

periods, ethnographic parallels concerning methods in bird hunting and consumption have been cited in order to reconstruct prehistoric bird exploitation. Birds must have always been admired for their ability to fly as well as for their feathers. Although ethnographic parallels are of help in reconstructing these aspects more easily outside Europe, where exotic birds have been widely exploited for feathers until recently (e.g. McGovern-Wilson 2005; Martínez-Lira et al. 2005), Gál also offers a few carefully worded cognitive interpretations of some related osteoarchaeological phenomena.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that, given the subtlety of osteological differences between bird species often representing different behaviour and meaning, observations of archaeological significance could not be made without the high-resolution morphological investigations detailed in Stewart's work, recommended as a standard desk reference to anyone interested in the role of birds in archaeology. This type of indispensable basic research is given direct archaeological meaning in the book by Gál; in spite of their small numbers, bird remains yield unusually high quality information (both environmental and cultural) that could not be gained from any other type of archaeological find.

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- Kristian Kristiansen and Thomas B. Larsson, *The Rise of Bronze Age Society: Travels, Transmissions and Transformations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. xii + 449 pp., 170 figs, pbk, ISBN 13: 978 0 52160 4666, ISBN 10: 0521604664; hbk, ISBN 13: 978 0 5218 4363 8, ISBN 10: 0521843634)

At first sight this book might appear rather traditional: arrows on maps, Homer as a source for the Bronze Age, and Wessex with Mycenae. Its central question is – why did the Nordic Bronze Age show so much east Mediterranean and Mycenaean influence, why did it adopt a 'Mycenaean cultural idiom'? The answer given is that the Mediterranean component is the result of long-distance travel and journeys by warriors and chiefs and much is made of the research of the social anthropologist Mary Helms (1979, 1988, 1993, 1998), whose work on

pre-state societies emphasized 'the universal role of travels and long-distance exchange in such societies, thereby providing the social and cultural contexts for understanding and explaining the role of diffusion and acculturation of foreign goods and knowledge'. This model of long-distance Bronze Age journeys across Europe will not be new to many readers of the *European Journal of Archaeology*, as Kristiansen has presented it at a number of EAA Annual Meetings (in themselves often long-distance trips!). In our motor vehicle-bound society we may indeed overestimate the difficulty of journeys across Europe in the Bronze Age.

The first chapter, 'A theoretical strategy for studying interaction' presents an 'intercontextual' approach which is 'neither diffusionism nor functionalism' (p. 7) and may be described loosely as eclectic; indeed we are told that in archaeological debate 'different levels of explanation are taken to represent different theoretical approaches, leading to a polemic which tends to obscure the legitimacy of both perspectives' (p. 7). The authors look to develop a 'new theoretical and interpretative framework for understanding and explaining interaction', a field of enquiry neglected by both processual and postprocessual archaeology 'owing to their preoccupations with autonomous development' (p. 29); they do so within a theoretical perspective which is broadly the core-periphery 'World Systems' model. Their model turns out in fact to be 'a return to a truly holistic cultural historical framework' where archaeology is history (p. 372; 'Epilogue: Towards a new Culture History').

But can we believe Kristiansen and Larsson's model for the formation of Bronze Age society as based on travel, trade and esoteric knowledge? Whilst the general edifice is very plausible and well-constructed – indeed the book is well written – the argument begins to break down when examined in detail and sometimes the problem seems to be a rather uncritical selection of elements that support the arguments put forward. For example, we are presented with an instance of the transmission of the lily and ivy flower motif from Minoan Crete to the early Bronze Age Carpathians – with as a starting point the well-known 'Lily Prince' fresco from Knossos (pp. 142–150). But here a minority interpretation of the figure as female is followed (despite its skin colour, lack of female breasts

and rather prominent cod-piece!) – indeed, elsewhere the more traditional interpretation of the subject as male is followed – pp. 262, 334), so that the lily and ivy symbol becomes 'a female symbol of high religious and social standing' in both societies (p. 150). But it is one thing to note formal similarities in material culture and iconography, another to suggest 'a close similarity of meaning' (p. 150), and in this particular example at least we may want to question Kristiansen and Larsson's conclusions.

