

Jews, facilitated by the bureaucratic reduction of humans to index cards, shaped his view of technology. The third, and perhaps most surprising, encounter is with political figure and philosopher Frantz Fanon who was a student on Leroi-Gourhan's course in Colonial Anthropology at the University of Lyon. Schlanger recounts that it is likely that Fanon even accompanied Leroi-Gourhan on an archaeological survey, we can only imagine what they talked about!

Leroi-Gourhan emerges from Schlanger's masterful study not as a one-dimensional representative and progenitor of technology, but rather as a complex figure steeped in a milieu in which the human relationship to the material world was an urgent concern. Little has changed in this regard and Leroi-Gourhan's writings are not only an inspiration for more empirical research, but also deepen reflection on how the past can help us think about our current and future challenges.

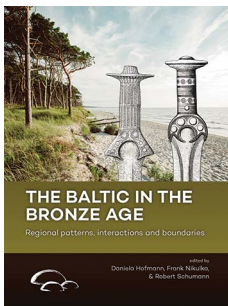
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DANIELA HOFMANN, FRANK NIKULKA & ROBERT SCHUMANN (ed.). 2022. *The Baltic in the Bronze Age: regional patterns, interactions and boundaries*. Leiden: Sidestone; 978-9-464270-181 paperback €65 Open Access.



The brackish Baltic is effectively an inland sea, connected to the North Sea and the Atlantic beyond only via the narrow Danish Straits. Today, the surrounding landmass is divided between nine different nations, each with its own archaeological tradition. This situation essentially assumes that the Baltic coastal areas of each of these countries have more in common with their respective national hinterlands than with the rest of the Baltic's long coastline. As a result, our understanding of connections across the sea and around its shores is fragmented and uneven. It might be instructive to reanalyse the archaeo-cultural map of the Baltic from first principles, disregarding modern national boundaries and focusing only on sites and find spots located within 20km of its shores.

Collected conference proceedings, however, rarely start from first principles. Nor, in this case, is the volume guided by an overarching framework or research question that would allow or compel the contributors to deal with the archaeology of each Baltic country in the same way. Instead, we have 19 rather disparate chapters, broadly unified by a focus on the Bronze Age (c. 2000–500 cal BC). Few of the contributions enter into dialogue with each other, thematically speaking. Everyone just writes about their own research interests. It is a sampler of various recent work in Baltic Bronze Age studies. The contributions derive from presentations given at workshops in Hamburg in 2017 and 2018. The book's origin may explain why half of the authors are based in Germany, and none at all in Denmark, Russia or the Kaliningrad Oblast. The Introduction by the editors gives an overview of the Baltic in the Bronze Age world and how the contributions fit with the wider research. The book is divided into three themes: the first discusses 'objects' in eight chapters; the second is on 'sites, regions and landscapes' with six chapters; and the third theme is 'connections' with five chapters.

Among the chapters, Mika Lavento's wide-ranging survey of Bronze Age culture in Finland is interesting and useful. It is also confusing. Lavento establishes from the outset that during this period, the area of modern Finland was sharply divided into a coastal zone and an inland zone. These two regions offer such different archaeological materials that each has its own chronological scheme, and only the coastal zone has a period labelled 'the Bronze Age'. This term therefore has both geographical and chronological significance in Finnish archaeology. Yet, Lavento does not discuss the two zones separately; moreover, he uses the term 'Bronze Age' interchangeably in its geographical and its chronological senses.

The 'Bronze Age' more generally also has a third, technological definition when applied to most other parts of Europe; that is, the period when most everyday edged tools were made from bronze. There were many people living all around the northern and eastern Baltic between 2000 and 500 cal BC, but if the Bronze Age were defined as it is in other regions, then there never was a Bronze Age in this particular area. Instead, there was a long Stone Age with a thin sprinkling of prestige metalwork towards the end, followed by an Iron Age. The northern and eastern shores of the Baltic are poorly served by attempts to apply south-western Baltic chronological labels.

Another interesting and useful contribution is by Lars Forsberg, who covers much of the same cultural material as Lavento but focuses on the northern two-thirds of Sweden, a region into which the South Scandinavian Bronze Age culture advanced only occasional coastal feelers. This is one of the rare occasions in the volume where two scholars, Forsberg and Lavento, share similar approaches and questions, and the two chapters work well together.

Having myself investigated the site of the Lilla Härnevi hoard in Sweden (and found nothing very interesting), I was pleased to read the chapter by Uwe Sperling and Daniel Sahlén on disc-headed pins of the Härnevi type and their distribution across the southern Baltic from Jutland to the island of Saaremaa off the west coast of Estonia. Evidence for regional patterns and interactions, indeed. The interplay between cast objects and finds of moulds is always food for thought.

In recent years, scholars have come to equate the name Tollense in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany, with an image of armies and large-scale warfare shortly after 1300 cal BC. In an important contribution, Detlef Jantzen and Gundula Lidke invite the reader to rethink the Tollense case, based on a review of the skeletal evidence. The authors argue that osteological stress markers suggest that the dead young men excavated from the Tollense River sediments spent their days not training with weapons or fighting battles, but carrying loads on foot over long distances. Instead of an army of fallen warriors, the authors suggest the Tollense dead represent a trade caravan: “a possibly small group of aggressors, who need not be represented in the skeletal assemblage, attacked a larger group of people, who were travelling in the valley or crossing it, from a protected position” (p. 352).

The book’s most fascinating contribution is Valter Lang’s clearly argued piece on ‘Bronze Age cultural changes, population movements, and the formation of a Proto-Finnic ethnos’. As a student in Stockholm in the 1990s, I was taught that models of migrating prehistoric ethnic and linguistic groups were either wrong or impossible to evaluate by archaeological means. Over the past decade, however, ancient DNA analysis has changed everything. It has now become impossible to argue that the archaeological cultures of Neolithic Scandinavia emerged because immobile people picked up ideas from their equally immobile friends elsewhere. Cultural diffusion, the hegemonic model of the period between 1945 and 2012, turns out to have been a parenthesis in the history of archaeological research. In Lang’s ancient Estonia, there are cist-grave people, hillfort people, Tapiola-pottery people and tarand-grave people—and the aDNA evidence reinforces this interpretation. It is still true to say that ‘pots are not people’, but it sure has proven difficult to find a prehistoric pottery style that does not correlate strongly with an aDNA group!

This thematically wide-ranging collection of spatially and chronologically related chapters offers something for every archaeologist interested in the late prehistory of the Baltic. Conversely, there is probably no reader who will be interested in the entire book. The individual chapters make useful contributions, but the collection as a whole does not provide the promised comprehensive picture of regional patterns, interactions and boundaries.

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