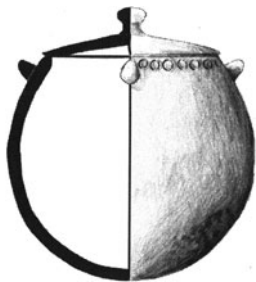


Ages. It is particularly interesting that there should be so many parallels with the ninth- to twelfth-century small church and cemetery excavated at Raunds Furnells, Northamptonshire, over 400km to the south. It is evident that, despite its small size, comparative remoteness and lack of investment, the Hirsel was deeply embedded in the broader cultural, political and religious developments of the period.

VICTORIA WHITWORTH
Centre for Nordic Studies, Orkney College,
University of the Highlands and Islands, UK
(Email: victoria.whitworth@uhi.ac.uk)

ALFREDO GONZÁLEZ-RUIBAL. *An archaeology of resistance: materiality and time in an African borderland*. xvii+379 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. 2014. Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield; 978-1-4422-3090-3 hardback £59.95.

Alfredo González-Ruibal has written a remarkable book that, in keeping with the title, defies and



indeed resists easy classification. It does not attempt to build a fresh archaeological theory of, or a novel approach to grasp, 'resistance' in and on archaeological terms, while the exploration of the

limits of state power would surely justify the shelving of this book alongside studies of state formation. Even if this volume is mostly concerned with the past, albeit that of recent decades and centuries, the investigations reported on these pages mostly involve living people and draw on accounts by contemporary informants and detailed observations of their present-day material life-worlds. From this perspective, González-Ruibal's book may be seen as not so much indebted to historical archaeology, understood as the archaeological investigation of the recent past, as aligned with social anthropology and ethnographic fieldwork. The latter label is nevertheless emphatically rejected by the author who insists that 'archaeology' is the correct tag for his work, even if he finds little relevance in the more conventional archaeological literature on resistance (pp. 6–12). It is surely no coincidence that the archaeological study that González-Ruibal makes most of is Matthew Liebmann's (2012) investigation of the seventeenth-century Pueblo Revolt in New

Mexico, which shares many features with the book under discussion. On balance, 'material culture study' is perhaps the best classification of this remarkable book, if only because it is as 'undisciplined' as that field has been claimed to be (Miller & Tilley 1996).

Materiality is what this book is about, and it serves as the lens through which to achieve a deeper understanding—and not just a thicker description—of the multiplicity and complexity of resistance and state power. Drawing much of his intellectual inspiration from Pierre Clastre's writings about the limits of state power, González-Ruibal concentrates his investigations on those situations that have largely remained beyond the reach of state power, and where more or less egalitarian communities have found shelter to hold out 'against the state' in Clastre's words. This has led him to focus on the 'borderlands', where the expansionary drive of ancient and modern states has ground to a halt and where a range of communities have sought shelter from state domination and exploitation. While González-Ruibal may not be the first to investigate the limits of the state and to explore resistance, his approach differs from most postcolonial work by the explicit and insistent emphasis on the violence involved in both state expansion and subaltern resistance. This is perhaps most evident in his discussion (Chapter 2) of the borderlands as the 'shatter zone' of state formation and expansion—a material metaphor borrowed from James Scott that takes on a new dimension in González-Ruibal's hands.

In concrete geographical and historical terms, González-Ruibal's study concerns western Ethiopia, where the highland plateaus that have long been home to state societies give way to the Sudanese lowlands further east, where states and kingdoms have long held sway. The rugged borderlands that lie between these are dramatically marked out by a steep escarpment, below which rocky outcrops and thick forests make for a landscape eminently suited to escape surveillance. It is in this area that the three ethnic groups of the Gumuz, Bertha and Mao live, each the focus of one of three long chapters that together make up more than two-thirds of the book. In these chapters, González-Ruibal discusses in great detail topics such as settlement patterns, land use, domestic housing and organisation, productive technologies (of pottery in particular), and dress and adornment. These are of course eminently archaeological topics and, while the bulk of information has been collected ethnographically, the frequent interjection of archaeological and historical information gives the discussions

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time-depth and enhances their archaeological nature. The parallel organisation of these chapters ensures a high degree of comparability, which is cemented by recurrent cross-references; an additional result is that these chapters and indeed the book as a whole cohere very well, despite the often very detailed discussions of objects and contexts. Given these rich accounts and the emphasis on materiality, it is a shame that the book offers few and poorly drawn maps and that the material culture has not been illustrated more abundantly, especially as the photographs and drawings of objects, places and contexts that are included do much to enliven the descriptions.

Overall, however, this is an outstanding book that not only offers a rich, diachronic account of a region that is not well studied at all, but that most of all makes an original contribution to debates of resistance and state formation; it also vividly underscores the rich potential of archaeological material culture studies.

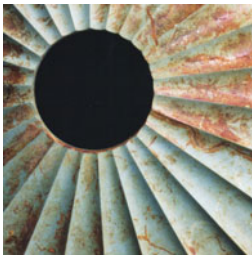
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PETER VAN DOMMELEN
 Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the
 Ancient World, Brown University, USA
 (Email: peter_van_dommelen@brown.edu)

KOJI MIZOGUCHI. *The archaeology of Japan: from the earliest rice farming villages to the rise of the state*. xix+371 pages, 94 b&cw illustrations, 21 tables. 2014. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-0-521-88490-7 hardback £75 & \$120.

This book deals with the archaeology of the Yayoi and Kofun periods, which saw the beginning of full-scale farming and the state in the Japanese islands. Despite its broad title and publication in the ‘Cambridge World Archaeology’ series, this is not a textbook, but rather a stimulating



and sometimes idiosyncratic study in social archaeology.

Mizoguchi begins by continuing and expanding the discussion of what has been a major theme in his previous work: the relationships between archaeology and the modern nation-state. The preface and first two chapters of this volume would be useful reading for anyone interested in this problem. As before, the shadow of Niklas Luhmann follows Mizoguchi closely, although Luhmann is only mentioned once in the index and the present volume lacks the dense theoretical debates that characterise Mizoguchi's previous books. The theme of archaeology and the nation-state, however, takes second place here to other issues and problems.

The book presents 12 chapters covering the period from roughly 900 BC to AD 700. The main discussion of the archaeological material from this time period is found in Chapters 5–11 respectively: beginnings, growth, hierarchisation, networks, monuments, bureaucracy and governance. This sequence reflects a broad evolutionary progression in which contradictions within different fields of social life “required the constant invention of new media for communication” (p. 326), media that included Yayoi bronze bells and the keyhole-shaped tomb mounds of the Kofun period. Mizoguchi distances himself from older Marxist approaches in Japanese archaeology, and his emphasis on communication goes beyond the old materialist/idealist division in archaeological theory. In at least one respect, however, Mizoguchi continues to engage closely with the ghost of the Marxist tradition in Japanese archaeology. This engagement explains what might otherwise be seen as a somewhat puzzling contradiction in the present volume. On the one hand, Mizoguchi's book focuses on networks of social power and has little to say about social units such as states or chiefdoms, the latter two terms not even appearing in the index. This approach shares similarities with sociologist Michael Mann's *The sources of social power* (1986), yet Mizoguchi is far more dismissive of social units than Mann. At the same time, however, *The archaeology of Japan* makes extensive yet rather uncritical use of certain ethnological social units such as clans, moieties and sodalities, a usage that would seem to derive from Seiichi Wajima and other scholars in the early post-war Marxist tradition.

The overall approach adopted in this book could be described as ‘structuralist’, and readers who are new to Japanese archaeology will find it difficult to