**Stefanie Klooß, Mit Einbaum und Paddel zum Fischfang. Holzartefakte von endmesolithischen und frühneolithischen Küstensiedlungen an der südwestlichen Ostseeküste.** Untersuchungen und Materialien zur Steinzeit in Schleswig-Holstein und im Ostseeraum, vol. 6. Wachholtz Verlag, Kiel/Hamburg 2015. € 50.00. ISBN 978-3-529-01858-9. 431 pages, numerous figures and tables, 57 plates.

Beginning in the 1990s and continuing into the first decade of the 21st century, a number of Late Mesolithic Ertebølle and Early Neolithic coastal sites in the German Baltic have been subject to extensive investigation. The sites mainly date to 5500-3800 cal. BC, with a few deviances, and have produced impressive finds of well-preserved organic materials; previous publications detail these and other findings. The author of the present book, Stefanie Klooß, is experienced in German coastal archaeological research and coastal rescue excavations. The well-preserved and numerous wooden artefacts from the excavations provide the starting point for this volume, which is the printed version of Klooß’ doctoral thesis, defended at the University of Kiel.

The book opens with a foreword by the editors of the series (S. Hartz / H. Lübke, pp. 15-16), followed by the author’s own foreword (pp. 17-18), and a detailed Table of Contents (*Inhaltsverzeichnis*). The volume includes five main chapters (1-5). Chapter 1 consists of the background and methods of the coastal investigations, the relative chronological positions of the sites, and artefact inventory, and discusses the sites with regard to the Neolithisation of the region. Chapter 2 describes each site chosen for the thesis in more detail. A geographical and contextual description is given, followed by the research history, chronology, and survey of the finds of each site, as well as an overview of previous analyses of the material. Chapter 3 describes and classifies the artefacts and discusses their various functions. Chapter 4 summarizes the results, while Chapter 5 enlarges on the many different tree species documented in the area of investigation. Next follows a German *Zusammenfassung* (Chapter 6), an English summary (Chapter 7), and an extensive reference list (Chapter 8). The book closes with a section of plates with explanations (*Tafeln* 1-57; and *Vorbemerkung zu den Tafeln*).

This is a well-organized and methodical book of an outstanding standard, with an attractive layout. The high quality illustrations were drawn by Klooß herself and by the skilled staff at the archaeological authorities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein. Among them is mentioned the legendary Professor Joachim Reichstein, who also is remembered as a promotor of underwater archaeology in the region. While the illustrations are very good, the presentation of the map on page 21 (Abb. 1) is somewhat confusing to readers unfamiliar with the Baltic region. The map depicts northern-most Germany and the eastern-most Danish islands, but where, exactly, this fits within the wider context is not clear. A suggestion would be to add a map of northern Europe in the corner of the local one that pinpoints the location of the investigated area. The English summary is short and takes up less than two full pages; a more extensive summary would be useful. The reason why this is mentioned here is that students outside German-speaking areas are often reluctant to read German texts, and thus overlook an entire tradition of knowledge. (This reluctance is an odd paradox: young people today frequently listen to German music – not least to famous representatives of *NDH –* and know the lyrics of the tracks, too, which certainly leads to some hope of them learning the language!) German classificatory terms of artefacts are generally not similar to English terms, and more detailed descriptions would certainly facilitate reading for colleagues and students less familiar with German terminology. The wooden material presented in the book is an extremely important contribution to European Stone Age archaeology in general; the ability to thoroughly understand it would be aided by a more complete English summary section.

Stefanie Klooß’ thesis, as presented in this book, is a systematic, comprehensive and detailed work. Meticulously presented knowledge, artefact classifications and discussion of their contexts make up the strength of the dissertation, as expected in the German academic tradition. From the perspectives of Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon scholars, however, the lack of explicit theoretical approach and thus, of subsequent social interpretations would not only have surprised, but would possibly have placed the work in a category other than a doctoral dissertation. From a wider view, it can be stated that in spite of the Bologna Process, criteria for doctoral theses do vary within the reform’s geographic area. This variation raises the question of how to define the boundaries between descriptive reference work and analytical, explanatory work.

The aim of the book was confined to dendrochronologicaland technological-ergological investigations of the wooden material from the coastal areas in question (p. 15). Ergology is the study of the relationship between humans and their setting/context/circumstances of work, including their tools. However, the focus of the thesis is on forms and details of tools; unfortunately, there is no suggestion of how the human-work relationship should be approached methodologically. It would have been an excellent opportunity to explicitly relate the much-applied *chaîne-opératoire* approach to making and using tools, integrating the methodology with wooden technology. Perhaps this is a potential avenue of future research.

