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Review Articles

Roger Beefy's Primer

Archaeological Theory: an Introduction by Matthew Johnson, 1999. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers; ISBN 0-631-20295-1 £50.00/US$54.95 hb; ISBN 0-631-20295-1 £14.99/US$24.95 pb, xv+240 pp., many illustrations

Bruce G. Trigger

During the past six years, three books have been published which present theory to archaeology students. Although they have different publishers, the books are of similar format, have green paperback covers and are written by academics who have had contact with Cambridge University. Collectively they attest to the richness and vitality of Cambridge University's Department of Archaeology.

James Bell's *Reconstructing Prehistory* (1994) is an effort by a philosopher to promote scientific method in archaeology. Bell favours Colin Renfrew's cognitive-processualism, a positivist epistemology, and a Popperian refutationist approach. Ken Dark's *Theoretical Archaeology* (1995) treats theory as embracing all aspects of archaeological interpretation, including classification; chronology; social, economic and cognitive interpretation; and processual studies. His basic sympathies are also with cognitive-processualism. Dark provides a very useful coverage of theories relating to different aspects of archaeological interpretation. His book supplies the systematic exposition of current theories that Michael Schiffer (1976, 193) once asserted should replace histories of archaeological thought.

The third of these books, *Archaeological Theory*, by Matthew Johnson, a distinguished historical archaeologist and former student of Ian Hodder, is the most general of these works. Johnson describes his book as 'an introductory essay on archaeological theory' which examines relations between archaeological thought and theory in the intellectual world generally. Johnson seeks to demonstrate how specific theoretical positions make sense in broader social and academic contexts and to explore relations between archaeological theory and practice. His presentation is compact, selective and focused on Anglo-American examples.

Archaeological Theory is written in a clear, jargon-free style, although Johnson defends the use of jargon as necessary in archaeology. He challenges students to consider alternative explanations and reach their own conclusions. He defers defining theory until the concluding chapter and then challenges the reader to decide whether theory consists only of propositions to be tested or whether all archaeology is theory laden. He uses a historical approach to consider the development of processual and postprocessual archaeology, after which he examines how these approaches are being used to address issues relating to gender, evolution, history and postmodernism.

The great strength of this book is its clear and explicit explanations, not only of processual and postprocessual archaeology, but also of many more specific theories that play, or have played, a role in these two archaeological projects. Johnson summarizes arguments for and against theories with exemplary clarity and concision and challenges readers to make up their own minds rather than accept a party line. More generally, he strives to convince Roger Beefy, an empirical but diffident undergraduate (very different from Kent Flannery's (1976) fast-talking Skeptical Graduate Student) to believe in the importance, excitement and relevance of theory and to adopt a critical attitude toward archaeological theory and practice. He also stresses that the most exciting findings result from developing theoretical insights in close and critical reference to archaeological material.

Despite the significant strengths of this book, I feel obliged to take up Johnson's challenge not to accept other people's theories passively or uncritically. In so doing I also realize that one tends to criticize most acrimoniously the work of generally like-minded people. Johnson's central emphasis on the dichotomy between processual and postprocessual archaeology structures the options he offers readers, while his history, which he admits reproduces the constructions of his chosen protagonists (p. 20), resembles what Ian Morris (2000, 71) calls pseudo-

histories. Johnson correctly suggests that both processualism and postprocessualism were movements, not single sets of beliefs and theories, and that their British and American manifestations were different in various ways. Yet he does not explore these differences sufficiently. New Archaeology was closely linked to the neoevolutionary and cultural-ecology movements that were opposed to Boasian cultural anthropology and which reached their peak in American anthropology in the 1960s. These movements, which emphasized materialism, behaviourism, functionalism, and internal explanations of change, were eclipsed by the revival of cultural anthropology by Clifford Geertz, Marshall Sahlins and Victor Turner in the 1970s. British processual archaeology developed largely independently of anthropology and what contacts it had into the late 1970s were with a behaviourally-oriented social anthropology rather than with cultural anthropology. Hence British processual archaeology remained more historical in orientation and, because it was not battling cultural anthropology, more open to an eclectic cognitive-processual orientation than did American archaeology.

On the other hand, the idea that processual and postprocessual archaeology are alternative schools battling for supremacy is mainly a construction of British postprocessual archaeologists. In America, most archaeologists who become disillusioned with processual archaeology are influenced by the revival of a strongly relativist and subjectivist cultural anthropology which predisposes them to look to postprocessual archaeology to supplement rather than replace processual archaeology. This eclectic view of the two approaches is now clearly the dominant one in American archaeology.

Johnson obviously prefers postprocessual archaeology. One way he promotes the postprocessual agenda is by suggesting that a consensus exists on certain key issues. He points out quite correctly that material culture is silent and the past is utterly dead and gone; but pays less attention to the status of artefacts as material surviving from the past (pp. 12–13). He also argues that few archaeologists believe that their interpretations are totally free from social and political bias (pp. 182–5). I would like to believe this is true. Yet, even if it were, there remains a vast spectrum of interpretive practice that extends from positivists who rely on 'scientific method' to the empathic interpretations of certain notorious landscape archaeologists. Johnson also denies that extreme relativism is a feature of postprocessualism (pp. 174–5, 185) and maintains that inveterate opposition to notions of scientific progress, social evolution and absolute truth characterizes postmodernism rather than postprocessualism.

On the other hand, Johnson adamantly opposes claims that a growing theoretical consensus is emerging in the form of a synthesis of processual and postprocessual approaches. His opposition to such a consensus resembles Marvin Harris' (1979) condemnation of eclecticism in anthropological theory a generation ago. Illogically, Johnson urges that the search for a middle ground should be 'banned', not because the middle ground is a bad thing but because such searches become an easy substitute for serious theoretical critique (p. 187).

I strongly disagree with this argument. How, if we are to understand the behaviour of a species for which mind has evolved as an adaptive mechanism, can the middle ground between processualism and postprocessualism be avoided? Idealists are correct that the world humans adapt to is never the world as it is but the world as they imagine it to be. Yet, if such forms of adaptation are to sustain human life, they must bear some resemblance to the external realm as it really is. Culture has evolved as a uniquely flexible adaptive mechanism and in the course of doing so has acquired unique properties. Meaning and adaptation are thus to a significant degree complementary rather than antithetical concepts (Childe 1949, 6–9; 1956, 54–68). A comprehensive theory to explain human behaviour and material culture must synthesize the understandings of cultural ecology and cognitive anthropology. Within such a framework, positivism, idealism and realism cease to be alternative epistemologies and become ways to account for different aspects of human behaviour (Trigger 1998). Developing such a framework also requires a detailed empirical investigation of the roles that analogies and homologies play in inferring human behaviour, in order to ensure that both cross-cultural recurrences and culturally-specific resemblances are used to infer such behaviour to the maximum extent possible. My ongoing comparative study of early civilizations indicates that cross-cultural regularities are more common than Johnson and other postprocessualists believe and that they characterize systems of belief no less than they do subsistence patterns. The question is not whether homologies are superior to analogies (p. 61) or cultural ecology is superior to cognitive anthropology as guides for archaeological interpretation, but how and under what circumstances specific approaches are appropriate. Unravelling such complexities requires archaeologists to study the middle ground intensively and critically rather than to embrace a lazy eclecticism.

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More subtle rhetorical biases also shape the text, although Roger Beefy is rebuffed for drawing readers' attention to these. While New Archaeology is described as coalescing around 'certain slogans,' postprocessual archaeology is said to conceal 'a great diversity of viewpoints and traditions' (p. 101). Johnson claims that no archaeologists are unequivocally strong relativists and implies that archaeologists who 'attack' extreme relativism have been tilting at windmills (p. 175). He does not draw attention, however, to the ambiguities in the early writings of postprocessualists, such as Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, who endorsed, often in a single text, both extreme and moderate relativist positions. If critiques of extreme relativism have helped to move archaeology toward a consensus based on the moderate relativist position, of which he approves, Johnson has no reason to condemn this dialogue.

Unexpected is Johnson's vituperative attack on the notion of 'unqualified individual freedom', which he sees as being 'utterly misconceived' (pp. 82–4). Taken literally, Johnson's position is perfectly acceptable since it is obvious that culture, like the environment, constrains human behaviour. In the past, however, deterministic viewpoints have been used as excuses not to consider the role played by the human mind as the sole locus of consciousness and decision-making in human affairs; thereby reifying concepts such as culture and society. How does Johnson regard the useful analytical approach of methodological individualism and how are we to interpret his comment that the 'archaeological record is as much about the detritus of individual actions as it is about long-term aggregrates or processes' (pp. 83–4)? Does he view long-term processes as consisting of more than the common outcome of individual actions?

Johnson's passion for theory may encourage students who do not know how deeply committed he is to studying the archaeological record to regard theorizing as an end itself and not, as most scientists do, as a means to understand the world better. Johnson also does not note that some archaeologists experience satisfaction, not disappointment, when new data or further testing disconfirm their cherished theories and interpretations. While a growing understanding of relativist viewpoints is salutory, a declining belief in being able to understand the past more objectively (and not even positivists, contrary to what is alleged, believe in perfect understandings) may promote an emphasis on theory for its own sake.

Many of the concerns archaeologists may have with Johnson's arguments result from the brevity and didactic character of his book. Johnson has a capacity to think clearly and sensibly about theoretical issues. I hope that before long he will write a more detailed and extensively documented account of his ideas for Roger Beefy the graduate student and Roger Beefy the professional archaeologist.

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Masquerades and Mis/representations: Or When is a Triangle just a Triangle?

The Living Goddesses, by Marija Gimbutas, edited and supplemented by M. Dexter Robbins, 1999. University of California Press (CA): Berkeley. ISBN 0-520-21393-9, hardback US$35, xv + 286 pp., ills.

Lynn Meskell

> Scales, feathers, flowers, and birds came up to her belly. As earrings she had silver cymbals which clashed on her cheeks. Her large eyes stared at you, and a luminous stone, set into an obscene symbol on her forehead, lit up the whole room . . .
> Gustave Flaubert, *Salammbo*.

The goddess in archaeology is becoming a somewhat tired topic. Many thorough and thoughtful papers have already been written and the topic rigorously deconstructed (Talalay 1994; Anthony 1995; Conkey & Tringham 1995; Haaland & Haaland 1995; Meskell 1995; 1998a,b,c; Hutton 1997; Morris & Goodison 1998). With the death of Maria Gimbutas in 1994 many would have assumed that interest in the subject of a universal Mother Goddess might have waned, but the appearance of her 'new' book in 1999 subsequently erased that hope. One might have expected some kernels of new thought or re-appraisals of prior work, given the substantive archaeological critiques that followed her earlier books. However, like the timeless topic that it is — all remains the same. No-one wants to write a wholly negative review, much less of the deceased. And yet I wondered, parenthetically, whether reviews of, say, Binford's work would suddenly become more positive in fifty years? — *de mortuis nil nisi bonum.* But there is a special cloak that has always surrounded Gimbutas. Colleagues and contemporaries found it difficult to come right out and accuse her of everything from sloppy methodology to sexism, from essentialism to excluding archaeological evidence (but see Tringham 1993). And after decades of her work, all at a high-profile level, communicating archaeological materials to the wider public, I am left with a series of questions. And I apologize that this review is posed in a rhetorical vein, rather than a descriptive one (see Talalay 1999 for a complete review). Why did we need another volume repeating everything that she had published before? Why did University of California Press consider this an academic work worth publishing? Was there no review by a relevant archaeologist? And more specifically, why did Gimbutas never bother to read the work of archaeologists in either southeast Europe or Turkey like Bailey, Hodder or Tringham; those working on figurines like Talalay or on gender like Conkey, Tringham, etc.? The archaeology of gender seems such a serious omission for Gimbutas given her own agendas of female superiority. The end result of wading through *The Living Goddesses* is sheer frustration at the misreadings and fictions contained within.

