

**A. Bernard Knapp. *Seafaring and seafarers in the Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean*. pp. 296. 52 colour b/w plates, 5 maps, 5 tables. 2018. Leiden: Sidestone Press. ISBN 97–90–8890–554–4 paperback. €34.95.**

This well-priced short paperback (176 pages of text) has full references, an index, well-chosen and striking illustrations (the cover showing a Balearic scene) and several useful tables listing Ugaritic, Egyptian, Akkadian and Hittite text references of significance to the topic, as well as 5 maps, on which the lettering is somewhat too small for easy use. It will serve an informed public or student audience well as an expert guide to the known facts about how shipping and trade operated in the Bronze Age east Mediterranean, especially the Late Bronze Age (64 pages against 15 on the Early BA and 22 on the Middle BA). The presentation aims at straightforwardness (e.g. bullet-pointing themes at the start of chapters), and addresses texts and material culture in a balanced way. Having spent much of his career interpreting the evidence for trade and interaction in the region during the LBA, Knapp is well-qualified to sift data to illustrate his theme. Like much of his academically-targeted work, this is essentially a working-over of secondary material retrieved within others' research projects. Knapp does not feel a need here to put forward specific new arguments to make an analytical contribution, move interpretation forward, or drive new research. He chooses to focus exclusively on presenting the evidence for the mechanics and operation of shipping, including the personnel involved (the latter mainly in a functional sense). This is a subject more restricted than his usual reach and one which he rather mystifyingly states in the preface to be peripheral to his interests, though the statement 'There are several scholars better trained and equipped than I am to write a book such as this.' (p. 11) would contradict this. The lack of personally-generated new data or new arguments may explain why there is considerable repetition of data between the broadly chronological main chapters (Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age, 3–5) each subdivided by region (Egypt and the Levant, Cyprus, Anatolia) and also by categories of text or material object (Ports and Harbours, Ships Representations, Maritime Transport Containers, Stone Anchors/Fishing and Fishing Equipment): the same categories are also covered in some depth in his main introductory chapter 2 'Maritime Matters and Materials', inevitably causing repetition later on. In an evidence guide focused overtly on shipping/

seafarers, the inevitable incompleteness of the record for each period/area requires interpretative cross-support from the others. In addition, much evidence e.g. for ports and harbours crosses the periods in question. Thus by the end of the book we have heard a very great deal about the same evidence - e.g. Byblos; Ulu Burun; Ugarit; the Sea Peoples reliefs. Knapp could instead have filled out the book by a wider consideration of the factors and contexts affecting maritime operations, of which he is well aware as a specialist and around which there are lively and pertinent debates. It would have been possible to add this depth in a sophisticated way without making the book inaccessible to general readers (potentially improving the offer for the more specialised reader).

Important up-to-date primary and secondary source work on material culture which Knapp relies on heavily include continuing analyses and re-evaluations of Ugarit material, new work and publication at Dor, J. Webb's work at Lapithos, the recent excavations and surveys around Izmir conducted/analysed by V. Şahoğlu, and work at Akko and Tel Abu Hawam, as well as recently published wrecks like Hishuley Carmel and Hisarönü. Knapp also usefully foregrounds older material not widely discussed in these contexts from Wadi Gawasi on the Red Sea. One senses gaps, however, selective or otherwise, e.g. in his lists of likely BA ports - what of Tel Mor (near Ashdod) and Gaza, for example? We can note Knapp's ability to authoritatively summarise and interpret data on what he calls MTCs (maritime transport containers) as a result of his recent work on the subject with S. Demesticha.<sup>1</sup> It is useful to have this discussion sitting side by side with information on shipping and summaries of the results of recent organic residue analyses. Among analytical works on shipping and travel heavily relied on here (with no new technical observations or clarifications, and the same accepted narrative of MBA masted ship and LBA galley/merchantman development) are those of S. Wachsmann, M. Wedde, C. Monroe and C. Broodbank.<sup>2</sup> Knapp excludes Aegean evidence from his focus, despite having to reference the many Aegean links of east Mediterranean shipping, especially in the LBA. Perhaps this is to avoid addressing the overtones of Classical archaeology scholarship (though the issue of Mediterranean research history/discipline history is not addressed here anyway) or because the data have been already well published on (much evidence discussed here is, notwithstanding, equally