Closer to my own specialist interest, which is prehistoric northern Italy, I am unconvinced that the fortified settlement of Monkodonja in Istria (Croatia) represents an east Mediterranean colony (p. 162), and even if its excavators' (Teržan, Mihovilić and Hänsel) interpretation is correct, I find it difficult to accept the statement that visits by Mycenaean traders to southern Germany from east Mediterranean colonies in Istria '[provide] ... for the first time ... a direct historical explanation for the widespread similarities between Mycenaean and Nordic Bronze Age cultures' (p. 250) – what, for example, of Peschiera (usually seen to have an important role, which is not mentioned anywhere in this book)?

Kristiansen and Larsson's insistence on Homer (or the Irish myths) as a valid source for reconstructing Bronze Age cosmology and ethos (e.g. pp. 2, 21, 22, 61, 229) is very attractive and like many prehistorians I wish that it was; the problem is simply that when Homer is proved right by the archaeology then the archaeology is sufficient evidence in itself, and when there is no archaeological confirmation we cannot know whether Homer is right! On Wessex (and Únětice) we are told that their technological sophistication is 'unthinkable without contacts and exchange of know-how with east Mediterranean specialists' (p. 138 – an argument strangely redolent of the Megalithic missionaries who were supposed to have built Stonehenge), but there is no doubt that our improved understanding of chronology makes such contacts possible, and indeed plausible in the context of journeys of the sort proposed by this book.

Kristiansen and Larsson provide copious illustrations in support of their arguments (though their sources are not always acknowledged – e.g. fig. 48a) and these are generally well chosen and presented. Conversely, I personally found the charts illustrating their

theoretical models rather opaque (such as fig. 38 on p. 113).

It is incumbent on a reviewer to pick up authors on points of detail, and there are many of these; although the volume is generally well-edited (and thus easy to read), the authors do not appear to have been well served by copy-editors: a number of works are omitted from the bibliography; Bietti Sestieri 1992 becomes Bietti-Sestieri 1992 in the bibliography, but Bietti Sestieri 1996 is Sestieri 1996 in the bibliography (in both cases the text cites correctly); the Mitterberg Alpine Copper district is misspelt as Witterberg (p. 134); Margarita Primas becomes Margaretha (p. 135); Zofia Stos-Gale becomes Stros-Gale (p. 138 and 419); and shafthole is misspelt as Schafthole (caption, fig. 96 on p. 211). But there are also more important errors – Únětice is spelt Unetice throughout (but is inexplicably given its German form Aunjetitz on p. 120) – perhaps this was to make the book more accessible – and Otomani is misspelt Ottomani. Finally, the swords assigned in note 12 on p. 216 to the ‘Terramare’ culture are in fact from the cemetery of Olmo di Nogara (VR), a neighbouring cultural and geographical context (Cupitò 2006:9–12).

In conclusion, this is a stimulating and brave book. Brave, because it is almost impossible for two authors to master the vast range of data marshalled, from Mesopotamia to the British Isles, and thus quibbles from specialists are inevitable; brave also in its championing of long-distance contacts as a motor of social change – though perhaps the pendulum is beginning to swing against the partisans of autonomous development at all times and places. I recommend it as an illuminating and well-written treatment of one of the key periods of European history.

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- Helle Vandkilde, *Culture and Change in Central European Prehistory, 6th to 1st Millennium BC*. (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2007, 215 pp., pbk, ISBN 978 87 7934 245 3)
- This compact and attractively produced book, by the Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at Aarhus University, presents a picture of European prehistory that is at the same time introductory and stimulating. Helle Vandkilde is best known for her studies of the Neolithic–Bronze Age transition in northern Europe, but also more recently for her focus on warriors and warfare. She has extensive familiarity with the material of this period from her chosen area – principally south Scandinavia and central Europe, *sensu* Germany, Poland, Austria and the Czech Republic; though in this book she ranges somewhat further in the periods either side of her specialist one. The result is a cogently written narrative that intersperses mainly descriptive passages with more theoretical discussions of particular themes and issues.
- The Preface describes the volume as an ‘introductory essay about central European prehistory’, and its readership is intended to be both general and – particularly – students of Scandinavian archaeology, who are said to be at something of a loss now that German is ‘no longer a natural part of young people’s training’. Anyone who works in central European archaeology quickly discovers that knowledge of German is a *sine qua non*; so the aim of providing students and others with a readable text in English is a laudable one.
- At the same time it has to be said that the focus of the book is very much on the Bronze Age and the centuries leading up to it; neither the Neolithic nor the Iron Age is given much space – Chapter 2, on the Neolithic prior to metallurgy, occupies 14 pages, while Chapter 8, on the Iron Age, has 20 pages. The rest