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Rezensionen / Reviews / Comptes rendus

SILVIANE SCHARL, *Jungsteinzeit. Wie die Menschen sesshaft wurden*. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 2021. € 34.00. ISBN 978-3-17-036740-1 (Print). 330 pages with 54 colour figures (incl. 11 maps), 5 b / w figures and 1 table.

Writing an introduction to the Neolithic of central Europe is not for the faint-hearted. New information is accumulating at an unprecedented rate and now includes an array of bioarchaeological data, as well as more traditional archaeological sources and supporting insights from, amongst others, social anthropology and experimental work. In addition, the Neolithic is a regionally and chronologically diverse period, and a wealth of evidence exists from site-based research to regional surveys and inter-regional syntheses, sometimes leading to conflicting interpretations depending on scale of analysis or examples chosen. This flood of information and the controversies surrounding it are particularly difficult to navigate for undergraduate students.

Silviane Scharl's authoritative introduction fearlessly wades into all this complexity and offers an invaluable helping hand. The volume works best as accompanying reading for an introductory course, providing balanced discussions, well-chosen examples and up-to-date references for a range of classic lecture topics. In spite of an Irish dolmen gracing the front cover (presumably not an image chosen by the author herself), the main geographical focus from chapter 4 onwards lies on central Europe, although we are also treated to a brief and informative global outlook on Neolithisation and to a chapter on the beginnings of the Neolithic in the Near East. The volume's scope is hence ambitious, and considerable scholarship and a firm grasp of both large-scale processes and site detail were needed to compile it. As such, this publication is an impressive achievement. Yet in presenting all this rich material and its interpretations by others, S. Scharl has sometimes struggled with establishing an overarching narrative of her own. A book such as this could have been styled in one of two ways: as a synthesis told from a specific vantage point and with a coherent theoretical or methodological approach, in the vein of similar offerings for example by Alasdair W. R. WHITTLE (1996), Graeme BARKER (2006), or more regionally for the United Kingdom Julian THOMAS (1999) – or instead as presenting the state of the art of “what we know”, a summary and description of results, sites and debates. Ideally, elements of both would be present, but Scharl has quite decidedly come out in favour of the latter option. She has therefore undoubtedly created a very useful reference work, but has only partly realised some of the broader goals set in her introduction (pp. 7–9).

These goals are threefold: the book aims to introduce the Neolithic, but also the methods with which it is studied (many of these are presented in a glossary at the end of the volume, pp. 280–282), and it wants to do so not in a linear, chronological way, but thematically, in order to highlight events and processes and to, for example, weigh the relative contributions of large-scale factors like climate change and of individual or small-group agency. This sets the bar high, but as the volume is primarily aimed at students, it would have been helpful to elaborate a little more on these debates and provide some theoretical grounding of how these different elements will be brought together (practice theory, assemblage theory, or any number of other options spring to mind). What is offered in chapter 1 (pp. 7–12) instead is a brief mention of the culture concept and its attendant controversies, but without really going into detail regarding how its inbuilt assumptions will be tackled in the volume. Culture names are used pragmatically throughout the book – indeed, this is almost unavoidable given research history and practice – but there is no consistent reflec-

tion throughout the chapters signposting potential shortcomings with this approach. Prospective student readers are also well advised to keep a marker on the page showing the chronology chart (p. 12), as they will have to refer to it extensively throughout, especially in the thematic sections.

The next chapter (pp. 13–31), given the heading “Neolithic revolution or evolution”, then introduces the formation of the Neolithic in the Near East, coming down firmly on the side of gradual evolution. Scharl expertly traces the slow emergence of systems of animal and plant management and summarises the unintentional social, demographic and health consequences of sedentism. The chapter also – very briefly and matter-of-factly – raises some themes that will remain important in sections to follow, such as the question of migration versus acculturation. The further spread of Neolithic things and practices across the Mediterranean and northwards into the Balkans is described. The following chapter 3 (pp. 32–44) provides an interesting digression to other case studies of Neolithisation across the globe in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Here, too, these processes often took quite a long time, and innovations such as farming, pottery production or new social constellations did not necessarily emerge as a package.

