

AUTHOR QUERY SHEET

Author(s): Pedro Paulo A. Funari

Article Title: Book Review

Article No.: SARC 534592

No Query

A. Jones (ed.): *Prehistoric Europe, Theory and Practice*. Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2008. 380 pp., ISBN 9781405125963

J. Pollard (ed.): *Prehistoric Britain*. Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2008. 370 pp., ISBN 9781405125468

PEDRO PAULO A. FUNARI

10 The Blackwell Studies in Global Archaeology Series is a now well-established scholarly enterprise, aiming not only at accessibility, but also at theoretical sophistication. Two recent volumes are dedicated to prehistoric issues, covering Continental Europe and Britain. Both are quite good in their innovative theoretical emphases, raising relevant epistemological issues, not so often perceived by ordinary practitioners of the discipline. Both volumes start with historiographical analysis of the subject itself, showing to the reader the subjectivity involved in the study of prehistory and how there has been a trajectory of construction of the prehistoric past as narrative. Andrew Jones begins by discussing the philological bias of the understanding of the human past, by praising free and reasonable supposition and by criticizing orthodoxies, such as that responsible for condemning Giordano Bruno to the stake. Jones reviews interpretative frameworks and paradigms, concluding that archaeologists always take up a theoretical and political position on the past. Positivist scientific approaches have long been out of favour in cognate disciplines such as geography, anthropology and history, and archaeology has been criticized for its long-standing adherence to archaic methods and approaches. Jones proposes an interpretative archaeology considering the issues implicit in the inevitable conversation between material culture and language and sets the agenda for the

40 volume and the discipline. Joshua Pollard takes a similar stance and rightly claims that British prehistorians have been at the forefront of interpretative developments in Anglo-American archaeology and beyond.

45 Several chapters are particularly enticing. Mark Pluciennik aims at overcoming the traditional hunter-gatherer to farmers approach, proposing such subjects as mobility in things, peoples and genes, changes in cosmology and cultural hybridization, among others. John Collins explores the Celts as a 'grand narrative', going from Celtomania in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to recent discussions about contemporary scholarly deconstruction. Joakim Goldhahn produces an illuminating study of funerary monuments, including even a picture from the funeral ceremony of King Hussein, Jordan's monarch, in 1999. He points to a change in theoretical perspective from the dead in the monument to the living who built the monument and from monuments in the landscape to landscapes in monument. The construction of social identities through selective deposition in the landscape is the main subject of David Fontijn. Fokke Gerritsen stresses that prehistoric houses functioned as elements of social memory and temporalities in multiple and changing ways. A house is an artefact whose life-cycle is framed by people's culturally specific ideas on how a house biography should proceed, as much as by natural phenomena.

70 Dragos Gherghiou deals with the emergence of pottery, opposing a grand narrative to a mosaic of perceptions and emphasizing the social symbolic value of display, after Bourdieu, and *chaînes opératoires* of ceramic technology, as producers can choose between alternative actions. Barbara S. Otaway and Ben Roberts adopt a similar stance on the emergence of metalworking. Archaeological evidence is taken to convey a varied picture of many regional variations indicating adaptation of the learned process to fit local resources and cultural styles and beliefs. Katina T. Lillios engages memories of European prehistory, through burial monuments, mnemonics and mimesis or imitation. Human groups during the Neolithic of Europe were involved in complex transformations of their

social, physical and cognitive world. Bryan Hands continues to explore such issues, using social memory and Halbwachs to study the technologies of memory. Hands studies warfare during the Bronze and Iron Ages, a traditional subject, but proposes new approaches relating warfare to cultural responses to this category of praxis. Daniela Hofmann and Alasdair Whittle study Neolithic bodies and conclude that routines, embodiment, identity and representation are important approaches. Ing-Marie Back Danielsson also turns to bodies and identities, using late Iron Age Scandinavia as a case study to stress that, through the acknowledgement of different forms of reality, body and identity it is possible for archaeology to connect to present-day issues of discrimination, harassment, sexism, hostility towards immigrants and so on. John Chapman and Peter Wells conclude the volume on continental Europe by turning to trade and exchange. Wells points to the fact that, during and after the Roman conquests, smaller communities maintained exchange and trade relations with their neighbours and with more distant peoples in ways similar to those of pre-Roman times.

