

Overall, this is an impressive volume. It deserves to be read by all scholars with even a passing interest in megalithic art and/or Neolithic Europe. It will stand as a monumental testament to the authors for many years to come.

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Václav Smrčka and Olivér Gábor, eds. *Health and Disease in the Neolithic Lengyel Culture* (Prague: Charles University, Karolinum Press, 2021, 398pp., numerous tables and illustr., ISBN 978-80-246-4514-8)

Bioarchaeology, scientific analyses in general, and, above all, integrated research open up exciting new venues to our understanding of past communities. In the current, ‘revolutionary’ phase of archaeology (as seen by many), it is always inspiring to see new publications that promise interdisciplinary interpretations. The volume here reviewed is based on archaeology, physical anthropology, and related biomolecular analyses: the target is to gain insight into dietary and health issues of fifth millennium BC Lengyel population in Central Europe.

At first glance, this volume offers the most desired state of research: at last—the reader hopes—we have cutting-edge bioarchaeological analyses compared and discussed with archaeological material and

results! The Czech editor and one of the main authors, the excellent physical anthropologist and stable isotope specialist Václav Smrčka, author of several significant works (e.g. 2005; 2019), leaves no doubt about the highest standards of his work. The book is composed of thirteen chapters. After an Introduction by the editors, Chapters 2 to 6 summarize the outcome of a journey into the cradle of the Lengyel culture, southeast Transdanubia. Chapters 7 to 13 give the results of the Lengyel (Moravian Painted ware) and Stroked Pottery cultures in Moravia, Czechia. The two scholars commissioned to peer review the volume were T. Douglas Price and Niels Lynnerup, a guarantee an excellent interpretation of the scientific analyses. Still, it is surprising that no Neolithic

archaeologist was invited to evaluate the manuscript.

The Acknowledgements mention two projects and several scientific consultants. In the Introduction, the reader notices the detail and accuracy of trace element or Neolithic dietary data, yet—at least if they are an archaeologist—they may be surprised by the description of relations between the Lengyel culture and the previous Linearbandkeramik (LBK) population. It is said that the Lengyel population ‘emerged from the Balkans to replaced [sic] the original early agricultural population of the [...] LBK’ (p. 16). The issue that the LBK was also a migrant population remains hidden, as well as the fact that the Lengyel culture evolved mostly from late LBK groups, instead of replacing them. The cited literature ignores the last twenty years’ overwhelming amount of new published results.

Some of the initial questions posed raise one’s eyebrows, for example, ‘How was the population affected by the introduction of metal?’ (p. 17). Given the fact that copper (in the form of jewellery) appears sporadically and only in the latest phase of the Lengyel culture, the suspicion grows that here two different cultures are mistakenly merged into one another: the Lengyel culture (4900–4400 BC), which ends in the advent of the Copper Age in the Carpathian basin, and the Lengyel-Polgár culture, which describes something rather different, that is, a late outgrowth in Silesia and Lesser Poland in the final centuries of the 5th millennium BC. This cultural formation is related to the Chalcolithic Tiszapolgár period in the Great Hungarian Plain, which used copper jewellery and even tools.

After this somewhat problematic Introduction, hopes grow for the relevant archaeological sections to put the cultural and chronological questions right. Chapter 2 is titled ‘The Lengyel Culture in

Hungary’, by Olivér Gábor, co-editor of the volume, while Chapter 7 promises an account of the ‘Lengyel Culture in Moravia’ (by Z. Hájek, A. Čerevková). Let us begin with Chapter 7. After a longish research history, Moravian Lengyel settlements, rondel enclosures, and ‘funerary rite’ (cremation burials and ‘skeleton burials’) are described. Strangely, the chapter is illustrated exclusively with clay figurial representations. The chronological part is mainly based on old relative sequences, with no mention of radiocarbon dates. Here it becomes apparent what could only be surmised in the Introduction, namely, that the Upper-Silesian Lengyel group is also involved in the discussion: the authors mistakenly blend the two, rather different geographical and chronological subgroups. The result reflects the confusion with the term *Lengyel culture*, a fact that does not give much chance for joint archaeological and bioarchaeological interpretations.

The archaeological overview offered about the Lengyel culture in Hungary (Chapter 2) is dispiriting. The very first sentence states that the Neolithic transition ‘in Europe’ took place in the 7th–6th Millennium BC (p.19), which is only true for southeast Europe, the Aegean and Anatolia, while the process developed westwards and northwards with delays of millennia. This is a small fraction of a plethora of incorrect statements, a chronological and terminological chaos, ignored basic facts, and the citation of random, sometimes non-existing, literature. As an example, the author situates the ‘Secondary products revolution’ in the Copper Age and does not cite recent research proving the early use of, for instance, dairy products in the Early Neolithic (Evershed et al., 2008) (p. 19). Regarding the dating of the culture, there is no mention of any absolute chronological data, which is quite puzzling, as

