
'THE STRENGTH OF THE PAST AND ITS GREAT MIGHT'; AN ESSAY ON THE USE OF THE PAST

Kristian Kristiansen

INTRODUCTION

Within the last generation archaeology has undergone a major transformation, developing from an independent small-scale activity, based upon museums and a few university departments, into a large-scale state organisation based upon national legislation. This has entailed an increase in resources on an unprecedented scale, and has drastically changed the profile of archaeology, which is now firmly fixed within the political and national domains. Moreover, decision making within the discipline has shifted from museums and university departments towards various new national agencies for the conservation and protection of the cultural heritage. The consequences of this development for the discipline as a whole had remained largely unnoticed until recently (Gathercole and Lowenthal 1990).

While archaeology may have lost its scientific innocence during the 1960s and 1970s, during the 1980s it certainly lost its political innocence. With the changing configurations of national and ethnic identities all over the world, the past, archaeology included, is gaining new political significance. In this situation, which has some resemblance to the first expansion of archaeology and nationalism during the nineteenth century, archaeologists need to develop a critical consciousness of the role of the past in the present, a role that will never be a neutral one, since it has implications for both archaeological practice and theory (Shanks and Tilley 1987). Promoting the development of a critical understanding of present-day archaeological practice will require great efforts to scrutinise and analyse our research methods and ways of disseminating information. At a time when school children are taught critical evaluation of the manipulation of information – from commercials to cartoons – archaeology has hardly begun to evaluate its own visual presentations, not to mention how images of the past are employed outside the realm of archaeology for political or other purposes. We can no longer hide behind source criticism and the study of formation processes to neutralise the past, but need to set the political agenda of our work; otherwise others will do it for us.



Figure 1. A small selection of Danish and foreign cartoon series that are inspired by ancient myths. The American Thor departs completely from the original, whereas both *I Vikingekongens Tjeneste* (*In the Service of the Viking Kings*) and *Valhalla* attempt to retell the original stories (reproduced from *Swiatek* 1984).

Here I attempt to cover a broad spectrum of problems that need to be considered as part of a critical analysis of the use of the past in the present. I have chosen the form of an essay and recognise that any attempt must be tentative and that no 'correct' answers can be given. What we can hope to do at present is to elucidate the interaction and interdependence of archaeology and politics and to point out the possible consequences of positions and practices as exemplified by well-documented cases.

THE ADVENTUROUS PAST

If one surveys newspapers, books, TV programmes, and cartoon series, it soon becomes evident that the past surrounds us in many guises. In Denmark advertisements have beat the drum of the past as an expression of Danish quality: butter is lur-packed, the dolmens on the old five-kroner notes (before inflation) testify to reliability, Viking names keep SAS planes airborne, and Thor's hammer underlines the strength and quality of many Danish products. The past – or more accurately a certain type of selected, timeless, myth about it – is both useful and marketable.

But the precondition for the continued effectiveness of these old Norse symbols is of course that the stories about the past are retold and kept alive so that we can all draw on them – in business life as in high school. And this happens in rich measure. In pre-history the myths were recounted in the dim light of the halls. Now Asterix, Prince

Valiant and many others are recreated by the contemporary media – cartoon strips and films. Time and place are abolished and we resurrect the eternal virtues: heroic courage, bravery, comradeship, and love – good and evil.

But at the same time the past gives us certain fixed and anchored points; it is not all just fairy stories and fiction. This is important because it makes the real elements in the dreams stronger – so strong that they almost come true. A good story should above all have an anchor in reality, while at the same time leaving scope for fantasy. For that purpose prehistory is well suited; the archaeologists cannot retell the old stories – at best they can only recreate the framework of how people lived. What those people actually experienced is something about which we can only fantasise.

'Once upon a time, long ago. . . .' All fairy-tales begin this way, and so does the tale about the past. It therefore has something legendary about it, which stimulates dreaming and fantasy. The Norwegian archaeologist, Christian Keller (1978:12), in an interesting book about the significance of archaeology in today's society, discusses this phenomenon and gives examples of it:

Using Donald Duck as an example again: in 1973 a series came out about 'the egg mystery', in which Donald and the nephews discover an unknown town under a carpet of fog in the Andes. The 'anchor in reality' in this story lies in the appearance and geographical location of the town, in that it is hardly distinguishable from the mystical ruined cities of the Incas in South America. The tale of Donald and the three boys in this way is linked to something which the reader knows really existed. After all, ruined cities in the Andes are well known. Few archaeological discoveries have actually led to more far-reaching theories and speculations than have the finds of the Incas' abandoned cities. It was therefore a deliberate point to give the story a basis in something which was real and yet at the same time left free scope for fantasy.

Here we have again a phenomenon which seems to have a violent fascination for us: this mixture of fantasy and reality!

It is no doubt also this which partly explains why historical novels and TV series have been so popular in the last dozen or so years: from *The Clan of the Cave-Bear* to more local Danish history in the TV series 'Matador'. Nevertheless, the choice of particular historical context is not a matter of indifference: in Denmark we especially like to read about our own heroes and our own past, from *Christine* in Helle Stangerup's new version, to Christian IV; from the Cimbrian incursions in Ebbe Reich's *Fæ og Frænde*, to Grundtvig in the book *Frederik* by the same author. In an age of ever-growing entertainment programmes of all kinds there is a greater demand for national archaeology and cultural history than ever before.

But if the past can be used for all these purposes, what will actually remain of it? Has the present completely taken over the past for its own purposes? Or are there limits to how much the past can be manipulated, and who sets these limits? Is that what archaeologists and historians are for, or should they simply deliver the facts for others to use freely at their own discretion? But facts can be presented in many different ways. Magnus Magnusson, in an interview about his popular TV series on the

Vikings, said (from Mahler, Paludan-Müller and Stummann Hansen 1983:134):

and to follow the story up, all this has something to do with Reagan winning the election. Why are the Vikings so popular; why is the Western world so interested in them? Why does the West keep reviving the Vikings? And they do. The Viking series is being shown in England, it is on the point of being shown in the USA, and it starts in Denmark in February. . . . Why? Because people are tired of the state's stewardship, because people need adventure; they create heroes like Thor Heyerdal – lone individuals who dare to take risks. . . . Believe me, archaeology tells us more about the present than about the past, in the sense that in a given period of our history we take an interest in quite specific epochs of the past . . . in the nineteenth century interest focused on the Bible and the Roman Empire, because the Victorians perceived themselves as patriotic – *pater familias* – and as imperialists. Now neither is any longer the case, so archaeologists have scouted around for other epochs upon which we might model ourselves, and thus we have pounced on the Vikings: men who sailed out and conquered new seas, men who took part in the creation of Russia (whether one likes it or not!).

Magnusson's TV series consciously emphasised these aspects of the Viking Age, while daily life and class divisions were played down. He played on the myth of Vikings-and-us, so that it has become more popular than ever. A recent investigation of the use of symbols from prehistory in Norwegian and Swedish newspapers has also shown that it is the symbols of the Viking Age which are dominant: as logos of firms, in the tourist industry, in sport and athletics, and in the marketing of Scandinavian products in the wider world (Welinder 1987:103ff.).

Magnus Magnusson's pronouncements were in fact later overtaken by reality. In the wake of the Viking series, almost like a prophecy coming true, came Spielberg's film about Indiana Jones, which (re)created the myth of the archaeologist as a heroic discoverer and individualist *à la* Thor Heyerdal. We have come a long way from the other-worldly researchers of relics or practitioners of the 'buttonology' which Strindberg treated with irony in *'De lyksaliges ø'*. We are engaged in something much more topical: the construction of modern myths. Here history and the even more remote prehistory have their own quality: the effect of distance. In a context which is remote, either in time or space, it is easier to come out with strong messages without causing offence. And because of the distance we are not on guard, so the messages are more likely to be accepted without fuss. We therefore often find that historical novels become the mouth-piece for fundamental opinions about our own time, perhaps without us even being aware of it. Let me give a couple of historical examples.

