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REVIEWS

BOOK MARKS – COMMUNICATING ARCHAEOLOGY

In the last issue (*EJA* 5(1), April 2002) Henry Cleere reviewed J. Beavis and A. Hunt's *Communicating Archaeology* and stated that 'archaeologists are, without exception, enthusiasts for their subject' but remain 'remarkably inept at passing on that enthusiasm or those data, whether to their fellow professionals, to their students, or to the general public' (p. 124). Strangely, this pithy, yet provocative comment has emerged as a focal point for this issue. The reviews here present examples of books and journals dedicated to communication among archaeologists, to students and the public. Clearly, Cleere was right. Yet, fortunately, some of our colleagues are taking steps to amend the problems.

One of the best examples of a new forum for interdisciplinary communication is *Archaeological Dialogues*. This biannual journal focuses on interdisciplinary dialogue and reflexivity. As Helmut Hundsbichler points out in his review, it succeeds in promoting exchange of both theories and concepts, while at the same time stimulating discussion. Such openness is exactly what we need and – if we participate and support it wholeheartedly – should lead to increased understanding among us.

Two of the books reviewed here also contribute to our understanding of one another. Heinrich Härke's edited volume on

Archaeology, Ideology and Society – The German Experience attempts an in-depth scrutiny of the political and social contexts that have affected German archaeology. Such an analysis is rare and not only provides a means for self-assessment for German archaeologists but also creates a means for non-Germans to see German archaeology more clearly. In his review, Geoff Carver points out that the papers focus too much attention on Kossinna and Nazi-archaeology. Such an emphasis shows the weight this topic still has in archaeological discourse on German identity and is surely proof that a contextualized, reflexive discussion is only in its infancy. The other book, *Towards Reflexive Method in Archaeology*, was written by the Çatalhöyük team and poses questions about how knowledge is acquired and how it is to be presented. In her review, Barbara Helwing does something as unconventional as the book's authors: she plays the contextual (or contextualizing) game in relating the act of writing her review to the situation of its writing. She discusses both reflexive methodology and the usefulness of the team's approaches for (Turkish) archaeology. Like the book, she breaks barriers and reflects on interpretative processes and the power of images. In this sort of archaeology, the goal is not to diminish the inherent biases, but to unveil them and make them comprehensible.

The message is that if we understand ourselves better, we can better understand our work and that of our colleagues.

In his slim book, Torsten Capelle manages to provide an overview of the complex historical and archaeological data surrounding the early medieval Saxons. He also does something that will undoubtedly please Cleere: he makes the information palpable to a public broader than a handful of specialists. For this, he is to be commended. Yet, he obviously also falls into a trap. In his book note, John Collis discusses the relationship between historical and archaeological data and points out the pitfalls of using ethnic labels such as the Saxons to specify a group of people. Part of the problem, he says, is that the public, non-specialist perception of names or 'cultures' often differs considerably from our specialist definition and can lead to confusion. Collis' review also focuses on the different ways of thinking in traditional 'culture historical' archaeology and an archaeology aware of the shortcomings of its ethnic paradigms. These differences often result in the kinds of problems the books reviewed here attempt to overcome.

In his novel, *Death by Theory*, Adrian Praetzelis achieves the seemingly impossible: he reflects on archaeological history and theory while narrating a detective story. Disguised in light-hearted banter, the novel presents a solid treatment of archaeological theory. As such, it is, as reviewer Mary-Catherine Garden points out, the ideal introductory text. It is a perfect means of introducing archaeology to first-year students and interested members of the public. Telling an archaeological story in an imaginative way is also the goal of Cornelius Holtorf's electronic publication. By putting his work online, Holtorf makes it available to (almost) the entire world. The non-linear, hyperlinked text allows readers – both specialists and non-specialists – to follow their own interests, rather than remaining mired in traditional format. This adds a never-before presented dimension to archaeology and makes it considerably more accessible. Both Håkan Karlsson, who reviewed Holtorf's publication, and Garden agree that these innovative publication forms will not replace traditional volumes. Rather, they will supplement them by supplying helpful and fun-spirited ways of learning about archaeology.

