Firstly the national and international nature of their production and distribution networks means that interruption or dislocation at these levels could manifest themselves as an apparent series of transformations at the regional and local scales of analysis. Secondly, our reliance on these isochronic markers leaves us helpless when they finally disappear from the archaeological record.

A third problem is conceptual rather than methodological. Most fine wares were produced in a vast quantities to a series of standardised designs. We have become accustomed to consider them all within the same conceptual framework - a market based, economic one - through the whole period of their production, distribution, and consumption. This assumption runs counter to our theoretical proposition that societal structures acquire new meanings over time, through their "activiation" and transformation in and through daily practice, and through their "webbing" with other structures (see chapter 3). It seems unlikely that high quality products, shipped over long distances, would have the same meaning, and operate in the same level of a social formation in which most other structures were being transformed, and in which the very production and locus of consumption of that product were changing.

These considerations will be elaborated on below in an attempt to locate the importance of certain aspects of material culture in distorting our picture of the scale of settlement and population changes, and to stress the necessity of considering production and consumption, as well as distribution[7].

It might be suggested, following the line of the argument presented in point one above, that the perceived settlement (for which read population) decline shown by the archaeological data from surveys all over Italy, is in fact a product of the lack of supply of the important datable fine wares from North Africa (this has already been alluded to in another context - §5:4. See also Freed n. d.; Roberto *et. al.* 1985; Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 41). The British excavations at Carthage have produced results which suggest that decline in production of ARS began sometime before AD 425 (Fulford 1980; Patterson 1985) thereby undermining the theory of direct Vandal causation and pointing to the deeper structural problems referred to at the end of the last chapter.

Hodges and Whitehouse argue that problems with supply do not significantly bias our assessment of population and settlement changes. They point to the fact that ARS was still being imported into Rome, Naples and Luni in the late fifth century, and that it is found on several sites in the Roman *campagna* (1983: 41 - 42). The implication is that if it was being imported into the major urban centres, then it must have been distributed to the remaining settlements in the countryside, and that those sites on which it is found represent the sum of rural settlement.

To an extent they are right. The Farfa survey, for example, has located sites on which fifth, sixth, and even seventh century ARS forms were found[e]. Similarily mid fifth century ARS was found on the Roman villa which preceeded the early monastery at San Vincenzo (Patterson 1985: 86), and a fine example of a sixth century ARS dish was discovered during the excavations of the monastery at Farfa (Whitehouse 1983: 23). In the Biferno

valley, Dr. John Lloyd has argued that the latest ARS both on the Matrice villa site, and on the other sites located by the survey teams, should be dated to the mid fifth century (Lloyd and Cann 1984). At San Giovanni di Ruoti, Freed shows the presence of significant numbers of mid-fifth century ARS forms (1983). In northern Italy, there is evidence that ARS was still reaching sites in Liguria into the mid seventh century. These fine wares have been found at *castrum Pertice*, close to the coast at Savona (Bonara *et. al.* 1984: 236).

But is this the full story? Can we presume, from the evidence presented in the paragraph above, that the sites on which late ARS was found were the only sites present at that time. This in essence is the argument presented by both Hodges and Whitehouse (1983) and Potter (1979, and 1987) in presenting their case for massive depopulation in the late Empire (see also Whitehouse 1985: 209). To consider the argument in more detail we must analyse (1) the nature of the sites on which the late ARS was found; (2) assess the evidence for late Roman coarse ware production; and (3) consider the changes in social relations which were the concomitant of the collapse of the Roman world system into a network of regional and local powers. This will lead us to a re-evaluation both of the evidence for demographic collapse, and of the nature of pottery as "active" material culture.

In considering the nature of the sites on which late ARS is found we must of necessity examine those which have been excavated, for survey material can tell us little about the form or layout of a site. The archaeology of the late Roman sites at Farfa, San Vincenzo, and San Giovanni di Ruoti show that they were to some extent "special". Their development in the fifth and

sixth centuries was different from most of the numerous other villas in their regions. We have already noted above (§6:2) a decline in the number of recorded villa sites in the San Vincenzo area from the second century onwards. In the Rochetta plain, the villa at San Vincenzo itself came to be the only identifiable site from the fourth century (Hodges 1985). By the early fifth century a large "dispersed" villa complex was replaced by a settlement with a more defined and precise focus. Two churches, one of them a funerary basilica containing many family tombs (Coutts and Mithen 1985), lay at the foot of a terrace dominated by a massive tower-like structure (see fig. 6 and 7). The importance of this site as a regional and local centre can not be disputed, and the finding of fifth century ARS at this site alone in the plain can hardly be coincidental. The ARS stands out as one of the few items of "exotic" material culture to penetrate a market now dominated by local and regional production (Hodges 1985: 9).

A very similar picture can be painted from the evidence of the excavations at San Giovanni di Ruoti in Basilicata. Again a "nucleated" complex was built on the remains of a preceding villa, although in this case there is evidence that it had previously been abandoned (Small 1980: 92)[9]. At San Giovanni, the new construction on the site was dominated, as at San Vincenzo, by a large tower with foundations over 1.5m wide (ibid: 93). Another of the buildings in the complex had an apsidal end, reinforced with buttresses and with a series of rooms attached to the outside (Small 1983: 34). The buildings were constructed over earlier midden deposits, and these allow a close dating for the life span of the complex. It was built around AD 460, and destroyed c. AD 525 (ibid: 37).

Unlike San Vincenzo, however, Small argues that the apsidal building at San Giovanni was not of a religious nature. The lack of tombs and christian symbols are presented as evidence to support this argument (*ibid*: 32). Instead he compares it with centres of local secular power in Spain and Yugoslavia. It was probably the residence of a local lord or *dominus*. The excavated remains of the apsidal building formed the undercroft of a structure whose residential quarter was on the upper floor. Small suggests that this marks a break with the architectural tradition of the villa, and looks forward to the middle ages (Small 1980: 95). On the other hand, towers are frequently represented in late Roman mosaics of villa scenes in north Africa (*ibid*: 93).

Analysis of the pottery from the middens at San Giovanni similarily reflects the changes which were occurring in fifth to sixth century Italy. In what Freed calls *Midden I* (AD 375 - 460), 59% of the fine ware bowls were ARS, while only 10% were of the "painted common ware" variety. By contrast, in *Midden IV* (AD 460 - 525) 31% of the bowls were ARS, and 62% painted common ware (1983: 99). The decline was not due to the lack of demand. The numerous fifth century imitations of late ARS forms at San Giovanni forcefully refute such suggestions. The fall off in the supply of long distance trade goods even to sites like San Giovanni is demonstrated by the lack of Eastern amphorae, and by the fact that although the percentage of fine wares in Middens I and II represented only 2% of the total ceramic assemblage, this had fallen to as little as ½% in Middens III and IV. The corresponding rise in the percentage of painted common ware, and the increased reliance on locally produced meat products (Steele 1983: 81 - 2), at the expense of regional and international products again points

to the regionalisation of economic structures which was a concomitant of the degeneration of the Roman world system and changing social relations.

The excavations at Farfa were discontinued before any appreciable late Roman structures comparable to those at San Vincenzo and San Giovanni were discovered. However, it cannot be doubted, that there was a sizeable Roman villa on this site. The many inscriptions found in the area testify to a notable early Roman presence, perhaps a cult centre to the minor goddess *Vacuna* (Evans 1939; McClendon 1981), while the numerous residual sherds of ARS (including the nearly complete example of Hayes' form 104a referred to above) demonstrate occupation of some kind into the fifth century. The importance of the site at Farfa as a centre of religious and/or secular power may be suggested as one of the reasons for the foundation of the first monastery there in the late sixth century (see chapter 8), though this runs the risk of lapsing into circular argumentation.

Unlike the other sites we have considered, many more of villas and other settlements found in the Farfa survey do have evidence for the use of fourth, fifth and sixth century ARS (see Appendix VI). This is a picture which is repeated in the South Etruria surveys. Thus Potter provides a list of sites in the *Ager Faliscus* which contain fifth and sixth century ARS (1975: 227), and in his general overview of the South Etruria surveys, on figure 41 he plots the distribution of similar sites in the *Ager Veientanus* (1979: 143). In both the Farfa and South Etruria cases the proximity to Rome must be seen as the factor determining this relative abundance of late ARS (see below).

To summarise this discussion of the nature of the sites which contain late ARS, I would argue that, rather than reflecting the reality of a massive population decline, they refer more to changes in supply and production of goods as a result of the collapse of the Roman state and its taxation structures (see chapter 5). The supply of ARS in fifth and sixth century Italy was a problem. We have already seen how late forms were imitated at San Giovanni di Ruoti and have suggested that this indicates continued demand. Also in Basilicata, fifth and sixth century imitations of ARS have been found at the San Nicola villa at Buccino (Dyson 1983: 159). This phenomenon was not confined to that region however. In Campania such imitations have been discovered at Santa Maria in Capua Vetere, Casanova di Cariola, and at the Posto villa at Francolise (Arthur and Whitehouse 1982: Cotton 1979).

In Molise, imitiation fifth century ARS has been found in the late villa complex at San Vincenzo (H. Patterson *pers. comm.*), while three sherds of imitation ARS were found in the course of the Farfa survey. One of these (that from site F14/3) was an imitation of Hayes form 61b, and dated to between AD 380/90 and 475, but the two others imitated much earlier forms. Thus a sherd from site M11/10 imitated Hayes 8b, a late second and early third century type, while that from site M41/12 reproduced Hayes 197, the real variety of which is dated to between the end of the second and the middle of the third century AD (Hayes 1980). This apparently strange imitation of early forms might be accounted for by postulating the survival of the examples of the latter from their production period right up to the fifth century when supply became short[10].

I would further argue that the fifth century sites on which this material is found, such as San Vincenzo, Farfa, and San Giovanni, lay at the apex of a settlement hierarchy rather than representing its totality. These were the focii of local power networks, and had a continued access to a diminishing supply of élite material culture. As such we could argue that the use of ARS in these locations contributed to the constitution of the élite group which inhabited them[11]. This fine ware had connotations not only of wealth and prestige, but also had links to the past and the sources of state power - the major urban centres like Rome and Naples through which it was imported. It should no longer be seen as simply another commodity reflecting settlement pattern and population distribution. Its "meaning" as active material culture had changed in a world which was one of transformations.

This might be seen as baseless speculation, but it has the advantage of accounting for the distribution of the ceramic evidence, of according with our theoretical perspective as presented in chapter 3, and of reflecting the changes in social relations which will be described later in this chapter. But what of those areas close to Rome which have a relative abundance of late ARS, and those at the foot of the Biferno valley where many examples of late African and East Mediterranean imports are known (Barker et. al. 1978)? Did this aspect of material culture have the same meaning there as it did in more remote areas of Molise, Basilicata, and Umbria (for the scarcity of ARS in the latter see Stoddart 1981)?

In his discussion of the material from the *Ager Veientanus* and the *Ager Faliscus*, Potter asserts that late ARS was found as often on small farmsteads as on large villa sites (1975: 222 - 3, especially table IV). He

further suggests that of the new fifth century foundations in these areas only 35% represented large villas, the other 65% being more modest farming establishments (*ibid*). This, it is argued, demonstrates the involvement of both peasants and the rural élite in the exploitation of the late Roman *campagna*, and also "some attempt to reverse the drift from the countryside" (1978: 109; 1975: 224).

It further implies a rôle for ARS very different from that proposed above for San Vincenzo and San Giovanni. If this material culture was permeating down to the lowest levels of society it could not have been effective in constituting social groups as seperate orders. This would not be totally unexpected nor unlikely given the proximity to Rome. Similarily in the case of the Biferno valley, it was those sites closest to the importation centre at Termoli which received the African and Eastern imports. Here ARS might be seen as the commodity it had been throughout much of the Empire in the mid-Imperial period. As such it might provide a more accurate picture of the levels of settlement and population to be expected in other parts of Italy where ARS was more restricted in its circulation in the social hierarchy. But as we shall see, when the information from South Etruria is analysed in more detail, it becomes clear that here too the material evidence refers more to social relations than directly to population change.

If this is the case throughout Italy, how can we locate those sites in the social hierarchy which were denied access to African imports. To avoid denying history, or even an existence to much of the population of "Dark Age" Italy we have to take into account other forms of ceramic evidence whose production at the regional and local levels might reduce the impact

of dislocations at the national and international levels which hinder the effectiveness of ARS as a guide to population.

In central and southern Italy we have evidence for another form of pottery which might be useful in this context. These are the red-painted wares which Freed (1983) calls "painted common ware". The first evidence for these at San Giovanni comes in the late fourth century, while in the Biferno valley an early fifth century date has been proposed (Lloyd and Cann 1984). In parts of southern Italy, production of red painted ware apparently continued from the late Roman right through to the early medieval period, and might thus be seen to offer the isochronic marker we need to arrive at some idea of population figures.

There are, however, problems. Firstly, Patterson suggests that the perceived continuity referred to in the paragraph above is more apparent than real. Thus the late Roman red painted wares from the Biferno valley are "stylistically and technically different to the red painted wares found at the 6th/7th to 9th century AD site at Santa Maria in Civitá.." (1985: 86; see also Hodges *et. al.* 1980). Also their form and distribution reveal their status as a quasi-élite material cultural product operating in a restricted social and geographical context. Thus in southern Italy, at least some of the red painted wares directly imitate ARS forms. They should be seen as "a relatively fine table ware" (Patterson 1985: 104), in many ways replacing ARS, as we have seen happening at San Giovanni di Ruoti. Initially they may have had meaning at a more "basic" level, but with the demise and disappearance of ARS, their context of use was altered.

As well as having a restricted distribution within the social structure, red painted wares were geographically confined to certain distribution networks. Thus while they are relatively common in the Biferno valley (Lloyd and Cann 1984), they are rarely found in the neighbouring valley of the river Volturno (Patterson 1985). As such the efficacy of red painted wares for allowing us to assess regional population levels is as restricted as that of late ARS.

As we saw from the figures produced by Freed for the fine wares at San Giovanni di Ruoti, these only accounted for between ½ and 2% of the total ceramic assemblage (Freed 1983). The same proportion holds for practically all archaeological sites, whether excavated or discovered through field survey. But the lure of fine wares like ARS as isochronic markers has proved so irrestible that the great bulk of the material cultural product of the past has mostly been ignored. The consequences of this are not too catastrophic, in terms of trying to arrive at relative population levels and in reconstructing social structures, as long as the fine wares can be assumed to have penetrated all levels of the social hierarchy.

The archaeological evidence for the early to mid Imperial period makes this a reasonable, though by no means water tight, assumption. When we have more restrictive production, distribution and consumption networks however, as we have suggested for both ARS and red painted wares in the late Imperial period, our concentration on the fine wares effectively excludes most people from the historical process. The problem becomes even greater when the isochronic markers finally disappear in the early to mid seventh centuries. Then we truly are in the dark. But evidence does exist to allow us to cast

some light into this obscurity. We simply have to recognise that it exists and then ask the right questions of it.

This evidence consists of the coarse wares which totally dominate archaeological assemblages. The problem with utilising this resource is that it is largely undatable. In the first two seasons of the Farfa survey for example we were only able to fit the coarse wares into very broad chronological categories - i.e. pre-Roman, Republican, and Imperial. In terms of assessing population change these gross divisions are virtually useless. An on-going programme of research, carried out as part of the current Farfa project, is however attempting to refine our dating of the coarse wares and has started to produce some tentative, but very promising results[12].

In both the San Vincenzo and Farfa projects one of the most important aims was to use the ceramic sequences produced from the excavation of well stratified sites to date settlements found in the areas around them, and so to provide a regional context from the emergence and transformations of the main sites themselves (Hodges 1985, Moreland 1986). At San Vinvenzo, this aim was to a certain extent hampered by a ceramic break between the late Roman villa and the eighth century monastery (Patterson 1985). The paucity of fine wares like ARS and red painted wares in the latest villa levels meant that contemporary sites in the region could not easily be located. A further problem was created by the assumption that, with the cessation of importation and consumption of ARS, most villas were abandoned.

During the Farfa survey we attempted to make use of the advantages gained from participation in the San Vincenzo project, from an awareness of its

results, and from the possession at Farfa of an almost unbroken ceramic sequence. We further sought to test the implications of Whitehouse's argument that, if anywhere in Italy, then in the area around Rome we should expect a continuity of coarse ware pottery production from the late Roman period through to the early middle ages (1980: 66).

The implications of this suggestion are profound and could drastically alter our picture of both population levels and social structures in "Dark Age" Italy. If pottery production did continue then we might expect some broad similarity in the forms of the coar wares vessels produced throughout the period. It follows from this, and from the neglect of the study of coarse wares referred to above, that at least some of the sherds found on villa sites with late Roman fine wares could in fact post-date those fine wares and demonstrate occupation from the sixth and seventh century onwards, albeit it on a different scale. If we could demonstrate this, and quantify the results on a regional level, we would be in a much better position to assess the real impact of population changes in the late Imperial period.

The preliminary results of the research on the material from the Farfa abbey excavations, seem to back up this suggestion. By studying in detail all those layers with stratified ARS, those with residual ARS, and those with datable early medieval glazed wares, we feel that we have now isolated several coarse ware forms which can be dated to the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries.

It is one thing to demonstrate the existence of such ceramics in an excavated context, and yet another to extend these results to all the Roman and medieval sites found in the survey, and to quantify the scale of occupation of such sites. The dictates of a Ph. D thesis seldom fit exactly with those of field research, and the application of the results of the work on the monastery material to the field survey sites has yet to be completed. It will take some time since every one of the dozens of contexts, some of which contain hundreds of sherds, from which evidence was collected by the survey teams, will have to be re-examined. All we can say at that moment is that there is every indication that these coarse wares are turning up on some sites and demonstrating a longevity of occupation previously unthought of.

In terms of assessing the total number of sites occupied in this period, there are obviously still problems. Again we are assuming that even these coarse wares penetrated all the levels of the settlement and social hierarchy. We must also bear in mind the possibility that in some areas pottery production may have been reduced to a quasi-prehistoric level. At Vacchereccia, near San Vincenzo, there is evidence for sixth century hand made coarse wares, though they do imitate late Roman forms (Hodges et. al. 1984: 171. See fig. 8). If sherds of such vessels were found in the course of a field survey it would be difficult to distinguish them from later prehistoric productions, and a whole range of settlements might be missed. We must also bear in mind the possibility that parts of Italy might have reverted to aceramic levels in this period. Even in the eighth century the record of a donation of their possessions to the monastery of Farfa by Aimone and his son Pietro of Viterbo, notes that *vasa lignaea et fictilia*

(wooden and pottery vessels) were included (**R.F. IV, pp. 85 - 86, n.92 for AD 775**). It does not take a great imaginative leap to envisage the populations of some poorer rural areas as being totally dependent on *vasa lignaea*. These people would be archaeologically invisible to standard survey techniques.

But these problems should not dismay us. By even considering the possibility of low levels of pottery production, or even aceramic populations, we are opening up the field of enquiry. Once we identify the problem we can seek to devise means of resolving it. Further by realising that we might be missing whole sections of past populations we have to rethink the argument for drastic population collapse in the late Imperial and early medieval periods. I have argued throughout this section that much of the archaeological evidence for changes in the demographic structure of late Roman society in fact relates to changes in the productive and distributive structures of the disintegrating empire and to the emergence of new forms of social relations. This is not to deny that there was no population decline. There is good evidence for this as we shall see. It is rather to critically re-evaluate some of the evidence on which the catastrophic demographic theory rests, and to use that same evidence to initiate an exploration of the changing nature of Italian society in the late Roman period. It now remains to show how those changing social relations can affect our asessment of population levels, and to examine in turn how our reconstructions of population figures are important for discussions of the nature of power in late Roman and early medieval society.

> "[The sons] though despoiled of their little properties and
> expelled from their little fields, nevertheless bear the
> taxation of the property they have lost. When the
> possession has left them, the tribute does not..., the
> landgrabbers invade their property and they poor wretches
> pay the taxes for the landgrabbers" (quotation from the
> Gaulish priest Salvian in Jones 1964: 777).

In a characteristic piece of invective against the iniquities of the late
Roman state, Salvian here rails against two of it's staunchest pillars, one
of which was crumbling (taxation), while the other was being transformed
and moving from strength to strength (patronage).

The burden of late Roman taxation and its importance in weakening the
ideological incorporation of the curial class have been discussed in chapter
5. But the high levels of taxation did not only affect the *decurions*. Its
effects permeated most of late Roman society. Inability to pay taxes has
been posited as the prime reason for the abandonment of agricultural land
in the middle to late Empire. Although references to *agri deserti* first
appear in AD 193 when the emperor Pertinax invited others to cultivate such
lands, the weight of fourth to sixth century taxation must have exacerbated
the problem and in turn reduced the revenues flowing into the treasury
(Jones 1964: 812 - 823; Brown 1984). In Campania 1332 square kilometres of
land were no longer liable for taxation by AD 395. They were presumably out
of cultivation. In Byzacena, in Africa, the area of land subject to taxation
in the early fifth century had been reduced from 7425 to 3768 square
kilometres (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 42). These lands were presumably
abandoned because the surplus extracted from the gross product by the

state's tax collectors was so great, relative to the productivity of the land itself, that it was no longer "profitable" to work it.

At the opposite end of the social spectrum the major landowners, who had of course to pay more tax since they owned more land, were increasingly faced with making a choice between their interests as beneficiaries of the state and their private interests as landowners and tax payers. Increasingly they chose the latter, thus depriving the state not only of their "moral" support but of the revenues due from their lands as well (Wickham 1984: 15 - 22).

These two factors of increased pressure on the peasant cultivator and the prevalence of private over public interests among the major landowners came together to further the growth of patronage - one of the oldest institutions in the Roman system (Jones 1964: 777 - 778; Wickham 1984: 17)[13]. Initially, in the East at least, peasant proprietors paid a "bribe" to large landowners for their protection from the agents of the state. In such cases they held onto their lands. Later in the West, however, they ceded their land to the prospective patron and received it back as tenants. The import of these processes, and the dangers they posed both to state integration and finances, were well understood by those who remained within the state and produced promulgations against the patron-client system (again see Jones 1964: 775 - 778).

The increasing importance of this institution in Italy, contributed to the growth of landlord power through their control of larger areas of land and more tenants. This was achieved at the expense of state integration and peasant solidarity. The reasons for the former have been set out already;

the latter was caused by the fact that in entering into patron-client relationships former small property holders were not only reduced to the status of tenants, but that relationship came to replace kin, familial, or group solidarity (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980: 50). The net result of this process was the gradual reduction in the status of the free peasant producer and its amalgamation with that of the slave to form an underclass of tied dependent labour. De Ste. Croix sees the process beginning in the first century AD with the erosion of some of the legal rights of the peasant, and by the end of the third century large numbers of them were tied to the soil they cultivated. He sees the total enserfdom of most of the peasant population as being complete by the fourth century (1983: 454 and 249 - 51).

It is also possible that the replacement of social relations between the peasant and the state, mediated through the agents of the state, by more immediate ones between the peasant and his landlord affected the nature of the settlement pattern and was responsible for at least some of the drastic changes which field surveys all over Italy have documented from the second century onwards. It might be more than coincidental that the decline in the number of recorded sites in South Etruria, in the Farfa area, and in other parts of Italy also starts to fall from the second century. In many areas the gradual reduction in the status of the peasantry might have had the effect of removing them from the distribution networks of African fine wares by which we locate them in the archaeological record. Theirs might be the small farmsteads characterised only by, currently undatable, locally produced coarse wares and tile fragments. The only datable sites we can locate could be those of the landlords.

This is obviously a very general picture and until more work is done to establish the nature and chronological range of the small farmstead sites little can be done to make it more refined. What is needed is detailed work on the coarse ware forms and fabrics like that being carried out as part of the Farfa project (see above), systematic field survey using the information derived from this work to locate these sites, and detailed excavation to establish their size, form and layout. This is definitely an area where further research could greatly affect our historical constructions of the late Roman past.

