

VI. Book reviews

Lawrence A. Kuznar *Reclaiming a Scientific Anthropology*. Altamira Press, Walnut Creek (CA), 1997. xi + 284pp, index, biblio. Paper (\$28.95), cloth (\$72.00).

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The title strikes a responsive chord in archaeology-as-science types such as myself as does Marvin Harris' 'A timely, thoughtful and civil intervention in the disputes that dominate our fractious discipline' characterization on the cover. But in spite of the good will and promising rhetoric, one is quickly disappointed. Contra D'Andrade's cover note, I doubt that Kuznar's civil, well-constructed, literary arguments will be effective in changing the mind of any committed protagonist, at least in the archaeological community.

Part 1, 'Anthropological Science', comprising three chapters, effectively explains 'where Kuznar is coming from', to use the modern parlance, perhaps even better than the author intends. What emerges is a very superficial, populist notion of the nature of science. There is no recourse to scientists on science, or even dictionaries on science. Consequently, if one is not already convinced of the virtue of science, this won't do it. The tack taken is that anthropology/archaeology, or at least some of it, is already science. Indeed, existing studies can be used to define 'scientific anthropology', not a very analytical approach and one that leaves a reader having to take the assertion on faith (more on which later). The absence of any initial serious discussion of the nature of science or how to recognize it has left little other recourse. Kuznar's use of Thomas Kuhn seems inappropriate as Kuhn models change between scientific theories, not one sense-making system replacing another – non-science to science. Again his inductive treatment of science has precluded that insight. Certainly he raises many important issues and supplies *ad hoc* insights into their resolution, but as a framework for the subsequent analyses or as a stand-alone argument in its own right, Part 1 is entirely unconvincing. Kuznar seems an apologist for what was (is?), not a recipe for what ought to be, despite a later chapter that tackles just that topic.

Part 1 closes with two 'examples' of scientific anthropology (hunting in foraging societies) and archaeology (the 'Hopewell phenomenon'). Both are used effectively to argue that hypothesis falsification, not confirmation, drives new developments – a point forgotten in other contexts. Yet one wonders at the choice of examples – neither is particularly current and, especially in the archaeological case, he does not make use of anything like the most current, most scientific literature on the topic.

Part 2, the four chapters that constitute 'Critiques of Anthropological Science', the first of which treats creationism and the other three various flavors of postmodernism, is the best part of the book. Kuznar adds nothing new to the creationism critique and counter-critique even though he might well have. His grasp of religion is no deeper than his grasp of science. The essential differences lie at more fundamental levels than he touches. The epistemologies of religion and science differ – key is the religious concept of 'faith' and its role is establishing 'truth'. Not having established the value of science in the beginning compels this discussion to a superficial level and renders the conclusions erroneous and oblique. Those who might protest that creationism isn't religion miss this point as well.

The postmodernist chapters are much better done, even to the extent of implying the religious

character of postmodernism. He shows that the criticisms of scientific approaches often rely on misconceptions of the nature of science and an almost total blindness to their lack of relativism in regard to their own program and beliefs. Yet one suspects, Kuznar, too, has exempted his own normative views on reality. One gets the distinct impression that for him, as for many, science is exempted by virtue of 'objectivity' rather than explicit bias (theory). Indeed, his own Part 1 discussions exemplify some of the faults (e.g., an inductivist view of science) he finds in the postmodernist program. What he seems to miss is the one central and positive postmodernist contribution, namely the notion that science is not objective. In this he sounds very much like the old 'new archaeology'. Still, one cannot help but appreciate the anti-moralist, anti-activist tone and the delightful detail with which the anti-science arguments are dissected and dismantled.

Part 3, 'Analysis of the Debate', is made up of three chapters, the first two of which refocus the criticisms previously developed around his own agenda and the last of which is a forward-looking programmatic statement. Although one might have hoped for something different, even led to believe it might be forthcoming in passages in Part 2, the sad conclusion is that we should make nice and steer a middle course. But compromise is a political, not scientific solution. It would seem that even Kuznar cannot get it through his head, despite the falsification rhetoric, that science is really the business of being wrong, not trying to convince others you are right. That is why it is different than all the other sense-making systems. Kuznar has tried to step outside (above?) the science wars in anthropology, and for this he is to be lauded, but alas, tradition, his own cultural background, and academia prove too much for him to succeed. Incredibly, in view of the recent archaeological literature at least, there is no apparent room for evolution in Kuznar's science. Still the effort is a worthy one; the book definitely worth reading, but it is still far from the place Kuznar wanted to get and that anthropology and archaeology need to get if they are not vanish as totally irrelevant.

F. Gracia, J.M. Fullola Pericot & F. Vilanova (eds) *58 anys i 7 dies. Correspondència de Pere Bosch Gimpera a Lluís Pericot (1919–1974)*, Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona.

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Histories of archaeology remind us of the debates that have guided archaeological interpretation to the present. They also allow us to understand the social context in which theories and interpretations were developed. This is particularly true in the case of external historiographical analysis, a recent trend in historiographical studies in the field of archaeology which is unveiling a wealth of information on past practices in the discipline. In this type of studies the emphasis is not on the actual theories, on the internal dynamics of archaeological thought, but on the interaction between practitioners and the personal and professional framework in which their studies took place. Yet, access to this data are not easy to obtain, especially when most of the protagonists and the people who knew them are no longer alive. It is in this context that research in archives and epistolary correspondence is proving an extremely valuable source of information. Letters and other documents such as minutes of meetings and photographs are providing revealing information about the transmission of ideas between scholars, the existence of academic networks, and the influence that particular non-scientific events may have had in the formation of scientific knowledge.

In the last ten-odd years Spain has developed a tradition in the history of archaeology. From an initial impetus using the internalist approach (Ayarzaguena Sanz 1992; Cortadella i Morral 1992; Martínez Navarrete 1989; Pereira González 2001) together with some biographies