

## REVIEWS AND SHORT REVIEW NOTES

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(review) Florian Klimscha, *Pietrele 1: Beile und Äxte aus Stein. Distinktion und Kommunikation während der Kupferzeit im östlichen Balkangebiet* (= *Archäologie in Eurasien* 34). Bonn: Habelt-Verlag 2016, 382 pages, 87 plates.

The well-known series *Archäologie in Eurasien* of the Eurasien Abteilung Deutsches Archäologisches Instituts offers, as its 34<sup>th</sup> volume, Florian Klimscha's *Pietrele 1: Beile und Äxte aus Stein. Distinktion und Kommunikation während der Kupferzeit im östlichen Balkangebiet*, published by Habelt-Verlag in 2016.

This published version of Florian Klimscha's doctoral thesis was written at the FU in Berlin in 2009 and then supplemented with information about axes recovered from the Pietrele excavation by 2013. As Svend Hansen, the editor of the *Archäologie in Eurasien*, points out in his preface, this is the first publication to consistently classify a long series of stone axes dated to the Copper Age. Much attention is given to the modifications of the shape of the axes and to reduction of their size due to damage and wear, resulting, in the author's opinion, from the fact that their makers and users economized on the raw material.

The author discusses 422 finds from Pietrele, comparing the series to 8239 axes described in the literature and museum collections. As many as 2582 come from the eastern Balkans, providing direct reference material to the artefacts from Pietrele analysed by Klimscha.

The introduction (Einleitung) gives an outline of the Copper Age in the eastern Balkans, placing the Măgura Gorgana site in Pietrele in that context. In the first chapter (Forschungsstand und Grenzen der Untersuchung) Klimscha defines basic notions, such as *axe*, *butt* or *cutting edge*, points out the natural boundaries of the eastern Balkans, explains what the term *Copper Age* means to him, and describes the Kodžadermen-Gumelnița-Karanovo VI complex, favouring the idea of indigenous development of the eastern Balkans in the Copper Age. Further, he outlines relative chronology of the region, reports on the current state of research, and discusses the premises of absolute chronology. The chapter ends with very interesting presentation of the history of research into stone axes.

The next chapter (*Der Fundstoff I: Beile und Äxte aus Silex und Felsgestein*) presents the entire assemblage of stone axes from Pietrele, specifying their dimensions as well as raw materials and techniques used in their production. The author reconstructs the stages of their use and describes cases of recycling with the accompanying modification of the shape and reduction of the size of the artefacts. He also analyses the formal diversity reflected in the division of the finds into axes, battle-axes, chisels etc., as well as their cultural identity and distribution.

The third chapter (*Der Fundstoff II: Beile und Schwergeräte aus Kupfer*) discusses copper axes and battle-axes, presenting their typology and selected typological categories. This is followed by statistical data about the artefacts, and a description of their chronology, cultural identity and distribution.

The next part of the book (*Die (Be-)Deutung von Beilklingen und Streitäxten im Neolithikum*) analyses the significance, function and occurrence of axes and battle-axes in Neolithic communities; this includes the age-old problem of whether the products should be interpreted as weapons or as tools used in deforestation. Discussion of their social and symbolic functions is based on ethnological research. The author considers circulation and exchange of the items from economic and sociocultural perspectives, with references to Kularing and circulation of gifts related to marriage. He also discusses axes and battle-axes as prestige objects, presents their semiotics, and compares the raw materials used in their production: stone vs. copper.

The conclusions (*Heiße Zeiten – kalte Zeiten? Interpretation der Ergebnisse: Die Kupferzeit anhand von Beilen und Äxten gedeutet*) result from the formal and statistical analyses of the axes and battle-axes. The author focuses on the interdependency of the stone and copper artefacts, the mining of the raw materials and the relationship between copper products and power. Finally, he points out parallels in the meaning of copper and jadeite artefacts in the early Copper Age.

The book is complemented with summaries in German, Russian and English, a bibliography (983 entries), a catalogue of stone and copper axes and battle-axes from the eastern Balkans (879 entries), a catalogue of axes and battle-axes recovered from Pietrele in 2002–2013 (422 entries), and 87 plates with photographs and drawings of the finds.

The reviewed book has numerous assets. As it has been mentioned above, it is the first publication to methodically classify, describe and explain the functions and meanings of such a long series of axes and battle-axes recorded over such a vast area. The chronological stratification of the finds has resulted in a dynamic view of their temporal and spatial changes presented against a diversified cultural background. Moreover, the author proposes a valuable reconstruction of their recycling, and highlights those features which help assign the products to particular homesteads or, to some extent, to particular makers and users.

It is worth noting that in his interpretation of the significance of axes and battle-axes in the eastern Balkans of the Copper Age, Florian Klimscha refers to models and theories

proposed by numerous researchers: cultural anthropologists, such as Malinowski, Levi-Strauss, Sahlins or Mauss, sociologists, such as Weber, Luhmann or Blau – and theoreticians of cultural memory, e.g. Assmann, and many others.

The author draws on the extensive archaeological material to construct models of Neolithic social systems based primarily on the circulation of axes and battle-axes of class III (the largest items) functioning both as prestige objects and as signs in specific communication systems. An important role was played in that respect by patterns of exchange – and marital exchange in particular.

If I were to name one deficiency in this valuable publication, it would be the lack of a single theory philosophically substantiating the excellent inspirations and models of Neolithic social systems, combining them all into one coherent image.

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