Miriam Dexter Robbins, her editor and co-writer in some sense, argues that Gimbutas was an 'original thinker', yet as Hutton (1997) and others have shown, her ideas were simply extensions of much older European traditions of thought. I would add that her ideas of matriarchy and a supreme female deity were notions that loomed large in the Western imaginary: one can find the same fantasies in everything from Frazer's *The Golden Bough* to Flaubert's *Salammbo* for example. They are largely male constructions tied to female corporeality and sexuality: something Gimbutas always failed to recognize. In fact she was never really interested in ordinary women's lives or even their sexualities: the figurines never signify people or women themselves, they are the goddess. Female visibility and agency are effectively removed from her reductionist histories. Only Gimbutas knew what was sacred versus erotic, the latter deemed a lesser concern. Apart from the academic inertia, I gradually became annoyed at the constant 'speaking for others' ('I will unravel their meaning', p. 8) that Gimbutas propounded. Not once does she allow for a multiplicity of meanings nor pause to be self-reflexive or self-critical in any way about her own privileged position as interpreter.

The book is laced with the familiar tropes and topics that Gimbutas employed. First, a panoply of symbols are direct reflections of a single Mother Goddess across time and space from the Orkneys to Estonia. Every symbol signified the goddess — squares, ovals, circles, lozenges, bladder forms, triangles, etc. Similarly every animal was her incarnation; 'deer, fish, elk, snakes, bears, frogs, rams, pigs, dogs, boars, hedgehogs and water birds (to name a few)' (p. 11). This leaves very little room for the mundane or any other representational schema. In figurative art her blatant erasure of male imagery or ambiguous imagery continued. In fact, the phallus as a cultural symbol gets only one paragraph in the entire volume. There are no surprises here, but one has to ask what are the implications for interpolating cultural stasis and blanket homogeneity. In her desire to cre-

ate a narrowly defined picture of the past she has effectively reduced cultural dynamism and specificity, creating an oppressive picture of pan-Europeanism. Religious zealotry in any form makes for a dangerous bedfellow in the writing of ancient history.

Sadly, the unsubstantiated assertions begin from page three onwards. She claimed Old Europe developed a 'symbolic script' (p. 46), but claimed 'it is not prewriting' but a true writing system like Sumerian or Chinese (p. 49) — a virtual Rosetta stone awaiting decipherment. As if competing with the acknowledged achievements of the Near East, she argued that the Old European script was the intellectual progenitor of Western civilization (p. 54). So there are degrees of truth-stretching here. But Gimbutas' emphatic style does not help since theories are presented as 'fact' rather than 'interpretation'. She goes on to recreate a whole narrative about social relations in prehistory — with no concern for possible misreadings. Old Europe is described as a 'democratic temple community' (p. 125). The Etruscans, Minoans, Celts, Maltese, Anatolians, etc., are all subsumed under this banner as well. Old Europe, Crete and classical Greece seamlessly conflated with no attempt at contextualization. Reviving the most outdated ideas concerning Crete, she presented them as being more civilized than peoples of the Near East or Egypt. Plausibly this is because the latter two cultures have firm, literate evidence of patriarchy which even she would be crazy to contest. Moreover, how can one talk definitively about Greek mythology (or Germanic and Baltic) and discount male deities, or mythology? How did she remain hermetically sealed from the vast bodies of scholarly work on these regions in both archaeological and mythological circles? How can we view this as archaeology when the most recent sources appear to be New Age writers like Cameron and Castleden? These theories must be able to stand up to criticism and peer review, especially if they are published in a quasi-scholarly book as this one masquerades to be.

As an example of the sort of scholarly contortions this volume evinces, I want to focus on one well-documented archaeological site which Gimbutas references frequently — Çatalhöyük. Clearly, neither she nor Robbins were keen to read (or cite) recent work or interpretations about the site over the last decade. Almost all archaeological endeavours are dismissed out of hand. But Gimbutas goes to the other extreme by inventing the data herself. She argues that there were specific rooms for birthing at Çatalhöyük. There is no conclusive representational evidence for pregnancy or birthing and reproductive organs are not depicted in the art. She claims there exists a figurine showing sexual intercourse which is, to date, untrue. She speaks emphatically about 'temples' at the site and this is also a fiction. She states there are representations showing the cervix, umbilical cord, and amniotic fluid, which is pure fantasy. Gimbutas stated in relation to images of fallopian tubes, 'there is no denying its existence' at Çatalhöyük (throughout the volume she pursues an almost obsessive quest to find amniotic fluid). Admittedly this is somewhat fuelled by Mellaart's recently published drawings from the site (Mellart *et al.* 1989, 34). These drawings have astonished archaeologists since they appeared long after Mellaart's project was closed down and, let us say, there are no archaeological correlates for these recent 'discoveries'. Gimbutas chose only to discuss female imagery and burials from the site, ignoring male representations, phallic figurines, zoomorphic pieces, bodies and the people themselves (Meskell 1998c), creating a misleading one-sided history. She goes back to that time-worn adage that you always know your mother, but not necessarily your father. From this she extrapolates that mothers and daughters were more important (p. 112). Not even a commitment to feminism (which she never claimed) would warrant such misplaced assertions.

We are not alone, scholars of religion have also questioned these flawed visions of matriarchy and the ancient past (Townsend 1990; Hutton 1991; 1997; Eller 1995; 2000). What makes someone resist these findings in various fields, from feminist theory to anthropology? Robbins claimed she supposedly transformed disciplines as diverse as ecology and anthropology — apart from the overstatement why did she never learn from them? Was her vision or intellectual arrogance so overweening that she was blinkered to the works of others? Taking my lead from Ortner (1996, 137) I would argue that in overemphasizing difference on the basis of gender, irrespective of context, writers like Gimbutas created serious mystifications, blinding themselves to the situations that men and women shared in the past. In the process Gimbutas naturalized gendered difference in her desire to foreground matriarchy. There are real problems in the pure constitution of women/men political oppositions in any context, past or present. And lastly, if we have learnt anything from the feminist endeavour, it is to create a situation where women were not seen as a natural class of being, defined primarily by their bodies. Gimbutas would have done well to look at those related fields where influential women, just like herself, were ask-

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ing questions about essentialism, naturalism and sexism, rather than spending her time looking for triangles, vulvas and goddesses.

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Rows and Circles Reconsidered

Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland by Clive Ruggles, 1999. New Haven (NJ) & London: Yale University Press. ISBN 0-300-07814-5 hardback, £45.00 & US$65. 286 pp., ills.

Great Stone Circles by Aubrey Burl, 1999. New Haven (NJ) & London: Yale University Press. ISBN 0-300-07689-4 hardback, £19.95 & US$30. 199 pp., ills.

Chris Scarre

It was William Stukeley in 1723 who first noted that the axis of Stonehenge is aligned with the midsummer sunrise. In doing so he initiated a trail of theory and speculation which has subsequently engulfed not only Stonehenge but many other Neolithic monuments of Britain and Ireland, leading to claims for incredible feats of astronomical observation and engineering skill, and equally ardent rejection by many archaeologists of such technocratic models for early prehistoric communities. The two books reviewed here, very different in style and presentation, both in some measure take their origin from this debate. In *Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland* Clive Ruggles provides the first comprehensive and coherent assessment of astronomical interpretations for these sites in almost twenty years, since the appearance of Douglas Heggie's *Megalithic Science* in 1981. Replete with diagrams, footnotes and explanatory boxes, this is a serious attempt to place such interpretations in their proper perspective, reining in some of the wilder theories, but at the same time urging the reintegration of archaeoastronomy within the mainstream of archaeological thought. Archaeologists today are increasingly concerned to understand these sites in the light of the way early communities may have observed and conceptual-

ized their surroundings, and these must include prominent features of the sky — the sun, the moon, the major planets and stars — as much as terrestrial mountain peaks, rivers and springs. Astronomical concerns figure largely too in Aubrey Burl's *Great Stone Circles*, but here the overall treatment is more multi-thematic. Alongside the question of solar and lunar alignments Burl devotes considerable space to the history and folklore attached to the individual sites, as well as taking sides in key debates such as the alleged transport of the Stonehenge bluestones from southwest Wales.

Great Stone Circles is written in an engaging style by an author who can fairly claim to be the leading specialist on the prehistoric stone circles and stone rows of the British Isles. His avowed purpose in this book is to provide 'a debate that uses twelve attractive and informative rings in much greater detail than is normally possible in order to remove some of the uncertainties that befuddle research into the problems of prehistory. The sites have been chosen because each encapsulates a particular problem and provides an explanation'. Four of the chapters are in fact based on articles published in academic journals, but these have been updated and rewritten for a wider audience. It is, then, essentially a book intended for that oft-quoted being the 'general reader'.

If this seems a barbed observation it is not intended as such, since there is much of great interest for both specialists and 'interested others' in this book. It does, however, betray some oddities of conception and structure, in including one monument (Woodhenge) which isn't a stone circle at all, omitting more than brief mention of important sites such as Avebury, and devoting 70 of its 185 pages to a single circle (Stonehenge). As a result, while section 1 is reasonably coherent, section 2 (on Stonehenge) is almost a separate book, and relies heavily on material that Burl has published elsewhere. The attempt in section 3 to round matters off and draw these strands together through a discussion of the Swinside stone circle is not entirely successful, this belonging more naturally with section 1 than section 2. Nonetheless, the book carries the reader forward with its clear flow of style, and is also given unity through the recurrence of a number of themes.

If we may single out two of these, they are folklore (which Burl shows to be mainly of historically recent origin, at least in its specifics), and astronomy (where Burl continues to place much emphasis on solar and lunar alignments as the underlying logic behind the planning and placement of these structures). Burl also seeks to provide an image of the ceremonies carried out in these circles, though in this undertaking the treatment is (perhaps inevitably) somewhat less persuasive.

The post-prehistoric history of stone circles is a key theme of the first section, 'Fables, Fictions and Facts', which opens with an account of the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire, then moves on to Long Meg and her Daughters in Cumbria, Stanton Drew in Somerset, and (ch. 4) the four surviving stone rings on the Land's End peninsula. In several places Burl seeks to calculate the size of local populations from the size of the circles themselves, assuming a relatively dense local population, all of whom could be fitted within the ring. Thus at Tregeseal, a ring of stones some 21 m across, he envisages a community of 30 or so pastoralists in the surrounding territory of 2 square miles. 'Allowing 5 m^2 for each person in the ring, and leaving half the interior for the leader or priest, a congregation of about 36 participants could have been accommodated, a number quite adequate to provide work-gangs of seven or eight to raise the heaviest stones which weigh no more than about two tons'. This image of a priest and congregation may be more a reflection of recent Christian practice than of the original ceremonies or rituals undertaken at these circles. Still less convincing is the case of Long Meg and her Daughters where Burl estimates the number of people required to erect the largest of the stones — weighing 9 tons — and the maximum number which this very large circle could accommodate — 1540. The idea of a dense Neolithic population in Britain runs counter to most recent thinking and to the sparse evidence of settlement sites, especially in an upland region such as this.