As a continuation of romanticism and the growing interest in the past, the historical novel came to life. From Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas the line can be directly traced, in Denmark, down to B. S. Ingemann. Together with the popular translations of Saxo's work and of the sagas (particularly Grundtvig's versions) they established a view of villains and heroes, of knightly virtues and warrior-like bravery, of the protective and stabilising influence of royal power through good and evil times, which



Figures 2 and 3. The illustrations of prehistory produced for school teaching material or in popular literature are often strongly influenced by (unconscious?) messages from our own time. Compare these two representations of life in the Stone Age from the turn of the century and the 1970s. The earlier (below) radiates middle-class harmony, almost idyllic in tone. In demure garments the women carry out traditional female work, while the men are returning from the hunt. In the modern representation (left) the figures are naked and social realism has made its entry; it is a commune-like life style that is projected here, but the pattern of sex roles is intact. (The modern edition of life in the Stone Age is from P. Petersen's *Avn - kampen mod skovfolket* 1976; the 'old' Stone Age picture was drawn by Rasmus Christensen).

by way of innumerable reproductions has persisted to the present day, diligently supported by classical paintings and book illustrations (Bau 1987). Nationalism, royalism, and medieval myth were here united in a peculiar and contrast-filled mixture. From the end of the last century onwards Darwinism and the



natural right of the strongest began to make their appearance in the historical novel, e.g. in the works of Jack London (*White Fang* and *Before Adam*, which deal with ape people who are displaced by higher-ranking groups), and H. G. Wells (stories such as *The Grizzly Folk* and *A Story of the Stone Age*). Archaeology's discovery that primitive species of humans were widespread not only in Europe but over large areas of the world, in the so-called Palaeolithic (old stone) Age, and that only certain areas and regions later developed into true civilisations, came to be seen as a kind of cultural

confirmation of Darwin's theories, and was a contributing factor in turning the literary and intellectual interests of the time in the direction of primitive people and myths of origin. There is no doubt that it is here that the seeds of the Darwinistic philosophy of race can be found. The myth of the white man as the upholder of civilisation during his colonisation of the world is personified in the books about Robinson Crusoe and Tarzan, which both became widely distributed (Jensby 1987). They show the development from middle-class rationality (the sensible Robinson from the start of the eighteenth century) to the individualist's survival by combat and superior reasoning (the wild Tarzan from the beginning of our own century). With help from archaeology in the course of the nineteenth century, historical proof was obtained of the white race's superior technological development from the Stone Age through the Bronze Age to the Iron and Industrial Ages; a welcome confirmation of the special abilities and historic mission of the white man (or individualist).

The poet and Nobel-prize winner, Johannes V. Jensen, was a prominent proponent of this trend, perhaps most explicitly in *Den lange Rejse* (The Long Journey), which was based to a considerable extent on discoveries in archaeology. The story about Dreng and Moa and their Nordic successors, who did not give way to the advancing ice, but took up the challenge and learnt to cope because they were compelled to adjust to progress in order to survive, and who became powerful and hardened, is a story which contains all the basic traits of the myth about the origin of the white race. The forest people, however, who retreated before the ice, did not develop further.

In Denmark, as in many countries, the historical novel has undergone a renaissance since the 1970s. In the book *Fæ og Frænde* (Cattle and Kin), by Ebbe Kløvedal Reich, the Cimbrian campaign against the Romans in the first century before our epoch thus becomes a symbol of the Danish people's chances of learning to cope with the Roman Empire of our time – the European Community. Fate took the wrong turn for the Cimbrians only when they started to disagree among themselves. But after the Cimbrians came the Danes, and they created a new order, and were to outlive the Romans. In addition to the national, the social and political dimension has come into the picture. The book concludes thus:

When Sine and Remus went to rest that morning, they both knew what task awaited them as Danes. They were to build a land in which no one had too much and no one too little of either hard work or the life of pleasure – in which slavery would not be known – and in which there would therefore be no difference between gods and humans. They were to build a history which did not burn up nature and time in greedy flames – but which loved them – and in which there would therefore be no difference between desire and duty.

They were to build a Denmark totally without an empire, only with people.

The historical novel, and the use of historical themes in literature and art, are thus symptoms of current political, ideological, and national tendencies; poetry and historical research, each in its own way, are both products of these tendencies and also contributors to their creation.

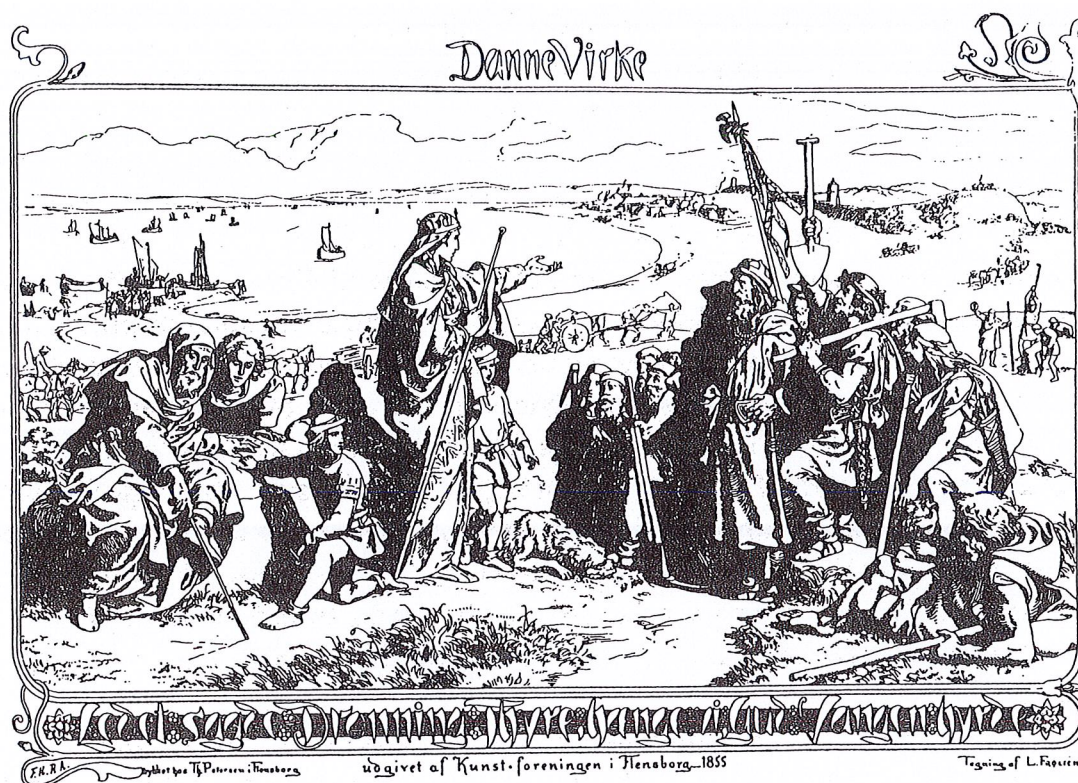


Figure 3. *The romantic conception of nature which we know from the Golden-Age painters has set its imprint, right up to our own time, on the image cherished by all Danes, including nature preservationists, of what is typical and beautiful in the Danish landscape (Olwig 1984); in the same way many of the classical illustrations of the most important of the legends and sagas from Denmark's history have set their imprint on our idea of the people of the past. A good example is the artist Lorenz Frølich's picture, from 1855, of Queen Thyra watching the building of Dannevirke, surrounded by devoted Danes. The picture is in every respect a fabrication – intended as a reminder that the border stood at Dannevirke, and that ever since prehistoric times the Danes had stood together to defend it against the Germans. It moreover reflects Romanticism's strongly idealised view of royal power and of the early Middle Ages, before the nobility began to exploit the free Danish peasant.*

THE DOMESTICATED PAST

It is not only in books and films that the past is revived. It has become just as important to be able to see, to be confronted with, the actual evidence of history. It has only been in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, that the past has been systematically rediscovered and efforts made to preserve it as a national-historic and scientific task, undertaken by archaeologists, architects, ethnologists, and historians, alongside innumerable support associations, tourist organisations, etc. The preservation of the past is part of the 'domestication' and 'cultivation' of history which makes it accessible to the present. It is thereby also altered. Even if individual ancient monuments or individual objects are authentic, they come to be presented in a context which is alien and which alters their historical meaning. They become a message in the present, torn away from the past. Because this happens in so many different ways, and with many different purposes, it also naturally opens up many different means of access to an understanding of the past, and therefore rarely results in standardisation

(Shanks and Tilley 1987: fig. 1.1; Lowenthal 1985: chapter 6).

It is important to understand to what an enormous extent the presentation of the past, the medium, contributes to changing its historic significance, and to what a large extent this is determined by the present. We are responsible for selecting what should be preserved and presented, what should be displayed in museums on the basis of our interests and present knowledge about both the past and the present. Greek temples are thought of, for instance, more as symbols of classical European culture than as evidence of the religion of the Greeks. Industrial monuments, such as Ironbridge in England, in the same way become symbols of England as the cradle of industry, rather than evidence of industry's social consequences in the form of exploitation and class conflict. We ought, however, to be at least as interested in what is not selected – in the history that is not being retold. Not with the object of exercising ideological criticism, since it is relatively easy with hindsight to identify false consciousness and hidden ideological messages. The purpose is rather to show the connection between present-day interests and the use of the past. Let me illustrate this transformation of form and content with a couple of examples which show how this also is historically determined.

