Book Reviews

Blakely, S. 2006. *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy in Ancient Greece and Recent Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. xiv + 328 pp. ISBN: 9780521855006. £53.00.

The research presented in this volume is aimed at elucidating the various associations and spheres of influence of the Classical Greek daimones. The daimones, known as the Korybantes, Kabeiroi, Daktyloi, Telchines, and Kouretes, are figures from myth variously portrayed as divinities, spirits and personifications, and are traditionally associated with iron smithing and craft production. In this they are associated with Hephaistos and his smithing tools, but their role in myth extend much further beyond the smithy. They are variously honoured as protectors, namely of the infant Zeus, various cities, and holy rites in mystery cults. In addition to this they dance, control fertility and hold Dioskouric roles. The different daimones are local to the various regions of Greece, but in many instances their roles do not overlap from one area to another. Blakely emphasises this point, because the Kouretes and Korybantes have little or no connection with blacksmithing, a phenomenon which she argues requires a more complete understanding of the role of the daimones in antiquity. She rightly condemns widespread labelling of the daimones as metallurgical spirits, as this characterisation negates regional and phenomenological differences amongst the different daimones.

Blakely's approach is to use recent evaluations of the ritual nature of African blacksmithing and apply this to the archaeological, pictorial and textual evidence of daimones. She argues that discussions of African iron production have very much moved away from evolutionary models that view African smelting and smithing as static and universal. Rather, the process of smelting and smithing are now more commonly viewed from an emic perspective, with emphasis on changes through time and space, negotiation of roles between the sexes, (re)creation of cosmology and shifts in power. The variety of ritual behaviour, the range in the status of smith and the types of symbolic roles iron plays in the different African societies are seen by Blakely to match the diversity in the functions of the Greek daimones.

The extent to which Blakely achieves this goal of situating the daimones in their cultural framework is in many ways a success. The volume opens with a lengthy discussion of the data and a description of the approach taken. Here the emphasis on the diversity of associations of the daimones is an excellent analysis of the historical evidence and this analysis drives the subsequent sections of the book. It is especially helpful given the disparate evidence for the roles of daimones, evidence that is discontinuous across geographic space, only referenced obliquely in vernacular literature and difficult to interpret in the cultic sphere. To some extent, changes in time are flattened as Blakely uses evidence from varying periods to build her argument, but her stress on the multifaceted nature of the daimones challenges this as an issue. Blakely's two main foci are the parallels between metallurgy and birth (Part II) and metallurgy and political power (Part III). She examines each of these through the role of the daimones in myth, their portrayal in the pictorial evidence, and their historical associations. Parallels in the African evidence are drawn; to some extent Part III is bogged down by a lengthy examination presented in two chapters on Africa.

There are a few disharmonious aspects to Blakely's approach, however. Her heavy emphasis on the diverse characteristics of the daimones leaves the reader wondering why she does not study them each individually but follows tradition in considering them all together. Patterns in associations of the daimones with birth and creation in general, as well as with political power may be even more distinct on a singular level. There are wider issues with this book, however. The title of the book encourages the reader to think that in-depth comparisons can be made in Blakely's examinations of historical Greece and recent Africa. This is in fact not the case; Blakely is solely using the methodology currently applied to African metallurgy in her analysis of ancient Greece. Thus the appearance of numerous chapters which explore in detail various African smelting cosmologies and power structures is puzzling when most of the insight gained cannot be carried over into the analysis of ancient Greece. Little is gained from these long essays on Africa, because the reader loses focus on the essence of Blakely's main argument, namely, the role of Greek daimones. The strength of her synthesis rests on Blakely's

ability to integrate textual evidence and portrayals of the daimones in their vernacular context with their known associations with regional cults and their depictions on various media. The overemphasis on African frameworks only confuses the reader, and those readers who are more interested in learning about Africa will be concerned that the examples chosen by Blakely to elucidate her argument are rather arbitrary and her discussions about Africa are often simplified. Thus this volume may not be of help to those scholars interested in specifics about African metallurgy and its cultural frameworks.

On the other hand, this book is an excellent resource for anyone wishing to learn more about the wide-ranging roles of the daimones; in addition, anyone studying cults associated with the daimones or regions which are particularly allied with daimones will benefit from the amount of information synthesised here. In addition, this volume is very good for elucidating many of the nuances of mystery cults and their associated rituals. Her approach is specifically Classics-based and will most help her Classics scholar readers.

