

Natascha Mehler, ed. *Historical Archaeology in Central Europe* (Society for Historical Archaeology Special Publication 10. Rockville: Society for Historical Archaeology, 2013, 418pp., 226 b/w figs., 1 table, pbk, ISBN 978-1-939531-01-8).

Historical Archaeology in Central Europe, an English-language survey of post-medieval archaeology across 25 chapters drawing on examples from Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Switzerland, is published by the US-based Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA). Much of what might occasionally seem unusual about the book to a European audience is predicated by its publication by the largest international professional society for the archaeology of the post-1500 AD time period, but one where some 90 per cent of members are based in the United States and Canada (for clarity, the current reviewer is a member of the SHA Board of Directors, and in that capacity voted in favour of helping to fund publication of the volume). Hence, for example, the very title of the volume. In the North American (and South American and Australasian) context, there is generally a relatively sharp divide between the pre-European archaeology of non-literate populations, conceptualized as 'prehistoric archaeology' and the archaeology of literate colonial societies and their impact, conceptualized as 'historical archaeology'. While the division is sometimes blurred for contact-period sites, this sharp distinction between the prehistoric and historical is very real for most colleagues working in what, for convenience, we can term the New World, as is the fact that this division is a necessary by-product of the expansion of European colonialism and capitalism in the post-medieval period.

This division, however, presents obvious problems of nomenclature for archaeologists working in Europe, where the historical written record has a much longer

and very different history, and where the post-1500 period is more typically called 'post-medieval archaeology'. This is exacerbated somewhat by occasional divisions over whether to distinguish industrial archaeology from post-medieval archaeology, and whether that distinction should be thematic or temporal. The latter issues have been the source of often vibrant discussion in the United Kingdom and Ireland (e.g. Horning & Palmer, 2009), but *Historical Archaeology in Central Europe* shows that central European colleagues are often still in the early stages of grappling with a basic issue of nomenclature that has very real conceptual implications.

The definitional problems of both nomenclature and date dominate the seven chapters that make up the first section of the book. Editor Mehler's own chapter notes the tension between the typical German approach of following Swedish archaeologist Anders Andren's definition of historical archaeology as the archaeology of all literate periods (hence encompassing classical, medieval, and modern periods) and the definition by the prominent North American figure James Deetz who defined North American historical archaeology as the study of the cultural remains of literate societies who could record their own histories, and the very different implications of what those superficially very similar definitions are in their different continental contexts (p. 13). A chart on p. 14 of Mehler's introduction shows how this dichotomy operates in practice, with German-speaking nations often making a real distinction between 'historical archaeology' (*Historische Archäologie*) of the entire literate period and the 'post-medieval archaeology' (*Neuzeitarchäologie*) of the

later Middle Ages onwards; in much (though not all) of the anglophone world, these terms are instead broadly synonymous. Even where national definitions offer less scope for terminological confusion, as with Hungary's 'early modern archaeology' (*Kora újkori régészet*), significant differences of temporality can exist with North American definitions since the Hungarian term apparently covers the period 1526–1711, thereby missing not only the very beginning of North American 'historical archaeology' but also missing the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—periods of significant research focus in the North American tradition.

This may seem like a considerable amount of space to devote to a sometimes perhaps semantic discussion of terminology, but the publishing of this book via a North American society that conceptualizes terminology in a very specific way is key to understanding how these opening chapters place themselves, and what issues they are defined by. Most of the opening chapters self-consciously use the word 'historical archaeology' in their title, using the phrase in the American sense, before noting that the term is either rarely used in their home nation, or that it means something entirely different in that nation.

Predovnik's chapter on historical archaeology in Slovenia and Schreg's chapter on historical archaeology in Germany are also the most overt in directly engaging with North American theoretical themes, particularly the North American conceptualization of archaeology (very much including historical archaeology) as a subdiscipline of the social science of anthropology rather than an independent discipline in the humanities (for three—often greatly contrasting—general introductions to North American historical archaeology, see Deetz (1996), Orser (2004) and Little (2007); of these, Deetz is the 'classic' introductory text). This

causes some occasionally awkward moments, such as when Schreg concludes—by no means unreasonably—that the American anthropological approach is simply incompatible with traditional approaches to historical archaeology in central Europe, and 'some major research topics of American historical archaeology therefore had little relevance' in the region (p. 39). Predovnik offers the most detailed and sympathetic engagement with New World paradigms, noting how the expansion of colonialism and capitalism outside Europe demonstrably impacted and is relevant to an understanding of the archaeological record in central European nations like Slovenia (pp. 69–71); but even here Predovnik is forced to acknowledge the significant differences in theory and terminology. Of these opening chapters, only Žegklitz's chapter on the Czech Republic fully breaks free of these definitional issues, perhaps buoyed by a combination of a decision not to use the term 'historical archaeology' in the title, what appears to be the most deeply rooted tradition of post-medieval archaeology practice in the region, and an ongoing supportive local conference culture for the field.

