

Sabine Gerloff, *The Early Bronze Age Daggers in Great Britain and a Reconsideration of the Wessex Culture*. *Prähistorische Bronzefunde* 6,2. C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, München 1975. 298 pages, 64 plates.

In her opening sentence S. Gerloff writes 'the bronze dagger forms one of the most significant classes of object in Early Bronze Age Europe'. Indeed, few could disagree with this statement and the number of studies of daggers that have appeared in various countries is a testimony of their significance. In Britain, too, the study of daggers has not been neglected, but now, for the first time, we are presented with a comprehensive study of the dagger in its various typological and chronological manifestations. To say that such a work is welcome is an understatement but it contains more than a study of the daggers. We are, for instance, given a reconsideration of the Wessex Culture and a review of the Arreton industry. In all of this S. Gerloff's acute awareness of the material on the continent of Europe is most vital, she commands the wide comparative knowledge which is such a characteristic feature of the works of her 'Doktorvater', Professor C. F. C. Hawkes.

This work opens with a view of certain aspects of continental Early and Middle Bronze Age chronology, daggers on the continent and the history of research into British daggers. We then move on to the daggers, finishing up with bone examples. Other chapters deal with biconical cups and related vessels, female burials and Wes-

sex-Continental relations: evidence from pottery. At the end there are twelve Appendices. This is much more than a study of daggers; it is almost a full treatment of the earlier stages of the British Bronze Age. Its review, therefore, is no easy task!

The author catalogues close to 360 daggers for Britain; apart from a few bone examples all are made from copper or bronze, and in general these are studied in chronological order. She opens with tanged copper daggers, nineteen examples, and confirms their contemporaneity with bell beakers. Next come flat riveted blades which are divided into four types and miscellaneous flat blades, in all 87 daggers. They are late beaker in date and some may be contemporary with the early Wessex Culture.

The next group consists of grooved triangular daggers divided into A, B and C. These daggers are usually made from tin bronze and they may have been cast in a double piece stone mould. Groups A and B are within the mainstream of European daggers but Group C is a later modified form of either Breton or British origin. For these groups the author uses the term Armorico-British. As the name implies she would derive them from Brittany with a background in the Oder-Elbe metal-hilted daggers which were part of the Aunjetitz metal industry. These daggers are, of course, part of the Wessex culture, nearly all come from burials under barrows, including 'royal burials', both A and B daggers were found in the Bush barrow burial. Their associations include sheet-gold ornaments, axeheads with slight flange, mace-head and sceptre. Armorico-British daggers are represented by about 30 examples. They have mainly been found in the Wessex area but they also occur in east Yorkshire and east Scotland.

As A. Apsimon firstly pointed out the Armorico-British daggers were succeeded by ogival daggers for which the name Camerton-Snowhill has been retained. There are about 53 examples, most were found in barrow burials, the principal rite being cremation. A few were found in hoards of Arretton Down type. Typical associations are bone tweezers, bronze and bone pins, perforated whet-stones, stone battle axes, incense cups and handled cups of amber, shale or gold. S. Gerloff has found no close continental parallels, she assumed that the notion of an ogival dagger entered Britain at a time when ogival daggers were common on the continent. From the spectrometrical point of view Camerton-Snowhill daggers to a large extent differ from the Armorico-British daggers. There are new metal groups, FB 2 appears in Camerton-Snowhill daggers and it may also be noted that this group is especially frequent in Arretton-type flanged axes. Camerton-Snowhill daggers have a wider distribution in the south of England than Armorico-British daggers, they are found from Cornwall eastwards to Sussex. Apart from a Welsh find they are, however, absent from north of the Thames.

Next S. Gerloff deals with a largish family of knife daggers, numbering close to 80 examples and have four varieties. These daggers can be dated to the tie of the Wessex culture but the varieties distinguished by a midrib or by grooving on the blade are largely contemporary with the Camerton-Snowhill phase of the Wessex culture.

Finally comes a small group, 15 examples of tanged knife daggers. These have Urn associations and the author dates them to the Wessex culture.

S. Gerloff's study has certainly brought order into the British daggers, she, of course, had a sound foundation to work on. As her sub-title indicates the Wessex culture is ranked as of considerable significance, something that is virtually self-standing and autonomous. Events that are considered contemporary, either in whole or part, are also studied in detail, the Arretton industry being the most notable. Her earlier types of daggers, the tanged copper type is exclusively beaker and almost so is the flat riveted dagger, it also has food vessel affiliations. Culturally and chronologically this means that 'the Wessex area was still inhabited by Beaker and Late Neolithic populations during Reinecke's phase A₁' (p. 93). But then things changed, new dagger types came into use and due to the 'astonishingly close relation' between the earlier varieties of these and Brittany, the author concludes that it was an import from Brittany that was responsible for the rise of the Wessex culture. This view is not new, it was put forward by Piggott in his classic paper of 1938. Now, it is certainly true to say that the Wessex area has some exotic types, even a concentration of them as the Armorico-British daggers and the Camerton-Snowhill daggers show (Plates 34-37). There are also the rich burials, gold, mace-heads etc. Tin bronze was widely used and daggers, at least Armorico-British A pieces were cast in double moulds. It is certainly true to say that there is evidence from Wessex for wealth, technological competence and external connections but does this constitute a 'culture' and if so was the culture implanted even by the arrival of new ethnic groups in some bulk and weight? But as S. Gerloff has herself pointed out the Wessex region already had, for instance, rich burials back in Beaker times, e. g. Radley and Meare. Furthermore, the good agricultural land would surely give rise to a wealthy farmer stock. But the material wealth of Wessex is much over-rated. All the gold ornaments only weigh a few ounces, they had no lunulae, instead they made do with amber necklaces. Therefore, the internal context of the Wessex culture is most important. At the end of the Neolithic-beginning of the Bronze Age various changes were taking place in Britain; these include new metal and pottery types and changes in the mode of burial (collared urns, etc.). The Wessex farmers may then be part of this wider canvas but even if they were we have to see them as having close connections with at least as far away as Brittany.

The Arreton industry is also a problem. In 1938 Piggott included the hoards in the Wessex culture and the industry was delineated by Britton in 1963 (P. P. S., 284). Superficially at least the daggers of this industry can be compared to the Camerton-Snowhill group but S. Gerloff considers them as quite distinctive. She has three groups consisting of about 26 daggers in all. S. Gerloff's view is that the Arreton hoards are peripheral to the Camerton-Snowhill burials, but the rigid division of the daggers contributes to this view – however there are linking associations, the Snowhill burial being a case in point. S. Gerloff has wisely pointed out the whole problem of relationships 'needs further research' (p. 157). However, I am inclined to see both as the products of a similar industry, the composition of the metals is similar. Indeed, ritual fashions may be responsible rather than industrial regionalism. In some areas bronzes could have been deposited with burials as grave goods; in other places bronzes may have been deposited for some other ritual purpose, hence the hoards.

S. Gerloff's work is a distinguished addition to the now well-established 'Prähistorische Bronzefunde', it is a major contribution to British Bronze Age studies and it, taken in conjunction with P. Harbison's work in Ireland, means that a large block of the daggers of west Europe is now published.

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