The chapters on Stonehenge cover the Heel Stone (ch. 8), the Slaughter Stone (ch. 9), and the supposed Breton inspiration behind Stonehenge (ch. 10). These are prefaced by a brief introduction (ch. 6), and by 'Transportation or Glaciation?' (ch. 7), in which Burl takes up the cudgels on behalf of the glacial (rather than human) transport of the bluestones from southwest Wales to Salisbury Plain. Much of Burl's argument here invokes modern concepts of pragmatism. Thus he argues that the perils of the sea-voyage have been under-estimated, and that there was nothing at all special about the material of the bluestones (some of them being so friable that they have fragmented and worn away *in situ* to invisible stumps). Yet the choice of materials must surely be governed by the qualities — both physical and symbolic — which the prehistoric builders identified in the stones. And twentieth-century pragmatics, taken to ex-

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treme, would lead us to question why Neolithic communities chose to build Stonehenge at all, not merely why they chose certain non-local materials.

Where Burl is most useful in this debate is in throwing doubt on recent attempts to 'explain away' the fragment of bluestone from Boles Barrow, a monument which should be 1000 years or more older than the Stonehenge bluestone setting. Recent claims that the Boles Barrow stone was not from Boles Barrow but from Stonehenge seem increasingly unconvincing in face of Burl's detailed rebuttal. Yet at the end of the day, Burl cannot explain why, if they were moved by glacial action, there are no other Preseli bluestone erratics on Salisbury Plain. It is hard to credit that glacial action would have transported only bluestones of Stonehenge size.

In chapter 10 Aubrey Burl repeats his controversial analysis alleging that Stonehenge was not an indigenous British construction but owed much to the Neolithic monuments of Brittany, notably the horseshoe stone settings of western Finistère and southern Morbihan. The argument claims support from supposed parallels between carvings on some of the Stonehenge sarsens — notably the rectangular figure on sarsen 57 — and the '*écusson*' figures of Brittany. Some of these arguments have already been challenged by the present reviewer (Scarre 1997). Burl's citation of Tossen-Keler as the nearest Breton horseshoe parallel in some ways exemplifies the weakness of the approach, since the Tossen-Keler monument is a low mound with a complex history, not a simple horseshoe setting. Furthermore, though few would argue with the notion that Stonehenge is a unique monument without close antecedents or descendants, the solution is not to be found in Brittany. There is no lintelled stone circle in Brittany. Indeed, there are no stone circles at all (only horseshoes), which makes the outer ring — 'an exact circle' in Burl's words — very hard to place in a Breton context. Cultural borrowings there may well have been across the Channel (though remarkably few of the Plussulien dolerite axes appear to have made the journey) but to claim Stonehenge as Breton rather than British still fails to convince.

The final chapter forms a section on its own and serves as a kind of coda. In a sketch running for some dozen pages, Burl describes the building and motivation behind the Swinside stone circle in Cumbria, drawing close connections with the trade in axes from Scafell Pike. He sees the circles as essential parts of the exchange network bringing producers and consumers together, even suggesting that the Cumbrian axe producers built a near-replica of the Swinside ring at Ballynoe in Ireland, 'a Cumbrian beach-head from which Irish inhabitants might be persuaded that the axes of volcanic tuff from Scafell were stronger and more desirable than the sharper but more brittle porcellanite from Tievebulliagh mountain.' Despite its modern commercial overtones, there is much to ponder in this reconstruction, and in the book as a whole. We may not agree with all the detail; we might welcome more discussion on the materiality of the circles and the significance of the stones — but Burl has provided a stimulating range of ideas and approaches drawn from his profound knowledge and long experience of studying these structures, presented with a lightness of touch which makes them all the more accessible both to specialist and general reader alike.

The book is marred by few typographical errors, though in several places there is clear evidence that the chapters were written separately. For example, in chapter 3 (Stanton Drew) the reference to 'Long Meg outside a great stone ring near Penrith in Cumbria' fails curiously to recognize the fact that this was the subject of the previous chapter. Chapter 2, indeed, is a revised version of an article already published elsewhere, and final editing has not removed all traces of this earlier origin. Likewise the discussion of the spacing and alignment of the Stanton Drew circles on p. 73 is presented without reference to the treatment of the same point in the previous chapter (pp. 60–61). Chapter 9 'The Slaughter Stone' has not caught up with the redating of the Stonehenge phases (of which Burl shows himself perfectly aware elsewhere), referring to 'the Neolithic axis of the monument' and 'its Bronze Age realignment'. Finally, without wishing unreasonably to cavil at minor slips, it is perhaps hard to see what the general reader for whom this book is intended would make of the unexplained references to 'AOC' and 'W/MR' beakers on p. 85.

Long Meg and her Daughters is in fact the subject of one of Burl's most striking claims for the astronomical alignment of these stone circles. An observer standing at the centre of the circle and looking towards the tall outlier of Long Meg herself is looking directly towards the midwinter sunset, a point already established by Alexander Thom and others. What is remarkable about Long Meg and her Daughters, however, is the second alignment, at 267°, which varies by three degrees from true West, but marks exactly the point on the sloping horizon behind which the sun sets midway between the extremes of midsummer and midwinter sunset. As Burl remarks, 'What looks like cardinal inaccuracy to to-

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day's investigator was solar precision to the people who set up the stone'.

Yet such equinoctial alignments come in for particular criticism in *Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland*, Clive Ruggles urging that what may seem a natural point of interest to a modern Western observer may be far from obvious to other societies. The equinox is, after all, simply the arbitrary midway point between the solstices. 'In short' Ruggles concludes 'the equinox is a concept unlikely to have any meaning from an earth-based perspective within a non-Western world view'.

Cosmology has long been an accepted part of archaeological studies, yet the role of astronomy has generally been limited to movements of the sun, or more simply still to the cardinal directions, and the precise alignments of heavenly bodies once claimed by Alexander Thom and others have rightly been regarded with caution. Ruggles largely concurs with this caution, yet argues that archaeoastronomy has wrongly been relegated to the sidelines. He remarks how standard archaeological texts often fail to make any reference to possible astronomical significance when discussing the Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments of western Europe, an omission which to the non-archaeologist may seem quite remarkable. The rift between astronomers and engineers on the one hand, and archaeologists on the other, Ruggles traces back to Sir Norman Lockyer's *Stonehenge and Other British Stone Monuments Astronomically Considered* (1906), to which archaeologists gave a 'generally muted' response. The debate was placed on a new footing in the 1960s, with the publication *Stonehenge Decoded* by Gerald Hawkins (1965) and with Thom's first book on the astronomy and geometry of British stone circles in 1967. The implications drawn from these studies, of a prehistoric society of astronomers and geometers, were unacceptable to most archaeologists, who found the results impossible to reconcile with the nature of these prehistoric societies deduced from other categories of evidence.

Ruggles devotes the first part of his book, 'Past Directions', to the progress of archaeoastronomical studies up to the mid-1980s. In length, these four chapters comprise roughly half of the entire volume, and include detailed consideration of some of the principal claims made by Alexander Thom and others for astronomical orientations at stone circles and alignments of standing stones in Britain and Ireland. They include the much-discussed cases of Ballochroy, Kintraw and Brainport Bay in western Scotland, not forgetting Stonehenge and the Grand Menhir Brisé. Ruggles finds each of these claims in turn unconvincing when subjected to rigorous scrutiny. He is particularly dismissive of Thom's evidence for high-level precision, down to a single minute of arc in some cases, and shows that even Thom's less precise alignments are open to considerable doubt. Prior selectivity is one major problem: for instance, Thom's 1967 study of astronomical indications included only 5 of over 90 recumbent circles. Furthermore, Thom's alignments are arrived at in very different ways — across pairs of stones, along the face of a flat stone, from circle centre to circle centre: there is no consistency in approach. As Ruggles observes: 'The diversity may well simply reflect how easy it is to fit theories to a site rather than revealing a function that the monuments actually served'.

In the second section of the book, Ruggles describes a number of his own field studies undertaken to explore these questions: recumbent stone circles in northeast Scotland, axial stone circles and short stone rows in Cork and Kerry, and the short stone rows of North Mull. In the North Mull project, notably, he includes not only astronomical events but also introduces prominent landscape features in his analysis, noting that many of the stone rows were aligned approximately on Ben More. At the same time, he argues that they observe a lunar orientation and adduces support for this in the scatters of quartz found at some of these sites, the whiteness of quartz referencing perhaps the quality of moonlight.

In the two chapters which constitute the final section of the book, Ruggles draws a number of general conclusions and presents proposals for future work, learning from the shortcomings of previous studies in this field. For an apparent proponent of archaeoastronomy, his overall assessment is surprisingly negative:

> It is certainly true that in so far as archaeoastronomy consists of approaching prehistoric monuments looking for astronomical alignments, then it is at best misleading and at worst completely useless. The simple reason is that many factors could have influenced a monument's orientation and position in the landscape, and while we should not ignore orientations, as archaeologists have often done in the past, we should certainly study them open-mindedly, not starting from the assumption that astronomy is the (sole or primary) motivation (p. 144).

This very caution should encourage archaeologists to consider with all seriousness Ruggles' positive proposals for future research: an approach to archaeoastronomy which is not grounded in the Western scientific worldview but which draws inspiration

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from ethnographic studies; an approach which does not assume, without further argument, that astronomical alignments were of relevance to prehistoric communities, and does not expect such alignments to be especially precise; and one that studies groups of monuments rather than individual sites on their own, in order to draw support for any conclusions from the repetitive nature of the patterning.

The book is furnished with an extensive series of end-notes (avoiding the need for Harvard-system in-text references; and allowing expansion and comment in some cases); and with a useful series of boxes, labelled 'Astronomy', 'Statistics' and 'Archaeology' as need may be, and intended to introduce key technical concepts; those on archaeology, for example, give an outline of the major British monument types (Archaeology Box 2), and the archaeology of Stonehenge (Archaeology Box 3); the astronomy boxes cover topics such as the concept of declination (Astronomy Box 1) and lunar standstills (Astronomy Box 4); while statistics includes subjects such as Monte Carlo methods (Statistics Box 4) and Bayesian approaches (Statistics Box 7). These are accessible and highly useful summaries, handy to refer back to as the terms recur in the text.

The reader might well take away from this book an ambiguous impression: that as archaeoastronomers themselves become more wary of the extreme claims made by earlier researchers, they are seeking refuge in a statistical approach which (while addressing some of the shortcomings) still does not entirely answer the question. We may wish to argue that one particular astronomical alignment is well supported by being highly precise or frequently repeated, while another is weakly supported by being imprecise or unique, but this does not in itself give us insight into the minds and intentions of prehistoric builders. They may not always have been seeking precision or regularity. There is no reason, either, why sites and their symbolisms — especially in their specific landscape settings — might not have been unique. The case for the midsummer sunrise orientation of Stonehenge 3 does surely not depend on its replication at other sites.

The argument is nonetheless powerful that archaeoastronomy — as formulated by Ruggles in an ethnographically aware context — is indeed well placed to be integrated into the mainstream of archaeological studies. The pursuit of phenomenology (e.g. Tilley 1994), which must include the sky as well as the land, and the development of GIS, both lead to that conclusion. Archaeologists will be happy to see abandoned the high-precision alignments claimed by Thom and others. There is still the problem, however, that orientations of the more approximate nature that Ruggles suggests, and which are more in conformity with what we understand about these societies, will be very difficult to substantiate. This is especially so if we also adopt the rigorous statistical approach urged by Ruggles, which throws into question many of the solar and lunar alignments which have hitherto been claimed for these monuments. In some ways, this brings archaeoastronomy back into the mainstream in a way Ruggles himself might not have intended — to join all those other areas of archaeological interpretation where certitude is neither possible nor expected, where precision is low and contingent, and where it is the vagaries of humans as individuals and observers which are perhaps the most obvious constituent of the prehistoric sites and situations which we seek to observe.

