

Rezensionen und Anzeigen

HERMANN PARZINGER. Die Kinder des Prometheus. Eine Geschichte der Menschheit vor der Erfindung der Schrift. C.H. Beck, München 2014. € 39.95. ISBN 978-3-406-66657-5. 847 pages with 110 illustrations and 19 maps, many in colour.

World prehistory is a vast field. As understood today, it reaches back to the time of the first hominins in Africa more than three million years ago and extends to every part of the modern globe prior to the inception of writing. As a subject of systematic study, it became possible only with the development of radiometric dating methods, most notably radiocarbon dating, announced by Willard Libby in 1949. Only then did it become feasible to establish a chronology for the human story that could extend back before the earliest written records, first established in Egypt and Mesopotamia shortly before 3000 B. C. Just twelve years after Libby's discovery, the British archaeologist Grahame CLARK was able to write the first global treatment to be based systematically upon it: *World Prehistory, an Outline* (Cambridge 1961). The international literature is now so extensive that the task of telling this long story of the human colonisation of the world and the ensuing development of urban society and of literacy is no easy matter. Indeed, it has seemed for some time that such a project was now beyond the scope of a single author. In order to deal with the now well-researched prehistoric archaeology on the different continents, it had come to seem more appropriate to employ a team of authors under the direction of an organising editor. Such, for instance, is the basis for Christopher SCARRE's edited volume *The Human Past: World Prehistory and the Development of Human Societies* (London 2013) or for the hundred authors who contributed to the *Cambridge World Prehistory* (Cambridge 2014).

It was therefore a brave and ambitious task that Hermann PARZINGER undertook in writing *Children of Prometheus, a History of Humankind before the Invention of Writing*. For clearly, to offer a single, coherent perspective, as seen through one pair of eyes, promises a clarity of vision and a coherence which can transcend a multi-author work. It is a task in which Parzinger is – perhaps surprisingly – brilliantly successful. In 17 chapters he covers the prehistory of the human world, on every continent, from its beginning down to around 2000 or 1000 B. C.

This is a masterpiece of good organisation – an organisation which is, however, skilfully concealed. There are no footnotes or text references. Instead each chapter has its own bibliography brought together as a reference supplement at the end of the book, each with up to 150 cited works. One secret of the success of the volume is a series of 19 maps, each apparently specially drawn by Peter Palm (although his name is found only as a copyright credit on p. 827). They form the backbone of the illustrative material. Each chapter is introduced with a colour image, and there are numerous black-and-white illustrations. Another notable aspect of the organisation is the unusual decision not to mention any archaeologist or researcher, alive or dead, by name (other than in the chapter bibliographies), although the book is dedicated to three: V. Gordon Childe, Georg Kossack and Hermann Müller-Karpe. This allows him to pass rather smoothly over a number of controversial matters (such as the date of the earliest settlement of the Americas), yet working in so broad a field the details of archaeological disputes can be avoided without much loss, although the author has to take personal responsibility for the decisions reached. This means that the emphasis is not upon the history of research, which is somewhat obscured by this impersonal approach, but on its outcomes, which are clearly reviewed. It implies also that while there is an index of geographical names and of culture names, no index of personal names is needed. Nor is there a subject index of topics or themes – to be able to look up 'writing' or 'domestication' or 'tin' would have been a convenience: this could be remedied in a subsequent edition.

The two introductory chapters ('The evolution of the human brain and its cultural consequences' and 'The great leap to cultural modernity') cover the Pleistocene period well. The significance of the invention of fire is particularly well covered as befits the book's Promethean title, with the reader left to recall that he was the legendary Greek hero who brought the gift of fire to humankind from the immortal gods. It is, however, with the succeeding Holocene period that the detailed examination begins, with a regional survey occupying 13 chapters and then a final chapter of 'Concluding comparative observations'. The Near East comes first, then two chapters assigned to prehistoric Europe, then Egypt and Africa (two chapters). A chapter, 'Early life in the steppe and forest lands of Eurasia', deals particularly well with the central territories of the Eurasian landmass. Then with two chapters devoted to Asia, one to Oceania with Australia and three to the Americas, the regional survey is complete. The final chapter reviews first the early innovations of humankind during the Palaeolithic period, then, with a very good comparative study, the transition to food production ('The fundamental shift in the relationship with nature') and finally the emergence of complex society. The author writes with an authority which is simply not possible in a multi-author work.