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Deger-Jalkotzy, S., and Lemos, I.S., eds. 2006. *Ancient Greece: From the Mycenaean Palaces to the Age of Homer*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. xxiii + 695 pp. ISBN: 9780748618897. £90.00.

The Early Iron Age (EIA) in the Aegean has traditionally been viewed as a "Dark Age" by archaeologists working in this field and it has only been over the last couple of decades that scholars have started to promote the idea that it may have been a more flourishing and complex era than was previously believed. A related methodological difficulty has been the fact that there is an artificial academic division between the Late Bronze Age (LBA) and the EIA, and issues of change and continuity between the two have rarely been considered in a unified manner. While there have been notable recent attempts to integrate the research of Aegean prehistory and Classical archaeology and to consider the less well-known intermediate EIA (e.g. Dickinson 2006), this book will certainly go a long way towards rectifying the current situation as it offers a wealth of fresh and comprehensive perspectives on this multifaceted time period. The rather generic title *Ancient Greece* obscures the fact that it is indeed a valuable and intelligent contribution to our understanding of the Aegean EIA in particular.

In Chapter 31, Whitley (2006: 599) highlights that the theme of the conference at which these papers were originally presented was 'from *wanax* to *basileus*'. This neatly summarises the main direction of the book, as there is a strong emphasis upon social structures and developments from the LBA to the EIA. The majority of the papers attempt to trace, to a greater or lesser degree, the sociopolitical changes occasioned by the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces and how these were played out in the archaeological evidence over the following five centuries. A number of the papers also deal explicitly with the complex issue of the *basileis* and who exactly these shadowy leader figures were. While inevitably the end of the book presents no clear answers, it is clear that some significant contributions have been made to this perennial question and the discussions offered will give the Aegean archaeologist a firm base from which to examine the issue further in the future. Some examples of the advances made on this subject include attempts to define the term *wanax* (Palaima, Chapter 2), discussions of the semantics of *anax* and *basileus* in Homer (Carlier, Chapter 5; Schmidt, chapter 23), explorations of the archaeology of the *basileis* (Mazarakis Ainian, Chapter 10) and a consideration of the transitions to *basileis* in Cyprus (Iacovou, Chapter 16).

The book is divided into six sections, each focusing thematically upon a broad topic. The opening part, 'Political and Social Structures', is more directed towards the LBA. A section that sums up the emphasis of the whole book, 'Continuity –Discontinuity – Transformation, follows this. The next three parts take specific topics relevant to the EIA and examine them in greater detail: 'International and Inter-Regional Relations', 'Religion and Hero Cult' and 'The Homeric Epics and Heroic Poetry'. Finally, the concluding section, 'The Archaeology of Greek Regions and Beyond', examines individual case studies that exemplify the themes and issues raised in the previous chapters, even if it does appear somewhat as a 'catch-all' section without the clearly defined parameters of the rest of the book.

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of this collection of papers is the way in which experts in their fields have directed their research upon highly focused topics, allowing for some valuable and insightful discussions. To give examples, in Chapter 10 Mazarakis Ainian continues to expand upon his research into EIA architecture and its social meanings and in Chapter 4 Killen adds to his previous subtle analyses of the Linear B tablets with fresh observations. In Chapter 8 Maran updates his examination of Building T at Tiryns in an article that will no doubt prove essential reading for anyone studying this important site in the LHIIIC period. All this ensures that the majority of the book is genuinely valuable for the Aegean prehistorian, as opposed to remaining at a superficial level.

It is hard to find any valid objections to this collection of articles. Inevitably, there are some that are more perceptive and significant than others, and certain authors do appear to have taken the route of summarising their previous work (such as Shelmerdine, Chapter 3 or Dickinson, Chapter 7). However, even these can still offer useful synopses of the topic under discussion that are concise yet comprehensive. Antonaccio's paper (Chapter 19) on the relationship between the *basileis* and the inception of hero cults may well provoke future discussion for its controversial and not always well-supported statements, an issue heightened by her confusion of books 23 and 24 of the *Iliad* (2006: 386). Yet, it must be emphasised that these are minor points in a book that ranges geographically across the whole Aegean, including Crete and Cyprus, and temporally from the LBA to the Archaic period, and that provides a genuine wealth of research into a relatively obscure era. It will undoubtedly prove to be an essential point of reference for anyone investigating this period in the future.

