

# Reviews

Menotti, F. (ed.). 2004. *Living on the Lake in Prehistoric Europe: 150 Years of Lake-Dwelling Research*. London: Routledge. ISBN 0415317207. 286 pp. £22.99 (paperback).

In 1854, Ferdinand Keller initiated excavations at Meilen on Lake Zurich and published a first report on his fieldwork, in which he sensationally interpreted the archaeological remains as evidence of a prehistoric village built on piles in the water. His successive publications, evocatively illustrated with reconstructions based upon ethnographic analogies, generated widespread scientific excitement. Indeed, they arguably changed the course of European prehistoric archaeology, inspiring scholars to search for similar remains throughout Europe, including Britain.

This volume celebrates the 150th anniversary of Keller's pioneering work. It presents 12 papers on European lake-dwelling research, packaged between a foreword by Barry Cunliffe, an introduction by the editor, Francesco Menotti, and a strong conclusion by Andrew Sherratt, which situates this distinctive circum-Alpine settlement form in the context of Eurasian settlement archaeology. The chapters are illustrated by a good number of high quality photographs, and rounded off by an index.

A characteristic feature of the prehistoric lake-villages, rightly reiterated throughout the volume, is the exceptional state of preservation of organic materials found at them. This has provided archaeologists with a wealth of detailed evidence concerning past ways of life and environmental conditions. Complete plans of prehistoric villages have been identified, consisting of rows or clusters of 10 to 40 houses, enclosed initially by fences, palisades or more complex fortifications, and reached by a path or trackway. Large wooden artefacts provide some of the earliest direct evidence of wheeled transport and ploughing in Europe. A wide range of smaller artefacts of wood, wicker, leather and textiles are also present, while plant remains include grain, seeds, wild fruits, moss, leaves and weeds of cultivation. Seen in this light, the contemporary Iceman's equipment seems altogether less exceptional. At the same time, as some of the contributors point out, there are limitations to this evidence. The state of

preservation of archaeobotanical remains, for example, is by no means the same at all lake villages.

Focusing on this material, the volume begins with an interesting group of papers, which provide historical overviews of the achievements of lake-dwelling research in the six circum-Alpine countries where wetland archaeology was born (Switzerland, Germany, France, Austria, Slovenia and Italy), as well as the UK where it is now thriving. Amongst these, Helmut Schlichtherle provides an outstanding synthesis of work in South-West Germany, including reference to relevant environmental research, the relationship between lake-dwelling studies and National Socialist politics in the 1920s and 30s, and debates over the interpretation of lake-dwellings. The latter have been dominated by the 'Pfahlbauprobblem', a long-running academic dispute concerning the form, location and function of the lake-dwellings. Over time, the focus of this debate has gradually shifted towards the diversity, origins and development of the lake dwellings. It is now widely accepted that lake villages included houses built on piles above the water, houses with slightly raised floors, and houses built on the ground. Dendrochronological analyses have also shown that their construction was dynamic and also more complicated than the regularity of the village plans previously led us to believe. In South-West Germany, for example, contemporary lake villages were spaced every 2.5 to 5 km, they were normally inhabited for periods of 10 to 80 years, their central areas shifted, the number of coeval buildings varied greatly, and their buildings were renovated or rebuilt at least every few decades.

The following set of papers explores the contribution of a range of multidisciplinary scientific techniques and studies to lake-dwelling research. This is, perhaps, the strongest section of the book. André Billamboz provides an excellent chapter on dendrochronology, clearly defining its relation to past and present lake-dwelling research. Looking to the future, he predicts further dendrochronology building south of the Alps, and new dendroecology work contributing to palaeoecological studies. Michel Magny offers a valuable synthesis of palaeoclimatology research, including its relevance to questions concerning the relationship between lake levels, lake dwellings and

long-term settlement patterns. Long-term research in France and Switzerland, for example, indicates that the whole Holocene period was punctuated by alternate higher and lower lake-level phases, related to a rather unstable Holocene climate, and that prehistoric lake-shore villages coincided with phases of lower lake-levels in the sub-Alpine area. Jörg Schibler's chapter on animal bones identifies some interesting diachronic patterns, and makes useful connections to other lines of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental evidence, with reference to subsistence economies and environmental change. He argues, for example, that during unfavourable climatic conditions people hunted more intensively and collected more plants, leading to the extinction of red deer in the Zurich region during the 37th century BC. Pigs, on the other hand, flourished from this time onwards, as forest management led to more open, structured, woodland in the lacustrine hinterland. Stefanie Jacomet clearly summarises the contribution of archaeobotany, with particular reference to food plants and weeds of cultivation. Archaeobotanical studies at Alleshhausen-Grundwiesen, for example, indicate a specialisation in flax cultivation without any sign of cereal cultivation in the mid-3rd millennium BC. Albert Hafner then offers an interesting historical overview of underwater excavations and related techniques, while Gary Lock outlines the relevance of computer usage in wetland archaeology.

The final set of papers covers public archaeology themes. Gunter Schöbel provides an original analysis of museums, covering the very wide range of media used in them to represent lake-dwellings. He calls for greater public accessibility in displays. He also explores their historical development and socio-political context, including their manipulation for National Socialist propaganda and education, when 'The merry lake-dweller at the cosy campfire mutated now into a sinisterly staring Teuton' (p. 227). Urs Leuzinger offers a clear overview of experimental and applied archaeology, with particular reference to the decay of pile dwellings, including the impact of lake water flooding. Stefan Hochuli and Gishan Schaeren then provide a useful outline of the heritage management of lake villages in Switzerland, emphasising the sheer scale of the archaeological enterprise, and calling for archaeologists to 'market' their research to the fee-paying public.

