

Book reviews

Geoff Bailey, Penny Spikins (eds.)

Mesolithic Europe. Xviii+467 pages, figures 96, pages 27. 2008. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0-521-85503-7 (hardback)

The book is a collection of interpretative essays, local and regional, on the Mesolithic in Europe. The chapters are organised in broadly geographical order and focus on the definition of the Mesolithic, chronology, technology and subsistence, arts and rituals, settlements and social organisations.

The opening chapter is an introduction to a different perception of the Mesolithic, and suggests we shift from narratives of passive Mesolithic societies to a new generation of interpretations. The final chapter, follows a discussion of Mesolithic-Neolithic transition, dominates many contributions. This chapter actualises the 'Neolithic' interpretative model of 'demic diffusion', suggesting that there is no evidence of interaction between the Mesolithic and Neolithic populations of the Balkans and the Mediterranean.

However, the book suggests that elsewhere different elements of the 'Neolithic package' were introduced

and adopted selectively and separately. Unfortunately, the book overlooks relevant information such as the recent discussions of the origins and diffusions of 'Mesolithic' and 'Neolithic' Y-chromosomes and mitochondrial DNA haplogroups, and human population trajectories in the context of processes in the Mesolithic-Neolithic transformation. It does not reflect the discussion on the 8600-8000 and 6000-5200 calBP climate anomalies, which undoubtedly correlate chronologically with the Mesolithic and the Neolithic and drastically affected global environmental conditions.

'Mesolithic Europe' offers an interesting regional synthesis of the Mesolithic in different parts of Europe and is a perfect complement to Barker's volume 'The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory. Why did Foragers become Farmers?'

Dusan Borić and John Robb (eds.)

Past Bodies. Body-Centered Research in Archaeology. viii+151 pages, figures 57, map 1, table 1. 2008. Oxford: Oxbow Books. The Cromwell Press, Trowbridge. ISBN-13: 978-1-84217-341-1; ISBN-10: 1-84217-341-3

"The body in archaeology is both omnipresent and invisible." (Borić and Robb, p.1)

The book is a collection of essays resulting from two symposia, 'Past Bodies' in Cambridge in 2006, and 'Acting and Believing: An Archaeology of Bodily Practices', held at the Society for American Archaeology meetings at San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2006. The book is in four sections, with papers grouped by general theme or approach in order to draw attention to cross-disciplinary linkages. The first section presents a general introduction to social theories of the body and an overview of relevant archaeological methodologies. The second presents studies of the represented body, and the third, studies of the body in death. The fourth section contains studies which cut across traditional domains of study such as repre-

sentation and burial, and focus upon the socially contextualised body at particular historical moments.

The articles range from the hunter-gatherers of the Upper Palaeolithic through modern British populations. The majority refers to the European sequence, but there are discussions of Near Eastern, North American and Mesoamerican cases. The book offers three theoretical implications: (i) it underscores the productive richness of the concept of the body in archaeology; (ii) it shows that the archaeology of the body is not the monopoly of a single province of archaeology, particularly data-rich regions; (iii) it goes beyond such stereotypes and prejudices as 'symbols, gender, agency, social relations and ritual experience, etc.', are all very well, but you can only do them where you have texts'.

The field of 'body studies' has become increasingly influential in a growing range of academic subjects since the 1980's, when Norbert Elias introduced the 'homo clausus' or 'closed personality' image of human beings running through much of modern Western philosophy and social and political thought, with its emphasis on autonomy, freedom and independent agency. He suggested that this picture be replaced by one of human beings as 'open personalities', bound together in social 'figurations', and characterized more by interdependence than autonomy.

The book's most significant contribution is its evidence and argumentation highlighting the partiality

of the, traditionally Western, homo clausus conception of the embodied being. It accomplishes this through various demonstrations of the 'relationality of embodied subjects' and 'fractal thinking'. It also addresses issues relating to questions of epistemology (knowledge and representation of the body), phenomenology (lived representations of the body), and ontology (the material bodily properties and capacities of our antecedents). The case studies provide explorations of corporeal knowing, sensing and being, and archaeology's concern with the 'open' and varied relationships that exist between embodied subjects and the social bodies of tribe and society.

Robert Bégouën, Carole Fritz, Gilles Tosello, Jean Clottes, Andreas Pastoors and François Faist (with the collaboration of François Bourges, Philippe Fosse, Sébastien Lacombe and Mathieu Langlais) **La Sanctuaire secret des Bisons. Il y a 14 000 ans, dans la caverne du Tuc d'Audoubert.** 415 pages, 484 illustrations. 2009. Paris: Somogy éditions d'art. ISBN 978-27572-0203-6.

Tuc d'Audoubert – with Les Trois Frères and Enlène – is part of the cave system of the River Volp, and best known for its bison sculpted in clay. The monograph 'La Sanctuaire secret des Bisons' is the result of intense scientific research between 1992 and 2004 on the cave and its Pleistocene art. The important part of the research was the re-examination of the archaeological material from earlier excavations. The book begins with the exciting story of the discovery of Tuc d'Audoubert in 1912 and the subsequent research of the cave's chambers and galleries, which are decorated with numerous paintings and engravings. The geographical position of the cave, the genesis of the cave system and landscape are then described, and environmental facts, and the cultural characteristics of the Magdalenians in the Pyrenees region are presented. The reasons for the excellent preservation of the cave art are also emphasised. The methods of research and various techniques for documenting parietal art are presented and some terminological problems explained. The main part of the book is dedicated to the cave art of Tuc d'Audoubert. The reader encounters various motifs and representations in a voyage through the cave chambers and galleries from the entrance to its deepest recesses, where the journey ends with the most spectacular find – sculptures of bison. The Magdalenians

did not visit the cave only to create images – they also lived in it for short periods, and left artefacts and animal bones in some parts. Among the more enigmatic finds are objects pushed into fissures in the cave walls. Similar objects have been found in other caves and might be interpreted as offerings of some kind, which connected people with the cave and underground world. There are numerous impressions of human feet in the cave. It is interesting that there are adult and children's impressions deep inside the cave, so at least one child accompanied adults to the Gallery of the Clay Bison. In the final chapters, the authors explain the chronology of the art in Tuc d'Audoubert. They discuss the figurative and non-figurative themes of the art, the art techniques, the distribution of the images and the relation between the mundane and symbolic or "sacred" spaces of the cave. The cave and its art are set in the context of the Magdalenian cultural region of the Pyrenees and the wider south-western European region. The book ends with an attractive epilogue, in which imagination takes wings in a story about the life and creativity of the Magdalenian people who visited Tuc d'Audoubert. "La Sanctuaire secret des Bisons" is an extensive work, which systematically presents a Palaeolithic cave art site. The numerous illustrations contribute to the general attractiveness of the book.

Mihael Budja and Simona Petru