Museums were set up in the nineteenth century as temples to the past, or more accurately to selected objects from it. The museum in its form and function is a child of a time when interest focused more on art and technology, on the objects themselves, than on what they were a part of. The objects in the cases became symbols of a tamed and cultivated past which the bourgeoisie of the towns could study without moving out of their habitual circles. The presentation followed the model of the nineteenth-century grocer's shop – with artefacts instead of commodities and identification labels instead of price tickets. The objects were moved into the towns, and so also at times were statues and parts of buildings; they came not just from the local culture, but from all over the world, so that the progress of history could be demonstrated in the main cities of Europe and America. It is amazing that both the public and archaeologists accepted this strait-jacket for nearly a hundred and fifty years. After the Second World War came a break-up and final reckoning; today attempts are being made to transform museums so that they can meet demands for experiencing the past in historical context. They have survived, however, because they have become part of our cultural pattern and a part of our historical up-bringing. They have replaced Sunday school; the ideological foundation of the present is history. For this reason new initiatives rapidly arose to supplement the tasks of the museums.

The preservation of ancient monuments and the provision of information about them at the original site began at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century as part of a change of perception about the past and nature. It was no longer adequate to place a selection in the museums in the towns; the monuments and evidence of the past in the landscape were now considered equally important. This movement coincided with the rediscovery of nature as the object of excursions and as something original and worthy of preservation, when seen with the eyes of town dwellers and poets (Olwig 1984). In the decades around the turn of the century thousands of ancient monuments all over Europe were excavated and recon-

structed, and then turned into historic sight-seeing objects. With the expansion of motoring and leisure activities after the Second World War, the purveying of information on this subject became systematised in the form of panels, leaflets, and historic guidebooks. Historic objects of interest increasingly became attractions for the tourist industry, at first nationally, then internationally.

In the towns in the same period new museums were built to full scale – the so-called open air museums, to which old farms and town houses were moved and then re-erected. The old town and peasant culture could now be experienced in a scrubbed and decent edition, a kind of historical theatre set, where the illusion of an idyllic past could be maintained. As regards presentation this was a scoop but only in a few places was a conscious attempt made to breach the idyll and show the whole reality – from the over-crowded slum to the well-kept bourgeois home. These museums became in addition a monument to progress, by showing what one had left behind, how far one had come.

In line with the development of the philosophy of preservation and conservation, the goal became increasingly to preserve the old environment in its natural state, so that the past was not put in a museum, but was an integrated part of the landscape of the present and future. This was expressed especially in the growth of building preservation and landscape preservation from the turn of the century onward, when laws on building preservation and nature preservation were passed everywhere.

Concurrently with the integration of the past into the present, and with the growth of open-air interests and tourism, there was an increase in demand for experiencing authentic environments, including those of the distant past. Reconstructed and animated prehistoric environments became, from the 1960s onward, an important new attraction, and are probably today one of the largest growth areas. In recent years dozens of simulated prehistoric environments of this type have been created all over Europe. There are three different functional types: historic workshops and centres set up in association with schools, with a primarily pedagogic purpose; commercial centres constructed by large capital interests (especially the tourist industry), a kind of prehistoric culture land to parallel the other entertainment centres for mass tourism (Disneyland, Legoland, etc.); and finally there are original scientific research centres such as Lejre in Denmark and Butser in England, which have had to link themselves to the other types in order to survive.

With this short sketch I have tried to demonstrate two things. First, that the demand to experience the past has moved away from bourgeois show cases with selected objects to reconstructed historical sites in the landscape and actual animated prehistoric environments; from observation at a safe distance in museums to active participation in reconstructed scenes. Second, that this reflects a corresponding development in the philosophy of conservation, both of nature and of culture, progressing from concentration on the individual object, via single monuments, to entire environments – natural or urban. In order to keep pace with this development the museums have also had to change character radically. Ultimately this reflects changes in needs for experiences which tourism in particular has helped to develop.

Present-day society thus lives with the past in an extraordinarily active way, and

uses massive resources to this end (Newcomb 1979; Baker 1983) – a project which is, from a world history point of view, unique. History has become the dominant ideology of the present; we see ourselves reflected in it and use it to throw our own age into relief. Awareness of history is inculcated into us in the same way as awareness of religion was in earlier times – even when we travel. Tourism is the pilgrimage of our age to the relics of the past, as has been said elsewhere (Horne 1984), and the parallels are not merely superficial. The tourist's journey, just like the pilgrimage, follows clearly-staked-out routes. Even if one only goes on holiday to sun bathe and swim, there still are rules as to what one 'must' see, when one visits certain places. It is not relics that we take home with us, but photographs and souvenirs, so that we can relive the journey at home in the living room, and be strengthened in our historical faith. The past is recreated and produced today for tourists, both domestic and international. The experiences and knowledge one acquires while travelling, visiting museums and monuments, through guidebooks, tourist films, pamphlets etc. are probably for many people a stronger contributing factor to the awareness of the history and concept of other nations and cultures than is literature. At any rate what is acquired in this way is a range of visual impressions which hold fast and perhaps lead to attempts to obtain more knowledge about the subject.

Archaeologists and historians should therefore take the closest possible interest in the way history is presented, precisely because it happens in such a haphazard and kaleidoscopic way. Major epochs and events in history are exemplified by selected symbols and monuments which often offer only simplified statements and limited possibilities for contextual understanding. Often traditional myths and cultural dogma are uncritically consolidated. We can experience the era of religion and the Church in churches and cathedrals from the Middle Ages, likewise the life style of the nobility and aristocracy in castles and manors. But only rarely can we find out about the living conditions of the tenant farmers or the proletariat in the towns, unless we visit the few museums where they can be found. Industrialism has also had its history, and its monuments are now to an increasing extent preserved and exhibited, and frequently also the living conditions of workers. The nearer we come to our own time, the more frequently history is presented as a lesson and as an expression of internal struggle and social contrasts: the museums of the revolutions in France, the museums of the World Wars, including, not least significantly, the concentration camps in Germany, as a historic reminder.

It was not until very recently that the scope and character of this world-history education and the preservation of physical remains of history, locally and globally, received serious critical academic attention (Lowenthal 1984; Horne 1984; Trigger 1989). In the course of the 1980s this attention has manifested itself in the holding of the first international conferences on cultural parks (Proceedings 1984) and in the creation of an international committee (ICAHM – International Committee on Heritage Management), which has held its first sessions. It was also a major theme at the World Archaeological Congress in Southampton in 1986 (Cleere 1989; Layton 1989a; 1989b; Gathercole and Lowenthal 1990).

Previously one stuck to the more obvious and isolated examples of misuse in the

form of national and political use of history, and paid less attention to the very broad spectrum of devices for historical indoctrination and socialisation, from literature and museums to the recreation of historic tourist environments. As has become apparent the devices are deeply rooted in their own age, and are an expression of it, and thus contribute to the formation of a view of the past which belongs to a specific period, not just because of what it shows or leaves out, but also because of the way one is socialised to understand history, whether as a chronological wanderer in museums or as a participant in historical environments. After having thus briefly placed the use and preservation of the past in a cultural and historic context, I shall now go on to give some examples of the use of the past for political and national purposes.

THE PAST, NATIONALISM, AND POLITICS

One of the most important functions of the past is as creator of national ethnic identity and unity. This is probably the main reason for the existence of archaeology, museums, and preservation laws, and for the importance attached to history as a school subject, on a par with arithmetic and mathematics. The past is actually the present-day myth about the coming into existence of the nation states. It is one of the cornerstones of the images we have of the world we live in, as developmental history, from Stone Age to Industrial Age, and as national and ethnic history (Moberg 1984). In Denmark, and western Europe, we have almost forgotten how important the common past was for the building of our national identity, because it seems to be something that is over and is therefore inevitable. Archaeologists and historians prefer above all to avoid such concepts; they seek to be neutral, or to be entertaining. They leave such terms, and the opportunities to exert influence, to others. But in other places in the world, where living-conditions are less harmonious, nothing is swept under the carpet (Sanoja 1981):

A sense of national identity tends to lead to desire for national independence. The sense of historical and cultural identity often generates a sense of the particular, of differentiation between two peoples. This differentiation has great political significance, particularly for the development of peoples who have been subjected to cultural intrusions that have altered and destroyed their national identity and who need to reaffirm their sense of national integration and historic tradition, which is in essence the permanence as a nation.

The constructive element in the combination of nationalism and historical identity is the spiritual and cultural consciousness of one's own values to which it can lead, not least in countries which for centuries have suffered colonial or imperialistic oppression, and which have often on that account lost both traditions and self-esteem (Sanoja 1981):

When a society is conscious of its own national and cultural identity, it can better understand, evaluate, and criticise other societies. When such a consciousness does not exist, as in the case of many Latin American countries,

some groups within the population search for other societies; for many Venezuelans and other Latin Americans, Miami and Disneyland have become national ideals. This situation would be amusing if, beneath this supposed loss of identity, there did not exist motivations stimulated by other economic, political, and ideological interests.

