

General Books

BRONZE AGE RITES AND SYMBOLS

The Chariot of the Sun and other Rites and Symbols of the Northern Bronze Age

By Peter Gelling and Hilda Ellis Davidson. Pp. ix + 200 + 9 photographs. (Dent: London, February 1969.) 55s.

HILDA DAVIDSON has already put students of the ancient history and religion of pre-Christian Scandinavia in her debt with her books *The Road to Hel, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* and *Pagan Scandinavia*. Now, together with Peter Gelling, she gives us a special study of the chariot of the sun and other rites and symbols of the Northern Bronze Age. The title is catch-penny and misleading: this is a serious and useful book about all the symbols used in Scandinavian Bronze Age engravings and their survival into the historical heathendom of Scandinavia.

The book starts, as, with such a title, it had to, with a colour plate of the 'Trundholm cult object in the National Museum in Copenhagen. This is captioned, even before we read the book, "the chariot of the sun", as well it may be. We do not learn from the contents or the preface that this is really two books. Part one deals with the Bronze Age, occupies pages 1 to 136 and is by Gelling; part two is called "After the Bronze Age", occupies pages 139 to 180, and is by Davidson. Professor Christopher Hawkes contributes a preface to the book, but it is a preface only to Gelling's part. Reading what he has written one might imagine that Hilda Davidson's more important part of the book did not exist. One has an uneasy feeling that there was originally a book by Gelling to which Hawkes wrote a preface which now appears with a long and valuable additional part by Hilda Davidson.

Gelling surveys the work of Scandinavian archaeologists on their Bronze Age rock engravings from Oscar Almgren's *Hällristningar och Kultbruk* (1927) to Althin's *Studien zu den bronzzeitlichen Felszeichnungen von Skåne* (1945) and the work of Gjessing and Marstrander on the Østfold engravings. He goes carefully and thoroughly through all the motifs from disks and disk-men, through weapons, ships, farming, the sacred marriage, and ritual dress to decorated metalwork. He has a chapter on the Mother-Goddess in which he relies uncritically on O. G. S. Crawford's late and highly uncritical and ill-informed book *The Eye-Goddess*. Even with Crawford as an uncertain guide, Gelling seems strangely ignorant of the art of the megalith builders of western Europe which must lie behind much of Scandinavian Bronze Age rock engraving. It is odd that the big Östergötland disk (his Fig. 3d) is not recognized by him, as it has been for years by Scandinavian and British archaeologists, as the eye-goddess almost precisely in the form she appears on the underside of the capstone in the north side-chamber at New Grange.

Hilda Davidson takes the story on from the end of the Bronze Age rock-carvings. These symbols, she says, did not disappear from the north. Even after the end of the heathen period a number of the symbols remained powerful, leaving an enduring mark on folk customs in north-western Europe. The sun-disk, the axe, the spear and the sword were still of primary importance in the culture of the late heathen period up to the Viking Age. There were, she says, two moments of change in the religious history of Scandinavia. The first was at the end of the hunting period; the second was the acceptance of Christianity. "The period between," she writes, "for all its variations in cults and symbols and the gods and goddesses of different names found in the literature, may be viewed as a largely harmonious whole. The religion of this epoch was that of men working on the land and travelling by sea, fighting in small bands under independent kings and heroes in a heroic society. . . . We are fortunate that so vigorous and

enduring a picture of these religious rites in the Bronze Age has been left on the rocks of the Scandinavian north." How du Chaillu and H. M. Chadwick would have echoed those words, and enjoyed this book.

The production of the book leaves much to be desired: the plates are not numbered although they are continually referred to by numbers in the text. The photograph of the sacred marriage from Helgö (? plate 7) is sadly blurred and fuzzy, and has clearly been taken from another book, but as there are no plate credits one cannot tell which. The one map is cartographically illiterate. The publishers must take the blame for these faults of editing and production, but it is surely the authors who have consistently refused to give scales to their illustrations (except for Fig. 37).
GLYN DANIEL

WORLD PREHISTORY



Terracotta Negroid head from Nok, Nigeria. From the second edition of *World Prehistory* by Grahame Clark (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, March 1969, 45s boards; 18s paper).

SOCIOLOGY OF RURAL ZAMBIA

Social Change and the Individual

A Study of the Social and Religious Responses to Innovation in a Zambian Rural Community. By Norman Long. Pp. xix + 257 + 8 plates. (Manchester University Press: Manchester. Published for the Institute for Social Research, University of Zambia, December 1968.) 55s.

THE individual, who has loomed increasingly large in previous sociological studies of rural Zambia, moves right into the foreground of this one, as well as into its