We, too, would like to think of ourselves and

of our own journal as a means of promoting discussion and of passing on the kind of excitement about archaeology Cleere mentioned. To that end, we have decided to put the review section of the *EJA* online in 2003. The online version will compliment the printed version and will be devoted to continual, ongoing debate. It will allow discussions that begin in the printed journal to continue without concern over page length, publishing costs or time delays. We will also be introducing a 'letters to the editors' section which will feature comments on the review section, suggestions for books to be reviewed as well as comments or statements in regard to specific reviews printed. We hope this interactivity will trigger debate among book authors and their reviewers as well as other specialists and interested archaeologists. So, please, send us your ideas, comments and reviews and review ideas!

One such controversy – that between Louis Nebelsick and Michael Rowlands – is included in this review section. Nebelsick's review offers a discussion of Rowlands' work on the Bronze and Iron Ages. Since his review is so critical, we thought it appropriate to offer Rowlands a chance for rebuttal. Unfortunately, the debate became more personal than we expected and the tone of the texts more acerbic. We find this troubling and are sorry it occurred within our forum. Still, we felt it necessary that the debate see print and we thank both contributors for their considerable time and exhausted patience.

Essentially, the core issue between them revolves around how archaeology should be practised. Nebelsick argues from the point of view of an American archaeologist deeply rooted in Central European 'traditional' archaeology, which emphasizes the necessity of a thorough, source-critical study of archaeological material before any attempt at a grand narrative can be made. He questions processual and post-processual approaches/archaeologists, accusing them of not reading and understanding the evidence sufficiently. For him (and most Central European archaeologists) the starting point for archaeological thought always lies in factual evidence. Rowlands sees this as a preposterous rejection of theory. He accuses Nebelsick of not understanding true epistemology, where the main essence is not absolute truth but the possibility of alternative explanations. Where Nebelsick discusses

evidence, Rowlands discusses models. The Nebelsick-Rowlands debate is a prime example of the different ways archaeology is viewed and practised across Europe and could serve as a springboard for a deeper discussion of the archaeological practices separating and connecting continental and Anglo-Saxon archaeology.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Ian Hodder, ed., *Towards Reflexive Method in Archaeology: The Example at Çatalhöyük*. (McDonald Institute Monograph – British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Monograph No. 28, Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2000, 238 pp., hbk, ISBN 1 902937 02 3, €81)

It is one of those rare mornings when I do not curse myself for my decision to become an archaeologist, a profession that requires me to get up every morning at 4.45 a.m. I emerge into the lush green of the dig house's courtyard, where the students have set up a holiday breakfast. I make plans for my free day – doing office work in town, spending an hour at an Internet cafe and hoping not to run into anyone I know. There will also be time to write this review. (Many thanks go to the Oylum team who provided an inspiring context for the writing of this review.)

The second of the new Çatalhöyük monographs comes along as a pricey hardcover in the usual format of the McDonald Institute Monographs series. Probably a first on the archaeological book market, the name of one main sponsor glows above the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara's name. Written by 'Members of the Çatalhöyük teams' and edited by Ian Hodder, the volume intends to set *the* example for the application of reflexive methods in archaeology. The book begins with acknowledgements and biographies of the individual authors. The 20 chapters that form the main part are arranged into three sections that come after an introduction by I. Hodder. Chapters 2–6 are devoted to the methods of defining, excavating, sampling and conserving. Chapters 7–15 assemble reflections on the

representation of Çatalhöyük(s), on the influence representation has on the process of thinking, and on the impact of special interest studies and interest groups. The last section, chapters 16 to 20, discusses the presentation of the site.