This statement from present-day Latin America is almost word-for-word a repetition of the words of the famous Danish archaeologist J. J. A. Worsaae, writing in 1843, when Denmark was a poor and undeveloped country, in the menacing shadow of the bellicose, imperialistic Germany (Worsaae 1849):

A people with respect for themselves and their independence cannot possibly rest content with a consideration of their present circumstances only. They must also of necessity look at the past . . . to learn how they became what they are. Only when this is clear in their minds, can a people fully understand their heritage, only then can they defend their independence with all their might and work with zeal for future progress, and thereby safeguard the prosperity and honour of their mother country.

When and how did this special national historical understanding come about? Has it always existed? No, it is at most two hundred years old, but in the course of that period it has succeeded so well that today no one can do without it, as has been said elsewhere (Harbsmeier 1986). The question of why has been debated just as much. Nationalism has been seen by some historians as a political and economic construction created in the wake of the breakthrough of industrialism; an ideological manipulation and an expression of false consciousness (Gellner 1983:125):

It preaches and defends continuity, but owes everything to a decisive and utterly profound break in human history. It preaches cultural diversity, when in fact it imposes homogeneity both inside and, to a lesser degree, between political units. Its self-image and its true nature are inversely related, with an ironic neatness seldom equalled even by other successful ideologies.

Others have fastened upon the deep feelings nationalism has been able to mobilise, and have seen in this some kind of 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983), in which common identity and right to self-determination were the decisive factors (the word 'imagined' refers to the fact that, in contrast to lesser social communities, in this case one does not know the other members of the 'community', but only has an image of others as nationally related). This view of nationalism as a national and human right to self-determination necessarily implied that one not only recognised one's own right to self-determination and sovereignty, but also that of others. One thus defines oneself in relation to others who are different from oneself in terms of nationality, but who can lay claim to the same rights. The idea of nationalism and the nation state therefore inevitably spread, but simultaneously came into conflict with the colonisation of the world by the European states in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This led to a particular development of nationalism, in the direction of imperialism and racism.

There was a difference between peoples and nations, but this naturally needed an explanation. Here archaeology and historical research came into the picture, because they could deliver the raw material which became the basis for this sort of nationalism.

A decisive element in the build up of national and historic identity is the choice of effective symbols and myths. The end of the nineteenth century was a particularly rich era for the invention of national symbols and myths which could only sporadically be connected with historical evidence – e.g. the myth about a German-Arian race or the English royal family's coronation rituals (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). In France, Italy, and England people conceived of themselves as the heirs of the classical civilisations and sought to outdo each other in carrying home and displaying art treasures from the Orient, Greece, and Italy which could be used to symbolise this historic mission (Trolle Larsen 1988). At one point in the 1840s the excavations in Iraq took on the character of a race between the great powers of France and England as to which could bring home the most treasures from what was thought to be the prehistoric Nineveh. In the wake of this archaeological imperialism the leading European nations established archaeological institutes in the Mediterranean countries and in the East, and the majority of these still exist.

In the Austro-Hungarian region, however, and especially in Germany, the effort went towards constructing a purely European past which emphasised the primeval strength and superiority of the German people in relation to the decline of the old cultures. It had its origins in the all-conquering spread of the Indo-European race and language from Europe out gradually to large areas of the world. From the turn of the century onwards a historical construction was developed, according to which the origin of the Indo-European people was traced to the North; since prehistory it had spread from there (Jensen 1988). The Greek culture also, with its indisputable influence on European history – 'the light from the Acropolis' – was shown with the help of archaeology shown to be of Indo-European origin, which explained its capacity to transform the old oriental cultural heritage into a dynamic European culture (Bernal 1988). European culture had thus developed since prehistoric times a specific character and dynamic of its own which explained the present domination of Europe in the world. Concepts such as this were not the exclusive preserve of academic extremists, but occupied leading researchers both on the Continent and in England (Rowlands 1989).

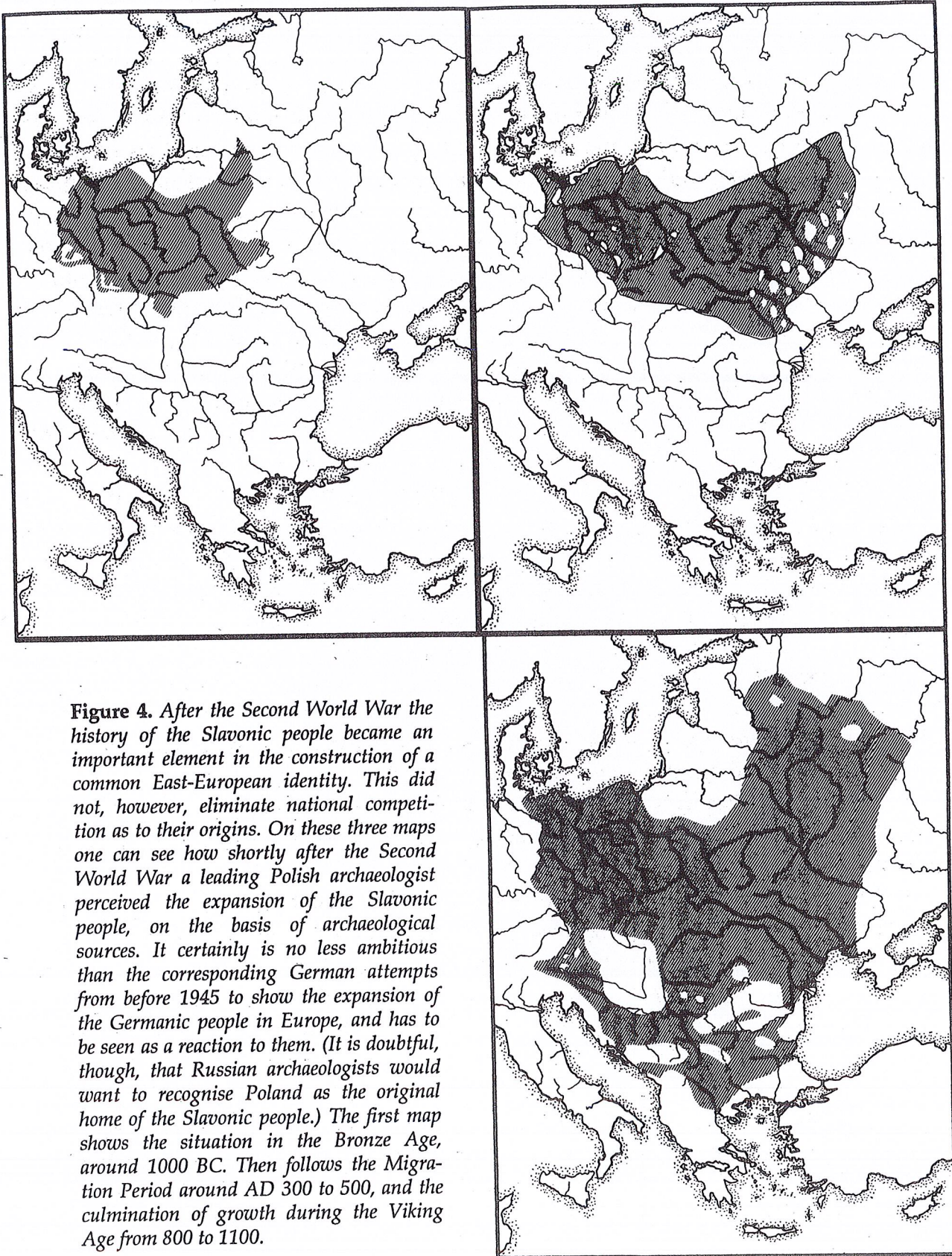
With the help of these historical myths, at the end of the nineteenth century nationalism and imperialism had become yoked to a racist national-historical world mission, which took two world wars to extinguish – for the most part, since it continues to survive in certain spots, such as South Africa. Inwardly the nation state created the framework for the construction of a national solidarity which cut across class divisions. In this century it helped keep social tensions in check in Europe, although it led to internal tensions being converted to external ones.

Even if the particular European variety of nationalism, with its imperialistic and racist leanings, has rightly been rejected and where possible replaced or supplanted by a common European identity (Boll-Johansen 1988; Øhrgaard 1988), historical con-

sciousness of national traditions and characteristics is an essential element in the identity and continued existence of any people. This became crystal clear with the progress of decolonisation after the Second World War. In recent decades we have thus witnessed the establishment of national identities – and at times the construction of such identities – in large areas of the Third World, often in conflict with the historical heritage from the colonial age; seldom, however, is this conflict so direct as in the case of Rhodesia, where the new state was named after one of the largest and most impressive complexes of ruins from the past – Zimbabwe – which covers an area of seven square kilometres. This symbolised a strength and stature with which it was desirable to become identified, and which could become a rallying symbol for a black national history. The colonial and archaeological history of the Zimbabwe ruins also qualified them, however, for this purpose. As late as 1971 the Inspector of Rhodesia's monuments, Peter Garlake, left his position because he refused to yield to the white government's insistence that Zimbabwe had been built by white Phoenician or Portuguese colonialists, and could not in any circumstances be the result of a black civilisation, as the archaeologists had determined (Garlake 1974 and 1982, Kårsholm 1989).

