

The Rise of Bronze Age Society

Beginning with state formation and urbanisation in the Near East c.3000 BC and ending in central and northern Europe c.1000–500 BC, the Bronze Age marks a heroic age of travels and transformations throughout Europe. In this book, Kristian Kristiansen and Thomas Larsson reconstruct the travel and transmission of knowledge that took place between the Near East, the Mediterranean and Europe. They explore how religious, political and social conceptions of Bronze Age people were informed by long-distance connections and alliances between local elites. The book integrates the hitherto separate research fields of European and Mediterranean (classical) archaeology and provides the reader with an alternative to the traditional approach of diffusionism. Examining data from across the region, the book presents an important new interpretation of social change in the Bronze Age, making it essential reading for students of archaeology, of anthropology and of the development of early European society.

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Travels, Transmissions and Transformations

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and

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Preface

This book wanted to be written. That is the only way to explain its birth. It emerged unexpectedly during a dinner between the two authors in late August 1998, pushed aside other publishing plans, and before the evening had come to an end we had sketched the content and agreed on a timetable. Both were to be modified several times in the course of writing, but the inspiration remained intact.

The historical background to this joint venture was based upon the convergence of our research interests during recent years. In 1997 Thomas B. Larsson published an interpretative essay about relations between the Near East and the Nordic Bronze Age (*Materiell kultur och religiösa symboler*), based upon Near Eastern/Hittite texts and material evidence from Scandinavia. At the same time Kristian Kristiansen had completed *Europe before History* (1998), where space did not allow the second millennium much room. The unfulfilled scope of both our works on this period made it obvious to join forces in a new book spanning the Bronze Age world in its entirety, from Mesopotamia to Scandinavia. We wished to approach the Bronze Age as historical epoch, going beyond a world system approach, by reconstructing the travels and the transmission of knowledge that took place between the Near East, the Mediterranean and Europe. In doing so, we are aware that western Europe has been somewhat neglected in our case studies. However, that would have demanded yet another book. We were therefore happy to realise that Richard Harrison had worked on such a manuscript, titled 'Symbols and warriors: images of the European Bronze Age' (although mainly covering the Late Bronze Age), that went to the publishers about the time we finished our manuscript.

In selecting relevant evidence and avoiding the worst academic pitfalls we have benefited from the advice of Professor Folke Josephsson (on Hittite and Vedic texts) and Professor Robin Hägg (Minoan/Mycenaean religion), both of Göteborg University. We also held an integrated research seminar in the fall of 1999 between the prehistoric and classical departments of archaeology in Göteborg. We thank all participants for lively and inspirational discussions. In March 2000 we ended the seminar with a small symposium, to which we invited a few scholars with whom we shared a yearlong academic co-operation and interest in the role of travels and trade in later prehistory. The discussions emanating from this meeting added the last touch to the manuscript and some important additional literature. Here we would like

to thank Professor Mary W. Helms, North Carolina, Professor Mogens Trolle Larsen, Copenhagen, and Professor Andrew Sherratt, Oxford, in particular, for their comments and valuable contributions to the symposium discussion, but also to a later draft version of the manuscript. For productive and critical comments on the manuscript we also thank Inga Ullén, Stockholm, Volker Heyd, Bristol, and Timothy Earle, Northwestern University. Per Persson skilfully transformed many sketchy hand-drawings into beautiful figures and did most of the artwork for illustrations. The following figures have been produced by Thomas B. Larsson: 12, 14, 24a, 67d, 90b, 103, 106, 117, 125, 134, 142, 143, 144, 150, 151, 154, 155, 156, 158, 160. One of us (KK) had the opportunity to spend the fall of 2003 in Cambridge lecturing on the book, and giving lectures in other British universities and in Berlin, which helped to clarify points of uncertainty in the final editing before submitting the manuscript to the Press. Finally, we wish to thank our friends and colleagues throughout Europe and North America for maintaining an exchange network of offprints and books. Even the best library cannot compete with the personal dynamic of academic networks.

After little more than five years with our project we are now ready – and happy – to leave the final result in the hands of colleagues and students. We learned a lot in the process and hopefully readers will share some of our excitement during the Odyssey.