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Bass, G.F., ed. 2005. *Beneath the Seven Seas: Adventures with the Institute of Nautical Archaeology*. London: Thames and Hudson. 256 pp. + 433 plates (410 colour and 23 b&w). ISBN: 0500051364. £24.95 (hardback only).

> *If only one vessel sank in every year of every decade of every century of every millennium since the first seafarers sailed out from their cave dwellings in Greece 11,000 years ago, we would have 11,000 wrecks in the Aegean alone. But hundreds of ships have sunk in Aegean storms in a single day. We cannot calculate the number of wrecks in that one sea. The number of wrecks beneath the Seven Seas is truly unimaginable* (27).

These words, taken from Bass's introduction to *Beneath the Seven Seas*, a collection of 39 'adventures' (read: wreck excavations), undertaken under the auspices of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology (INA) between 1960 and 2005, serve well as a prelude to the sheer variety of the wrecks discussed in this lavishly illustrated volume. Ranging from Late Bronze Age to WWII, in a wide variety of locations, from the Gulf of Thailand and the Red River in Oklahoma to the old seabed of the now-reclaimed Zuiderzee in the Netherlands, and, of course, the Mediterranean and the Aegean, these wrecks still form only a small proportion of the total number of wreck excavations that have taken place in the world in recent years. As Jonathan Adams (2007) has commented in a recent short review of three new nautical publications in *Antiquity*, in this respect *Beneath the Seven Seas* provides a sharp contrast with an earlier, comparable work by Bass, published in 1972, demonstrating how much has changed in the world of marine archaeology since the early 1970s. Whereas Bass's earlier work was able to provide a fairly exhaustive survey of most of the excavated shipwrecks at that point in time, *Beneath the Seven Seas*, written just over three decades later, only touches the tip of the iceberg.

So much has happened in the discipline of underwater archaeology in the past thirty years that to produce a volume that can live up to the claim to be 'the most exciting book ever published on the exploration of our seafaring heritage' is, to say the least, challenging. Bass, himself a pioneering marine archaeologist, and one of the founders of the INA, certainly does the challenge justice. Bass himself provides the general introduction to the book, as well as the introductions to the seven chronological sections into which the book is divided, ranging

from 'The Oldest Wrecks' (Late Bronze Age wrecks along the Turkish coast) to 'Wrecks of Modern Times' (including the *Titanic*, which Bass himself explored in 2003, and the D-Day landing craft from WWII). Other sections comprise 'Ancient Greek Wrecks', 'Roman and Byzantine Wrecks', 'Medieval and Renaissance Wrecks', 'Seventeenth-Century Wrecks' and 'Eighteenth-Century Wrecks'.

Bass is also the author of five of the accounts of the actual investigations in which he was personally involved. These include the excavations of the Bronze Age wreck at Cape Gelidonya, the first ever complete excavation of a ship wreck on the sea bed off the Turkish coast, carried out in 1960 (48-55), and the more recent investigations of the *Titanic* (230-37). An additional 26 authors, all experienced marine archaeologists and specialists from a wide range of backgrounds, provide the remaining chapters, in each case again written from personal experience. Bass's editorial qualities are immediately apparent, as he manages to maintain a consistent style, without detracting from the engaging manner in which the authors relate their experiences, all written from a first person perspective. Thus the reader can almost *feel* Paul F. Johnston's exasperation when he complains about the bureaucratic difficulties in obtaining a permit for his 1995 investigation of the 19th century *Cleopatra's Barge* in Hawaii (pp. 214-25), or Cemal Pulak's seasickness and exhaustion during the 1983 excavation of the Yassiada Ottoman wreck off the west coast of Turkey (138).

The same personal style permeates Bass's general introduction, in which he gives a brief overview of the development of wreck exploration, from the pioneering efforts of the 16th to early 20th century (13-14) to the 'explosion of underwater archaeological projects in Europe, Asia, and North America' in the 1960s (14-19), and finally to the establishment of the INA in 1973, and the subsequent emergence of underwater archaeology as an independent discipline (19-27). The highly professional full-colour photographs, taken both above and below water, which adorn each page, further strengthen the sense of personal involvement of his readers, dragging them, as it were, to the blue depths where each time new treasures are encountered. They also make the book worth having, just because they are so pretty to look at!

