Primitive

tider

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tider

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It is a bit peculiar, and very gratifying, to experience how contentious, but consciously defined “non-issues” in Scandinavian archaeology like migration and Indo-European studies, have come to the fore of interpretation and debate. Inquiries have moved beyond the basics, implicitly picking up themes insightfully pioneered by major archaeologists like V. Gordon Childe. From an archaeological vantage, it is also interesting to see how a field that was previously often studied within restricted disciplinary confines, now is multidisciplinary, increasingly interdisciplinary and energetically original. Indo-European studies bring genetics, linguistics, philology, anthropology, religion studies, history and research history into a common orbit. The geographical scale spans from local to multi-continental, the temporal scale from synchronic to diachronic over millennia, and the approaches vary from strict methodologies to playful and speculative interpretation. An example is *Tracing the Indo-Europeans: New evidence from archaeology and historical linguistics* (2019), published in the wake of *Roots of Europe – Language, Culture, and Migrations*, a seminar held by the multidisciplinary research centre in Copenhagen. It is one of two recent multi- and interdisciplinary publications coming from this centre – the other being *Language and prehistory of the Indo-European Peoples* (Hyllestad *et al.* 2017).

Tracing the Indo-Europeans contains nine articles written by archaeologists and linguists. This collection of articles is somewhat eclectic in terms of approach (from descriptive approaches to speculative interpretation), geography (India to the Atlantic), themes (from trait distributions to yoga, initiation rites to political structure) and degree of interdisciplinary. The original seminar was held in 2012, and though some of the contributions have been informed by later breakthroughs in ancient genetics (Allentoft *et al.* 2015, Haak *et al.* 2015), the results and ensuing discussion of these genetic studies is more a premise than a striking feature in the presentations. The growing body of genetic data should probably have engendered a revision of some of the contributions in the book. Still, in the contemporary era of the “third science revolution”, it is interesting to see how strong arguments are generated based on linguistic, philological and archaeological data, methodologies and theories.

The introductory article by the editors briefly presents the background, scope and aims, sketching the historical-comparative linguistics, archaeology (including archaeo-genetics), broader cultural history and a selection of other recent contributions relevant to Indo-European studies. The content of Thomas Olander’s article (chap. 2) will be familiar for most who have followed debates concerning Indo-European

homelands in that it directly confronts the central points of contention in the research of Proto-Indo-European: Where was the proto-language located and when did the branching start? Historically, candidates from Jutland to Kazakhstan have been proposed (e.g. Mallory 1989, fig. 80), but Olander wisely limits the discussion to the two serious modern contenders: Anatolia (Gray & Atkinson 2003; Renfrew 2003) and the Pontic-Caspian Steppes (e.g. Mallory 1989; Anthony 2007). Though Olander advocates the Steppe model (which even Colin Renfrew acknowledged in a 2017 memorial lecture for Marija Gimbutas, 52.30 -53.30), his text represents a phenomenon common to discourse *within* Indo-European studies: thoughtful arguments and respectful representation of opposing views. James P. Mallory (chap. 3) explores the lexicon of the Indo-European language, elements of the language that describes the plant world and compares Indo-European, Uralic and Nostratic further elaborates the Proto-Indo-European world. Mallory refers to Mary Haas's claim that a reconstructed proto-language is "a glorious artefact" – which both Mallory's and Birgit Olsen's article (chap. 8) about family structure demonstrate.

The Corded Ware Culture, long argued to represent the first Indo-European phase in the Southern Scandinavia (and introduced through migrations), is mentioned in several articles, but is explicitly addressed in two chapters. Einar Østmo's contribution (chap. 4) is about Indo-Europeanisation of Scandinavia in light of ceramic cord *decoration*, and is thus based on the study of an archaeological category. Cord decoration has a diffuse chronological and geographical history that extends beyond the Corded Ware Cultures. Østmo argues that this is an indication of a long process of impulses and local developments leading up to Indo-Europeanisation, starting as early as 3600 BC. The article represents one of the pre-ancient genetics approaches, and downplays explanations based on "one, decisive event". Rune Iversen (chap. 5) reviews the emergence of the Corded Ware *Culture* in southern Scandinavia

around 2750 BC. This contribution is written within a Danish tradition, and is moderately familiar from debates. However, he then attempts to reconcile the pre-aDNA pro- and anti-migrationist dichotomy in archaeology with the growing evidence for migration through elements of a processual migration concept.