there was a recent ERC project largely focusing on Lengyel sites in southern Transdanubia that produced hundreds of radiocarbon dates modelled with Bayesian statistics (Whittle, 2018; Osztás et al., 2016). Regarding Lengyel settlements, key relevant literature is not cited and there are citations to publications that do not exist (e.g. 'Szamárhegy et al 2000' in p. 21). Apparently, the author's main source is a volume written for the general public two decades ago (Visy, 2003), but sometimes even its short relevant texts are misunderstood by the author. The section 'Beliefs and Circular Ditch Systems' has no better fate, as it ignores, again, the vast amount of literature dealing with both themes, while referring only to a single Bronze Age expert, again from a book aimed at the general public. This chapter reveals a concerning lack of knowledge of the Lengyel culture. It is almost painful to see that the name of I. Zalai-Gaál, the doyen of research on the Lengyel culture in south-eastern Transdanubia, author of many fundamental publications, is missing from the chapter.

Going back to the Lengyel Culture in southeast Transdanubia, Hungary, Chapter 3, by Smrčka, Musilová & Kuželka, gives short descriptions of the graves from Zengővárkony that are involved in the anthropological analyses. The photos of the grave goods are informative, but photos or drawings of the full skeletons and especially of entire burials indicating the location of grave goods are missing. The human remains of the cemetery are meticulously analysed in the chapter, but, again, no pictures of whole skeletons or burials are included. The descriptions of traces caused by degenerative, epidemic illnesses, or traumata are discussed in comparison with cultural, anthropological, and experimental archaeological observations: this is a valuable part of the book. Gender roles are discussed by Čermáková based on the

Zengővárkony evidence. No matter how positive this endeavour is, the outcome is rather thin due to a mixture of general statements that do not find support in the burial evidence. The chapter does not cite key literature for various fundamental topics (e.g. chronology of ceramic grave goods studied by Regénye et al: 2020). As a result, the reader is left with banal conclusions like those related to anthropomorphic vessels (pp. 85–86). Furthermore, the chapter reflects the structure of the book: chapters are put together without any consideration to each other and, thus, they are full of repetitions, and contradictory statements, both regarding chronology and terminology.

The following Chapter 3, by Smrčka & Musilová) offer extremely valuable results of anthropological and pathological analyses from southeast Transdanubian Lengyel cemeteries. Lengyel period human remains from Villánykövesd and Belvárdgyula (Hungary) show evidence of work-related stress, congenital and dental illnesses, and signs of infections. Interesting is the zoonosis case from Villánykövesd, which the authors tend to interpret more likely as tuberculosis (through cattle) rather than brucellosis (through goats) (pp. 116–17). The analysis is complemented by histological investigations, resulting in the observation of various disorders like osteoporosis, calcium, or phosphate deficiency. Indeed, the health profile of the Transdanubian Lengyel population does not differ from the general picture of the 5th millennium BC Carpathian basin and Central European population. A burial from a neighbouring area was also included in the analysis, 'the Lady of Borjád' (Zoffmann, 2015–2016), which was buried under a hut with four big timber posts at the corners and remarkably rich grave goods. This is the same ritual found in many Alsónyék graves from the vicinity, which have been widely published but are not mentioned, even when the

following section provides a brief summary of the physical anthropological and pathological analysis of the northern (10B) part of the huge Alsónyék site (Chapter 3.6, by Köhler).

It is a great merit of the book that the morphological analyses are completed with the full investigation of diet via carbon ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$) and nitrogen ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$) isotopic analyses, indicating no differences in diet between males and females, but a decline in animal protein consumption in case of senior individuals (Chapter 4), although it is a pity that no all-inclusive interpretation comparing the two methods, cross-checking them with archaeological contexts and the analysis of grave goods, is included. Certainly, the other key question is mobility through strontium isotope analysis (Chapter 5). Samples from a restricted number of individuals from three of the sites were analysed. The result is interesting but has no statistical significance, as it is based on a handful of data (e.g. in Villánykövesd (p. 183), five out of the analysed eight individuals proved to be mobile and therefore, mobility at this site is argued to be at 62.5%). This might be a good start; more unfortunate is the lack of any reflection on this fact from the side of—intensively researched, abundantly published—archaeological interpretations.

The second part of the book focusing on the Lengyel culture in Moravia, Czechia, starts with Chapter 7, already mentioned, which is followed by chapters on the anthropological and pathological investigations. These chapters are of the highest quality: beginning with a map showing the location of the sites mentioned, Chapters 8 and 9 offer thoughtful assessments of the human skeletal material in the Lengyel-Moravian Painted cultural group. The outcomes reflect, for example, on lower body height of later Neolithic (Lengyel) males when compared to earlier local population in

Moravia, and on lower saccharide in the diet resulting in the decrease of tooth decay instances. The pathological analysis shows the consequences of the hard physical work of farming life as well as those of other activities, such as weaving, which caused finger deformation among females. The possibility of tuberculosis cases is intriguing in light of cases documented in coeval Lengyel sites like Alsónyék. Again, one can only miss some proofreading by an archaeologist here. The same can be said about the stable isotope analyses about diet and mobility (Chapters 10 and 11): these are well-structured and some archaeological context is offered. The trace element analysis results (Ch. 12) are significant, as there are several sites with a rather high number of individuals.