The volume on Britain starts with Paul Pettitt reminding us that Britain, for much of Pleistocene times, was not an island, but a European peninsula, with the earliest remains dating to the early 30,000 BP. Most of the chapters though refer to the last few millennia BP. Julian Thomas discusses the thorny issue of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition, acknowledging that the evidence will not speak for itself. The author considers the possibility that Mesolithic people had some role in the formation of British Neolithic, considering the active role material things may have had in bringing about social transformation. Domesticated plants and animals, pottery, timber architecture and polished stone tools involved a set of practices that were not restricted to subsistence and ritual. Several of the innovations might initially have been used under non-utilitarian conditions, and their adoption might in time have led to the transformation of the everyday. Several other contributors share Thomas' attention to inner changes and to symbolic motivations.

Rick Schulting studies foodways and social ecologies from the early Mesolithic to the early Bronze Age and does not hesitate to use a figure of the killing of a water buffalo at a large feast in Thailand to strengthen his argument of high

drama associated with the slaughter of domestic animals. The preparation of foods in prehistory is provocatively called cuisine, so as to stress the culturally specific ways of preparing, serving, consuming and disposing of food. Lesley McFadyen does not shy away from discussing the phenomenology of landscape in the Mesolithic and Neolithic, drawing on Christopher Tilley's interpretative framework. Considering the ways in which place comes into being through social practice, architecture is taken as practice rather than object, paying attention to points of departure and dispersal rather than being about the nested quality of a location and its fixed, staying-put character. Vicki Cummings also highlights monuments as places of experience, where communities could create multiple meanings through architectural form. Beyond the typological studies of old, monuments are now seen as providing arenas for the gathering of people, the treatment of the dead and the exchange of material culture, and marking out significant places and events. Again, a post-processual archaeological approach explores perception, experience and use.

Chantal Conneller proposes new approaches to lithic technology, emphasizing the *chaîne opératoire* concept, as a socially transmitted body of knowledge, as a socialized suite of gestures on matter (*pace* Leroi-Gourhan). The author acknowledges the structuralist rigidity of the concept and proposes to complement or correct it with a network analysis, enabling a focus on agency and fluidity of identity, meaning and things. Conneller argues that the symbolic dimensions of materials are inseparable from their mechanical properties and thus we need to understand these in order to generate an understanding of prehistoric stone working. Andrew Jones tells an attractive tale from the dead, focusing upon mortuary ritual as a process, diverse from one place to the other, unbounded by rigid typological schemes, as proposed by earlier archaeologists. Ancestors may intercede in the lives of the living by the presence of their bones or by the continued circulation of material culture. These are different ways of expressing the persistence of the dead in living communities.

David Field considers the terrain in terms of ancestral memory in the development of an agricultural countryside. Enclosure is part of the reorganization of the middle centuries of the second millennium BC, marking stability, land ownership,

and defining local communities. Jacqui Mulville relates foodways from the Middle Bronze Age to Late Iron Age to cultural choices, such as feasting and sacrifices, while Joanna Brück explores symbolism in the use of space. Robert Johnston on landscapes and Ann Woodward on ceramic technologies stress the need for data gathering, while Stuart Needham on exchange and Melanie Giles on communities both stress symbolism and identities. Giles reminds us that Iron Age lives are constructed through our interpretation as much as through our observations. More than that, we must discuss our own engagement with the past, how it challenges and transforms our own sense of identity and place in the world.

The two volumes are not monolithic, comprising a variety of standpoints, but overall the emphasis is on interpretation, rather than collection of new data. As part of this theoretical programme, attention is paid to the study of the relationship between archaeological interpretations and the present, now and in the last 200 years or so of scholarship. Then, theoretical models are put into action, encompassing Bourdieu and Foucault, to mention just a couple of authors out of a plethora. Both are very inspiring volumes. Hopefully prehistorians everywhere will explore the same theoretical awareness, for the benefit of the discipline and of society at large. Prehistory is shown as relevant and meaningful for people today, what is not a mean feat in itself.