Yet not all is praise. As a result of the sheer amount of material that is covered within this book, the individual chapters are necessarily short, and their personal style often stands in the way of a discussion of technical and methodological procedures. The wrecks themselves are discussed only in general terms, and although their cargos are merited with a little more academic discussion, this volume provides no more than a very general introduction to shipwreck archaeology. This is not a bad thing, as that is all it aims to provide. *Beneath the Seven Seas* is a beautiful coffee-table publication, both worth having and the ideal gift, and is certainly worth spending £25 on. But those who want detailed information about the circumstances of the dive, the site, and the finds, are in the wrong place.

For those, the list of further reading, organised by shipwreck, in *Beneath the Seven Seas* (246-49) provides a good starting point. Including references to interim reports of wreck excavations as well as final publications, this list serves as a gateway to a wealth of information on the detail of the archaeology introduced in *Beneath the Seven Seas*. In addition, there is the recent publication (not included in this bibliography yet) of Volume 1 of a specialist series by Bass and others, which focuses on the eleventh-century *Serçe Limani* from Turkey, also discussed briefly in *Beneath the Seven Seas* (Bass, Matthews, Steffy and Van Doorninck 2004). As Adams (2007) states in his recent review, this latter volume represents something completely different, praising it as "an example of what can be achieved when quality and scope drive research rather than just time and money".

Yet each book serves its own purpose, and even if *Beneath the Seven Seas* may be lacking in detail and in-depth discussion, it is still worth reading. Bass knows how to tell a good story, and how to make others do the same. The accounts are entertaining, the archaeology is spectacular, and the underwater photography is so good it feels as if you are actually *there*. Can *Beneath the Seven Seas* live up to the claim to be 'the most exciting book ever published on the exploration of our seafaring heritage'? Perhaps not. Personally, I find it far less exciting than for example Cousteau's *The Silent World* (1953), another classic first-hand account of underwater exploration. But in one aspect *Beneath the Seven Seas* is definitely amongst the best, and that is in its illustrations. Even if it may not be the most exciting book, it certainly is one of the most beautiful books ever published on the exploration of our seafaring heritage.

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Tilley, C., Keane, W., Küchler, S., Rowlands, M., and Spyer, P., eds. 2006. *Handbook of Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications. 576 pp. ISBN 9781412900393. £85.00.

The *Handbook of Material Culture* is indeed a handbook recording the history and various scholarly directions of material culture studies. Close to 600 pages, and with thirty-three chapters, the considerable scope of this book makes it essential for anyone studying materiality. The volume is aimed at a wide range of audiences in diverse fields of study, although the general focus and context of study is anthropological in nature. Because the focus is on material culture, however, archaeologists will find this book a useful resource.

The introduction to the book asserts that the volume intends to underline the significance of material culture studies in the social sciences, and it cannot be denied that this holistic work will be an important foundation and resource. The book does this by showing how vast the topic of material studies has become and by presenting its long history in scholarship. The book is divided into five sections: Theoretical Perspectives; The Body, Materiality and the Senses; Subjects and Objects; Process and Transformation; and Presentation and Politics. Each section has an introduction that establishes the flow of the section and highlights common themes. The 'Theoretical Perspectives' chapters act as an additional introduction to the other sections. Overall, these chapters are concise and yet detailed in presenting the conceptual framework of materiality through its different phases, although the chapters feel somewhat truncated because they are restricted to the historiography of theory whilst leaving the elaboration of examples to the content of the other sections. This makes the theory section relatively dense and, to anyone not familiar with the subject of materiality, it will be necessary to read the theory chapters followed by case studies presented in the other sections in order to really understand the concepts. The second section, 'The Body, Materiality and the Senses', is quite valuable in framing the relationship between people and objects because the scholars conceptualise the body as the primary artefact and the solitary receptor of the material world. Although the possibility of distinguishing certain impacts on the senses may be difficult to establish archaeologically, the chapters in this section are thought provoking in that the authors recognise that there are diverse interpretations for sensory input and that much of material culture impresses more than one sense at a time. The third section, 'Subjects and Objects', balances the intimacy of people and materiality as studied in the second section by distancing material culture through objectification. Somewhat surprisingly, the fourth section, 'Process and Transformation', does not really try and harmonise the subjects of the two previous sections, that is, the immediacy of the body and the gulf between people and things; it simply acknowledges that both exist and are worthy of study. The final section 'Presentation and Politics', situates people and their affiliated material culture in the context of social identity. The focus here is how the relationship between cultures and materiality continue to play a role in the modern world, thus emphasising the relevance of this type of study. It also represents a current topic in archaeology and anthropology.

