arresting snapshots of prehistoric life. There is little sense of time or change, indeed, it is not clear how far he believes that there was no change. His interpretations of this material are entirely intuitive. Although he uses ethnography for local colour, the approach is literary, not analytical. Much of the problem arises because Burl has no clear conception of the place of 'religion' in the social formation. I suspect that this goes outside the scope of his book.

Aubrey Burl has now written distinguished books for both the specialist and the general reader. He has an original approach, a very wide range of reference and a rare gift for effective prose. We still need a satisfactory textbook of British prehistory, one which is not too technical and not too boring. Surely, here is its author.

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SUSAN FRANK, Glass and Archaeology. Studies in Archaeological Science (ed. G. W. Dimbleby), Academic Press, London, 1982. 155 pp. £12.20 (hard) ISBN 0-12-26520-2.

Reviewed by Colin Shell

In this rather slim volume, Susan Frank sets out to provide a comprehensive guide to glass from a scientific point of view, from its origins in the fifth millennium BC, through its rapid increase in use with the invention of glassblowing, to the post-medieval period and onset of mass-production. In a limited way the book succeeds as a guide, but it cannot be greeted as a comprehensive handbook on glass for the archaeologist. It is more of a general introduction with a less than complete treatment of the subject.

Much of the description of glassmaking technology is drawn from later historical sources and there is a strong bias towards later material. This is understandable in that a wealth of information survives for the later period, but it is exactly for the same reason that a full discussion of the earlier evidence would have been appreciated. The range of glass considered is narrow. While vitreous waste-products, such as metal smelting slags, may require little attention (although vitrified forts are discussed), and obsidian is only briefly mentioned, the importance over a long period of glass beads and enamelling is almost entirely overlooked. The geographical scope is also limited, with the only detailed discussion of excavation evidence restricted to post-Roman Britain. Islamic glass is hardly mentioned, and Far Eastern glass only in a caveat that barium-containing Chinese and Japanese glass may be confused with leaded glass in a simple density test.

The basic structure and properties of glass are explained in general terms without examples of exactly how properties change with composition. Composition and colour are discussed within a review of the development of glass technology. Here, one particularly felt a fuller treatment was needed, with more primary information. Although this was compensated for in part by the author's praiseworthy attempt to provide a good annotated bibliography, the reader was at times referred to this when the information itself should have been given in the text. In several chapters detailed description and primary references are omitted. Further information on the earliest evidence for glassblowing in the Near East in the first century BC requires a search for the original source in one of the cited review articles. Hence it is at least two steps away, even for those able to consult an appropriate library. Similarly, more illustration of

earlier material would have been welcomed, particularly as the standard of the few figures provided is good.

A section on scientific analysis does include specific examples of techniques applied to glass. Simple visual examination is rightly emphasised -- a well known archaeometric laboratory recently identified an early glass bead as fossil mollusc. Glass is susceptible to aqueous corrosion and the difficult problem of conservation is discussed, especially for excavated material.

The author, in a final chapter, gives bibliographic sources that should be consulted to keep up with the dispersed literature yet to appear. This is valuable and the example could be followed to advantage elsewhere.

Glass and Archaeology is a useful initial reference guide and can be used as a primary source for those seeking further information, but the author, and, not least, the series editor and publisher have missed an opportunity to provide a comprehensive handbook on glass of immediate archaeological value.

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RICHARD HODGES, Dark Age Economics. Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd, London, 1982. 230 pp. £24.00 (hard) ISBN 0-7156-1531-9

Reviewed by Tim Champion

Richard Hodges has set himself a large task: no less than a thorough re-examination of the field of early medieval Europe so long dominated by the towering figure of Pirenne. This is an ambitious book, but certainly one which needed to be written to clarify the present state of knowledge. The last fifteen years have seen a huge increase in the sheer volume of evidence for this period, which has formed a major focus of archaeological research in all the countries around the North Sea. The current transformation of our perception of this period is almost entirely due to the urban archaeologist, and it was perhaps inevitable that at some point the traditional historical approach should be challenged by the upstart archaeology. The intellectual ancestors to whom Hodges appeals to legitimate his work are the likes of Fried, Service, Flannery, Polanyi, Renfrew and Sahlins, not least in the obvious origin of his title. It remains to be seen what history will make of this encroachment into its territory: the reception afforded to a similar pioneering effort, Klavs Randsborg's The Viking Age in Denmark, does not bode well. And yet this book deserves to be read by all students of early medieval Europe, whether their approach is primarily archaeological or historical, and by all students of early complex societies, for it achieves a considerable measure of success in its ambitious aim.

After an introductory chapter dealing with the prevailing historical theories and the growth of an anthropological theory of the relationship between trade and social development, the core of the book is to be found in the next six chapters. These are largely a factual summary of the evidence for trade and towns in the early medieval period, and are an invaluable introduction to what have hitherto been very scattered and inaccessible data. It appears to be up-to-date to early 1981, and the evidence is well chosen and generally well presented. The coverage is wide-ranging, and includes not just the trading systems themselves and the emporia, but also the boats, merchants and objects of trade as well as the subsistence economy. Though this part will grow dated as the pace of work continues, it will, for some time