

REVIEWS

Die erstern Bauern. Pfahlbaubefunde Europas. Zürich: Schweizerisches Landesmuseum Zürich, 1990. 2 Volumes, 368pp. and 265pp. Approx. £30.00 for both.

From April to September of 1990, a small EBA hamlet graced the shore of Lake Zürich adjacent to Switzerland's largest city. Surrounded by exhibition pavilions, the reconstructed village - based on evidence recovered from the large wetland site Zürich-Mozartstrasse - formed the nucleus of a prehistory theme park. A large exhibition of European Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts at the Swiss National Museum ran concurrently.

The two volumes under review here were designed to provide additional information for the interested visitor. They consist of seventy papers - 52 in German, 9 in French, 7 in Italian and 2 in English - including both general overviews of various areas and themes, and short site reports.

The first and larger volume is dedicated to material from Switzerland, mostly to the wetland sites of the Neolithic and Bronze Age. It is divided into six sections : history and method, general chronology, environment and economy, special activities, individual wetland sites or site-clusters (by far the largest section with 24 papers), and the Neolithic in the alpine regions. The second volume contains some papers discussing the origin and spread of agriculture, and a number of short reports from Early Neolithic East-European sites. It is dominated by a series of papers describing sites comparable to or contemporary with the Swiss material from Volume 1 and located in the adjacent regions of Austria, Germany, France and Italy.

There is little doubt that the first volume will be of greater interest to the reader, excepting those already thoroughly familiar with the Swiss wetland sites. These Neolithic and Bronze Age villages, situated on lake shores or in peat-bogs, boast an extraordinary preservation of organic material (wood in particular), and form - together with similar sites in the adjacent circumalpine regions - the largest and most consistent body of wetland remains in the world. While the first discoveries elicited world-wide interest during the second half of last century (see Speck's paper on the history of research), the recent large-scale excavations at Zürich (papers by Ruoff, Gross & Ritzmann and Eberschweiler), Twann (paper by Stöckli), Portalban (paper by Ramseyer), or Auvernier, Hauterives-Champréveyres and St.Blaise in the Canton of Neuchâtel (paper by Egloff) - to name but the most important - have remained largely unknown in the Anglo-Saxon world. This may be an effect of the language barrier; most site reports have been published in German or French, and the reader of the two volumes under discussion should also have some familiarity with both languages.

The first third of the second volume offers little new to the reader, precisely because the origin of the Neolithic and the Early Neolithic of Eastern Europe have been sufficiently discussed in the English language. The following papers dealing with the Neolithic and Bronze age sites in areas adjacent to Switzerland, such as Fiave in Italy (paper by Marzatico), Charavines in France (paper by Bocquet) and Hornstadt in Germany (paper by Dieckman) form an interesting addition to volume 1, as they put the Swiss material into a larger regional perspective.

As there are seventy separate contributions, quality and interest of individual papers will obviously vary. I would recommend the following papers in particular: Gross on the development of the Swiss Neolithic, which pays particular attention to interregional exchanges and influences; Jacomet et al. on agriculture and plant-gathering around Lake Zürich; Währen's short paper on prehistoric bread and cakes - a commodity recovered from several Swiss wetland sites; the papers by Ruoff, Gross & Ritzmann and Ebenschweiler on recently excavated sites in the Canton of Zürich; Speck and Wyss on sites from the Wauwilermoos, including the comparatively well-known Egolzwil sites; Winiger on sites from Lake Bienna, illustrating the high density of pile-built villages around this small lake - between 5 and 13 at any period; Strahm & Wolf on the sites of Yverdon; and Ramseyer on the sites around Lake Murten.

The greatest weakness of this collection of essays is undoubtedly the way in which contributions from the western, French-speaking part of Switzerland are under-represented. One misses in particular a more detailed treatment of the sites of the Canton Neuchâtel, where the past decade has seen some very sizeable excavations, in particular at Auvernier, Cortaillod, Hauterive and St. Blaise. Recent work in the Canton of Zürich is, by contrast, much better documented - possibly a reflection of the geographical location of the exhibition and the continuing slight tension between Switzerland's two main language groups. Nevertheless I can strongly recommend the two volumes to anybody interested in the European Neolithic and Bronze Age and capable of coping with largely German and French papers. They provide a good overview and introduction to the rich wetland sites of the circumalpine region, and although the individual papers are comparatively short, each comes with a list of bibliographical sources for those who seek more extensive information.

Robert Fellner

Vainker, S.J. *Chinese pottery and porcelain: from prehistory to the present*. London: British Museum, 1991. 240pp. £19.95

Published to coincide with the 1991 British Museum exhibition of the same name, this book offers a concise and generally well-presented account of the world's most accomplished ceramic tradition. As early as the 12th century AD China's achievements, technological and aesthetic, had created such a demand as to fuel a wood-fired Industrial Revolution at the potteries of Jingdezhen.

The book is generously illustrated with colour photographs, some of them quite superb. Some prehistoric pots are rendered in sectional drawing, as are the main types of kiln. There is also a series of site location maps. Appendices on clays, glazes and kilns are followed by a glossary, a chronology and a bibliography.

For its length the book is ambitious in its scope, especially in including the various cultural sequences of the Neolithic. However, for that period alone there have been a number of important discoveries in recent years. Hemudu in the east, Peiligang in the north and Zengpiyan in the south. Pottery is now claimed to have begun several thousand years earlier than at the well-known Yangshao site of Banpo. Not surprisingly the earliest dates claimed for