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The volume "Framing Archaeology in the Near East" is focused on social theory in archaeology. The nine studies in this volume originate in a session held in 8ICAANE (Warsaw 2012).

In the introduction (pp. 1-6), Milevski and Levy review briefly the history of social theory in archaeology and note that it is not as developed or central in the Near East as in Europe and America.

Chapter 1 by Michael Harrower (pp. 7-20) concerns the employment of new technologies (such as GIS, LIDAR and unmanned aerial vehicles) for spatial analysis. For example, LIDAR helps survey of areas covered by thick vegetation and accurate GPS mapping reduces the need to excavate by grid squares. Several subjects are discussed ("viewsheds and visibility", "water in social and economic life", "movement and social networks") and a rich bibliography is offered.

Joanna Maras (Chapter 2, pp. 21-30) studies ambiguity of genders in ancient Mesopotamia, based largely on texts and rejecting simplistic binary differentiations. Mesopotamian creation myths speak about humanity in general and recognize more 'types' than men/women, e.g., women who cannot give birth and (probably) eunuchs. The heroes of the Gilgamesh epic transgress 'normative' gender concepts. Gilgamesh is a hegemonic masculinity (brave, strong, etc.), but at times he is tender, loving, or weak, and his relations with Enkidu have erotic undertones. The *Kurgarru* were perhaps hermaphrodites or transvestites performing in women costumes (but some seem female). Former studies focused on women; but

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masculinities and other genders are now studied too, since scholars realize that gender is a spectrum with multiple, dynamic identities.

Chapter 3 by Elise Luneau (pp. 31-50) focuses on gender in Bronze Age burials in Central Asia (Oxus Culture). In this area/period burials of women are richer in finds than those of men. Yet scholars are divided about the social status of women: some argue for patriarchal, others for matriarchal society. Analysis of 811 single adult burials from five sites shows that some markers of high social status 'mark' female burials (combs, needles), but others are 'male' markers (daggers) linked to political/military power. The complex picture does not fit simplified binary (patriarchal *vs*. matriarchal) constructions.

In Chapter 4 Patrycja Filipowicz (pp. 51-62) discusses semiotics of Late Neolithic/ Chalcolithic imagery at Çatalhöyük (Anatolia). Çatalhöyük is not homogeneous as conceived earlier. Early imagery is focused on wild/dangerous animals (bulls, vultures) and male figures with leopard skins and weapons associated with them. Heads/headless is stressed while female depictions are few. Later phases see significant changes, and finally when painted pottery appears, it replaces house walls as a medium, but with similar motifs. Employing a Peircean model, Filipowicz explains the continuation of motifs as a selective replication process. The images, "abducted" and continually re-copied, finally "fade away", losing their original meanings and becoming a cliché.

Alessandro Di Ludovico (Chapter 5, pp. 63-78) deals with communication in late 3rd Millennium southern Mesopotamia. This period (Ur III) sees an extensive use of writing and "abstract reasoning modalities in the management of state affairs" (p. 64). Abstraction is a yardstick "to contextualize and qualify phenomena and habits that are related to communication". The degree of abstraction is expressed by *concreteness*, which is "the function of a decrease or relatively low degree of abstraction". Various aspects are treated, but it is difficult to follow the long, complex sentences (e.g., "the quality of being context-related here reveals a relative concreteness, while an adaptation for a use at a larger scale and within a

larger structure is a clear sign of a relatively marked inclination to abstraction, and follows qualitatively different logical processes", p. 67). The article ends with a noble call to include "the views of peoples living in the lands that host the relics"; but it is not clear how – the present study does not give an example. The call is marred by paternalism (their views should be "encouraged and liberated").

In Chapter 6, Johnny Baldi (pp. 79-95) treats pottery from Tell Feres Al-Sharqi in relation to the 'Uruk colonization' in Late Chalcolithic Northern Mesopotamia (ca. 3800-3200 BC). This site does not become a colony and continues to display 'traditional' material culture, but also imported 'southern' ceramics. The 'colonization' likely meant economic and commercial acculturation and not direct political conquest. The pottery may indicate 'cultures', but not *ethnies*. The ceramic *chaîne opératoire* can define 'technical traditions'. The hybridization of pottery techniques leads Baldi to suggest that – assuming the potters were females – many Uruk settlers married local wives.