In the introduction, Hodder sets the agenda for the Çatalhöyük project, which consists of three components: excavation and surveying, research on conservation, and research on the presentation of the site to the public. He stresses the social context in which the project is situated, including the various interest groups involved, and calls for the greatest possible interaction between them. In doing so, he challenges the role of authoritarian archaeology by calling for a multivocal chorus. He also calls for reflexive and dominance-free methods that allow critical review of the way in which archaeological information is produced and presented and for open access to this information. The ongoing Çatalhöyük excavation is therefore designed as a forum for experimenting with a new, reflexive methodology carried out by archaeologists and specialists who are aware of their role as knowledge-producing agents and of their personal biases (C. Hamilton, ch. 10). They are, for instance, aware that they cannot provide objective information as they themselves are biased and influenced by subjective experiences, be it their own conceptual backgrounds or funding constraints.

My thoughts trail back to the context I am in right now. The green courtyard of the excavation house, constructed for us by the Turkish ministry of culture, a wonderful and restful place, with no space provided for either storage or working. The Turkish-German-Dutch team has just staggered off to spend the holiday in town. The village has been severely struck by the latest economic crisis and many people are desperate and must survive on the government's minimum wages. Unfortunately, we can only employ nine of them for about three weeks. There are 45 others who won't get jobs. I feel for the Turkish archaeology students from Hacettepe and Antakya Universities. Their work in the field fills them with dreams of becoming professional archaeologists. In reality, few will be able to continue beyond a BA. Most of the girls will be forced into marriages by their families, while the boys will be pushed to get practical jobs as clerks or door to door pharmaceutical salesmen. This is not a country where archaeology is easy – or terribly

respected. That sad fact became apparent to us during the first season of surveying the plain, when we learned of many sites that had simply been bulldozed away (a bulldozer illegally hired from the government's village work organization charges about one dollar per hour). While we are here, the police call us semi-regularly to ask our opinions on cases of tomb looting. While the Zeugma mosaics are the subject of widespread interest, Turkish archaeology has as its main focus the dozens of rescue operations in the dam areas. The three-month field work is frustrating and too often exhausted archaeology professors return to classrooms and announce to their students that the best way to make a living in archaeology is to marry a foreign archaeologist.

This is Turkey's archaeological reality. The question is: does Turkey need reflexive archaeology? Let's have a closer look: in trying to break free from the linearity imposed by regular texts, the book focuses on three themes: 'breaking barriers', reflections on the interpretative process, and the power of images in shaping our own virtual reality.

The major motive is clearly to 'break the barriers' inherent in archaeological discourse. By admitting the multivocality of the archaeological record and by replacing the concept of an authoritarian archaeological science (Hodder) with open discourse among different interest groups, the Çatalhöyük team is forced to reflect and contextualize both archaeological field methods and interpretative schemes. They also must break away from familiar schemes. Most of the chapters do present approaches pointing to a more refined methodology of fieldwork and analysis. Thorough proposals and comments on fieldwork organization and interpretation are provided by S. Farid (ch. 2), while L. Martin and N. Russell provide insight on the interpretation of garbage areas (ch. 5) and R. Tringham and M. Stevanovic carefully describe differences in excavation methods (ch. 9). W. Matthews and C. Hastorf (ch. 3) explain sampling and coding strategies, and F. Matero discusses the conceptual and practicable challenges of conservation (ch. 6). D. Brill (ch. 19) and M. Stevanovic (ch. 20) advocate multiple lines of documentation. Two chapters are based on the local context of Çatalhöyük, where ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological research adds new dimensions to the research (D. Shankland, ch. 14; W. Matthews, C. Hastorf,

B. Ergenekon, ch. 15). In keeping with a transparent interpretative process, the reader is provided with a narrative of the development of these methods, their faults, dead-ends and pitfalls. In the end, the Çatalhöyük experiences can be used as an example for other projects as well as used to challenge routine ways of thinking. What might be new about the operation is the stringent manner in which the methods are applied, and it is this part of the book that is the most fruitful to read.

In the book, S. Farid (ch. 2) and C. Hamilton (ch. 10) take time to enumerate some of the problems, or barriers, that exist among members of the excavation team. They point out sharp differences between trained contract archaeologists and academic archaeologists. A similar dichotomy was observed between the field staff and the specialists working in the laboratories (W. Matthews and C. Hastorf, ch. 3). The improvement of intra-group communication by the introduction of site and laboratory tours helped to overcome these problems (of course, in pre-postmodern times, the group might have gathered for a beer at sunset and discussed these day-to-day issues). At the same time, other barriers are apparently deliberately held up, e.g. between excavation teams of different nationalities (Farid, ch. 2, on the British team with R. Tringham and M. Stevanovic's comment on the American/Balkan trained BACH team, ch. 9).