There are, however, real positives to all of this introductory definitional handwringing. If the book helps our North American colleagues become more aware of the specific methodological and theoretical traditions of central European post-medieval archaeology, then the book will have done intercontinental archaeological dialogue a very real service. Similarly, if the book leads to broader engagement with North American approaches to the post-medieval period, even if the ultimate result of that engagement is to reject most of those approaches, then the volume will have done European colleagues a very real service by encouraging more detailed theoretical analysis within a subdiscipline of which even the most ardent supporter would

likely be forced to concede has not always been the most robustly theoretical of European archaeologies. As a bridge-building exercise, the volume therefore has a very real and important value.

It is, however, primarily a bridge with North America. As important as that bridge is, and as understandable and appropriate as it is that a volume published by a North American professional society would more actively engage with North American themes, it is perhaps a minor shame that the volume does not also seek to build a more active bridge to the far closer (in this case both geographically and conceptually) post-medieval archaeological tradition of Britain and Ireland. This is especially true given that the subsequent four sections of the book—on ‘religion, conflict and death’, ‘technology, industry, and modernization’, and ‘landscapes and cities in change’—show much closer theoretical and methodological affinities to their British and Irish counterparts. All of the latter are core themes within British and Irish practice.

A few examples will illustrate the point. Crossley’s (1990) *Post-Medieval Archaeology in Britain* focuses on rural landscapes, towns, churches, shipwrecks, and industry; even the chapters on glass and ceramics predominantly focus on industrial production and classification rather than production. Moving forward a decade, Newman *et al.*’s (2001) *The Historical Archaeology of Britain c. 1540–1900* focuses on buildings, landscapes, industry, and artefacts; the latter discussion is primarily focused on production and trade, though ideological interpretation is briefly touched upon in the last couple of pages (Newman *et al.*, 2001: 222–24). Moving forward another eight years, to the 2009 Horning and Palmer edited volume *Crossing Paths or Sharing Tracks?* (subtitled ‘future directions in the archaeological study of post-1550 Britain and Ireland’)—admittedly a very different volume in intent to

the previous two, not least due to the multiplicity of authors—and discussion has fractured. There is considerably more attention on theory-informed discussions of the interrelationship of different areas of study, and while industry, landscape, and buildings are still core topics, much more attention is paid to the consumption and interpretation—rather than just the production—of domestic material culture.

We have no way of knowing at present whether central European historical archaeology will follow a similar path in the future, but the focus in *Historical Archaeology in Central Europe* on the production of material culture (Heege on pottery kilns, Kluttig-Altman on clay pipes, Schreg on glass) over consumption (something only really touched upon by Kluttig-Altman’s study of finds from Pirna, Saxony, and Schreg and Zeischka-Kenzler’s study of German sites in Panama), and a range of papers on sacred buildings, landscapes, industry, and cities show that the current point where central European historical archaeology finds itself is not dissimilar to where British and Irish post-medieval archaeology found itself ten to fifteen years ago.

There are, however, areas where there are undoubtedly opportunities for close research connections with North American work. One of these is battlefield archaeology and the archaeology of war. Considerable work has been done on the archaeology of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conflict in North America, particularly on the American Civil War (1861–1865), the War of 1812 (1812–1815), the Revolutionary War (1775–1783), and various conflicts with the indigenous populations of the Americas. Britain and Ireland were hardly entirely free of warfare in the post-medieval period, but the combination of ideologically significant eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conflicts in North America with the more developed North American historical archaeology of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

perhaps offers opportunities for research synergies here. The papers in the present volume from Homann (early modern battlefields of central Europe), Belasus (an early eighteenth-century Swedish ship barrier in Germany), Theune (modern concentration camps), and Stadler and Stepanek (WWII Cossacks in East Tyrol) amply display the importance of this theme to central Europe, and Homann also specifically notes the importance of North American historical battlefield archaeology methodologies (p. 207). Indeed, this is a rare area where central Europeans have already actively contributed to international collections of papers (see, e.g., Schofield et al., 2002).

