JEAN CLAUDE GARDIN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH STRATEGIES
LECTURE HELD AT GENEVA IN 1978
« One main aspect of the archaeological method is imperative: we are authorized to destroy the evidence only if it has been recorded in a detailed and exhaustive manner » (Leroi-Gourhan 1983, 137).

« Instead of acquiring increasing quantities of materials, it is perfectly reasonable to gain greater knowledge by less excavating. » (Idem, p. 142).
Is there a relationship between irrigation and the emergence of state societies?

Poor performance of sophisticated methods
Poor performance with regard to the interpretation of aerial photographs (hindered by significant alluvial deposits)
An example for research subordinated to a single-issue approach: Field survey in the region of ancient Bactria

Sites were only taken into account if they permitted the datation of the irrigation canals.
Issues ignored by the archaeologists

A definition:

« The study of the (in)experience of the archaeologists with regard to the modalities of archaeological practice »

« The study of the (in)experience mirrored by the archaeological actions meeting specific objectives thought to be crucial issues »
Choice of the actions

LEVEL 1
POLITICS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

LEVEL 2
SCIENCE
POLICY

ADVANCES IN KNOWLEDGE (SCIENCE)

LEVEL 3
ARCHAEOLOGY
POLICY

ACtions X, Y, Z

Actions P, Q, R

Generally within the same « budgetary envelope ».

Tourism

Oil, etc.

Setting oneself in the assumption of scientific rationality

LECTURE HELD AT GENEVA
January - April 1978
What choices at the level of archaeology policy?

1. OBJECTIVE

2. CORPUS
   - Choice of the corpus

3. DESCRIPTION
   - Symbolisation

4. ORDERING
   - formal settings

5. INTERPRETATION
   - Giving a meaning to the formal orders

6. VALIDATION
   - Testing the empirical value of the construct on a different corpus
S1: choice of the objectives

Current situation:
1. The silence
2. Various adjectives:
   - abundant
   - unexpected
   - interesting
   - famous
   - physically significant
   - threatened by destruction

Consequently $H > (S + D + I)$
An interesting relationship from the archaeological perspective between:

P3 / P0

No conclusion possible without an estimation of the relationship between:

P2 or P1 / P0
Cowgill:

« A reasoned choice with regard to sampling should be privileged whenever
- it is feasible
- meets the objectives
- it is cost-effective. »
U: contextual evidence (excavation)
V: substantial evidence (vestigial remains)

attribution of U to V
relative positioning of the vestigial remains V1, (x,y,z) / V2, (x,y,z)
S3. Description: strategies for recording and archiving

Four issues:

1. Recording the information with regard to the subsequent construct: E+A / Cc
2. Optimum limit between E and A
3. Optimum organisation of E according to 1 and 2
4. Optimum organisation of A according to 1 and 2
S3. Description: strategies for recording and archiving

Issue 1

Strategies taken into account with regard to the objectives: E + A / C

Strategy So (excavations at the site of Byblos)

The whole of the information supplying all the constructs will be registered

Strategy S1 (survey in the region of ancient Bactria)

Observations according to a single construct
S3. Description : strategies for recording and archiving
Issue 2
Strategies for the transition from recording to archiving E / A

Recording: restricted to the only non-renewable data (mainly data stemming from U)

FORMAL ANALOGY :
(E,A) : to restrict the collection to C-oriented data
E/A : to restrict the collection to C-oriented and to perishable data (U)
S3. Description: strategies for recording and archiving
Issue 3: collecting considered separately

A: rejection following an operation of collection
B: haphazard rejection between two operations
C: deliberate rejection resulting from a sorting process

Strategy: explicitation of the C-operations
S3. Description: strategies for recording and archiving
Issue 4: archiving considered separately

Strategy of sorting during archiving
Limit archiving to deliberate sorting of type C

Physical or symbolic sorting
1. Subordinate the choices to a theoretical aim
2. Explaining the work without searching for being rational
S3. Description : strategies for recording and archiving
Issue 4 : archiving considered separately

In the data collection:
D : description of the elements of recording
G : graphic symbolism (drawing)
C : classification
RANCES CHAMP VULLY SUD/EST
1978 - 1981
NEW STRATEGIES

A very complex stratigraphy
Formalizing a research strategy
Program 1979-80:
Tactical planning

Excavation of the silty zone exclusively (layers 4/5)

1. SURFACE < PRECISION
   Maximalist tactics

   Lower level 4
   Bell beaker

2. PRECISION < SURFACE
   Minimalist tactics

   Level 1 to 3
   Middle Bronze Age

   Features

   Cut features
   Obvious features

   General plan

   External morphology

   Analysis of filling

   Stratigraphic insertion

   Soil analyses
   Subtle features

   Archaeological material
Rances Champ Vully Sud 1979: a tactical mistake with serious consequences
Rances, Champ Vully Est:
Excavation program 1980-81: an exhaustive excavation

Middle Bronze Age
Bell Beaker
Middle Neolithic 1
Rances Champ Vully: What conclusion?
A single issue: relationships between circles and tumuli
Cf. T (time) and/or F (function)
Survey in the region of Bao Bolon: an improved balance between tumuli and circles
Santhiou Kohel: A site with classical structure
Senegambian megalithism 1980-81:
S3: RECORDING (EXCAVATION TACTICS)

Tumulus 43: an excavation tactics depending on precise questions
Senegambian megalithism 1980-81: S4: ORDERING, FUNCTIONING of the RITE

Circle versus tumulus
Tumulus:

Taking over of the power by a warrior caste of foreign origin: the Gelwar

Foundation of the kingdom of Saloum
Senegambian megalithism 1980-81:
S5: EXPLANATION, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Circles (3rd century BC – 15th century AD):
A society characterised by warrior-caste despotism

Tumulus (16th century AD):
a Merchant Empire
Exploring a region based on a single issue:

What are the relationships that can be established between the pottery traditions and the different populations of the Niger Bend.
Twelve field missions

5 missions in the INNER NIGER DELTA
1988-1993

7 missions in the Dogon country
1976
1998-2004

200 km
Typological bases of the pottery traditions: technology

The analysis of the operational sequences of pot-forming requires a descriptive stage based on an indexing language LD/ETIC, followed by an interpretative stage using a scientific language LS/EMIC.

Distinctions based on the modalities of shaping the preform.


Region of ancient Bactria 1974 – 1978: survey made by Gardin

Geneva 1978: lecture held by Gardin on archaeological research strategies

Rances 1978 – 1981: new oriented excavation strategy


Niger Bend 1988 – 2004: oriented ethnoarchaeological strategy