

concludes (Chapter 8) with a modest discussion—a kind of synthesis—of the settlement of Neolithic Lerna, rightly emphasising the limited area of the site exposed to date and the desperate shortage of data from this period in the Peloponnese. Yet, the author's decision to look for comparable material solely within the Neolithic of southern Greece has denied her the opportunities available from the north (Greek Macedonia), where there is a plethora of recent Early Neolithic sites with material remains similar to those of Lerna (e.g. pit-houses, rectilinear structures, ditches) (Karamitrou-Mentessidi *et al.* 2015). Moreover, Banks resorts repeatedly, for relative chronological and stratigraphic purposes (and then based only on pottery characteristics), to just a single site—the Franchthi Cave. However understandable this is, given that site's proximity to Lerna, this decision does not compensate for the complete lack of radiocarbon dates (or efforts to obtain them), or for the weakly supported references to the evolution of habitation choices over the long Neolithic period.

Elizabeth C. Banks, having taken on the burdensome task of organising and publishing material from an old but emblematic excavation, has done so with competence and a welcome directness. This handsomely produced book is an invaluable contribution to the history of the poorly known Neolithic of southern Greece.

References

- ANGEL, J.L. 1971. *Lerna: a Preclassical site in the Argolid II: the people*. Princeton (NJ): American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
- KARAMITROU-MENTESSIDI, G., N. EFSTRATIOU, M. KACZANOWSKA & J.K. KOZLOWSKI. 2015. Early Neolithic settlement of Mavropigi in Western Greek Macedonia. *Eurasian Prehistory* 12(1–2): 47–116.
- VITELLI, K.D. 2007. *Lerna: a preclassical site in the Argolid V: the Neolithic pottery from Lerna*. Princeton (NJ): American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

NIKOS EFSTRATIOU

Department of Archaeology, Aristotle University of
Thessaloniki, Greece
(Email: efstrati@hist.auth.gr)

JOHANNES MÜLLER, KNUT RASSMANN & MYKHAILO VIDEIKO (ed.). *Trypillia mega-sites and European pre-history 4100–3400 BCE* (Themes in Contemporary Archaeology 2). 2016. xviii+311 pages, numerous

© Antiquity Publications Ltd, 2016

colour and b&w illustrations, tables. London: Routledge; 978-1-910-52602-6 hardback £55.



The Trypillia mega-sites have fascinated generations of scholars since their discovery more than half a century ago. This remarkable phenomenon con-

tributed to the development of prehistoric Europe, and laid the foundations of present-day European societies. Despite the number of excavations, projects and publications, the full archaeological potential of these sites has not yet been realised. Some scholars blame the recent political climate or a lack of dialogue between East and West; others point to more technical reasons, such as taphonomic processes of site formation, the lack of systematic research, the unavailability of data or even a lack of funding. While some or all of the above might be correct, the main issue is, in my opinion, the absence of a systematic contextualisation of data within specific diachronic timeframes—in other words, we lack a dynamic assessment of the available data within suitable chronological frameworks. This edited volume has, to a certain extent, been able to provide this missing context. The varied results, from projects old and new, have been assessed and ordered within appropriate chronologies so as to maximise the value of the available data. This spatial and temporal contextualisation of the archaeological and environmental evidence helps to formulate a plausible narrative, while also highlighting what is missing, why, and how specific lacunae might eventually be filled.

The book begins with a general introduction by two of the editors (Müller and Rassmann). The 18 chapters that follow are grouped into five sections. Section 1 comprises two chapters; the first sets the Trypillia mega-sites in the context of the demography and social processes in Europe, c. 4100–3500 BC. Chapter 2 summarises the history of Trypillia studies from the nineteenth century to the present.

