

## I.

### THE POWER OF REASON, THE MATTER OF PREHISTORY. HONORING ANTONIO GILMAN

*Pedro Díaz-del-Río / Katina Lillios / Inés Sastre*

#### **Abstract**

This chapter summarizes Antonio Gilman's career and contributions as a Marxist, comparative and field archaeologist. We review his implacable logic, key ideas and their reception in archeology and in the history of political economy, as well as their influence on Iberian archaeology and its academic community.

**Keywords:** Antonio Gilman, Marxist archaeology, Iberia, United States of America, later prehistory, Historiography.

#### **Resumen**

Este capítulo sintetiza la carrera y las contribuciones de Antonio Gilman como arqueólogo marxista, comparativista y de campo. Revisamos su lógica implacable, sus ideas clave, la recepción de las mismas en la arqueología y en la historia de la economía política así como su influencia en la arqueología prehistórica peninsular y su comunidad académica.

**Palabras clave:** Antonio Gilman, arqueología marxista, Península Ibérica, Estados Unidos de América, prehistoria reciente, historiografía.

#### **1.1. THE LIFE AND SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS OF ANTONIO GILMAN**

The idea of honoring the professional career of Antonio Gilman has been in the minds of the editors of this volume for many years. Thanks to a felicitous convergence of various circumstances, this commemoration first materialized as a conference session at the 24th Annual Meeting of the European Association

of Archaeologists in Barcelona. This session was memorable for many reasons. First, it was packed: twenty-four papers written by archaeologists representing Antonio's transgenerational and international influence were presented in a session that lasted an entire day. The room, although uncomfortably warm at times, was still full at the end of the day. The papers, which critically engaged with the role of Antonio's thinking and research, were of high quality. Above all was the expression of affection and friendship that was displayed throughout the day. There was a continuous flow of people wanting to greet, congratulate, and speak with Antonio. All this reflects the role played by personal relationships in Antonio's academic life and the importance that he has given to cultivating and caring for his friendships. The session and this volume are a direct consequence of these relationships.<sup>1</sup>

Antonio was born in 1944 of Stephen Gilman, an outstanding scholar in Hispanic literature and disciple of the exiled Américo Castro, and Teresa Guillén, daughter of the also exiled Spanish poet Jorge Guillén. As a child, Antonio lived at Princeton and Columbus, and by 1956 moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where his father soon took a position as full professor at Harvard. At their home, Antonio grew up surrounded by the friends and colleagues of his parents and grandparents, the republican exile and the intellectual elite of his time (Vicent, Martínez Navarrete and Díaz-del-Río 2020).

---

<sup>1</sup> Not all who presented at the conference session were able to contribute to this volume. Furthermore, not all who have contributed to this volume were able to participate in the session.

He received his A.B. in Classics in 1965 from Harvard, later moving to Cambridge (UK) where he earned a B.A. in Prehistoric Archaeology in 1967. Married to Benedicte that same year, Antonio returned to Harvard, where he wrote his dissertation on *The Later Prehistory of Tangier, Morocco* (Gilman 1975). While completing his dissertation, Antonio took a position as Instructor at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh for one year, and then moved to the Department of Anthropology at California State University, Northridge, where he taught and was twice Chair, until his retirement in 2007.

There are many dimensions to Antonio's career and thinking. One of the most distinctive is his Marxist approach, to which he has been committed since his graduate years. Antonio's Marxism was certainly learned through the readings of Marx and Engels, but his approach to the archaeological record—of which the founders did not say much about—was mostly influenced by the readings of some outstanding archaeologists, such as V. Gordon Childe and Robert McCormick Adams, and anthropologists, such as Marshall Sahlins and Eric Wolf.

