PART ONE

HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY
ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY*

Introduction

Archaeology is the study of the human past through its material remains, yet even this straightforward definition produces problems. Are not manuscripts and books material remains? Are other objects, such as inscriptions or coins, which bear writing, the province of the archaeologist or the documentary historian? We might hive these classes of material off into the disciplines of epigraphy or numismatics, but the problem remains, with, for example, graffiti on pottery, and so on. Acknowledging these blurred areas leaves us with an admittedly problematic and provisional, but nevertheless useful, definition of archaeology as the study of the unwritten, material records of the human past; it also, of course, raises the question of the interrelationship between the disciplines of documentary history and archaeology.

The two are separate disciplines, in that the types of evidence dealt with, written records on the one hand and excavated data on the other, require, at a technical level at least, the acquisition of different skills for their evaluation and interpretation. Nevertheless, as they are both concerned with the human past, archaeology and documentary history ought to be natural allies. However, over recent decades there has been something of an estrangement between the two. In some areas of historical writing, like the early medieval period, where the volume of archaeological work and the comparative absence of documentary data highlight the problems of integrating written and excavated

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