Overall, the volume delivers most of what its promises on its cover: to provide an overview of the development of lake-village studies, to explore the impact of a range of scientific techniques on our

understanding of the settlements from an environmental as well as a cultural perspective, and to consider how the public can relate to this evocative branch of archaeology. The major value of this book is, then, as a synthesis: of past and present lake-dwelling research, and its place within circum-Alpine prehistoric archaeology. As Bryony Coles states, 'So many archaeologists working in wetlands are submerged by the data, swamped by the quantities of things and facts' (p. 106). This book floats, and congratulations should be offered to Menotti for captaining it. Furthermore, this clear introduction to the subject will be particularly welcome to English-speaking students unfamiliar with a range of European languages.

The volume could, however, have delivered even more. Menotti's brief introductory chapter is slightly disappointing, in contrast to his interesting paper on settlement patterns, which highlights discontinuity in lake settlement compared to extensive Middle Bronze Age settlement in neighbouring dry-land areas. The latter might have been incorporated within the introduction or first set of papers, rather than given its own special section. The first group of papers could have been better presented in the introduction, especially through a comparative analysis of the spread of lake-dwelling research across Europe. It would also have been useful to learn something of the editorial brief provided to the contributors, particularly considering the inclusion of two papers by British scholars which move well beyond lake-dwelling research, to the much broader field of wetland archaeology, useful as that may be in contextualising the former. The European scope of the volume is also undermined by the absence of lake-dwelling studies from East-Central Europe, and by the regional focus of most of the papers. Certain topics might also have been given greater consideration, including Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic lacustrine settlement in Europe, human remains, post-excavation research, and conservation.

But the real weakness of the book, which reflects an apparent intellectual complacency of lake-dwelling studies, is its limited engagement with social theory and the archaeology of *people*. With the exception of Andrew Sherratt, who emphasises this point in his concluding chapter, the contributors to the volume maintain traditional functionalist, culture-historical and processual perspectives, typified by recourse to invading Bell Beaker folk and the defensive function of lake-villages. They consequently have surprisingly little to say about the

people who actually built the lake-villages, and how they lived together, experienced, valued and identified with them. Such themes are currently being addressed by a new kind of anthropological archaeology, which seeks to integrate theory, methodology, evidence and interpretations, as well as large-scale and more personal histories. Ultimately, what this volume shows is that the European lake-villages still offer a very rich potential for exciting future archaeological research. A new generation of archaeologists must seize this opportunity.

ROBIN SKEATES

University of Durham, UK

Monks, G. (ed.). 2005. *The Exploitation and Cultural Importance of Sea Mammals* (Proceedings of the 9th conference of the International Council for Archaeozoology, Durham, August 2002). Oxford: Oxbow Books. ISBN 1842171267. 192 pp. £40.00 (hardback).

This book is a collection of articles originally given at a session at the ICAZ meetings in Durham, 2002. As the focus of the session was a type of animal, and not a particular research question, a wide variety of topics from all over the world are covered. Although this makes it difficult to summarise the book, it also gives a broad view of research on marine mammals and certainly introduced me to new geographic areas. The papers cover both pinnipeds and cetaceans, although there are more dealing specifically with pinnipeds.

This volume opens with Sabin's look at marine mammal research and the cetacean collections found at the Natural History Museum of London. As anyone who works with marine mammals knows, extensive comparative collections are rare, especially for whales, so it is instructive to learn of their large existing collection and even more satisfying to know that they are actively adding to that collection. A brief discussion gives a feel for the breadth and time depth of the research projects ongoing at the museum.

Two papers provide summaries of marine mammal use from opposite (or almost opposite!) ends of the world: the Aleutian Islands of Alaska and Tierra del Fuego in South America. Johnson, writing about the Aleutian Islands, brings together ethnographic information on hunting techniques, equipment and mythology with the archaeological information on tools and fauna and attempts to find patterns in

marine mammal use over time and space. The ethnographic information is broken down by marine mammal and is an extremely useful summary. The archaeological data are presented by geographic region with NISP and MNI data from a number of sites. The usefulness of this data is marred by numerous errors in the tables, in particular clear addition errors in the total columns (see Tables 2 and 8) and, in some cases, inconsistencies between the numbers on the tables and the numbers used in the text (see p. 49). Even with these problems this paper serves as a very useful compilation of information not easily available in one place.

Piana provides a similar summary for Tierra del Fuego, although he focuses on cetaceans in particular. One of Piana's conclusions is that whales were scavenged, but not actively hunted, except possibly in the late historic period. He finds no archaeological indication of large harpoons and no whale bones show evidence of being pierced by harpoons. An interesting proposal revolves around the idea of a whale carcass as a quarry for raw materials, which then becomes the basis of a permanent settlement. The extensive bibliography is particularly useful for those of us with little knowledge of the literature from this area.

Smith and Gifford-Gonzalez *et al.* both look specifically at interactions between fur seals and people. Smith examines the response of the southern fur seal of New Zealand to the arrival of first the Maori and then the Europeans. Although hunted extensively by both new arrivals the fur seals did not become extinct, unlike many land-based animals. Smith hypothesises this is because neither the Maori nor the Europeans could affect the marine environment as extensively as they could, and did, affect the terrestrial environment. In addition, fur seals had access to coastal areas that were difficult for both the Maoris and Europeans to access and could adapt to the new hunting pressures by changing their distribution.

Archaeologists on the west coast of North America have recognised for many years that the modern distribution of marine mammals conflicts with that shown archaeologically. Gifford-Gonzales *et al.* very usefully summarise the data supporting these differences, discuss the possible causes suggested by a variety of authors and propose several avenues of research to determine the cause (or causes) of these distribution changes. Although in the introductory summary all marine mammal species are discussed at least briefly, the main focus of the authors' research is