The variety of subjects presented in the case studies offer interesting reading and many of them tackle contemporary scholarly interests in archaeology, such as the nature of the production and consumption of food (Chapter 9), the reality of colour (Chapter 11), the conception of the landscape (Chapter 19), and the process of technology (Chapter 21). The variety of scholarly input and the array of subjects dealt with in the each section make this book an important resource in material culture studies. Certainly the theoretical chapters offer detailed yet concise overviews of

the history of academic perspectives on material culture. The number of scholars from diverse backgrounds who contributed to this volume makes the book a valuable resource for archaeologists; these scholars include Janet Hoskins, Julian Thomas, Jean-Pierre Warnier, Barbara Bender and Chris Gosden.

It is clear that the book is meant to be read at least section by section, if not cover to cover, as there is a certain flow from one chapter to the next. Unfortunately, however, the layout of the book is dense, the text size is tiny and the overall feeling is that of reading a reference text. It is apparent that images were sacrificed to make room for text, but those that are presented are relatively poor reproductions and much of the content would have benefited from having more visual aids. For those searching for particular information, there is a thorough index that will help many readers find the specific references they need.

To conclude, the overall use of the book lies in its summary nature; relatively few chapters represent anything cutting edge, but the work presents a good overview of the history of this discipline in a straightforward and accessible manner. Because the *Handbook* combines the work on materiality from a number of different disciplines it will prove thought-provoking for many archaeologists unfamiliar with all the diverse applications of material culture theory. For the same reason, sections of this volume will no doubt become a standard on second and third year undergraduate reading lists. The ideas and subjects presented here are conventional, but their treatment is comprehensive and this forms the book's most lasting contribution.

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Gibson, A., ed. 2006. Prehistoric Pottery: Some Recent Research. Oxford: Archaeopress, BAR International Series S1509. 116 pp. ISBN: 1841719439. £30.00.

The fifth Occasional Paper to be published by the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group emerged from the second International Conference on Prehistoric Ceramics, held at the University of Bradford in the autumn of 2004. Like the conference itself, the content of the volume is eclectic, including everything from specific local/regional studies to discussions of widely applicable theoretical and methodological approaches. There has been a deliberate attempt by the editor not to focus on any particular issue or research theme other than prehistoric ceramics in general. Although this could be seen as a disadvantage, as a cross section of current thinking in European ceramic research the volume provides anyone interested in prehistoric research with considerable food for thought and debate, regardless of their particular area of expertise. Gibson (2006: iii) calls this 'the unifying beauty of ceramic research'. As a consequence of the variability, each contribution will be considered separately.

The first paper, by Yuri B. Tsetlin (Russian Academy of Science: Moscow) attempts to develop a general theoretical framework for understanding the origins of various 'modes of decoration'. The author explicitly focuses on what he calls the '*technical-and-technological*' component of pottery decoration and provides an excellent, illustrated introduction to a number of decorative techniques: the use of relief moulds, various types of paddle, stamp, smoothing and incision, some of which, though commonly discussed in the Russian literature, may be unfamiliar to those working on the ceramics in Western Europe.

Tsetlin suggests that the first truly graphic modes of decoration (notably incision and single stamp impression) were adopted wholesale from other material technologies, such as leatherwork and basketry, while techniques of moulding, paddling, coarse smoothing and the use of wide, rolled stamps had their origins within the ceramic medium. These are certainly interesting, though not necessarily new ideas and it is a shame that the paper goes on to include a rather underdeveloped and over-simplistic progressional scheme that that fails to satisfy totally. Nevertheless, Tsetlin's contribution provides the volume with a thought-provoking opening paper, which has much to recommend it.