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British Prehistory: Some Thoughts Looking In

Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic: Landscapes, Monuments and Memory by Mark Edmonds, 1999. London: Routledge; ISBN 0-415-20432-1 paperback £15.99 & US$25.99, xi + 173 pages, 64 ills.

Ian Hodder

This is a wonderful book, beautifully written, an elegant summary of Edmonds' own views and of the conclusions of an exciting new generation of British prehistorians. The book has also set me thinking about a wider set of issues. Especially when read in California, the book offers a reflective moment. It invites a consideration of the way in which British prehistorians have come to see the monuments and sites which fill up (and here is the issue) 'their' landscapes.

The book provides a general interpretation of

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the earlier Neolithic in Britain, covering aspects such as landscape, subsistence, burial, and exchange. The largest part of the text concentrates on the evidence from causewayed enclosures. The chapters in the book alternate between general interpretive accounts of the archaeological evidence, and (in bold type) more fictional and imaginative essays. At the back of the book a dialogue with Barbara Bender about its content is presented.

From the point of view of the perspective I take in this review, the book is both an ending and a beginning. Appropriately published in 1999, it represents a moment of change in the way the past is construed. On the one hand, looking backwards perhaps to the nineteenth century, we see nationalism and nostalgia. On the other hand, looking forwards to a globalized relationship with the past, we glimpse a new openness and multivocality.

Nationalism and nostalgia

It is now widely argued that archaeology emerged as a scientific discipline in the context of nationalism (e.g. Daniel & Renfrew 1988; Diaz-Andreu & Champion 1996). Colonialism and imperialism also played an important role, especially in the United States (Trigger 1984), but an initial impetus in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the construction of unity and history within the emerging nation states. Earlier periods and groups such as the Celts, Slavs, Greeks, Turks or Germans were looked to, to provide a unity and sense of national pride. The success of this strategy is evident in contemporary Europe where, in contrast to many other parts of the world, members of nation states have an unproblematic relationship with the monuments and artefacts found on their territories. Monuments and sites are seen as belonging to and owned by the nation state, and especially middle and upper class groups take their relationship with monuments and sites for granted. The monuments help to create a sense of belonging; a being part of. The relationship between people and their past is seen as self-evident.

Within the British, or at least the English sense of nation, nationalism and nostalgia are intimately tied to a rural fantasy, and in this archaeology has long played a role. Whether we consider Turner's paintings of Stonehenge, or Hardy's romantic dramas centred on the same site, or Victorian picnics on barrows and monuments, or whether we fast-forward to English Heritage and the National Trust protection of rural landscapes, we see a mixture of nation, romance and nostalgia ingrained within a rural idyll. Throughout, there is a comfortable sense of knowing, of belonging, of familiarity within a rural landscape.

This background helps me to make sense of what seems to be a contradiction within much recent work on British prehistory which takes an experiential or phenomenological perspective. It is of interest that this recent work arrives at the same end point — the bodily experience of moving around monuments and landscapes — whether the starting point is the phenomenology of Heidegger (as in the case of Thomas 1996 or Gosden 1994) or the very different structuration theories of Giddens (as in the case of Barrett 1994). What seems contradictory in this work is that on the one hand a critical, reflexive stance is taken, but on the other hand the moment of experiencing past monuments is not opened to critique (Hodder 1999; Meskell 1996). Rather, the bodies that are described moving down a cursus, or into a causewayed enclosure or henge, are not placed within a different frame of meaning and are not adequately situated within an alien discourse. The bodies become universal bodies, and their relationship with 'their' landscape becomes taken for granted and unproblematic. For example, when Tilley (1994) takes a walk down the Dorset cursus, he seems to be 'taking a walk' in a very contemporary sense. When Barrett (1994) and Thomas (1996) describe individuals moving around henges, or when Bradley (1993) discusses how Neolithic houses were centres of experience, there is little account of alternative views, radically different understandings of our relationship with place (despite the theoretical emphasis on just such issues). It is almost as if one sees in such writing not the self-critical, reflective social scientist, but the lord of the manor 'taking a walk' around his estate, surveying 'his' landscape, entirely comfortable within a familiar land and nation to which he 'belongs'.

In some ways, Edmonds seems aware of these issues and tries to move beyond them. His experiential accounts are more careful and more nuanced than many others. He does try to place human action within a situated frame of meaning. For example, in chapter 5 he suggests that we need to see stone tool production as not just practical but as situated within a landscape of social memories (p. 49). I will refer to more such examples below. But in other ways, Edmonds repeats what has become the dominant interpretation of the earlier Neolithic in Britain without critical appraisal. He seems to take his interpretations for granted, to be comfortable with them.

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The monuments in the landscape have become familiar to him.

In the postscript dialogue to the book, Bender (p. 157) refers to the repetition of this taken-for-granted set of ideas as a mantra, and this does seem an appropriate word. All the new terms of the dominant discourse regarding British prehistory are repeated without critique. This is true both of the use of general social theory and of specific interpretations of the earlier Neolithic. As regards examples of the social theory mantra, on p. 58 we learn of 'routines that people followed', and of 'knowledge of how to go on', and on p. 134 that 'monuments are often fundamental to . . . social memory'. As regards the mantra that describes the interpretation of the earlier Neolithic, on p. 63 we read that treatment of human bones in Neolithic burial monuments 'could conceal differences of authority', and on p. 64 that 'a forecourt emphasized the place in which only a few could stand and speak'. 'Enclosures were concerned with the making and remaking of the social order' (p. 123). Treatment of bodies and objects in burial was 'a narrative' (p. 124).

The mantra-like nature of these claims is indicated by the fact that for many there remains little evidence. On p. 90 Edmonds argues that the recutting of ditches in causewayed enclosures 'was not simply the result of some routine process of ditch cleaning and maintenance: it was a product of more purposeful acts'. This claim has never in my view been demonstrated — it has become an unquestioned taken-for-granted. On p. 99 'enclosures were arenas in which identity and authority were brought into being'; monuments were projects in which people had a limited sense of what they were doing. There is no evidence for such claims. As Edmonds states (p. 100) 'there is much scope here for speculation'.

On p. 162, Edmonds says that he wants to avoid writing a 'past-u-like', but the mantra has become uncriticized. The discourse has effectively silenced conflicting claims and allowed grand arguments to be based on minimal data. The shift to the Neolithic is described as piecemeal, small-scale, uncoordinated, dispersed, gradual, with the people at the time not being aware of the transition (p. 68) when the actual evidence for transition is very slight. In chapter 8 there is an account of rotten flesh being picked off human bones by hand. There is no evidence that defleshing occurred in this way. The movement of individuals across causeways into enclosures 'meant an acknowledgement of seniority and difference' (p. 113). Other unsubstantiated claims are that 'the dead pass through Wayland's Smithy rather than ending up there' (p. 58), and that 'there were many ways of dying. There were good deaths and bad deaths' (p. 58).

The mantra occurs because of the effectiveness of a new dominant discourse. According to this new canon it seems to have been accepted that we know how earlier Neolithic communities interpreted the world in which they lived. There is a comfort from the discourse. But I would also argue, and I shall pursue this further below, that the lack of internal critique stems from a familiarity with landscape which comes from believing it is yours and that you are part of it. In order to make my case further, I wish to turn to the way in which Edmonds' text is written.

Each of the main chapters starts with a poetic account of the English landscape. These accounts are of the familiar and nostalgic. Few except educated English readers would recognize the sonority and power of writing such as this. 'Upon the edge of the Vale of Pewsey a chalk ridge hangs above the arable, an area of grazing and hawthorn scrub. We know it now as Knap Hill. Coming to this vantage in the low light of morning or as the sun starts to set, the shadows reveal a chain of ephemeral features . . .' (beginning of ch. 9, p. 80). Or at the beginning of chapter 7 (p. 56) we find the following. 'Walk along the Ridgeway south-west from Uffington. Keep the White Horse behind you, Dragon Hill and the Vale over your right shoulder. Half an hour or so will bring you to Wayland's Smithy . . .'. We are drawn into the Neolithic by familiar paths and by-ways, recounted in terms redolent of centuries of prose and verse. The Englishness and the rural nostalgia stand out. It is this, I argue, which at least partly, lies behind the unsubstantiated claims of the new prehistory. The past is familiar and the rhetoric supports the familiarity. We 'know' what the past means.

A different but related point can be made concerning the bold fictional accounts in the alternate chapters. While I welcome these, for reasons to be given below, I sense a use of words and phrases that hints of the rural exotic. On p. 106 we read that 'her uncle had shown her the way in this making'. Other phrases include 'when she had seen ten summers'. The writing is often beautiful, but in the unusual phrasing and in the short stunted and repeated words such as 'The signs were good' (pp. 51–2) there is a sense of a static and stereotypical other — 'That was the way at these times' (p. 131). Perhaps I am reading too much into the rhetoric used in these accounts, but they seem to me to make the Neolithic past exotic yet desirable. It seems that this past is con-

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structed as traditional and other-worldly, but familiar because stereotypical tropes are employed.

One of the distinctive aspects of the whole book is the complete lack of references in the text, although a bibliography is provided at the end. The lack of references could be seen as positive in that it makes the text more accessible. The lack of evidence for claims, and the lack of substantiation for interpretations could be seen as the necessary product of writing a popular book. This may be true and some of the positive aspects of Edmonds' popular account will be discussed below. In my view, the book remains specialized and I doubt that it will work as a truly popular text. It rather summarizes the dominant view in British prehistory. In which case, should not the general reader be allowed some indication of the evidence on which the story is based? Edmonds is better placed to offer informed critique than any of his readers. The lack of evidence, reflection, references seem to make the text more élitist and less penetrable. For example, on p. 121, when talking of causewayed enclosure ditch placements of skulls, he suggests that 'perhaps the heads that were sometimes buried retained their eyes'. The way this is stated makes it difficult for a non-specialized reader to know whether there is any evidence for this. At Godmanchester in Cambridgeshire 'assembled companies may have sought spiritual help in renewing the fertility of the land' (p. 105), but how, might the general reader reasonably ask, can archaeologists make such claims?

Towards global diversity

So far I have suggested that aspects of Edmonds' text and of recent British prehistory, in particular the contradiction between a reflexive approach and a non-reflexive account, can be made sense of in terms of a long cultural tradition in which landscape is central to claims of national belonging, and in which rural monuments are owned and made familiar. In such a context, the past is self-evident and there is little potential for critique and debate. It is possible to 'speak for' people in the Neolithic because in some sense (a sense defined by the politics and rhetoric of nationalism) 'we' and 'they' are one.

It is distinctive that the phenomenological approaches in British prehistory have had little impact in the United States, and I think in other strongly multi-ethnic societies. The idiom of 'speaking for' experiences of people in the past seems to make less sense in these countries. In a recent discussion in California it was suggested to me that one cannot imagine most US archaeologists describing native American experiences of monuments (Preucel pers. comm.). Such a 'speaking for' would be seen by many non-native and native Americans alike as insensitive. Some non-native Americans argue that their use of categories of complexity to describe early societies in the Americas has to do with the feeling that it would be inappropriate to go beyond such external descriptions to define internal experience. These may be some of the factors that inhibit the use of phenomenological approaches in the United States, at least in the way they have been used in the UK. Native American rights, reburial and African American identities mean that the context of the archaeological past in the United States is colonialism and imperialism (Trigger 1984). The comfortable space provided by the 'one-ness' of nationalism in the UK does not exist here.