In the Farfa survey area the current impression is that very few small farmsteads survived the growth of the great estates in the last years of the Republic and the early years of the Empire (Moreland 1986). This might of course be altered when the work on the coarse wares is applied to the whole of the field survey material but it is what we have to work with at the moment. Even if the latter shows that such sites did persist, the lack of fine wares on them points to a marginalisation and reduced status for the peasantry much like that argued for above. In South Etruria, by contrast, we have already referred to Potter's claims that throughout the period from AD 200 - 500 small farmsteads persisted along with the villas, although there was an overall decline in both (1978: 109). These sites can only be located through the presence on them of African fine wares, and so they seem to point to some prosperity on the part of the remaining free peasantry.

A more detailed study of the figures for the numbers of small farmstead and villa sites in South Etruria and a questioning of some vital

assumptions made by Potter, however, serves to throw these impressions into a fresh light. Thus he shows that of the 86 villas in the *Ager Veientanus* which demonstrate second century occupation, 49 were still occupied in the fourth century. Of the 230 second century small farmsteads however, only 43 remained by the fourth century (Potter 1979: 142). This represents a massive reduction in the percentage of small holdings to villas as the table below shows –

	Century					
	Second	%	Fourth.	%	Sixth	%
Farmsteads	230	72.8	43	46.7	15	44.1
Villas	86	27.2	49	53.3	19	55.9
TOTAL	316	100	92	100	34	100

(after Potter 1978: 142 and 1975: 222)[14].

As a percentage of the total number of sites in the *Ager Veientanus* area, villas had risen markedly by the fourth century, with a further slight increase by the sixth. Potter is right to suggest that even at this time the number of small holdings almost equalled that of the villas (*ibid*) but fails to consider the implications of the massive percentage increase in the numbers of the latter. They now dominated the Roman *campagna* in a way which they had never done before and must have equally dominated the agrarian productivity of the area.

But what of those small farmsteads which still existed in the fourth or even in the sixth century? Is Potter right to assert that they demonstrate the continued existence of the small independent farmer? While not wishing to argue that this class was totally englobed in the general enserfdom

process, we should at least consider the possibility that even the inhabitants of these sites had a dependency relationship with the owners of the villas (see **Vickham** 1979: 85). There seems little reason to suppose that the pressures on both landlord and peasant which furthered the growth of patronage should not also have been effective in South Etruria.

Potter (1975: 224) notes that 16% of the fifth/sixth century settlement in the *Ager Faliscus* and 21% of that in the *Ager Veientanus* represent new foundations, and that they are "*insediamenti poveri*". He concludes that

> "Questi dati indicherebbero una limitata quantità di ri-insediamenti da parte di contadini in alcune zone della campagna" (*ibid*).

This assertion rests on two assumptions which when dissected are shown to be untenable or at least unlikely. Like many of the considerations in this chapter, analysis of these assumptions forces us to look in a different way at the evidence used to argue for population collapse.

As we have stated many times, sites of the late Imperial period can currently only be dated through the fine wares found on them. In this case ARS is the isochronic marker. We have already seen how difficulties in the production and supply of this type of ceramic developed at least from the early fifth century, and have argued that as a result the context of use of ARS would have changed. If we accept that the status of the "free" peasantry had been diminished from at least the third century, and combine it with our considerations on the changing status of the fine wares, then it becomes difficult to imagine that fifth/sixth century sites containing ARS could be "insediamenti poveri". Potter's assertion that they do derives

from a failure to consider the changing nature of material culture over time. He applies the same conceptual framework, with reference to material culture, equally to the fifth and the sixth centuries when all the evidence speaks of massive transformation.

The assertion also derives from a failure to adequately consider the nature of the sites discovered in field survey. The sites he speaks off only appear to be poor because they are new foundations. Thus most sites located in field surveys do not belong to any single period. They represent a palimpsest of human occupation, extending perhaps over several centuries (see the sites in Appendix VI for examples). The apparent wealth of the villa sites which continue is arguably more a product of the nature of archaeological site formation than a representation of a sixth century reality. The late ARS on these sites could point to a much more restricted and more precisely focussed occupation of a site which is rich with the material cultural debris of past generations. We have already seen this very situation on the excavated sites at San Giovanni di Ruoti and San Vincenzo al Volturno. Examples in South Etruria itself are the sites recently excavated at Anguillara and Monte Gelato (Potter and King n.d.; Whitehouse 1979a, 1982a).

In essence what I am suggesting, for the sixth century at least, is that most sites containing ARS should be seen as major centres. This applies to both the Sabina and South Etruria. In a world of increasing material cultural poverty, they stand out. In terms of settlement hierarchy they might be regarded as falling into the same position as the "estate centres" at San Vincenzo and San Giovanni. The rest of the population are currently

archaeologically invisible because of their use of coarse wares or of *vasa lignaea*[16]. If this is the case, then we still have to explain the relative abundance of such sites in South Etruria and the Sabina in the late Imperial period.

With the loss of the Western provinces and those in Africa from the fourth century onwards, Rome lost the productive heart of the Empire. Cassidorus remembered that in former times the city had been provisioned by imported goods (quoted in **Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 48**). The warehouses at Ostia, the pottery on sites all over Italy, and the mountain of amphorae at Monte Testaccio are the physical manifestations of this. But things were obviously different in the sixth century. Rome now depended more and more on locally produced resources, from areas like South Etruria and the Sabina. The Church played an increasingly vital rôle in the administration of the food supply of Rome, and in the actual production of those resources on the vast estates it had been building up from the time of Constantine (Jones 1964: 895 - 904). The ARS found on both secular and religious sites of the fifth and sixth centuries in the area around Rome and other major cities can be seen as the material evidence for the return side of an exchange involving the flow of agricultural products to the city (see note 16).

Although subsistence products came from further afield as well - we know for instance of herds of pigs being driven from Southern Italy in the fifth and early sixth century to provide the dole for the *plebes* in Rome (**Steele 1983; Whitehouse et. al. 1982, 1985**) - the city/countryside relationship had returned to something like its "classical" form where each city was dependent on and exploited its *territorium* or *chōra* (de Ste Croix 1983: 9 -

13). But there were essential differences. The ancient mode of production no longer prevailed. The regionalisation of production and distribution networks, evidenced for example by the changes in the nature of the pottery industry over much of Italy (Patterson 1985; Hodges and Patterson 1986), is a reflection of the dissipation of power throughout the social formation. Although the organs of the State, and the heart of the Church still remained in the city, much effective power was now possessed at the local or regional levels. The articulation of the ancient and feudal modes of production which we referred to in the last chapter, had begun to resolve itself in favour of the latter.

But even from the fifth and sixth century onwards feudalism in its "pure" form did not dominate the social formation. In many ways those who exercised *power over* (see §3:3) in a network of feudal social relations did so only as a consequence of a dialectical relationship with the remaining elements of the ancient mode of production. The *dominus* at San Giovanni or San Vincenzo may have "opted out" of the State, but they still supplied the city with pork and received material culture like ARS in return, artefacts which were important in constituting them as an order apart[16]. The landlords of South Etruria and the Sabina may have distanced themselves from the political and taxation structures of the State, but they still had a necessary relationship with it. Their position as patron was predicted upon the "protection" they could offer the peasantry from the agents of the State. Once the fabric of the old Roman state had totally collapsed the "justification" for the exercise of power by regional and local élites had to be altered. It has been argued that the seventh century in Italy was a period of almost true peasant freedom (Wickham n. d.), and this would be a

logical consequence of the removal of the *raison d'etre* of local power groups. But structures which emerge "interstitially", as the patronage system and feudal social relations did, can themselves become institutionalised. They can form the fabric of a new social formation (Mann 1986). These considerations will form one of the focusses of the next chapter.

§6: 6 *Conclusion*

Where does all this leave us in terms of arriving at a resolution to the radically opposed statements of Hodges and Whitehouse (1983: 53) on the one hand, and that of Wickham (1979: 86) on the other. I have spent most of this chapter critically examining the nature of the evidence on which the "demographic catastrophy" theory rests. I have not denied that population changes did take place, but have tried to use the information from archaeological field surveys and excavated sites to show how changes in the nature of material culture and social relations can affect our conclusions based on that data. But there is evidence for population change in late Roman Italy, and as I will argue at the end of this conclusion, that demographic change itself was a factor in influencing the nature of the social relations we have spoken of. A complex web of interaction and determination between population, social structure, and material culture is often oversimplified in the search for monocausal explanantion.

Perhaps the best evidence for population change is that provided by recent calculations for the population of Rome from the start of the Imperial period through to the early middle ages. We are seldom given absolute

population figures by the ancient sources, and we have to rely on estimates based on circumstantial evidence. This evidence has recently been collated by Hodges and Whitehouse (1983: 48 - 52), and it is to this work that I shall refer.

Summarising the available information - mainly figures for the distribution of food to the plebes in Rome - it is suggested by Hodges and Whitehouse that the population of Rome at the beginning of the Empire was c. 1,000,000 (1983: 49). The next available set of figures derive from legislation of AD 367 concerning the compensation to be paid to pig suppliers for the loss of produce on the journey from the south to Rome. Based on various assumptions this produces a population figure of around 1,000,000 (50). By AD 452 the population is estimated at between 300,000 and 500,000 (51). "In 523 - 7, Cassidorus implied that it was considerably smaller, and between the sixth and ninth centuries the population was whittled down to a few tens of thousands (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 51). Krautheimer provides a figure of 90,000 in the time of Gregory the Great, while by the twelfth century he suggests a figure of c. 35,000 (1983: 231). Here we have an indication of real urban depopulation.

Some care has to be exercised in taking these figures too literally. It is extremely hard to account for a population decrease of between 500,000 and 800,000 in Rome over the three generations between AD 367 and 452 and is indeed "a difficult...process to imagine" (Wickham 1979: 86; Barnish 1987). But despite such inconsistencies, it is hard not to accept that urban population did fall. The dramatically reduced scale of the occupied area of Rome within the Aurelian walls in the medieval period is physical testimony

to this. Before the eleventh century the population was restricted to the area on both sides of the Tiber around the Tiber Island, and along some of the major routeways (see fig. 9).

Hodges and Whitehouse (1983: 40 - 42) discount a flight to the towns as a valid explanation for their postulated rural depopulation. It is equally unlikely that the population decline in the towns can be attributed to widespread population movement to the countryside (though see Jones 1964: 1042). Despite the criticisms I have made of the attempts to assert rural population decline through the use of field survey evidence, there seems little doubt that some rural depopulation did take place, though not on the scale that those who use such evidence suggest. Even if most of the sites dated to the late Imperial period belong, as suggested, to the upper levels of a settlement hierarchy, not enough sites with only coarsewares and tiles have been found to accomadate population levels like those demonstrated by archaeological evidence for the first and second centuries of the christian era. Even if we assert quasi-total aceramic peasant populations for "Dark Age" Italy, which seems unlikely, there are still too many large areas where even élite sites are absent to argue for a continuity of population levels.

Thus Potter shows that while both the *Ager Faliscus* and the *Ager Veientanus* maintained a certain level of population,

> "in the hilly and difficult terrain that divides the Veientine and Faliscan region...or in the tangled countryside to the south west of lake Bracciano, the disappearance of sites with late Roman pottery is so pronounced as to imply more or less complete desertion of the areas. Either the land was made made over to pasture or, more likely, it was allowed to revert to the scrub and woodland that it still often bears today" (Potter 1979: 142. See also Wickham 1979: 85).

The *agri deserti* of the mid Imperial period are further manifestations of this (see §6:5), and as Jones suggests since less land was cultivated, less food was produced and "since consumption per head could hardly sink for the mass of the population, who were already near subsistence level, the population must have grown smaller" (1964: 1042 - 3). The ultimate indication that population levels did decline is provided by the vast areas of woodland and scrub which were cleared during the early medieval period.

The reasons for this decline are more obscure and should not detain us too long. There are records of plagues in the second and third century (Jones 1964: 1043), but no more until the sixth. If references to *agri deserti* are any indication of the time span over which population declined, then the persistance of this phenomenon through the fourth and fifth centuries should caution against using epidemics as a monocausal argument for the general demographic change. Italy was badly affected by plague between the 560's and the 590's AD (Biraben and Le Goff 1969; Russell 1968). This might have had an impact on an already reduced population. Subsequent waves of the epidemic in the seventh and eighth centuries affected the West only sporadically (Biraben and Le Goff 1969).

Similarily the immediate impact of the barbarian invasions on population levels in Italy must have been minimal. Despite Paul the Deacon's statement that under king Gleph, the Lombards killed many Roman nobles and sent others into exile (quoted in Vickham 1981: 66)[17], the overal impression is that the invaders and natives managed a relatively peaceful co-existence. It is doubtful that the numerous wars between the Goths and the Byzantines, and between the latter and the Lombards could have resulted in fatalities

on a scale great enough to have affected the overal demographic balance. Indeed even the assertion that the insecurity of the period drove settlement from the major arterial routeways, as suggested for example by Potter (1979 and 1981) and Greene (1986: 104), must be doubted given Wickham's recent assessment of the historical and archaeological evidence from South Etruria (1978 and 1979)[19].

It might be suggested that the Christian attitude to sex and marriage was influential in reducing population levels. Paul's suggestion that "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Corinthians, i -   quoted in de Ste. Croix 1983: 104) might easily account for population collapse if it was followed to the letter by most people. But this was exceedingly unlikely, and as de Ste. Croix points out, one only has to recognise that the "conspicuous prevalence in Christian countries of prostitution down the ages shows that mere prohibitions of conduct regarded for religious reasons as immoral, even if backed by threats of eternal punishment, may have little effect if the structure of society is not conducive to their observance" (1983: 109).

Jones suggests that "one is driven to the conclusion that the population dwindled because, when they had paid their rent and taxes and other exactions, the peasantry had not enough left to rear sufficient children to counterbalance the high death rate (1964: 1043). About this we can say little except that it would seem to fit with the suggestions already made about the weight of taxation and the decline in the status of the peasantry. To move further, we must first have detailed palaeopathological analyses of

late Roman cemetery populations which try to quantify features such as Harris lines which indicate nutritional stress (V. Higgins *pers. comm.*)

In the end we are left with an indication that both urban and rural population did decline and that social relations had changed in a context of a fragmenting state structure. The two factors are linked as I have already suggested, and the import of this connection was to make itself more apparent in the following centuries (see chapters 8 and 9). It has frequently been argued that control over land as one the major forces of production was fundamental to the constitution of feudal social relations. But that land possesses only latent productivity as long as it was not worked. To release the potential of landed wealth as a source of power, people were needed to cultivate it. When people were in short supply, relative to the amount of land available in the context of an economic *croissance*, **they** became the critical resource. Although Giddens' (1979) *authoritative* and *allocative* resources as routes to power are in fact inextricably linked (Wright 1983), we shall suggest that control over people became a critical variable in the constitution of power relations in the last centuries with which this thesis deals.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Oratores, Bellatores, Laboratores

"Amid the vast stretches of barely reclaimed land, amid the
tribes bowed down under the weight of their poverty and
shaken by spasms of latent anxiety, and alongside the
castles where the soldiers stood watch, fortresses of a
different sort arose,...They were the monasteries, and attacks
by the demonic armies shattered against their defences. The
earthly city was supported, it was believed, by two columns,
and defended by two associated types of militia: the men who
bore arms and the men who prayed to God...Although the
knighthood camped in the midst of Latin Christendom and
held it firmly in its grip, it was the monks who reigned
supreme in the enormous spiritual realm of mental anguish
and religious fear and trembling. In other words the realm
of artistic creativity" (Duby 1981: 58).

S7: 1 *Introduction*

Much of the Italian countryside is today characterised by a most particular

form of settlement - that of nucleated hilltop villages (see plates 1 and

2). Thus, in the modern day Sabina, the landscape is dominated by a series

of small hill top towns which sit perched on rocky crags and promontories,

surrounded by lowlands which, until after the end of the first world war,

appear to have been totally devoid of settlement. Even up until 1934 in

this area only 16.5% of the population lived outside these locales (Toubert

1973: 200). They totally dominate the consciousness and way of life of the

people in this area.

Such is the apparent timelessness and solidity of these places, appearing as they do to grow immediately out of the rocks on which they sit, that one might suppose that they had always been there, and that they represent continuity with a most ancient form of settlement. However, we know this not to have been the case. Like Man, they are a phenomenon of relatively recent date. But that date is a matter of some considerable discussion as we shall see in the next three chapters.

The archaeological surveys in many parts of Italy which were the focus of much of the discussion in the last chapter have shown that in the Roman period the land was worked from a large number of villas dispersed fairly evenly over the landscape. At the height of the system they reached a density of one or two every square kilometre. They were tied into a productive and distributive system centred on the cities, and as we have already seen, those in the Sabina and South Etruria were linked by an extensive series of roads which carried the produce to Rome or to the Tiber ports for shipment to the Eternal City (Toubert 1973: 625 - 40; Leggio 1986a and 1986b). The number of villas probably declined from the second century onwards, and by the fifth and sixth centuries those that remained were the centres of estates built up through purchase, inheritance and latterly the patronage system. The archaeological evidence suggests that although the nature of social relations was changing, rural settlement remained focussed around some of the old villa sites. San Vincenzo, San Giovanni di Ruoti and possibly Anguillara were physical manifestations of an emerging social structure, but one still tied to the past both in the location of settlement and in terms of the perceived locus of authority.

However, with the disappearance of the archaeologist's principle dating tool - the African Red Slips - in the seventh century our picture of the settlement pattern and associated social structures becomes an enigma. It was specifically to investigate this period that a whole series of research projects have been established in Italy. The first of these arose out of the work done by Dr. Graeme Barker in the Biferno valley in Molise (Barker: forthcoming). Although the main interest of the project was in the prehistoric period (Barker 1976 and 1977), vital information on the classical pattern of settlement and landuse was produced (Barker et. al. 1978). More interestingly for the subject under discussion here, the interdisciplinary nature of the Biferno valley project meant that the early medieval period recieved its first adequate treatment on a regional scale (Hodges et. al. 1980; Hodges and Vickham 1981).

The project at San Vincenzo, to which we have already referred so often in relation to the significance of the late Roman villa there, was a conscious continuation of the work done in the neighbouring Biferno valley. The principal aim was to provide a regional perspective for the spectacular development of one the most important of Italy's early medieval monasteries (see chapter 8). A programme of systematic archaeological investigation (both excavation and field survey), geomorphological and geological studies, analysis of historical documentation, and art historical and architectural studies was designed to elucidate the date and nature of the process by which the pattern of late Roman villas was replaced by the hill top towns - a process known in Italian as incastellamento - which also dominate the landscape of this part of Molise. The project still stands as one of the finest examples of interdisciplinary field work in elucidating historical

process and provided the inspiration, in terms of both methodology and the questions asked, for several of the others which were to follow'.

Thus the project at Farfa can be seen as an extension of the goals and aims of that at San Vincenzo. Similarily focussed on one of the most important monasteries in central Italy, the Farfa project has as its aim the construction of a regional settlement and landuse context for the whole of the past for which there is material cultural evidence. Given my own particular research interests, detailed attention was of course focussed on the period from the end of classical antiquity to the turn of the second millennium of the Christian era. Here too extensive archaeological field survey combined with documentary research and environmental studies form the methodological core of the project.

The development of the monastery in the seventh to ninth centuries AD has been clearly outlined archaeologically by the excavations directed by Dr. David Whitehouse (see plate 3). The recent survey sought to examine the nature of the settlement system upon which such a monastic complex was based and so place it within a regional context[2].

The monastery at Farfa is the locus of the largest collection of early medieval documents in Italy, with an archive containing some 3,000 pre-twelfth century texts. On account of this unique documentary wealth, the Farfa area has naturally been the subject of much historical research. Toubert (1973) and Vickham (1985a) among others have used this archive to produce detailed works on the nature of the early medieval settlement pattern. By contrast, until the present Farfa project, there had been little

archaeological research in the *terra* of the monastery to set against this historical research (though see **Noyé 1984; Bougard** *et. al.* **1986**). This is very much the reverse of the situation across the Tiber in South Etruria. Here historians and archaeologists working on the late Roman and early medieval material from the British School's surveys have bemoaned the lack of a good documentary record (**Luttrell 1975, and 1976; Wickham 1978**).

Thus a second aim of the Farfa project was a comparison between the historical and archaeological data on settlement patterns (**Moreland 1986: 333 - 334**). In addition we intended to use this information to examine the more general theoretical problem of the relationship between History and Archaeology, an aim totally consonant with the goals of this thesis. The nature of the relationship can only really be assessed through the study of a region where both disciplines have deep resources to draw upon. The early medieval archive at Farfa provides just such a resource for History; a good archaeological field survey, combined with the results of the excavations at the monastery, begins to provide Archaeology with a comparable resource.

Both the San Vincenzo and Farfa projects have the problem of continuity or change in late Roman structure as one of their focii. In this context we must also consider the work carried out by Dr. Tim Potter at Monte Gelato (**Potter and King n.d.**) and Dr. Whitehouse at Ponte Nepesino (**Cameron** *et. al.* **1984**), both in South Etruria, along with the results of a burgeoning urban archaeological tradition in Italy (**Arthur 1984, 1985 and 1986; La Rocca Hudson 1986; Leciejewicz** *et. al.* **1977; Manacorda** *et. al.* **1985; Ward Perkins** *et. al.* **1986** are some examples).

Although the early medieval period is now receiving the kind of attention previously accorded only to the remains of classical antiquity (see Chapter 9), projects like those mentioned above are beginning to cast some light into the gloom of the Italian "Dark Ages" and to take us towards a resolution of the enigma of settlement and social structure from the seventh century onwards. The results are still tenuous. Empirically they hinge on the reality of a so-called "ceramic gap" from the disappearance of the ARS fine wares to the appearance of a new tradition of glazed wares (Potter 1975). Of particular importance is the dating of one type of fine glazed pottery - *Forum Ware* (see 7:3 for detailed discussions). Epistemologically the results depend on the perceived nature of the relationship between History and Archaeology.

§7: 2 *Militarism and Social Structure: Oratores and Bellatores*

The political and military turmoil and division of the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries have been presented as the reason for many of the characteristics, real or imagined, of sub-Roman Italy, ranging from population decline and flight from the roads to *incastellamento* - Renfrew's "flight to the hills" (1979b: 483). There can be no doubt that the Gothic, Lombardic and Byzantine invasions, and the wars that accompanied them, did profoundly affect Italian society, but not always in the ways imagined, and frequently as a continuation of, or catalyst to, processes already underway or latent in the social formation. One of the aims of the next three chapters will be to challenge the arguments of those archaeologists who seek to locate *incastellamento* in the sub-Roman past, in explicit opposition to the tenth century date given by the historical documents. Reasons for

these attempts will be presented in the course of the text, but here we must note one of their implications - that late Roman society experienced a massive transformation in the sixth and seventh centuries, and that this can be explaained by the insecurity of these unsettled times.

One of the clearest effects of the takeover of Italy by the "successor states" was a reduction in the requirements for taxation. As I made clear in chapter 5, the prime consumers of state resources were the army, the church, and the bureaucracy. The decline of the city councils and the unattractiveness of public office were among the factors which resulted in a decrease in the size of the state bureaucracy, though many of its functions were taken over by a church on the ascendant. Although by the sixth century the bishop of a see could "earn" as much as a provincial governor (Jones 1964: 934; de Ste Croix 1983: 496) much of the salary bill of the clergy must have been funded from the proceeds of direct rent taking on the vast lands the church had built up through state and private donations[3]. That leaves the army. The major change here was that in the successor states to the Roman empire the army came to be based on the land, "that is to say on landowning. The major expense of the state was removed at one blow. Taxation was here immediately replaced by rent: the logical conclusion to the refusals and evasions of the last century" (Vickham 1984: 20).

