

by attacking state spending on welfare programmes, removing jobs, lowering pensions, reducing workers' rights, etc. The class struggle (the ultimate expression of inequality) that is taking place in the most developed countries, and between them and the under-developed world, does not encourage any belief in an ordered and peaceful turning back of the clock from unequal to equal societies. An understanding of the history of our species is insufficient, by itself, to develop a more just society.

My last point concerns the 'general reader'. Flannery and Marcus never say who s/he is. From the text, my guess is that they mean well-educated readers, probably college/university graduates, maybe even archaeology and anthropology graduates who have not gone on to pursue careers in these disciplines. I make these assumptions partly because of the lack of discussion of how both archaeologists and anthropologists work, and partly because sometimes the jokes and humorous asides work better if the reader knows something of their background. Identifying the general reader, and then trying to write for them, are big challenges that comparatively few of us attempt (and certainly so in countries like the UK, in which such 'popularization' attracts almost no kudos in the development of professional careers and contributes nothing to the periodic assessments of research quality in universities). Even fewer of us have tried to write about the past for the non-professional audience, those

without higher education, for whom the relevance of what they are reading would require a different form of presentation.

The Creation of Inequality has some interesting contradictions. It is a book for the general reader that can also be read by the specialist. It is a book that makes no mention of Europe, but which will challenge (although not necessarily convince) many European readers to think critically about the relationship(s?) of archaeology and anthropology. It argues that inequalities are historically based and archaeology and anthropology can make a contribution to halting, even reversing, their accentuation, but how this aim is to be achieved is not convincing. Finally it is an entertaining read, and this cannot always be claimed about archaeological publications on inequality and social change. I suspect that it will be extensively cited in the professional literature.

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Gonzalo Aranda Jiménez, Sandra Montón-Subías and Margarita Sánchez Romero, eds. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner: Feasting Rituals in the Prehistoric Societies of Europe and the Near East* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2011, 245pp., pbk, ISBN 978-1-84217-985-7)

The edited volume, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, is the result of a workshop held in

Granada (Spain) in 2009. The book consists of an introduction, an overview

chapter, and ten case studies. A total of twenty-seven authors contributed to the volume, a testimony to the productive role of collaborative work. The papers offer a good temporal coverage, ranging from the Epipalaeolithic through the Iron Age, with a geographical emphasis on the lands around the Mediterranean.

As the title of the book indicates, this volume is concerned not just with who comes to dinner, but who comes to *special* dinners, or feasts. The introductory chapter sets the stage by focusing on ritual consumption of food and drink. Accordingly, most of the contributions to the book frame their enquiries firmly within the realm of feasting studies. However, most of the papers in this volume take the important step of going beyond simply showing that feasting occurred in particular archaeological cases. As Hayden points out in his paper, we need to investigate specific elements of feasting, such as the number of participants, the sponsors of feasts, their purpose, and so forth. Although other authors do not necessarily take up Hayden's challenge to address these particular parameters, they do work towards understanding the complexities of feasting practices and their connections to other elements of social life. For example, Parker Pearson and colleagues pose the Brechtian question of how people who built Stonehenge were provisioned, given that neither animal bone nor pottery was found in any substantial quantities at the site. They turn for a solution to the nearby site of Durrington Walls, ultimately arguing that communal feasts may have been a means by which people were coopted into building Stonehenge, a form of work feast as discussed by Dietler (2001: 79–80; see also Kennedy, 2012).

An important counterpoint to any discussion of food practices is, as Sánchez Romero notes, hunger. Because food is essential to every person, control over food

can be easily translated into power. This should be an essential element of food studies in archaeology (as well as in other fields), but unfortunately hunger is rarely mentioned in archaeology (but see Halstead & O'Shea, 1989, for an approach that centres around buffering mechanisms more than hunger *per se*). The difficulty of approaching hunger archaeologically may be one reason for this neglect, but this should not prevent us from raising the issue (Pollock, 2012a, b). Only by making it a topic of concern will we find ways to explore it using archaeological data, a point that was discussed extensively with regard to gender in the early feminist literature in archaeology (see, for example, Gero & Conkey, 1991).