<sup>1</sup> Knapp and Demesticha 2017.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Wachsmann 1998; Wedde 2000; Monroe 2009; Broodbank 2014.

well-discussed). Knapp may simply have felt the Aegean data *en masse* to be unwieldy. Yet he cannot resist Aegean-related asides uncontextualised for the general reader - e.g. on whether the Hiyyawa/Ahhiyawa referred to in the Ugaritic/Hittite texts are connected to the Aegean (p. 189) or on the still-tentative claims of Cypriot copper on Crete at an EBA date (p. 72). Missing out the context is particularly unsatisfying when citing Aegean evidence in central discussions e.g. the Mycenaeanising pictorial representations of ships on pottery LB III Liman Tepe and Bademigiği Tepe (p. 162–3; 177; 189) or the LB I Thera frescoes with ship imagery (p. 58). On the end of the LBA, it is encouraging to see Knapp encapsulating for a general audience the idea of economic overextension and socioeconomic mobility as leading to disruption and conflict, a model which usefully links the Aegean to the wider east Mediterranean (p. 25–7 in Chapter 1, 'A Brief Prehistory of the Mediterranean Bronze Age').

The tendency of Knapp's scholarship to generalise or conflate long time periods and processes is easily accommodated here, where a single theme subsumes all. But the general reader looking to understand *why* changes in the nature and practice of seafaring occurred, by reference to sociopolitical change in historical context, will not get much help from this approach. Nor will much empathy or insight be gained into what being an ancient seafarer was actually like, beyond some well-worn tropes about seascapes and liminal spaces, and Knapp's remembering always to mention fishing as well as trade. Little is said or inferred about the context of ritual and the sea, for example - surprising given Knapp's previously demonstrated interest in ritual, his discussion of textual references to the maritime links of deities like Ba'al, p. 95; (we can ask who might have pushed these links, in whose interests; over what length of time and in what social context?) and his concluding comment, p. 196 'People socialise and spiritualise...seascapes.' Throughout, he tends to revert to environment, process, function and economic structure as determining what people did on the sea, revealingly incorporating in Chapter 2 a bounded section on 'Social Aspects' with subdivisions 'Seafarers and Seafaring' and 'Merchants, Mariners and Pirates'. Even when he has detailed texts to build on, such as the Ugarit subclassifications of merchants, we move little beyond individuals' function in/determination by an economic and political system. Agency is rarely glimpsed: e.g. p. 178: 'To develop maritime networks of exchange, it was essential for land-based polities to support people (merchants, sailors, tinkers) who were motivated to travel, and to promote the 'technologies of mobility' (boats,

sails, port facilities) and socioeconomic institutions ('the palace'; merchant organisations) that assisted them'. The discussion of pirates, giving a useful summary of relevant texts, is apparently mainly intended (in rather too specialised a manner for this book) to question recent overblown claims about pirate agency/identification at the end of the LBA<sup>3</sup> and is ultimately inconclusive, showing that limits on state size and bulk shipping meant piracy could not become a really regular or rewarding business, though there probably was some piracy wherever there was trade. Another example of a missed opportunity to discuss perceptions/internalisations of seafaring in ancient societies is Knapp's reference to maritime imagery, where a lack of interpretation of the material in a social context and/or as art leaves its informative value incompletely explored. The general reader gets only the point that people represented ships because they used ships and lived near the sea and acquired useful or desirable things through shipping, and that we might learn a bit about their ships from those images - nothing deeper (e.g. p. 188). Some aspects of representation (e.g. as offering insight into attitudes to conflict and power portrayal, as in the Egyptian Sea Peoples reliefs), are brushed in with a few sentences. Indeed, the difficulties and investment/rewards of maritime aggression, and the different modes seaborne conflict could take at state level or below - raiding, settlement, destruction of ports - are more generally marginalised in discussion.

