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CARLA DRUMMER, Vom Kollektiv zum Individuum. Transformationsprozesse am Übergang vom 4. zum 3. Jahrtausend v. Chr. in der deutschen Mittelgebirgszone. Scales of Transformation volume 13. Sidestone Press, Leiden 2022. € 160.00. ISBN 978-9-46427-013-6 (Hardback). € 55.00. ISBN 978-9-46427-012-9 (Paperback). Open Access. ISBN 978-9-46427-014-3 (E-Book). 348 pages with 148 illustrations.

What happened in the 4th and 3rd millennium BC in Europe, how societies were structured and interconnected represent challenging questions for archaeologists, particularly for those concerned with the Neolithic of central, western, and northern Europe. This is partly due to the fact that the archaeological record is generally patchy, with a lack of burials for some regions and periods, or of settlements in others, but likely also to the fact that local and supra-regional phenomena may have coincided or diverged in different aspects and at different levels, and potentially all at the same time. Moreover, the observations drawn from different disciplines concerned with this particular context, spanning 'traditional' archaeology and more specialised foci – such as archaeometallurgy, -thanatology, -zoology and -botany, genetics – partially diverge and lead to heated discussions. For example, to what extent migrations from the steppes may have triggered the homogenisation of some aspects of material cultures in the 3rd millennium BC (e. g. ceramic vessel shapes and decorations) in central and western Europe? How did the seemingly radical transition from collective to single inhumation burial practices, the increase in visibility of social differentiation within communities, or yet, the variability of genetic mark-ups play out? These are just some of the most controversial topics (e. g. see FURHOLT 2018, and following discussion). And these are precisely the challenging topics that Clara Drummer chooses to tackle in her book, by testing existing hypotheses on the 4th and 3rd millennium BC archaeological record in the Central German Highlands in Germany. The work under review (*From the Collective to the Individual. Transformation Processes at the Transition from the 4th to the 3rd Millennium BC in the zone of the Central German Highlands*, in English) is the published manuscript of a PhD thesis that was initiated and completed in the scope of the subproject D2

“*Transformations of social and economic practices in the region of the German Highlands in the 3rd millennium BCE*” in the Collaborative Research Center 1266 “*Scales of Transformation – Human-Environmental Interaction in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies*” at the University of Kiel (<https://www.sfb1266.uni-kiel.de/en> [last access: 21.04.2024]). This fruitful work-environment is reflected in the multi-faceted analyses that C. Drummer presents, which include archaeological, archaeometric, osteological, and biomolecular data.

The single-volume book written in German is structured in two parts: the first part includes the text (pp. 13–265, organised in 13 chapters, a brief summary in German and English, and the bibliography); the second part contains several annexes, including an inventory of selected settlement and burial sites the author has re-analysed in more detail (pp. 267–271), a further inventory of megalithic art (pp. 273–285), a list of abbreviations (p. 289), and plates featuring decorated pottery sherds, the megalithic art and if necessary their locations within the single burial structures, as well as profiles and plans of selected single settlement features and burial structures (51 plates, pp. 291–339). Supplementary data and tables are indicated to be accessible on the repository of the Johanna Mestorf Academy of the University of Kiel (p. 287), and they are not included in the printed or digital version of the book. The data is presented in 84 spreadsheets, of which two are described as lists, 45 as supplements, and 37 as tables. Their content can only be discovered by opening each single file, and while the file “Drummer_list02” contains a list of all site-numbers with geographical coordinates, one would need to consult the inventories of other authors, or the very short and somewhat patchy inventory of selected sites in the paper-version, or yet cross-reference some of the other 83 excel-sheets (e. g. sup07), to find out the name of a site. Although it is commendable to make data durably accessible on repositories, the access to this data is very inconvenient, not only for the reader, but also for researchers wishing to work with it in future.

The textual content, on which I will focus henceforth, generally seems to follow the argumentation logic of the author throughout years of doctoral research, which may perhaps challenge readers at first, in particular the introductory parts with descriptions of the theoretical framework, corpus, preliminary analyses and methodology. I would recommend those readers to persevere, as one is rewarded with clearly structured, fluidly argued analyses and useful interpretational outcomes, at the latest starting in chapter 8, p. 69.