In chapter 4 (pp. 45–73), it is central Europe’s hunter-gatherers who take centre-stage. This is also one of the few chapters in which a wider theoretical point is raised, namely a critique of evolutionist narratives in which Neolithic societies had long been seen as inherently superior. Instead, foragers are described as very well adapted to their constantly changing environments and as managing resources such as hazelnuts efficiently and sustainably. Yet ultimately, Scharl does not succeed in transcending the evolutionary paradigm, but rather tries to move foragers further along the inevitable line of development towards managing nature. All kinds of practices, such as the repeated reuse of sites (p. 65), delayed-return strategies (p. 62) or storage are characterised as behaviours “one would rather associate with agricultural societies” (p. 55), thereby ignoring considerable scholarship by Lewis R. BINFORD (1980), James WOODBURN (1982) and others which has long highlighted the diversity of economic adaptations that can be found within the broad category “hunter-gatherer” and that need not inevitably lead to anything like “the Neolithic”. Similarly, Scharl uses designations like “complex hunter-gatherers” (p. 70), but these are not explained or contextualised. In the end, it seems that the contribution of forager groups to our understanding of the past is limited to how close they came to a Neolithic economy. To my mind, this rather precludes an understanding of these societies on their own terms. It also leads to the paradoxical situation in which hunter-gatherers in central Europe are said to both have paved the way for the arrival of the Neolithic, but then also to have continued as a kind of parallel society alongside farmers, without adopting the new economy (p. 72). Still, while I disagree with the reading presented here, this is one of the few places in the book in which Scharl’s own views and interpretations are made explicit, and in which it becomes clear what archaeological debates are actually about. As such, it makes for refreshing, thought-provoking and engaging reading, whether or not one in the end follows Scharl’s line.

The next chapter (pp. 74–117) presents the *Linearbandkeramik* (LBK), accepting Jens Lüning’s hotly debated early dates for Schwanfeld and tracing its spread from Hungary and Lower Austria accordingly (for some of the controversy regarding the beginnings of the earliest LBK, see e. g. BÁNFFY et al. 2018; a critical reappraisal of the Schwanfeld dates themselves is provided in FRÖHLICH / LÜNING 2018). Overall, the presentation of economy, housing, settlement structure, burial customs, pottery technology and so on is down to earth and comprehensive, corresponding largely to the currently dominant narrative of a sedentary and territorial society with inherited wealth differences and patrilineal clans. This is by now a tried and tested picture (although various aspects can be criticised, see e. g. HOFMANN 2020), and one of the times where the process-based narratives we were promised in the introduction are explained more clearly. However, there are also curious gaps; for

instance, there is little discussion of the roles of artefacts like pottery in either constituting various identities (e. g. the role of various motifs and decorations), or in facilitating community life through shared patterns of food preparation and consumption, as a practice approach might suggest. Material is described, interpretations by others are summarised and critically reflected, but there is rather less focus on building an own line of argument.

Until this point, the stated aim of thematic rather than chronological presentation has not been followed, and for the sake of consistency it would therefore have made sense to provide a short overview chapter of post-LBK developments in order to complete the sequence, before then treating selected aspects in more (thematic) detail. As this is lacking, students will have a much more contextually rounded view of the LBK than of any of the other Neolithic sub-periods, on which information has to be gathered from the various thematic chapters (with the exception of a short chapter dedicated to a biography of Ötzi, the Iceman). For example, there are few maps for the post-LBK Neolithic cultures, and basic information on the spatial distribution of the Bell Beaker and Corded Ware cultures has to be extracted from a section primarily to do with warfare (p. 166). All this makes the tracing of integrated social processes difficult. Having said that, the thematic chapters range widely, repeating or expanding some of the information already given for the LBK and adding Middle, Younger and Late/Final Neolithic developments in greater or lesser detail. Topics covered include economy; social structure and violence; burial practices and health; trade and communication; flint mining, working and distribution; enclosures and megalithic monuments; and finally copper metallurgy and wheeled transport.