Particularly in countries with a colonial past, as in Africa, or in countries where European colonialists created new nations, as in America and Australia, there is a basis for conflict and politically-coloured decision making concerning relative priorities for the preservation of the indigenous and/or colonial past. In the last decade, many indigenous peoples have used the past and archaeology to recreate and recapture something of their lost culture (Layton 1988a; 1988b). In Australia this has further led to a demand for the recovery of lost land areas which have particular historic and religious significance, and in the USA many Indian tribes claim, very naturally, that they want to govern their own cultural heritage and participate in decision taking on archaeological excavations. For them the past and its culture are still alive. This means for instance that certain tribes treat every burial, no matter when it took place, with the same veneration and respect. All the dead are forefathers and part of the common family. Reverence for the dead is thus not dependent, as it is in the Christian tradition, on direct kinship and historical proximity (McGuire 1989); they find the habit of demolishing burial places after one or two generations incomprehensible and pretty nearly barbaric. The desire to re-bury the bodies of forefathers which are at present stored in museums has therefore led to something of a cultural collision with the archaeologists, for whom burial is first and foremost a scientific source material (Schubert 1989). But in spite of these differences the past still serves the same function: it creates a common identity and solidarity built around specific shared values.

The past is thus a strong power in the present, because it helps create fixed points which we can use to find our bearings. It defines a community which excludes others and gives reassurance to those who are within it. It is both constructive and potentially destructive; it both creates unity and justifies wars. The destructive possibilities were demonstrated in Europe under Nazism, when archaeology and history were manipulated in support of racist ideals about a master race, and to support the claim



for new territories (McCann 1989). In this connection the idea has too readily been accepted that the Nazi distortions can be dismissed as an exception. That is all too easy. It came from a common European tradition, which still thrives in a watered-down version in European history writing today. In eastern Europe after the Second World War the old pre-war traditions in archaeology, broadly speaking, were retained. Research concerning the origins and spread of the Slavonic peoples was massively supported, and the methods at times were not very different from those employed before the war. In 1949, for instance, the Polish archaeologist, Konrad Jazdzewski, published an archaeological atlas of the expansion of the Slavonic people from a core area in Poland in the Bronze Age to cover the whole of eastern and central Europe in the course of the Iron Age and the early Middle Ages. It is a counterpart to Kossinna's map of the expansion of the Germanic people, a perhaps understandable reaction to the Germanisation of Europe before the Second World War. The establishing of priorities in Slavonic archaeology must also, however, be seen as an element of an ideological and political attempt to set up a common ethnic and historic tradition for eastern Europe following the communist assumption of power.

The use and misuse of history for political and ideological purposes has thus been an ever-present possibility all over the world, wherever nationalism, imperialism and other -isms which needed historical legitimation could be found (Fowler 1987; Gero and Root 1990). In Europe we tend to moralise over the Third World's neo-nationalism, but we entirely forget our own, which came about in exactly the same way, and still thrives for better and worse. The problems seem in fact to be growing at the present time, especially in countries with several ethnic or national groups which do not wish to be integrated.

This is relevant in Africa, where the present state boundaries were created in the colonial period, and unite or split cultural and ethnic traditions often in a totally haphazard way. Within Europe also increasingly strong demands are made by ethnic and national minorities for self-determination and preservation or revival of their own traditions and language.

What is archaeology's response to this? Realistically it must be stated that there is a gulf created by historical transformations, encompassing all aspects of social life from language and the world of the imagination to social organisation, which separates the present from most of the past. The Danes of the past, by-and-large, had only two things in common with those of the present: that they lived in the same areas and from a certain point in time onwards developed a Nordic language. The few traditions which demonstrate continuity, language and certain crafts practised since the Iron Age, are insignificant from a historical point of view in relation to the sum of changes: A feeling of connection to the past is in fact an expression of an 'imagined' subjective community which only rarely contains any socio-historical reality. This is of course not a hindrance to seeking one's models for the present in particular historical epochs or traditions.

Archaeology and the cultural-historical disciplines inhabit the border area between politics and science. This is particularly true of archaeology because it serves the state as the manager of the cultural heritage. Consequently, it is important that historians,

ethnographers, and archaeologists maintain a critical attitude to their role as producers and communicators of historic traditions (ARC 1986; Gathercole and Lowenthal 1990). It is difficult or perhaps impossible to position oneself outside society as a neutral and critical observer of one's own work. If one is personally or politically committed this naturally colours what one sees, whereas those who are also without such commitment as a rule are without insight into this type of problem and therefore act uncritically, merely as tools of tradition. It can often be helpful, however, to survey the use of the past in a historical perspective. At a distance one sees things in a clearer and more level-headed way; this insight can then be used to expose some of the disguises and hidden messages in current representations. To illustrate this I shall conclude with an example.

THE CASE OF DENMARK: CHOOSING 'TO ADD THE STRENGTH OF THE PAST TO THE WISDOM OF THE PRESENT'

While everywhere in the world today the use of the past is an element in the construction of historical identity by national and ethnic groups, only in a few countries have archaeology and the distant past come to play a major role. Denmark is one of those countries, and there are a number of reasons for this. In Denmark archaeology developed early, together with the agricultural reforms and the beginnings of nationalism. New cultivation and the intensification of agriculture meant that prehistoric remains were demolished in their thousands, and the many archaeological finds from this led to the creation of the first national museum in 1807. This formed the basis for a national prehistory. When the rural reformers in addition had brought an end to the oppression of the farming class which had grown in the preceding centuries, the history of this period, and of its monuments, castles and manors, was perceived as tainted. In contrast prehistory stood out as the nearest illustration of the originally-free agricultural society. Prehistoric symbols, from stone axes to burial mounds and dolmens, were found in almost every farmer's fields and formed a close and extremely-strong link between the past and the present. To a much greater extent than, say, those from the Middle Ages, these monuments symbolised an agricultural culture without large class differences. In the agricultural country of Denmark, where after the land reforms the farmers gradually became a dominant economic and political force, these symbols therefore were an appropriate departure point for the construction of a national identity (Sørensen 1986).

This national tradition found poetic expression in the many songs of the time; the High School Song Book became a national song treasury which was diligently used at every large gathering in the country, and still is. Johannes V. Jensen's *Hvor smiler fager den danske kyst* (How beautifully smiles the Danish coast) expresses it thus:

What the hand shapes is the evidence of the spirit. The ancient peasants built and fought with flint. Every chip you find in Danish soil is from the soul of those who built the kingdom. If you yourself want to find the roots of your existence, value the treasure they left behind!



Figure 5. The front cover of *De Tusind Hjem* (*A thousand homes*) from 1913, which shows how the national romantic concept of Denmark had become commonly-accepted property. One could hardly condense 'Danishness' more than this: wood, beach, white church tower, windmill, and not least the dolmen in the field, all framed in a kind of old Nordic animal style (from Nielsen 1987:161).

H. C. Andersen gave his version of this Danishness in some of his finest poems:

In Denmark I was born, my home is there, my roots are there, my world goes out from there; you, the Danish language, are my mother's voice, so sweetly blessed you reach straight to my heart. You, the fresh Danish shore, where the heroic graves of the past stand amid orchard and hop garden. You I love! – Denmark my native land.

In Denmark historical nationalism in this way acquired its special, slightly peasant-flavoured character, contrasting with developments in Europe's dominant nations. Denmark was a country without dreams of major power; quite the contrary, the defeats by England and later Germany created fertile soil for a vivid consciousness of the need to regain internally what had been lost externally. While the European great powers competed to dig out and carry home archaeological treasure in good imperialistic style (Bandaranayke 1977; Chamberlin 1983), testifying to the high cultures they felt themselves to be heirs to, so in Denmark a virtue was made of necessity and strength was found in the country's own more modest past (Worsaae 1843: 116):

The attention which is already now paid to monuments of the past is therefore assuredly not without deeper causes. It is a sign that the Danish people in their future higher development will not blindly join themselves with other countries, but instead will turn their minds inward towards themselves, to add the strength of the past to the wisdom of the present and thus educate themselves independently and in freedom.

This trend was encouraged especially by the Three-Year War against Germany (1848–51), and then by the loss of Southern Jutland to Germany in 1864. In that con-

nection the archaeologist J. J. A. Worsaae determined (Nielsen 1987:117):

to work with the pen for the dissemination of specific and true knowledge about Denmark's old national borders . . . and about the former and present position of the Danish nationality in the most controversial areas. It is the full and clear consciousness of our good right that will strengthen our minds for tenacity and endurance.