This is certainly true of the Lombards since we have no evidence that they collected the taxes necessary to fund a "Roman-style" army (Vickham 1981: 67). But what about the remnants of the imperial army still stationed and operational in Italy? Brown shows that here too the possession and

exploitation of land replaced cash payments as the means by which the army was supported. The date of this acquisition of a landed base for the army is difficult to determine but it is significant that military pay is not mentioned after AD 640 (1984: 87; **Wickham** 1980: 75).

After this date taxation probably did not form one of the major structures of social formations in Italy and, as Wickham argues, this had lasting effects on other structures. The peasantry certainly benefitted The rent paid to local feudal lords must have been less than the tax/rent combination paid in the late Empire. But the impact on "public displays of wealth" was less "favourable". With less resources available, fewer buildings were constructed and "a prestige product of the late Lombard state like the urban monastic church of S. Salvatore in Brescia is a pathetic shadow of the imperial buildings of the sixth century" (**Wickham** n. d.: 6).

On what structures then was the authority of the new ruling Lombard and Byzantine élites based? What mechanisms were employed to ensure the reproduction of social relations with the producing classes? Although they dominated the social formation by virtue of their situation at the apex of a social structure and through their landholdings, how did élites ensure control of local communities which may have been "ethnically" predominantly Roman (**Wickham** 1981: 65)? The answer, for both Byzantines and Lombards, seems to lie in the construction of "ideological" schemes which drew upon the signs, symbols, and material culture of the Roman past and Imperial present.

The conventional politico-military histories of the Lombard invasion stress

the battles and alliances between them and the Byzantines - a true

Braudellian *histoire évenementielle*. Great effort is expended in illustrating

the changing pattern of control between the rival groups. Although some

interaction is acknowledged, the construction of borders and territories

occupies the energies of the historical map makers. But much recent

anthropological and archaeological work has sought to emphasise the

"permeability" of frontiers (e.g. the papers in Green and Perlman eds.

(1985). Hodder (1982a), amongst others, has attempted to show the

considerable importance of interaction across "ethnic" boundaries, and to

emphasise the significance of this interaction for group constitution. In

this context material culture, as the bearer of signification and meaning,

is very useful since art historical, petrological, and linguistic studies

allow us to trace artifacts back to a point of origin and so demonstrate

interaction between regions.

In one of the most stimulating recent papers on the nature of seventh and

eighth century Italy, Filippucci has sought to use the insights of work like

that of Hodder to re-examine the structure of power relations within the

Peninsula, and between it's élites and the Byzantine state. Her analysis of

the contents of "dressed" graves found in Lombardic areas shows that in the

richest graves many of the goods deposited with the deceased emanated from

the East. These include bronze bowls, ivory boxes, amphorae, glass vessels,

gold and silver saddle decorations, and gold coins (Filippucci n .d.). These

objects are only found in a small percentage of the known graves - 1.5% of

the male and 4% of the female graves at Nocera Umbra, and 1% of the male

and 2% of the female graves at Castel Trosino (Pasqua and Paribeni 1919;

Mengarelli 1902)[4]. This suggests controlled access to the distribution networks of these products, perhaps mediated through a form of "directional exchange" with Byzantine élites either in Italy or in the East (see Hodges 1982).

The movement of an artifact from one social formation to another may result in a change in signification and in .the "level" of the social formation in which it is operative. The luxury Eastern products found in the Lombard graves may perhaps have been seen as *commodities* in the society in which they were produced. A quantitative relationship could be established between the objects exchanged and alienated from their owner/producer (Gregory 1982: 100). In Lombard social formations, by contrast, they may have circulated as *gifts* and created "a qualitative relationship between the transactors (*ibid*: 101). They were symbols of social power. Their "exoticness" and association with the power centre on the Bosphorus made them effective in actions and rituals designed to ensure the reproduction of social relations within Lombard society.

Along with those artifacts directly imported from the East, the Lombard graves contain some which seem to have been made locally in Italy. They imitate Byzantine forms, and try to achieve association through emulation. These artifacts include

> "gold crosses; coins with illegible inscriptions imitating, without understanding it, Greek script; Latin mottoes engraved on belt plates, rings, fibulae,...suggesting the almost magical virtue attached to writing in an illiterate age. Religion, writing, coinage: three aspects of the ideological apparel of the Empire were awkwardly appropriated by a society which may have dimly perceived their significance, but recognised their role in the maintainence of power and authority" (Filippucci n. d.).

The existence of similar imitations in a sixth - seventh century AD cemetery at San Vincenzo in Molise, points to the use of the site after the final ARS forms in this part of Italy disappear (see §6:4). Further, the poor quality of most of the imitation rings, ear-rings and bracelets indicates occupation by a local élite group who, though they drew upon the cultural resources of Byzantium, were firmly rooted in their south Italian world. Basket ear-rings may find parallels in the rich cemeteries of the north, but the bangles, finger rings and other items of jewellery can be securely located within a southern Italian context. Perhaps the most evocative example of the fusion of world system pretensions and local realities is to be found in the pendant which reuses a base silver coin. It pales beside the gold *aurei* used in those areas with direct access to Eastern products, but we should not doubt that, as active material culture, it was a potent symbol of power in this south Italian backwater (for a description of the jewellery from San Vincenzo, see Filippucci (1989: *forthcoming*).

Most of the imported goods in the rich cemeteries can be dated to the first half of the seventh century, and demonstrate interaction as well as "competition" among regional and international élites. But by the middle of the seventh century pressures on the Eastern empire served to stem the flow of goods into Italy (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 54 - 76; Foss 1979). Filippuci argues that we might see the movement of the Lombards to take the coastal areas of northern Italy at this time as an attempt to secure access to goods they had formerly traded for. This might be so but the reduction in the volume of east Mediterranean trade meant that any such attempt was frustrated. Alternatively we might see the imitations of

Byzantine products as attempts to maintain a supply of artifacts which had become important in social reproduction.

In the absence of "real" symbols of power, the Lombards may have reverted to more traditional forms of legitimation through kinship and birth, structures which operated alongside and were reinforced by "prestige goods system". But we might also consider the increasing importance of Lombardic links with the church. Such patronage of monastic and other ecclesiastical institutions, as we shall see, was also important in the reproduction of social relations in Byzantine controlled parts of Italy[6].

In these areas, Brown shows that members of the army used their privileged position as defenders of the realm to acquire land legally through marriage, inheritance, sales, donations or exchanges, and illegally through expropriation and oppression. More significantly they acquired large tracts on emphyteutic lease from the church. Initially these grants might have been of some economic advantage to the church in the sense that to gain any profit from their estates they needed to be worked (Guillou 1969: 189 - 191). Later, however, the grants were in quasi-perpetuity in return for token payments. There can be no doubt that in some cases lands were conceded under duress. The alternative to concession could be seizure (Wickham 1981: 78).

It is clear that concessions on emphytheutic lease won for the church a powerful political ally (ibid; Brown 1984: 196). But the relationship was not all one way. The church was God's institution on earth. In a society which saw earthly society as a reflection of that in heaven, the support of

such an institution was invaluable for any group which hoped to control and well as dominate (Gramsci 1971: 56 -57. Duby 1980: 110 - 119 and Le Goff 1980 for the heavenly model for earthly society. Also see below). The importance placed by the secular arm on the ecclesiastical link is reflected in the desire of the Roman aristocracy to associate their families with the papacy through the attainment of office at the papal court (Brown 1984: 186).

In the sixth century the association of the army with the Imperial regime served to legitimate their possession of power and manipulation of position. However, the increased reliance by the army on the possession of lands as opposed to direct payment by the state weakened the links which held the army to the central authority, whether in the person of the Emperor himself or the exarch in Ravenna. It led to the emergence of a new élite, who although originally of Byzantine origin, came to settle permanently in the towns and fortresses of the Peninsula and establish hereditary positions of power for themselves. They used their position of public authority to build up local and private power, and in this last respect became like many other landowners in seventh and eighth century Italy.

The establishment of the army as a landed power in Italy was one of several factors - including the rise to the surface of deep seated Roman resentment for all things "Greek" (Brown 1984: 146 - 147), and the development of differences of opinion on theological matters - which coincided to reduce respect for Imperial authority and as a result the latter much of its force as an instrument of cohesion. Taken together these

contributed to the growth of an Italian "separatist movement" which gained force in Italy from the seventh century onwards (see **Brown** 1984: 144 - 163; and **Noble** 1984: 5 - 9. Also Llewellyn 1986 and O'Hara 1985).

New local bonds replaced the links the army formerly had with the Empire. With the loss of the legitimising Imperial connection, the most important of these new links was that established with the church, though a play on an antique Roman inheritance expressed through the occasional revival of the terminology and customs of the late Roman state was also significant (see **Brown** 1984: 135 - 143). With the church, the military élite became one of the dominant powers in Italy. They had effective control over public authority through their occupation of the institutions of the state, weakened though it was, and had local private power through their possession of lands⁶.

The importance the military élite had gained in seventh and eighth century Italy can be seen from the position they held in the conceptual ordering of society as represented in the rôles allotted to groups in the election of popes. There seems to have been a clear division into "three orders" already by the seventh and eighth centuries - the clergy, the military officials, and the rest of the population - the *oratores*, the *bellatores*, and the *laboratores* (Patlagean 1974. Duby (1980) puts the emergence of this tripartite division much later). The idea that such order was divinely ordained, and reflected a celestial structure, though deriving from the constructions of a fifth century Greek - Dionysius the Areopagite - could have had great political and social force in early medieval Italy (Duby 1980: 111 - 115). It confirmed the right of the military to hold and

exercise power, and reinforced that power. It did the same for the church, and in the course of the seventh and eighth centuries these groups between them held power over the lives of what must have amounted to most of the population of Italy. They had taken over what functions remained to the state. But the state had withered. The ancient mode of production was subordinated and the feudal mode dominated.

But we must consider the effectiveness of such ideological practices in structuring social relations between producer/non-producer in a social formation. It has been argued (§5:3) that the concept of *Romanitas*, of "belonging", was important in cultivating within-group solidarity, and that relationships between opposed social groups had an essentially economic base (though we have hypothesised a kind of "dual consciousness" formed through the intermeshing of peasant values and ways of life with some notion of *Romanitas*).

What then of the effectiveness of the "three order" ideological construction in seventh and eighth century Italy? If, as Wickham (1980: 65) argues the great majority of the population of Italy, both Byzantine and Lombard were ethnically Roman, how did the conceptual structures of the élite affect them? Again the answer seems to be that their status as tenants was reproduced through an essentially "economic" relationship. It was on such relationships that the ideological constructs of the élite were founded, though we must always recognise the recursive nature of the interaction between societal structures, and bear in mind Godelier's insights on the relationship between the structural levels of a social formation (1986; and §3:2).

For such an ideological construct to have been efficacious in social reproduction it would have had to have been lived out in the daily practice of all "three orders", for we must remember that ideology is not necessarily false consciousness. It structures the lives and actions of individuals. We must therefore look for the circumstances in which such a conceptual ordering achieved a materiality sufficient to impinge on practice and alter/transform *habitus*.

The three order system might be seen to be reflected and reproduced through the location of the *oratores* and *bellatores* in the cities, with the mass of the *laboratores* working the surrounding land. But this belies the reality of changes in the distribution of power in the seventh and eighth century Italy, and in the nature of the interaction between town and countryside. With dominance of the feudal mode of production, *power over* was dissipated into the numerous villas, *castra*, and monasteries of the Italian countryside. Although the church may had had its centre in Rome, and the Exarch his in Ravenna, real power was regionalised and localised. The lived existence of the *laboratores* was predicated upon the more immediate relationship with his/her landlord, whether secular or ecclesiastical.

Unlike the Roman empire where, as we have seen, some degree of "belonging" may have been inculcated at the level of practice through the use of Roman material culture, the regionalisation of production and distribution in the early middle ages meant that the connection between the "universal" ideological schema of the élite and the products of material culture would have been minimal. The lack of a single core area for production must have made it very difficult for the products of material culture to become linked

with, and take meaning from, concepts of societal ordering. The imported goods found in graves in Lombardic areas which we have discussed above were efficacious in the reproduction of relations within the élite, rather than between social classes. As we shall see later (chapter 8), many of the material cultural products of the local centres of power circulated primarily within and between those centres, rather than being distributed more widely. The separation between the ideal of the conceptual construct and the reality of lived experience was too great for the "three order system" to have been useful as a means of social integration.

In the cities themselves, the ordering of the populace which was witnessed in the papal elections were too rare and infrequent to impinge on the conceptual models of the *plebs*. Even the structures within which the prime power rituals were enacted had changed their form, appearance and "rhetoric" when compared with those of the late Roman empire (**Vickham n.d.**). The outward looking monumentality of Imperial constructions was replaced by church buildings whose meaning and signification was contained in the decoration and design of the interior (**Krautheimer 1983**). Access to such meaning was necessarily more restricted than it had been with the very public buildings of the empire, and would have been inculcated more immediately by those who used them most – the clergy or *oratores*. Again the model only approached the reality of the practice of most people at such an oblique angle and in such an indirect manner as to render it almost impotent for social reproduction.

In any case, as we have suggested, structures already existed which ensured the reproduction of **between** class relations – the daily experience of labour

and rent paying. I am not denying that a concept like that of the "three orders" existed nor removing entirely the possibility that it may have been significant in other times and places (e.g. Duby 1980), but am instead suggesting that the importance of such a conceptual structure in seventh and eighth century Italy derives from the nature of relationships within the élite. It stems from a desire to reinforce their relatively recent position at the top of the social structure, especially with the growing isolationism from the Imperial power in the East; from the persistence of elements of the old ruling order; and from the need to mediate and accomodate two distinct, but connected, claims to power - one spiritual, one secular.

A "dual consciousness" among the peasantry may have been weak, and among the ruling classes strong. The latter were aware of their recent past and needed to forget it. Thus we might suggest that, perhaps more so than in the case discussed in chapter 5, the dominant ideology had minimal effect on peasant culture and life. The seventh and eighth century Roman three order construct was in essence a "Gregorian concept of 'concord' or 'weave' unnaturally draped over relations of subjection" (Duby 1980: 72)[7].

§7: 3 *Militarism, Insecurity and Settlement I: Northern Italy and South Etruria*

Did the wars and battles, and the militarisation of Byzantine Italy, have any impact on the pattern of settlement? The question is an obvious one since the coincidence between the almost total "disappearance" of sites from the archaeological record and the battles and devastations of the sixth and seventh centuries has frequently been noted. Even in antiquity, Gregory the Great was writing that, as a result of the Lombard invasions

"the cities have been depopulated, fortresses razed, churches
burned down, monasteries and nunneries destroyed, the fields
abandoned by mankind, and destitute of any cultivator the
land lies empty and solitary. No landholder lives on it: wild
beasts occupy places once held by a multitude of men"
(quoted in **Brown** 1984: 440).

Although Brown cautions that we must make allowances for exageration due
to Gregory's profound detestation of the 'heretical barbarians', the
"insecurity theory" has been an easy monocausal explanation seized upon by
some historians and archaeologists to account for the drastic changes in
the structures of the late Roman social formation. We have already noted
Potter's (1979 **and** 1981) and Greene's (1986) assertion that the insecurity
of the period drove men from settlement along the main lines of
communications and to seek refuge in the remote fastnesses of the interior.
As we shall see later in this section, Potter and Whitehouse extend the
argument to suggest that the sixth century Lombard attacks on the duchy of
Rome precipitated a precocious "flight to the hills", with the implication
that much the same might be found elsewhere if only we looked for it.
External threat is postulated as the cause of a radical re-ordering of
settlement patterns.

Recent archaeological research has done much to challenge the validity of
the "insecurity theory" as prime mover and to force us to come to different
conclusions regarding continuity or change in this particular structure. I
will concentrate on the evidence from South Etruria, the Sabina, and Molise,
but first the results of some recent work on the effects of Byzantine
militarism must be considered, since this illustrates the impact of the new
élite on settlement structure, and points to a general continuity of the

latter in the face of outside adversity and internal transformation in other societal structures.

If insecurity did cause a change in late Roman settlement patterns, one would expect its consequences to be most readily apparent in those areas under the greatest threat from the Lombards. When Alboin led his people across the Alpine passes into Italy in the late sixth century, they entered the region of Friuli, part of *Venetia and Histria.* Here we do find evidence for some fairly major transformations in the pattern and location of settlement. Large inland centres were abandoned for the more secure locations proferred by the lagoons and islands of the coastal area (Leciejewicz *et. al.* 1977). Change is also detectable along the line of the Rome-Ravenna corridor, the object of a long series of struggles between the Lombards and the Byzantines (Bullough 1966). But as Brown and Christie point out, this was not typical of the situation in much of Byzantine Italy.

In the Exarchate and Pentapolis, the city based structure remained largely intact, with parallel broad continuity in rural settlement patterns. In Liguria recent archaeological investigations at Ventimiglia and Vado have cast some doubt on the assertion that the militarisation of the area under Byzantine domination led to the abandonment of coastal towns in favour of defensive sites in the interior, and to the suggestion that the movement could have been a long term process (Brown and Christie n. d.).

It might be suggested that the Byzantine settlement pattern was radically different in that it was based on a system of *castra* (Potter 1987: 216). Although this term can be applied to any fortified site, it generally

denotes small garrison and refuge posts strung out along the line of threatened territory. The fact that they could become major centres of population in later centuries should not obscure the fact that they supplemented rather than replaced a pre-existing pattern of settlement. Failure to recognise this can lead to the ascription of a mythical continuity of settlement structure between the sixth and eleventh centuries. Over-generalisation of the term can also lead to the ascription of the word *castra* to any site of the period which has "defensive" characteristics (see the discussion of the excavation of the site of Ponte Nepesino, below).

We must also recognise that although *castra* were a feature of the sixth and seventh century landscape in at least some parts of Italy, they were not a unique product of those times. Settia points out that both Lombards and Byzantines inherited such structures from the late Roman past (1984: 43 – 5). Some of these may have been a product of the Gothic wars, but they might equally relate to buildings like those at San Vincenzo, San Giovanni and Anguillara, the product of changing social relations rather than a definite military response to insecurity. Towers can be as much a potent symbol of control and domination as functional fortresses.

These assertions of overall continuity in the location of settlement into the sixth and seventh centuries are derived from areas with limited detailed archaeological research. To check the validity of this idea, we must look to those areas where research has been more comprehensive – South Etruria, Molise, and the Sabina. Before we do this we must first discuss the date and meaning of one particular type of glazed ceramic – *Forum Vare* – since it is fundamental to our conclusions here and in the next chapter.

As its name implies, Forum Ware was first identified in the Forum in Rome, by Guiseppi Boni. In the fill of a fountain called the *Lacus Iuturnae* he discovered some 1500 pieces of glazed pottery, including 83 complete vessels. These were generally pitchers or jugs with combed or applied petal decoration and covered in a thick olive green glaze. Boni dated Forum Ware to the late eighth and early ninth centuries AD on the basis of sculptural fragments associated with the pottery in the fill of the fountain, and on a presumed mid eighth century date for the construction of the church of Santa Maria Antiqua (Boni 1901: 41 – 144; Christie 1987: 451).

For a long time this was the accepted chronology, and it was used to date structures found in South Etruria, like those at Santa Cornelia, to the early medieval period (Whitehouse 1980b). This is the isochronic marker which lies at the more recent end of a one hundred and fifty year gap in datable fine wares in the archaeological record of central Italy (Potter 1979: 147). The last ARS forms provide the other point of reference.

Recently however, Whitehouse has used a revised late Roman date for the foundation of Santa Maria Antiqua, and the results of an analysis of coins from the *Lacus* area, to argue that Forum Ware should be dated to the late sixth and early seventh centuries (Whitehouse 1980a). If this date is accepted then Potter's "ceramic gap" is effectively closed. Forum Ware follows on directly from ARS, and consequently a comparison between the sites containing either or both should provide an indication of any change in the settlement pattern between the fifth and eighth centuries AD.

Field survey in the *Ager Veientanus* produced finds of Forum Ware from some Roman villa sites (**Ward-Perkins** *et. al.* 1968). Further north, however, in the *Ager Faliscus*, such finds on villas were less frequent, with Forum Ware being found instead on a series of promontory sites, similar to those typical of *incastellamento* (**Potter 1975**)[8]. The proposed early date of Forum Ware, combined with a revised version of Brown's work on the historical evidence from South Etruria (1978), led to the suggestion that such promontory sites operated as a series of 'strategic hamlets' protecting the northern frontier of Rome against the incursions of the Lombards in the late sixth century (**Whitehouse and Potter 1981**: 206 - 210). To "test" this idea a promontory site overlooking the important road connecting Rome with Ravenna - the Via Amerina - was excavated (**Cameron** *et. al.* 1984).

Ponte Nepesino revealed sherds of Forum Ware, was dated to the sixth century, became a 'strategic hamlet' and the circular argument was closed. To reinforce the strategic hamlet argument, Potter states that "there was a certain amount of weaponry - spears and knives - amongst the finds, and a study of the animal bones suggests that this was not a farming community but a garrison supplied from the outside" (**Potter 1987**: 217)[9] The significance of this supposed sixth century move to the hill tops was presented as challenging the documented date for the *incastellamento* process (*ibid; Cameron et. al.* 1984: 143 - 144).

In Molise, Hodges has postulated a similar date for the development of hill top settlement, though it would appear that there is little or no evidence for this from the hill tops themselves. Rather it is the "absence of sixth/seventh century pottery from classical sites...[which] indicates that

hill top locations were preferred during this unstable period" (Hodges *et. al.* 1984: 188). The "instability theory" as prime mover is again seen as explaining major structural transformations.

The significance of this ascription of late antique dates to hill top settlement lies in attempts to change the nature of the relationship between History and Archaeology. Where documents exist, they generally date *incastellamento* to the tenth and eleventh centuries (Toubert 1973; Settia 1984; Wickham 1985a). But a new assertive Archaeology sought to challenge this date by arguing that it was simply a "reflection of the evidence, since in most parts of Italy archive material only becomes abundant from the tenth century (Brown and Christie n. d.) and intimating that "many villages are not documented before the tenth century merely because so few documents survive" (Luttrell 1975: 271). Here was an opportunity for Archaeology to rewrite history and to alter our perceptions of historical transformations through the location of a major discontinuity several centuries before the date given by the texts.

It is somewhat paradoxical that one of the consequences of this "rewriting" was the necessity of archeologists to fall back on explanatory devices – invasion and external threat – more characteristic of the culture history phase in Archaeology than of the new era of scientific objectivism (see chapters 1 and 2). By challenging the historians data base in this way, archaeologists reverted to a consideration of the significance of the **event** in effecting structural change, contrary to the stated aims of both *Annales* history and *new archaeology*. The archaeological data were fitted into a framework of **facts** deduced from an "abuse" of historical documentation.

Such marriages of convenience are seldom permanent or satisfactory. The paradox becomes greater when we consider that the archaeological data on which these constructions of the past were based were themselves fundamentally flawed.

This example of how Archaeology might rewrite history was soon demolished by a detailed consideration of archaeological and historical evidence (cf. Christie 1987), and by a conception of Forum Vare which sees it as something more than an isochronic marker. It was asked that if these "strategic hamlets" in the Ager Faliscus really were of sixth century date then why were the relevant African Red Slip forms totally absent? It was further noted on historical grounds that the Ager Faliscus did not constitute a frontier zone in the sixth century. It was certainly affected by the Lombard incursions but so was Ager Veientanus closer to Rome, where the presence of sixth century African Red Slips and Forum Vare on the dispersed villa sites argues against a massive disruption of settlement and general nucleation at this time (Christie 1987; Brown and Christie n. d.).