Section 2 focuses on the various mega-sites, with a special emphasis on those excavated during the collaborative German-Ukrainian and British-Ukrainian projects carried out over the past five years (e.g. Maidanetske and Nebelivka). Other relevant mega-sites such as Taljanky, Dobrovody,

Apolianka (Ukraine) and Petreni (Moldova) are briefly considered in Chapters 3 and 4, which are the result of the two large geomagnetic survey campaigns by the German team in Ukraine and Moldova respectively. Chapter 8, which includes a useful list of all radiocarbon dates for Cucuteni-Trypillia sites, presents a first attempt to put numbers on the demography of the mega-sites; several of the other chapters (Chapter 10 especially) also touch upon this topic in various ways.

Section 3 covers some of the most crucial, yet less-researched, aspects of the Trypillia mega-sites: people-environment interaction and, alongside, the economy, social structure and ideology. The frustration at the lack of available data is palpable throughout this section, especially in the chapters on palaeoenvironmental reconstruction (Chapter 9), animal and plant exploitation (Chapter 11), and sustainability (Chapter 12). Chapter 13 is dedicated entirely to the pottery kilns, which are considered to have been fundamental to the Trypillia economy (if pottery was important to Trypillia people themselves, it has become ‘iconic’ for those studying the Cucuteni-Trypillia culture). In an interesting and courageous contribution (Chapter 14), Müller *et al.* unravel social structure from house architecture and settlement plans in an attempt to identify why these settlements grew so large. The chapter ends with the ‘million-dollar question’ that has fuelled debate amongst Trypillia scholars since the mega-sites were first identified: proto-urban or not?

Before Chapman and Gaydarska take the proto-urbanism topic a step further by advancing the possibility of ‘low-density’ urban sites (Chapter 17 in Section 5), Diachenko (Chapter 15) and Müller and Pollock (Chapter 16), in Section 4, discuss possible reasons for the collapse of the mega-sites. While Diachenko puts more emphasis on the “crucial transformations in the Trypillia political economies” (p. 276), Müller and Pollock, comparing the mega-sites with Uruk, leave other possibilities open.

It is with a positive spirit that Müller concludes the book. Perhaps not agreeing with the term ‘proto-urban centres’, he nevertheless acknowledges that the Trypillians’ “social experiment” (p. 302), as he calls the development of the mega-sites, was successful for quite a long time—but only further studies will reveal why it eventually failed.

The authors of this volume are fairly clear in their argument and never force the reader towards any predetermined archaeological reasoning. Each chapter provides additional information in an orderly way, elaborating on both old and new ideas at the same time, but also leaving enough space for readers to develop their own interpretations. Despite the close collaboration between Eastern and Western institutions during the projects from which the book stems, the differences between the two archaeological schools are evident. Also conspicuous are the divergent opinions of various contributors on topics such as large house functions, public buildings, the presence/absence of fortifications, kiln function, settlement layouts including internal divisions, and demography (see in particular Chapters 6, 7 and 17).

This book makes no claim to definitive results concerning the formation and decline of the Trypillia mega-sites. Rather, it presents an array of valuable new data, and advances new theoretical approaches to its interpretation. The fact that the available data are still insufficient to formulate plausible conclusions is emphasised throughout the volume. As usually happens when dealing with under-researched sites with enormous potential, this publication stimulates more new questions than it answers. The main message is therefore not what has been achieved here—which is, undoubtedly, already significant—but what else might be achieved in future. Due to the sheer size of the settlements and the vast territory to be covered, this is not a task that can be accomplished by individual small-scale projects. Only collaboration beyond borders and disciplines will reveal the secret of the Trypillia people’s successful, but extremely vulnerable, way of life. And maybe, as Müller suggests in his conclusion, “we might even find useful insights into human behaviour which are still relevant for us today” (p. 304).

FRANCESCO MENOTTI
School of Archaeological Sciences,
University of Bradford, UK
(Email: f.menotti@bradford.ac.uk)

T.J. WILKINSON, EDGAR PELTENBURG & ELEANOR BARBANES WILKINSON (ed.) *Carchemish in context: The Land of Carchemish Project, 2006–2010* (BANE Monograph 4). 2016. xi+238 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Oxford & Philadelphia (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78570-111-5 hardback £45.

© Antiquity Publications Ltd, 2016