In the second paper, Frances Healy (University of Wales, Cardiff), provides an excellent introduction to the pottery recovered from excavations at one of Britain's best known ancient monuments: Hambledon Hill in Dorset. Healy describes the various fabric groups that have been identified at the site, exploring several interesting technological features of the analysed ceramics. She differentiates, where possible, between the

local and non-local wares. Healy focuses on the assemblage of 'substantially-represented' Bowl-Pottery vessels found at the site and examines the distribution of the various fabrics represented in the material, both vertically (through time) and horizontally (across space). The distinctive patterns she identifies suggest both broadening networks of contact exchange and a clear, prescriptive use of space at the site. Included at the end of this paper is a well-constructed catalogue of 68 Bowl-Pottery vessels. This paper is an excellent, descriptive and interpretive work that will be of value to many, within the field of ceramics research and beyond. The catalogue will be of considerable interest to researchers (as well as providing an excellent model to aspiring students).

The third paper by Jonathan Last and Catriona Gibson, like the first, discusses decoration though from a considerably less technological perspective. The authors begin with a concise introduction to some of the major theoretical models that have been used by archaeologists and anthropologists to address their main question: why do people decorate pots? They highlight the benefit of considering how potters in small-scale societies talk about the concepts of style and meaning amongst themselves, and emphasise the need for a shift in the way we examine ceramic vessels as archaeologists. The majority of the paper is taken up by a case study focussing on the West Mound at Çatal Höyük. The authors describe the changes that occurred at the site around 6000 calBC, at which time the more famous East Mound was abandoned and the first pottery with painted decoration appeared on the smaller West Mound. They describe the site and its pottery in considerable detail and provide constant comparison with both the earlier Neolithic material culture from the East Mound, and that of other contemporary painted pottery sites in the Konya Plain.

The significance of the apparent shift in the decorative focus from architecture to pots is also discussed as well as the limited variability of the painted pottery. The authors conclude by reflecting upon the role of pottery in personal and communal exchange networks and as indicator of changing social dynamics. Although, given the limitations of their data, their conclusions cannot always be fully supported, Last and Gibson nevertheless provide a stimulating contribution to the volume that will be of particular interest to research students looking for new ways to approach their own material, whether it is ceramic or not.

Biochemical analysis is one of the most rapidly growing and potentially informative fields in ceramic research and it is therefore fitting that two of the nine papers in this volume should be largely devoted to this subject.

The first of these (Chapter 4) comes from a team of researchers at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. They present a summary of the preliminary results from an examination of organic pigments used to decorate various categories of Neolithic pottery from the Vistula basin. The authors applied a suite of analytical techniques to characterize these wood-tar based pigments and although around 50 sherds were analysed in this project, the paper presents the detailed analytical results for just ten, chosen to represent the larger sample. This analytical programme identified the majority of the analysed pigments as organic-mineral hybrid materials based primarily on wood tar extracted from birch bark, deliberately mixed with various mineral components and possibly even blood. The authors contrast these findings with the situation in the Balkans and the Carpathian Mountains, where pigments prepared for ceramics decoration are predominantly of mineral origin, and suggest that the adoption of the technique was likely to have been partly practical and partly symbolic. They conclude that this change in technological practice is likely to have occurred as an adaptation of Balkan-style agrarian society to northern climates.

Although there are many good ideas and interesting results in their contribution, some of them are buried in a rather unnecessarily wordy presentation of results.

The paper by Jan Turek (Czech Republic) on gendered cups is the shortest paper in the volume, perhaps because it lacks a conclusion. It is not clear whether this omission is intentional or not. Turek discusses Bell beaker cups from Central Europe, often decorated with a variety of plastic ornaments, described as moustaches, protuberances and even schematic representations of sexual intercourse, which have been frequently assigned strong gendered gender significance. He suggests that their role may have been entwined in a social need for a clear definition of gender roles. Turek discusses the likely role of the pottery in drinking ceremonies and the social significance of such festivities, identifying the carefully finished one-handled cups and various other vessel categories as particularly important in these contexts. As

many of the cups in museum collections lack contextual information, Turek focuses only on those examples that have been found in secure contexts, principally burials and explores the apparent correlation between the gender of individuals and certain classes of artefact or particular decorative schemes. Unfortunately as his argument ceases rather unexpectedly after a section on the under representation of female burial, the reader is left wondering what the author himself makes of the patterns he has identified.