The early date for Forum Vare can itself be challenged. Thus Christie (*ibid*: 453 - 4) points out that there is no reason to suppose that the numismatic data used by Whitehouse should affect the date of Forum Vare, since there is no evidence that the coins were contained within the fill of the *Lacus Iuturnae*, and consequently that they were associated with the pottery found there by Boni. The fountain itself need not have been abandoned with the construction of the church of Santa Maria Antiqua since "pagan" facilities were frequently appropriated to become one of the features of early churches (Ward Perkins 1984: 153). The *Lacus Iuturnae* could therefore have

remained functional until sometime in the late eighth or early ninth centuries when it was filled with the deposits containing Forum Ware. More conclusively, recent excavations have shown without doubt that Forum Ware dates from the late eighth century and possibly as late as the tenth (Manacorda *et. al.* 1985; Bonifay *et. al.* 1986; H. Patterson pers. comm.).

We must therefore accept that Forum Ware dates from the end of the eighth century. From this Christie argues that Ponte Nepesino might be seen as a 'strategic hamlet' dating to the period of the early to mid eighth century Lombard pressure on the duchy of Rome (1987). But even this would seem too early to be accommadated within the now accepted date for Forum Ware. Instead we might look once again to changing power relations, within the duchy of Rome, to explain the emergence of sites like that at Ponte Nepesino.

As we noted above (7:2) the militarisation of Byzantine Italy resulted in the emergence of a new military élite, whose power was based on local landholding. In the course of the eighth century, with the demise of the final links with Byzantium (Noble 1984), the power of these men at the local level increased. Although they used their "official" position "as a justification for their authority, we may suspect that their effective power lay increasingly elsewhere, in their personal followings, their economic wealth, and their day to day control of local communities" (Brown 1984: 218). However, Christie argues that the lack of documentrary evidence argues against these local leaders "objectifying" or "formalising" this control in the erection of *castra* (1987: 461)[10].

But the evidence from Ponte Nepesino, and to a certain extent from other South Etrurian hill top sites, can be use to arrive at just such a conclusion. The date of the site is consonant with the period at which local military élites acheived *de facto* control and a quasi-independence from public authority (*ibid*). Although Ponte Nepesino may have been enclosed from the earliest period of occupation (partially by a constructed circuit and partially by the natural topography of the site) there is no evidence to suggest that the whole of the interior so defined was occupied (Cameron *et. al. 1984*). Indeed the evidence points very definitely to the contrary. The earliest phase of occupation (that of the late eighth century) was restricted to the area overlooking the Via Amerina (*ibid*: 95). In essence we must be thinking about a very small, and judging by their use of Forum Ware, élite population..

As we have frequently asserted, material culture is not a "passive" product, which simply functions for us as an isochronic marker. It has meaning and signification. It is a reflection of, and serves to reproduce, social relationships. The same is as true of Forum Ware as it is of the last African Red Slip forms (see §6:4). All the evidence points to the production of Forum Ware in Rome, though it was influenced by east Mediterranean forms like those recently identified at the Byzantine port of Otranto (Whitehouse 1980c; H. Patterson *pers. comm.*). Its distribution seems to be largely restricted to the area around Rome, though some fragments have been discovered further afield. It seems likely that it was a prestige product, and as the first fine table ware for one hundred and fifty years (Potter 1979: 147), it is unlikely that it would have been readily available to all sections of society. As such its distribution can be said to reflect the

loci of élite settlement, but not the total pattern of settlement. In this context, the similarities with the last ARS forms are apparent.

However we still have to account for the differential distribution of this material in the *Ager Veientanus* and the *Ager Faliscus* - on villa sites in the former, and hill top locations in the latter. To arrive at an adequate explanation we have to reconsider the web of economic, political and military relationships between town and countryside.

As we saw in the last chapter, the fall of the western provinces meant that the provisioning of Rome became more dependent on the productive resources of its *territorium*. The church increasingly took on much of the responsibility for arranging the food supply for Rome, and for distribution through its system of *diaconi* (Krautheimer 1980: 110 - 111). In the eighth century the papacy attempted to "formalise" the productive system in the *terra sancti Petri* through the establishment of a series of *domuscultae*[1]. Although the popes sought to consolidate their holdings around Rome by acquiring (by various means) lands contiguous to their own, there is no need to see these *domuscultae* as single unitary estates stretching over vast distances as postulated by Partner (1966; Wickham 1978 and 1979). Nor were they necessarily new foundations in land abandoned since the late Empire. The association of the latest ARS and Forum Ware on many sites in the *Ager Veientanus* points to continuity of occupation and cultivation in this area, while the documentation in the *Liber Pontificalis* makes it clear that the papal founders of the *domuscultae* had to bargain with existing owners for the acquisition of land (Christie: *forthcoming*).

The significance of estates like that centred on Santa Cornelia (Whitehouse 1980b) for the provisioning of Rome can be linked to the loss of much of the papacy's holdings in Sicily as a result of a theological split with the Eastern Empire in AD 732/3 (Noble 1984: 38 - 39), and to the pressure placed on the duchy of Rome by the Lombards in the early to mid eighth century (Christie 1987). That the *domuscultae* did supply food to Rome is made clear in the *Liber Pontificalis* which records their foundations (see note 11).

But the link between Rome and the *domuscultae* need not be seen solely in economic terms. The power of the local secular élites was as significant here as elsewhere in Central Italy. The *domuscultae* can be seen as an attempt both "to increase the food supply of Rome and simultaneously to re-establish papal control in church lands" (Christie: *forthcoming*). The politico-military relationship between the *domuscultae* and Rome is illustrated by the fact that the tenants of the papal estates were collectively called the *familia sancti Petri*. They were used by the popes to build part of a new defensive wall around the Vatican following the Arab attack of 846 (Gibson and Ward-Perkins 1979; Krautheimer 1980 : 117 - 120), and more significantly in 824 part of the *familia* was used by pope Paschal I in his attack on the *primicerius* Theodore (Christie: *forthcoming*).

In this context we might see the distribution of Forum Ware on the villa sites of the *Ager Veientanus* as a reflection of the importance of the economic and strategic relationship which existed between Rome and the *territorium*. The pottery as a prestige good, represents the return side of a

relationship which brought food to Rome, and maintained the position of the papacy there.

Not all the sites on which Forum Ware is found need be regarded as part of the *domuscultae* system, since we may suspect that the authorities in Rome maintained links with many of the landholders in this area. The *domuscultae* were however, an attempt to secure the lands of St. Peter from seizure by secular powers, and provided the popes with a militia to counter the personal followings of that élite.

What then of the *Ager Faliscus*? What is the significance of the distribution of Forum Ware in "defensive" sites there? Although the local secular leaders did have a considerable power base in their landed wealth and personal followings, that power was still to a certain extent predicated upon a relationship with the duchy of Rome. The nature of this relationship may have been made more immediately apparent to the local élites in the *Ager Faliscus* and to the authorities in Rome by the Lombard pressure in the mid eighth century. Although asserting their independence and power, local élites still had a responsibility to defend the duchy. If the latter fell, so would the power and position of local rulers. Here again we have a dialectical relationship between state authority and local power (see §6:4). In this case Forum Ware can be seen as an aspect of a political relationship between Rome and local élites on the edges of the territory. It reinforced that relationship. Here we might almost be tempted to see Forum Ware on sites like Ponte Nepesino as quasi-diplomatic gifts designed to ensure support and adherence to the structure of the duchy (see **Vickham** 1979: 89).

Given that the distribution of Forum Vare was restricted to élites, and the small area occupied at Ponte Nepesino, there is no reason to suppose that this site represents the "typical" settlement of the *Ager Faliscus*. As we suggested above for other Byzantine *castra*, it was essentially additive in its contribution to settlement pattern. Most people probably still lived in dispersed settlements which we cannot locate at the moment. The extent of the curcuit around Ponte Nepesino suggests that it might have served as a refuge from time to time, but the lack of substantial structural evidence for the late eighth century phases arques against it being a real centre of population. The same is true of the other excavated sites in the *Ager Faliscus* where Forum Vare was found. The small quantities of the material recovered and the emphemeral nature of the structures at Mazzano and Castel Porciano suggest small scale élite occupation (**Mallett and Vhitehouse 1967; Potter 1972**). In all cases the more substantial occupation phases are those dated to the period when Sparse Glaze pottery was used – i.e. from the tenth century onwards (**Vhitehouse 1980c; H. Patterson pers. comm.**).

The erection of these *castra* does represent a change in the settlement pattern of the *Ager Faliscus*, but it is a change which reflects the growing power and position of the élites and their ambivalent connection with Rome, rather than pointing to wholesale population nucleation. As we noted earlier, the fact that some of them became centres of population should not lead us to ascribe a false rupture to settlement patterns in the eighth century and a mythical continuity to those between then and the late medieval period.

What can we say about the effects of insecurity and militarism on the nature of settlement patterns across the Tiber in the Sabina, and further south in Molise? In the former, as far as the picture is clear it bears most similarity to the *Ager Veientanus*. The site containing the largest collection of Forum Ware in the region is of course the monastery at Farfa. Many sherds were found in the course of the excavations (H. Patterson *pers. comm.*) and several were discovered during the survey of the fields immediately below the monastery (see fig. 3) (Moreland 1986). The position of this site at the top of the settlement structure in this part of the Sabina is undoubted. Its relationship with Rome and with the sites in its *terra* will be discussed in the next chapter.

Including the monastery, the Farfa survey recorded seven sites with Forum Ware (see fig. 3). Of these, four were sites which had once been Roman villas. Not all of these have the latest ARS finewares, but as we have noted above, this does not necessarily argue against continuity of occupation. Unrecognised seventh and eighth century coarse wares could fill the gap. In order to test this idea, we decided to intensively survey one of the villa sites containing Forum Ware (site code M42/12 - 13) to look for these ceramics. The survey involved laying a grid out over the whole of the site and selecting a series of squares from which all material was collected (fig. 10). In addition a less intensive survey of the whole site was carried out and diagnostic fine and coarse wares selected (fig. 11). As a result of this procedure coarse wares which could be early medieval were discovered.

They have still to be throughly checked against the sequence of medieval coarse wares from the monastery excavations, but initial impressions suggest a close relationship with seventh and eighth century forms. This site contains late ARS as well as Forum Ware, so continuity seems very probable.

This site was selected for detailed investigation because it lay on open rolling countryside reasonably close to the Tiber. It was argued that production for Rome, though not necessarily through the papally organised domuscultae seen on the other side of the Tiber, should make continuity likely (Moreland 1987). The results from this site do not necessarily mean that all villa sites with Forum Ware will show such continuity, but it makes it possible. In the forthcoming season, this procedure will be extended to other sites with Forum Ware, and to those large villas along the banks of the Tiber which have sixth and seventh century ARS forms. In addition, the excavations of the two early medieval "hill top" sites of Bezanum and San Donato should determine whether they were new sites or if they were established on late Roman foundations (see note 12 for the location of Bezanum; also fig. 12).

It must be pointed out that even if continuity of occupation is not demonstrated at the other villa sites with Forum Ware, the distribution pattern of this ceramic is still largely restricted to dispersed lowland settlements on villas. Similarily, we must also remember that continuity might be demonstrated on sites which do not contain Forum Ware. In 1875, Tommasetti excavated a villa near Bocchignano (fig. 12), and from the material recovered he estimated that that the building was constructed at

the end of the first century AD and abandoned by the third. Recent work on

ARS might revise these dates, but late occupation of the villa is attested

by the finding of "tre lucerne fittili con monogramma cristiana" (*Notizie di*

Scavi 1876: 8 - 9). He later wrote that these lamps had crosses rather than

monograms (*Notizie di Scavi* 1878: 28), but there is no mention of any Forum

Ware type ceramic. Very preliminary analyses of the coarse wares from other

sites without Forum Ware suggests continuity on a few. The rest of the

population of the area may have relied on *vasa lignaea* or on hand made

coarsewares which we mistake for those of the prehistoric period (see the

discussion of *Bezanum*, below).

Forum Ware was found by Farfa survey teams on the hill top sites of

Cavallaria and *Bezanum* (**Moreland 1986**; and fig. 3)[12]. Both these sites lie

within 2kms of the monastery, which as we have seen also has Forum Ware

sherds. It might be argued that these two hill top sites, dated to the late

eighth and early ninth centuries, show a movement to hill top settlement by

this date in the heart of the Sabina. Such an argument founders on the

evidence for continued dispersed villa settlement in the surrounding area.

If we look at these two sites in detail, it can be shown that they were

"special", and relate to the late eighth and early ninth century grandeur of

the monastery.

As well as Forum Ware, the site at *Cavallaria* (survey codes F21/100 and

F21/101) also contained many diagnostic early medieval coarse ware sherds

(fig. 12, plate 4) (**Moreland 1986**). Survey evidence suggests that there may

have been a substantial stone building at the western end of the site.

Several cut and dressed blocks and an early medieval sculptural fragment (a

cornice) were found there. Like the site at *Bezaum*, *Cavallaria* is characterised by a distinctive topographic feature. Both settlements seem to have been located on top of an artifically created platform, made by cutting back the sides of the top of the hill (see plate 4). This might be the *podium* and *carbonariae* referred to for *Bezanum* in a document of 1096 (L.L., 1276).

A very strong relationship between *Cavallaria* and the monastery is suggested in a passage from the *Chronicon Farfensis* (C.F., I, 29 - 31) which describes the monastery at its zenith in the ninth century -

> "foris vero claustrum totius monasterii ex omni parte erat foriter munitum et turritum ad instar fortis civitatis. placita quoque et iudicia nunquam ibi exercebantur; sed habebant unum palatium ultra rivum qui Riana dicitur, ubi hec gerebantur" (quoted in McClendon 1986: 131).

Site F21/100 - 101, lying as it does across the river Riana, might thus be seen as an important administrative centre for the monastery. The Forum Ware found there probably came from the monastery itself rather than directly from Rome.

As we have already noted, *Bezanum* is topographically similar to *Cavallaria*. It lies about 2kms. west of the monastery overlooking both the river Farfa, and the old road from Rome to the monastery (see fig. 12; Leggio *pers. comm.*). The site is mentioned in a document of the mid eighth century as a ducal *curticella* (R.F.,II. 28 for AD 750 and R.F., II, 93 for 776; see Toubert 1973: 456 for the relationship between *curticella* and *curtis*). The later document suggests that the site contained an oratory dedicated to S. Vito, and that the "duke" was responsible for the pastoral sector of (Farfa's?)

production in the area. Around the site, 52 *casae colonicae* are documented, pointing to the persistence of the dispersed settlement we have argued for on archaeological grounds (for the historical documentation see Toubert (1973: 461 - 462), and again p. 456 for the relationship between the *curticella* and the *casae colonicae*).

The location of the site, and its appelation as a ducal *curticella*, argue for a function complementary to that of responsibility for the animals. *Bezanum* effectively oversees the entrance to the valley in which the monastery sits, and might thus be compared with Ponte Nepesino's position overlooking the Via Amerina (§7:3). In this sense *Bezanum* too might be considered a 'strategic hamlet' though it is possible that the residents of the site were responsible for overseeing the movements of animals which might have passed this way on route to and from the winter grazing of the Tiber lowlands to the summer upland pastures in the interior of the Sabina, as well as checking on human passers by. In any case it can be seen as a centre of administration and religion, rather than a nucleated settlement[13].

Turning now to Molise it must be restated that there is little evidence, if any, from hill top sites to support a sixth century date (*contra* Hodges et. al. 1984: 188). The pottery from the as yet unpublished excavations at Colle Castellano is much later in date, probably tenth century (H. Patterson *pers. comm.*), while the hand made coarse wares at Vacchereccia need not point to any significant occupation. They might refer to small *casae colonicae* situated on the hillside.

In the light of the preliminary results of the Farfa survey, it might be profitable to re-visit the Roman villa sites in the Rochetta plain to see whether some coarse ware continuity can be detected. In both the Farfa and San Vincenzo areas, very detailed surveys of small areas - say 1 sq. km. - could be useful in locating the very ephemeral remains of other *casae colonicae*, distinguished perhaps by "proto-historic" wares like those from Vacchereccia.

One of the most interesting sites located in the Molise surveys, was that of Santa Maria in Cività in the Biferno valley (coded D85 by the survey teams - see **Hodges** *et. al.* 1980). Here detailed field survey, geophysical survey, and limited excavations revealed the remains of a small church and cemetery on a knoll at the northern end of a long flat hill which was enclosed by a palisade on the western side and by a stone wall on the east. Occupation debris was concentrated against the stone wall, and excavation revealed a series of pits and post holes containing organic and ceramic material (*ibid*). Carbon 14 dates and ceramic isochronic markers suggest occupation from the sixth/seventh to the ninth century AD. Most of the pottery was the regionally produced red painted ware (see chapter 6) although one "Forum Ware type" sherd was found.

Here again we have possible evidence for a major change in settlement patterns from the seventh century AD, while the documents suggest *incastellamento* happened here in the late tenth century. But again D85 seems to be "special". The excavations suggest a total population of around 50, and unless we argue for total demographic collapse, this cannot represent the sum total of the population of the area, for D85 is the only

such site known from the valley. The argument that other sites of the seventh to ninth century lie on hill tops is vitiated by the absence of any characteristic pottery on them (Hodges and Wickham 1981). Lowland dispersed sites of the period are also elusive, and we must once again think of D85 as an élite site from which special functions were performed, with most of the surrounding landscape worked by people using undiagnostic coarse wares.

The special functions of D85 are suggested by its location. Like *Bezanum* and Ponte Nepesino, the site overlooks a major routeway up the valley, and it "guards" the shortest crossing point of the Biferno (fig. 4) (Hodges *et. al.* 1980: 72). The material culture of the site suggests élite occupation. The red painted wares were probably produced in Apulia, and, as we have already argued in chapter 6, their restricted distribution points to prestige status. The glass vessels, probably from the Venetian region, are also not an every day occurrence on most sites of the period (though see chapter 8), and suggest the operation of what Hodges calls a "partially commercialised" exchange network linking D85 with the port of Termoli, and from there with the production centres of northern Italy (1980: 113). The "Forum Ware-type" sherd seems slightly out of place so far from Rome, but, as the excavators point out, it may in fact be a late Roman or south Italian type. The decoration of "two sets of parallel bars resembling the branches of a tree" (*ibid*: 89) is quite unlike that of the Forum Ware produced in Rome (§7:3). It is nevertheless still a rare find in this part of southern Italy, and reflects links well beyond the region.

D85 probably occupied a fairly high position in the social/settlement hierarchy. As Hodges *et. al.* argue, during the seventh to ninth centuries, the region was probably dominated by the Roman centre at *Larinum* (1984: 113), while at the other end of the valley some prestige goods were still being imported through Termoli (fig. 4). In between we have no evidence that the whole population of the valley lived in sites like D85. They were still dispersed over the landscape. Those in the immediate area of D85 might have had a dependency relationship with the occupaants of the site. Other local *potentes* in the valley might still have occupied the old villas.

Like Ponte Nepesino, D85 was an addition to a pre-existing settlement pattern, and did not replace that pattern. Its emergence might be historically contingent on Lombard pressure in the late sixth century, or that of the Byzantines in the mid seventh (Hodges *et. al.* 1980: 111). Equally it might reflect the increasing power of the local lords. But like the *castra* of South Etruria, and the early hill top sites close to Farfa, it does not represent an early nucleation of settlement in the Biferno valley. Population was still largely dispersed. Roman towns like *Larinum* and some of the villas were centres of power, and at some point, for particular reasons, a site like D85 developed. Like the others in South Etruria it does not challenge the date of *incastellamento*, for that was a process very different from that of the shifting of some centres of power to the tops of hills. Sites like D85 might, however, have offered the model for that later development (see chapter 9).

The aim of this chapter has been to assess the impact of the élites of the successor states on the structures of late Roman Italy. In §7: 2 I sought to examine the means by which a new élite emerged, and to illustrate the mechanisms used to "legitimate" their authority and reproduce social relations. The past was not a foreign country to them but a resource to be exploited for legitimating symbols. The Lombard church at Clitunno near Spoleto so accurately reproduces Roman iconography that it has often been taken for a Roman church, while the plaque from Agilulf's helmet is rich with the symbols of Roman power.

In §7: 3 and §7: 4, the focus was narrowed to examine the effects of militarization and insecurity on the seventh and eighth century social formation, and in particular its impact on the settlement pattern. Such an examination was necessary given the tendency of those archaeologists who want to rewrite histroy to lend tacit support to Brown's suggestion that

> "in their enthusiasm to break away from the old image of the
> early middle ages as a period of continuous battles,
> historians and archaeologists run the risk of
> underestimating the importance of insecurity...and of failing
> to appreciate that military direction is a common...factor in
> settlement change" (1978: 330).

The particular becomes generalised in the headlong rush to challenge the documentary evidence for tenth century change, and results in an uncritical acceptance of earlier texts. I have not wished to deny that there was pre-tenth century hill top settlement. The evidence from Ponte Nepesino, Santa Maria in Cività, Mazzano, Castel Porciano, *Bezanum* and *Cavallaria* all show

that there was. But this was not seventh or eighth century *incastellamento*. These sites are rather the "objectivisation" of local power relations between some lords and their tenants. They may suggest attempts by some *potentes* to reinforce their control over local communities. But the occupied area was always too small to be seen as accomadating regional populations

These sites can only be seen as population concentrations if we accept wholesale demographic collapse. However it was made clear in the last chapter that, although population probably did decrease, "the demographic catastrophy theory" rests on a normative conception of the material culture products by which archaeological sites are identified. From at least the sixth century onwards current archaeological techniques allow us to locate only a small percentage of the population. The Farfa survey found no material trace of the 52 *casae colonicae* connected with the site at *Bezanum*.

Accepting material cultural poverty for the majority in the early middle ages, we can argue that those villas which show material evidence for continuity were among the primary foci in local networks of power. This is made clear by those excavations which have revealed an early medieval church set within late Roman foundations (see **Potter and King n. d.; Pallottino 1937; Jones 1962**. See Toubert (1973: 855 - 867) for an historical discussion, especially p. 857). Other villas may have become the Italian equivalent of manorial centres - *curtis* settlements (see **Andreolli and Montanari 1985**). Indeed we might speculate as to whether the *power over* exercised by the residents of such sites was not reinforced by their association with the remnants of the great Imperial system, and with the past in general. Re-use of an old Roman site might have been one of the

mechanisms by which social relations were made to appear "natural", immutable and "age-old". As such, as material culture, the sites themselves could have been important in reproducing relations of power[13].

The *Ager Faliscus* is slightly different. Here a greater proportion of the "centres of power" are on hill top locations. Perhaps a *conjuncture* of contingent (the position of secular élites as defenders of the realm in the mid to late eighth century) and **structural** (their *de facto* power based on land holding and dependency relationships) circumstances prompted a decisive, but not total, break with the old system. But we must emphasise that it was not *incastellamento*. That would come later.

The interesting point here, however, is the general persistence of a characteristic Roman form (though altered in nature) of settlement in association with essentially feudal relations of production. Its significance lies in the demonstration that societal structures do not necessarily change all at once. Indeed we would only expect them to do so if we operated within a framework which saw society as a series of neatly dovetailing structures linked by hypercoherence, with pathologies and environment as inducers of change, and homeostatic regulating mechanisms ensuring stability and adaptation. Rather the institutions and social structures which we construct from the material traces of the past are created, reproduced, transformed, and disappear differentially over time. Societies do not generally flip over and change *en masse* from one state to another. Change can instead be seen as the result of the mediation, through human action, of structural contradictions. In terms of incastellamento one obvious contradiction is the living of feudal social relations in structures

created for, and creative of, the ancient mode of production. Resolution of this contradiction through incastellamento should not, however, be seen as the necessary, teleological, result. We must describe and explain how the resolution came to take this form, specify the nature of other contradictions and examine the role of contingent factors.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Monasteries in Context: Oratores and Laboratores

[In 787] "si apriva, per l'abbazia del Volturno, un nuovo
periodo di grande prestigio e di splendore. Il flusso delle
donazioni, fino allora lento e faticoso, e non privo di
ostacoli, riceve ora un impulso decisivo: l'area del cenobio
cresce, si moltiplicano le sue dipendenze e i suoi confini
geografici si allargano, ma ben più si espandono quelli
spirituali nell'intensificarsi delle relazioni politiche e
religiose che legano il piccolo monastero del Sannio a una
potenza, quella carolingia, avviata ad unificare tutta
l'Europa civile" (Del Treppo 1955: 31).