Worsaae goes on to describe the historical traditions in Slesvig's cultural affiliation with Denmark, which the Germans had contested. Here the archaeologist clearly committed himself and took up the cudgel on behalf of the national side.

But within the frontiers too there was agitation for the preservation of ancient monuments, specifically with reference to their national significance. In 1893 the poet Johan Skjoldborg travelled around in Jutland and gave lectures to farmers. Here are a couple of extracts, reproduced in the local newspaper, the *Holstebro Avis* (after Thorsen 1983):

We Danes live in a country rich in memories. Our history tells of our fathers' lives on weekdays and Sundays, the fathers on whose shoulders we stand and whose culture we carry on. Cultural development is like a stone cutter's chisel, which is carved out of a raw stone block, first in coarser, then in finer outline, until it finally takes form as a polished and fully refined tool. If we had not had forefathers who had produced the first rough outline, the first cuts and blows, then we, living in our age, could never have achieved the education and culture we have. And for this reason we must have respect for the memorials our forebears have left to us. And we have a fatherland in which ancient monuments lie spread out in fields and moors, one after the other, so that at every step we are reminded of our relatives in the far-distant past, those of whom we are the descendants, and whose bones rest in our soil. But this feeling of having a history and a fatherland, this actually means that we are a nation, a people. In everyday life this feeling may not bubble strongly to the surface, but it simmers in people's minds, during the wear and tear of the day, like an underground spring, and it is just as clear and pure in the mind of the common man as in that of any other. This spring also fertilises present-day life. If the Danish farmers, not less than Danish art and academic life, in this century have caused the attention of the world to turn to them, this is not wholly without connection with the fact that this has been a century of freedom and rebirth for us in the national context, so that the people have woken up and it is as if they have consciously taken possession of themselves. Today's life grows out of respect for the memories of our forefathers.

Today this outlook has taken root so strongly that hardly any Dane would contest it. This is especially because it has been staunchly sustained by poets, archaeologists, and several generations of school and further-education teachers, particularly in times of crisis. For the writer Martin A. Hansen and many others of his generation during and after the Second World War, history was and is extremely alive, a factor which

together with language contributes to the sense of community which binds Danes together as a people. Martin A. Hansen (1957:9) has written:

We are not mere inmates of society, citizens of the state; we are, we discover, part of a stronger, deeper community, the Danish people, founded upon our mother-tongue, the history of Denmark, its poetry. But history is something more besides. It is a weapon. It is a matter of having a forged and tempered history. And it becomes that as soon as we retell it as it deserves to be told. *Skræp* [the name of a legendary sword] must be dug up, not in order to be described, pollen analysed, and placed in a museum, but so that it can be used.

This national historical tradition found new sustenance as a consequence of membership of the European Community, and is still alive both in literature and in the minds of many Danes. A recent example comes from a protection plan drawn up in the Danish Ministry of Environment in 1985, concerning the preservation and publication of the national-historical area of Lejre, for which the author Ebbe Kløvedal Reich was asked to write the introduction – in itself a testimony to the interplay of administration and myth makers. As an introduction to this rational planning proposal he conjured up a dream about Denmark and juxtaposed the irrational and the rational:

Lejre is a name with subtle, magic powers in Danish. First and foremost this is because it is the name of the very first seat of legendary kings in the new-born Danish kingdom. The dream of Denmark begins there. But it also subtly lies in the fact that the royal seat of the Scyldings from its very beginnings had an especially transitory nature. It kept disappearing. It will become a pure dream, if we do not take care of it. . . . Much of what Denmark is actually about and strives for can be seen and touched in Lejre. But still more can only be sensed intuitively. For Lejre has always been a subtle, light construction. It can only endure if the Danes support it with care and affection.

Ebbe Reich evokes feelings which echo the romanticism of the previous century. Care, warmth, and poetry instead of Martin Hansen's more sturdy rallying call. These represent the extremes of the Danish tradition of historical nationalism, a very Danish brew, far removed from the chauvinism one can find in larger countries. Experience of the practical work of protecting and maintaining ancient monuments furthermore shows that this care is a characteristic feature. Foreign archaeologists visiting Denmark are invariably struck with amazement not only by the large number of protected monuments, but also by the widespread respect with which they are treated, which together with the great interest generally shown in the past is unique in the world. The archaeological periodical *Skalk*, with its 50,000 – 60,000 subscribers, has a larger readership than any popular archaeological magazine in one of the major languages. This reflects in addition a conscious effort on the part of the archaeologists in the direction of popular presentation, a tradition which goes back to the founders of archaeology in the last century, C. J. Thomsen and J. J. A. Worsaae, a tradition which

has since been continued and developed by the leading researchers in the discipline, Sophus Müller, Johannes Brøndsted and P. V. Glob. A recent survey has shown that a third of what is published by Danish archaeologists is popular communication on the subject.

This alone, however, does not suffice to explain why the message found fertile soil and eventually spread out to a wide cross-section of the public. In order to understand that, it is necessary to construct a historical and social perspective and study who has used archaeology and for what purpose (Kristiansen 1981; 1985).

The first national museum was founded in 1807, after Denmark's defeat in the Napoleonic Wars, the loss of its fleet, the bombardment of Copenhagen, and, not least, the theft of the Golden Horns. The announcement of state bankruptcy in 1813 was just the formal culmination of the disasters. In this atmosphere both national romanticism and interest in the ancient history of the nation quickly found favour as a means of promoting national mobilisation and supporting the now-weakened absolute monarchy. In a book on the significance of ancient monuments from that time the following passage is to be found (Thorlacius 1809: 68): 'They uphold the memory of the heroic deeds of the dwellers in the North, they trumpet their strength and great might, they offer rich opportunities for comparison between past and present.' The interest in the past, however, during the whole of the closing phase of the absolute monarchy up until 1850, was restricted to the old bourgeoisie: officers, landowners, officials, and higher academics. This is evident from the membership lists of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries and from the subscription lists for the first popular representation of Denmark's prehistory: Worsaae's book from 1843, *Danmark's Oldtid oplyst ved Oldsager og Gravhøie* (Denmark's Prehistory illuminated by Artefacts and Burial Mounds). It was this bourgeoisie which formed contacts with the museum in Copenhagen when new finds were made. Clergymen were also active as archaeological intermediaries in this period before the religious revivals. The rewards, which always went to the finders, usually farmers and agricultural workers, ensured that the quantity of incoming finds rose steadily.

Attempts were also made to establish collections in the cathedral towns, 'the appropriate use of which would spread the interest in knowledge about the past already aroused by the spirit of the time and the arrangements of the government far and wide', as Prince Christian Frederik, later King Christian VIII, wrote in a recommendation in 1817. But these early efforts all came to nothing. It should not be forgotten that there was actually not much that could then be said about prehistory. In his museum C. J. Thomsen established the first systematic sub-division of prehistory into Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age, and with his weekly conducted tours he rapidly turned the museum into both a popular and an international attraction, which soon had imitators all over Europe. It was Thomsen's successor, however, J. J. A. Worsaae, who first established archaeology as an independent discipline which, in co-operation with natural science in particular, soon came up with amazing results, including evidence that in Denmark's earliest prehistory people had lived as hunters and fishers. The proof was found in the so-called *Køkkenmøddinger* (kitchen middens), a concept which found its way into international archaeological literature.

After the end of the absolute monarchy and the advent of the new Cabinet responsibility, interest in prehistory began to grow seriously. After 1850 in the course of only a few years museums were established in the major cathedral towns. The initiative was taken by the liberal bourgeoisie, often with academics from the natural sciences heading the boards. The purpose was 'to put the people in spiritual possession of the old relics of the past, so that they learn to understand them and are roused to general interest in the history of the fatherland.' The new provincial collections were furthermore seen as an element in the process of decentralisation and public education after the centralism of the absolute monarchy. The national historical significance of archaeology was emphasised by the king's active participation in archaeological excavations, especially the excavation of national historical monuments such as Jelling and Dannevirke. It was however still the established bourgeoisie that was dominant in e.g. the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries, and it was also in large measure the same group who set up their own private collections. Collections of antiquities became a prestigious and fashionable phenomenon in the second half of the nineteenth century, when any estate with some self-respect could boast a reasonable collection displayed in well-built showcases in one of its rooms. The model was the National Museum and Frederik VII's collection.

Major economic and social contrasts also made their mark on archaeology, however, where it became a rewarding secondary occupation for the rural proletariat to dig out burial mounds and sell ancient artefacts either to antique dealers or directly to provincial museums and the large private collectors (Thorsen 1979). It was in order to stop this plundering of the mounds that Johan Skjoldborg was sent out on lecture tours of the worst-affected areas. The fact that there was a direct link between the museums' and collectors' purchases and the absence of a protective law was not recognised by the National Museum's director, Sophus Müller; nor did it disturb the archaeologists of the time that some of the largest private collectors undertook large-scale excavations themselves. They were people one associated with, and they were members of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries, the recognised cultural and social club. They often cooperated with the National Museum and in many cases carried out proficient work on a standard equal to that of the archaeologists of the time. In a jubilee publication for the National Museum in 1907, for instance, Sophus Müller typically called the middle-class collectors 'our devoted friends', while the 'archaeologists' of the rural proletariat, who could not afford to keep the finds, were called 'our dangerous enemies'.