With such a survey, the difficulty is to decide where, in each region and continent, to bring the story to a close. That is an easier decision in those areas where written records first emerged, in Mesopotamia and in Egypt. So 'The origins of the state in Mesopotamia', culminating in the first city at Uruk, and 'Agriculture, interaction and the construction of power before the unification of Egypt', concluding with the first dynasties of the Old Kingdom, before the pyramids, are authoritative accounts. The emergence of writing, although mentioned in the discussion of Hierakonpolis in Egypt, is not treated in detail: it is considered only briefly in the Indus case (pp. 463; 721) and hardly touched on at all for China or the Americas (p. 722). The beginning of the Shang period in China and in South Asia the Indus civilisation mark the end of the treatment in Asia. In Mesoamerica the consideration concludes with the Formative period with the development of chiefdoms and the monuments of the Olmec. So the story ends before the appearance of the classic Maya or the formation of great centres such as Monte Alban or Teotihuacan. In South America the emergence of ritual centres in the Initial Period and in the Early Horizon of Peru, such as Chavín de Huántar, is considered. Indeed the plan of the Initial Period ceremonial centre at Huaca de los Reyes in the Moche Valley is the only illustration in the volume indicative of rectilinear planning and urban sophistication. Some of these examples come down as late as the first millennium B. C., and an unstated decision has clearly been made to bring the discussion to an end around that time for the volume as a whole. So although the settlement of Easter Island around A. D. 200 is mentioned for the sake of completeness following the discussion of the Lapita Culture dispersal in the Pacific in the first millennium B. C., the monuments of the Polynesian Islands, including those of Tonga and Easter Island, are presumably thought too late in date to be discussed. These decisions imply that the book does not seek to undertake a thoroughgoing analysis of the origins of complex society or the rise of the state. Such a treatment would deal with city states, with ceremonial urban centres and with the inception of writing in different areas. That decision is directly implied, of course, in the title of the work, which is at its best in dealing with the hunter-gatherers, the forager-collectors and the transitions to farming in different parts of the world in a comprehensive and wide ranging way. There lies its greatest strength, as a worldwide survey which is not distracted or deflected from its main subject matter by the subsequent early civilisations of the world.

Some subjects are dealt with in a particularly well-informed and enthusiastic way. The Neanderthals are well covered over their entire geographical range, and the process of the early population of the Americas prudently treated, successfully skirting round current controversies. The following chapter on the early Near East is full of interest, with the recent finds at the key site of Göbekli Tepe in east Turkey and its remarkable stone pillars well discussed: "undoubtedly one of the great

discoveries of archaeology in our time". The treatment of Europe, Africa and the Near East as separate continents underplays perhaps the role of the Mediterranean Sea and the early developments of shipping, contrasting there with Cyprian BROODBANK's recent *The Making of the Middle Sea* (London 2014). Developments in the Balkans are particularly well covered, with good treatments of Lepenski Vir and of Varna (with a good colour plate) and the beginnings of European metallurgy.

Any reader of this work will have their own special interests and concerns, and the author will no doubt be beset by reviewers lamenting the absence of matters which particularly interest them, and which at a global level may not in reality merit special mention. However, this reviewer, while welcoming the thorough treatment of the central European Neolithic (illustrated by no fewer than four colour plates) feels that the megalithic monuments of north-western Europe have been given short shrift: no mention of the great stone alignments of Carnac in Brittany or the very early Breton stone tombs, no reference to the great cemeteries of the Boyne Valley in Ireland (e. g. Newgrange), nor of the impressive monuments of Neolithic Orkney (Maes Howe, Ring of Brodgar). All these are earlier than Stonehenge, which does find honourable mention. Also the striking originality of the 'temple' monuments of Malta, freed by the radiocarbon revolution from any diffusionist debt to the East Mediterranean, might have been more emphatically asserted. To regret any mention of the Minoan civilisation of Crete would, however, rather go against the books stated scope, since the Minoan palaces were indeed accompanied by their own Minoan Linear A script.

The chapter on the steppes and woodlands of Eurasia, one of the areas where the author has conducted fieldwork, is covered with particular clarity: this must be one of the best concise treatments of the topic available anywhere, and the same is true of the treatment of Iran and central Asia in the succeeding chapter. This concludes with the Indian subcontinent, where Mergarh is also well-discussed. The chapter on East Asia deals well with the early phases, including the remarkable site of Niuheliang in north China, but the late Neolithic of the Yellow River valley and the antecedents of the Shang dynasty are rather less clearly delineated. Australia is the subject of a section of the chapter on the Pacific, but the settlement of New Zealand, presumably on chronological grounds, is not mentioned.

It is a particular strength of the book that it deals even-handedly with the New World as well as the Old, and the neothermal period in the Americas is covered in three chapters. In each area the transition from hunter-gathering and collecting to food production is very well described, and in Mesoamerica the transition towards the great 'Hochkulturen' is well covered. The treatment in South America, with separate sections for the north, central and southern Andes, for the region between Orinoco and Guyana and for the Amazon basin is again informative, but the regional map for South America, like that for North America, does not indicate the names of specific archaeological sites. The concluding chapter offers a summary and overview with a thoughtful consideration of the relationship between humans and nature in each region during the transitions to food production and, where relevant, the beginnings of complex society. No strikingly novel theories or models are introduced to account for the changes and development under consideration, but the treatment is everywhere a balanced one.