But in the context of global flows, creolization, hybridity, and trans-nationalism, it is increasingly apparent that the self-evident nature of the nation-state is being undermined. For many, Britain too is increasingly a multi-ethnic society. What is the role of archaeology in these new diverse and globalized spheres? In many ways, Edmonds' book moves us towards a response to such questions. In particular, the use of two texts, the one 'serious' and the one 'fictional', opens up his book to wider interpretation. This move is parallel to the many experiments in ethnographic writing, and Edmonds' version is particularly successful. My only worry here is that the distinction between the two types of text is not great enough. In fact the 'serious' chapters become so imaginative that they become scarcely distinguishable from the 'fictional' accounts. Both chapter 4 which gives a fictional account of making a wooden track, and chapter 6 which is a story about flint quarrying, seem little more imaginative than the 'serious' accounts which precede them. The end result is again homogenization. Critique and diversity could have been engendered by placing references in the serious chapters, and by having careful consideration of the evidence on which the fictional accounts were based. This would have both opened the Neolithic up, and allowed the entry of other critical voices.

An opening up of the text is also achieved by the popular and accessible writing style. As Edmonds states in his preface, he had felt frustrated at the gap between theory and evidence in British prehistory. Theory was often too abstract, turgid, impenetrable. Written accounts missed the humanity of daily life. So he tried to write in a way that is less determined and more open. 'I wanted to write a less "academic"

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book' (p. 157). Chapter 4 does give a wonderful sense of 'being there' as Neolithic tracks were constructed. It makes the reader see that the tracks were more than wooden structures; they are set within a social context. Similarly, the mundane acts of quarrying flint are set within social memories of landscape in chapters 5 and 6.

The book is very successful in giving a sense of a landscape with people in it, a lived landscape. Edmonds is good at giving particular, rather than a general, sense of place and time. The account often emphasizes diversity and difference. Women are described doing tasks often stereotypically associated with men. Different social groups are seen using the tombs and causewayed enclosures in different ways. The same landscape is seen as being used differently in different periods through time (e.g. p. 80). As already noted, British prehistorians have not sufficiently critiqued their notions of how people lived in Neolithic landscapes, but at least Edmonds pushes us towards some degree of diversity and specificity.

Conclusion

The postscript dialogue is perhaps the most obvious point at which diversity, critique and reflexivity can enter into the book. Bender usefully prises open many of the taken-for-granted assumptions that underlie the book. But I found it odd that she did not push farther in this direction since it is her own book on Stonehenge (Bender 1998) that most directly challenges the one-nation tenor of British prehistory. In her exploration of alternative perspectives on Stonehenge, in her travelling exhibit dealing with conflicting claims on the site, in her use of dialogue and debate, she produces a past which seems diametrically opposed to the comfortable certainty of the phenomenological accounts of Neolithic daily life. She directs us towards a world in which nation is not taken-for-granted, and in which the rights and interests of a diversity of groups are explored.

Another account which opens up 'British' prehistory is provided by Parker Pearson and Ramilisonina (1998). Here, parallels with Madagascar are used to provide an alternative reading of Stonehenge and its landscape. In an increasingly globalized world, as nation states become cross-cut by processes as diverse as migration and media, archaeologists will increasingly need to respond to a diversity of competing claims on the past. The response will involve new perspectives and new methodologies. Edmonds in this book is to be congratulated on both presenting an older perspective, and moving in significant ways towards the new.

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Early Greek Art in a State

Art and the Greek City State: an Interpretive Archaeology by Michael Shanks, 1999. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; ISBN 0-521-56117-5, hardback, £40.00/US$69.95, xv + 237 pp., ills.

John Papadopoulos

Following hot on the heels of his 'My Summer Travels through Greece' (aka: *Classical Archaeology: Experiences of the Discipline*, London 1996), Michael Shanks returns to the subject of his doctoral dissertation: Corinthian pottery. The result is a bold and in many ways innovative discussion about the 'design' of a culture and a 'way of life in times of great change' in the archaic city-state of 'Korinth' (normally Corinth in English; Korinthos in Greek). Under the influence

of Anthony Snodgrass, Shanks' time-frame, predictably, begins with the end of the 'Dark Age,' a period that provided all the primordial slime required to create the *polis*, or Greek city-state. Prosaically, the book is largely concerned with the eighth and seventh centuries BC. Developments in the late Bronze Age and earlier stages of the Iron Age, along with what happens to Corinth during the sixth and fifth centuries are deemed irrelevant and thus beyond the scope of the study. The focus is therefore most sharply on colonial settlement outside Greece, the spread of Corinthian goods and influences and the emergence of the *polis*, three aspects that are stated, from the very beginning, as unassailable given facts.

The great strength of Shanks' study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, one informed by anthropology, archaeological theory and art history (in that order). The result is what the author himself labels an *interpretive archaeology*. It is, however, interdisciplinary in a highly selective and idiosyncratic manner. In a book such as this — devoted to style and design — anthropologists, for example, might be surprised by the omission of seminal contributions, such as those of James Sackett. In a similar vein, art historians working in the post-antique era would note similar omissions. The guiding hands of those that influenced Shanks most are spelled out: Ian Hodder and Anthony Snodgrass (in that order), followed by Vernant, Gernet and Schnapp (who appear as surnames), and then Bruno Latour. Randall McGuire's *A Marxist Archaeology* earns a mention, and Shanks virtually casts his own study as an ancient Corinthian version of Walter Benjamin's unfinished *Passagen-Werk*, which 'aimed to fashion a history of nineteenth-century Paris . . . another great city in times of radical change' (p. xiv).

Following an introduction that sets the intellectual stage, the material is presented and discussed in six chapters. The first deals with methodology and the presentation of a theory of design. The starting point is a single Corinthian perfume jar. This is an arbitrary, but very effective beginning that permits the author to move cogently from detailed minutiae. From this small pot — in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston — he opens up great vistas by asking penetrating questions to do with particularity and classification; the motivation of style (why potters make in certain ways and not others); materiality; the influence of social structure on production; style and how the concept is best conceived and used; temporality, survival and the role of the interpreter. One question looms large: what is a pot? The answer is not straightforward.

In dealing with these questions, chapter 2 turns to the historical and material context of craft production. The foundation block is a sample of some 2000 complete Corinthian pots. These pots, drawn from the 'lists', as they are cast, of Amyx, Benson, Dunbabin and Robertson, Johansen, Neeft and Payne, are subjected to a hefty dose of traditional and processual archaeologies of style, as well as (other?) anthropological approaches and social histories. Despite this barrage, the analysis of the discourse(s) concerning the archaic state surprisingly turns to classical philology. Like any good Classicist, Shanks provides the original Greek text followed by a translation. Indeed, the inclusion of so much Greek throughout the book gives it a certain scholarly 'weight', appealing to Classicists from Cambridge to California. Here Shanks falls into a trap that has snared many Classical archaeologists setting out to write at length about textual sources. He believes that the world he is describing started only when he began to cover it. Whereas the little Corinthian pot in Boston is thrown through a whole series of intellectual hoops, the literary record, including later sources such as Strabo, Diodoros, Herodotos, Aristotle (and pseudo-Aristotle) and Thucydides, to mention a few, does not receive a comparable treatment. Tyranny, power and discourses of sovereignty — political history — speak through the venerable text. The material record takes a back seat, a corollary of textual history. To be sure, Shanks returns to 'social history' in an attempt to make anthropological sense of archaic aristocracy, but only after the social, political and economic realities of the historic era have infiltrated and thus determined and defined the prehistoric or protohistoric past.

Chapter 3, almost one-half of the book, returns to design and style in early archaic Corinth. This is, in many ways, the pivotal chapter on 'art'. It is a dazzling 'collage or counterpoint', to use the author's own terms, 'of illustrated vessels, literary sources and anthropological discussion — routes into the archaic Greek imagination'. Some of the illustrations are marvellous constructs, many of which will delight inquisitive readers and challenge their curiosity and understanding for hours on end. Illustrations in other chapters are, in comparison, more traditional, though one (fig. 2.7) held its own mystery, as it was not immediately clear whether the thing illustrated was a Corinthian helmet, the Korykian Cave or a Disney character. The chapter begins with an interpretive dialogue through a Corinthian aryballos and ends with an overview of Corinthian ceramic style. In between (pp. 107–51) there is a hefty digression into epic and lyric war, hoplite reforms, experiences of soldiering, war machines and

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violence. Here, too, the literary record takes pride of place. Moreover, literary historic records are often used more or less as direct historic analogues. Criticism comes not at the level of the text, but at the level of the object, more specifically the picture on a pot. Evocative images, like the fighting scene on the Macmillan aryballos in the British Museum, become little more than illustrations for the poetry of Tyrtaios, Archilochos and others. We end up with a form of iconographic investigation very nineteenth century in its outlook, but one draped with a solid 'anthropological' veneer.

The shorter chapters 4 and 5 can be taken together. The former, *Perfume and Violence in a Sicilian Cemetery*, deals with patterns of consumption of the sample of 2000 Corinthian pots against the backdrop of a statistical and qualitative interpretation of context deposition. The pots are 'proposed as unalienated products, "total social facts" in a repertoire of style, a set of resources drawn upon in social practices of cult, death and travel' (p. 7). Chapter 5 deals with the export of Corinthian goods (i.e. pottery), travel, trade and exchange in line with recent discussions of an archaic Mediterranean 'world system.' The discussion is very Helleno-Corintho-centric, but the full force of a true 'world system' is not effectively explored. The whole argument takes on a very different light if one questions, as some scholars are doing, the 'Corinthianness' of the pottery in hand. Catherine Morgan, for example, has suggested that much of the 'Corinthian' pottery found in south Italy and Sicily may have been produced in, and shipped from, Ithake, and Sarah Morris and I (in Rolle *et al.* (eds.), *Archäologische Studien in Kontaktzonen der antiken Welt*) have argued that the Corinthian pottery trade — both manufacture and distribution — was in the hands of Phoenicians. If such perspectives are taken into account, then the discussions of ancient economy, anthropologies of travel, design and ideology, sovereignty, tyranny, power and warfare have little to do with Corinth. More than this, colonization is presented in monolithic terms: in black-and-white. There is no critique of the problematic Greek literature on colonies, no discussion of ambivalence, hybridization or creolization in a colonial setting, no mention of how objects become 'entangled' to borrow the term used by Nicholas Thomas. Moreover, there is a neglect of much enlightening anthropological literature on colonialism and culture contact and nothing on post-colonial theory, cultural hybridity and resistance.

Chapter 6 concludes with the concept of ideology, 'Marxian' ideas of material production and a 'sketch of contestation and strategic interest in the emerging states of archaic Greece'. The final word in the book is the *polis*, a preoccupation of Cambridge dissertations in classical archaeology of the last generation. In this case we return to the *polis* not because that is where the material has taken us. It is the inevitable outcome of the written word, coupled with a perspective that denies developments in the Bronze Age. Rather than move forward in time from prehistory into history, Shanks begins in the familiar landscape of the Classical period and from there, with the aid of literary testimonia, navigates back in time, from history into prehistory. However subtle, there is a privileging of written sources over the material record. This may be good (social) history, but it contributes to the ongoing schism between history and prehistory.

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Engendering Egypt

Remembering Osiris: Number, Gender, and the Word in Ancient Egyptian Representational Systems
by Tom Hare, 1999. Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press; ISBN 08047-3178-0 hb, £35.00/US$55.00; ISBN 08047-3179-9 pb, £11.95/US$19.95, xx +322 pp., ills.