Two articles explore elements of social practice, ritual and cosmology in the Indo-European world; Dorcas Brown and David Anthony's *Late Bronze Age midwinter dog sacrifices and warrior initiations at Krasnosamarskoe Russia* (chap. 6), and Kristin Oma and Lene Melheim's "*Children of the light*": *On yoga, body schemes and altered states of consciousness in Nordic Late Bronze Age – a link to India?* (chap. 7). The articles also share a robust analytical and interpretative structure, starting with a localised distinctive archaeological set of data that is contextualised archaeologically, anthropologically and in reference to written myth, as well as an expanding geography, to generate hierarchies of interpretation – from moderately secure to tentative. Both articles are genuinely interdisciplinary. Brown and Anthony's point of departure is a unique winter-season sacrificial site in Russia with 51 dogs and seven wolves. Through analysis of the context and the skeletal material, mythology, ritual theory, anthropology and psychology, the site is interpreted, the meaning of dogs and wolves is elucidated and an understanding – an anthropology – of the initiation of boys to warriors is presented. Oma and Melheim's article discusses the possible origins of Yoga in reference to a find of a relief in the Indus valley and the four Vedas. Bronze Age figurines from Grevensvænge and Fårdal are then described, and the iconography in the figurines is compared to yoga postures. The argument explores similarities in practices, cosmology and iconography. If the comparisons hold true, are similarities a result of shared Indo-European universe of thought and practice, general diffusion or more direct interactions?

Birgit A. Olsen describes her *Aspects of family structure among Indo-Europeans* (chap. 8) as perhaps "disappointingly conservative",

but presents an absorbing (for the non-linguist, at least) review and historical linguistic study of kinship terms related to the extended family. The descriptions are followed by interpretations of the anthropological-linguistic implications for “on-the-ground” structures and relations in and around the family, not the least related to age and gender. She sums up her results in 10 points loaded with descriptions of the Indo-European world’s outlook, social structure and practices.

Along with the sword, Childe (1964:178) emphasised the monopoly on “highly-trained steeds” as the basis for the Bronze Age Mycenaean princes’ wealth and power. Anne Marie Carstens elaborates on the importance of the horse in her *To bury a ruler: The meaning of the horse in aristocratic burials* (chap. 9). Her article spans long stretches of time and space to visit a number of burials and sacrifices, represented in archaeology and texts from the Bronze Age and Iron Age: Scandinavia, Caucasus, Germany, the Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, Anatolia and Syria. The multi-contextual approach, also using some examples from outside the Indo-European world, generates cross-cultural conclusions about the horses in funerals and as metaphor of the elites.

Though the book cannot be said to have a single thrust of argument, apart from being concerned with a selection of Indo-European issues, some articles approach related themes and ideas from different angles. Still, each article stands a bit on its own, either presenting a *stand-der-forschung* on a debated issue (like homeland and language history) or a study of a subject more arbitrarily carved out of the complex history of the Indo-European world. As a whole the book does convey a message (if perhaps inadvertently) concerned with, to quote Thomas Olander (p.11), re-opening the field of Indo-European studies as explorations closer to “... the real world we are interested in ...”. Though this reviewer is obviously conditioned by previous readings and his own previous arguments, this book reinforces a message found in the sub-title of Anthony’s book from 2007: *...How Bronze Age riders from the Eurasian Steppes shaped the modern world.*

History up to the modern world is in a relatively direct sense shaped by the outcomes of events in the third millennium BC. When combined, the study of the many strains of sources - written sources from the Bronze Age, archaeology, iconography, linguistics and ancient genetics - not only provides fascinating insights into a pivotal epoch of human history. Indo-European studies become captivating examples of the odd twists and turns research in the humanities can take.

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