

ing out that despite the outrage expressed by a number of western project directors and institutions, the law was extraordinarily generous when compared to those governing antiquities from European countries at the time, where all ancient artefacts were considered property of the state in which the excavation took place.

Throughout *Reclaiming a Plundered Past*, the reader's attention is drawn to the political use of archaeology and especially to the ways in which archaeological materials and interpretations are used to selectively bolster particular kinds of identities. Bernhardsson traces the ways in which archaeological knowledge contributed to European interest in the land of Iraq, its delineation as a country, and the affirmation of its identity as a nation. Claims for the critical role played by archaeology in nationalist discourses are no longer novel, but the author extends the point to argue that nationalism promotes the creation of linear and unproblematic histories.

Reflection on these latter issues offers, to my mind, some of the greatest creative potential of this book. It is no longer enough to articulate the ways in which archaeology plays a part in bolstering nationalism and other particular identities. We need to begin to reflect as well on *other ways* in which our work can contribute to present discourses and to effecting political change. How can we work *against* the appropriation of archaeology for the writing of linear and unproblematic histories? How can we work *against* its exploitation on behalf of exclusive agendas, whether nationalist or other? How can we move beyond the nearly automatic equation of archaeological materials with particular groups and identities, an equation that partakes at best of a romantic and oversimplified notion of life in the past and of the ways in which social groups are formed, maintained, and change? Should we not endeavour to show that Mesopotamian artefacts are more than just part of 'our shared history and accomplishments' (p. 2) – they are also part of our shared *barbarism* (cf. Bernbeck and Pollock in press). Although Bernhardsson's book does not take that step, its rich and provocative analysis offers the impetus and the raw material to allow us to explore other associations and other ways of thinking about archaeological practice and knowledge production.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Andrea Vianello, *Late Bronze Age Mycenaean and Italic Products in the West Mediterranean. A Social and Economic Analysis*. (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, International Series 1439, 2005, 256 pp., pbk, ISBN 1 84171 875 0)

Vianello's work discusses the relationship between the Mycenaean world and the central Mediterranean. His choice is a daring one, since the same topic and cultural area have been part of a recent study by G.J. van Wijngaarden (2002).

Vianello organizes his work into two main sections, with the second (Gazetteer of sites and additional data) providing the basic data for the analysis developed in the book's first part (Chapters 1–6). The core of Vianello's line of reasoning is a simple, clever and laudable one, and can be summarized as follows: given the wide spatial and chronological distribution of Aegean ware in the western Mediterranean, can one infer patterns in its use and distribution? Are these patterns, if any, similar in each western Mediterranean area? How can different patterns be explained within an exchange framework? The goal of the study is to understand 'the reasons for the people of Bronze Age West Mediterranean to consume' Aegean ware (p. 17). Vianello's perspective is clearly not Aegean-centric.

After a history of previous studies and a wide-ranging critical review of the interpretative

models put forward by different scholars through the years (Chapter 1), the focus turns to the methodology (Chapter 2). Vianello highlights some key-points. The first is the prudent label *Aegean-type* used for the pottery instead of others, like Mycenaean. This is necessary because of the existence of an Italic production of Mycenaean-type pottery and because of the difficulty in identifying the origin of a vessel without scientific analyses. The other key-points are the guidelines for the analysis to come (pp. 19–20): the *functional context*, that is the relation between shape, type and function of the pottery; the *depositional context*, that is the situation in which the pottery was deposited; and the *cultural context*, in other words the general indigenous frame. The author makes clear the theoretical models in use (pp. 25–30): Hodder's contextual approach, Wylie's inductive-analogical model, and the consumption approach, seen from a globalized perspective. In particular, the inductive model is well suited for studies that attempt to infer general patterns from detailed evidence. Hodder's model is one of the key elements of studies faced with the problem of cross-cultural consumption and it should be noted that it provided the basis for van Wijngaarden's work as well (2002:29).