The high number of different tree species recorded on the sites (close to 30) is impressive. Their use as raw material for making artefacts reveals and confirms the fact that people of the late Mesolithic and early Neolithic possessed extensive knowledge about how to find, transport and use wood, and that particular species were more suitable for specific objects than others. The particular tree species chosen for making tools is an additional analytical variable for comparison of tools and gear are widely chosen in time and geography. This gives an overview of each type of material (species of tree used), its construction and different uses. Although the use of comparative ethnography has been widely debated in archaeology, it is a method that can support the archaeologist in defining the use and function of tools. In some cases, tools seem not to have changed much through time; examples are the eel-spears and trap baskets that were widely used in the Stone Age Baltic, as well as in modern contexts (p. 238). Some items suggested to be children’s bows are fascinating. Textiles are another organic material found to be relatively plentiful in the coastal sites. The results are presented in Chapter 4 in a very clear, brief and pragmatic manner. It concisely summarizes the choices of plant species for different devices, as well as the reconstruction of the local arboreal vegetation. The summary also discusses fishing practices: the tools used, as well as the fish bones found at the sites. The chapter closes with a brief comparison of fishing practices in other locales.

When theoretical frameworks and tools for social interpretation are not present, it will reasonably follow that the scholar will be unable to construct a wider social and cultural analysis and interpretation. Who were the makers and users of the materials and artefacts, how did they acquire their skills, and how were they related and organized; how did they practice and organize their specializations in tool making, fishing and consumption? These are only a few of the possible questions that would have encouraged more in-depth analysis and discussion.

The results of the German coastal projects are presented in the wider geographical context of examples that are close in time and space, including the extensive Danish coastal/underwater investigations, known not least through the Tybrind Vig project. The documented extensive use of wood and aquatic resources in the end of the Mesolithic (not only in the geographic area of this book, but also, for example, in the Danish regions) focuses off a traditional hunter-gatherer concept, and should therefore have been enlarged on. How would the extensive use of aquatic and botanical resources and specialization affect social organization and social development? How does the presence of specialized fishing locales affect social organization? Was there standardization of the choice of certain tree species for certain pieces of equipment? And how important is it to have concluded that fishing seems to have been as important in the early Neolithic? And how could it more profoundly support a demonstration of the complex nature and nuances of hunter/gatherer and agricultural societies? Addressing these questions would add to the knowledge about Ertebølle communities and their geographical networks. The dugout canoes, paddles and imported artefacts provide further support that the lives of the communities in question were mobile and flexible. While there is a very brief mention of extensive exchange of goods and the mobility of people (p. 189), a more in-depth analysis would have been very useful and interesting.

Chapter 1.6. (pp.28-33) demonstrates the lack of integration of the later wooden artefacts. The transition between the Mesolithic and the Neolithic is generally presented in archaeology as an almost teleological process. Materials from settings like those discussed in this book would have given the opportunity to paint a nuanced picture of the Ertebølle at the end of the Mesolithic to the Early Neolithic. The wide-scale use of hazel twigs and nuts and imported axes stirs curiosity: do these, taken together, indicate a tilling or even cultivation of hazel trees? Questions such as this seem to be among the real challenges for future research of the era and region investigated. The reader might be motivated by the title of the book – *With Dugout and Paddle to the Fishery Ground* – which makes us imagine that we will come across paddling, fishing and generally visible, active people in the coastal scenery. However, the image we are presented with is full of data and information, but devoid of people.

In conclusion, the thesis presents impressive and extremely well-preserved archaeological material with careful documentation of physical find contexts, which is certainly required procedure for excellent scientific work. Unfortunately, the extensive sets of data and their meticulous systematization and description seem to have no makers or users; the data are disconnected from any social and cultural context. One might hold the opinion that the attention to detail has come at the cost of social and cultural analysis. The data from the find materials are potentially valuable for a wide variety of research questions, including those on practices of subsistence, tool manufacture and the practices of social life during the ostensibly ambiguous phase of the Ertebølle and Early Neolithic.

This review has noted the rich potential of the material and contexts discussed in the book. It is impossible not to be impressed by the detailed survey, by the variation in the material itself, as well as by the vast knowledge this book reveals about the importance of wood, of other organic materials, and of the extensive and specialized fishing practices in the transition of the middle/late Stone Age. And the author herself must be credited, as she has indeed presented an admirable publication. The book is the result of an extensive process of investigation in the field, in the museum and laboratory, and at the desk.