The farmers themselves were still not directly active archaeologically; they had enough to do with organising themselves and carrying through the major new reforms in agriculture: the cooperative movement, new farming systems, and the high schools. Only after the change in the political system in 1901, when they acquired political power, did they begin to set up their own monuments in the form of the many local-history museums. The vast majority of these were set up between 1890 and 1940, and in contrast to the museums of the cathedral towns they were built around the preservation of the old farming culture, or folk culture (cf. Karen Schousboe's article). Education and interest in history nurtured by the Folk High Schools now began to



Figure 6. Interest in ancient monuments spread to farmers-to-be through the high schools. This picture shows a class of pupils from Vallekilde High School at the beginning of the 1870s; they are standing on a burial mound with spades in their hands, having completed the restoration of the mound under the leadership of the headmaster, Ernst Trier. Trier's brother donated a flagpole to be erected on the mound, and the girls in the school sewed a gigantic Danish flag (from Nielsen 1987:138).

play a significant part. We now make the acquaintance of the enlightened farmer who voluntarily protects the ancient monuments on his or her land, one with time and motivation to set up his or her own collections.

It was not long, however, before clashes of interest arose between the new local museums and the old National Museum, which would have preferred everything to be run from Copenhagen. There the old traditions from before the change in the political system in 1901 were still dominant. It was not until the 1930s that the staff there joined the new development, and by that time there were also more archaeologists on the staff who came from the same social layer which dominated the cultural work in the provinces: school teachers, farmers, and lecturers. This was a contributory factor in the turning of research toward daily life, including investigations of sites and agricultural tools, and regional investigations of settlements. For some it was a question of conscious solidarity with the population groups one came from oneself; cf. the book *Sultegrænsen* (The Starvation Line) by the museum keeper, Peter Riismøller. A similar attitude was held by Gudmund Hatt, who surveyed Iron-Age fields and excavated the first villages from the Iron Age (Stummann Hansen 1983). Among the amateurs, school teachers in particular were an active element in the local-history work from the end of the nineteenth century, along with, typically, vets, dentists and chemists, who through their work were in contact with many people and thus had easy access to information about archaeological finds.

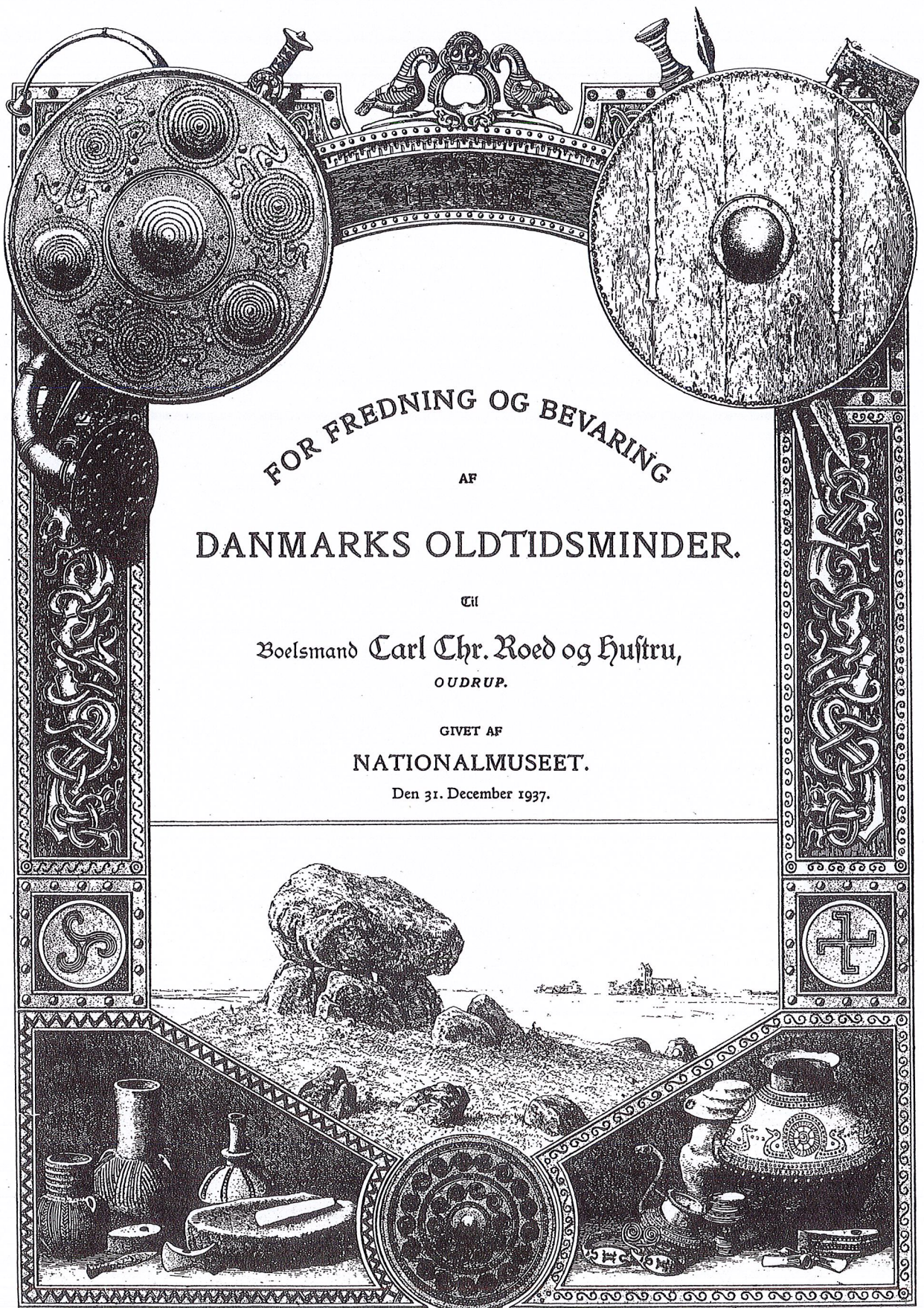


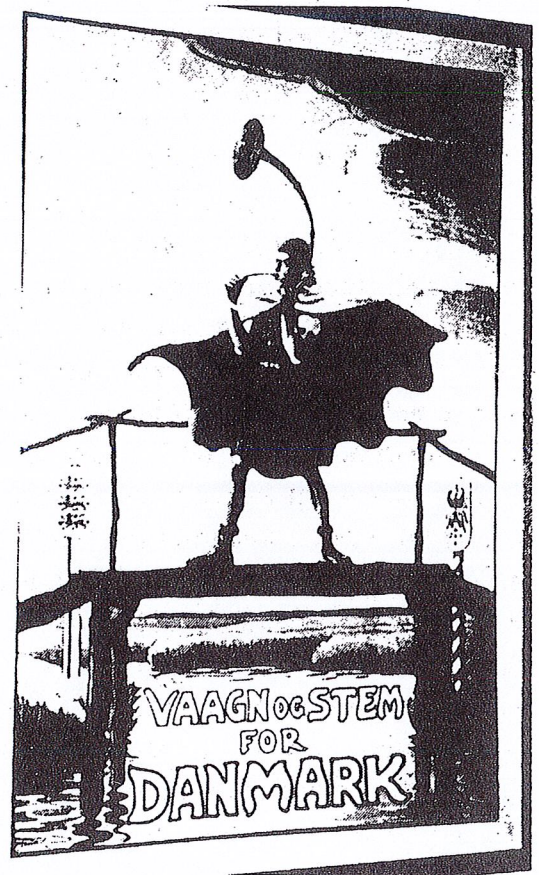
Figure 7. Up until 1937 farm owners and small holders who had voluntarily offered to have their ancient monuments placed under protection received a diploma decorated with numerous old Nordic artefacts and symbols as a token of recognition.

And what happened to the labour movement and social democracy during this time? They staked much on the preservation of nature and possibilities for enjoying it and an open-air life style; historic sites were a part of this. For this reason, among others, the protection of ancient monuments was included in the nature-protection law of 1937. This trend did not make a significant mark until after the war, however, when at the same time the local-history movement slowly ebbed away. This also reflected changes in the political centre of gravity from the country to the towns. The new staple layer was the well-educated middle class, whose involvement in history was of a more passive type. One read about history instead of taking part in it. Spare time, the new concept, was used in expeditions in the open air and to ancient monuments, a change in leisure habits which both the car and the shorter working hours facilitated, and which archaeologists put to good use. From the middle of the 1950s onwards numerous handbooks and guides to ancient monuments in rural areas were produced. Museums for the time being were passé. New popular presentations of Denmark's prehistory sold in large editions, and *Skalk*, founded in 1957, reached a circulation of around 60,000 in the course of the 60s. In general it is characteristic of Danish archaeology that in contrast to most other countries there is a solid tradition of popularisation. In step with this mass communication, many school children became active amateur archaeologists, and many of them later qualified as archaeologists.