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This book is at once exciting and frustrating — exciting because it represents an unusual approach to ancient Egyptian culture and thought; frustrating because it never quite fulfils its promise. The author is a Japanologist and thus, from an Egyptological perspective, an outsider. This enables him to take a fresh look at ancient Egyptian material, unhampered by the traditions passed on to the trained Egyptologist. He states that he decided to write about ancient Egypt because the civilization 'is so distant that no one can claim a culturally privileged understanding of it' (p. xiv). Ironically, although this is true, Egyptologists have in general been very reluctant to allow that anyone without years of traditional Egyptological training has the ability to make a meaningful contribution to the subject.

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This book, nevertheless, has to be treated as a serious study that takes as its focus the myth of Osiris and uses it to study aspects of language and representation, gender, and number, with a chapter devoted to each topic. Despite this framework, the whole never quite seems to hang together. The author himself says: 'I abandon all ambition toward the comprehensive and definitive . . . If whatever Egypt we may know must be assembled from the fragments of its ruin, so my discourse of Egypt must be fragmentary and dispersed . . .' (p. 5). The upshot is that it is never clear why the author decides to include some things and ignore others.

Some of this excitement and frustration can be illustrated by looking at Hare's discussion of gender and sexuality. Here the author takes as central the male ithyphallic figure and the 'celebration of the phallus' (p. 145) — the masturbating creator god Atum, the resurrected Osiris impregnating Isis, and the ithyphallic images of the gods Min and Amun. Although most Egyptologists today no longer share the embarrassment or disgust of their predecessors with regard to these matters, which Hare evokes so well, male sexuality, despite the ubiquity of ithyphallic deities, has generally aroused little interest in Egyptological circles. Thus it is timely to have this aspect of Egyptian religion and thought brought emphatically into the foreground.

Female sexuality, by contrast, has been a subject for study for at least two decades, partly as a result of an upsurge of interest in women in ancient Egypt. Consequently, gender issues in Egyptology have often been equated with the study of women and their concerns, to the detriment of male gender and sexuality. Hare, therefore, makes an important contribution by shifting attention to male gender and the phallus. It is odd, however, that he makes no reference to recent work that has touched on male sexuality (Pinch 1993; Robins 1996a), nor to the greater body of work on female sexuality and on Hathor, the goddess most concerned with sexuality (Naguib 1991; O'Connor 1996; Pinch 1983; 1993; Roberts 1995; Robins 1996a; Troy 1986; Vandier 1964–6). As a result, he fails to consider how male and female sexuality might intermesh and whether one can exist in isolation from the other.

A case in point is the continued existence of the individual after death. The erection achieved by Osiris after he had been murdered, and his impregnation of Isis, formed a bridge between life and death. Not only is the deceased, from the Middle Kingdom on, identified with Osiris, but he is promised the ability to copulate in the hereafter, an ability that is graphically displayed on a ceiling in the tomb of Ramses IX, where the newly awoken male dead are shown with erections. In addition, the transformation from this life to the next is envisaged as rebirth, analagous to birth into this world, with the emphasis, therefore, on female sexuality. Objects that protect and help during birth are placed in burials to perform a similar function during rebirth. Among such items are images of nude women, now usually called fertility figurines, which frequently emphasize the pubic triangle and sometimes include an indication of the vulva also. These are very common objects and have been found in houses, burials, and Hathor temples. It has been convincingly shown that they relate to female sexuality and fertility, and thus to the continuity of the family in this life and the rebirth of the dead in the next (Pinch 1983; 1993, 211–25).

Fertility figurines are ignored in the author's brief consideration of female sexuality (p. 137–44). Perhaps if he had included them in his discussion, he would have modified his statement that '(i)t seems that certain standards of decorum inhibited reference to female sexuality, and this has led some art historians to observations about reticence vis-à-vis the depiction of human sexuality in Egyptian art' (p. 137), a statement that is further undermined by studies on other aspects of female sexuality, but the pertinent references for these are missing from his bibliography (Naguib 1991; O'Connor 1996; Pinch 1993; Roberts 1995; Robins 1996a; Troy 1986; Vandier 1964–6).

It is true that in the formal art of temples and tomb chapels depiction of the sex act is mostly avoided. A good example is Hare's figure 3.10 showing the conception of Amenhotep III, in which Amun-Ra holds the sign of life to Mutemwia's nostrils, rather than depicting the god physically penetrating the queen. Human copulation is, however, readily shown in non-formal contexts, such as drawings on ostraka (Manniche 1977; 1987) and in the famous Turin erotic papyrus (Omlin 1973). Furthermore, female sexuality is frequently referenced from the Old Kingdom on. Although their status demanded that élite women be shown clothed, the body-hugging sheath dress that they are depicted wearing from the Old Kingdom and into the first part of the 18th Dynasty displays the shape of the body, including, in many instances, the pubic area. The looser forms of dress depicted from the later 18th Dynasty are frequently treated as though the material is transparent, so that the body and pubic area are plainly displayed to the viewer (Robins 1996a, 36–7; 1997a, 76). If women, like men, wore loincloths — as surely they must have done at least during menstruation —

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this is not acknowledged in the pictured image.

Hare is more comfortable with recognizing erotic intent in 'the full nudity of certain dancers and musicians depicted in scenes of banqueting and celebration in New Kingdom tombs' (p. 140). These scenes relate to the annual Festival of the Valley, when the (ithyphallic?) statue of Amun was brought from his temple at Karnak across the Nile to the west bank to spend the night with Hathor at the temple of Deir el-Bahri. Élite families would at the same time visit the tomb chapels of deceased relatives and share a meal with them. The scenes include numerous references to rebirth and to Hathor, who was associated with music, dance, and drunkenness, in addition to female sexuality (Manniche 1987, 40–43; Robins 1996a, 30–31; Robins 1997a, 138). Within this context, the nudity of some musicians, dancers, and female servants can plausibly be seen as erotic and connected to the deceased's hope of rebirth through the agency of Hathor.

In considering the phallocentric nature of Egyptian gods, Hare asks 'how it would be possible *not* to interpret the ithyphallic representations of Amun and Min . . . in an erotic, more precisely, *homoerotic* way' (p. 144), and how to 'interpret the legions of representations of the pharaoh making offerings to an unambiguously erect and remarkably endowed god' (p. 145). These are interesting questions that need consideration, but we must not view the cults of these gods in isolation; any answers have to take into account the fact that the king is also depicted performing similar rituals for female deities and for male deities who were not shown as ithyphallic.

Furthermore, Hare ignores the fact that the cult of Amun was from the 18th Dynasty most unusually served by a priestess who held the titles 'god's wife' and 'god's hand' (Gitton 1984; Naguib 1991; Robins 1993, 149–56). The latter title, referring to the creator god's act of masturbation, suggests that the god's wife served the phallic aspect of Amun-Ra. Thus the female is not lacking, as suggested by Hare (p. 148), nor was the cult 'exclusively a sexuality *between men*' (p. 148).

Hare discusses two 18th-Dynasty rulers, Hatshepsut and Akhenaten, who do not fit the phallocentric model of kingship that he posits. Hatshepsut poses a problem because she is a woman. Hare suggests that she introduced a 'new ideology of divine paternity' (p. 134) in order to legitimize her position as king. He is referring to the series of scenes in her funerary temple 'which cast her as the begotten heir of Amun himself' (p. 135). This was not, however, the first time that a king had been identified as the bodily offspring of a deity. A literary tale of the Middle Kingdom identifies the first three kings of the 5th Dynasty as the bodily children of the sun god Ra and a human woman (Lichtheim 1973, 219–22), and such a relationship is suggested by the title 'son of Ra' used by kings since the reign of Khafra in the 4th Dynasty. A study of the decoration of a chapel erected by the 11th-Dynasty king Nebhepetra Montuhotep within the precinct of the temple of Hathor at Dendera has plausibly shown that the king, who often called himself 'son of Hathor, mistress of Dendera', was depicted here as the offspring of the goddess Hathor, having played the role of *kamutef* and fathered himself on the goddess (O'Connor 1992; Robins 1997a, 89).

Hare suggests that, when later kings used the myth of divine birth, 'it would seem to undercut the very seminal line they propose to strengthen, depicting their human fathers (unwittingly?) as cuckholded by Amun' (p. 136). But this problem, if it is one, was also present in the case of Hatshepsut, for she claimed the kingship as the daughter of her human father, Thutmose I, as well as as the daughter of Amun. Like all kings, she also claimed to be a manifestation of Horus and the offspring (in her case the daughter) of Ra. While Hare is concerned by the 'logical contradictions confronting us in these constructions of divine paternity' (pp. 136–7), it is not clear that they worried the Egyptians. Indeed, it was possible for the king to be called 'son' of still other deities, including goddesses, as in the case of Nebhepetra Montuhotep and Hathor. It seems, then, that the king could be thought of as having multiple identities.

Turning to the reign of Akhenaten, Hare interestingly characterizes the art 'as a normative inversion of the hypermasculine representation of power and divinity that had become so common in the cult of Amun *kamutef*' (p. 150). As for the new rendering of the king's image, Hare suggests that 'one would have every reason to assume the figure depicted to be female' (p.149). Yet careful observation shows that, despite its definitely feminizing traits, Akhenaten's figures are always distinguished from those of Nefertiti and other women at Amarna. Alone among adult male figures, Akhenaten's clothing is treated as transparent so that the forward line of the near thigh can be seen through the material. This line runs up to join the forward line of the far thigh where it meets the belly fold. Despite the startling lack of genitalia, the configuration of this region is totally different from the way female figures are depicted. In these the forward line of the near thigh, seen through the transparent dress, curves back at the top to form one side of the pubic triangle (Robins 1996a; 1997b). What-

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ever the message of Akhenaten's image, and this is much disputed, it is not that he is female.

In conclusion, I found this book, even at its most frustrating, to be a stimulating read. It is challenging to be presented with a view of ancient Egypt from a new perspective, and salutary to have to think through those points where one disagrees with the author to find out why. This is a book Egyptologists should read and discuss, whether they ultimately agree with it or not.

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African Complexity Revealed

Beyond Chiefdoms: Pathways to Complexity in Africa. edited by Susan Keech McIntosh, 1999. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; ISBN 0-521-63074-6 hb £40.00/US$64.95. x + 176 pp., ills.

Tim Insoll

This volume, part of the *New Directions in Archaeology* series from Cambridge University Press, aims in the words of the editor to rectify the paucity 'of African models, African-inspired theories and African case studies in the archaeological literature on the development of complexity' (p. ix). This is an admirable and justifiable aim. African material in general, not only that pertaining to the development of complexity, is frequently neglected outside of 'Africanist' circles, i.e. scholars whose research focuses upon Africa, and whose output is largely confined to specialist journals, conference proceedings and the like. How successful then is the volume in presenting this material to the target 'non-Africanist' audience? As with all edited volumes this is a difficult work to review even within the more generous word limit allowed by the *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*. One is essentially attempting to assess this volume from two different directions, as a collection or a coherent whole, and as a series of individual papers.