§8: 1 *Introduction*

Most archaeological and historical field work is carried out at the local

and regional levels. We excavate single sites, carry out extensive field

surveys, or examine the documents held in town archives. However, despite

the criticisms of his work made in chapter 5, one of Wallerstein's greatest

contributions was to show that we cannot properly understand historical

process at that level without taking into account the wider system of which

it is a part (Wallerstein 1974. See also Wolf 1982; Smith 1984). But that

relationship - between the region and the world system - is historically

specific. The level of analysis appropriate to the construction of

historical trajectories during the glory days of the Roman empire might not

be appropriate to the anlaysis of the more regionalised and restricted

production, distribution, and consumption networks of the "Dark Ages".

It seems fairly clear that contact with distant regions always existed even in the obscurity of the seventh and early eighth centuries, whether those regions were geographically separated as Constantinople was from the Lombard capital at Pavia, or temporally separated as the Senate was from it's early medieval apparition (see Brown 1984: 11 -12 and Krautheimer 1971: 214 for references to the Senate in ninth century Rome). In fact, as we have seen, the significance of the materials and ideas appropriated from these distant contexts was to an extent predicated upon the separation (S7:2). But we might imagine that the situation would change when we have evidence for the emergence of a social system which transcended the regional and even national boundaries of the early middle ages. Such a world system was the Carolingian empire.

§8: 2 *More Romano*

In AD 773, the Carolingian king, Charles the Great (Charlemagne) crossed into Italy with an army and laid seige to the Lombard capital at Pavia. The Lombard kingdom soon fell and became a "sub-kingdom of the Frankish Empire" (Wickham 1981: 46 - 48; Noble 1984: 128 - 132). From then until the collapse of the Carolingian state in the late ninth century (Settia 1984), the Carolingians held *de facto* political power over much of the Peninsula. Their allies (the Papacy) controlled the *terra sancti Petri*. Only Benevento and the southern Byzantine possessions of Naples, Amalfi, and parts of Apulia and Calabria remained outside the Carolingian political orbit (Wickham 1981: 49).

Charlemagne's invasion of Italy was the culmination of a series of alliances and disputes between the Lombards, the Papacy, and the Franks (Noble 1984). Wickham states that Charlemagne "rather unwillingly" took on the Italian campaign (1981: 47), while Noble suggests that the need to get rid of the "Lombard nuisance and a "sense of duty" to the Republic of St. Peter (inspired by Desiderius' attacks on it), made the invasion "necessary" (1984: 132). This is hardly the place to debate the niceties of Charlemagne's motivations for taking this action, but we might suggest that the capture of Italy and the incorporation of Rome within the empire, would have been of great significance to a ruler who was portrayed as the "new Constantine" (Krautheimer 1971: 230 - 7).

By the time he had added Italy to the Carolingian empire, Charlemagne ruled a large and heterogenous entity, created through the military conquests of himself and his father, combined with the missionary zeal of clerics (see McKitterick 1983 for the conquests, and Parsons 1983; Riché 1980 for the christian missions). But the Carolingian empire of the late eighth and ninth centuries was a very different structure from the Roman Empire, and from the kind of imperial system envisaged in Wallerstein's world systems model (see above §5:2, and Wallerstein 1974). In the Carolingian case the overarching political superstructure was weak, the bureaucracy limited, centralisation incomplete, and the military structure "primitive". Local aristocratic power and authority had to be reckoned with and were potential sources of disintegration.

Instead the Carolingian empire resembled what Eric Wolf has termed a "civilisation". The use of this term by Wolf is not meant to carry connotations of superiority but rather refers to

> "cultural interaction zones pivoted upon a hegemonic
> tributary society central to each zone. Such hegemony usually
> involves the development of an ideological model by a
> successful centralising elite of surplus takers, which is
> replicated by other elites within the wider political-
> economic orbit of interaction" (Wolf 1982: 82).

In the Carolingian case the "ideological model" was central to what has become known as the *Carolingian Renaissance*'. This Renaissance was court produced and directed. The most renowned thinkers and craftsmen of the period were gathered together in the royal court, and it was they, in consultation with the king, who dictated and determined Carolingian political philosophy, and who patronised and produced art and architecture. As we shall see later in this section, there can be little doubt that ideas and concepts derived from the former were expressed in, and reinforced by, the latter.

The Renaissance of which these men were the architects drew heavily upon the conceptual and material core that was **Rome** (Panofsky 1972). More precisely, it was the period when the Church and the Empire were united – under Constantine and Theodosius – which was most extensively mined for material cultural and literary resources for use in the Carolingian political project (Krautheimer 1971).

With the modest war bands at the disposal of the Carolingian kings, and with the diffusion of political power throughout the social formation, it

was a great challenge to ensure the coherence of the polyethnic and polylinguistic empire. The Carolingian emperors rose to this challenge by patronising the one body which had outposts in even the most far flung corners of the empire - the Church. Through its development of a unitary ideology which portrayed christian society as one and indivisible, and its conception of the king as the 'Lords Anointed', the Church was to be the binding force which ensured the continued integration of the empire (see Hodges and Moreland 1988).

This "ideological model" stressed two basic themes - the rebirth of the Frankish nation as the people of God, and the rebirth of the Roman empire. Based on the writings of early christian thinkers - Augustine, Gregory the Great, Ambrose, Tertullian, and Fortunatus - a purely christian political philosophy was produced (Krautheimer 1971: 231). The Church and the State were to be essentially one. The Frankish people were to be "renewed" as the new chosen people of God. In theory there was to be one Church, one society, and one people. In reality, there were many peoples (some barely christian) and society itself was in danger of fragmenting into the local power networks which formed it. Nevertheless, people were encouraged to think of themselves as part of one divinely ordained system. What the Jews had been in the Old Testament, the Franks were to become in the New[2].

The ruler's power now came from God and no longer from the people. The biological cohesiveness of the Frankish people was extended to the other groups in the empire through the sharing of elements of the christian faith. To go against the "order" was not only a criminal offence but a sacrilegous act (Ullmann 1969: 59). Many civil crimes now became punished

by excommunication, and in the ninth century an excommunicant was, from a social, public, and legal point of view, a dead person. "In general anyone who stood in contempt of ecclesiastical censure was to be exiled by the king,...he was to be persecuted as God's and the church's enemy and as a ravager of the kingdom" (*ibid*: 34). At the local level the power and position of the Church was extended through the granting of immunities from civil interference to many monasteries (for Italian monasteries see Drew 1963).

The revival of classical antiquity permeated all aspects of life at the Carolingian court, the monasteries and royal estates. It can be seen in the range of classical texts in the libraries of the monasteries and cathedrals (Bullough 1977; McKitterick 1978 and 1984) but especially in the form and decoration of the great churches. The structural composition, the pilasters and capitals of the gatehouse of the monastery at Lorsch - the *Torhalle* - hark back to Roman triumphal archs, and particularily to the arch of Constantine (Krautheimer 1971: 233; Panofsky 1972). Inside the *Torhalle* classical architectual themes are repeated in the frescoes, while the royal palace at Ingelheim contained frescoes of the two "good" emperors - Constantine and Theodosius. Illustrated maunscripts are full of classical motifs, "the egg and dart pattern, the palmette the vine *rinceau*, and the acanthus - began to reassert themselves against the abstract interlaces and schematized animal patterns of insular and Merovingian art (Panofsky 1972: 47 - 8)[3].

The Carolingian adoption of a late Roman rhetoric in art and architecture can be seen as an attempt to reclaim their heritage as "legitimate heirs

who had neglected or even forgotten their property for a time" (*Ibid*: 109)

and to revolt against their Merovingian parents and look to their Roman

grandparents for support (*ibid*: 38). More than this it was an attempt to

deny four hundred years of history, and to ground their present in the past

of the Constantinian empire, thereby giving the existing social structure a

christian imperial ancestry. Social relations could be presented as

longstanding, natural and immutable in a world of change and flux.

To what extent was this ideological model, and its material representations,

replicated in areas outside the German and French heartlands? Can we find

evidence for it in Italy? In fact Krautheimer (1971: 224; 1980: 114) sees a

Roman revival of classical antiquity as slightly preceding that of the

Carolingians (though see below). The papacy's establishment of *domuscultae*

to provision Rome, their repair of the acqueducts, and the aggrandisement

of the city through a major new construction programme can be seen as

parts of a multi-faceted attempt to consolidate their power as the

inheritors of Rome's greatness in opposition to the claims of the Eastern

empire.

The papacy's involvement in a long running "separation movement", as

chronicled by Noble (1984, and see **Llewelyn 1986,** and **O'Hara 1985**), finds

material reflection in attempts to emulate the grandeur of the Rome on the

Bosphorus. Already in the mid-eighth century, Zacharias' reconstructions of

part of the Lateran clearly echo elements of Constantinople's imperial

palace, while church renovations look to Byzantine and Near Eastern

prototypes for inspiration (**Krautheimer 1980: 120 – 1**). For while the late

eighth century popes sought to rebuild Rome as an adjunct to their political motivations, the conceptual link with the East was hard to break.

From the second decade of the ninth century the political schism which was effective from at least the late eighth, was complemented and reinforced by a conceptual break. Rome's popes now looked to Rome's past for legitimating material slogans. In architectural terms, the late Roman christian basilicas, and especially Old St. Peters, were the inspiration for both Carolingian and papal constructions. This is best seen at Sta. Prassede, constructed in the papacy of Paschal I (817 - 24) -

> The size of Sta. Prassede, the plan with its T-transept and its single apse, the tall narrow structure of the transept which is opposed to the nave in direction and in proportion; the colonnades with their architraves, the comparatively wide windows of the clerestory; the lavish mosaic and marble decoration of the interior and the sobreity of the exterior; the clear contrast of the parts in plan and elevation - the whole layout and style find their exact prototype in the great basilicas of the fourth century. Only as a revival of the architecture of the great Christian century can Sta. Prassede be explained (Krautheimer 1971: 219) (see fig. 13).

Similarily the Zeno chapel at Sta. Prassede and the chapels of Sta. Barbara and Sta. Nicola at SS. Quattro Coronati have definite early christian prototypes, recalling the centrally planned mausolea surrounding the fourth century basilicas of St. Sebastiano, St. Peters, and St. Pauls. Such chapels/mausolea are also found at St. Denis, near Paris. They had largely disappeared by the sixth century and only reappeared in the early years of the ninth. They can be connected with the growth in the cult of relics and reverence for the dead in ninth century Europe. These relics were moved from the catacombs into the newly built and restored churchs of Rome, and further north into Germany and France, by the ninth century popes Leo III

and Paschal I (Heitz 1980). Throughout Europe these relics came to be 'displayed' in annular crypts probably copied from the one inserted into Old St. Peters before the sixth century (fig. 13) (Krautheimer 1980 137)*.

The Carolingian Renaissance and that of papal Rome were mutually reinforcing. The renascence of Rome, as part of the Carolingian empire can only have enhanced the Frankish claim to be the midwives of a new Roman empire, while the transalpine connection was important for a papacy anxious to stress its separation from the East, and decisive in its struggle with the Lombards. The geographical and temporal links being made reflected the duality inherent in Carolingian political philosophy, a philosophy designed to ensure system reproduction (though see note 3). For while the king had secular power, the clergy had divine authority. These dualities are made manifest, to those who had access to it, in a (now destroyed) mosaic from the Lateran Palace. Later illustrations show, on the left side, Christ handing the *laboreum* to Constantine and the *pallium* to St. Peter, while on the right St. Peter is portrayed as handing the *pallium* to pope Leo III and the banner to Charlemagne (Krautheimer 1980: 115). A complex web of associations drawn from the past and the present were incorporated in an ultimately political piece of iconography.

We must recognise that the papal *renovatio* was paralled by infrastructural developments such as the foundation of the *domuscultae* and the expansion of the *diaconiae* (see above, chapter 7), while that of the Carolingians was accompanied by changes in the organisation of pottery, glass, and quern production, and by the stimulation of long distance trade (Hodges 1982;

Hodges and Whitehouse 1983; James 1988). But what of the countryside outside the *territorium* of Rome, and far from the Rhine valley?

Noble has spoken a Carolingian "monastic conquest" of Italy preceeding the politico-military one (1984: 153 - 9). What changes, if any, did this produce in a social formation which was essentially rural? What was the impact of the Carolingian takeover, and the introduction of its ideological model, at the local level? The rest of this chapter will consider in detail the evidence for changes at the monasteries of San Vincenzo al Volturno and Farfa in Sabina in the Carolingian period, and attempt to account for those. As often is the case we can show that study at this more finely focussed regional level, informed by a world system perspective, can provide a clearer picture of the dialectical relationship between the ideal of élite constructs and the reality of lived experience.

S8: 3 *Monasteries in a World System*

Farfa in Sabina was founded between 560 and 570 by an eremitic monk from Syria called Lawrence, who had recently been made bishop of the Sabina with his seat at *Forum Novum* (Vescovio) (C. F. 121 - 132). In fact the monastery was founded on the remains of an ancient Roman cult centre, probably dedicated to the goddess Vacuna (Evans 1939). The archaeological evidence from the site demonstrates continuity from Imperial to late Antique times (Moreland 1986: 337 - 8; McClendon 1981). Although the historical evidence suggests that this initial foundation was only of brief duration, the recent excavations may have located some elements of it. Thus a series of characteristic seventh century graves were found in the lowest excavated

layers, along wih a mid-sixth century ARS plate (Whitehouse 1983). No structures can be assigned to this phase and its seems likely that the monks simply reused the remains of the villa (McClendon 1986: 63).

The *Chronicon* records that the monastery was refounded in the late seventh century by Thomas of Maurienne, a Gaul, who while on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land had a vision of the Virgin commanding him to go to Italy and re-establish a monastery there dedicated to her name.

The foundation story continues that Thomas found the site in ruins, overgrown with vegetation and infested with snakes (C. F. I, 3 - 6). We need not necessarily accept the Chronicler's word for all of this since the foundation of religious communities in wooded or wild places was an early medieval monastic ideal (Le Goff 1985b). But the general lack of material remains in the region from this period does suggest that much of it had reverted to varying stages of forest. Whatever is the case, the monastery soon found favour with the Lombard dukes of Spoleto who endowed it with lands and so initiated the process by which the monastery gradually built up a huge landed power base, through state patronage and pious donations, over much of central Italy (McClendon 1986: 6 - 7; Noble 1984: 157).

The great landed wealth of the monastery and its contacts with the Lombards allowed the abbots of Farfa to play an important role in the complex politics of late eighth and early ninth century Italy. Probatus (abbot from 770 - 781) took part in a diplomatic mission from Pope Hadrian to the Lombard king Desiderius (Noble 1984: 130), while abbot John I (872 - 881) was a major figure in attempts to organise defensive measures against

Saracenic attacks in the late ninth century (Leggio 1987: 61). As we shall see later, the importance of the monastery was recognised by successive Carolingian emperors, and was a significant element in Franco-Papal relations in the late eighth and ninth centuries.

The histories of Farfa and San Vincenzo were linked from the very beginning, for while they were both to exhibit the same rise to power in the late eighth century, and the same demise in the late ninth, the monastery by the Volturno is said to have been founded by three Beneventan nobles who were monks at Farfa (see fig. 1). Paldo, Taso, and Tato were anxious to return to their home area, and following the advice of abbot Thomas they went back to found the monastery at San Vincenzo. The foundation is dated to the early years of the eighth century (C. V. I, 104 – 23).

The site was founded on the remains of another old religious centre - a late Roman cemetery church this time (Hodges 1985, and see above chapter 6). As at Farfa, the monastery was patronised from its foundation by the local Lombard élites - the princes of Benevento. Guisulf I (689 - 706) donated the large block of land in the upper Volturno valley which, along with a further donation by Arichis II in 758 - 60, formed the core of the monastery's estates - the *terra sancti Vincentii* - up into the period of its greatest wealth in the ninth century (Wickham 1985: 13). By this time the monastery possessed lands over much of southern Italy and as far north as Piacenza (Wickham pers. comm.).

In terms of the built fabric, both monasteries appear to have reached their
zenith in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. The evidence for this
is best at San Vincenzo where the recent excavations have revealed the
development of the site from a small early eighth century establishment of
about ½ hectare within the old Roman villa, to that of a "monastic city"
covering 4 - 5 hectares with lavish abbots quarters, a huge refectory
(capable of accom͡dating hundreds of monks), decorated walkways and
corridors, and many churches (fig. 6) (Hodges 1985). The art historical
and archaeological evidence shows that this massive expansion took place
during the abbiates of Josue (792 - 817), Talaricus (817 - 23), and
Epiphanius (824 - 842) (plate 5) (Mitchell 1985a).

At Farfa the more limited archaeological investigations allow us an equally
limited glimpse of the development of the monastery to its ninth century
zenith. However, a tenth century description of the ninth century
monastery,[c] combined with what archaeological evidence there is (McClendon
1986; Whitehouse et. al. 1979 and 1981; Whitehouse 1985) leaves us in no
doubt about the wealth and prestige of the monastery -

> "ecclesia denique quam mirifice ornata erat et officine
> cuncte qualiter composite, quis ad plenum valet referre(?)
> tamen dicamus pauca ex plurimus. ipsa namque maior ecclesia
> tota plumbeo tecto cooperiebatur. altare quoque principale
> ciburium totum ex lapide oniccino habebat. librorum volumina
> quanta et qualia vel quam diversis aureis argenteisque
> operibus ac gemmis lapidibusque pretiosis intesta habebantur,
> longum est enarrare. ....quarta autem in palatio regali
> constituta erat, quod ibi honorificum satis edificatum erat,
> in quo imperatores hospitabantur, quando illus visitandi
> gratia veniebant. ....totius monasterii ex omni parte erat
> forniter munitum et turritum ad instar fortis civitatis.
> .....quid multa(?) in toto regna Italico non inveniebatur
> simile illi monasterio in cunctis boni, excepto monasterio
> quod vocatur Nonantule, sed non ex toto, ut plures fatentur"
> (C. F. I, 29 - 31, quoted in McClendon 1986: 130 - 31).

But this grandeur was expressed in a particular form. If anywhere in rural
Italy, the monasteries of San Vincenzo and Farfa exhibit the rhetoric of a
Carolingian *renovatio*. At San Vincenzo the influence of northern concepts in
architecture and church layout is already apparent by the late eighth
century. The "proto-ambulatory" of the phase 3 "south church", although
modelled on that of a late Roman predecessor, finds parallels in
Carolingian design, as does the tricoran apse constructed within the late
Roman fabric of the "crypt church"(fig. 7)   (Hodges 1985: 10 - 11, and see
fig. 00). But the real expression of Carolingian ideology was to make itself
most apparent in the early ninth century phases (fig. 6).

During the constructional programmes caried out in the first four decades
of that century, the full array of Carolingian symbolism was incorporated
within the fabric of the monastery. Many of the rooms and corridors were
covered in painted decoration. Because the walls do not stand to their
original height, the decoration which was uncovered by the excavations
comes mostly from the lower courses. But this itself is very informative. It
consists of dados obviously imitating the marble revetments of late Antique
buildings. The undulating lines of the design, representing the "marbling"
of the original, and the depiction of metal clamps between the painted
panels makes this much clear (Mitchell 1985a: 126 - 32). Although the
effect might appear garish to modern eyes, the association claimed for the
monastery through the emulation of the material culture of the past would
have made a deep impression on those for whom the Roman world was part of
their lived experience. The deep significance of this marbled motif to the
monastic community is made apparent when we consider its use in other
contexts. Some of the floor tiles from the refectory contain the same

decoration (*ibid*: fig. 6:39 p. 164), while there is some suggestion that it might also have been incorporated into the window glass (Hodges *pers. comm.*).

In the long corridor to the west of the refectory (see fig. 7) a series of benches set up against the walls were decorated with two designs. One consists of a series of differently coloured equilateral triangles; while the second comprises "parti-coloured overlapping semicircular tiles running in four horizontal rows, each row being distinguished by its colours" (Mitchell 1985a: 143). Although the latter design is rare in early medieval contexts, it was a common decorative motif in Roman antiquity (*ibid*). Many examples can be seen at Pompeii, and in the National Museum in Naples (for an illustration see Pozzi *et. al.* 1984: 42).

Above the benches in the long corridor were representations of some of the prophets. Although many of these had been destroyed in antiquity, careful excavation has allowed several to be reconstructed. The artistic style employed seems to owe more to north Italian influence than to the purely local cultural mileiu (Mitchell 1985a). Although this might seem at odds with the postulated "Carolingian Connection", we have to remember that the influence of the latter was to a large extent mediated through their control of former Lombard centres of power.

The impact of Carolingian philosophy is perhaps seen most clearly in the reconstructed inscription carried by one of the prophets, This reads

"In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that
halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her

that I have afflicted (Micah iv, 6 quoted in Mitchell 1985a: 150).

This passage referring to the future victory and glory of the church would be appropriate in any monastic context, but particularily so in one imbued with the tenets of Carolingian religious philosophy.

One of the ninth century glories of the monastery at San Vincenzo was the abbey church. The *Chronicon* records its construction and significance. It was constructed in the abbiate of Josue and was said to have been partially built from the elements of a Roman temple brought to San Vincenzo from a site near Capua (C. V. I, 219 - 222). In the present context this reuse of Roman *spolia* is significant in itself. Perhaps more important, however, is the fact that the *Chronicon* records the text of the inscription "in gilded letters" which was set into the facade of the church⁶. Fragments of an inscription which fitted the recorded text were found incorporated into the floor of the twelfth century monastic church on the other side of the river Volturno. This convinced the great historian and archaeologist of San Vincenzo - Don. Angelo Pantoni - that the early medieval monastery had always stood on this site (Pantoni 1980: 20 - 21).

But the scale of the structures found in the Sheffield excavations can leave no doubt that this was the site of the monastery of Josue, Talaricus and Epiphanius. Further, more fragments of the recorded inscription were found in those excavations. It would seem that parts of the ruined church were carried across the Volturno and built into the Romanesque structures,

perhaps to indicate continuity by association in the face of rupture and change.

The significance of the fragments of the inscription found on both sites lies in the fact that it consisted of bronze letters set into marble, and held in place by rivets (Mitchell 1985b). The original inscription was probably about nine metres long and must have been set high up on the facade. All these features of the inscription - the materials used, its location and size - , make it a rarity in early medieval contexts. Its nearest parallels come from the triumphal arches and Imperial temples of the Roman period (*ibid*). Although the inscription above Josue's church was an adaptation rather than a replication of these predecessors, it clearly drew upon the cultural resources of the Imperial past, and fits precisely within the context of a Carolingian *renovatio*.

Indeed throughout the monastery of San Vincenzo Roman inscriptions, columns, capitals etc. seem to have been directly incorporated within the early medieval construction. The result was a complex network of appropriated and imitated images, all looking back to the Roman past and, across the Alps, to the Carolingian present. This Renaissance symbolism permeated every level of the monastery from the tiles on the floor to the form of the monastery itself. Its planned nature owes much to the conceptual movement which also resulted in the St. Gall Plan (Horn and Born 1979), while the bilateral symmetry of its major buildings recalls the layout of the Carolingian imperial palace at Aachen (Hodges *pers. comm.*; for an illustration of the latter see Conant 1959: 47). Thus the major "secular" building - the distinguished guests quarters - at San Vincenzo lies at the

northern end of the monastic complex (over the "south church"), and was

connected to the prinicipal ecclesiastical building - the abbey church - by

a long corridor (see fig. 5). Here in material form is expressed the

fundamentals of the Carolingian political philosophy - the state and the

Church forming an indivisible unity in the governance of the empire (see

§8: 2).