Another potential point of research synergy with North American historical archaeology comes from the study of the impact of colonialism. Only Schreg and Zeischka-Kenzler's paper about colonial Panama tackles this subject head on, and it must be conceded that central Europe was not as active in territorial colonialism as the European nations of the Atlantic seaboard (economic colonialism is perhaps a separate issue). Nonetheless, the German Empire was active in colonizing Africa and the Pacific, while the sixteenth-century Habsburg Empire of Charles/Karl V provided important opportunities in the Americas for central European subjects of the Empire (Venezuela, for example, was controlled by the Welser family of Augsburg for some twenty years in the early sixteenth century). And, as Predovnik notes, the topic of the impact of colonialism on central Europe is a wholly valid subject. It might also be reasonably asked whether shifts in borders and population movements offer the opportunity for central European archaeologists to consider colonialism and the expansion of capitalism as an internal process rather than as something primarily associated with other continents.

This review has, so far, primarily focused on points of comparison between

central European post-medieval archaeology and the historical archaeologies of the Anglophone Atlantic. Several of the chapters, however, address themes more specific to the continental European experience, and these offer potentially exciting topics of research for a wholly distinctive central European archaeology alongside the potential for growth of research links with Britain, Ireland, and North America. Gerelyes, for example, studies Ottoman mosques and cemeteries in Hungary, a subject with no obvious direct Anglophone analogy despite the existing body of work on sacred buildings. Similarly, Mitchell's study of Vienna takes the initially common trope of the study of urban landscapes, and transforms it into a study of how Habsburg absolutism is reflected in that landscape. While the ideological manipulation of post-medieval urban landscapes has certainly been studied by Atlantic archaeologists (e.g. Miller, 1988), the specific subject here provides a new research direction.

Historical Archaeology in Central Europe offers an invaluable snapshot of a discipline that, in its regional manifestation, is still in its infancy; in many cases also still fighting for academic respectability. It is clearly the definitive English-language guide to its subject, and it will hopefully reach a wide audience, not just with North American SHA members interested in European historical archaeology, but also with European archaeologists who may not always be aware of important work taking place in other languages. At the same time, it is also clearly a starting point that will, the present reviewer very much hopes, serve as a catalyst for the further rapid development of the subdiscipline both within and across regional borders; in that sense, rarely can I have read a book hoping, indeed actively anticipating with some degree of excitement, that it will be largely obsolete in five to ten years.

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Johannes Dillinger. *Magical Treasure Hunting in Europe and North America: A History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, vii + 255pp., 2 figs., hbk, ISBN 978-0-230-00004-9)

Nowadays treasure hunting tends to go under the moniker of metal detecting, after the chief tool of the hunt as practised today, though one of the principal UK magazines on the subject, *Treasure Hunter*, still uses the older term. While the majority of users of metal detectors are not professional archaeologists, it is reasonable to say that treasure hunting or metal detecting has been colonized by archaeology in the late twentieth to early twenty-first century. More recent publications on treasure (including Renfrew, 2000; Tyler, 2000; Hobbs, 2003) have tended to focus on its archaeological value, either in terms of social artefact studies or from a legal/criminal perspective (whether addressing the contemporary world's problem with the illicit antiquities trade or the historical hinterland of treasure trove laws). Taken together the two issues define treasure hunting as a public debate between the pursuit of knowledge and the pursuit of financial/economic gain. This is

not to suggest that all metal detectorists are in search of economic gain—many are clearly driven by the desire to encounter and explore the past. Nor was economic gain a factor introduced by modern metal detecting; countless discoveries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (continuing practices well established for many centuries) saw the greater part of the treasure melted down or re-worked by jewellers (to name but two examples from Scotland: the Norrie's Law hoard of Pictish silverwork from Largo, Fife and the medieval hoard of silver coins from Perth). There is, however, a deeper, supernatural hinterland to treasure: that of magic. It is this magical context that is so engagingly and adroitly explored in Dillinger's new book. Although its framework is historical, there is much here that engages fruitfully in dialogue with the practice and understanding of archaeology. It is a rewarding and fascinating case study of the workings of the human imagination.