Chapter 3 provides an analysis of pottery forms and functions in the Aegean. The fact that it is limited to the shapes found in the western Mediterranean is connected to the role of this section in the book's perspective; it is aimed to sketch out a picture of patterns to be compared to those of the western Mediterranean. Chapter 4 deals with this topic and is, in my view, one of the more interesting and innovative analyses carried out on the central Mediterranean documentation so far, even though it requires some critical remarks that I shall stress later. This part is divided into paragraphs, each dealing with one broad central Mediterranean sector (eastern Sicily-Aeolian Islands, western Sicily, Ionian Apulia, Ionian coast). For each area Vianello seeks to identify patterns in the *functional context*. The status of the archaeological documentation forces him to make some choices (pp. 43–44), the most important being the use of two broad chronological periods (LH I-III A1, LH III A2-C) as means to seek and compare patterns. This analysis sheds an innovative light on several points; I shall limit myself to a few. The

discovery of ties between the Aeolian Islands and Vivara is remarkable with regards to the functional context during LH I-III A1 (p. 51). Whilst the connection between the two sites is well-known, the complementarity of their Aegean-type repertoire arises as new evidence and strengthens the picture of ties between these two important areas. Another point worthy of note is the similarity of functional context between the Aeolian archipelago and Thapsos (p. 52), in spite of the different types of documentation (domestic and funerary respectively). Other important points are stressed with regards to western Sicily, an area that saw activity at two relevant sites, Monte Grande (LH I-III A) and Cannatello (LH III A2-C). The connection between western Sicily and Sardinia is again stressed from a functional context standpoint. On this topic as well, Vianello succeeds in rooting in facts (distribution and pattern of use) what has been stated over the years by several scholars only on the basis of fragmentary evidence.

If compared to this high-density chapter, Chapter 5 is, to my mind, less innovative. It is concerned with the description/reconstruction of the *depositional context*. It seeks to analyse the distribution of Aegean-type pottery with attention to a dearth of the parameters (e.g. type/dimensions of the huts/tombs; type of associated items; on-site distribution in relation to particular buildings) that allow a reconstruction of the cultural meaning of the objects (in a contextual archaeology perspective). Some outcomes of this analysis are familiar ones, like the wide on-site distribution of Aegean-type pottery in the Aeolian settlements (see van Wijngaarden 2002:226–227) or, generally speaking, the luxury value of imported vessels, with the Aeolian context the only exception, as correctly admitted by Vianello (p. 85). Other statements are apparently to be accepted blindly, since the author does not quote any bibliographical reference or documentation; this is the case with the alleged greater dimensions of the shaft graves of Thapsos's middle necropolis (*contra* Alberti 2006). A point that I appreciated in this chapter is the comparison between Monte Grande and Cannatello; the hypothesis of a connection is fascinating, in spite of a short gap between the two sites, with the functions of the circular enclosures of the former replaced by the circular hut of the latter (p. 79). The hypothesis

seems based on the common presence of imports in both contexts. It should be noted, however, that it is unclear if at Cannatello the greater amount of imported pottery was found inside circular huts (p. 79) or rectangular structures (van Wijngaarden 2002:255).

The main achievement of chapter 5 – that is in showing the luxury use of Aegean-type pottery – is of pivotal relevance in the reconstruction of the cultural meaning of foreign pots in western contexts. This is the focus of the final Chapter 6. It begins with a broad analysis of various goods that could be considered as the reasons for the exchange between Mycenaeans and the western Mediterranean. After items like figurines, amber, glass, and ivory (pp. 89–90), much more room is reserved for metalwork and ox-hide ingots (pp. 91–93). As for the former, the role of metal objects (especially Cypriot bowls) as luxury items is stressed (cf. La Rosa 2000). Apart from Vianello's rather contradictory statements about ox-hide ingots and their role in the archaeological documentation of Sardinia (pp. 91–93), the role of metals as prime target of Mycenaean movements westward is reduced (p. 87). This daring view acquires its proper value if considered within the general theoretical frame provided at the end of the chapter (pp. 94–97). Vianello cleverly attempts to explain (what I would define as) the multidimensional character of the documentation not overemphasizing just one aspect of the archaeological record, but considering it globally, as a complex system. In summary, the western Mediterranean entered a *Global Production Network* (GPN), connecting societies that were different in terms of geographical localization and social complexity. This GPN allowed the connected societies to share workforces and natural resources. Inside this system, payments for foreign work and/or resources were made by exchanging regional production. I would go further to suggest that bronze bowls documented at Thapsos could be considered luxury items used as currency during the exchange between Aegeans and the local élite (Alberti 2006), a role in part shared by ox-hide ingots as well (Lo Schiavo 2004:1333). Vianello's view strengthens the role of the locals in selecting the objects exchanged and explains the different consumption patterns in the western Mediterranean.

