



Petr Květina *et al.*: **Minulost, kterou nikdo nezapsal (The History Unwritten).**

Pavel Mervart, Archeologický ústav AV ČR v.v.i. 2015, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. 660 pp. ISBN: 978-80-7465-173-1, EAN: 9788074651731. Hardcover.

A collective of mainly young collaborators consisting of Petr Květina, Jaroslav Řídký, Markéta Končelová, Pavel Burgert, Radka Šumberová, Ivan Pavlů, Hana Brzobohatá, Olga Trojánková, Pavel Vavrečka and Jiří Unger published an impressively voluminous book in 2015.

Despite the risible prologue that sends chills down the spine after reading the epilogue, and perhaps also despite an unusual photograph chosen for the cover, the publication must not be taken lightly, but should be read carefully and responsibly. It contains a huge amount of ethnological information, archaeological reconstructions, confrontations and explanations the intention of which is to explain to the reader how tricky and difficult interpretation of certain events in the history of mankind may be while using ancient and modern sources. It shows the kind of misinterpretation or differing explanations that we as archaeologists and cultural anthropologists are necessarily struggling with, if we only have mute artefacts, incomplete finds and remains of settlements and burial grounds of long-dead civilizations! The book is dedicated to societies living without the aid of writing – those ancient ones, known only from archaeological sources, as well as the recent or contemporary non-European indigenous cultures.

To accentuate the difficulty of interpretation of these societies, the authors point first at the precariousness of our own thinking and subconscious in a period of time (Chapter One). Man subconsciously selects only certain events or contexts, displacing others from his mind or inadvertently switching over the sequence of events. Distorting the original sequence of events gives them a different meaning.

That may then take effect in sources depicting events (chronicles, print) or those archiving them (databases); the discord appears then at a time when the literary sources are, or at least can be, confronted. Time plays an important role both in the small, barely perceptible changes and in the most fundamental ones, regardless of how it is measured.

In the first part of the book (chapters 1–7), the authors present a description of the archaic, preliterate societies, the way they are studied and the way to understand their "timeless" nature. The second part of the book (chapters 8–9) is dedicated to a significant milestone in the history of mankind – our neolithisation, the effects of which now affect our health, economy, ecology and globalisation. Finally, readers are presented the most common artefacts associated with the Neolithic culture, i.e. ceramics and the polished and chipped stone industry. In the two most prominent cases, edged axes from New Guinea and a multi-purpose chipped stone tool, called *yilugwa* by the Australian aboriginals, not only the progression of a manufacturing process is demonstrated, but particularly also the practical and non-utilitarian connotations associated with them. The very effort to enter into the problems of chipped stone industry made by the Australian aboriginals deserves recognition because, because even the Australian archaeologists themselves (and many others) admit that the classification of this industry is very difficult and the routine criteria known from the European Palaeolithic cannot be applied in this case. Just a small note on the phrase "blade technique," which is somewhat unhappily employed in this context: in 1967, a symposium was held at which the difference between the concepts of method and technique were discussed. The method is sequence of actions, each of which is carried out according to one or more techniques. The concept of

technique should therefore correctly be used to indicate the manner of knapping (i.e. whether it was done by percussion or pressure, while distinguishing between different sub-variants), the result of which is production of flakes or blades.

In the lengthy text, there sometimes appear some minor shortcomings, which are inevitable in such an encyclopaedic work. On page 97, we can read that: "[lithic] tools made by knapping obviously offered a very low potential of reutilization". If I understand the sentence in the context of the previous and subsequent sentences correctly, the author of the chapter believes that the chipped stone tools could not be repaired and reused. The opposite is true, including their multi-functionality, both of which are documented the best way: by use wear (in Czech is correct *trasology* not *traseology* as the book says), refittings, ethnological analogies, as the authors themselves cite in chapter 10.04.

I was a little puzzled by some terms in the book the use of which is perhaps modern, but sometimes rather discouraging to the reader: "*meta-information of the ethnological world, the establishment of a paradigm, aggregation of several different cultural stimuli, or aggregated sharing of the unit*". At least sometimes synonyms would be appropriate. Not everyone necessarily shares my opinion, but I don't like at all the terms: "*lateral cyclisation, the plane of individual artefacted domains, artefact inventory (repertory) of hunter-gatherers*" appearing in the text, and I wonder what the general reader understands, for example, behind the term "*the plane of individual artefacted domains*".

During a spot check of references and citations consistency, I did not find errors, which brings us to the fact that the book is accompanied by fairly detailed index. Citations and notes on individual chapters are numerically referenced to the appropriate index, which on one hand streamlines the written text, on the other hand, it occupies the reader by browsing

forth and back again (this is why the book has two tassels).

The bibliography is very exhaustive and, principally, reflects all the important works until the publication date of the book. Of course, some topics or chapters are rather "played down" in content and citations at the expense of others, but they always contain everything substantial.

I should recommend to the readers of the book that they take their time for the reading, and read the book at rest. It is not necessary to try realising and understanding all the chapters at once. They will definitely be returning to the book in the long term, depending on what topic they will actually be interested in. I hope it becomes a Baedeker to all those who need

or want to learn about various aspects of unwritten history (archaeology), but also various ethnological sources that we have, which the authors are presenting here.

The final bonus is a link to the application with a virtual tour of Neolithic artefacts from Bylany and pictures with QR codes in the book. Will they work in 20 years?

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