A second chapter devoted to biochemical analysis comes from Alex Gibson and Ben Stern at the University of Bradford. Examining an unusual class of vessels, known as pygmy cups, Gibson and Stern attempt to use the analysis of absorbed organic residues to go beyond nearly two centuries of speculation about their uses, whether as incense burners, censors (for carrying hot coals to the funeral pyre) or as containers for everything from body parts to narcotics. Critically examining the formal and decorative variation within the category, they also highlight the need for a reassessment of the classification of these vessels beyond the simple fact that they are small. The results of their pilot analysis of 29 samples from across Britain were somewhat disappointing. Even where residues were found, it was often impossible to rule out contamination, whether from the post-depositional environment or as a result of conservation practices and storage. In spite of this, the authors go on to produce an extremely thoughtful conclusion that suggests several possible reasons for the lack of organic residues and several possible roles of these ceramics in society. Gibson and Stern's contribution provides an excellent platform for future research into this class of vessels, while highlighting the limitations of modern biochemical research.

The contribution of Ole Stilborg (Lund University, Sweden) looks at vessels with functional perforations found in later prehistoric Scandinavia. He is not concerned with holes used to repair or suspend vessels nor those associated with decoration, but rather with the kind of holes that have caused certain classes of ceramic objects to be called incense burners, strainers, steamers and cheese-moulds. Stilborg examines the plausibility of these various practical suggestions drawing on ethnographic and experimental research, before focusing on two groups of holey vessels in particular: those with a single hole in the base and those with multiple perforations. He makes an effort to explore alternative interpretations and suggests possible functions from spheres of activity as varied as textile production and metalworking. Although the author puts forward a strong argument against some of the traditional interpretations he does concede that most still remain as possibilities and further points out that any search for unitary functions is likely to be defeated by the variability of these classes of vessel. His paper was a thoroughly enjoyable addition to the volume and as the research is ongoing we can look forward to more detailed analysis in the future. As similar vessels are found in other parts of northern Europe this project has considerable potential.

Chapter 8 is an almost purely analytical paper from a team of researchers also based at Lund University, Sweden. It subject is an analysis of Late Etruscan Creamware pottery from San Giovenale in southern Etruria, Italy. Using a combination of microscopy, Mössbauer spectroscopy and carbon analysis, nine sherds of Late Creamware and two sherds of Coarseware were examined alongside 16 clay samples taken from around the site. The analytical results are used by the authors to good effect, allowing them to comment on provenance and technology in parallel and even to identify a possible clay source, for at least some of the Late Creamware vessels, from among their sampled clays. This is a thoroughly researched paper, which although it is laid out in such a way as to be broadly comprehensible to the non-specialist reader, will probably appeal to a narrower range of specialists than some of the other papers in the volume.

The final paper in the volume, by Sarah Ralph of the University of Cambridge, explores the role of ceramics in feasting, using the case study from the later Iron Age and Early Roman Britain. Having introduces the various theories that surround commensality in general and feasting in particular, Ralph investigates changes in the eating, drinking and settlement habits of East Anglians around the time of Christ.

Ralph presents an interesting picture of social as well as ceramic change tied to the widespread social re-organization in which feasting was used as a context for re-negotiating, even challenging the existing social order. She does not subscribe to the idea that the uptake of novel material culture and consumables represents the increasing 'Romanization' of uncultured British 'barbarians'. Rather, she suggests that it shows

the actions of certain people which were gained from introducing these exotic items into existing cultural traditions and 'foodways'. This is shown by the active selection of particular commodities and the restricted distribution of those materials around the landscape.

Although this subject is far from the specialist field of this reviewer, it is an enjoyable and scholarly paper and certainly worth the read.

A collection of abstracts (Chapter 10) concludes the volume and reminds the reader clearly of the variety of approaches that are to be found in current ceramic research. The majority focus on pottery from the prehistoric periods in Britain and Ireland.

Overall, this is an interesting and even enjoyable volume to read. However, although highlighting the value, especially in a discipline like ceramic research, of looking beyond regional, temporal or technical specialties, it did not always feel particularly innovative or groundbreaking.

Individually many of the papers will certainly be useful to professional prehistorians, but as a whole volume, it would probably be most valuable to the third year undergraduate or first year postgraduate research student hoping to get a flavour for contemporary ceramic research.

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Korsmeyer, C., ed. 2005. *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*. Oxford: Berg Press. ix + 421 pp. ISBN: 9781845200619. £55.00 (paperback £19.99).