As regards some critical remarks, I will limit myself to a few. The Cypriot character of Cannatello's Aegean-type pottery repertoire (De Miro 1999) is too strong to be dismissed on the basis of the difficulties in identifying the origins of merchants. The presence on the same site of stirrup-jar handles with post-firing marks points again and with good reason to Cyprus (Hirschfeld 1993), in spite of the Cretan production of the vessels (Day 2005). In this respect, the presence of Cypriot bronze bowls from the same area has to be stressed. I believe, in brief, that sometimes the documentation provides good hints to pinpoint with reasonable confidence the origins of the traders. The second remark is about the role of metals in Aegean western movements. I still consider valid the hypothesis of metal as a prime target; this may not be in too sharp a contrast with Vianello's model. It must be kept in mind that the involvement of Sardinia (possibly via eastern and south-central Sicily) from LH IIIA2 onwards begins when Aegeans leave Vivara, this site being possibly related to the mineral resource of central-western Italy. As for the similarity in functional context between the Aeolian Islands and Thapsos during LH IIIA2–C (p. 52), I wonder if this picture is affected by the comparison of non-homogenous cultural phases: Milazzese and Ausonio period for the former, Thapsos period only for the second. Finally, it is a shame (but not Vianello's fault) that a number of important data from Thapsos are not fully described since they are still unpublished (e.g. Aegean pottery from the residential quarter) or only inadequately published (Aegean, Cypriot as well as local items from Thapsos's graves).

In conclusion, I welcome Vianello's work and I really appreciate his effort in providing a new perspective. This is valuable because it does not deny the role of western people in Late Bronze Age exchanges and because it provides a general explanation that saves the validity of the detailed multi-patterned evidence. Whilst the choice of broad periods and cultural areas could cause a loss of detail, it enhances the comparability of the documentation. His analysis of functional context is precious and marks the main difference with van Wijngaarden's work, which remains unsurpassed as far as the contextual analysis of Aegean pottery is concerned. The two books should sit side by side in scholars' bookcases.

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Demetra Papaconstantinou (ed.), *Deconstructing Context: A Critical Approach to Archaeological Practice* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006, x + 214 pp., pbk, ISBN 1 84217 204 2)

The 'deconstructing' in the title should not intimidate anyone still threatened by 'theory'. Most of the 11 articles collected in this volume are down-to-earth, use concrete examples, and largely avoid obtuse jargon. Derived from a

session at the 8th EAA Annual Meeting in Thessaloniki in 2002, these are not session proceedings, rather 'a more structured discussion' by 'contributors ... chosen on the basis of their research topics and background in order to cover the whole spectrum of archaeological excavation'. The aim was to emphasize 'types of material usually marginalised in archaeological research and rarely recorded in contextual terms'.

In archaeology, contextual analysis aims at identifying and interpreting formation processes, specifically discard and abandonment. The theory derives from the works of Binford and Schiffer, with a post-processual emphasis on ritual and symbolism. Several articles could also be seen as part of ongoing debates over analytical scale in archaeology: attempts to bridge the gap between micromorphological studies of individual contexts and large-scale research designs suitable for investigating an entire site or a landscape.

Demetra Papaconstantinou's 'Archaeological context as a unifying process' introduces the relevant historical background. By sacrificing much for the sake of brevity, such overviews risk being too obscure to be easily understood by the uninitiated, or so oversimplified that others will quibble over details. In this case the material will be familiar to readers of Trigger, Hodder, Harris and – more recently – Gavin Lucas. As these names – and the fact that all of Demetra's sources are English-language – indicate, this is an Anglo-American perspective, largely failing to recognize methodological differences in other traditions (the theme of a session at the EAA's 2006 Krakow conference). A comparative look at the role contextual analysis has played in other disciplines might also have helped locate everything within a wider 'context'.

Catherine M. Cameron's 'Ethnoarchaeology and its contribution to contextual studies' contrasts the way sites are formed, and how they are usually interpreted.

In 'From animals and food in space to bones in context: social zooarchaeology of the Neolithic farming settlements', Arkadiusz Marciniak offers a 'social zoological' interpretation to counter 'simplistic' studies based largely on comparisons of relative proportions of species represented in assemblages. While sensitive to smaller-scale issues of areas within