

Prehistoric Bone Industries in Southeast Europe.

Book review:

Corneliu Beldiman, Diana-Maria Sztancs and Costel Ilie: *Artefacte din materii dure animale în colecția Muzeului de Istorie Galați. Eneolitic (Osseous material artefacts in the collection of History Museum of Galați: Aeneolithic).* Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, ISBN 978-606-543-277-2.

Iosif Vasile Ferencz and Corneliu Beldiman eds.: *Artă și meșteșug în epoca regatului dac: artefacte de os și corn. Catalog. (Art and craftsmanship during the dacian kingdom: bone and antler artefacts. Catalogue).* Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2012., ISBN

The book *Osseous material artefacts in the Collection of History Museum of Galați Aeneolithic (Artefacte din materii dure animale în colecția Muzeului de Istorie Galați)*, by the authors Corneliu Beldiman, Diana-Maria Sztancs and Costel Ilie (Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2012), contains 237 pages, 155 pages of text, 82 pages comprising 210 full-colour plates. The book represents a bilingual catalogue in on the osseous artefacts from several Aeneolithic sites (Berești-Delalul Băzanului, Berești-Delalul Bulgarului, Soicani-Cetățuia and Sucevani Stoborăni) in Romania. It is the result of the project called „Digitization of the movable cultural heritage from the History Museum of Galați. Collection of Aeneolithic osseous materials artefacts” - DanubiOs (August-November 2012) financed by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund of Romania.

The purpose was to give a proper presentation in both digital and paper form of the portable archaeological material in Romania, and this book is devoted to assemblages of artefacts made from osseous raw materials. This type of assemblages are generally poorly represented in the archaeological literature throughout Europe, therefore a detailed catalogue of finds, with high-quality illustrations, is more than necessary for both heritage presentation, preservation, as well as for future scientific research.

The book represents much more than merely a catalogue, it also includes a high-quality scientific study. The first chapter of the book gives general information on the project of digitalization itself. Second chapter gives an overview of the Aeneolithic sites from which the movable archaeological material is represented (Berești-Delalul Băzanului, Berești-Delalul Bulgarului, Soicani-Cetățuia and Sucevani Stoborăni). The next three chapters are devoted to the osseous assemblages – from history of research in general, the studies of osseous industries in Romania, methodological considerations, the full analysis of assemblages from above-mentioned sites, and the catalogue itself. The catalogue is equipped with high-quality colour photographs, including some macro-photographs of selected artefacts. The book also gives and extensive bibliography on both Aeneolithic sites in Romania and bone industry analyses.

Extensive analyses of bone industries, with catalogues included, are generally not particularly common in European prehistory (with some notable exceptions). Therefore the entire project of the digitalization of the portable archaeological heritage itself is an excellent undertaking, very important for both Romanian archaeology as for European archaeology in general. Especially artefact types such as everyday tools do not receive enough attention in archaeological publications; the industries from osseous materials are get even space in archaeological publications, and detailed catalogues of such finds in the European prehistory are extremely rare. Keeping this in mind, the project of the book on osseous artefacts deserves even more credit and praising.

This catalogue is very important for both Romanian and wide European framework of archaeological research, and has significance in not only preserving and presenting the diverse archaeological patrimony of Romania, but for scientific research as well. The catalogue itself represents an important contribution to the research of prehistory in South-Eastern Europe.

* * *

The book *Art and craftsmanship during the dacian kingdom: bone and antler artefacts. Catalogue (Artă și meșteșug în epoca regatului dac: artefacte de os și corn. Catalog)*, edited by Iosif Vasile Ferencz and Corneliu Beldiman (Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2012), represents a volume with numerous short papers on osseous industry during the Dacian reign, accompanied by a detailed catalogue. The book contains 359 pages, with 81 figure and 73 plates in colour, and is bilingual (texts in Romanian are followed by unabbreviated English version). The catalogue is an outcome of the exhibition presented in the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization in Deva.

Apart from the editors, list of contributors includes Mihaela Ion, Diana-Maria Sztancs and Marius Barbu. Papers represented are dealing with different aspects of bone crafting and related topics in prehistory in general, with special emphasis on bone industry during the Dacian times. Several introductory papers are dealing with bone artefacts in prehistory and protohistory, osseous raw materials in general and zooarchaeology (domestic and wild animals, hunting and fishing) in Dacian times by Mihaela Ion, Diana-Maria Sztancs, and Iosif Vasile Ferencz. They are followed with contributions by Corneliu Beldiman and D.-M. Sztancs on history and methodology of bone artefact studies, bone industry in Romania and especially bone crafting among the Geto-Dacian communities. Third part of the book are papers dealing specifically with Dacian osseous artefacts and their context, by C. Beldiman, I. V. Ferencz and Marius Barbu. The book is closed by Short introduction of the Dacian imaginary. The real and fabulous bestiary, by I. V. Ferencz, thus encompassing a wide range of topics related not only to bone artefacts but also to the animal use and animal symbolism within Dacian communities.

This part is followed by a detail catalogue of finds, organized by sites, bibliography list, and seventy-three colour plates, that include also some macro photos of details of manufacture and use wear traces.

As mentioned above, the bone industry is, despite the increase of diverse researches and publications in past few decades, still under-explored topic. While some regions and some periods received more attention (for example, Palaeolithic finds from France or Spain), some are almost completely ignored. The protohistoric periods, for example, especially in south-east Europe, belong to the second group. Therefore the book edited by I. V. Ferencz and C. Beldiman represents the first comprehensive overview of the bone industry in Dacian times. Diverse related topics covered by papers in this volume, as well as detailed catalogue, add to the value of this book.

* * *

Both these publications are amongst still rare (especially regarding the south-east Europe) publications devoted to the bone industry. This under-explored topic has a great interpretative potential and value for research in all prehistoric periods. These two publications will, hopefully, encourage further research in this field, but at the same time draw attention to the archaeologist conducting excavations how and why it is important to collect properly and later analyse and publish in detail artefacts from osseous raw materials. Detailed catalogue and illustrations give these books potential to become reference work for future analyses of the bone artefacts in region, but also in wider context of European prehistory and protohistory. The bilingual version of the integral (unabbreviated) text gives additional value to both these books.

Selena Vitezović
Archaeological Institute, Belgrade, SR