The evidence for the impact of the Carolingian "ideological model" at Farfa

is less clear than at San Vincenzo since the continued use of the site has

meant that less was available for excavation. But there are some good

indications that here too the monastic fabric was permeated with the

concept of *renovatio.*

Although we have no record of an inscription on the facade of the church at

Farfa, there is evidence for the copying of the style and form of Roman

epigraphic techniques. Thus the epitaph of abbot Ingoaldus (815 - 830)

seems to have consisted of bronze letters set into marble (Mitchell 1985b).

The letters on the epitaph bear a much stronger similarity to the Roman

originals than do the San Vincenzo ones, and suggest a more "sophisticated"

imitation. This is seen even more clearly in the epitaph of the Ingoaldus'

predecessor as abbot of Farfa - Sichardus - discovered in 1959. It was

executed in perfectly formed Roman letters, and as McClendon writes it is

"an expression of the full flowering of the revival of classical epigraphy

that characterised the Carolingian Renaissance (1986: 8).

Few late eighth and ninth century frescoes survive from Farfa, but some of

those that do suggest a similar representative scheme, drawing upon the

same classical themes as those at San Vincenzo. Thus Mitchell argues that some of the the dados in the western crypt at Farfa are the only other examples in ninth century Italy of the use of the parti-coloured overlapping tile motif seen in much greater profusion at San Vincenzo (Mitchell 1985a: 143 - 44). San Vincenzo's painted martyrs and saints are paralleled at Farfa by a very fragmentary fresco on a wall to the south of the western crypt (see fig. 14). This is a portion of a standing, draped figure, and the stylistic techinque used finds parallels in northern Italy, Rome, and San Vincenzo (McClendon 1986: 72).

But perhaps the most convincing case for the impact of Carolingian concepts at Farfa can be made from a consideration of the form of the church and other buildings. The *Constructio* (or *Libellus Constructionis Farfensis*) records that abbot Sichardus built an "oratory" in honour of the Saviour "joined to the church of the Virgin with a crypt below where he honorifically interred the bodies of the holy martyrs Valentine and Hilarius, translated from Tuscany, together with the body of St. Alexander the son of Felicitas" (C. F., 21 quoted in McClendon 1986: 7). McClendon identifies this complex with the semicircular apse and crypt at the western end of the early medieval abbey church (see fig. 14). The form of this construction finds its most immediate parallels in early ninth century Rome, across the Alps at Fulda and St. Denis, and two hundred years into the past at Old St. Peters in Rome (fig. 13) (*ibid*: 57 - 62. See also Krautheimer 1971 and 1980). The preference for the type of annular crypt seen at Farfa is directly related to the cult of relics referred to above (§8:2).

At some point after the construction of the crypt, a concentric semicircular wall was built around it, and to the west of this ran a porticoed courtyard (Whitehouse 1985c). Many burials were found in this area (Whitehouse 1983). The most exact parallels for the concentric wall around the apse come from Fulda in Germany (McClendon 1986: 71), although, as we have seen, another example has been discovered at San Vincenzo (Hodges 1985: 10 - 11). Like the Fulda example, at Farfa the area between the curved wall and the apse of the church was used for burial. Indeed there is some evidence of a kind of hierarchy in death reflecting the structure of the monastic community in life -

> "the burials furthest from the church tend to be simpler, occasionally outlined with mortared rubble or a few unhewn stones, whereas those nearest the church, and especially inside the curved wall and within the adjacent portico, are usually constructed of brick and mortar or dressed stone" (McClendon 1986: 68).

This spatial representation of a monastic structure culminated in the burial of abbots in the space between the western crypt and the surrounding wall, and, in the context of a revival of ancient Rome, in the burial of at least one of them in a Roman battle sarcophagus (McClendon 1986: 69). Position in life guaranteed burial close to the relics in the crypt, and presumably granted sanctity by association[7].

The nave of the ninth century church contained a complex *opus sectile* pavement. It was probably made from reused material taken from the Roman floors on the site. Along with several examples in Rome (Sta. Maria in Cosmedin, the Zeno chapel at Sta. Prassede, St. Giorgio in Velabro, and SS. Quattro Coronati) the Farfa *opus sectile* pavement is part of a revival in

ninth century Italy of a flooring technique last used in the early Christian

period (McClendon 1980).

So the massive florescence of both San Vincenzo and Farfa in the early

ninth century can be seen as predicated upon the implementation of the

politico-religious philosophy of the Carolingian Renaissance. A complex

mixture of ancient Roman, contemporary Roman, and north European symbols

and techniques made these two monasteries potent structured sign systems

in the heart of rural Italy. We have to ask **why?**

§8: 4 *Border Monasteries*

The material symbolism at San Vincenzo and Farfa was the direct product of

Carolingian involvement in the affairs of both abbeys. One consequence of

Noble's "monastic takeover" was the increased prevalence of Frankish monks

at both monasteries (Wickham *forthcoming*; McClendon 1986: 6 - 7), and we

have already referred to the grants of immunity by Charlemagne to Farfa in

775, and San Vincenzo in 787. The reason for this Carolingian patronage is

to be found in the location of the monasteries on sensitive political

frontiers.

San Vincenzo lay on the southern borders of the duchy of Spoleto and on the

northern frontiers of the duchy of Benevento. As we we saw at the beginning

of §8:3 the monastery on its foundation was endowed with substantial

blocks of land by the Gisulf I and Arichis II. In the mid eighth century it

was also patronised by the Lombard king Desiderius and by duke Lupus of

Spoleto (Wickham: *forthcoming*). Both clearly saw advantages in favouring a

monastery on the edge of territory over which they had political ambitions. The Carolingians also recognised San Vincenzo's strategic position, for although Charlemagne never gave lands to the monastery, he did grant immunity and that was to be important in later years.

Carolingian interest stemmed from the ambivalent relationship between the Beneventan duchy and the empire. Benevento long resisted incorporation into Charlemagne's state. In 787, the year immunity was granted to San Vincenzo and Monte Cassino, Charlemagne launched an attack on the duchy, as a result of which the Arichis II appealed to the Byzantines for help. This was granted, but by the time the Byzantine forces arrived, Benevento had fallen Arichis was dead, and his successor Grimoald III (787 - 806) was a hostage in Carolingian hands. He was forced to go out and defeat the Byzantine forces as a condition of his freedom (Vickham 1981: 49). Thus Benevento became the southernmost region of the diffuse state that was the Carolingian empire and a border zone between the Frankish and Byzantine superpowers.

But, although the Beneventans acknowledged Frankish suzerainty, they still pursued a largely independent political course. Grimoald III (787 - 806) minted his own coins and fought the Carolingians on several occasions (ibid). As Whittaker has pointed out frontiers are "constantly shifting and in ferment, ambivalent in their loyalties and often having more in common with the 'other side', as it were, than with their own political centre (1983b: 122). The Beneventans loyalty to the empire was never certain. Their political and military actions made this clear, as did their adoption of the church of Santa Sophia in Constantinople as a model for their own church

of the same name in Beneventum (Wickham 1981: 159). Given the lack of a strong overarching political and military structure within the Carolingian empire, the emperors chose to patronise monasteries like San Vincenzo in an attempt to secure and legitimate Frankish control. Thus the 'plethora of symbolism' at San Vincenzo.

Wickham (*forthcoming*) presents an explanation for the Carolingian "atmosphere" at San Vincenzo which is at slight variance to the one offered above. He shows that the period of monastic embellishment in the early ninth century coincided with a sequence of donations of substantial estates by Beneventans. He concludes that the monastic building programme was 'financed' from these resources, and explains the Carolingian aura of San Vincenzo by suggesting that Carolingian cultural hegemony was so complete in the early ninth century that any construction, even those executed by Beneventans, would be formulated within the dictates of this dominant framework (*ibid*).

But this argument fails to adequately consider the overwhelming weight of Carolingian rhetoric expressed in the buildings at San Vincenzo. If the early ninth century monastery was built under Beneventan directives we would expect some diminution in the scale of Carolingian expressionism, and the incorporation of material symbols derived from alternative conceptual schemes. Just as we have argued that the "dominant ideologies" of the Roman élite were not passively accepted by a population seen as mute and unintelligent, so we should not expect the complete assimilation of Carolingian ideology by a group which were at best tolerant of outside control. As Carol Smith has shown in a different context, peripheral

regions seldom accept core ideas and structures without substantial modification (Smith 1984).

It is perhaps significant that the donations to the monastery from the Benevento are almost all from people who, although attached to the court, were private individuals. As Wickham notes, the princes themselves gave little (*ibid*). This might suggest that the rulers of Benevento saw little to be gained from patronage of the monastery, perhaps because they recognised it as explicitly Carolingian. Although it might be difficult to conceive of a situation where the members of the court gave lands to San Vincenzo when this was not "state policy", the complexities of Beneventan internal politics allows that some people might have taken the opportunity to favour a monastery closely connected with the most powerful political group in Italy. The instability of the Beneventan regime at the very time of these donations to the monastery is shown by the murder of two princes, and by the sequence of events leading up to the civil war of the 840's (Wickham 1981: 154 - 160).

These arguments do not necessarily contradict Wickham's suggestion that the resources drawn from the estates donated by the Beneventans "funded" the construction programmes at San Vincenzo (see §8:5). We might rather imagine a situation where both parties (Beneventans and Carolingians) patronised the monastery, each for their own reasons, and each in their own way. One donated landed wealth, the other provided a universal ideological model which fitted the Church's vision of pan-European temporal and spiritual power. Whatever the reasons for the Beneventan patronage they paradoxically

found their donations contributing to the expansion of both the abbey and Carolingian influence in the area.

Farfa's location is no less politically sensitive. It lay on the borders of the duchy of Spoleto and the *terra sancti Petri*, and figured prominently in a long correspondence between pope Hadrian and Charlemagne over the formers claim to the *patrimonium savinese*. This consisted of those former parts of the duchy of Rome on the east bank of the Tiber which had been gradually lost to the Lombards from the early eighth century (Noble 1984: 156). Hadrian hoped that the Carolingian takeover of the duchy of Spoleto would result in the return of these lands. In fact it did, but with the significant exception of Farfa and its *patrimonium*. The Carolingian grant of immunity to the monastery in 775 meant that it was effectively independent of Papal influence. As Toubert says Farfa therefore "constitué en Italie centrale au IX⁰ siècle une sorte de môle contre lequel sont venues buter les tentatives d'expansion pontificales" (1973: 985). This might have been part of Charlemagne's intentions in not withdrawing the 775 immunity on recognising papal control of the Sabina. He would have been unwilling to see the dismemberment of his newly acquired kingdom, and saw Farfa as an effective means of countering the expansion of papal control in this direction (Noble 1984: 159).

Like San Vincenzo, Farfa's landed wealth was the result of donations of large organised production units, and smaller parcels of land and groups of tenants (Toubert 1973: 112ff), and as at San Vincenzo the resources from these properties may have provided the economic base on which the monastic edifice was constructed (see below §8: 5). But what is certain is that Farfa

remained an imperial abbey radiating, through a whole array of "active" material culture, Carolingian ideology on the borders of the Papal States and in the midst of newly conquered Lombard territory. For the material resources and ideas incorporated into the monastic structure at Farfa (and at San Vincenzo) were not simply reflections of Carolingian ideas, but served to reproduce those ideas through forming the environment within which daily practice was situated (see chapter 3).

But if the symbols at San Vincenzo and Farfa were "active", then whose actions were they designed to influence?[9] Here questions of access and audience are fundamental. Both monastic complexes can be considered on a range of semiotic levels. These run from the mass of the complexes themselves, to the form of particular buildings, right down to the symbols and groups of symbols embodied in particular works of art. Each of these "levels" might have had an impact on particular sections of society, though we should expect no simple symmetry between the semiotic levels and those of the societal hierarchy. Some of the structured systems of meaning may have been "impressive" on all groups within the social formation, while others had a more restricted efficacy. As we said the question of access is fundamental.

On the broadest level, the shere grandeur of the monasteries, veritable cities in an overwhelmingly rural context, must have helped to reinforce social relationships between the monastic community and its tenants, and monastic rights over peasant surplus labour, and to reproduce the 'dull compulsion of economic relations'. See §8:5).

But who would have appreciated the significance of the bronze letters on Ingoaldus' epitaph or on the facade of Josue's church? Who would have been influenced by the obvious Roman symbolism of the marbled decoration on the walls, floors and windows of San Vincenzo or the construction of the apse at Farfa? It may be that it did not really matter if the import of particular items of material culture was appreciated. Instead the whole "plethora of symbols" may have constituted the message (Leach 1983: 250). But it is clear that the "message" would have had more immediacy if the individual groups of symbols had been understood.

The situation of much of the material culture expressive of Carolingian ideology within the monasteries must have meant that access to it was restricted to a small group of people - the local élite. From the location of the frescoes and reused Roman pieces in the spiritual heart of the monastery at San Vincenzo, this audience would seem to have been the monks themselves, and to a lesser extent the secular nobility of the area. It would therefore appear that as "active" material culture these symbols primarily served to reinforce group identity and solidarity within the monastery. They constructed the community which constructed them.

Such group self constitution would have been of great importance in monasteries where, although some of the monks were Frankish, many must have been the sons of local (that is, Beneventan and Spoletan) aristocrats. This inculcation of cohesiveness would have been intended to ensure the commitment of local élites to the idea of the Empire in the face of ambivalence and uncertainty. That such measures were necessary, and that the attachment of the monks to the Imperial concept was not a foregone

conclusion, is shown by the case of the deposition by Charlemagne of abbot Poto of San Vincenzo in 783 for allegedly refusing to pray for the Frankish king, and insulting Franks in general (Charlemagne in particular) (Wickham 1989: *forthcoming*). Poto's dissent points to the existence within San Vincenzo of, at times, opposed groups of Frankish and Lombardic monks, and to the need for the type of group reinforcement suggested above.

Although the Roman empire as such had long since disappeared it persisted as a conceptual core which drew its power from the memory of the 'glory that was Rome'. This core was the source from which a whole series of legitimating symbols and concepts were drawn and which were used in attempts to ensure the reproduction of a pan-European world system, through encouraging coherence and integration when all around the forces of change and flux were already in action.

§8: 5 *Regional Production and Social Relations*

Conventional archaeological wisdom would suggest that the transformation of sites like San Vincenzo and Farfa from small religious centres in the middle of ancient ruins overgrown with vines and infested with vipers to become some of the most powerful and influential monasteries in early medieval Italy should have been predicated upon a massive expansion of the regional productive base. Just such an expansion can be seen in some of the eastern parts of Germany after conquest by the Carolingians in the late eighth century. Perhaps the clearest example comes from the Odenwald which was given to the monastery of Lorsch after the Carolingian conquest of

Saxony and Bavaria (Nitz 1983a). Here control by the monastery resulted in the transformation of

> "densely forested hill country..into a cultural landscape, with a network of central places controlling administrative districts and with a chain of market towns linking the newly developed hill country, supplying agricultural and forest products to the densely settled Rhine plain to the west" (Nitz 1983a: 106).

The monasteries (Fulda and Amorbach also benefitted from such donations) developed sophisticated patterns of landuse and settlement to allow the efficient exploitation of these areas. Nitz (*ibid*) argues that these new settlements strengthened the economic base of the monasteries and enabled them to render to the emperor the increasingly heavy dues demanded in the early ninth century. They probably also provided the economic basis for the construction of monuments like the *Torhalle* at Lorsch, and had the further advantage of ensuring Carolingian control over, and profit from, disputed lands (see also Nitz 1983b).

To what extent can we locate a similar transformation in the lands controlled by Farfa and San Vincenzo? We have to look most closely at the areas around the monasteries because, although both communities had vast property holdings over much of central and southern Italy, problems of transportation and commmunication must have precluded the widespread transport of resources from these estates to the monasteries (note 12. See also Devreoy 1984). If *incastellamento* could be dated to the early ninth century then we could convincingly argue for the grandeur of the monasteries being predicated upon a massive restructuring of the regional productive base, though expressing world system ideologies. This, however,

is not the case. The historical evidence from the Sabina and Molise clearly

places *incastellamento* within a tenth and eleventh century context (Toubert

1973; **Vickham** 1985a). The archaeological evidence concurs. Although some

hill top sites do have Forum Ware as we have seen in chapter 7, and can be

dated to the late eighth and early ninth centuries, most are characterised

by tenth and eleventh century coarsewares and by Sparse Glaze finewares

(see chapter 9). But did any other changes (perhaps less dramatic in their

physical manifestations than *incastellamento)* take place in the

organisation of production and the control of population around Farfa and

San Vincenzo?

The evidence is sketchy and ambivalent but it can be argued that some

changes did take place. As we have already noted, the field survey around

the monastery at San Vincenzo located only one site contemporary with the

florescence of the monastery (see **Hayes:** *forthcoming).* This was on the

slopes of the hill called Vacchereccia (**Hodges** et. al. 1984). I shall discuss

this site further in a moment. Apart from this site there is no

archaeological evidence for the organisation of production, or even for

population, in San Vincenzo's *terra.* The historical evidence is not much

better, but it does at least tell us that the area was not totally

depopulated. The lands donated to the monastery by Beneventans in the early

ninth century (see §8:4) formed the southern edge of the San Vincenzo's

terra (**Vickham** 1985a: 19). The texts documenting these donations record

that the land was occupied by small groups of servile tenants, living in

dispersed farmsteads. There is no sign of any reorganisation of these

productive groups throughout the ninth century. In the 880's a monk called

Sabbatinus bemoans the devastation of monastic property near Isernia. This

land was worked from "25 *casis de servis*" grouped around a church (*ibid*:
21). Wickham argues that although the organisation of production in the
former fiscal land which formed the heart of the *terra* was likely to have
been different, it was probably not much more highly organised (*ibid*).

In the Sabina the situation was somewhat different. As with the survey of
San Vincenzo's *terra*, little trace of settlement contemporary with the
monastery was located apart from a few sites containing Forum Ware (see
chapter 7 and fig. 3). The preliminary results of comparisons between the
early medieval coarse ware sequence established for the monastery and the
material collected from villa sites during the field survey suggests that
some of the Roman sites might have had continuous occupation right through
into the the late eighth and ninth centuries (see §6:4). This suggestion is
reinforced by the finding of Forum Ware on four Roman villas (§7:4 and fig.
3). As we noted in §6:4 these sites with early medieval coarse wares and
Forum Wares need not represent the total of sites in the region. We have
consistently argued that Forum Ware should be seen as an élite product but
in a situation of general material cultural poverty, even the coarse wares
might have been available to only a small section of the population. This
would place these villa sites at the apex of a settlement structure. The
rest of the sites might be archaeologically invisible or situated in
"ecological niches" like that occupied by the early inhabitants of Vacchereccia
(Hodges *et. al.* 1984). We shall endeavour to check this last suggestion in
the forthcoming season of field work at Farfa.

But what do these villa sites mean in terms of the organisation of
production in Farfa's *terra*. Here we must turn to Farfa's documentary

record, and inevitably to the work of Pierre Toubert. Toubert's study of the

Farfa documents is unrivalled, and despite some errors (see chapter 9)

remains one of the best studies of changes in the settlement pattern and

the organisation of production in the early medieval Italy. But despite the

wealth of the Farfa archive Toubert feels that "il nous paraît impossible

d'avoir une idée satisfaisante de la réparition de la terre en Sabine au

haut Moyen Age...Les seules conclusions fermes que la lecture des chartes

nous authorise à formuler sont d'une banale modestie" (1973: 450 - 51). But

we can say more than the limited documentation from San Vincenzo allows.

In the late eighth and early ninth centuries the monastery benefited from a

series of donations which endowed Farfa with a number of productive units

already organised around *curtes, villae,* and *casalia* (Toubert 1973: 451). All

these terms refer to what has been called the *sistema curtense,* and which

has been compared with the manorial system in England (Andreolli and

Montanari 1985: 15). Although Toubert points out that the *curtes* system

which existed in Farfa's lands should not be seen as the same as the

classic Carolingian version, in that the relationship between the demense of

the lord and the tenant cultivators was often less structured than in areas

further north (1973: 457 - 465), the system was obviously more highly

organised than the evidence suggests for the *terra S. Vincentii.*

I think that is is reasonable to argue that the villa sites with evidence

for early medieval occupation are the archaeological manifestations of this

curtes system. Of course it is possible, or even likely, that the *casa

domnica* of some of the lords could have been situated elsewhere, but the

high status of the sites as suggested by the ceramic evidence (certainly

the Forum Ware, and possibly the coarse wares too) makes it possible to link them with the level in the social formation below the monastic community. This suggestion is backed up by some documentary evidence which refers to the construction of domainal centres, in these cases churches, within Roman sites. Thus the oratory dedicated to S. Angelo, which was the focus for the *colonia* of Affile, was constructed beside a *cisterna antiqua* (Toubert 1973: 857).

But even if this is the case, the archaeological evidence presently available does not allow us to detect a transformation in the numbers or nature of these sites in Farfa's territory. So we are left in a situation at San Vincenzo and Farfa where agrarian production, although organised differently around each monastery, shows no sign of transformation contemporary with the major monastic construction programmes. It was on the basis of this evidence that Hodges *et. al.* (1985) argued that the economic basis for these developments was purely Carolingian.

But is this the full story? Transportation and communication problems would have affected the distribution of men and resources by the Franks too (see above). We have to consider ways of increasing production which do not involve the wholesale restructuring of the landscape. In a context in which population levels had dropped and land was "plentiful", control over people may have become of some significance. We must look again at the sites which appear in the archaeological record for the first time in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. We must consider more closely the sites of *Vacchereccia*, *Cavallaria* and *Bezanum*, and assess the significance of religious establishments outside the monastic precincts.

The excavations on the mid-slopes of Vacchereccia, as we saw in chapter 7, produced evidence for some sixth-seventh century settlement (Hodges *et. al.* 1984). By far the bulk of the material cultural debris, however, can be dated to the late eighth and early ninth centuries by analogy with the ceramic sequence established by the excavations at the monastery (*ibid*: 170 - 2). Indeed the site seems to have been unique in sharing in the material wealth of the monastery. Most of the fine pottery was of the broad line red painted variety which Patterson believes to have had a restricted distribution (1985: 104). Some glazed sherds were also found, and these might be variants of Forum Ware, again a prestige product (Patterson 1984: 172). Further evidence for a ninth century date for the site, and for its high status, is a sherd of vessel glass which closely resembles pre-881 types from the monastery (J. Stevenson *pers. comm*. For the significance of the 881 date and glass production at the monastery see note 12).

This site in many ways resembles those hill top sites close to the monastery of Farfa which contain   Forum Ware (see §7:4). The material culture at Vacchereccia demonstrates close links between the "high status" population of the site and the monastic community, just as the archaeological and historical evidence from *Cavallaria* and *Bezanum* show close links between them and Farfa. We might argue from these parallels that the occupants of these hill top sites performed similar functions - the administration of the monastic property. Here is the evidence for a change in the organisation of production connected with the monasteries zenith.

What this entails is the increase of what Giddens calls *surveillance*. This involves the "collation of information relevant to...control of the conduct of...[the] subject population, and the direct supervision of that conduct (Giddens 1981: 5). In the present case therefore we have a situation where the pre-existing settlement pattern remains largely intact, but the social relations of production are tightened due to the increased demands made by the élites on peasant surplus labour. These demands are mediated through the occupants of sites like Vacchereccia. The position of the site overlooking the Rochetta plain would have provided an ideal situation from which the movements of men and animals to and from the monastery could have been administered. We have already mentioned the locational advantages of *Cavallaria* and *Bezanum* in this regard (§7:4).[9] But these sites could hardly have administered the whole of the *terra*. Is there any other evidence for the development of new sites in the late eighth and early ninth centuries?