This book represents a notable achievement for a single author. Hermann Parzinger has written a remarkable survey of the achievements of humankind, from our beginnings through the development of food production and towards the inception of complex society in every part of the globe. It will be regarded for many years to come as an authoritative account. Yet the hints of new insights from the developments in the study of ancient DNA are already in the air. Preservation of DNA in hot climates is problematic, yet techniques of analysis are improving all the time. So, if changes in perspective are to emerge in the next decade or two, they will come from that direction. Yet the

basic outlines, as reviewed here, are unlikely to change very much. That so thorough a survey, covering all continents, can now be written is a testament to how far the discipline of prehistoric archaeology has advanced over the past sixty-five years, since the application of radiocarbon dating first made possible a comparative global approach to the story of our species.

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SIBYLLE KÄSTNER, Jagende Sammlerinnen und sammelnde Jägerinnen. Wie australische Aborigines-Frauen Tiere erbeuten. Ethnologie Band 42. Lit Dr. W. Hopf, Berlin 2012. € 59,90. ISBN 987-3-643-10903-3. 599 Seiten, 34 Abbildungen.

Die bis in die 1970er Jahre hauptsächlich von männlichen Archäologen dominierte Forschung ließ wenig Raum für eine differenzierte geschlechtergerechte Interpretation der archäologischen Befunde. In Arbeiten zur Subsistenz des Jungpaläolithikums wurden die Frauen dieser Zeit bestenfalls mitgemeint, aber blieben sonst weitgehend unsichtbar. Erst die Arbeiten Linda Owens und anderer – auch der Verf. selbst – in den 1990er Jahren machten auf diese Defizite aufmerksam. In dieser Zeit entstand auch das „Netzwerk archäologisch arbeitender Frauen e.V.“, das eigene Tagungen zu diesem Forschungsanliegen veranstaltete. Die Basis für eine geschlechterorientierte Archäologie war in vielen Fällen die Erforschung von Frauenrollen in heute lebenden Jäger-Sammler-Kulturen. Dabei zeigte sich, dass die Lebenssituation der Frauen in diesen Gesellschaften sich nicht nur von der gängigen archäologischen Interpretation von Hinterlassenschaften auf vergleichbarer Basis lebender eiszeitlicher Jäger, sondern auch von ethnologischen Berichten deutlich unterscheidet.

Die Gründe für diese Diskrepanzen sind im ersten Teil des Buches dargelegt (S. 11–107), der sich mit den theoretischen Grundlagen und Modellen beschäftigt, an denen Paläoanthropologie, Primatologie, Archäologie und Ethnologie beteiligt sind. Ziel des zweiten Teils (S. 107–475) ist es, anhand des Fallbeispiels australischer Aborigines-Frauen das Modell der Großwildjagd als weltweite Männerdomäne auf seine regionale Gültigkeit zu prüfen und den Anteil der Frauen an der Jagd zu erforschen.

Die Schiefelage in der Interpretation des Verhaltens von Jäger-Sammler-Gruppen erklärt sich vor allem aus der Forschungsgeschichte. Wie die Verf. sehr klar darstellt, entstand durch die Tatsache, dass hauptsächlich männliche Forscher an der Erstellung des zu Beginn ihrer Studien bestehenden Bildes beteiligt waren, eine Konzentration auf männliche Aktivitäten und eine Fokussierung auf den Mann als alleinigen Versorger der Gruppe und Motor der Kulturentwicklung.

Wie vielschichtig die Wechselwirkungen von Ergebnissen der verschiedenen Forschungsrichtungen untereinander sind und vor allem wie langlebig uralte Ergebnisse sein können und in einer Art und Weise weiter wirken, dass auf den ersten Blick die verzerrte Darstellung gar nicht als solche erkannt wird, wird durch die sehr ausführliche und detailreiche Argumentation im ersten Teil des Buches in vollem Umfang bewusst gemacht. Eine der Wurzeln der oben angesprochenen Schiefelage liegt dabei sicher in der historischen Grundlagenforschung der Ethnologie (S. 77). Ethnologen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts haben sich bei ihren Feldforschungen auf die Schilderungen der männlichen Mitglieder eines Stammes gestützt, wie sie es wahrscheinlich auch in ihrem persönlichen Umfeld gewohnt waren. Dazu kommt, dass es für sie als Männer nicht einfach gewesen wäre, die Frauen selbst zu befragen. Die Berichte sind auch nicht das Resultat einer teilnehmenden