To start with the first consideration, the collection as a whole inevitably suffers from problems of uneven coverage of the continent. West-Central Africa for example, with 4 out of 13 papers, is privileged at the expense of other regions, most no-

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tably East Africa outside of the Great Lakes region (none), Southern Africa (one), and the Sudannic Nile Region (one). This patchiness in coverage, considering the size of the area covered, is acknowledged by the editor, along with the problems in satisfying everyone's 'wish list for gender, national, ethnic, and disciplinary diversity among the contributors' (p. ix). Such acknowledgement as this is useful, but the point needs to be made that some of the material included leaves one wondering what exactly the selection criteria were. Some of the archaeological data is already well known; the McIntosh's work at Jennejeno or De Maret's research in the Upemba Basin. Admittedly, this volume is aimed at a new audience, but one is still left thinking that many scholars of younger generations — perhaps, dare one say it, fresher from the field — could have made significant contribution (the reviewer not being one of these!), David Edwards, for example, springs to mind (Edwards 1996), with regard to the segmentary state and its relevance to the Meroitic state.

Similarly, the existence of the target audience needs to be considered further. The editor is undoubtedly correct when she outlines the usual absence of an African input to models (etc.) of the development of complexity. Africa is neglected in archaeological literature in many ways, denied an indigenous urban heritage until recently (but see Connah 1987), excluded or marginalized in archaeological textbooks, or exploited for certain categories of information, on hunting-gathering or for ethnographic analogy for instance (see for example Binford 1983). Thus this volume is certainly a useful way of drawing attention to Africa as a source of material, ideas, theories, models and case-studies for 'non-Africanist' archaeologists. Having said this, however, it is also something of a difficult volume to read in places, on account of style. Is this of importance? I believe it to be so — if important material is presented in what might be perceived as an off-putting way, who but the specialist in complex societies will consult it? The point could be extended to much archaeological writing, not only that concerned with aspects of archaeological theory.

Thus, although the style might be somewhat verbose in places, requiring a bit of determined wading through, the results are generally worth it. Not least for the fact that the existence of labels such as 'Africanist' has little utility in an era when we are constantly reminded of our ever-shrinking world, of the globalization processes going on around us. African archaeological material should be made available, and the editor and her contributors are to be commended for attempting to make this material more widely available. The 'receptive climate' (p. x) for it certainly does exist today. Technically, little can be said. Production values are high, as is perhaps to be expected from Cambridge University Press, are high; the only notable exceptions being one or two murky maps (e.g. map on p. 111), and an unfortunate typographical error relating to the spelling of the editor's surname on the contents page with some indecision as to whether it should be Mcintosh or McIntosh.

The individual papers themselves are obviously varied, some much more area and period specific than others. But a common theme is apparent, the critique of evolutionary models as applied to the development of complexity, and this unity of approach must, it is assumed, be put down to the hard work of the editor. A debt of gratitude also appears to be owed to Norman Yoffee's (1993) paper, 'Too many chiefs (or, safe texts for the '90s)', which is cited by six of the contributors, and provides a valid starting point for considering the 'typological stage-level neo-evolutionary model' (Yoffee 1993, 60).

Otherwise, it is difficult to isolate individual papers for special attention, particularly considering the limit of length for this review. The undisputed high point of the volume in my opinion, however, is the paper by David and Sterner, who draw a clever analogy between the richness of the Burgess Shale creatures, 'this disparate, but not diverse, early Cambrian fauna' (p. 97 — later corrected to middle Cambrian fauna), and types of human society, thereby illustrating that it is flawed reasoning to ignore the 'not-so-rare societies that present what we judge to be atypical off-trajectory features' (p. 97). Instead, they argue, we should study 'the disparate social formations least likely to lie on a trajectory leading to statehood' (p. 99). This is well exemplified with reference to David and Sterner's long-standing project in the Mandara Highlands of Nigeria/Cameroon.

Less convincing is Stahl's paper which provides an overview of the application of evolutionary approaches to African societies. Stahl raises many interesting and valid points, and criticizes recent archaeological research in Africa because, 'the emphasis on trade, towns, and states is consistent with a progressive developmentalist perspective that is alive and well in African archaeology' (p. 45). This perceived emphasis on empires, trade and towns in African archaeology comes in for repeated criticism, including the relevant chapter in David Phillipson's (1993) much-used textbook, *African Archaeology*. Fair enough, such an emphasis could be said to exist, as in

my own research investigating the towns of Gao and Timbuktu in Mali (Insoll 1996; 1999; 2000). But Stahl's comments appear somewhat naïve. She acknowledges, for example, that the input of funding council research interests and agendas is not insubstantial (p. 45). This is a major factor dictating many research priorities which should have been given greater prominence.

The main fault lies in the fact that the 'non-Africanists', the main audience of the volume, are somehow considered to be so subject to the swings of interpretative fashion that they gullibly took in, first, colonial denial of African achievements (which they did), then an Africa defined in terms of a 'progressive evolutionary framework' (p. 45), and finally have to be re-taught that Africa was not only on some upward ladder of progression. This might in part be the reflection of a generational gap in approaches to archaeology between Stahl and myself, but not all archaeologists, including 'non-Africanist' ones, are that simple — surely? The proposal that 'careful attention to variability and chronology associated with careful surveys are a first step'(p. 48), as a means of overcoming the downfalls or 'structuring effects of a progressive developmentalist framework' (p. 48) is also simplistic. Many archaeologists do survey as routine, and integrate the town into its regional picture of 'hamlets or villages' (and nomad camps — which are excluded). I fully agree with the need to stress 'variability and diversity, using Africa's past as a source of alternative models' (p. 48), but to neglect much work which is doing this is not the way to go about it.

In general, the variability in the volume which has been picked up in this short review is characteristic of the whole. Its ethos is highly commendable, some of its content is excellent, and most fine, but to approach the archaeology of such a vast area inevitably means that certain shortcomings will be apparent. Nonetheless, it is hoped that it will make archaeologists working outside Africa more aware of the rich and complex body of material from the continent upon which they too can draw in considering the development of complexity elsewhere. In summary, the volume is ultimately successful in conveying the diversity and utility of African archaeological material in considering 'pathways to complexity'.

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Meaning and Monuments

Mesoamerican Architecture as a Cultural Symbol, edited by Jeff Karl Kowalski, 1999. Oxford: Oxford University Press; ISBN 0-19-5079612 hardback, £55 & $US75, xiv + 416 pp.

David Webster

I was somewhat bemused to be asked to review this particular book because (to put it mildly) neither Mesoamerican epigraphy nor iconography, or the ideologies they reflect, are exactly my forte. When I happen to blunder across Maya inscriptions or sculpture in my own excavations I quickly yield to the nearest experts in these arcane matters, who are numerous, willing, and never far away. Because *Mesoamerican Architecture as a Cultural Symbol* is directed at a wide audience, including many readers as ignorant as I am, my observations will hopefully still be of some usefulness.

According to Jeff Kowalski's introduction, the theme of this book is the 'interrelations between buildings, builders, and the cultures that produced them'. More specifically, it seeks to investigate and reveal the meanings encoded in architecture that structure human interactions and that embody and transmit cultural information. Architecture is seen as part of a more general system of semiotic communication and socialization that includes the formal or

sacred landscapes of Mesoamerican built environments. As such the book has a pronounced top-down perspective, focused on symbolic programmes that expressed on the one hand the superiority, exclusivity, and dominance of high-ranking individuals or groups, and on the other, messages that cloaked and justified social, political, and economic inequality with images asserting collectivity and universal values.

I evaluate any book according to two criteria: first, did I learn something from it, and second, do I find it useful? My reaction is positive on both counts, but not necessarily because every chapter conforms to the expectations of the introduction. One reason why I find this book useful is that twelve of the fifteen chapters read like a 'great sites of Mesoamerica' roster, focusing on La Venta (Reilly), Teotihuacan (Kowalski), El Tajín (Wilkerson), Xochicalco (Molina and Kowalski), Tula (Kristan-Graham), Mitla (Pohl), Tenochtitlan (Matos), Copán (Sharer, Fash, Sedat, Traxler, and Williamson), Yaxuná (Freidel and Suhler), Uxmal (Kowalski and Dunning), Chichén Itzá (Stone), and Tulum (Paxton). If one needs quick and general overviews of such sites, their architectural layouts, and their basic symbolic attributes, along with up-to-date bibliographic entries, one could do no better.

Some chapters serve up fairly standard overviews that have been published in slightly different forms elsewhere (Teotihuacan, Uxmal, and Tenochtitlan, La Venta). Others cover ground that is not as familiar to most readers (El Tajín, Xochicalco), recently excavated sites (Yaxuná), or works in progress (Mitla). I found the chapter by John Pohl on Mitla to be particularly elegant, taking into account as it does both architectural embellishments and arrangements (the latter highly characterized by the *absence* of planning) and linking them to the very unusual political conditions of Postclassic Oaxaca. Pohl's chapter also illustrates another extremely important dimension of the book — the extent to which the richest conclusions can be drawn from those architectural and symbolic features most closely linked to written accounts.

With respect to the latter point I noticed that our understanding of Olmec iconography is battening on the far more complete information we have for the Classic Maya. That is, the Olmec are being ever more firmly entrenched as *the* (or at least *a*) 'Mother Culture' of Mesoamerica because meanings appropriated from the Maya (long since demoted from this same role) are being assigned to Olmec buildings and art. No doubt these interpretations have a sound methodological basis, but they do make me slightly uncomfortable, rather as when Thor Heyerdahl (as I recall) imported workmen from Peru to build reed boats in Egypt, to sail back to Peru, to prove that Egyptians taught Peruvians to build reed boats.

Three of the papers focus not on particular sites, but instead on the larger architectural patterns of whole regions (Weigand on west Mexico and Marcus on the Valley of Oaxaca), or on a widespread and distinctive class of Mesoamerican architectural features (Miller on skull racks). I found these papers to be among the most interesting for several reasons. I knew comparatively little about west Mexico, which Weigand admirably summarizes, raising among other issues how a strikingly original regional symbolic tradition emerged and flourished within Mesoamerica and resisted (or escaped) incorporation into the wider Great Tradition for a surprisingly long time. Marcus uses Oaxacan residential and temple architecture from the earliest times as a barometer of political and social evolution, and is not much concerned with its associated symbolic load. Although virtually all of her data have been reviewed elsewhere, I found her organized presentation very useful. Beginning with Mexica *tsompantlis* at Tenochtitlan, Miller effectively draws together evidence for skull racks and skull manipulation beginning in Formative times throughout Mesoamerica, and their symbolic implications for warfare, sacrifice, and world view.

As a Mayanist I found the chapters on Copán and Yaxuná very informative. Years of innovative tunnelling and mapping at Copán have produced the best architectural stratigraphy available for a major Maya centre and have convincingly tied it to a dynastic sequence. The discussion by Sharer *et al*. is extremely detailed and must be read by close comparison between graphics and text, especially for those (unlike myself) not already well-acquainted with Copán. I now eagerly await reconstructions of the energetic requirements and organizational implications of the many documented building phases. At Yaxuná, Freidel and Suhler have identified apparent dance platforms with underground passageways and trapdoors allowing a certain ritual legerdemain — i.e. to facilitate the ritual progression of Maya kings from the underworld to the heavens, performances which they relate to art or architecture at other Maya centres. Their work shows that excavation of unprepossessing structures at Maya centres can reveal forms that fall outside our standard categories, and I also appreciated their predictions about how future work at Yaxuná could help confirm current hypotheses.

Given surprisingly short shrift in any of the

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chapters is consideration of what Bruce Trigger has singled out as the most basic, widely shared, symbolic information inherent in monumental architecture — the projection of messages of social power. (Trigger's 1990 article on this topic is not even cited in the bibliography.) At first I put this down to a general abhorrence of reductionism, but then was fascinated to learn in Matos' Tenochtitlan chapter that according to Mircea Eliade, all temples and royal residences in ancient societies the world over convey the same symbolic meanings (*axis mundi*, sacred mountain).