After the reform of local government in 1970 local history again underwent a renaissance, which passed off largely unheeded, however. With the large-scale removal of sections of the population to new villa quarters outside the large towns there arose a new need to seek out historical roots. After 1970 between 300 and 400 local historical associations and archives were set up. This new popular historical grass-roots movement coincided with the professionalisation and modernisation of the old museums. The oldsters in the museums were replaced by qualified archaeologists and ethnologists who put new life into the activities. Soon it became a matter of municipal pride to have a modern museum.

The popular spread of archaeology in Denmark has thus in great measure been supported by four successive groups in society and their allies: the aristocracy (until about 1850); the bourgeoisie (until 1901); the farming class (until the 1950s); and the modern middle class (until the present day). These groups were each in turn dominant in the process of historic and economic change which turned Denmark from a feudal agrarian society into a modern industrial one. In this way interest in history spread out to the large majority of the population. The historical engagement of these four social groups coincided with their political consolidation (and incipient decline). National history was taken up and used to emphasise that one represented and embodied the continuation of fundamental national values. Archaeologists participated actively in this entire process, through popularisation and by playing on the same national chords as the poets and politicians. But because this national involvement was seen as natural there was rarely any conscious taking up of positions, except occasionally when the social tensions came to the surface in war or crises. Neither was there any approach to a racist national ideology, partly because the population was ethnically homogeneous, and partly because the proximity to Germany cast shadows

Figure 8. In connection with the plebiscite on the Southern Jutland border in 1920 many historic symbols were used. On this election poster can be seen a lur player calling all the Danish-minded to assemble for the cause, standing on a prehistoric bridge with a German border-sign in the background. The black clouds are about to be driven away by the sun shining over the old country, with stout assistance from the lur player. (The inscription reads 'Wake up and vote for Denmark!').



from which a deliberate distance was taken. There has however been a clear tendency towards 'depoliticisation' and 'denationalisation' of archaeological work during the last twenty to thirty years, in line with the growing professionalisation and in harmony with the growth of direct involvement of archaeologists in and dependence on the political system in counties and municipalities. Politicisation takes place instead through the established channels, in the form of contributions to planning and preservation. The archaeologists have become bureaucrats.

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

It ought by now to be clear that the international spread of archaeology, and its national significance since the middle of the nineteenth century, cannot solely be attributed, as is usually argued in handbooks about the history of the subject, to a few distinguished and far-seeing researchers. Archaeology's development and international dissemination took place as an element in the establishment of the modern nation state and the modern world system, which was created by the European states in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with roots going back to the sixteenth century (Wallerstein 1974; Wolf 1982). In keeping with this a series of archaeological traditions developed as a way of adjusting to this process. The Canadian archaeologist, Bruce Trigger, has described three main categories of archaeology: national, colonialistic, and imperialistic (Trigger 1984). This article has touched on all three, although it has dealt more fully with national archaeology. To these categories we can add two more: fictive and commercial.

Fictive archaeology is linked to the use of history as a framework for historical novels, cartoons, and films, while commercial archaeology is linked to the use of symbols of the past as an element in the marketing of anything from industrial products to forms of life and ideologies. For example in Disneyland, where indoctrination in the American myth is carried out under cover of apparently innocent

entertainment for children. In fact these two categories often go hand in hand and represent a trend which one could call fictive archaeological commercialism. Its significance has grown in accordance with international tourism and the need to market historical experiences and myths in the post-modern and post-industrial society (Lowenthal 1984). Mass tourism has been called present-day pilgrimage to the relics of our own civilisation's history (Horne 1984), and it is probably today the most important factor in the production and reproduction of historic myths. State archaeology has thus in many places been subjected to demands for more commercial and popular marketing; this is for example the policy in England. This is not in itself harmful, and can actually be fruitful. But if the sole goal is commercial there are consequences both for content and for non-commercial interests. After all it is only a small proportion of ancient monuments which can be sold in such a way (ARC 1988).

Since in recent years we have been experiencing both neo-nationalism and ethnic 'renaissances' in many parts of the world, archaeology is under pressure from many sides, and this makes new demands both on politicians and on archaeologists in respect of professional and political accountability. There seems to be a need for both parties to develop a critical consciousness to enable them to cope with the future's complex use of the past, especially since most of the archaeologists in the world today are public employees and obtain most of their resources through laws about preservation of the national and international cultural heritage (Green 1984; Shanks and Tilley 1987).

Archaeologists cannot place themselves outside society; the past has lost its political innocence, as became rather clear when the decision was taken to exclude colleagues from South Africa from the Archaeological World Congress in England in 1986, as part of the international boycott (Ucko 1987). This conflict between professional and political ethics split the archaeological world into two blocks. In everyday work the problems rarely find such clear expression, and it therefore in reality requires a better-developed critical sense to retain them in perspective, involving a historic understanding of the complicated relationship between the present and the past, between science and ideology. What this entails in practice is a matter on which opinions are divided, however, stretching from the demand for political commitment to the demand for neutrality. On this no general lines of direction can be given; it depends on a combination of historical and political traditions in tandem with institutional links and the personal standpoint of the individual archaeologist.

NOTE

This article was originally written and published in Danish in 1989, before the break down of Communism in eastern Europe. I owe intellectual stimulation to my colleagues at the former 'Centre for Research in the Humanities' in Copenhagen. Much of the inspiration for this article came from the following: *Archeologi – virkelighetsflukt eller samfunnsforming*, from 1978, by the Norwegian archaeologist Christian Keller; Ditlev Mahler, Carsten Paludan-Müller and Steffen Stummann Hansen, 1983, *Om arkaeologi, forskning, formidling, forvaltning – for hvem?*; and collections of articles – *Fortid og Nutid* from 1984, produced in connection with an exhibition at Søllerød Museum, and *Danskeren og den ædle vilde*, published in connection with an exhibition on this subject at the Prehistoric Museum at Moesgård in 1987. These books are easily accessible and give many good examples. The chapter heading *Føie Oldtidens Kraft til Nutidens Kløgt* (To add the strength of the past to the wisdom of the present) is the title of an equally inspiring article by Marie Louise Stig Sørensen in the periodical *Stofskifte*, no. 13.

The title of this article is a slight adaptation of a quotation from Thorlacius: *Bemærkninger over de i Danmark endnu tilværende Hedenolds-Hoie og Steensætninger*, published in 1809. In this book, on p. 68, can be found the following passage about ancient monuments: 'they are reminders of the heroic deeds of the dwellers in the North, they trumpet their strength and great might; they offer rich opportunities for comparison between past and present.'

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ABSTRACTS

Die Stärke der Vergangenheit und ihre große Macht. Ein Essay über den Gebrauch der Vergangenheit.

Dieser Beitrag ist Teil einer kritischen Analyse über den Gebrauch der Vergangenheit in der heutigen Gesellschaft. Verschiedene Arten von Vergangenheit (z.B. heroische oder alltägliche Vergangenheiten) werden in unterschiedlichen Zusammenhängen, wie zum Beispiel in Büchern und Filmen, sowie auf einem ländlichen oder städtischen Schauplatz, geschaffen. Geschichte ist, im Interesse nationalistischer und anderer sozialer Gruppierungen, zu einer dominanten Ideologie der Gegenwart geworden. Anhand des Beispiels Dänemark wird die wechselhafte Art und Weise, in der Vergangenheit im Verlauf der Zeit konstruiert wird, erläutert.

La force du passé et son grand pouvoir: un essai sur l'utilisation du passé.

Cet essai dérive d'une analyse critique de l'utilisation du passé dans les sociétés contemporaines. Différents types de passés (comme le passé domestique ou le passé héroïque) sont créés dans différents contextes, tels que les livres, les films, ou encore dans le paysage ou l'occupation urbaine. L'histoire est devenue l'idéologie dominante du présent, au profit de divers groupes, de nature sociale ou nationaliste. Les transformations historiques de la construction du passé sont évoquées ici à travers le cas du Danemark.

The strength of the past and its great might, an essay on the use of the past.

This essay is part of a critical analysis of the use of the past in present-day society. Different types of past (e.g. heroic or domesticated pasts) are created in different contexts such as books and films, and in the landscape and in urban settings. History has become the dominant ideology of the present, in the interest of nationalist and other social groupings. The changing way in which the past is constructed through time is illustrated with the case of Denmark.