Chapter 1 (pp. 13–16) begins with an outline of what Drummer intends to do, that is to explore and define the *social aspects* of transformation processes at work from the Late to the Final Neolithic (c. 3500–2500 BC) in the Central German Highlands (mainly Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia) based on archaeological materials. Those materials include the common protagonists for this region at the end of the Neolithic, that is collective burials (gallery graves and *Mauerkammergräber*) for the Late Neolithic and single inhumation burials for the Final Neolithic. Drummer also takes into consideration the few, sparsely preserved settlements and enclosures, and their associated artefacts, botanical and zoological remains. This is rarely done in the German research community, in particular for the regional and chronological scope discussed here, as most previous studies, including mine (PAPE 2019) focus either on the graves, or on the settlements of the Late or Final Neolithic, or yet on graves and settlements of one particular “material culture” of e. g. the Late Neolithic Wartberg Culture, the Bernburg Culture, the Globular Amphora Culture or the Final Neolithic Corded Ware Culture of the study region. In order to be able to explore the social aspects of transformation, the author aims to first reconstruct social group-identities separately for the Late and the Final Neolithic periods and regardless of the material cultural attribution, and in a second step to compare the latter – a sensibly neutral approach that has already helped to generate useful outcomes at both local and supra-regional levels in other study regions of the same era (e. g. CORTIAUX/SALANOVA 2014; SOHN 2007). The author further intends to explore social group-identities and their social transformations within eight analytical categories, which are, however, not specified

until p. 67 of chapter 7. On top of this already ambitious endeavour, the author intends to subsequently interrogate her observations in the light of previous hypotheses, according to which, for example, larger immigrational movements of people from the north Pontic steppe-regions could, in fact, have triggered the homogenisation of ceramic styles, but also the transition from collective to single inhumation burial practices. Chapter 2 (pp. 17–29) describes the conceptual approach of ‘categorical’ and “relational identities” and “processes of change” that Drummer wishes to identify based on material remains, a sociological concept that was proven useful to archaeologists by e.g. Matthew A. PEEPLES (2018) in his study of the Cibola world in the ancient American Southwest. Drummer details potential scenarios by which the intensity of categorical and relational identities of Late and Final Neolithic communities may have increased or decreased, and explores which of these communities may have developed a keener aptitude to change than others. In order to better understand the potential involvement of migration events on the verge of the Final Neolithic, the author further summarises previous assumptions, and defines different types of migrations (with variable push or pull factors), as well as general expectations of their impact on local social systems and networks.

Still, without specifying *how* she intends to implement data into her models and test her expectations, Drummer proceeds to describe the history of research of the gallery graves and of the Wartberg Culture in Late Neolithic western Germany, and that of the central German Beaker Cultures in the Final Neolithic in chapter 3 (pp. 31–34), as well as the problematics that come with such categorisations, i. e. mainly the difficulties to draw clear-cut chronological and regional boundaries in the study region. In chapter 4 (pp. 35–38), Drummer presents a broad comparison of geomorphological and pedological aspects of the landscape, and of the climate of the two last Neolithic stages of the study region, the results of which would indicate that there is no particular change in subsistence strategy and landscape use that may have encouraged the conspicuous changes in the archaeological record. She then details the frequency and the geographical and topographical distribution of the Late Neolithic sites in chapter 5 (pp. 39–58), which count a total of 184 sites, of which 128 burial sites, 30 settlements and 26 “single-find” spots. Amidst overall quantifications and distribution maps of sites, the chapter also contains the thorough presentation of one particular site – the enclosed and structured settlement of “Wittelsberg 7” in Hesse (pp. 43–58). This site was re-analysed in 2017 in the scope of the CRC-1266 by means of new magnetic prospections and ceramic, archaeozoological, -botanical and anthracological analyses. Drummer focusses here on the functional analyses of pit house-features, the overall structure and economy of the settlement and delivers very interesting insights into one of the rare settlements of the “jüngere WBK” (younger phase of the Late Neolithic Wartberg Culture). This settlement, however, is here dated between 2800 and 2600 BC based on 14C-data (p. 43), a phase usually classified as Final Neolithic in the commonly used chronological frameworks, which may perhaps imply their update in future. Chapter 6 (pp. 59–62) represents the counter-part of chapter 5, with an overall account of the number and spatial distribution of Final Neolithic sites included in this study, i. e. a total of 2060 sites, including 1515 burials, 26 settlements and 519 “single-finds” spots. In the following chapter 7 (pp. 63–67), the last bit of this long introduction and preliminary comparative analyses, Drummer discusses the transitional phase between Late and Final Neolithic of the study region, which she generally sets between 2900 and 2700 BC. Moreover, the author finally details the mentioned eight – and I believe, well-chosen – categories of prehistoric material she intends to analyse in order to determine categorical and relational (group)-identities. These categories are: 1) pottery styles, 2) burial structures and formal practices (e.g. positions, grave goods, and burning activities), 3) dress elements, and jewellery and their associations with sex and age of the deceased, 4) megalithic art as categoric identity markers (in other words, how local-regional groups may be identified or differentiated at different levels), and 5) pottery technologies, 6) copper object types and chemi-

cal compositions, 7) jewellery types and 8) haplogroups of mt-DNA as relational identity markers (in other words, how these local-regional groups may have been interconnected in networks with potentially different intensities).

