

SABINE RIECKHOFF und JÖRG BIEL, *Die Kelten in Deutschland*. Konrad Theiss Verlag, Stuttgart 2001. 542 Seiten, 350 Abbildungen, 40 Farbtafeln, 1 Tabelle.

This new book presents an overview of Iron Age archaeology in southern Germany and in parts of the central regions of the country. As the authors state in the introduction, it is aimed at a public audience, but it provides an excellent synthesis and summary for the professional as well. Rieckhoff wrote the synthetic overview (pp. 11–276), Biel assembled the catalogue of 121 major archaeological sites, authored by 47 specialists (pp. 277–502).

The presentation begins with consideration of modern ideas about the ancient Celts, origins of the Celts, and research history. Especially good is discussion of recent research, over the past 50 years. The body of Rieckhoff's synthesis, divided into an earlier (800–250 BC) and a later (250–15 BC) phase, deals with a wide range of topics, including settlement, subsistence, manufacturing, trade, burial, and ritual. A few well documented sites are frequently discussed, such as the Heuneburg, Hochdorf, Manching, and the new finds at the Glauberg, while many others are mentioned in passing. Maps, drawings, and photographs are excellent throughout.

The text includes welcome discussion of issues that archaeologists debate, such as the social and political character of the man buried at Hochdorf, the purpose of the *Viereckschanzen*, and whether or not the *oppida* were cities. While the emphasis is on economic issues – subsistence, settlement, craft production, and trade – art and ritual are also well represented.

The topographical section edited by Biel provides detailed current descriptions of 121 major Iron Age sites, complete with maps, site plans, and photographs of sites and artifacts. Along with an up-to-date summary by a specialist, each entry includes a valuable bibliography. This excellent source of data, together with the extensive synthesis in the first half of the book, makes »Die Kelten in Deutschland« an essential resource for students and scholars working on Iron Age central Europe. A map showing the locations of all of the sites in the catalogue would have been very helpful.

I must mention a few matters that might have been handled differently. I do not intend these remarks as criticisms of the book, because I think the authors succeed in achieving their goals. Rather, these are suggestions about aspects that might have added different perspectives to the presentation. At the beginning and end of the synthetic section of the book, Rieckhoff mentions issues concerning what the names “Celt” and “German” meant in the ancient world, but she could have said much more about the problems of identifying these groups. A great deal of literature about these identities has appeared in the past decade, not only in the field of archaeology, but also in ancient history and linguistics. A discussion of some of this literature and of the different perspectives on the meaning of “Celt” and “German” 2000 years ago would have been a welcome addition to the text.

The synthetic part of the book relies heavily on Greek and Roman written sources about the Iron Age peoples of Europe, for example in discussion of “Celtic” ideas about death (p. 260). The presentation and evaluation of the archaeological material are strong, but the various references to what Greek and Roman writers thought about the Iron Age Europeans are problematic. It would have been better to separate discussion of the archaeology from consideration of the ‘outsiders’ accounts”. In both archaeology and history, issues concerning understanding written sources that pertain to other peoples are subject to much discussion and debate today. In many cases, written sources and archaeology do not seem to correspond. For a context such as Iron Age Europe, it might be best first to present and evaluate the archaeological evidence left by the people under study. Then, the textual sources can be considered, but only with the qualification that they were written by people outside of the society they were describing, and they did not necessarily understand the significance of what they observed or heard about those peoples.

Finally, the first part of the book might have said more about the complexities of interpreting the meaning of grave goods. Recent research has drawn attention to the many different ways that burial practices and objects placed in graves can relate to social, political, and religious themes in the societies that arranged the burials. The book could have conveyed some of this complexity to the reader.

These matters are likely to concern mainly the professional audience rather than the public one. But surely many general readers would be interested to know more about ongoing debates in the field about how to interpret the archaeological evidence. I wholeheartedly support the authors’ aim in presenting an up-to-date discussion of Iron Age archaeology for the interested public. This book will be highly informative to general readers interested in the European Iron Age and of considerable practical use to archaeologists who specialize in later European prehistory. It will also be a valuable source of information for historians who wish to learn more about the prehistoric peoples whom the Greek and Roman writers called “Celts” and “Gauls”.

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