Marxism was obviously not a mainstream approach among the overtly anti-historicist New Archaeologists of the US. Nevertheless, by 1974, the same year they completed their Ph.D. at Harvard, his lifelong friend Phil Kohl and Antonio organized a session on *Marxist Approaches to Archaeological Research* at the 73rd Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. This explicitly Marxist session was remarkable considering a disciplinary context dominated by cultural ecologists and a country where embracing an unambiguous Marxist framework was uncommon. Anthropology was nevertheless changing. That same year saw the foundation of the journal *Critique of Anthropology*, while *Dialectical Anthropology's* first issue came out in the following year. This issue included three papers with an openly Marxist approach to the archaeological record: Phil Kohl's "The Archaeology of Trade" (Kohl 1975), Maurizio Tosi's "The Dialectics of State Formation in Mesopotamia, Iran and central Asia" (Tosi 1976) and Antonio's "Bronze Age Dynamics in Southeast Spain" (Gilman 1976). There, Antonio laid out what became his key approach to the later prehistory of the Iberian Southeast by using "a dialectical and materialist interpretation of the available facts, a method peculiarly useful to archaeology" (ibid.: 317).

"Bronze Age Dynamics..." did not only lay out his materialist approach, but also showed some of his long-lasting interest in the details of the archaeological record, *the matter of prehistory*. Among them is his distinctive butterfly-collector approach to the radiocarbon chronology of prehistoric Iberia, already displayed in one of his always sharp-witted footnotes—a *gilmanian* genre

in itself—, where he details the probable context of one of the early dates for Almizaraque, and suggests that "the sample, taken from the vertical section after excavations, does not in fact date the Almerian levels of the site" (ibid.: 318, note 28). Although by 1975 the available radiocarbon chronology for the prehistory of Iberia was exceedingly sparse, Antonio had already noticed the key role that a robust chronology would have in framing prehistoric regional dynamics, as it in fact happened. This long-term commitment was instrumental in laying the foundations for the Spatial Data Infrastructure of Iberian radiocarbon dates ([www.idearq.org](http://www.idearq.org)), based on the Iberian radiocarbon database that he personally curated over many decades (and generously shared with friends over that time).

His research was also driven by some of the practices that one could call processual, specifically in the importance he placed on hypothesis testing, data collection, and his concern with fundamentally materialist questions, such as the relationship between land use potential and social evolution. Hypothesis testing was important to him, and we often heard him critique a scholar's work by "how could it be falsified?". Indeed, this was one critique that Antonio leveled in his review of Lillios' book *Heraldry for the Dead: Memory, Identity, and the Engraved Stone Plaques of Neolithic Iberia* and her thesis that the plaques served as genealogical records (2008) (Gilman 2009). Perhaps one of his key long-term contributions to the prehistory of Iberia relates to his landscape archaeology projects: his 1985 pioneering study published in the book *Land Use and Prehistory in South-East Spain* (with Thornes) and the long-term field project on the Bronze Age of La Mancha (Fernández-Posse et al. 2008). These works are models of how researchers should approach the spatial nature of the archaeological record.



FIGURE 1.1. Antonio Gilman with María Dolores Fernández-Posse in Vila Real (Portugal), 1999. Photographed by Benedicte Gilman.

Antonio's anthropological training in the US, with attention to world archaeology, has given his work a decidedly comparative flavor. Those who know him know that he is frequently inclined to introduce himself as an archaeologist working on prehistoric Iberia, as an Iberianist, and there is certainly truth to this. But as Antonio well knows, things are not always as they appear. Although slightly over 20% of his articles relate to topics other than the late prehistory of Iberia, this percentage is inverted when it comes to his published reviews and comments. This fact is, no doubt, due to his encyclopedic knowledge of world archaeology, which is based on his belief in the original comparative project of Anthropology as the study of Humankind, past and present. It is also his belief in the key importance of History and the historicity of human societies that lies behind his commitment to Iberian prehistory. It is this background of materialist, historical, and comparative knowledge that makes Antonio's analyses so compelling.

