

## Book reviews

Graeme Barker

**The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory. Why did Foragers become Farmers?** xvi+598 pages, 138 figures, 15 tables. 2006. Oxford: Oxford University Press; ISBN 0-19-928109-2; 978-0-19-928109-1

*The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory* addresses some of the most debated questions as to why, how, when and where foraging societies decided that 'the advantages of food production outweighed the options available to them as foragers'. Graeme Barker first discussed these questions in his Cambridge PhD on the transition from hunting to farming in central Italy. Some years later he focused on the evolution of farming in Europe. His recent book is an attempt to bring to bear a global holistic approach to the problem of why foragers became farmers. The book is in ten parts: (1) Approaches to the Origins of Agriculture, (2) Understanding Foragers, (3) Identifying Foragers and Farmers, (4) The 'Hearth of Domestication'? Transitions to Farming in South-West Asia, (5) Central and South Asia: the Wheat/Rice Frontier, (6) Rice and Forest Farming in East and South-East Asia, (7) Weed, Tuber, and Maize Farming in the Americas, (8) Africa: Afro-Asiatic Pastoralists and Bantu farmers?, (9) Transitions to Farming in Europe: Ex Oriente Lux?, and (10) The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory: Why did Foragers become Farmers?

In the context of a short review, the range and rich detail of this book precludes further summary, and to engage in debate on any one section would be invidious. Suffice to say that the author believes that the process of transition to farming demands a regionally comparative approach. For every region, he suggests, we need to understand "*changes in climate and environment, the nature of the plant and animal resources available, and how they were exploited by people on either side of the presumed transitional phase(s) from foraging to farming*". And, that "*if we are to understand why prehistoric foragers become farmers*" we have to "*imagine how they must have viewed their world and the challenges and choices available to them*". There is no reason not to agree with these postulates.

The author develops a strong case for the development of agricultural systems in many regions as transformations in the life-styles of indigenous forager societies, and hypothesises that these were as much changes in social norms and ideologies as in ways of obtaining food. He argues at the same time that the transition to farming was a process consisting of many unwise, foolish and fatal decisions, and

that what actually happened was not the discovery nor the invention of food production, but a by-product of decisions made without an awareness of their consequences (p. 392, quoting *J. M. Diamond*).

The author surprises us by reviving two old concepts and models, agricultural revolution (*cf. V. G. Childe*) and acculturation (*cf. S. Piggott* [Ancient Europe. 1965], missing from the bibliography). He argues strongly against the concept of demic diffusion and/or the wave of advance model (*cf. A. J. Ammerman and L. L. Cavalli-Sforza*). For him, the main problem with the demic diffusion model is "*its focus on the transition to farming as some kind of unique sequence of movements in an otherwise static world.*" (p. 413).

By adopting a global perspective, the author integrates in the book a series of general and basic data that were discussed in the eighties and nineties in archaeology, anthropology, botany and zoology, climatology, and archaeogenetics. Unfortunately, he overlooks relevant information as much as the recent discussions of origins and diffusions of 'Mesolithic' and 'Neolithic' Y-chromosomes and mitochondrial DNA haplogroups, and global human population trajectories in the context of the processes of the transition to farming. Human genetic studies show that the modern European paternal and maternal genetic landscape was not the result of farmers invading from the Near East, and that demic diffusion is not a realistic scenario for interpreting the transition to farming in either Europe or Central Asia. The lively debate on the '8.200 calBp climate event' - which undoubtedly correlates chronologically with the transition to farming on a global scale, and certainly affected environmental conditions - is not taken into account. How the event affected contemporary hunter-gatherers and farmers and the transition to farming still awaits an answer.

There is no question, however, that *The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory* is a big step towards an unbiased interpretation of the processes of transition to farming in prehistory both regionally and globally.

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**Preston T. *Miracle* and Stašo Forenbaher (eds.)**

**Prehistoric Herders of Northern Istria: the archaeology of Pupičina Cave, Volume 1/Pretpovjesni stočari sjeverne Istre: arheologija Pupičine peći, 1. svezak (Monografije i katalogi 14).** 560 pages, 194 illustrations, 15 plates, 89 tables, 8 appendices. 2006. Pula. Arheološki muzej Istre; 953-6153-37-8 paperback.

This monograph documents the results of the excavation of the post-Mesolithic layers in Pupičina Cave in Northern Istria. Pupičina Cave contains a deep, albeit interrupted sequence, which covers the last 12 000 years of occupation, with significant Neolithic and Bronze Age deposits. This is the first volume in a series of monographs which is intended to cover the whole occupational sequence of the Cave.

This substantial monograph is a very welcome contribution to studies of the Neolithic and Bronze Age in the Northern Adriatic, which has been relatively intensively researched, but lacks well-excavated and dated assemblages, and which is plagued by a lack of detailed publications.

