Primitive

tider

23

arkeologisk
tidsskrift

23

Primitive tider
2021 23. årgang

Primitive tider utgis av Marie Ødegaard (redaktør), Svein Vatsvåg Nielsen, Guro Fossum, Vibeke M. Viestad, Isak Roalkvam, Astrid Tvedte Kristoffersen, Knut Ivar Austvoll og Mari Arentz Østmo.

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ISSN 1501-0430

Postadresse:

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0130 Oslo

E-post: kontakt@primitive-tider.com

Internett: <https://journals.uio.no/PT/index>

Ombrekk: Redaksjonen

Trykk: Reprosentralen ved Universitetet i Oslo

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Forsideillustrasjon: Bergkunst oppdaget på gården Elvestad i Råde. Foto: Lars Ole Klavestad.

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Mette Løvschal, Rasmus Birch Iversen and Mads Kähler Holst (eds.) 2019: *De dræbte krigere i Alken Enge. Efterkrigsritualer i ældre jernalder*. Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab, Højbjerg. 289 p. ISBN: 978-87-93423-45-9.

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The discovery at Alken Enge of the skeletonised remains of at least (and probably many more than) 380 individuals deposited in water has attracted much attention in recent years. Emerging in interpretations as the result of a single event in the first century AD, most likely a battle, where the remains of the fallen were left exposed for up to a year before being collected, ordered and deposited, it stands in a singular position both in terms of the sheer number of bodies, and the nature of the deposit itself. This new knowledge and renewed focus is due to the completion of new archaeological excavations at Alken Enge, which have culminated in the volume reviewed here. Reviewing this volume within a wider scholarship tradition of the site is in other words not feasible, as the reviewed book not only sets a standard for new detailed knowledge gleaned from the recent excavations from which it originates, but also provides the state-of-the-art interpretative account of the site.

Somewhat curiously, for a site of this magnitude, the research history of Alken Enge demonstrates a distinct lack of engagement with the material for the first 60 years after the initial excavations. These took place between 1957 and 1960, when a large amount of skeletal material was uncovered: more than enough to determine that this was a site of a singular nature and considerable magnitude. The lack of direct engagement with the site stands somewhat in

contrast to the extensive academic focus given to more fully articulated bog bodies throughout the latter half of the 20th century and onwards (Glob 1971; Sanden 1996; Farley et al. 2019; Giles 2020). The nearby weapon deposits from Illerup Ådal are also in general better known than Alken Enge, perhaps as they fit into a clearer tradition of object depositions in wetlands without the same interpretative complications that attend Alken Enge by virtue of being somewhat singular. At the time however, there was no clear interpretative direction, and the find was not comprehensively published. Perhaps because of this, and because no one quite knew what to do in terms of interpretation, the site ended up being neglected for several decades. Consequently, this book documents the more recent excavation and painstaking post-excavation work carried out between 2012-2014, and brings together the benefits of scientific methods, interpretative maturity and theoretical heft that have developed since the first excavation to make a comprehensive and authoritative book covering this complex site and its history.

The edited volume brings together 18 contributors in 16 chapters, covering the aim of the project from which the book springs, the site's research history, the scientific analysis as well as more esoteric, interpretative views of the site. It is divided into four main parts: Landscape, The Sacred Lake, The Main Event and War and Crisis,

though the introductory chapters are separate from this. Strictly speaking, the book could have been divided into five rather than four sections to allow for this, but the structure works well and both guides and informs the reader. The chapters are assigned to their appropriate sections to make for a comprehensive and well-structured overview.

To start, the introduction, by Mette Løvschal, Rasmus Birch Iversen and Mads Kähler Holst serves the dual purpose of introducing both the site and the project, in addition to the volume itself. Covering broad questions of interpretation, it introduces the reader to what they may expect from the volume in general. It also places the human remains at Alken Enge with the wider tradition of deposits made in wetlands in the Iron Age, as well as clarifying the interpretation of the dead as explicitly warriors: as is indeed made explicit in the title of the book. Also part of the introductory section of the book is a shorter chapter by Peter Jensen on the data, with useful links to the open access database, available online via alkenenge.dk. Together, these lay a solid foundation for what is to be found in the book, and where to look should one wish to carry out further research on the material itself.