Because of the basic theme of architecture as encoded meaning (and hence as text) there is heavy emphasis on intentional design. I was personally disappointed to see so little discussion of how this concept can be squared with the historical contingency inherent in the construction at many of the sites discussed. Layouts at Xochicalco and Tulum presumably reflect rather directly the intentions of the site planners. Other centres, such as Copán and La Venta, underwent centuries of architectural evolution. Still others, such as Teotihuacan, fall between these extremes. Sufficient variation accordingly existed to analyze how this encoding proceeded under different circumstances. It seems to me that the tension between what Bourne (1982) has called the 'blueprint' and 'process' principles in architecture is extremely pertinent to the enterprise of the volume.

One test of an integrated, multi-author book is whether or not each chapter conforms to the overall conception. As I noted above, this is not really the case here. Some chapters present good discussions of how real people actually used their architectural spaces, and what kind of sociocultural 'work' was thus accomplished (e.g. Kristan-Graham's account of Tula, Pohl for Mitla), but most do not. Others, like Marcus, avoid much discussion of symbolism at all except in the most general sense. In some cases the thrust of the argument is reinterpretation of particular sculptural or mural programs, as Paxton presents for Str. 16 at Tulum, with the larger architectural setting tacked on almost as an afterthought. Andrea Stone, on the other hand, does balance her interpretations of sculpture at Chichén Itzá with considerations of putative shifts in rulership and consequent innovation in architectural layouts.

In some cases I detected a certain sleight of hand, or at least neglect of alternative points of view. For example, in the Teotihuacan chapter much is made of the ritual importance of natural caves, most obviously in determining the position and orientation of the Pyramid of the Sun. Yet Linda Manzanilla's contention that the main cave in question is entirely of human construction is relegated to an inconspicuous footnote.

Mesoamerican Architecture as a Cultural Symbol is very well edited and I found only a few textual mistakes. Given the subject matter, the graphics must carry much of the information load, and I found them adequate, but only just. Many of the line drawings have been so reduced that it is difficult to make out structure numbers and other details, and some of the plans, such as those of Tula, are reproduced without scales.

Finally, I would like to register a complaint. On p. 95 Kowalski (whose work I have long admired) attributes to a long list of demon materialists, myself included, the assertion that religion and art are 'epiphenomenal' (quotes Kowalski's). This is an old, oft-repeated, and inaccurate canard, and quite gratuitous in terms of the content of this and the rest of the chapters. Next time someone takes me to task this way I would appreciate seeing the exact citation. For the record, I personally find ideology, epigraphy, and iconography quite interesting and significant, although I have no great talent for analyzing them. I also think all of these things are very useful in understanding the Precolumbian past in particular and the human condition in general, although I probably envision their roles very differently than Kowalski and most other art historians or epigraphers do. One archaeologist springs to mind who has used the word 'epiphenominal' as Kowalski accuses, but I'm not telling (and it's probably not who you think it is).

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On the Origins of Sacred Space

Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe, by Barbara H. Rosenwein. Manchester: Manchester University Press 1999; ISBN 0-7190-5565-2 hardback, £45; ISBN 0-8014-8521-5 paperback £15.99, 265 pp.

Roberta Gilchrist

Through the study of medieval immunities, this book explores the development of notions of spatial exclusion, the protection of sacred space, and the sanctity of place. Medieval bishops, monarchs and popes, in turn, declared specific properties immune to their own entry, or to that of their agents, and exempt from certain judicial and fiscal controls. Historians will value this book for its detailed political and legal analysis, while archaeologists will marvel at the picture it presents of the intricate spatial relations of early medieval Europe. By focusing on medieval immunities, and in particular the exemptions and prohibitions that were granted to religious communities, Rosenwein demonstrates the active role of space in negotiating power. Ecclesiastical space is revealed as deeply stratified — layered physically and chronologically — and imbued with multiple meanings that defy simple dichotomies such as sacred/profane and public/private. Just as archaeologists emphasize the contextual, polysemous character of material culture, Rosenwein regards the documents that granted immunity as fluid, multivalent political tools. She is one of a growing number of theoretically ambitious medieval historians of the American academy, whose work contrasts significantly with the more traditional political history of the British school.

Immunities were sets of prohibitions and exemptions that emerged in the sixth century, and were codified in charters by the seventh century. Rosenwein provides the historiographical background to their study, and traces their development in detail from a Late Antique tradition through to the twelfth century. She concentrates on their changing meaning in Merovingian and Carolingian Europe, where kings used immunities, together with gift-giving and religious patronage, to manipulate political alliances and networks. The issuing of immunities announced the political power of the king, demonstrating his self-control, and his control over royal agents, against entry to immune places. Such declarations had consequences for access to real physical spaces and territories, and the development of notions of sanctity, enclosure, pollution and asylum. This book does not deal in detail with the physical qualities or parameters of the spaces involved, which will be a disappointment to archaeological readers. Instead, Rosenwein provides us with a carefully crafted history of the spatial politics of early medieval Europe.

Rosenwein compares the notion of medieval immunity to that of Polynesian *tapu* (taboo), a system of seemingly irrational prohibitions. In Polynesian society a chief has the ability to declare negative sanctions, the infringement of which results in automatic penalty without human or supernatural mediation. The chief's power resides in the declaration of *tapu* — ritual, symbolic prohibition. In the medieval case, breaking the prohibitions of immunity could result in excommunication; in other words, eternal damnation of the soul. Rosenwein suggests that the major difference between the Polynesian and medieval conventions lies in the importance of writing in announcing the immunity.

The purpose and outcome of immunities changed markedly during the period under discussion, but they continued to confirm the high status of the granter. In the newly Christianized landscape of the sixth century, it behoved monarchs to grant immunities to religious houses, providing an autonomous position for them between church and state. By the seventh century, Frankish kings and queens stated their purpose in granting immunities to ensure peace and order. Charters were issued that emphasized the pious, religious meaning of entry prohibitions to monasteries. Immunities had become part of a royal strategy of patronage that gave land and inviolability to monastic houses. By the eighth century, Carolingian kings issued immunities that were closely bound to royal protection, enabling the king to be involved in ecclesiastical business, and strengthening the ties between the church and crown. By the tenth and eleventh centuries, immunities had become the preserve of the papacy, while kings granted new types of gifts and entry prohibitions, including the award of market dues and tolls, and licenses to construct castles and walls. By the twelfth century, the term 'immunity' had come to mean a sacred space, conflating the earlier concepts of royal immunity, church asylum and liturgically consecrated space.

Through immunities, the developing meanings of ecclesiastical space can be traced, notably those of enclosure, sanctity of place, and the use of relics to enhance the protection of sacred areas. By the fifth century, churches were regarded as sacrosanct spaces, and asylum could be sought within church enclo-

sures or within 50 paces of the church. Already, degrees of sanctity were accorded to parts of the church according to their function, with the altar being the most sacred space by virtue of its eucharistic purpose. A growing concern for the 'inner sanctum' of churches can be detected. In the middle of the seventh century, King Clovis II issued canons that included a diatribe against men and women who sang 'filthy and disgusting songs' while attending dedications and feasts. He demanded that churches should be protected by priests, who 'ought to keep and fence off those people from the enclosures and the porticos of their basilicas and even from the atria; and if they do not want to pay the penalty voluntarily [the priests] ought to excommunicate them or control them with the sting of discipline'.

Once the concept of sacred space had been established, notions of purity and pollution were formulated, requiring the spatial segregation of clergy and laity, and religious men and women. With the exception of priests, men were excluded from nunneries. Women were regarded as pollutants, and consequently were barred from monks' enclosures. From the time of the Council of Tours (567), distinctions between the clergy and the laity were emphasized, reflected in spatial prohibitions: 'At the vigils as well as at Mass, let the laity not be permitted to get close to the altar where the holy mysteries are celebrated and mingle with the clergy. Let the space delimited by the chancel toward the altar be open only to the choir of clergy who chant the psalms'.

By the end of the ninth century a new rite of hallowing burial grounds had emerged. It was not until the eleventh century, however, that cemeteries became sacred, protected spaces. Rosenwein cites the example of Catalonia, where by *c.* 1030 cemeteries had become inviolable spaces (*sagrera*). She notes that 'such protected places could become densely populated with residences, farm animals, granaries, and tool sheds. Indeed, the *sagrera* became the nuclei of new villages, displacing and disrupting old settlement patterns'. The place of the cemetery as a protected, inviolable space has yet to be addressed by archaeologists in relation to the changing nature of burial within churchyards, and the shifting patterns of nucleated villages in relation to churches.

The idea of the medieval immunity reached its zenith at the monastery of Cluny in 1080, when Pope Urban II declared a holy and inviolable circle of 8 km of land around the monastery. This land was consecrated (*sacratas*), just like the altars of Cluny, so that the inner sanctum had been extended to encompass the full monastic precinct and a substantial territory beyond it. Powerful religious symbolism was invoked to support the immunity: it was declared during celebration of the feast of the Purification of the Virgin, so that 'Cluny's seigneury and the pure womb of the Virgin became thus allied'. Here corporeal metaphors were used to emphasize the integrity of Cluny's sacred ban, an immunity strengthened by the inviolate space of the Virgin.

The final chapter of Rosenwein's book takes an entirely different approach, shifting focus to the immunities of English domestic space (franchises and liberties), their development over 1000 years and their relevance ultimately to the American Constitution. This chapter is less convincing than the main part of the book, and Rosenwein is at her best in dealing with the intricacies of the Merovingian and Carolingian scene.

Negotiating Space is an important antidote to archaeology's use of formal spatial analysis, with its inherent cross-cultural and cross-chronological tendencies. Rosenwein demonstrates that a contextual and diachronic understanding of the meaning of space is essential, and she provides us with a deeper knowledge of the spatial rules of the medieval ecclesiastical world. Ironically, church archaeologists will be closely familiar with modern immunities governing ecclesiastical space. Such concepts remain with us today: in Britain, buildings in use for worship are exempt from listed building controls and scheduled monument consent. A separate set of ecclesiastical planning controls are in place to protect the archaeology of churches and cathedrals, while the crown retains the privilege of special immunity from the jurisdiction of both church and state in royal 'peculiars' such as Westminster and Windsor.

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Description: Orkney, newly designated as a World Heritage site, has numerous well-preserved Neolithic monuments which give insight into the lives of Neolithic peoples in Britain and beyond.

In the far north of the British Isles, the islands of Orkney have a wealth of well-preserved Neolithic monuments. They have inspired this volume of essays by international scholars, who offer new ideas about life and death, monuments and landscape, not just in Orkney but also in the rest of Britain and Europe. From Ireland to Eastern Europe and north into Scandinavia, an inter-relating pattern of social practices in the Neolithic can be traced through archaeological excavations and close observation of upstanding monuments. Orkney has this year received a World Heritage designation for a swathe of land including Skara Brae, Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness and Maes Howe.

About the Editor:

Anna Ritchie is an archaeological consultant who has excavated in and published widely about Orkney. She is a Trustee both of the National Museums of Scotland and of the British Museum and was awarded an OBE for services to archaeology in 1997.

About the Conference and Authors:

The conference in September 1998 was initiated and hosted by the Orkney Heritage Society, and it attracted speakers and participants from across the British Isles and northwest Europe. For the first time, Orkney's outstanding Neolithic heritage from five thousand years ago has been placed in its European context. There is much new research here, from scholars well-established in their field.