
Reviewed by John Alexander

Many who work in this field have talked of writing a book with this title, but none have dared appear in print. The knowledge required for it is immense, scattered, and in a dozen or more languages. John Collins comes to it with the advantages of nearly two decades work in the central and western European mainland and a command of the ancient languages needed, and is therefore well qualified to attempt a synthesis. He has written an excellent and useful book aimed not at specialists but at the community at large. It can only be faulted for promising in his title something which he never apparently intended to perform. The same kind of promise was made some years ago by V. Megaw with his title Art of the European Iron Age, which equated European with La Tène art and ignored all the other schools. Collins concentrates on a zone of Europe which stretches S.E.-N.W. from the Aegean coastlands through Italy and Central Europe to the British Isles and does not discuss either Scandinavia or northeast Europe on one side or Iberia on the other, as his maps (p. 27) show. His selection of a special zone of study is legitimate and far sighted, but it excludes nearly half of Europe, and the title should be different. If he were to change his title, he would also be well to drop 'Iron Age', now out-dated concept, when his real study is the first millennium B.C.

He is interested in four problems: the development of Aegean and Italian iron-using states; the spread northwards of their commercial influence into Central Europe; the rise and southward spread of Celtic (La Tène) peoples; and the impact of the expanding Roman Empire in northern western Europe. Within this framework he has written a most informative book. The title is intended for the intelligent general public is shown by an introductory chapter on 'Attitudes to the Past' which sets out his position as 'a prehistorian viewing the world from Central Europe'. It is a pity, however, that in it he castigates Diffusion as 'a dangerous and misleading concept' (p. 14) and illustrates it with the wilder shores of eccentricity, for he had to go on and admit that what he is discussing undoubtedly involves the diffusion of ideas and techniques as well as objects. The peculiarity for the knowledge of iron-using.

The heart of the book lies in the next four chapters, and it is entitled 'The Old Order' and 'Reawakening in the East' describe the Mycenaean world of the Aegean and the rise of iron-using Aegean and Western Asian states. It is disappointing that the Phoenicians, whose influence in the Central and West Mediterranean coastal areas was so great, and who preceded the Greeks there, are not better considered and are not mentioned in the index. The Greeks and Etruscans in the chapter headed The Trade Explosion deal first. The illustrations (e.g. 16a-b) need replacing. In Central Europe the coverage is excellent and the illustrations superb. The Iron Age in 500-250 B.C. is headed, rather surprisingly for one standing in Central Europe, 'The Bronze Age', but this great period of Celtic expansion and the phases of La Tène is well described and has many familiar and useful illustrations.

The final chapter discusses economic revival and the coming of Roman armies which affect northern Europe, and summarises much of the work to which Collins has been a major contributor. The vexed question of the origin of the Celts is handled boldly as the 'deliberate founding of large urban centres' (p. 140), although the claim that Caesar's use of the term being followed may be disputed.

This book, with its notes and select bibliography, can be recommended even if a different book with the same title still remains to be written.


Reviewed by Tim Reynolds

The result of a session entitled 'Palaeoanthropology: Behavior' at the 12th ICAFS in Chicago, 1973, this volume of thirteen papers is another in the Mouton series entitled 'World Anthropology'. As with others of this series it is well presented and clear, however, it contrasts these other essays in a striking imbalance between length of papers and the lack of a definite focus. Aimed at Old World paleo-behaviour, it shows a curious lack of contributions by workers based in the Old World, a bias towards Spain (papers by Freeman (2), Clark and Richards), and, despite usage of the terminology of the 'New Archaeology' (Freeman, Fedele, Hassan) its contents remain rather traditional (see especially Singer and Wymer). This latter point is somewhat of a disappointment for behavioural archaeologists, but at this time, easily packs the volume with controversial topics for debate. This problem surely lies in the length of time taken to publish the book, some five years, during which period which northern and European database have all altered. The volume, therefore, contains many熟知s such as Freeman's essay (p. 5) which is handled boldly as the 'deliberate founding of large urban centres' (p. 140), although the claim that Caesar's use of the term is being followed may be disputed.

This book, with its notes and select bibliography, can be confidently recommended even if a different book with the same title still remains to be written.

Wide coverage within the old world is admirable. Papers by Hassan, Gonzales Espejary and Saxon cover between them the late Pleistocene and early Holocene industries of the Levant and North Africa. Saxon adopts an environmental approach for the Mesolithic of these areas. Fedele adopts a similar perspective in his discussion of human occupation in the Italian Alps.

Two of the papers are particularly lengthy, the area in which Western archaeologists rarely delve. Shinkin presents a review of the Upper Palaeolithic of North America, and Landeira Neves takes a sideways step into the adaptive niches in Homo erectus in eastern Asia following a relatively long and lengthy examination of the Conozoic climatic change and mammalian evolution. Both papers present useful data and area summaries for reference but neither provide great enlightenment