

Introduction

By considering archaeology as a social science, the resemblances with social sciences like anthropology, sociology and even psychology are easy to discern. Archaeologists study the relations between human society and material culture. Anthropologists and sociologists define their field of interest as a science that studies the ways in which people live together (Wilterdink & Van Heerikhuizen 1985: 13; Kloos 1981: 1-2). Psychologists study people on a micro-level and are engaged in the way people are constituted as conscious beings and its implications for social interactions. In short, these disciplines all study people and the ways they interact with each other and with their physical and material surroundings, in order to establish a systematic explanatory framework. Besides resemblances to social sciences, archaeology can also be seen as a colleague to history (Little 1994: 7). The shared objects of study do, however, not diminish the singularity of archaeology. The specific material and chronological orientation of archaeology may provide alternative questions and interpretations in relation to those fashionable in history and cultural anthropology (Little 1994: 8). The ability of archaeologists to create links between written, oral and material forms of expressions is only one, but often neglected, capability.

The anthropological and archaeological interest in respectively ethnographical and archaeological objects, has stimulated scientists to search for the origins of cultures and of specific material traits. Two of the most prominent paradigms that were engaged in this quest are the anthropological *Kulturkreise* (Culture Area) and the archaeological Culture History models. Both theories have the same method of approach and explanatory framework. By analysing objects from different cultures on the basis of similarities in form, relationships could be discerned. In anthropological theory the German *Kulturkreise* developed as a reaction to evolutionistic approaches. Focus of study were ethnographical, museum objects. Grouped similarities in these artifacts were described as style areas that were called *Kulturkreise*. Theories of diffusion and migration had to explain the similarities. These were, however, often unsatisfactory and extremely hypothetical. Due to the fieldwork of anthropologists like Malinowski, scientists soon acknowledged the importance of the cultural context of objects. The use, function and meaning of objects could be studied by means of fieldwork. This led to the disappearance and replacement of the Culture Area theory in anthropological theory.

In European archaeological theory a variant of this method of approach was introduced in the early twenties and remained influential till the early sixties and even beyond. Due to the work of V.G. Childe and G. Kossinna, a culture historical method of approach developed. Archaeological cultures were defined as specific types of artefacts -pottery, tools, decorations, graves, houses- that repeatedly occur together. These assemblages could be taken as the material equipment of a specific group of people whose material distributions in time and space were studied (Childe 1925). In order to explain apparent changes

and continuities in these cultures, as in anthropology, principles of diffusion and migration were used. To culture historians the study of style was *the* method to gain information about typology, chronology and subsequently the relationships between different archaeological cultures (Shennan 1989: xiv; Conkey 1990: 8). Since specific styles were related to archaeological cultures, has the material expression of human cultures, style was used to define ethnical groups. In fact objects and their features became synonymous with ethnical groups (e.g. the 'Bell Beaker' culture). In present-day archaeological science, the culture-historical approach and its concept and use of style are still being practised (Conkey & Hastorf 1990: 3).

Another foundation of archaeological theory and practice is the use of analogy. Archaeologists can only make interpretations about the past by comparing past features with present ones. A prehistoric axe is an axe because of its likeness and analogy with present axes (Hodder 1982: 11). In contrast to these comparative 'formal analogies', which are used by archaeologists without any reflection, the use of farther reaching formal analogies is more controversial (Hodder 1982: 16; Murray & Walker 1982; Part I section 2.1). Alongside comparative methods that focus only on the archaeological material and its resemblance with present objects, the 'direct historical' approach is an other method to equate the past through the present. This approach is applicable where a direct historical continuity between the past and the present can be presupposed. By comparing archaeological sites and objects with modern sites in the same area, the use of present analogies in order to explain the past is more justified (Hodder 1982: 18). Besides formal analogies Hodder (1982: 16) discerns 'relational analogies' that 'seek to determine some natural or cultural link between the different aspects in the analogy'. In a relational analogy archaeologists have to examine why one variable is relevant to another (Hodder 1982: 21). The employment of this kind of analogy in combination with the ideational context of the objects, can lead to a proper use of analogy (Hodder 1982: 21).

Along lines of the 'culture-historic' and 'direct historical' approach, Newton (1988) and Craig (1995) have conducted comparative studies of prehistoric and recent Melanesian material. They analysed style characteristics on prehistoric material and compared these with recent artefacts from the same area in order to distinguish continuities and discontinuities in style. Thus, they only investigated formal analogies. Newton (1988) argues that there is evidence for a continuity between prehistoric Lapita decorations and historical or present Melanesian material. Following this assumption, Craig (1995) has also conducted a study of Lapita designs and compared them with northern and central New Guinea designs. In addition to his analyses, Craig argues that a direct comparison can be made between the designs on certain objects of Lake Sentani and equivalent paraphernalia of the Border Mountains and upper Sepik (Craig 1995: 256).

Scholars like Newton and Craig legitimate their search for continuity and discontinuity between present and prehistoric design elements by referring to the corresponding geographical area and the prehistorical relations that probably existed between the two cultures that produced the studied design-elements. The time-barrier of 2,000-3,000 years is therefore irrelevant. By comparing present with

prehistoric material they presuppose that the design elements are comparable and analogous in the first place. By focusing on design elements and their compositional principles, they ignore their cultural imbeddedness and social meaning. In doing so, they do not have to worry about possible consequences their statements have. So their advocacy of continuity in motifs does not reveal the interactions between the two groups and the possible transfer of thoughts, meanings and other cultural traits and items.

In this thesis the general approach of Craig and Newton will be carried through and repeated by analysing prehistoric Lapita and Dongson designs, and recent Lake Sentani and Humboldt Bay designs. The designs will be analysed in a formal and structural analysis. By determining whether these prehistoric and recent decorations are similar or divergent, insight could be gained concerning the questions of continuity in this area. Craig and Newton limit their explanatory framework to diffusion of motifs or style-elements. However, they relate certain design features with Lapita people and present Melanesian cultures. Thus, implicitly they also connect continuity in designs, with a certain continuity in cultural features. This implication is, however, totally neglected by both scholars and they avoid more far-reaching relational analogies between prehistoric Lapita cultures and historical or recent New Guinea societies. In contrast to this superficial approach, I will try to relate continuities and discontinuities in design elements and their structural principles, to social life in both the present and the past. In doing so, I make use of more profound analogical inferences. Subsequently, I will seek to establish whether it is correct to search for parallels between prehistoric and recent material and use analogical inference to explain and give meaning to the archaeological record.