Certainly, the systematic, comparative, and data-centered approach has been a consistent feature of Antonio's career. Three key works can be highlighted. The first is one of his earliest published works (Harrison and Gilman 1977), where he and Richard Harrison, a graduate student with him at Harvard, compared the role of trade in the cultural trajectories of North Africa and Iberia during later prehistory. The interactions of prehistoric groups across the Strait of Gibraltar have received renewed attention, yet their political economic interpretation of this trade has yet to be challenged. In a second work, Antonio offered one of the few coherent explanations as to why the prehistoric trajectories of the Iberian Southwest (Portugal) and the Southeast (Spain) were different. He argued, for example, that there was no distinctive Bronze Age along the Tejo because "incipient elites of the mid-third millennium in central Portugal chose to aggrandize their power by a strategy of wealth distribution [...] which fell victim to the changes of fashion and the vulnerability to import substitution which characteristically beset wealth distribution." (Gilman 1987: 28-29). In a third piece, he contrasted the Iberian Peninsula and Aegean in a paper entitled "Trajectories Towards Social Complexity in the Later Prehistory of the Mediterranean". In this work, he counter-argued the well-established functionalist managerial account for the development of hierarchical social systems, demonstrating "the viability of a class society in which elites are entirely non-managerial" (idem 1991: 167).

Antonio's work has been cited internationally, and its impact can be tracked outside the discipline of archaeology. Perhaps the clearest

case is his hypothesis on the emergence of institutionalized inequality, the so-called "Mafia hypothesis", the core of which was outlined in his 1981 *Current Anthropology* paper "The Development of Social Stratification in Bronze Age Europe". This paper, which has been the most cited of his works, postulated that a dependency bond can emerge "when capital intensification of subsistence production had proceeded to the point that leaders could add the threat of violence to their earlier promises of assistance without being abandoned by their followers". This hypothesis had applicability in a broader geographical and chronological framework, and did not go unnoticed by many scholars outside archaeology. Among these scholars are the eminent sociologist Michael Mann in his monumental *Sources of Social Power* and, most recently, the anthropologist and political scientist James Scott in his 2017 book *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*. It is fair to say that Gilman's hypothesis on the emergence of social inequality will stand as a key contribution to the social and economic history of humanity.

But despite his coherence and consistency, Antonio has also shown a willingness to change his points of view when the data did not fit his expectations. This was made clear in his 2001 paper "Assessing Political Development in Copper and Bronze Age Southeast Spain". In it, he argued that "agricultural intensification in Millaran and Argaric generated conflict, but did not generate a surplus sufficient to support an elite that could control that conflict" (idem 2001: 81). Iberian Copper Age elites had the possibility of pumping enough surpluses out of their commoners, but lacked the capacity to cage them. On the contrary, Southeast Bronze Age commoners were somehow caged, but lacked the surplus required to support long-term hereditary elites. *Mutatis mutandis*, this approach can well be used to explain many other historical contexts of emerging social inequality in Iberia and beyond.

Antonio's ideas on the origins of social inequality have paved new ways to understanding the social dynamics of prehistoric Iberia. His work has stimulated debate on stratification and the State in Copper, Bronze and Iron Age societies. His writings have promoted the study of social resistance and the ability of local communities to make their own history without the management or supervision of elites. In this way, his work has contributed to the study of historically contingent and particular processes, overcoming a blind, mechanistic and misleading evolutionism. His writings have also revived productive theoretical frameworks, such as Marx's notion of Germanic societies. Finally, he has vigorously advocated for

balancing theoretical proposals with archaeological analysis, for “it would be naive to assume that our arguments would be convincing based on such [insufficient] data” (ibid.: 79, our translation). Archaeological interpretation cannot be carried out without an exhaustive analysis of the available data.

## 1.2. SUMMARY OF BOOK CHAPTERS

The contributions in this book reflect Antonio’s multifaceted legacy. Thus, in addition to being a tribute of his friends, each contribution collects, reinterprets, and expands some of the facets of Antonio’s work.

The first set of chapters engages critically with some of the central ideas structuring Antonio’s work, including modes of production, functionalism, and resistance. In “Modes of Production Revisited” (Ch. 2), Earle and Kristiansen argue for a revamping of the Marxist concept of modes of production (MP) and trace how MP have been applied to archaeological settings. In “Towards Archaeological Theory: A History” (Ch. 3), Díaz-Andreu contextualizes the theoretical work of Antonio—and his identity as a functionalist *sensu lato*—within the broader landscape of changing archaeological theory, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. In “Resistencia política e identidad relacional” (Ch. 4), Hernando writes about her ethnoarchaeological work with the Awá (Brasil) and Gumuz and Dats’in (Ethiopia) in which she examines the relationship between social inequality, resistance, and relational identity, arguing that

in emphasizing change in their studies, archaeologists miss opportunities to study resistance.