The most obvious contribution of the monographs lies in the detailed specialist studies of the whole line of evidence, both 'artefactual' and 'ecofactual', including stratigraphic, micromorphological, taphonomical, palaeobotanical etc. data. Thus, aside from an introductory article (*Miracle*) and two overview contributions, the monograph consists of a series of detailed specialist reports covering different lines of evidence.

*Miracle* and *Forenbaher* describe the methodology of excavation and the stratigraphy of the post-Mesolithic layers in the cave in full detail. The sequence of five occupation horizons is dated with eight radiocarbon dates. Particularly interesting is the geoarchaeological report (*Boschian*), which clearly demonstrates that the stratigraphic sequence is almost entirely the result of anthropogenic processes, mainly the periodic burning of animal dung and cleaning of cave floors. The micromorphological data provide clear evidence that the cave was used as a sheep pen. The pottery analysis (*Forenbaher and Kaiser*) provides evidence of sharp contrast in the use of pottery at the site between the Bronze Age and Neolithic, while the analysis of stone artefacts (*Forenbaher*) questions previous assumptions that the Neolithic lithic industry in the region is based on a prismatic blade technology industry. An important observation is the intensification of long-distance interactions during the Neolithic, which can be clearly seen in an expanded range of raw materials. Different uses of raw materials can be seen in a small collection of bone and antler artefacts (*Amatt and Miracle*). The report on vertebrate fauna (*Miracle and Pugsley*) clearly shows the major role in subsistence of herds of ovicaprines, thus complementing the mi-

cromorphological and stratigraphic evidence. The paper reveals substantial changes in cave use, animal management, during the Neolithic and Bronze Age.

The very small mollusc assemblage provides more evidence of site formation and taphonomical processes than of dietary or palaeo-environmental processes (*Laurie, Miracle and Poje*). The charcoal and phytolites analysis offer evidence of the utilisation of the landscape in the immediate environs of the cave (*Fletcher and Madella*) and thus complements a pollen analysis from an offsite core (*Andrič*), while the analysis of small vertebrate remains (*Steward and Parfitt*) focuses more on the formational processes which could have led to their accumulation in the cave. The specialist reports often include regional comparisons and set data within a wider regional context. Especially worth mentioning is the report on faunal assemblages (*Miracle and Pugsley*), which summarises zoo-archaeological data from the whole of the eastern Adriatic.

The last two chapters summarize the different lines of evidence and provide an overview and conclusion about the cave itself and its environment, and its position in the spread of farming in the eastern Adriatic.

The first synthetic contribution summarise changes in the activities in the cave and its immediate environs (*Miracle and Forenbaher*). Pupičina was a seasonally visited site, with changing patterns and intensity of use and occupation. It was used as a seasonal camp, with major periods of relatively intensive occupation during the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (Middle Neolithic) and mid-second Millennium BC (Bronze Age).

The Middle Neolithic occupations were short; shepherds lived in the cave with their herds; animals were slaughtered and consumed on site. Although the authors admit that the data fits fairly well with J.-É. Brochier's 'habitat bergerie', an occupational site used by shepherds and their herds, they anyway conclude – in my opinion too hastily – that "*Pupičina may have been a special-purpose site attached to the nearby village*", and was therefore more a 'grotte bergerie', a seasonal transhumance site linked to the (hypothetical) lowland village. This might be true of the Middle Bronze Age, with the appearance of fortified hill-forts in northern Istria and the immediate vicinity of the site.

An important observation is the existence of 'gaps' in the deposition, a major one between the Mesolithic and Neolithic, and another between the Neolithic and Bronze Age, along with several others. These 'gaps' also occur in other caves in the region. Unfortunately, the research does not provide a final answer to this problem, although it seems to be crucial for understanding the transition from the Mesolithic to the Neolithic in the cave and the wider region, which is the topic of the second synthetic contribution (*Forenbaheer and Miracle*). There is a hiatus in occupation of around 1800 years between the Mesolithic and Neolithic occupations of the cave, therefore the evidence of a Mesolithic-Neolithic transition and the transition to farming has not survived. Unfortunately, this renders the cave less suitable for a discussion of the process of neolithisation. The earliest Neolithic layers in Pupičina are at least a few hundred years younger than the first Neolithic evidence in the region. Therefore, we might not agree

with the authors' conclusion that "*Pupičina has some of the strongest and clearest evidence of a new population of herders/farmers coming to the site in the Middle Neolithic*". Absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence of absence of hunter-gatherers in the cave during the transitional period, especially when other lines of evidence (exclusive use of local lithic raw materials in the oldest Neolithic horizon) may suggest local ancestry of the first herders in the cave.

