Ethnicity, culture and identity French archaeologists and historians


"...discontinuous territorial mosaics of varied languages and religions." 191 despite having a territorially defined kingdom under a single monarchical power useful description of France prior to “the NATION” but not that the quote isn’t referring to just France but Europe as a whole

18th century Germany had no unified territory or national language needed to focus on unity of ‘folk’ because no other type of unity

Mémoire sur les anciennes sépultures nationales by Legrand d’Aussy provided a foundation for national inventory and archaeological excavation

“But it proposed to ignore Roman burials, for they ‘did not belong to the customs or industry of our forefathers and that they are only foreign monuments erected on our soil by a conquering people (Laming-Emperaire 1964: 102: Schnapp 1993: 336-8)” 191

abbé Sieyès proposed theory of class struggle between conquered Gallics and Frankish German aristocracy and this was developed by Guizot

Germanic unity achieved after Franco-German War in 1871–origin myth fundamental

“The 19th century was a period of deepening potential ‘scientific’ foundations of the Nation.” 192

“While central Europe was covered early with a network of regional or national museums and numerous learned societies, the real cultural past in France was Greece and Rom....In France, Gallic or Gallo-Roman archaeology (Medieval archaeology was for a long time still merged with History of Art) was left to provincial notables.” 192

Napoleon III tried to legitimate power through national ideology that launched excavations and created museums but “These attempts remained marginal and eventually associated the image of the barbarian and defeated Gauls with that of imperial despotism, in the eyes of the liberal university teachers and humanists.” 192

study of prehistory birth in 1859–not concerned with origin of nation but of all humanity

“The Indo-European hypothesis is opposed to the French national image which was founded on a territory unified for eternity.” 192 Germany looking for unity through an original people populating Europe whereas France had a united group to look for origins for

French prehistorians disdainfully regarded Indo-European/Aryan hypothesis

Mortillet dismissed it and Déchelette said it was erroneous thinking

however 1880 Broca founded Société d’Anthropologie–established no racial homogeneity among French and that the French population was of local origin

two Gallic races: Kimris (large, blonde northern) and Galls (small, brown, southern)

French nation did not reside in a language or national soul but in two overlapping races and their territory

Kossinna placed the homeland of the Indo-Europeans in northern Germany (first time archaeology applied to the traditionally linguistic research question)

at the end of the war 4 intellectual/geopolitical attitudes to culture and ethnic formation

1. Western German: cultures: clearly bounded typologically and territorially well defined entities that displace one another through conquest and colonization: biological
2. English-speaking countries: historical change attributed to mechanisms of adaptation to the environment
3. Eastern bloc
4. France:

“The nations of central and eastern Europe, born mainly at the Treaty of Versailles (1918), needed to form a past.” 195

“In the United States, a country of recent settlers, archaeology could not play a fundamental role in national identity. A deterritorialized archaeology was practised, a simple typological inventory of the Past in the invaded territories” 195
Pre- and protohistory played little role in the founding of national identity
during the 20th century up to the beginning of the 1970s most innovations came from outside of France in terms of archaeology
French archaeology had a combination of Kossina and geological models

"Modern French historians, less so the more official ones, have a conception of the nation very close to romantic 'Volksgeist' and far from the critical English-speaking historical school cited above." 197

contrast between sureties of historians and doubts of ethnologists in France

"Faced by the massive destruction of archaeological evidence as a result of development, archaeologists have often insisted on a 'préervation du patrimoine' or on 'mémoire nationale', in truth, 'identité nationale' in front of politicians. These skillfully dressed arguments are in fact dangerous, in that they take up the romantic idea of 'Volksgeist'. There is no reason to think that national or ethnic identity has any meaning more than two or three centuries back." 197