



## Book Reviews

### **IRON AGE CHARIOT BURIALS IN BRITAIN AND THE NEAR CONTINENT: NETWORKS OF MOBILITY, EXCHANGE AND BELIEF IN THE THIRD AND SECOND CENTURIES BC BY GRETA ANTHOONS**

*BAR Publishing, Oxford. 2021 British Series 666, 246pp, 64 illustrations, 16 tables, 5 appendices, pb, ISBN978-1-4073-1684-0, £65.00*

The chariot can be considered the most quintessential symbol of later European Iron Age society. In Britain these are mainly found within East Yorkshire, and form a classic part of the Arras Culture, which has been subject to regular research publications over the last fifty years (e.g. Stead 1979; Giles 2012; Halkon 2013, Chapter 1). How the chariot burials of East Yorkshire relate to those on the Continent, and how they all relate to the populations interring them, has long been pondered but never fully resolved (Stead 1965; Halkon 2020). Taking up this challenge, Anthoons combines her PhD thesis with the most up to date research available, and provides the most comprehensive analysis to date of chariot burials both in Britain and on the near Continent.

The first major synthesis of this book carefully considers all characteristics which make up the burials of the Arras culture. This reaches a near forensic level of analysis, which provides the backbone by which data in Europe is further considered. Beginning by placing the chariot burial phenomena within their local funerary context, landscape organisation, architecture, treatment of the body, vehicles and surviving grave goods are all considered in fine detail. Though Anthoons comes to focus mainly on the chariot burials of the second and third centuries BC, it is in awareness of their fifth to fourth century predecessors. Furthermore, the synthesis and analysis of the entire work is conducted with a clear self-awareness of imminently forthcoming publications (e.g. the late chariot burial from Pembrokeshire, Wales). Chapter 13 summarises the results of the main body of the work fairly and considers the problems with evidence; these illustrate that no one clear source can be proven as the origin for the chariot burials in East Yorkshire. This leads to two discussion-based chapters. The first is on the methods by which social networks change and are maintained through both theoretical modelling and available evidence (14), and the second explores the social mechanisms by which they may have practically worked (15).

Chapter 14 is a good example of balance between theory and available data. The role of art during the period is particularly noted as relating to evidence of broadening 'internationalisation'

and long-distance connections (p.146–7), demonstrating a further awareness of other evidence that relates to this discussion that is otherwise beyond the remit of this work. However, another branch of material culture that could have also been mentioned here is coinage. By the mid-third century BC there are several communities producing Philippus imitation staters, particularly in the Somme and Paris areas (see Sills 2003 Chapters 1 and 2). These could potentially be useful indicators of said internationalisation that perhaps deserve greater consideration in these types of discussion, especially given that chariots are a main feature of design which continue beyond attempting to directly copy the original inspiration. Unfortunately, it must be said this is not necessarily useful evidence for the Arras Culture, given that the closest example of a Philippus imitation is from Lincolnshire (Portable Antiquities Scheme: NLM-3BF2C7).

Chapter 15, on the other hand, is a much more theoretically based consideration of the potential social methods of elite network function, which draws heavily from both classical and early medieval Irish literature. Aware of the limitations of evidence, Anthoons proffers hypothesis but never delves into unsupported application, again providing an extremely balanced discussion which will be of interest to several other branches of Iron Age studies.

Overall, the volume is written in an accessible style. It is logical and neat in its organisation, something to be commended given the level of data analysed. A lack of preservation from early twentieth century excavations means that information for some regions is sparse, and even though this leads to some incredibly short chapters, the flow of the work is not affected. Furthermore, the use appendices (A and B in particular) as a synthesis of information designed for quick reference should be praised, and will no doubt prove practical to researchers for years to come. Although this is only somewhat incidental to some parts of the text, Anthoons identification of an evolution in iron tyre manufacture, whilst not yet a developed typology, does perhaps deserves a more dedicated and detailed paper in the future.

There is one minor criticism to be made of this volume, and that is in the mapping. Those few maps which are included (though the publication would have benefited from more) are produced through Google maps rather than a GIS programme and lack basic annotations (such as scale). The pale grey rendering makes some more difficult to read than others. The manuscript would have benefitted from being checked by another copyeditor, as there are several typographical errors. In common with too many archaeological publications, the price at £65 is a little steep, which unfortunately means that despite its accessible writing style, it is perhaps less accessible to potential readers outside of academia.

None of these minor criticisms detract from the value of work. This volume is a success in almost every respect and can be considered essential reading. The discussions of the evidence are important for many aspects of Iron Age archaeology, and as such this volume should not be confined to the shelves of chariotry or Arras enthusiasts. Its logical and practical nature make it easy to use for student and researcher alike, and the awaited imminent publications previously referred to will by no means diminish the value of this work.

## References

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