These chapters work very well overall and provide comprehensive introductions to their themes. For example, the section on economy details the prevailing LBK practice of intensive garden-style cultivation and outlines how this was progressively transformed to include both the plough and a slash-and-burn element, which drove the expansion of farming onto the North European Plain. This is supplemented with interesting studies on cattle herding and milk consumption (pp. 125–126; 148–149), with the variety of wild plants and animals that were being exploited (pp. 144–148), and with a discussion of slash-and-burn cultivation (pp. 131–143). In sum, all the important points are expertly presented using well-chosen examples and with a good range of further literature. Sometimes (as in the presentation of the LBK site of Herxheim and the controversy on cannibalism on p. 220) the discussion is not quite up to date, but in general the volume is very thoroughly researched and succeeds in expertly balancing insights from bioarchaeological and more traditional archaeological methods. Overall, these thematic sections provide extremely thorough reviews of the state of knowledge in their particular field, with the emphasis squarely on the presentation of results rather than on interpretation or overarching narratives.

It is evident that with such a wide thematic scope, and so much information to get through, not all aspects could be addressed with an equal level of depth. One might for example have wished for more critical discussion surrounding the “nuclear family” at Eulau (pp. 158–159), the comparative (in)stability of the various social formations described for instance in chapter 7 (pp. 152–164), fluctuations in health or violence (as summarised on pp. 164–176) and so on. Yet this book nevertheless remains a treasure trove for those who are seeking a way into the literature and the main debates, or are just in search of a good reference for a particular point. For the brighter students, Scharl has raised plenty of questions and left plenty of leads into the further literature to explore controversial topics, such as the degree of hierarchy needed to construct monuments (p. 226) or the question of whether binary “Mesolithic” and “Neolithic” identities are helpful in understanding the dynamic changes of this period (p. 93). Yet the book offers no concluding synthesis chapter that takes up these strands, or returns to the questions of event and process, or agency versus envi-

ronmental change that were raised at the beginning. Instead, it abruptly ends after a review of the evidence for horse domestication.

In sum, this volume succeeds in cramming a lot of information effectively into a very small space. I would definitely recommend it to my students as a reference work to be consulted alongside a course of lectures and seminars (without this wider context, several of the arguments are perhaps a bit compressed). The bibliography is an excellent resource, including not just the must-have German- and English-language classics, but also a wide range of works on specific sites and problems, including many studies with a strong natural science component. All this is invaluable in guiding students through the thicket of available material. Indices of sites, persons and topics are also provided. This book will therefore undoubtedly find a deserved place on reading lists across the German-speaking university landscape, and hopefully a little beyond, and it will make the task of setting follow-up seminar reading much easier.

The one thing I was really missing from its pages was the author herself. She steps out only occasionally, and although I sometimes find I disagree with her arguments when she does, these sections are the most engaging and inspiring of the book which most directly invite to further reflection and debate. It is a shame that we so rarely get a more rounded exposition of how Scharl thinks Neolithic society was working, how it changed, or how its study helps us rethink some of our own modern-day assumptions. The wide range of topics represented and the in-depth reading clearly reveal a scholar at the top of her game, and even if this is primarily conceived as a student primer, a stronger narrative line would have helped to build up a more vibrant picture beyond the presentation of data. I hope that, having so expertly built up the foundations, Silviene Scharl will soon produce such a follow-up text.

