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**Cătălin Nicolae Popa, Simon Stoddart (eds.), *Fingerprinting the Iron Age. Approaches to Identity in the European Iron Age – Integrating South-Eastern Europe into the Debate*, Oxford – Philadelphia, Oxbow Books, 2014, 428 pp., ISBN 978-1-78297-675-2**

**I**dentify has become a ‘hot’ topic in archaeology nowadays. Over the last two decades, a significant number of studies run by anthropological works (Jones 1997, Díaz-Andreu *et al.* 2005) is dealing with challenging the identity, or in other words, ‘*how small and large solidarities were constructed and maintained and how they were reflected at the level of individual*’ (Popa, Stoddart, this volume, 3).

The volume under review called *Fingerprinting the Iron Age. Approaches to Identity in the European Iron Age – Integrating South-Eastern Europe into the Debate*, edited by Cătălin Nicolae Popa and Simon Stoddart and printed by Oxbow Books, tackles the same subject of identity from different points of view. The writing of this volume was possible due to the conference held at Magdalene College from Cambridge on 23-25 September 2011.

Released in 2014, the volume is very well assembled and illustrates the latest studies, contributions and approaches to this field of research. It starts with a list of *Contributors* (vii-xii) presented in alphabetical order in which we acquaint ourselves with the 26 professors and researchers, including the two editors, who signed these papers. It continues with a *Tribute to John Alexander* (pp. 1-2) who was an influential teacher who dealt especially with the Iron Age and encouraged dialogue between British Archaeology and the South-Eastern Europe Archaeology. In the next paper, *Introduction: the Challenge of Iron Age Identity* (pp. 3-7), the two editors are summarizing the papers presented in this volume.

In the effort of searching the identity in Iron Age Archaeology, this volume divides the ‘perspectives’ in four parts and concludes with four papers of synthesis’ comments that cross geographical boundaries, a large part of *Bibliography* (pp. 332-414) and an *Index* (pp. 415-428).

The first part *Perspectives from the South East Europe* (pp. 9-172) is the main core of the volume covering contributions from the countries of Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and reaching to Albania and Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. The moment 1989, when the boundaries between East and West physically collapsed, was a good start for the researchers from Eastern Europe to access the foreign archaeological literature published in the western countries and participate in different conferences dealing with the new studies in archaeology. One of the main target of this book is, as the title shows and states, ‘*to integrate the South Eastern Europe to debate*’ (Babić, this volume, 283) and mind the gap between eastern way of treating Iron Age communities (until recent it was considered that south-eastern regions were populated by specific ethnic groups and specific material culture and have been the ‘ancestors’ of modern states), and western archaeology. After reading the first part of the book, I found out about the diversity of approaches in challenging the identity, from the multiplicity which characterizes the Celtic identity in Transylvania (Sándor

## Alin Henț

Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca  
alinhnz@gmail.com



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Berecki), the landscape of Slovenia which can bring, new identities in discussion in the light of the new studies (Matija Črešnar and Dimitrij Mlekuž) or tackling only one dimensions of identity, gender (Bela Dimova). The classical texts and archaeology are brought together by Mariana Egri, while Alexandra Genghea takes a historiographical approach of early Iron Age in Romania. The identity of a place through art and writing is also presented in this volume by Gelu Florea. Marko Janković tackles the ethnicity in Roman province of Moesia Superior, while Vladimir Mihajlović criticizes the use of ethnic terms for central Balkans onto protohistory. Identity appears different after analyzing the funeral context from Romania and creates a database (Cătălin Nicolae Popa). A very interesting approach in Southern Pannonian where identities are changing over the full period of Iron Age is plain to be seen (Hrvoje Potrebica and Marko Dizdar). Aurel Rustoiu brings up in discussion the topics of mobility and retention of identity in Late Iron Age, while Nikola Theodossiev analyzes the history of Thrace between East and West. Lastly, the Iron Age identities are used by political present to legitimate a state, as in the case of Macedonia (Ivan Vranić).

In my opinion, the majority of the studies try to detach from the ways in which archaeology was written during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and used as a political instrument in the South-East Europe and in most of the cases they really succeed in doing it.

In the next two parts of the book, *Perspectives from the West* (pp. 174-208) and *Perspectives from the Far West* (pp. 209-238), five studies are moving the attention of the readers to Central Europe and British Isles. Important oppida or sites are used to construct multiple identities by Manuel Fernández-Götz or Oliver Nakoinz, while Peter Ramsel takes apart the funerals from Alpine area to create layer of identity. One of the absorbing study deals with the presence of Roman material culture over the Roman frontier in Northern Britain, seen here in terms of negotiated identity (Louisa Campbell). In the last studies, Elizabeth Foulds creates multiple identities after analysing the glass adornments from Iron Age Britain.

The next part of the book shifts towards Italian peninsula, *Perspectives from the South West* (pp. 239-279). The multiplicity of identities is seen by Yvonne Inall through a new typology of spearheads, whereas Olivia Kelley analyses it through the burials of Peucetia. The last study signed by Simon Stoddart shows the contrast between the multi-scaled identity of the Etruscans and the unitary identity presented by the ancient sources and early scholars. In these three parts of the book, the major themes tackled are the multiplicity, hybridity and analysis of the material culture.

This volume ends with four studies of synthesis in which Staša Babić shows that the past has been used in the present Serbia, John Collis in order to rearrange the information about identity of Celts, while Peter Wells tackles the identities drawn by ancient authors in the light of modern interpretations. Finally, the two editors, Cătălin Nicolae Popa and Simon Stoddart, are summarizing the debates about identity.

It is very important the fact that the general trend of this volume was not to present the studies from a positivistic

point of view, but rather from an interpretative point of view, challenging the identities through different manners and putting all kind of manifestation into question, from case to case. Even though this book collects the effort of many scholars, it is a coherent volume with a good writing style suitable for any type of reader and with good plates or illustrations.

In the past approaches that are dealing with identity, it can be observed that for understanding identity we need to divide it into pieces, such as age, gender, ethnicity, status or religion.<sup>1</sup> Because identity is a *fluid and dynamic process that is always changing and constructed of many complex layers* (Foulds, this volume, 224), this volume under review shifts towards individual types of manifestation and creates multiple identities that are closer to the definition of identity.

As I state from the beginning of this review, identity has become a topic of great interest in archaeological studies today, and this could lead to endless debates in this fragile domain. From my point of view, identity can be challenged but it is a part of the identity we are born with that never changes, regardless of any conditions or circumstances.

In conclusion, I would like to say that this volume is a good starting point in the key issue of challenging the identity, especially for South-East Europe. Moreover, this volume published by *Oxbow Books* deserves a place in all Universities and courses that are covering the Iron Age.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> JONES 1997; DÍAZ-ANDREU/LUCY/BABIĆEDWARDS 2005.