In the next section, the authors examine the impact of Antonio’s thinking and contributions on the prehistoric record from the Paleolithic onward. In “Perspectives on the Biogeographic and Cultural Adaptations of Early Humans During the First Intercontinental Dispersals” (Ch. 5), de la Torre and colleagues engage in broad-scale synthetic analysis and compare the earliest settlement of hominins of eastern Africa and China. In “The Middle Paleolithic Revolution, the Origins of Art, and the Epistemology of Paleoanthropology” (Ch. 6), Zilhão engages with Antonio’s writing on the Upper Paleolithic and his critique of biological and cultural determinism in order to explore the significance of symbolic behaviors by Neanderthals in the Middle Paleolithic and their implications to the ideological underpinnings of paleoanthropology. In “Explorando los sesgos en las cronologías radiocarbónicas” (Ch. 7), Vicent and colleagues discuss the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition of Iberia and its complexity due to marked regional variability in light of the database of Iberian radiocarbon dates found in Idearq, an online repository that had its beginnings with a personal archive of published dates that Antonio maintained over decades, since 1982. In “Los caminos de la desigualdad. Releyendo la prehistoria reciente del noroeste ibérico” (Ch. 8), Parcero-Oubiña and his colleagues demonstrate the impact of Antonio’s thinking on the prehistory of Northwest Iberia, a region outside his primary focus (Mediterranean Spain) through an examination of resistance as a critical engine of social evolution.



FIGURE 1.2. Some of the participants in the session in honor of Antonio Gilman Guillén at the EAA, Barcelona, September 2018. (Author: Michael Kunst).

The next set of papers engages with one of the central ideas in Antonio's career—the question of social inequality and the state in Iberian prehistory. In “Where is the State in Portuguese Later Prehistory?” (Ch. 9), Lillios turns our attention westward toward the Portuguese archaeological record by examining the ways that Portuguese archaeologists have attended to the question of social complexity and evaluating the archaeological evidence for social stratification (and the state) in the Portuguese Copper and Bronze Ages. Beck, in her chapter “The Human Position” (Ch. 10) addresses the question of social inequality from a biological perspective, assessing the evidence for social patterning in diet, mobility, and violence at key Chalcolithic sites. In “Implantación y desarrollo de las estrategias agropecuarias en el sureste: la depresión de Vera (Almería)” (Ch. 11), Camalich and colleagues present new data and dates from Early Neolithic-Early Copper Age sites from the lowlands of Southeast Iberia (Almería) that point to less aridity during the third millennium BC than previously recognized and the small scale of metallurgical production; these results challenge models that rely on water management and metallurgy as drivers of social complexity. Lull and colleagues (“The Chronology of the Structural Changes Between the Copper and Bronze Ages in Iberia”, Ch. 12) explore the temporality and regional variability of key cultural changes that occurred between the Copper and Bronze Ages, namely the appearance of single or double burials, the decreasing use of collective tombs, and the abandonment of Copper Age settlements, using radiocarbon dates selected from throughout the Peninsula. In “Cultural Resistance to Social Fragmentation: the Continuity and Reuse of Megalithic Monuments during the Argaric Bronze Age in South-eastern Iberia” (Ch. 13), Aranda and colleagues look at the continued use of megalithic monuments into the second millennium BCE/Bronze Age in SE Spain and argue that these display evidence for resistance against the social fragmentation and exclusivity that was emerging in the Bronze Age. Maintaining the theme of continuity is the chapter by Montero-Ruiz and colleagues entitled “Reciclado o reutilización en la producción metalúrgica argárica” (Ch. 14) that discusses the role of metal recycling during the Bronze Age; this is critical to assessing the scale of metallurgical production. They argue that, based on the size of daggers, their elemental composition, and lead isotopes that recycling was not a significant factor and, thus, the relative scarcity of metal objects and weapons during the Argaric likely reflects an ancient reality.