Another set of barriers was manifest in the interpretation process. Interpretation takes place at the trowel's edge, at the very moment of object definition (P. Conolly, ch. 4). This moment is hence a crucial one for every further analysis, since from that moment on, the object becomes decontextualized. How much every single interpretation is directed by an underlying 'conceptual archive' is exemplified by N. Hamilton (ch. 7), who unveils traditional western perceptions of gender behind contemporary reconstructions of the past.

The next step in the interpretation process is the documentation of detected features or artifacts. Traditionally, this includes imaging – which is not haphazardly linked to the word 'imagination'. N. Leibhammer (ch. 11) and J.-G. Swogger (ch. 12) trace the connotations transported via different modes of archaeological illustration and reconstruction. Leibhammer points out that the interpretations done by a draftsman include both visible and nonvisual

information. Swogger's reconstruction of the exterior of a house illustrates how a drafts-person is influenced by experiences from their personal cultural archive ('House exterior reconstruction using modelling software': http://catal.arch.cam.ac.uk/catal/archive_rep01/01fig46.jpg). Despite such bias, archaeological illustration is far from obsolete. L. Hawkes and T. Molleson (ch. 13), demonstrate that it is still one of the most powerful tools for understanding archaeological features and objects. The two use drawings to create a three-dimensional reconstruction of the skeletons found interred at Çatalhöyük. Images, of course, represent only a selected moment of the past. As Swogger rightly points out, every image provides a crystallization of a given moment, a static, frozen snapshot of the past. This creates a constant dichotomy between the static images and the fluidity necessary for research (O. Shane and M. Küçük, ch. 16). The introduction of multiple images and moving images may help to enrich the archives that archaeologists create and eradicate some of the fuzziness inherent in archaeology. Images and accompanying documentation are the best means of presenting an excavation to lay viewers and specialists, each of whom comes with a cultural background and an agenda of their own. Yet, each wants to be satisfied. This leaves museums with the job of anticipating expectations and accounting for them in their presentations.

But how can any presentation transmit the many meanings of the archaeological material as well as those of the producer, user and viewer? Such multivocality is a major task for all involved in the presentation of Çatalhöyük, be it a field archaeologist, a museum's curator or a web designer. Every choice taken – the selection of objects shown, the editing of the documentation, and so on – is reflected in the presentation, and this is the moment when one has to admit that the ideal of a dominance-free discourse cannot be achieved.

The three websites operated by members of the Çatalhöyük team (Shane/Küçük, ch. 16; A. C. Wolle and R. Tringham, ch. 17) offer three alternative views of the site: the Cambridge website includes the least edited data, and is closest to the experience of the excavators. It allows access to field notes, diary entries, databases, reports and pictures created from the ongoing excavation. The Minnesota museum website consists of an interactive platform with

an educational objective. Ruth Tringham's website claims to provide access to multiple readings of the past, with a heavy influence from recent feminist studies. (Unfortunately, Tringham's website was not accessible at the moment of review.) Again, different views are provided by 3D-reconstructions and interactive CD-ROMs produced by the Fachhochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe (M. Emele, ch. 18).

Every single representation of reality manifests the transformation of reality into virtual reality. One of the characteristics of virtual reality – such as staged images – is that it is often more powerful than the reality it signifies. This virtual reality, once created, begins an independent existence, disconnected from historical time and space (ch. 18). Çatalhöyük's virtual reality is part of the creation myth of western civilizations since the 1960s (Hummel 1996). Its globalization now makes it accessible to new interest groups, and the excavators' ambition to provide the best possible ground for multiple interpretations is admirable. But a question remains: at what point does Çatalhöyük turn into a completely artificial product?