In a discussion that bears indirectly on this theme, Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen points out that consuming large quantities of meat is, generally speaking, a luxury in most societies. Halstead and Isaakidou note that slaughtering animals – or even a single large animal – the meat of which exceeds the consumption capacity of a household, usually implies that the meat was shared. This insight offers an important angle on examining a practice – sharing – that we often think of as archaeologically elusive (but see Benz, 2010). These observations point well beyond the archaeological implications of specific case studies: they encourage us to reflect on the social and economic contexts in which many of us live, where regular and often abundant meat consumption is taken for granted.

Aranda Jiménez and Montón-Subías examine the use of meat from a different perspective, that of funeral contexts in the Argaric Bronze Age of south-east Spain. They consider not just what types or parts of animal skeletons are found in graves, but also the portions of the animals that were *not* deposited with the burials. They suggest that the latter represented the

parts of the animals that were eaten by participants in the funeral. This would be an interesting place to incorporate the biographies of objects, in this case, animal carcasses, in an effort to trace the ways in which the other parts of the animals were distributed, consumed, and the refuse (bones) eventually discarded.

As others have noted (for example, Sutton, 2001), food is often closely entwined with memories. In the introductory chapter to this volume, the authors pick up this argument, noting that food practices can be understood as 'a vehicle for the transmission of memory, *i.e.* historically established knowledge' (p. 2). Sánchez Romero addresses connections between food and memory in her discussion of the role of gender and the possibility that practices surrounding food may be a medium through which to gain access to 'female forms of memory' (p. 17), for example, through narratives associated with food preparation. This, of course, presupposes that – cross-culturally, as well as across class and age – women are the principal participants in food preparation, something that need not always be the case.

Several papers take up the challenge of thinking about food in relation to knowledge transmission, sometimes in novel ways that go beyond received wisdom on the subject. Delgado and Ferrer consider the potential implications of women's (likely) roles in food preparation in Phoenician contexts and what they would have meant for the transmission of sensuous knowledge. Garrido-Pena et al. consider the basis for the widespread sharing of a Bell Beaker prototype over a large geographical area. They argue that it represents the shared intentions of potters who worked with a common prototype, but also the spread of work party feasts as a particular kind of ritual commensality. Armada examines various kinds of metal

objects and their connections to feasting in Late Bronze Age Atlantic Iberia. He claims that people in Iberia did not passively adopt Mediterranean fashions, but rather interacted with them in ways that produced original phenomena. Each of these papers raises important questions regarding the ways in which knowledge about food preparation and consumption is transmitted among people across space and time – as well as when and why it was not. In doing so, the authors point to fruitful directions for further work regarding the place of knowledge and memory in relation to the broad spectrum of food-related practices, from preparation to consumption, and from feasts to daily meals.

In their efforts to find novel ways to examine feasting and other food-related practices in a variety of archaeological cases, authors in this volume draw together kinds of data that are all too often kept analytically separate. A prime case in point can be seen in the paper by Halstead and Isaakidou, who examine faunal remains, ceramic and metal vessels, and disposal practices in their comparison of feasting in the Neolithic through the Late Bronze Age Aegean. They suggest, for example, that vessels with flat bases can stand level on a table or platform and thereby enhance the formality of the occasion in which they are used. Even more intriguing are their attempts to investigate the relationship between hosts and guests. They propose that the segregated disposal of feasting remains may be a way to draw attention to the host of a feast, as did the use of vessels with elaborate spouts, which accentuated the act of pouring and hence the asymmetrical host-guest relationship. Although distinctions between hosts and guests have often been mentioned in the literature on feasting, these relationships are seldom examined in detail despite their centrality for

considerations of the social relations that are constituted through food consumption practices.

