

## PART 4: GEO-POLITICAL CONFIGURATIONS, BOUNDARIES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

*Kristian Kristiansen and Helle Vandkilde*

This conference session was concerned with geo-political configurations, boundaries and socio-cultural transformations, all three of which can be said to be rooted in both movement and its responses. Within our European study area, the Bronze Age was the first era in which cultural expressions were frequently shared. It also witnessed the simultaneous development of local and regional differences pertaining to culture, political economy and social organization. Despite often prevailing cross-cultural convergences and interactions, there were differences across Europe in terms of societal organizations which should not be underestimated. Notably among these was a fundamental division between North and South in which states began to be successfully formed in the Aegean region prior to 2000 BCE. In consequence, some form of opposition between non-state-organised societies in temperate Europe and state-organized societies in the eastern Mediterranean was sustained for most of the duration of the Bronze Age.

It is unclear to which degree fundamental societal disparities shaped cross-European mobility and in turn became shaped by it. It seems likely that the societies as well as the forms and systems of interconnecting mobility were co-dependent on each other for their maintenance and success, and, therefore, that abrupt change in one could have been fatal to the other. This may have constituted an important backdrop for major pan-European horizons of change – notably c. 1600 BCE and c. 1200 BCE – which were also on the agenda for this session. In the same vein, the background and details of major macro-regional con-

figurations were addressed, such as formed by the Únětice, Tumulus and Nordic Bronze Age contact cultures as well as the Urnfield culture. In brief, the foremost concern of the session was to debate those diversities and commonalities on a regional and European level that emerged from increased intercultural trafficking. Thereby, the aim was to reveal possible relationships between micro-scale events, everyday-practices and structures of mobility on the one hand and macro-scale conjunctures and disjunctures on the other.

The original session encouraged contributions to take their point of departure in the above issues, however, several entangled sub-themes are touched upon in the published collection of twelve articles: Most of these take a regional perspective without losing sight of the overall setting and underlying mobility. Aspects of the following themes were often also addressed: the geopolitical positions of specific sites and regions, the geographical extension of cultural similarities across Europe in different phases and periods, the scale of intercultural interaction in Europe, the intrusion and, thereby, impact, of increasing cultural similarities/dissimilarities on the social life of singular societies differently positioned in the geo-political and cultural landscape of Bronze Age Europe, and, finally, the search for the presence and definition of any ‘rules of change’ common to the study of opposing processes. These articles deal with so-called marginal communities as well as hotspots and gateway societies and they do so most often with a view to connected mobility patterns and systems.