Over the last two to three decades, archaeologists have begun to pay much greater attention to the sensory aspects of the lives of those in the past and to reflect upon the ways in this may have affected how they experienced the world around them. This book and the others in the *Sensory Formations* series, while not written specifically for archaeologists, aim to redress the balance by providing a comprehensive, thoughtfully selected collection of papers focussing on how our senses operate, interact and ultimately affect how we understand our environment.

Taste is perhaps one of the most difficult senses to discuss, as it is so subjective, dependent upon sex and age as Bartoshuk and Duffy demonstrate in chapter 2, and differing from individual to individual. Indeed, the question of whether sapid experiences can ever be described in a reliable manner is raised by several of the authors in this collection. On the other hand, while this may seem a major obstacle to discussing concepts of taste, the fluidity of the sense allows it to operate in a multi-faceted manner, applicable not just to what we consume but equally exercising an aesthetic meaning. When we refer to someone as having "good taste", we are not judging their eating habits but their actions, domestic environment, or even lifestyle. Korsmeyer has selected the papers in this book to reflect the complex web of meanings that is embodied in the word 'taste', producing an exceptionally rich and inclusive collection that covers every angle one could imagine. Divided into eight parts, the book therefore offers discussion on: the scientific explanations for our sense of taste, how taste and cuisine have operated throughout history (perhaps the section most relevant to archaeologists), discussions on flavour, the relationship between eating and fasting and the spiritual uses of food, taste as an aesthetic quality, how one can assess taste, the interaction between taste and emotions, and the effects generated by globalisation and modern eating habits upon our food.

The breadth of the book is impressive, containing chapters that are an obvious inclusion, such as Proust's famed description of the *madeleine* (chapter 28), as well as ones that discuss little-known, fascinating aspects of gustation, such as Goldstein's discussion of modern Moscow restaurants and how they are part of a long tradition of Russian eating habits (chapter 35). It appears that Korsmeyer has specifically selected papers that cover as much of the globe as possible, thus refreshingly avoiding a Western ethnocentric approach. The contributions are also temporally broad, with 18th- 19th century classics of gastronomic writing (Brillat-Savarin, chapter 1) and philosophy (Hume and Kant, chapters 19-20) sitting comfortably alongside original material discussing some of the most topical issues connected with taste, such as Haden's almost futuristic analysis of convenience food, artificial flavourings and taste's interrelationship with *The Matrix* (chapter 33). Finally, there is an unusual mingling of genres. While the majority of the contributions are academic discussions, there are equally valid treatises on taste in the form

of philosophical essays, travel writing, gastronomic memoir, and fiction, with a few recipes sprinkled in the midst of them for good measure.

The book's readability is one of its strong features, a fact that is due not only to its variety but also to the brevity of most of the chapters. While this certainly has a positive effect, as most could be read effortlessly at a short sitting, it did mean that a high number of those from previously published material were substantially abridged. This did prove frustrating in a few cases, where one was forced to omit part of an absorbing argument or the author referred to a fact elsewhere that had been excised from this edition. One particularly noticeable example of this was in chapter 5, an extract from Jack Goody's *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class* (1982). On the other hand, it must be recognised that the full-length text would have limited the sheer scope of the book, which is perhaps where its greatest value lies. The only other issue to have resulted in some slight disappointment was the lack of cutting-edge new work, particularly when one considers the rapid increase of scholarship on the topic of food and drink in fields such as archaeology and anthropology in the last few decades. The overwhelming majority of the articles were from the 1980s and early 1990s, with only two contributions written since the turn of the millennium and only four papers that were original material for this collection. Of the original material, all except one were in the section on 'Artifice and Authenticity', and concentrated on the issues of taste in a world of artificial flavourings and creolisation of cuisines. Considering the speed with which the topic of consumption is gaining ground in academia today, I feel that this is a sad omission and does not reflect the ways in which scholars today are discussing one's senses and eating habits from a broad variety of angles.

However, there is no doubt that this book is an important contribution to the field of sensory studies, providing stimulating thought for anyone exploring the idea of taste or eating and drinking. The experiences generated by consumption are often neglected amongst archaeologists for a concentration upon the utensils used or the debris created, and it is easy to forget that the actual moment of eating produces its own effects, reactions and sensations.

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