

archaeological project in the East Mediterranean. The combination of the published volume and online resources set a new standard for the publication of archaeological survey data.

But for all its methodological sophistication and self-reflection, and its laudable approach to open data, in the interpretation of the survey material itself the volume presents nothing particularly new or innovative. The consequence of this is a sense of imbalance between the methodological discussion and the interpretation of the material. There are relatively standard discussions of survey zones and period analyses, but no integration of ancient sources, epigraphy or history (broadly writ) as it relates to any historical period covered by the survey. Theories of interpretation (as opposed to theories of archaeological practice) are given short shrift, and while the authors claim to be conversant with theories of connectivity, state formation and regionalism, they themselves make few substantive forays into these areas of interpretation. This may be an unfair criticism—they clearly prioritised making the data available, and further publications on geomorphology and geology, the results of geophysical examination and targeted excavation are planned—but the interpretation is nonetheless a disappointment given the intellectual potential of these specific authors working together. Should it be a cause for concern if the brightest lights in Mediterranean survey focus their attention on collection in the now, rather than the why in the past?

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P. BREUNIG (ed.). *Nok: African sculpture in archaeological context*. 2014. 303 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Frankfurt am Main: Africa Magna Verlag; 978-3-937248-46-2 paperback €49.80

This is a beautiful book full of stunning, high-quality illustrations and produced to an impeccable standard, as is now to be expected of the foremost publisher of African archaeology, Africa Magna Verlag. The volume is an English translation of the German edition published in 2013 in conjunction with the exhibition, 'Nok—Ein Ursprung Afrikanischer



Skulptur' ('Nok—an origin of African sculpture'). It presents the results of the Nok research project led by Peter Breunig at Goethe University, Frankfurt, ongoing since 2005. The project focuses upon what is referred to as the 'Nok culture', the most extensive, and possibly the earliest, of the terracotta figurine traditions of West Africa, dating primarily from the middle of the first millennium BC. The people that produced the Nok

terracottas were farmers, and also some of the first iron producers in sub-Saharan Africa, occupying a region that corresponds approximately to the centre of modern Nigeria.

The book contains 25 chapters arranged in 6 sections. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the book and the reader is led into the section, the 'Big picture' by Brinkmann's consideration of "Distant lands in the eyes of the Greeks and Egyptians" (p. 27). Regrettably, this is brief and the point of it is unclear, other than to indicate that Nok was unknown to these Classical civilisations and vice versa. Of greater value is Breunig's chapter on 'Africa and the Nok culture period' (p. 33), although the inclusion of just three references, all by Breunig, does not do justice to the wealth of relevant archaeological research completed over the past two decades. Two other useful chapters follow: Neumann and Hahn on environmental history in the Nok savannah landscape, and Eggert on early iron production in West and Central Africa—the latter also including a detailed bibliography. In contrast, Zimmermann's short discussion, 'Interpreting from within material culture', that attempts to examine "human and animal representations in archaeological context" (p. 61) is under-researched and under-referenced, failing to take account of any salient writings on archaeological

approaches to the interpretation of religion, ritual or figurines.

The two chapters that comprise the 'Art and profiteering' section provide interesting Nigerian viewpoints on the issue of the looting of Nok terracottas, with Hambolu writing from the perspective of the Nigerian authorities and, uniquely, Potiskum from the perspective of someone who used to sell figurines. The third section, 'History of research' starts with a chapter by Angela Fagg, the daughter of the pioneer of Nok studies, William Fagg, and provides a useful overview of earlier research on Nok. The Nigerian scholarly perspective is then provided by Jemkur. The section is completed with Breunig's discussion of the development of the Frankfurt Nok Project that ends on a sad note: as of January 2013, the research project was ordered to be suspended by the German Embassy in Nigeria because of increasing regional instability, with its resumption still uncertain for the future.

The fourth section focuses upon methods, beginning with a chapter on the date of the Nok culture by Franke and Breunig. Rupp then discusses Nok sites providing important data on previously neglected Nok settlements, including the Puntun Dutse stone circle site dated to *c.* 1300 BC. Following this are chapters on chemical analyses undertaken at Nok sites (Nagel), the stone tools, rings, balls and beads found (Rupp), Nok pottery (Francke) and archaeobotany (Höhn and Neumann). These are all significant contributions to an understanding of Nok; previously, the figurines have taken centre stage and questions about past lifeways, such as what people ate and the pots they made and used, have been neglected. A strength of the Frankfurt project, and of this book, is the holistic perspective adopted.

The fifth section is concerned with the terracotta figurines themselves. Männel and Breunig attempt to define the 'Hallmarks of a Nok terracotta figure' (p. 189). The chapter contains some exceptional line drawings of figurines and the discussion of depictions of disease is particularly interesting. As such, the Nok figurines mirror concerns evident in other West African figurine assemblages such as those from Koma Land (Ghana) and Ife (Nigeria). Again, a bibliography longer than two references would be useful. Rupp then evaluates Nok figurine context with reference to the site of Utak Kamuan Gareje Kgoro. Here, excavation indicates that the

figurines appear to have been placed in organic containers, possibly baskets, and buried in pits. This suggests processes of deliberate fragmentation, collection, curation and deposition. The excavation, in a laboratory in Germany, of a soil block from one of these pits is then described (Munir and Ritter). The restoration of a large Nok sculpture (Frohreich) and an examination of the clay used in pots and figurines (Beck) follow. Breunig then provides an overview chapter. This is again under-referenced and would have benefited from fuller engagement with relevant literature on the varied role of figurines (and other materials) in archaeological contexts. For example, the statement that "commodities like ceramic vessels, tools such as axes and hand axes, or leftovers in the form of bones are scarcely surrounded by secrets or mysteries" (p. 257) is simplistic and does not take into account the fact that all these materials could have plausibly served varied purposes, impossible to reconstruct, as extensive literature indicates. The final section 'Beyond Nok' seeks to contextualise the Nok material within its wider Nigerian setting through chapters by Aliyu and Usman.

In summary, this is a valuable book concerned with one of the great prehistoric sculptural traditions of Africa and the people that created that tradition. It will appeal to a variety of readers, from specialists in West African archaeology and art history to interested members of the public. The production quality is superb, something other publishers could learn from; it seems to lack any typographical errors whatsoever. The only shortcoming is the lack of references, which is not compensated for by the two-page "Further reading" (p. 301) appended at the end of the book; this is good on Nok bibliography, but the rationale behind the other references is wholly unclear.

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LINDY CASSON, JAMES DRUMMOND-MURRAY & ANTONY FRANCIS. *Romano-British round houses to medieval parish: excavations at 10 Gresham Street, City of London, 1999–2002* (MOLA Monograph 67). xviii+220 pages, 143 colour and b&w illustrations, 33 tables, CD 2014. London: Museum of London Archaeology; 978-1-907586-22-4 hardback £25.

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