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MATTIA CARTOLANO, Animal and Human Symbolism in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic of the Near East. Studies in Early Near Eastern Production, Subsistence, and Environment Bd. 24. ex oriente, Berlin 2022. € 68,00. ISBN 978-3-94417-821-9. xv + 364 Seiten mit 74 Abbildungen, 130 Tabellen, Datenbanksammlung unter https://www.exorient.org/associated_projects/cooperations.php (letzter Zugriff: 21.04.2024).

Disruptiv war die von Vere Gordon CHILDE (1936) konstatierte „Neolithische Revolution“ vor allem auf lange Sicht, in ihren bis heute nachwirkenden Konsequenzen. Für die unmittelbar Beteiligten, die dieses „Neolithische Paket“ unterschiedlicher Kulturtechniken und Werkzeuge schnürten, gestaltete sie sich – ebenso wie für uns, die wir dieses Phänomen auf Grundlage des archäologischen Befunds nachzuvollziehen versuchen – als Prozess allmählicher Veränderung. Der Übergang von (halb)nomadisch-wildbeuterischen zu nahrungsproduzierenden Gemeinschaften und permanenten Siedlungen am Ende der letzten Eiszeit muss deshalb, das hat die Forschung insbesondere in den Kernzonen dieser Entwicklung in Vorderasien deutlich konturiert, vor dem Hintergrund ökologischer, technischer und sozialer Transformation nachgezeichnet werden. Während dabei naheliegenderweise zunächst vor allem die materiellen Reste im Zentrum wissenschaftlichen Interesses standen und mit neuen Beprobungsstrategien und Analysemethoden schließlich auch verstärkt Landschafts- und Umweltrekonstruktion in den Fokus rückten, steht eine psychosoziale Bestandsaufnahme der reichen neolithischen Symbolwelt und der mit ihr zu verbindenden kognitiven Mechanismen noch am Anfang. Jacques CAUVINS „Naissance des divinités, naissance de l’agriculture“ von 1994 gilt hier zurecht als wegberreitender Auftakt der eingehenden Auseinandersetzung mit einer „Revolution der Symbole“ im beginnenden Neolithikum Vorderasiens. Der inzwischen deutlich angewachsene Quellenbestand hat der Diskussion in den letzten Jahren wiederholt neuen Anstoß gegeben, u. a. mit den Arbeiten von Marion BENZ und Joachim BAUER (2014), Trevor WATKINS (2016) oder Tracy HENLEY und Matt ROSSANO (2022). Zu diesem Diskurs trägt nun auch Mattia Cartolano 2022 als Band 24 der Studies in Early Near Eastern Production, Subsistence, and Environment bei ex oriente erschienene etwa 360 Seiten starke Arbeit bei, in der er sich den soziokognitiven Begleiterscheinungen früher Agrargesellschaften aus evolutionspsychologischer Perspektive annähert. Für die Untersuchung zur symbolischen und rituellen Praxis im Präkeramischen Neolithikum (PPN), seiner 2021 an der *University of Liverpool* eingereichten Dissertation, fokussiert M. Cartolano auf anthropomorphe und zoomorphe Darstellungen 64 ausgewählter Fundplätze in Levante, Anatolien und Mesopotamien, die er auf Basis des jeweils verfügbaren Publikationsstands nach Fundkontexten sowie formalen und chronologischen Kriterien ordnet und auswertet. Hinzu kommen demographische Analysen zu zwölf dieser Orte, die dem so gezeichneten Bild mit Hilfe weiterer demographischer Parameter zusätzlich Tiefenschärfe verleihen sollen.

Seine Studie gliedert Cartolano in zehn thematische Kapitel sowie einen umfangreichen Literaturapparat und zwei ausführliche Appendizes mit erläuternden Lageplänen, ergänzenden Fundtafeln, Populations-, Chronologie- und Distributionstabellen. Auf die in der Einleitung im ersten Kapitel (S. 1–4) vorgestellten Fragestellungen und Ziele der Untersuchung folgt in Kapitel 2 (S. 5–25) eine weiträumige Verortung des Untersuchungsgegenstands: Dort steckt der Verfasser den