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A review of doctoral dissertation *Boats of European prehistory – study of typological and chronological aspects.*

The doctoral thesis of Jiří Chleviš'an, MA, entitled *Boats of European prehistory - study of typological and chronological aspects*, was written at the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia, under the supervision of Professor Marin Gojda. The textual part of the work is contained in 200 pages (including an index of figures and a bibliography) and is complemented by a catalogue presented in another 100 pages.

The first part of the work consists of as many as 26 shorter or longer chapters. Many of them are less than half a page long, which may question the sense of separating them. Such a breakdown makes it difficult to clearly separate the introduction to the dissertation from the main body of the dissertation and then from the conclusion. Chapters 1 to 10 seem to constitute a kind of broad introduction. The next four chapters (11 to 14) are a kind of transition to the main part of the dissertation, which is chapters 15 to 19. Chapters 20 and 21 can be regarded as the conclusion. The large number of chapters has probably had the opposite effect than intended, as chapters 9 and 10 are missing from the table of contents and from the dissertation itself.

In his dissertation, the author presents an authorial approach to the issues surrounding the development of early forms of water transport. Already in the initial part of the work he emphasises that the development of boatbuilding technologies was determined chronologically, culturally and environmentally. At the same time, he notes that the end of the last glaciation stimulated the development of water transport, nevertheless, this theme is not developed in the work.

Throughout the work, an evolutionist-typological approach (so characteristic of Central European archaeology) runs through the evaluation of the vessels mentioned. However, the author himself notes that log boats are difficult to subordinate to typological systematics.

The author clearly states the aim of his work: "The aim of the work is to create a comprehensive database and a distribution map of the vessels, which occurred within a set chronological and geographical framework. On the basis of these tools, it aims to answer formulated questions that should help to uncover the reason for the existence of selected formal characteristics and, above all, to confirm or disprove the intensiveness in choosing the shape of the hull."

The methodology of the work presented by the author is no longer so obvious, but this is largely justified by the variety of sources analysed. The collection of data from older foreign literature formed a large part of the work. The data were entered into a relational database. Because of the nature of the work, the database contains items that were available in the published literature.

In terms of chronology, the work covers finds from the Lower Palaeolithic, through the remaining Stone Age periods, the Bronze Age and into the early Iron Age (the Hallstatt period). In addition to this classical division, for the purposes of database management, the author uses a more mechanical division into units covering intervals of 500 years. This database was transmitted to the GIS (Geographic Information System) environment, which it produced a distribution map of the vessels collected. The biggest shortcoming of the database created is its lack of consistency, which is due to the incompleteness of the data. In addition, the researcher did not include some important finds that may affect the interpretation of early European boatbuilding. For example, the reindeer antler from Husumer Hafenschleuse in Schleswig-Holstein, that was used as a part of the frame of the skin boat. This artefact has a very early post-glacial chronology. Another example is probably the oldest bark boat remains in Europe discovered by Prof. Kabacinski at the Mesolithic site of Dąbki in northern Poland.

The author himself admits that his database is mainly based on log boats and that it is 65% based on data taken from three authors (B. Arnold 1995, 1996; Ch. Christensen 1990, 1999; P. S. Philipsen 1983). The paper lacks a short chapter treating the development of dugout boats in younger chronological periods. This analysis would have made it possible to see that the evolutionist-typological analogies are unfounded. Only after a preliminary assessment, it is possible to conclude that the quality of vessels made in the Stone Age was often higher than those made in the Middle Ages and modern times.

Another missing part of the work is a broader reference to iconographic representations, known especially from rock engravings, and to the discovered boat models. The depictions from Slettnes, Alta and other sites provide unique knowledge of early Scandinavian boatbuilding.

The issue of early forms of water transport has appeared many times in European archaeology, but the thesis presented here uses new tools to organise and facilitate the interpretation of the data collected. The work represents a significant contribution to the discipline of archaeology.

The applied research methods and problem-solving process fulfil an academic task. The results presented are a valuable and original contribution to science.

It is difficult for me to assess the quality of the language, but it should be noted that the work forms a logical whole. Despite preliminary remarks, it should be considered coherent and valuable.

The candidate's publication output is very significant and confirms his academic potential.

Taking into account all the comments mentioned above, I strongly recommend the dissertation to be defended.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Pydyn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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