The ensuing chapter 8 (pp. 69–131) concerned with the analyses of the categoric identity markers and chapter 9 (pp. 133–203) with those of relational identity markers include a wide array of methods spanning quantifications and geographical distributions, macroscopic classifications of ceramic ware groups and temper types of selected eleven sites, network analyses by means of closeness / betweenness-centrality values, and two spatial and chronological studies of two gallery graves (Altendorf and Niedertiefenbach in Hesse), which include new radiocarbon and genetic data. The resulting observations of continuous or discontinuous categoric and relational group-identities are then creatively combined within neatly structured subchapters in chapter 10 (pp. 205–208), while those regarding potential movements of people are discussed in chapter 11 (pp. 209–222). Essentially, the latter would suggest that style and decoration of pottery vessels, megalithic art motives, and jewellery object types would attest for a fluid development or continuity of “categorical group-identities” from Late to Final Neolithic, while the association of jewellery with age and sex-groups and the burial practices would attest for a greater emphasis on social classes in Final Neolithic communities compared to those of the Late Neolithic. At the same time, regional variations observed in structural aspects of Late Neolithic collective burials would seem to dissolve in a homogeneous mass of highly stereotyped single burial structures in the Final Neolithic. In terms of “relational group-identities”, Late and Final Neolithic people would seem to have shared overall ceramic and copper technologies, although regional differences are perceptible in a greater openness towards the inclusion of copper objects in Central Germany compared to Western Germany. It is, however based on new genetic results of two gallery graves and the collection of all accessible haplogroup-data, and the network analyses of jewellery object types in the general study region that the author achieves more conspicuous insights into the interconnectivity of Late and Final Neolithic groups: the sampled Late Neolithic individuals of the gallery grave of Niedertiefenbach would accordingly be bound by kinship and those of Niedertiefenbach and Altendorf would generally display variable haplogroups of local, typically Central European Neolithic burial communities, but none of the “new” Final Neolithic ones, compared to those of sites further east in Central Germany. The network analysis of jewellery types, on the other hand, would suggest a shift from equally connected regional groups in the Late Neolithic, to single communities in the Final Neolithic, which eventually dominate and centralise the networks at play.

Drummer moves on to the *grande finale* of her work in chapter 12 (pp. 223–234) and concluding single-page chapter 13 (p. 235), where she pursues the *how*, *when*, and *why* changes could have taken place. In lack of clear-cut overall gaps or turning points in settlements, technologies, and mt-DNA haplogroups of the study region (and beyond) – and in lack of clear evidence of crises such as war, sudden climate changes, epidemics, as well as based on her observations of fluid shifts of networks and of the emphasis on individuality rather than collectivity – the author does not suggest a monocausal reason, but rather advocates the interplay of several factors that involve variable aptitudes of people towards new elements starting already in the Late Neolithic, for example copper objects or crouched positions in collective burials in the eastern part of the study region. This and additional evidence may indicate that the velocity and the extent of (archaeologically visible) change was variable through space, and that change is perceptible much earlier than hitherto assumed. For example, some Late Neolithic communities would seem to have given up their collective burials, and dissolved around 3100/3000 BC (e.g. at Niedertiefenbach), while other communities, instead, persisted (e.g. at Altendorf) in depositing “individualised” burials within older Late Neolithic collective burials, after a similar, but longer hiatus around the turn of the millennium. Drummer concludes that a general homogenisation of Final Neolithic material culture did not

occur due to a massive influx of new people in the study region. Instead, the homogenisation and the shift from collective to more individualistic representation in burial practices happened gradually. This shift was facilitated by the selective integration of new, supra-regional elements at a local level. These elements were propagated and negotiated through growing, more centralised and faster networks, likely due to increased mobility among a few local and foreign actors or small groups.

The great achievement of this book – which I recommend to colleagues from different disciplines focused on the end of the Neolithic in Europe – lies in its intricate and challenging approach that considers variable proxies at different levels of what could be considered part of prehistoric group-identities, life and ideological practices, while at the same time spanning variable material cultural complexes as well as the two later chronological stages of the Neolithic that are usually considered separately. Of course, taking into superficial consideration specialised information sources, such as archeometrics or genetics, may be subject to a more critical appraisal by experts; nonetheless with her book, Drummer delivers solid archaeological insights into networks that likely interconnected various local communities with different intensities, that could be further traced in future by both archaeologists and researchers in natural sciences, in neighbouring regions, or yet by means of further proxies at a local or supra-regional level: e. g. lithic and bone tool technologies, paleodemography, nuclear DNA of more Late Neolithic collective burials and Final Neolithic single burials, or sedimentary eDNA-analyses in settlements, to name some possibilities. I will close this review with a last, brief comment: as heated and perhaps even belligerent the discourse concerning 3rd millennium BC Europe may have been perceived across disciplines in the past decade, it has encouraged the generation of a considerable amount of more nuanced, targeted disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies, including Drummer's, each bringing us a step closer, if combined, to a better understanding of the subject-matter, of our methods and of the potentials of each of our perspectives.

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