The issue of scale is of relevance in all archaeological work. Studies of feasting and other food-related practices are no exception. Most of the contributions in this volume frame their investigations in terms of the medium to large scale. Hayden postulates that feasting played a pivotal role in processes of domestication in the Epipalaeolithic in the Fertile Crescent. He thereby presumes that it makes sense to treat this enormous geographical area and considerable span of time as a unit, despite an acknowledgment of the 'mosaic-like diversity of adaptations' in the region (p. 31). While the papers by Armada and Halstead and Isaakidou also engage with substantial temporal ranges as part of a broad comparative perspective, they do so with more attention to specificities of individual components, with the result that they succeed, to my mind, in making a more convincing argument.

Buxó and Principal and especially Garcia and Pons, on the other hand, pay particular attention to the small scale. While Buxó and Principal investigate the specificities of different households, Garcia and Pons examine the materials deposited in a single pit at Mas Castellar (north-east Spain), as well as the depositional sequence and its implications for understanding the activities that resulted in the discarded materials. These kinds of small-scale approaches are extremely important, not to the exclusion of looking at larger scales, but as the basis from which to build up larger scenarios. This is not a plea for an old-fashioned empiricism nor for a tunnel-vision focus on one's 'own' site or region. Rather, it is a recognition that achieving more nuanced understandings of the ways that people lived in the past – and in the present – require us to pay more attention to the

specificities and complexities of the small scale and the everyday.

Finally, I would like to briefly consider the scope of the topic broached by this volume, specifically feasting. While the importance of feasting is not to be denied (see Dietler & Hayden, 2001), I am nonetheless troubled by the consequences of an exclusive focus on feasting, an over-attention to the special and unusual at the expense of the everyday and mundane (Pollock, 2012a, b). I would argue instead for approaches that try to balance the picture by examining daily commensality as well as those that consider daily food practices in conjunction with feasts.

Two of the papers in this volume – by Delgado and Ferrer, and Buxó and Principal – do exactly that, by focusing explicitly on daily eating practices and domestic contexts. Delgado and Ferrer point out that an emphasis on feasting tends to highlight hierarchical differences at the expense of the ways in which food-related practices contribute to community building and solidarity. They demonstrate how research on the use of staple foods – in their particular case, the use of grain in Iberian Phoenician settlements – allows one to trace components of everyday life that were transported by colonists to their new homes, how daily tasks of grain grinding contributed to familiar sets of sounds that would have been present in every household, and the way in which staple foods used in offerings to the gods connected everyday actions to ritual practices. Buxó and Principal examine household contexts in northeastern Iberia, comparing the sphere of domestic commensality in four households that are argued to have belonged to different ethnic subgroups.

Overall, this volume has much to offer the reader interested in feasting and food-related practices in archaeology. The papers do not present a single perspective

but rather a collection of possibilities, questions, and potential new directions. They give a clear sense of how far archaeology has come in considering issues of feasting, as well as some of the directions in which future work can fruitfully take us.

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Paul Pettitt and Mark White, eds. *The British Palaeolithic: Human Societies at the Edge of the Pleistocene World* (Routledge: Routledge Archaeology of Northern Europe, Abingdon, 2012, 592pp., 237 figs., 38 tables, pbk, ISBN 978-0-415-67455-3)

In Chapter 1 of this regional prehistory, the authors explicitly state the aim of the volume: a synthesis and interpretation of the British Palaeolithic record including aspects of occupation, behaviour, and hominin societies that moved around the landscape of the British Isles during Pleistocene times. Most likely, similar or analogous intentions have been stated by others in books focused on different regions. However, to my knowledge, none have been able to truly reach the initial objective in such a coherent and holistic

form. Pettitt and White have done a superb job of presenting all types of data: archaeological, sedimentological, geomorphological, isotopic, data from physical anthropology, and the faunal record (including insects, mammals, etc.), and many other sources of knowledge that allow a true and deep study of the Palaeolithic, as well as a contemporary and updated synthesis of the British Palaeolithic. But of no less importance is the fact that the authors also make a strong effort to offer, whenever possible, a wide range