Archaeological and historical evidence demonstrates that several churches were contained within the precincts of both Farfa and San Vincenzo in the late eighth and early ninth centuries (Hodges 1985; McClendon 1986). From San Vincenzo there are records of some "rural" churches in the early part of this period. Thus local people refer to an inscription, found in a quarry near Colli al Volturno, which suggests the existence of a church there built during the abbiate of Paul (783 - 92). But there seems to have been a concerted phase of church construction in the middle decades of the ninth century. A church called *San Pietro ad pontem marmoreum* (somewhere near Colli al Volturno) was built between 842 and 844; *San Pietro ad Itria* was constructed between 844 and 853 and lay near Cerasuolo; and *San Eleuterio*

in Fundiliano near Filignano was built between 853 and 856 (Hodges *pers. comm...* For the locations of these churches see fig. 8)

We know from the Sabina that much of the agrarian reconquest, and subsequent production, was organised around a system of rural churches. We have already referred to the 52 *casae colonicae* focussed on the church of S. Vito at *Bezanum* in the third quarter of the eighth century (§7:4), while at the beginning of the ninth century a *curtis* on Monte Tancia was centred on an oratory dedicated to S. Stefano (Toubert 1973: 461). The phenomenon was widespread and Toubert has suggested that the initiators of this "reconquête religieuse ont sans aucun doute été les mêmes que ceux de la reconquête agricole.." (1973: 857). They were also the monastery's mediators in attempts to increase control over production

The recorded San Vincenzo churches were evidently later, though the existence of one built by abbot Paul in the late eighth century, and the grouping of 25 *casis de servis* around the church of S. Angelo di Isernia allows us to speculate that there may have been more. If they did exist they could have been similar focusses for rural production to those in the better documented Sabina, and would have been complementary to sites like Vacchereccia. The mid ninth century churches may have been an attempt to further reinforce control over the countryside and its cultivators in order to maintain the prosperity of the monastic community in an increasingly uncertain climate created by civil wars in Benevento and in the Carolingian empire.

The ultimate control of the surplus labour of producers is the slave mode of production. Although the later had largely broken down in the early centuries of the Roman empire (de Ste. Croix 1983; Wickham 1984), there is evidence of slavery in the territories of both San Vincenzo and Farfa in the ninth century. We have already referred to the servile tenants of the properties donated to San Vincenzo by Beneventan nobles (above), but we have little idea if this slavery was a consequence of the tightening of productive relations in the early decades of the ninth century. There are no comparative texts from this period, but we might easily imagine that increased demands on peasant production and control over their labour would have resulted in a diminished status for them. At Farfa the evidence is better, though contradictory.

The Farfa documents show a clear demarcation by the middle of the eighth century between free and unfree producers, between the *ingenui* and the *servi, ancillae* and *manicipia* (Toubert 1973: 474). A concomitant of the donations of lands to the monastery seems to have been the manumission of slaves *pro remedio animae*. In general it seems that the collective manumission of the slaves of a property upon donation to the monastery was rare. Rather the estate was given *servi pro servis, liberi pro liberis, sicut in antea fuerunt* (*ibid:* 476 - 77). Those who benefitted from *pro anima* manumissions seem to have been the household or domainal slaves who, upon the granting of freedom, were given a small plot of land taken from the reserve (*ibid*). The net result seems to have been the almost complete eradication of slavery by the end of the ninth century (*ibid:* 478).

This would seem to counter arguments for increased control over peasant production. But the situation is more complicated because there are other ways of tightening social relations than slavery. Here we must consider the evidence for labour services. These are already apparent in the Farfa documents from the 740's (Toubert 1973: 466) but only become precisely fixed towards the end of the eighth century (*ibid*: 467).[10] A qualitative increase in the amount of labour services required can be detected between 820 and 850 (*ibid*: 470). This period neatly encompasses the building programme of Sichardus, and although the documents to which Toubert refers come from areas outside the immediate area of the monastery, they might point to a much tighter regime in general. Even the Farfa documents are not detailed enough to allow us to elaborate, but we can see that by the late ninth century some freemen were accepting tenenancies which involved heavy labour services.

Toubert tends to minimise the significance of these services by stating that although they now fell on freemen too (see note 10), they were quantatively less onerous than in the early ninth century - eight to twelve days instead of three weeks per year (1973: 472 - 73). But these services were demanded at particular times of the year - during the peak harvesting and sowing seasons - when the peasant would have needed to spend most time on his own land, and if free men now had to provide them as well this represents a qualitative leap in the amount of control exercised over the productive labour of the peasant. Not only was labour service required of more people, it was also more highly regulated. It seems that there was a progressive increase in the demands placed upon the peasant producer in the Sabina from the early ninth century onwards.

A further manifestation of this reorganisation of production and productive relations is to be seen in the attempts by the abbots of Farfa in the mid to late ninth century to construct coherent systems of landholding. By a series of purchases, sales and exchanges, Farfa sought to "reunite" its landed estates into contiguous and more easily administered units. The impetus for this was provided by the increase in the donations of small plots of land, as opposed to already structured *curtes* estates, itself a product of the fragmentation of lay property from the mid ninth century (Toubert 1973: 487 - 93). As Toubert says

> "On ne saurait exagérer l'importance de ces nouvelles initiatives dans la genèse de l'*Incastellamento*. La reconstruction dans les années 870 - 920 pars les seigneurs ecclésiastiques d'ensembles fonciers cohérents a préparé la fondation des nouveaux habitats concentrés" (1973: 491).

Ve could further argue that the development of élite sites like Vacchereccia, *Cavallaria*, and *Bezanum* should not be underestimated as models for the form and location of settlement concentration in the tenth and eleventh centuries. But that will be dealt with more fully in the concluding chapter.

To conclude this chapter we should briefly consider the importance of the artefacts which tell so much about the organisation of production at Farfa in the ninth century - written documents. These are examples *par excellance* of increasing control and administration. Vriting is crucial to the retention and control of information and knowledge (Giddens 1981: 94), and we might expect an increase in the amount of documentation to coincide with the increased administration of monastic landed property. Here again the Farfa documentation provides the most detailed indications of the extent of

documentary production (though we must always bear in mind that the earliest periods are likely to be under-represented due to the increased chance of decay and destruction over time).

Thus the *Regestum Farfense*, compiled by Gregory of Catino in the twelfth century, contains 173 documents from the eighth century and 176 for the ninth, suggesting a relative stability in textual production. However, the *Liber Largitorius* has only 2 acts from the eighth century and 69 from the ninth (Toubert 1973: 304, notes 1 and 3).

The evidence is obviously ambivalent, but taken together seems to bear out the arguments for the increased recording of exchanges, rights, and duties in the ninth century. As we shall see, textual production and, more importantly its distribution and penetration of the social hierarchy, was a fundamental aspect of *incastellamento*.

§8: 6 *Conclusion*

The late eighth and early ninth centuries in Italy witnessed a gradual "levelling" of social distinctions within the productive class caused by the manumission of slaves on the one hand, and the diminution in the status of free tenants on the other (**Andreolli and Montanari 1985: 69 - 98; Toubert 1973: 473 - 487)**''. The evidence from Farfa and San Vincenzo fits well within this context but it is difficult to separate out the regional causes from a more general change in productive relations. Whatever is the case, the increased control over natural products and men (Giddens' *allocative* and *authoritative* resources - 1979: 100 - 101) seen at San Vincenzo and

Farfa surely contributed to the monastic construction programmes within the precinct, and probably to the building of churches in the *terra* of San Vincenzo.

An idea of the impact upon the regional resource base of such massive projects is provided by texts from Farfa concerning the reconstruction of the abbey church at the end of the eleventh century. It apppears that all the revenues of four of Farfa's principal *castri* - Fara, Pomonte, Arci, and Campo S. Benedetto - were usd to fund the scheme (Toubert 1973: 523 note 2)[12]. The scale of the demands made on the region are made clearer when we consider that a further 17 castra had to provide 20 men to work permanently on the project. A total of some 400 men were involved. We should imagine an operation on a similar scale at San Vincenzo and Farfa in the early ninth century and, drawing upon a lower reserve of people, it would have been an even greater drain on the regional resource base.

These studies of the contexts of monastic florescence have shown the causes and consequences of the interpenetration of regional productive systems and world systems of ideology and politics. The regional resources probably funded the construction of the great monastic cities of Farfa and San Vincenzo, but these spoke with the rhetoric of a world beyond that of the Sabina and Molise. The need to organise production to construct the monasteries gave the monks the administrative infrastructure necessary to maintain that production in the less certain times of the the late ninth century. Site like Vacchereccia and *Bezanum* were the products of this link between the region and the world system. They were élite sites, not early version of *incastellamento.*

This discussion of the nature of the eighth and ninth century settlement patttern and social relations has pointed to the existence of several contradictions - that between the monasteries as centres of opulence and display, and a materialy deprived *terrae*; between the monasteries as pan regional centres, and the essentially local productive base; between feudal social relations, located within the remnants of a Roman settlement system; between superstructural relations linking élites, and the essentially economic ones between élites and peasantry. These can all be subsumed within a more general contradiction, which had been manifest in Italian social structures since the seventh century (**Brown 1984**) - that between the monasteries position as mediators of the state (albeit that the latter existed for them at a basically ideological level) and their local power base as landlords. The opposition was between public and private, local and national. As long as the state existed, as long as the conceptual core had some efficacy in reproducing social relations, the balance could be maintained and terms like *villa, fundus, vicus* etc. would persist along with relations of personal dependency.

The terminology of settlement and landuse, and of other structures for that matter, do not exist *in vacuuo*. They are connected to conceptual structures, to world views - in this case to a world still rooted in the myth of Rome and the state. When the latter had disappeared or lost its significance in the face of other more dominant realities, such terminology lost its meaning and changed.

The opposition between *villa* and *castrum* had long existed in the Roman world. The former referred to the dominant form of lowland dispersed

settlement, the latter to settlement on the heights (Settia 1984: 42 quoting Livy). But so too had the ancient and feudal modes of production co-existed (Wickham 1984). Although the latter became dominant in structuring the social formation by the seventh century, we might argue from the above discussion that the ancient mode persisted on an ideological level into the eighth and ninth centuries. With the collapse of the Carolingian state and the start of *incastellamento* it all but disappeared and so did the associated terminology for settlement. *Castra* replaced *curtes* and *villae.*

CHAPTER NINE

By Way of A Conclusion: Incastellamento in Text and Material Culture

"...the situation of the place [Capranica, near Sutri] and its obvious fertility were, as they became known, responsible for attracting, little·by little, a fair number of inhabitants, who created a citadel for themselves on a mound of sufficient eminence..." (Petrarch 1337, quoted in Luttrell 1975: 270 - 71).

§9: 1 Introduction

Such was a fourteenth century explanation for the development of the hill top towns which so dominate the present central Italian landscape - a gradual accumulation of people on a site with economic advantages. Petrarch's was perhaps the first attempt to explain incastellamento. Explanations have grown thick and fast, and in recent years a new, assertive Archaeology has added its voice to a field previously dominated by historians. In the previous three chapters I have suggested that the arguments of those archaeologists who seek to locate this fundamental change in the central Italian settlement pattern between the sixth and ninth centuries have very little basis. The attempts fail because they are based on a normative conception of material culture (chapters 6 and 7), and because they universalize the particular in the archaeological record (chapter 7 and 8).

Pottery is seen as merely an isochronic marker. Changes in the "value", meaning, and social distribution of fine wares are unconsidered in world

which was witnessing marked transformations in production, distribution, and consumption networks (chapters 5 and 6). Similarily the discovery that some settlements were located on hill tops from late Antiquity has been generalised to represent the totality of regional settlement patterns without considering the nature of occupation (chapters 7 and 8).

There undoubtedly were changes in the settlement pattern between the sixth and tenth centuries. Many Roman villas show no sign of continuity or re-occupation, and it is very unlikely that the sort of detailed work on late Roman and early medieval coarse wares, being carried out as part of the Farfa project, will establish continuity on every one. Those that show continuity or re-occupation into the early middle ages had become the residences of local élites drawing upon the associations their locales had with the past to reproduce and reinforce social relations with the mass of a population living dispersed throughout the landscape, archaeologically invisible in their material cultural poverty. As Hodges *et. al.* (1984) suggest the peasant population may have sought out "ecological niches" more favourable to subsistence farming, and can only be located through the kind of intensive archaeological field work carried out at Vacchereccia and Colle Castellano'.

Some hill top sites were probably occupied in seventh and eighth century Italy. There had always been such sites in the Italian countryside, even amidst the dominant villa networks of the early and middle Empire (Settia 1984: 42), and *castra* were undoubtedly a significant element in the settlement structure of the sixth to eighth centuries (see chapter 7). These could range from the garrison towers of the Byzantine and Lombardic

frontiers to "refuge" sites like that of Squillace established on the estates of Cassiodorus in Calabria (Brown 1984: 105).

In the late eighth and early ninth centuries there is better evidence for such hilltop sites in Molise, the *Ager Faliscus*, and the Sabina (see chapters 6 - 8). But they should not be seen as examples of "proto-incastellamento". They were rather the product of a tightening of social relations and a more "efficient" management of the economy. Although the phenomenon was widespread over central Italy, in each case "contingent" factors may have combined with structural change to give such sites their specific form. Thus around Farfa and San Vincenzo the major construction programmes of the ninth century interacted with the more general process of social ordering throughout central Italy to produce a settlement system which included sites like Vacchereccia, *Cavallaria*, *Bezanum*, and *San Pietro ad Itria* (see chapter 8). In the *Ager Faliscus* the same structural developments combined with a dialectical relationship between the "state" powers in the duchy of Rome and a local secular élite under the threat of Lombard attack to produce a fairly dense distribution of hill top sites like Ponte Nepesino (see chapter 7). Like those in Molise and the Sabina, they were élite sites (and sometimes refuges) amid a pattern of dispersed settlement. Ponte Nepesino's "strategic" position overlooking a major routeway, like D85's, could have been as efficacious in local population control as in guarding against external threat.

But even if these sites can be shown to have originated as a result of processes different from those which produced *incastellamento*, the latter remains to be explained. I shall not attempt to do this in any detail. The

works of Toubert (1973), Wickham (1982 and 1985a), and Settia (1984) provide such detailed explanations. Instead I will attempt to draw out certain themes from these arguments which serve to illustrate the relationship between structure and event, between *power over* and *power to* (see chapter 3), and between Archaeology and History in general.

§9: 2 *Pagani and Latrunculi Christiani*

A common explanation for *incastellamento*, and one analogous to that used by Potter and Whitehouse (1981) to explain their 'sixth century strategic hamlet' at Ponte Nepesino (see chapter 7), is that it was a purely defensive response to the depredation of the Italian countryside by bands of Saracens and Hungarians. This bears a striking similarity to the invasionist argument which for so long lay at the heart of British archaeological explanation. The search for an external threat as an explanatory device fits well with a view of societies as essentially unchanging and with a consensualist picture of social relations. It negates the importance of contradiction within society as a source of transformations and underplays the significance of relations of power and domination. It is an politically charged notion, and its falls in the face of the evidence.

On Tuesday 10th of October AD 881 the monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno was attacked and destroyed by a band of Saracens led by Sawdan (C. V. I, 364).[2] Montecassino suffered the same fate two years later. These attacks were the result of the penetration of the Arab raiders deep into the Italian countryside from their bases at Garigliano and Civitavecchia. Their attack on Rome in the 846 prompted the construction of a wall around

the Vatican area (the *Civitas Leoniana*), using Frankish funds and the labour of the *militia* of the *domuscultae* and teams of Saracen captives (Gibson and Ward-Perkins 1979; Ward-Perkins 1984: 195 - 96). In 877, abbot John I of Farfa (872 - 881), acting in concert with pope John VIII, the prince of Salerno, and the bishop of Capua, attempted to enlist the help of the *Amalfitani* to use their fleet against the Saracen coastal bases, but the deal collapsed when the men of Amalfi demanded more than the 10,000 silver *mancusi* agreed (Engreen 1945; Leggio 1987: 61 - 62).

In the following decade abbot Teuto of Farfa (883 - 888) organised what amounted to a rudimentray maritime surveillance operation against the Saracens from the *gualdo de Minione, in monte qui appelatur Gosperti* (north of Civitavecchia) (L. L. I, 60, quoted in Leggio 1987: 62). By the 890's the Arab menace was being felt closer to Farfa and abbot Peter (890 - 919) mobilised the monastery's *militia* to counter the threat. The monastery never fell to Arab assault but was abandoned after seven years resistance (McClendon 1986: 9). The monks left in three groups carrying the treasure of the monastery with them (C. V. I, 31). Their flight echoes that of the monks of San Vincenzo to Capua after the terrible events of 881. This was the ninth century nadir for both monasteries, and their smoking ruins must have stood in sharp contrast to the zenith they had reached in the earlier part of the century (see chapter 8).

Subsequent events at Farfa have some bearing on one important aspect of this section - the significance of the *latrunculi christiani*. In the *Destructio Monasterii Farfensis* (written by abbot Hugh (998 - 1039)) it is recorded that the Saracens choose not to destroy the monastery after the

flight of the monks, and instead used it as a base. Toubert argues that the use of such bases, in addition to those at Garigliano and Civitavecchia, allows us to speak of a forty year Saracen rule over all central Italy (1976: 694). The *destructio* records that the monastery was subsequently destroyed, but not by the Saracens. Hugh says that the destruction was the work of men from nearby Catino who entered the monastery when it was temporarily empty and lit a fire, which spread to engulf the whole establishment -

> "*accidit, ut quidam* **latrunculi christiani**, *qui huc illucque discurrebant inopie causa, ibi devenerint noctu et iacuissent in uno angulo ipsuis monasterii, accenso igne, pavore territi fugerunt. ...predicti vero latrunculi fuerunt de oppido quod nuncupatur Catino*" (C. F. I: 31 - 32, emphasis added).

This story is contradicted in the Liber Largitorius (compiled by Gregory of Catino in the early twelfth century) where the blame for the destruction of the monastery is laid firmly at the door of the Saracens. From 933 to 935 there are a series of sales to obtain money "*ad restaurandum ipsum monasterium, quod a* **nefandissima** *gente Saracenorum igne crematum vel destructum esse videtur*" (L. L. I, 91,94, 96, and 97, emphasis added).

The monks returned to Farfa early in the 930's, and established a small religious community in the ruined abbey (McClendon 11986: 9). Their brothers had returned to San Vincenzo some fifteen years earlier to refound the monastery there. *Incastellamento* followed soon after. It seems that the monks lost no time in beginning to reconstruct their patrimony and to resurrect their control over the population. The first *incastellamento* lease we have from the *terra* of San Vincenzo is for Santa Maria Oliveto and dates

to 939 (Vickham 1986: 36. See fig. 8). The concidence between these two factors might seem to justify the assertion that the one was the product of the other - that as soon as they returned from their exile the monks decided to organise the population into a series of defensible sites to protect them, and the monastic property, from any future attack.

The collapse of the Carolingian empire in the last quarter of the ninth century resulted in a series of civil wars in northern Italy between the rival claimants to the throne of Italy and to the rightful succession to the leadership of the empire (Vickham 1981: 169 - 72). At much the same time a series of "barbarian" attacks beset the North, and here the Hungarians were as much in evidence as the Saracens, especially from the end of the ninth century (Leggio 1987).

From the mid-ninth into the early decades of the tenth century several religious institutions in Pavia, Piacenza and Cremona won from the king the right to build fortifications around their establishments (Settia 1984: 48 - 50). Unspecified enemies of the church are presented as the threat to be defended against. Later ninth and early tenth century documents from northern Italy contain numerous references to , the construction of fortifications, not just *castelli* but rural as well as urban monasteries, chapels, pieval churches, *curtis* estate centres, ports, *casale*, and *vici* (see Settia 1984: appendix 3, pp. 100 - 108 for a comprehensive list). In addition church lands were being attacked and expropriated by latrunculi christiani (*ibid*: 88 - 96). It might seem that here too we can see a link between settlement change and insecurity.

But when we look more closely the apparent link dissolves. Although the *pagani* are frequently mentioned in the texts, only rarely are they cited as the cause of the construction of fortifications. More usually the documents simply record the damage they caused (ibid: 127 - 8). A breakdown of the figures for Hungarian attacks and for the construction of fortifications shows little direct relationship between them -

Period	Recorded Incursions	Recorded Fortifications
899 - 910	3	13
911 - 920	1	50
921 - 930	4	24
931 - 940	2	16
941 - 950	3	30
951 - 955	3	19

(based on Settia 1984: 128 - 9).

Rather, Settia argues, they show

> "non tanto l'effettiva presenza della minacchia ungara, quanto l'interesse che i re, in certi momenti, avevano di aumentare il numero delle fortezze nel quadro della lotta per le conquista o per il conservazione del predominio contro i loro avversari politici" (1984: 129 - 31).

Regarding the *latrunculi christiani* he shows that in one case (Modena) the church felt threatened by the populace of the city, not just the *potentes* but a veritible *malivolae conspirationes populi* (ibid: 53). More usually, these "evil christians" were local lords, both secular and ecclesiastic, who took the lands of the church and distributed them amongst their vassals (ibid: 88 -, 96). They used the threat of disorder, both from *pagani* and from the civil wars, to consolidate their local power base, and to materialise that in the form of *castelli*. It was not the Saracenic and

Hungarian threat which prompted settlement change, but the disintegration of the state fabric. *Pagani, latrunculi christiani* and *castelli* were products of more general structural change. The threat of the former was a contingency drawn upon and used as a factor in reinforcing feudal social relations.

In central Italy, further from the warring princes and dukes, the situation may have been different. The impact of the civil wars was less immediate, but "barbarian" attacks here too combined with structural change. But what was the nature of the interaction between them? Perhaps our clearest indication comes from the Rome.

We have aleady noted the construction of the Leonine wall after the Saracen attack and desecration of the shrine of St. Peter in 846. But the construction of the wall may not have been for purely defensive reasons. Settia argues that it should be seen as a symbol of the papal and imperial power (11984: 45 - 7). More than this it was a symbol of the Church's temporal power in a world which was already showing signs of fragmentation. The civil wars in Benevento and the Carolingian core, and the Saracenic attacks themselves were signs of things to .come. The Léonine wall carried the rhetoric of a Church liberated from the East, and determined to maintain its patrimony at home. It was a statement of papal intentions.

As Toubert says "La pousée sarrasine... n'est pas une cause mais une conséquence de la dissolution des structures d'encadrement qui suivi l'effondrement carolingien..." (1973: 312), but these attacks were drawn upon in the construction of a symbol of papal prestige. That symbol was then in

turn adopted by those kings who used the defence of the Church as one element in their claim to the Italian and Carolingian thrones. The construction of walls around monasteries in some north Italian towns may owe more to the "proto-type" of the *civitatis Leonina* than to the threat from *pagani* or "evil christians (Settia 1984: 47). Here we see a complex web of interactions and associations between structural change and the consequences of that change.

But what of the countryside? Despite the claims of monastic chroniclers, we should not imagine that the Saracens devastated, and caused the total depopulation of the areas in which their attacks are recorded (Wickham 1985a: 25). As with the Viking attacks in Britain and Ireland, the Saracens seem to have chosen specific targets - the monasteries. These were treasure troves in a landsacpe of material cultural poverty. Their reliquary covers, liturgical vessels, and richly decorated book covers, made them obvious targets for raiders in search of portable wealth. In some cases they may also have acted as depositories for the goods of the surrounding population in times of attack (Settia 1984: 270). The monks at Farfa managed to escape with the monastic treasure, but the brothers from San Vincenzo were not so lucky. The immediate consequence of the Saracenic destruction of San Vincenzo and Farfa, and the flight of the monks, was the effective removal of one group of surplus takers. But this need not have resulted in an era of peasant freedom or unrest.