Aaron Greener (Chapter 7, pp. 95-112) discusses social perspectives of Intermediate Bronze Age tombs at Jericho. Kenyon excavated 181 tombs (all single shaft tombs) and identified six types. Scholars debated whether the Jericho tombs show differences of wealth/social status (Palumbo, Baxevani), or are homogeneous/'egalitarian' (Dever, Shay). Greener reexamines the distribution of grave goods with the aim of defining social constructs. Differences between burials with daggers and with objects like spindle whorls, and between primary and secondary burials, were interpreted as male/female burials. Greener supports this identification and sees the daggers (and javelins) as status symbols of warriors/leading men. In his view such analysis provides insights into social structures and identities. He sees social complexity in Jericho, but one based on gender and age, not 'classes'. This is a highly interesting article, but the debate is not over. Viewing societies as either 'complex' or 'simple' when looking for 'social complexity' is misguided. There is no 'simple' society; each society has both simple and complex dimensions (Verhoeven 2010). Differences of gender/age do not

indicate “social complexity” in the sense of differences of wealth/ ‘classes’. Burials do not necessarily reflect social realities: they may contradict them, for example, seeking to show equality in death that did not exist in life (McGuire 1988). Perhaps the daggers in the tombs do not mark professional ‘warriors’, ‘leaders’, or ideals of “Spartan lives”, but ‘common men’ (Kletter and Levy 2016).

Chapter 8 by Juan Manuel Tebes (pp. 113-122) is a critic of the “Edomite state model”. For decades, Iron Age Edom was perceived as a kingdom with typical state aspects (capital at Buseirah, border fortresses, ‘Edomite’ pottery, etc.). More recently it was viewed as a ‘tribal kingdom’ (Bienkowski and Van der Steen) or ‘segmentary society’ (Porter). Tebes rejects the ‘tribal kingdom’ model since Edom is not a state (as defined for example by Claessen and Skalnik), while ‘kingdom’ says almost nothing (p. 114). In his view, the ‘segmentary’ model is also not valid. Instead, he prefers a “chiefdom” model: “many of the archaeological features that are present in Buseirah are also congruent with what scholars know about non-state hierarchical societies, what anthropologists call ‘chiefdoms’” (p. 118). In his view the term ‘king’ in biblical/Assyrian references to Edom reflects not a reality but an ideology of scribes. Much of Tebes’ criticism is valuable, and he is aware of criticism of the neo-evolutionary model. However, there is no reason to dismiss the term “king” (what ideology did Assyrian scribes have against it?). The evidence is not only external, but also from Edom: several Edomite seals with provenance belonged to the “king of E[dom]” or to a “servant of the king” (Avigad and Sass 1997: 387-390). Kingdoms were a dominant (perceived as natural) entity for thousands of years, and in similarity to states today, they came in various sizes. The “chiefdom-state” model is outdated. There were no states or chiefdoms in the ancient Near East. The issue returns to kingdoms, and the question is “when” and in which form, rather than “if”.

In the final Chapter (pp. 123-140) Ianir Milevski and Bernardo Gandulla discuss politics and social situations affecting Archaeology in the southern Levant, particularly in Israel. They review the history of

archaeology in the region. The Biblical Archaeology developed by Albright thrived in post-1948 Israel as a nationalistic archaeology (both minimalists and maximalists of the 1990s are identified as continuation of it). The 1960s New (Processual) Archaeology is identified mainly with the post 1967 period. Post processual Archaeology is identified after 2000 AD, but while some archaeologists labeled under it are left/critical, others use it for "new biblical archaeology". Communal archaeology can be a tool for Israeli and Palestinian cooperation. This article opens a host of important issues. For example, there is a question to what extent did New Archaeology penetrate Israeli Archaeology, and one may suggest a somewhat different periodization. Regarding the present, the analysis seems too optimistic. Critical archaeologists form a small minority and Israeli archaeology shifts back to be a nationalistic archaeology. "New biblical archaeology "rejects post-modernism (which it misunderstands as an attack on truth, normative families, the Bible, etc.). Archaeologists may liberally use post-processual and post-modern catchwords in articles, but excavate in East Jerusalem with budget from extreme colonial-settler organizations, claiming that they are "pure" scientists and that what happens there outside the excavations is none of their business.

The volume is well produced and edited (I noticed only one slip of hand on p. 21, when the "former" and "latter" should be reversed). Most of the studies deal with the application of social theory in archaeology, but one (Chapter 9) is on politics of archaeology and another (Chapter 1) concerns spatial, not social archaeology. An introduction about social theory would have been helpful, especially since the authors (and presumably the intended readers) are archaeologists. Overall, this is a highly interesting, varied, and original volume.

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