The first monograph in the series is a colossal contribution to Neolithic and Bronze Age studies in the area and sets high standards for future research and publications on the area. It is to be hoped that the quality of the research and publication seen in this monograph will be also reflected in publications by other researchers working in the area. I eagerly await further volumes from the series.

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**John Chapman and Bisserka Gaydarska**  
(with contributions from Ana Raduntcheva and Bistra Koleva)

**Parts and Wholes: Fragmentation in Prehistoric Context.** xiv+233, 4 appendices, 124 illustrations, 38 tables, 43 colour plates. 2007. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 978-1-84217-222-3 paperback.

The book *Parts and Wholes* is in many ways a supplement to Chapman's previous book, *The Fragmentation in Archaeology* (2000), but it is also a new, highly innovative and interesting book. It is an ambitious attempt to write an integrated study which combines archaeology, social anthropology and material culture studies.

Chapman's study focused on the complementary practices of fragmentation and accumulation, processes which link people to objects through production, exchange and consumption. He adopted an anthropological model of personhood, derived mainly from ethnographic analyses of Melanesian societies, where people are made up of the totality of their relations: they are not 'individuals' but 'dividuals', made up of their relations and transactions with each other, places and material culture.

This study was founded upon the 'fragmentation premise', an idea that many artefacts in the past were deliberately broken and then re-used as fragments after that break. A crucial practice connected with the creation of personhood is 'enchainment', a social relationship between people and people and objects which emerges from the exchange of fragments. A related, complementary process is 'accumulation', which creates a hoard of objects.

Fragments are tokens of relations between people, places and objects, and thus create personalities. This model of personhood seems to fit the evidence of fragmented objects, hoards and partial deposits of human bone from southeastern Europe.

In the present book Chapman and Gaydarska elaborate on many points and arguments from Chapman's previous book. In fact, the book addresses many criticisms of the first book and provides many case studies which support the theoretical issues raised in the both volumes.

The first two case studies are examples of the culturally specific creation of personhood, the first using whole pots and the principle of 'categorisation' (Chapter 1). The second study discusses the anthropomorphic figurines from Hamangia (Chapter 3). Observation of the various biographies of Hamangia figurines, which were androgynous when whole, but change their rendered identity to male, female or gender-neutral, or no-gender following the fragmented life history of the figurines. However, in graves, either complete figurines or fragments, which can be refitted to whole figurines, were deposited, which characterise "*a return to androgynous whole at death.*"

Two methodological studies focus on the correspondence between the mobility of objects and frag-

ments and the archaeological record. The first one – wittily named “Schiffer visits the Balkans” – discusses ‘rubbish’, the importance of deposition and disposal for the objects’ biographies, the mobility of the fragments, the creation of context and the definition of ‘activity areas’ (Chapter 4).

Meanwhile, the second approach mobilises the re-fitting studies and *chaine opératoire* approach to answer the key question in fragmentation studies: “Where are the missing parts?” The study traces the dispersion of fragments both on-site and off-site (Chapter 5).

The final two studies combine a biographical approach with re-fitting studies. The first approaches the large assemblage of fragmented figurines from the Final Copper Age layers of the Dolnoslav tell (Chapter 6). The complex pattern of deposition at Dolnoslav seems to suggest that the tell was an accumulation site for the fragments, while the pattern reflects diverse principles of personhood, and thus offers an interesting contrast to the study of Hamangia figurines in the third chapter.

The second traces the *chaine opératoire* of *Spondylus* rings based on refitting studies of three sites (Chapter 7).

Chapman and Gaydarska succeed in demonstrating that the ‘fragmentation premise’ is well founded. The high level of object and fragment mobility – up

to 80 % of objects’ mass is missing on some sites – suggest that fragments travel across sites and landscapes. Even more, they show that fragmentation studies can offer an insight into the creation of personhood and identity.

What we miss in the book is an acknowledgement of the social importance of the act or performance of deliberate breaking. Deliberate breaking is first an extremely important event in the biography of the object, not just ‘ritual killing’. It is an act of transformation, when a whole object is transformed into something other. The act of transformation – due to its visual or aural qualities – can bring people together and make the event a social one. Obvious examples are the ‘ritual explosions’ of figurines at Dolni Věstonice, Balkan celebrations involving the ‘ritual’ breaking of glass against walls, or Leslie Grinsell’s funeral cited in the introduction to the book. In such events it is the performance of deliberate fragmentation which has important social implications; it binds people together, the resulting fragments make those relations merely visible and tangible.

All in all this is a mind-boggling book. Chapman and Gaydarska’s study is a highly innovative and stimulating one. It opens completely new lines of enquiry into Balkan (and wider) prehistory.

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