In “The Origins of Social Inequality in Prehistoric Europe: Rituals and Monuments to Con-



FIGURE 1.3. Antonio Gilman addressing the contributors to the session. EAA Barcelona September 2018 (Author: Michael Kunst).

trol Wealth in the Bronze Age of La Mancha” (Ch. 15), Benítez de Lugo and colleagues discuss how sites of the La Mancha Bronze Age were integrated in a network of practices in order to access valuable resources, such as water (*motillas*) and the ancestors (at Castillejo del Bonete), which contributed to the rise of elites in the region.

Moving northward to the Duero Valley, García and colleagues, in “Excepcionalidad espacial, actividad metalúrgica y molinos de granito en Carricastro (Tordesillas, Valladolid)” (Ch. 16), discuss the Bronze Age hilltop site of Carricastro and argue that its special qualities—including its size and visibility—were related to its control over trade networks and other sites where agricultural production took place. In “Project Au: The Archaeology of Gold” (Ch. 17), Perea discusses the evolution of Project Au in the context of a shifting economic landscape and theoretical perspectives in archaeology related to technology. In the chapter by Mayoral and colleagues, entitled “De la complejidad del registro de superficie hacia una historia agraria del paisaje” (Ch. 18), the authors present the results of their intensive surface survey in the region of Cancho Roano and its contributions to our understanding of the Iron Age and Roman period, suggesting that the region was characterized less by colonization but by the reorganization of indigenous communities. In “Sociedades ‘germánicas’. El Bajo Ebro en la Primera Edad del Hierro” (Ch. 19), Blanco examines the archaeological evidence between the Late Bronze and Late Iron Ages in northeast Iberia, with particular attention to households and kinship dynamics; employing the concept of heterarchy, the evidence suggests the existence of decentralized, unstable, and kin-based Germanic societies, and not class-based states. Chapa and Martínez Navarrete, in “La escul-

tura ibérica y sus implicaciones territoriales” (Ch. 20), examine Iberian sculptural works in terms of their role in referencing space and territory through their raw material and source, their depiction of personages (mortal or mythical), and their display in sanctuaries in selected places. In “Costes de sumisión frente a costes de rebelión” (Ch. 21), Sastre and colleagues explore why social hierarchization did not emerge in Northwest Iberia during the Iron Age and Roman period, arguing for the important role of communal forms of organization. In “Dinámicas internas e implicaciones para los estudios austro-nesios” (Ch. 22), Cruz and colleagues present their geospatial studies of the archaeological settlement of Taiwan over a period of 6,000 years, showing progressive occupation of the interior with associated diversification of ecological regimes and cultural practices.

### 1.3. FINAL WORDS

Gilman’s impact on different generations of archaeologists has been enduring and far-reaching. He has achieved this through his deep intellect as well as through his sociability, respectfulness, commitment to critical thinking, and sustained efforts to serve Iberian archaeology through various projects, including laying the foundations for the Spatial Data Infrastructure of Iberian radiocarbon dates (Idearq) and as editor-in-chief of *Trabajos*

*de Prehistoria*, the principal journal of Iberian prehistoric archaeology. These last two long-term commitments are part of a longstanding friendship with members of the CSIC Department of Archaeology. Many members and former graduate students from this department have benefited from his wisdom, professional support, and personal affection. He is part of its academic community and institutional history. It is, therefore, appropriate that this volume is published in the monographic series of the CSIC *Bibliotheca Praehistorica Hispana*. This series was founded in 1958 by Professor Martín Almagro, whom Antonio rightly considers the key architect of the contemporary institutional infrastructure of Spanish archaeology and the main modernizer of Iberian prehistory (Gilman 2018: 8).

Antonio has always been an ally and dear friend to many of us. He has been instrumental in creating a strong and wide network of colleagues that are, above all, his good friends. To Antonio, our personal lives, families, and struggles have been of equal importance as our academic successes. Fostering these relationships has been the generous hospitality extended to us by Antonio and his wife Benedicte. Therefore, it is with particularly profound sadness and regret that the unexpected death of Benedicte, before the publication of this volume, prevents us from also acknowledging our gratitude and affection for her. This volume, honoring Antonio’s career, is dedicated to Benedicte, in her memory.