it is executed. Bearing that in mind, it has to be noted that many of the papers in the volume are the reports of what consequences theoretically-informed interventions to specific problems brought about. Each intervention is obviously and inevitably theory-laden, and can be classified into either of the ‘isms’ mentioned earlier. However, confrontation with a unique problem and the creation of a new problem through confrontation make intervention an open, ongoing process rather than the imposition of discursive closure by attempting to verify or falsify the way the intervention was made.

These papers might make the volume look like an epitome of the fragmentation which some of us recognize to characterize the current state of archaeological practices. However, the intrinsic ‘openness’ that confrontation with unique local issues creates makes the diverse interventions and the discourses they produce mutually related in a pragmatic manner. By focusing on the consequences which theoretically-informed interventions to unique local problems bring about, we might be able to revitalize the possibility of the creative and pragmatic networking of knowledge that has been lost amidst the antagonistic hot air which characterizes the post-processual phase in which we are doing archaeology.

The approach which was chosen by the editors of the volume, and which I have described by referring to my own understanding of the state of contemporary archaeological knowledge production, might make the volume look eclectic and give the readers an impression of undesirable unevenness in the content and quality of the contributions. However, for the reasons I have put forward, I find the eclecticism and unevenness the strength of the volume. The volume not only reflects the healthy state of Scandinavian theoretical archaeologies but also makes one convinced that more novel and fruitful contributions to theoretical archaeology will come out of this region.

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This volume contains English translations of 10 essays published (in German) by the renowned German archaeologist Georg Kossack, between 1974 and 1997. The topics are wide-ranging – including a chronological span from the Bronze Age to the high Middle Ages and diverse themes from settlement geography to the symbolism of prehistoric art, as well as a geographical range encompassing Europe, the Mediterranean and large parts of west-central Asia. The intention of the editors, Anthony Harding and Bernhard Hänsel – was to rectify the sorry neglect of Kossack’s life-achievement in the English-speaking world, by introducing a representative collection of his work to those audiences renowned for their shyness at reading continental literature in the original. Let us return to the interesting questions raised by this endeavour later and focus first on the actual content of the edited collection.

To the Anglo-American and other archaeological readers of the book whose first language is English, what is most striking is the surprising parallel development of the best German scholarship to approaches we would normally associate with innovations introduced within English-speaking archaeology by new archaeology and later post-processual archaeology. Thus what Kossack does with his Old World case-studies in a sphere we could term social archaeology – especially in the area of mortuary analysis, or with settlement systems, or with the analysis of artistic and symbolic styles and motifs – could easily fit into edited volumes produced during the same period as these essays (i.e. the 1970s–1990s) within the mainstream of ‘Mid-Atlantic’ theoretical archaeology. But there are clear differences. First, the ‘theory’ that underlies Kossack’s essays is always understated, and introduced on top of weighty discussion of the ‘material’, i.e. the artefacts or structures each essay focuses on; and second – and this seems to be a matter of clear choice on Kossack’s part – not a hint can be found that he is interested in what scholars younger than him (a sprightly 75!) are writing about in the UK or the USA. Antiquity and American Journal of Archaeology can be cited, but only for works of traditional scholarship, with all the references to ideas, as with case-study
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comparisons, orientated to the German-speaking world, Russian scholars, and the pre-new archaeology researchers writing in English (e.g. Stuart Piggott). The first point to be made, then, is to agree with the editors in their Introduction that Kossack's work is indeed of contemporary relevance to debates in the archaeological literature in English. The second point is more controversial, but surely inevitable: if Kossack really represents a research community whose sharpest thinkers have been relatively or entirely unaffected by the two chief theoretical mini-paradigms of the last 25 years in Anglo-American scholarship, and his work nonetheless offers a series of impressive contributions to key concepts in those movements — then how important actually are those packages of theories to the steady advance of progressive analyses of the Old World past? I am immediately reminded of the intriguing debate which took place at the start of this century between the physicists Ernst Mach and Niels Bohr (the subject of recent study by the sociologist of science Steve Fuller). Whereas Bohr maintained that science progressed through key theorists and their abstract models, Mach argued that it was the mass of nameless laboratory scientists, probing relentlessly at the data, which ultimately produced deeper understandings. Is it possible that a certain inevitable deepening of archaeological research from culture history and typology into social analysis, ecological approaches and finally symbolic and cognitive insights is an inbuilt dynamic of thoughtful researchers, independent of formal programmes of theory and their gurus? In favour of such a view in the case of Kossack is the fact that his especially perceptive analyses of society and environment have a clear and respectable pedigree in German-speaking archaeology going back to the pre-war era (for settlement archaeology) and even earlier (for the Landeskunde approach to landscape archaeology and history). Might a convergent German tradition of new and post-processual approaches benefit from a closer knowledge of the 'real thing', and vice versa (were Kossack to have sought to study recent English-speaking scholarship and the latter to make more effort to pursue German-language publications!)? One has to say 'yes' to both suggestions. On the one hand, there is a certain lack of clarity in Kossack's deployment of interpretative models, appearing often in brief statements at the end of lengthy (and to this reader often tedious) examinations of typo-chronological parallels for specific artefacts or structures. On the other hand, one senses throughout these essays the importance German-speaking archaeology still, and rightly, attaches to one's real knowledge of the objects of study before launching into philosophical or anthropological discourses at a remove from the data.

Is this a good selection? Maybe representative is a better description. My own prior confrontation with Kossack's oeuvre received its greatest impact from my discovering the remarkable inter-disciplinary project in which Kossack played a key role — the settlement archaeology programme on the island of Sylt off the German North Sea coast (see the 1974 issue of the generally-accessible Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission, vol. 55, 'Zehn Jahre Siedlungsforschung in Archsum auf Sylt'). A lengthy excerpt from this ecological, prehistoric, historic, sociological tour de force might have made an even greater impact on the world audience lacking German reading-skills.

There is little to criticize in the formal aspects of this volume. It is not surprising that the team of translators had problems translating the articles reprinted here into fluent English, and minor mistakes are rather common but never seriously disrupt the sense of the text. Only the poor-quality and miniaturized figures for the essay on place-names present real problems in getting the message of Kossack's work across to us. However, one problem remains: the separation of discourses which continues to prevent closer collaboration between the German- and English-speaking archaeological communities. It is perhaps symptomatic that this volume, targeted for Anglo-American and wider world audiences, is published by the Marie Leidorf press in Rahden, Westphalia (and when did you last receive one of their catalogues?). Apart from reviews such as this, and the now-indispensable and wide-ranging catalogues of Oxbow Books (where I am sure this book will receive advertisement), it is unclear how that wider world can get to hear of this — and a host of other interesting and important German-language publications in archaeology — when publicity remains so limited beyond west-central Europe (a problem, I think, that also applies to French-language publications!).

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