Although Toubert speaks of a "brigandage endémique" (1973: 970 - 4) engulfing central Italy in the late ninth and early tenth centruries, there seems little evidence for it. He backs up his assertion with references to

the disruption of trade routes, and statements by the papacy and Roman aristocracy that the region was largely depopulated (*ibid*: 971 - 2). But the only recorded incidence of peasant disturbances seems to be the destruction of the monastery of Farfa recorded by Hugo (see above)[3]. But as Settia suggests, these men were probably "poveri diaboli spinti occassionalmente dalla fame a delinquere" (1984: 93). As such they were hardly symptomatic of massive unrest which might have followed the easing of monastic control over rural populations.

The lack of evidence for Toubert's "endemic brigandage" may derive from the fact that the texts we have for the period were produced by monks anxious to portray their concern over, and care for, the lower orders, and to blame any disturbances on secular élites or *pagani*. But it may also mean that events like that at Farfa were rare. If this was the case, we might argue that this rarity was a product of continued control over, and the extraction of surplus from, peasant producers. For although the monks from San Vincenezo had fled, a series of post-881 documents demonstrate the continuation of some attempt at the managment of their estates. But this seems to have been limited to the leasing of property in the South at very low rents or for large lump sum payments (**Wickham** *forthcoming*). They would seem to suggest the need for immediate resources and a desire to maintain intact the core area of the monastery's patrimony.

Probably more significant was the fact that some of the monastic lands had fallen into the hands of secular lords by 914 (*ibid*). These latter now exercised control and extracted surplus from peasant producers. It is possible that these secular élites used the **threat** of Saracenic attack to

increase this control, much as their counterparts in the North did (see above). This would seem to fit with the account given by John, the chronicler of San Vincenzo, of the loss of monastic control over parts of its territory and population. John paints a picture of a ninth century landscape dominated by villas with a peasantry living in idyllic freedom. He continues that they accepted the offer, made by the local secular lords, of protection from Saracenic threat, and so fell under their control. Thus the monastery was robbed of its ancient rights (C. V. I, p.231 - quoted in Toubert 1973: 330).

We might imagine that the monastic community might also have drawn upon the contingency of the Saracen attack in their efforts to get the local population to accept *incastellamento* leases in the early tenth century. The paradox of this scenario is that the "threat" was probably directed mostly at the monasteries and not the rural population. But the "reactivation" of this threat after the event contributed to increased control over peasant production. In any case, whether the threat was real or apparent in the minds of the tenth century peasant in Italy, whether it was specifically focussed of more generally diffussed, it was no more responsible for incastellamento here than it was for the construction of fortifications in the North. As Settia argues for that latter area -

> "senza la maturazione di un quadro politico e di esigenze generali destinate a favorire il fenomeno, non avremmo certo avuto in Occidente un mezzo millennio caratterizzato dalla fitta e ingombrante presenza dei castelli" (1984: 130).

That "quadro politico" was the peeling back of the gloss that was the early medieval state in Italy to reveal the "reality" of feudal social relations and a "pullulation of little powers (Vickham 1981: 168).

S9: 3 *A Break With The Past?*

One of the central tenets of Toubert's *incastellamento* thesis is the profound rupture it represented with the past. The terminology of settlement alters. Villae are replaced by *castri*. The archaeological and historical evidence points to the same change, and the historical documentation suggests a more rigidly defined system of landuse. Each *castrum* had its *territorium*, whose boundaries were contiguous with those of other *castri* (Vickham 1985a: 58). Within the *territorium* a network of production zones radiated out from the *castrum* - from *ortus*, to *ferraginalia*, to *cannapinae*, to *terrae sementariciae* - whose intensity of cultivation decreased with distance form the castral centre (Toubert 1973: 210ff, especially p. 218).

The change was certainly radical, and Toubert goes further to argue that the settlements themselves are almost always on new .sites (1973: 326 - 7, 331). Although he grants that in some cases, old ruins could form the focus for the tenth century *castello*. "dans l'immense majorité des cas cependant, le choix même d'un *podium* ou d'un *mons desertus ad castellum faciendum* impliquait une volonté de rupture dans les formes de l'habitat" (1973: 326 - 7, note 3). If this were the case the break with the past would have been complete, and we would have to imagine a project on the same scale (though perhaps not with the same single focus of origin, as that of *sistematisare*

currently being carried out by President Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania (Stamp 1988: 4 - 5).

This however was not the case. The examples which contradict Toubert's conclusion, even within his own data, are too frequent to allow the argument to stand in its present form (see 1973: 374 - 447 for many examples). Wickham points to the cases of Magliano Sabino and Empiglione as examples which contradict Toubert's thesis (1985a: 61 - 62), but we can add to these the cases of the three "rural" sites which occupied so much of the discussion in the last chapter.

Cavallaria and *Bezanum* in the Sabina, and Vacchereccia in the *terra S. Vincentii*, all have archaeological and documentary evidence to show pre-*incastellamento* occupation. If we are right in our identification of *Cavallaria* with the hill immediately to the north of the monastery (see plate 4), the 1068 record of a *castellum Cavallarie* might refer to a construction which reused the "palace for the administration of justice" situated there in the ninth century (see §8: 5 and plate 6; and Toubert 1973: 393 for an alternative location for Cavallaria.

We have already referred to the fact that in the late eighth century *Bezanum* was an administrative centre with an oratory to S. Vito (§8: 5). It is recorded as a *castellum* in 959 (Toubert 1973: 421). In Molise the red-painted wares, the glass, and the "Forum ware type" from Vacchereccia sherds all suggest late eighth - ninth occupation (Hodges *et. al. 1984*), while the 985 charter for the settlement implies that the site was already occupied (Wickham 1985a: 28).

Toubert's total break in settlement pattern seems to have disappeared. The rupture with the past was not complete. Only in very rare cases can it ever have been, for the past is constantly with us a 'nightmare on the brain of the living' (Marx, quoted in Fischer 1973: 168). But if we want to move beyond merely saying that Toubert was wrong we have to analyse the relationship between *incastellamento* sites and their predecessors, and examine the efficacy of a ninth century past in the tenth century present.

In the Sabina there are several cases where *castelli* were founded on churches. The example we have referred to most often is that of *Bezanum* (see §8: 5) but several others can be mentioned. The *castrum* of Affile, not far from Subiaco, was founded around the oratory dedicated to S. Angelo, the latter having acted as a focal point for population in the ninth century (Toubert 1973: 857, and p. 327). In the area of the Farfa survey, the early medieval site of San Donato is recorded as a having a ninth century church (Leggio *per. comm.*). It too became a castrum (Toubert 1973: 441 - 2)[4]. Toubert in fact presents a list of several other *castri* which were established on sites with churches (1973: 334, note 1). Although he argues that the *ecclesia castri* radically altered the "géographie religieuse" of the Sabina (1973: 862 - 3), the fact that, in most of those cases where there is a temporal separation between *ecclesia* and *castrum*, the former came first, should be considered of significance (see below).

It is probably also important that both of the élite sites in the Farfa survey area - *Cavallaria* and *Bezanum* -, as well as Vacchereccia in Molise, became castelli. We have argued that these sites, along with the rural churches, were focal points for the administration of the monastic

patrimony (§8:5). To explain the coincidence between these early sites and those produced by *incastellamento*, we can argue that it was the association of the former with the (recent) past, and with the organisation of productive labour, which was important. They may not only have been used as conceptual models for the location of *incastellamento* sites, and for the control of populations, but also may have provided important links with the period of monastic grandeur for a system whose "radicalness" may have cast its acceptance into some doubt. For we must remember that the past is and was a resource to be constantly drawn upon and interpretated in the constitution and negotiation of social relations. The grounding of the tenth century present in the ninth century past, in the period of Epiphanius and Sicardus, may have conferred a degree of legitimation and "naturalness" to the *incastellamento* process which it would otherwise have lacked.

Wickham has argued that if we accept that *incastellamento* was essentially an élite directed and organised affair, which for most of central Italy it was (though see note 5), then we must try to isolate those situations in which the lords gained experience in the technologies of control and management. He argues that such experience was gained in the organisation of landclearance in the ninth century (1985a: 59 - 60). In this he is undoubtedly correct. But we might make the argument applicable to those areas where clearance was not a feature of the ninth century agrarian structure by considering the involvement of lords not just in clearance, but also in arranging for the administration of production in the context of a general tightening of social relations in pre-*incastellamento* central Italy. They drew upon this experience, and on the sites through which it was mediated, to organise incastellamento.

So the rupture with the past was not complete. Some sites from that past were certainly occupied in the tenth century. But in one sense *incastellamento* did represent a decisive temporal disjuncture. It was not a break with the past *per se*, but a break with the Roman past. We have argued that Roman settlement structures persisted largely intact into the ninth century (see chapters 6 to 8). Villas were still the sources of social power for a dispersed peasant population. The villas may have formed the basis for the *curtes* system, and the association of these sites with the Roman past may have been significant for the construction and reproduction of social relations. Although there are obviously exceptions (see **Wickham** 1985a: 61 for the case of Magliano), Toubert would seem to be largely correct when he suggested that

> "La plupart des *castra* fondés aux X⁼ - XI⁼ siècles
> apparaissent d'abord dans notre documentation non comme
> centres domaniaux (curtes)..." (1973: 331, note 2; and 493 -
> 4. See also *Ibid*: 374 - 447 for examples).

With the disintegration and collapse of the the Carolingian revival of the Roman empire in the last quarter of the ninth century, the implied connections between these *curtes* settlements and the previous Roman state lost their efficacy in terms of social reproduction. Just as we have argued that the Leonine wall was more a symbol of papal temporal power in the context of a fragmenting state than a purely defensive response to Saracen attacks, so the *castellani* of the tenth century drew upon a ninth century past in which the dominance of feudal social relations was already apparent. Two of the most significant elements drawn from this past were the infrastructure of control, and writing.

Another central, tenet of Toubert' thesis is that *incastellamento* was almost

totally effective in grouping rural population into what he calls a system

of "urbanisme villageois" (1973: 332). Once the system had been established,

very few pople lived outside the *castelli*. The implication is that the power

of the monasteries, and of the secular lords who founded many of the

castelli subsequently controlled by Farfa, was virtually complete. Either

the peasantry was totally powerless to resist the imposition of a new

settlement structure, or the offers made to them were so attractive that

they could not refuse. As we shall see these two factors were connected. But

before we can take this discussion further and assess the validity or

otherwise of Toubert's suggestion, we have to consider the social, economic

and demographic context of *incastellamento*.

We have already seen how those who situate central Italian *incastellamento*

within a military context, and who stress the insecurity of a period which

experienced Saracen and Hungarian raids, elevate a contingency to the level

of a determinant of structural change (§9:2). There are others who, while

admitting the unsuitability of external threat as explanatory device, still

emphasis insecurity, an insecurity caused by the rivalry of feudal social

lords in the tenth century (Tobacco 1974: 908 - 9). Toubert, who in 1973

had stressed the economic dimensions of *incastellamento* and had situated it

within the context of demographic increase and social change (1973: 330 -

8), later acknowledged the power of Tobacco's criticisms, and accepted that

he had underplayed the political and military aspects of *incastellamento*,

and argued that his distinction between "*castelli* de peuplement" and "*castelli* stratégiques" needed to be further explored (1976: 701).

But, as Wickham points out, insecurity caused by feudal rivalry can perhaps explain the 'flight to the hills' but not the nucleation of population and the persistence of this pattern of settlement after the threat had dissipated (1985a: 60 - 61). A problem arises from an inadequate conceptualisation of the nature of power, and of the imposition of a rigid compartmentalization of "economic", "political", and "social" structures.

The categories into which we sub-divide the past may not be appropriate, and are more likely a modern, Western view of how the world works (Hodder 1986: 25). Such sub-divisions are fine as analytical constructs, but problematic when they are reified and imposed on the past. I would argue that rather than trying to disentangle the (conceptual) military, political, or economic factors in instigating and perpetuating *incastellamento*, it would be more fruitful to examine how a settlement pattern based on *castelli* was important for the negotiation of power relations, both between élites and between the surplus producing and the surplus extracting sections of society.

As we saw in chapter 3, Giddens has stressed that power should not be conceived in a purely negative, repressive sense. Power is inherent in all social relations and refers to "the capacity of actors to secure outcomes, where the realisation of those outcomes depends on the agency of others (1979: 93). This is not to deny the reality of exploitation and relations of domination, since Giddens' conception of power is not that of a resource to

be drawn upon at will. Rather the capacity to draw upon two types of resource - *allocative* (natural products) and *authoritative* (control over people) - results in the unequal distribution of power over within a social formation (1979: 93 - 100). Our discussion of *incastellamento* should focus on the attempts by lords in central Italy to draw upon these these resources.

Giddens has suggested that control of allocative resources has only been of prime importance in the creation and preproduction of power relations within capitalism. He argues that in precapitalist societies, it was control over people which constituted structures of domination (*ibid*: 100). We have already pointed to the flaw in this analytical distinction which ignores the recursive link between the two types of resource (§3:3), but in the present context we can argue that control over people was a significant factor in *incastellamento*, and in Tobacco's feudal rivalry (1974).

We have previously argued that by the eighth and ninth centuries people may have been a relatively scarce resource (see chapter 8). All the indications however point to a demographic increase from at least the ninth century (Toubert 1973: 321). But this population was increasing from a depleted base, and the greater numbers did nothing to decrease their "value" as a resource, because competition for access to, and control over this authoritative resource was also greater. The breakdown of the state and the strengthening of power at the local level produced the kind of feudal rivalry spoken of by Tobacco (see above). But this was a rivalry which was made manifest in what we would call the social and economic levels of society as well as the politico-military one. People were not only a

productive resource but they were also essential elements in the constitution of the "little powers" of which central Italy was now formed. They were at one and the same time the productive base of a society based on feudal social relations, and also a symbol of the power and authority of élites.

This competition for people is seen clearly in the texts. Some of the San Vincenzo documents record the granting of *incastellamento* leases to people from well outside the region (**Vickham** 1985a: 28, 31, 32, 36)., and in several cases the setting up of a populated *castello* is clearly intended to stake a claim to an area disputed between competing élites. In the San Vincenzo area clear examples are the foundation of five *castelli* in the eastern zone of the *terra*, to the west of the river Vandra (see fig. 8). This area was disputed between San Vincenzo and the count of Isernia. San Vincenzo's instigation of the construction of *castelli* in this area was obviously meant to demonstrate that this was part of the monastic patrimony (**Vickham** 1985a: 30 - 31). A similar case is the foundation of the *castello* of Alfedena in territory under threat from the Anseri family (*ibid:* 34 - 5).

In the Sabina some of the texts are explicit about the connection between the foundation of a *castello* and the control of people. They make clear that the purpose of the *castello* is the "*congregatio populi*", the "*amasamentum hominum*", and the "*consolidation fundorum*" (**Toubert** 1973: 337). But this did not always work. The *castellum* of *Postmontem* was founded by Farfa before 970 (in 999 the monastery renewed a 29 year lease to a group of tenants) (*ibid:* 444). But documentary references to forms of dispersed settlement in

the area right into the eleventh century shows that here the population was never fully "incastellated". By the end of the eleventh century the *castrum* had become part of the *territorium* of Fara in Sabina (Wickham 1985a: 64 – 65). The foundation of *Postmontem* may have been an attenpt to extend Farfa's influence and authority in an area over which it did not have complete control, but it evidently failed. Even here, so close to the monastery itself, the power of the "castellani" was not complete, and the power of the peasantry to make choices, resist and refuse was not totally eroded.

This example of the survival of the dispersed settlement in the Sabina is only one of several. Thus there is good documentary evidence for the persistence of human occupation around the *castrum* of Bocchignano (Leggio*pers. comm.*), while Petrucci's analysis of the later medieval religious structures of Lazio suggests the existence of non-castral settlement over much of the region (1984). The archaeological evidence from the Farfa survey confirms this picture.

We have argued that Sparse Glaze ware was the type ceramic of *incastellamento.* But its distribution is not confined to hill tops or to settlements for which we have *incastellamento* texts. During the 1986 season it was found on at least four locations outside *castelli.* The implications of these finds for the nature of production and distribution in tenth and eleventh century Italy will be discussed below, but here we can use this as further evidence for the persitence of dispersed settlement and the existence of other ways of living from that offered by "castellani" (see below).

Toubert was evidently mistaken in placing so much emphasis on the total incorporation of the rural population within *castelli*. But he was surely correct to stress the fundamental reorganisation of settlement space which *incastellamento* involved. That reorgansiation of space, of the material world within which daily life was lived out, was not merely the consequence of increased control over the population. As created space it further reinforced, and was used in the reproduction of the social relations which formed the basis of, such control. For settlements are not "neutral" spaces, stages on which the individual performs a Sartrean 'narcissistic dance' (see chapter 3, note 15). They too are material culture which structure and are structured by human action. Their position, form, and layout create the conditions for action and for interaction between people (see Giddens 1985). In the face of competing local powers for the control of *authoritative* resources, the location and establishment of people in concentrated settlements served to establish a series of **horizontal** bonds which went beyond the elementary structures of kinship. The identification of people with a particular locale created a "sense of community" which reinforced territorial and political control. By living, working, and playing together a sense of *belonging* to a group and a place was created. The constitution of the group, through daily practice, was a potent force in fending off rival claims to land and people.

But what of social relations **between** classes? How did *incastellamento* reproduce or reinforce these **vertical** relationships? Here we must consider literacy and the nature of texts.

As we have seen in several chapters of this thesis, archaeologists have tended to see historical documents as biased and distorted due to their production by élite groups (see chapter 1). In Italy, archaeologists have sought to challenge the dating of the *incastellamento* process offered by the documents, and have embarked on the wearisome search for precedents. These can certainly be found, as we have seen in chapters 6 to 8, but the retroactive imposition of the structural features of *incastellamento* onto these early sites only contributes to the construction of a false picture of settlement continuity from the seventh century onwards. It denies the profound changes which were a fundamental part of tenth century central Italian society.

The major problem with many archaeologist's treatment of documentary sources is that they are seen as something inherently different from the bulk of the material world of the past (§3:5). Even those who challenge the date given for *incastellamento* by the documents from Farfa seem to place texts in a separate category. They are conceived of in a normative fashion, as relating facts which can be either accepted or dismissed as élite distortion. They are not seen as material products to be situated within a specific social, economic, and political context. When they are placed within the context of the transformations which were taking place in other structures of tenth century Italy, it becomes impossible to present archaeological precedents as challenging the historical date. For documents did not merely record the foundation dates, the names of the leasees, the size of the house plots etc., but were fundamental to that process itself.

A preliminary link between texts and a settlement pattern focussed around hill tops can be established by pointing to the florescence in textual evidence for the tenth and eleventh centuries. The *Liber Largitorius* has 69 documents for the ninth century and 400 for the tenth (Toubert 1973: 304, note 3). The ambivalency we noted for an increase in documentation between the eighth and ninth centruies is absent for the tenth (see §8: 5), and as Toubert suggests

> "les actes privés appairaissent puis se multiplient dans le courant du X⁰ siècle avec une régularité qu'il serait puéril d'imputer au hazard, à la substitution du parchemin au papyrus ou à l'arrêt des dernières incursions barbares dont les conséquences locales devront d'ailleurs être réévaluées" (1973: 304).

This link can be transformed into an integral factor in *incastellamento* if we consider the nature of texts in general, and those for *incastellamento* in particular. In situations where pure orality - that is verbal discourse uninfluenced by the written word - existed, the rapid transmission of information is fairly restricted in time and space by the need for face to face communication (Goody 1968: 29: see also Goody 1986). The ability to control, and exercise power over, groups and individuals was similarily restricted.

The formalisation of speech in the written word creates new possibilities for élite control through the provision of a facility to create and maintain relationships in several places at once, and over longer time spans. Through documents rights and duties can be made explicit and fixed. Social relationships are materialized and reproduced in and through the written word. Documents specify, record, and make permanent that which may have been fluid and open to negotiation.

Here the context of production is important for, as we noted in §3:5 effective literacy was spatially and socially restricted. Texts were produced in monasteries and cities, the centres of social power, and were generally written by ecclesiastics (Stock 1983). Their production in Latin gave them an "other worldliness" in a world of vernacular tongues, and contributed to the authority of the information they contained. As artefacts, produced within a specific context, they were themselves important in the reproduction and transformation of social relationships.

Incastellamento texts fixed people in both space and time, as well as specifying rents. In and through these texts a link was created between the leasees and the settlement, which reinforced the actuality of residence. People were named as residents of particular places. The documents often insist on residence, and sometimes on the collective nature of occupation (Toubert 1973: 515). The contracts were also usually for fixed time periods - 29 years or three generations (*ibid*: 521 - 32). Even though the initial terms of the contracts may have been favourable to the peasantry to encourage them to take up the lease (see **Vickham** 1985a: 26 for the terms of the lease for the *castrum* of San Vincenzo), this control of surplus production into the future would have been of great importance to an élite attempting to ensure the reproduction of social relationships of dependency in the face of competition from other power groups.

This form of contract was of course a double edged weapon, as was the creation of wider horizontal bonds between the members of the productive class through residence in nucleated settlement. For the rights of the tenants were also fixed and "materialised" in text, and infringements were

frequently challenged in court (Wickham 1986). Similarily *castelli* could become foci of resistance to the *castellani* as Montecassino found to its cost (Wickham 1985a: 43 -4). This is a clear demonstration of the complexity of the relationship between structure and agency. It shows that although people worked within and through structures they were not structure bound. They could and did take action, and even use the facilities (like *castelli*) which constituted elements of structure to further their own ends. This is also seen clearly in those cases where peasants themselves formed *castelli*, as in the case of those constructed in Tuscia Romana. Wickham sees these as symbol of resistance by small owners to attempts by local lords to exercise control in this area. Again the interaction of structure and agency is clear since although the peasants took the action which resulted in the construction of *castelli*, they chose as a symbol of their resistance the very elements of the *incastellamento* structure which were the essence of seigneurial power (see **Wickham** 1985a: 72-3)[5].

The internal layout of those *castelli* which were centres of élite power was a physical manifestation of social relationships, and as *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977) they were important in the inculcation of an awareness of the person's place within the social order. The settlement space was defined by an enclosing wall, within which the population was located in a series of precisely defined units, arranged around "un noyau monumental constitué par l'eglise et la forteresse seigneuriale" (Toubert 1973: 333 - 4).

These sites seem to be the perfect "materialisation" of the feudal society which dominated tenth and eleventh century Italy. Nucleated settlement, around which was arranged a series of interacting productive zones forming

the castral *territorium* and intermeshing with those of other *castri*, was both the medium and outcome of the structural transformations which were the essence of central Italian society at that time. They were also an almost perfect representation, at the micro-level, of the "three order" construct which emerged as élite ideology in the eighth century in the context of a decaying Byzantine state and the emergence of a new élite of Church and military (see chapter 7).

We argued in that chapter that this construct remained just that - a construct - and made little impression on the consciousness of the lowest level of the tertiary order because of the lack of contexts through which it could be inculcated in daily practice. The arrangement of church, fort, and peasant dwellings within the *castelli* provided just such a material context. But it is ironic that by the time the "three order" construct had found its material form forces were at work which negated its impact. Social divisions within the *castelli* created a "middle" class of *boni homines* (Toubert 1973: 515 and 1976: 699 - 700); the Cluniac reform programme introduced at Farfa in the late tenth and early eleventh century linked the monastery to a pan-European movement (McClendon 1986: 100); the proliferation of the text in the rural world was symptomatic of the spread of literacy (Stock 1983); while the distribution of fine wares like Sparse Glaze to non-élite sites points to an expansion of production and exchange networks.

The world was becoming more complex at the very moment when the "three orders" took their places beside each other in central Italy's *castelli*. But as we have stated so often, societies do not change all at once and nor do

societal structure wait for · conceptual constructs to fall into line with
them. The history of the central Italian early middle ages is one of
discontinuity, transformations, and change. Attempts to impose rigid
uniformities on it, whether by archaeologists and historians in the present,
or by the architects of the "three order" construct in the early middle ages
itself, only serve(d) to deny the specificity and difference of these "Dark
Ages".