Finally, there is the irritating question of context. In the introduction, contextualization was cited as the main agenda. However, the Çatalhöyük experiment is almost entirely self-contained. While local women's personal interpretation of the site, villagers' traditional perception of ancient mounds or local politicians' selection of Çatalhöyük-related symbols add new voices to the multivocal chorus, there is a lack of a wider context, namely the political and archaeological. Two monographs on the new Çatalhöyük project have appeared, but there is no attempt to discuss the site with regard to other, contemporary archaeological sites. As illustrated by the Çatalhöyük section to the 'Neolithic in Turkey' volume (Özdoğan and Başgelen 1999), the site's contribution to our understanding of the central Anatolian Neolithic is still extremely meagre. The assumed uniqueness of the site still imposes barriers around Çatalhöyük. Breaking these barriers will be an eagerly-awaited task for the future.

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Heinrich Härke, ed., *Archaeology, Ideology and Society: The German Experience*. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000, 432 pp. incl. index, pbk, ISBN 3 631 36707 4, € 45.50)

As the title indicates, this book was not intended to serve as a history or theoretical overview of German archaeology (although both themes are discussed), but rather a study of the role archaeology has historically played in German society; what Härke calls an 'historical sociology of German archaeology.' This distinction might not be obvious at first – since such historical studies as Trigger or Bahn do tend to place developments within a social context – but should be evident from the section headings in the table of contents:

1. From nationalism to Nazism
2. Post-war West Germany
3. East Germany and reunification
4. International perspectives

In contrast to British archaeology, which developed under many years of parliamentary democracy, German archaeology evolved against the backdrop of a nation that was fairly late in unifying (1871). The sections are thus not divided according to scientific or theoretical developments, but by the societies archaeology served: the Empire under the Kaisers, the Weimar Republic, the Nazis; the post-war East and West, and now what is a (re)unified Germany. Although in his introductory essay 'The German experience' Härke argues that 'There can hardly be a better case study of the interrelation of archaeology and politics than Germany,' what ultimately results is somewhat different.

The first article, Ulrich Veit's 'Gustaf Kossinna and his concept of a national archaeology,' outlines Kossinna's influence on German

archaeology, which is arguably greater than that of his British or American counterparts. While the likes of Pitt-Rivers and Wheeler tend to be remembered for their technical innovations, Kossinna is primarily associated with a nationalism which – if only for the reactions it caused – is still felt in German archaeology today. His 'settlement-archaeological method' (which influenced Childe, among others) is, by comparison, all but forgotten.

The book's longest contribution, 'Archaeology in the Third Reich' by Henning Haßmann, discusses a number of still controversial issues associated with the abuse of archaeology by Nazi propaganda and the roles archaeologists played within the Third Reich. His close analysis shows the issues are not clearly black-and-white and might prove uncomfortable for many. This is an extreme example of the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by all archaeologists, a fact that is perhaps not underlined strongly enough: as with much else in this book, the close focus tends to wrongly suggest that these are strictly German problems.

Frank Fetten's article on 'Archaeology and anthropology in Germany before 1945' provides a slightly more theoretical overview, contrasting Kossinna's national and ultimately racial outlook with Rudolf Virchow's rationalism. If there is a hero in this book, it is Virchow, and one of the great imponderables is what would have happened if his *Urgeschichte* (which was not unlike American anthropological archaeology, with ties to physical anthropology) had not been replaced by Kossinna's *Vorgeschichte*. It should perhaps be noted that the articles in this book repeatedly emphasize the fact that they deal solely with what in German is called *Ur-* or *Vor-* and *Frühgeschichte* (pre- and protohistory), not archaeology (*Archäologie*). *Archäologie* has traditionally been equated with Classical archaeology, and considered to be a separate discipline in a very schismatic academic landscape. Further divisions (Medieval or 'provincial Roman' archaeology, for example) compounded by legislative diversity (culture is controlled by the 16 *Länder*) results in a very fractured framework for archaeology in Germany. Also, it might not be clear from this short summary that Härke's premise falls apart; the focus here is already less on archaeology and society than the influence of individual personalities. Kossinna, for example – active under the Kaiser