The first of the main parts, Landscape, is made up of three chapters, where one is a thorough research historical overview by Uffe Rasmussen and Ejvind Hertz – essential reading for anyone seeking to engage with the Alken Enge material. The next chapter is an overview of the results of pollen analysis by Bent Vad Odgaard, presenting a thorough discussion of the results, followed again by a chapter on the finds and the landscape by Uffe Rasmussen. This last delves into taphonomic processes and place the depositions within their contemporary landscape, thus providing a foundation for understanding how the site was created. Together, these three chapters thoroughly place the site within a broader landscape.

Moving on to the second main part, the Sacred Lake, this too is made up of three chapters, covering separate overviews of the find material: Weapons and military equipment by Rasmus

Birch Iversen, Animal bones by Jacob Kveiborg and Pottery by Niels Haue. These chapters form essential reading for understanding the depositional contexts and build up the site through time, and are all comprehensive and detailed. Yet one does wonder if the title of the part (the Sacred Lake) was chosen more for the evocative image it calls up, rather than what the section actually contains, which are detailed and necessary discussions of the finds and the contexts rather than discussions of the lake as a sacred place.

Part three, labelled the Big Event, tackles the human remains and places them in the centre of the site and its interpretations, as is indeed appropriate considering the material. A discussion of these by Lene Møllerup starts the section, and is as such very appropriately positioned. A small idiosyncrasy in the wider presentation of the project result is revealed in a closer reading of this chapter however, which raises a minor question of the overall interpretative decision to exclude it: in the book's introduction, and indeed on the project website, the skeletal material is described in unequivocal terms as exclusively male, but this is in fact something of a (minor) misrepresentation. As this chapter reveals, certainly most of the sexed material was of young adult males, but less than half of the total material could in fact be assigned a sex. Moreover, the sexed material also includes the remains of up to 14 women. It does appear fair to point this out as a missed opportunity in terms of interpretative nuance. This chapter is followed by a histological analysis of bone by Anna Katarina Eigreen Tjellén, and an overview of the radiocarbon dating by Marie Kanstrup, Jan Heinemeier and Jesper Olsen, both of which are highly informative and well-written contributions. Julie Lund's insightful discussion of Alken Enge as a ritual site brings this section to a close, and elegantly places the site within a wider setting of ritual behaviour and sites.

The fourth and final section deals with War and Crisis, and contains three chapters. Arjen Hejmis contributes with a discussion of Alken Enge as a battlefield, whilst Martin Winther Olesen places the site in context with two power

centres nearby. Peter Winther Lundby concludes the section and the book with a discussion on people and power in the area at the time of Alken Enge. These chapters serve to emphasise the truly comprehensive approach of the book: It offers the definitive current knowledge on Alken Enge, not only from recent excavation and scientific analysis, but also from a broader, more comprehensive overview of state-of-the-art knowledge, context and wider networks.

The parts taken together give a comprehensive overview of a site that has great potential to further archaeological knowledge in a number of directions, from societal organisation, warfare, ritual behaviour and sacrificial behaviours. Add to this the potential for elucidating diet, health and migratory patterns from the skeletal remains, and it becomes clear that this is a site not only deserving study and publication, but in fact a vital part of the wider puzzle that is Early Iron Age Scandinavia. The book is so well put together as to make the wording 'weaknesses' rather hard to swallow, but one could perhaps imagine a few points that could have been better delivered on, minor though they are. A reflection on the lack of engagement with this material as opposed to the academic focus lavished on more complete bog bodies may have provided further depth for instance. This does seem a relevant point if we consider, for example, the academic attention lavished on the bog body known as Tollund Man, discovered in 1950, juxtaposed with Alken Enge, excavated in 1957 and left alone for decades after. This could have been used to deepen a discussion related to personhood and human remains for instance (Moen and Walsh Forthcoming), or to access the debate about how we relate to human remains in the present (Williams and Giles 2016). Furthermore, there are some nuances missed in the summaries of the skeletal material as mentioned above, which in my opinion does both the site and the analytical work carried out by this project team a disservice in promoting overarching stereotypes rather than highlighting the true complexities evident. Finally, a minor point is the lack of a thorough index: though the place name index and the chapter titles

deliver much in terms of ease of navigation, a complete index is always desirable in a book of this nature, bound to serve as a reference work for students and researchers for years to come. These are minor points however, and overall the book is both well presented, comprehensive and clearly carefully conceived, and recommended as integral reading for all who are interested in the Scandinavian Early Iron Age.

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