Knapp's long-established interests in the big geographical picture, and in process, make him good at listing and arranging secondary data. But the challenges of inference and interpretation in ancient material culture should be lucidly exposed when doing this for the general public: this needs discussion of the research context. Knapp does identify limits in inference, often timely - e.g. warnings of over-focus on origin point in the Ulu Burun case (p. 160–1); and against straightforward identifications of 'Egyptian' against 'Syrian'/Levantine' ships, either in terms of belonging or actual provenance (p. 133). But this often sounds inconclusive: there is no sense of where research is leading or should lead. On stone anchors, which as he notes are rarely particularly informative about shipping (though numerous) one wonders why he spends so much time itemising them, interesting though some contexts are. He also notes at great length the absence of any actual harbour remains at sites clearly identifiable textually and in terms of goods as ports e.g. see discussion for Troy p. 154–55, making it hard to find where he draws the limits

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Hitchcock and Maeir 2015.

of inference. When general conclusions are drawn, they can also sound generic and colourless: e.g. p. 195 in the 'Conclusions' chapter: 'Representational art not only depicts the ships and people who sailed them but also various types of fish and shells, highlighting the links between fishing and seafaring as well as maritime trade.' – how could fishing not be related to seafaring? Or (p. 196) 'The sea itself does not, and by its nature cannot, represent a palimpsest of human activity...Unlike a landscape...the seascape is a surface of flows and change....'. The determinist 'Maritime interaction not only motivated politico-economic development and facilitated human mobility, it also transformed social structures and modified individual human actions.', again in the chapter Conclusions: Final Words, p. 196, conveys little conclusive meaning. Finishing the book, the reader may assume that everything there is to say has been got out of the data and that the conclusions, however bland, are pretty straightforward. While it is true to say the data have been well-wrung here, Knapp knows there are many other ways and dimensions of exploring it beside his own, and that it has been gathered in a wide variety of research contexts which affect its quality. Thus, the book could be as profound and thought-provoking as the Mediterranean's winy depths – but it is workmanlike instead, a serviceable raft on the surface.

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## Food for thought: socialising meals, cuisine and subsistence practices in prehistoric Southeast Europe

**Maria Ivanova, Bogdan Athanassov, Vanya Petrova, Desislava Takorova and Philip W. Stockhammer (eds). *Social Dimensions of Food in the Prehistoric Balkans*. pp. xvii+367. 2018. Oxford: Oxbow. ISBN: 978–1–78925–080–0 £48.00**

Food practices and their social implications are an important focus of investigation for a wide range of disciplines. In anthropology in particular the cross-cultural importance of meals or of the exchange of food and substances in creating and enduring social bonds gained attention already in Malinowski's era and has remained a central theme of inquiry ever since.<sup>1</sup> It is now widely acknowledged that food practices play an active role in the negotiation of social identities, relationships and distinctions at different social scales. In archaeology, the economic dimensions of subsistence practices have always held an interest, but food itself was not recognised as a significant analytical or theoretical concept until recently. Since the 2000s, however, there is a growing interest in the cultural and social analysis of food, accompanied by a surge of novel perspectives and methods in palaeo-botanical, zoo-archaeological, palaeo-anthropological and material culture research, including the regions in question here.<sup>2</sup>

*Social Dimensions of Food in the Prehistoric Balkans* reflects these changes, focusing on the cultural, social, ritual and ecological dimensions of food practices from the Mesolithic to the Early Iron Age and advocating a combination of practice-oriented approaches with new scientific techniques. At the same time, it demonstrates the profusion of fresh data and the emergence of new research themes, including the human-animal relationship, feasting and ritual consumption, memory, culinary practices, ecological dimensions, the variability of subsistence preferences and the dispersal of farmers, crops, livestock and foodways across Greece and the Balkans. The volume consists of 19 chapters, in addition to an extended introductory section by the editors, apparently originally presented at an

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Carsten 1995; Fernández-Armesto and Smail 2011; Goody 1982.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Halstead and Barrett 2004; Hastorf 2017; Mee and Renard 2007; Pollock 2012.