Chapter 13 (by Smrčka) gives a Conclusion about the lifestyle and morbidity of the Lengyel population. This is again a part of the book that is full of exciting facts, based on more than a thousand Neolithic skeletons from the two distant regions of southeast Transdanubia and Moravia. Morphometric features, diet, and mobility of both sexes and age groups are summarised. Aside from degenerative diseases, tumours, traces of inflammation and infections, traumata caused by violence are also considered here. Among pathological observations, the known Neolithic tuberculosis cases grow with the one described here from Zengővárkony (pp. 368, 371). Since these data are probably among the earliest ones in Europe, they deserve much attention in the future. Occasionally, inferences cause surprise, like the interpretation of cutmarks on teeth as traces of initiation rituals (p. 362); sometimes even scepticism, like the explanation of four to thirteen years old children's diet with weaning as a phenomenon that the author calls 'likely common' in the Neolithic (p. 352). In other places

the excitement grows again, e.g. the section about Transdanubian Lengyel settlements where migrant women would arrive with their children, based on cases from Zengővárkony and Villánykövesd. What a splendid opportunity it could have been to compare these—radiocarbon dated—examples with the sudden demographic aggregation and slow decline registered at Alsónyék (Osztás et al., 2016) to see if mobility within the region and from further away can be detected; or, indeed, to compare these examples with the Bayesian chronological modelling of Lengyel burials in Transdanubia, based on a robust dataset (Regenye et al., 2020). This summary is solely based on physical anthropological, palaeopathological, and stable isotopic analyses. Archaeological information is reduced to barely visible ‘trace element’ data in the book. There is no in-depth consideration of these data with published archaeological information from the same cemeteries, same culture, or region. The reviewer, therefore, would like to use the opportunity of this book review to pronouncedly plead for real integrated work, real cooperation between scientists, bioarchaeologists, anthropologists—and archaeologists, for a better understanding and joint interpretation of datasets coming from all fields. The cutting-edge investigations by the Czech team would have deserved a better outcome. These chapters could have been a valuable set of papers in esteemed journals, or even part of a book offering an integrated approach. It is unfortunate that unexplained scientific analyses do occur, when outdated and mistaken archaeological descriptions accompany a high standard scientific publication, which is what happens with this valuable analysis about lifestyles, health, and disease in a long-standing Neolithic cultural formation in Central Europe.

Finally, the alarming absence of any (including formal) editing activity has to

be noted. Hungarian geographic names, place names, also names of (international) authors are prime victims here. Any editor, even without knowing the language would hitch at this high variety of the very same names by a simple proofreading. All in all, it is rare to have a book of such great amplitude in quality. The reason why it can still be recommended, is the rich source of high standard bioarchaeological results. These remain valuable inputs to the Central European Neolithic, awaiting appreciative archaeologists, prehistorians, to embed these data in the context of Lengyel lifeways, societies, subsistence, mobility, and cultural habits. A good example of this is the book published by Zvelebil and Pettitt (2008) about the history of the Neolithic Vedrovice inhabitants. The real merit of the investigations of Smrčka and his team will be given justice when similar joint brainstorming and cooperation between scientists and archaeologists takes place.

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Richard Bradley. *Maritime Archaeology on Dry Land: Special Sites along the Coasts of Britain and Ireland from the First Farmers to the Atlantic Bronze Age* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2022, 184pp., 50 b/w illustr., pbk, ISBN 9781789258196)

Just like Picasso was able to express many things with 'very little', Richard Bradley's new book is able to say many things by 'just' discussing a handful of sites. This is not a conscious decision, but a necessity as the book was written during the covid lockdown. In a nutshell, the book is a 170-page commentary on the archaeological record of a set of somewhat forgotten British and Irish coastal areas using a 'big picture' approach to produce a history of and a new range of questions concerning how people interacted with the coastline.

Like Richard Bradley's (1998) classic *The Passage of Arms*, this is not a book that offers categorical explanations, but suggests new ways of looking at things. The interval studied goes from the Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age, although there are several sections which focus on the Middle Ages and there are some commentaries regarding the Mesolithic, the Iron Age, and the Roman

period. Nevertheless, any epoch and region could benefit from applying the ideas and approach presented here. Bradley connects changes in coastal sites with how the landscape in the interior was organised as reflected by changing settlement patterns (hillforts, metal deposits, henges, etc.) and widely discussed archaeological phenomena unavoidably linked to sea travelling (the movement of Neolithic farmers, the distribution of Alpine jadeite axes, the Bell Beaker pottery, the arrival of steppe ancestry, the transport of copper from key places such as a the Great Orme, etc.). Thus, the book produces a social history of landing places bringing together the biographies of a rather heterogenous group of coastal sites by linking their similarities and differences to the grand transformations that characterize the prehistory of Europe.

The book has six chapters. The first two are a longue durée analysis of Atlantic Europe during prehistory, with a particular