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Book Reviews



ATLANTIC EUROPE IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM BC: CROSSING THE DIVIDE. Edited by Tom Moore and Xosé-Lois Armada. Pp. xxvii and 681, Illus 141. Oxford University Press, 2011. Price: £125.00. ISBN 978 0 199567 95 9.

This volume represents a departure from the usual conference proceedings on Iron Age Europe because of its specific geographic focus, covering the Iberian Peninsula, France, Britain, Ireland, Belgium and Holland, as well as its thematic approach, which includes landscape studies, social organization, continuity and change, rhythms of life and death and a section on the history of European research traditions. Buy the book for the first chapter if nothing else — it presents what by now has come to feel like a rather thread-bare debate over the use of the terms Iron Age and Celtic in a neutral but very detailed and systematic summary. Here, Moore and Armada chart trends in regional and trans-regional research foci, linking these to geo-political developments and theoretical paradigm shifts in a way that manages to be simultaneously informative and non-partisan. At almost eighty pages, this introductory chapter is much more than the usual roll-call of chapters and disclaimers regarding lack of comprehensive coverage; it brings together and pulls apart the topic of Atlantic Europe in the first millennium BC in a magisterial synthesis that sets the stage for the rest of the volume.

The ensuing thematic sections include an unusually balanced mix of specialist authors, particularly in terms of professional affiliation (academics, museum-based researchers and heritage management specialists are all given equal billing). The editors appear to have chosen also to target younger scholars as well as senior establishment types, so while some of the usual suspects appear, there are also some fresh faces that bring a chorus of different voices to the discussion. The only quibble (a minor one) is that the Iberian Peninsula is perhaps disproportionately represented, equating to roughly one third of the chapters. However, given the fact that this part of Atlantic Europe has traditionally tended to be short-changed in English-language publications dealing with the Iron Age, and that Spanish archaeologists are an increasingly active group in European theoretical and methodological discourse, this is not a major detraction.

To single out just a few of the chapters, new approaches include a scalable model for studies of historical ecology in Iron Age contexts (Meyer and Crumley), and developing a methodology for using gold and other metalworking techniques as a proxy for understanding cultural interaction (Armbruster). Areas of Europe not traditionally discussed in the English-language literature include an extremely interesting study of shifts in power and elite symbolism between the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age in the Scheldt Basin, which encompasses parts of northern France, west-central Belgium and extreme south-western Netherlands (de Mulder and Bourgeois), while an archaeometric

approach to craft technology illuminates the interpretation of a hillfort complex in Asturias in northern Spain (Pardo, Suárez and García-Guinea).

While the various case studies and regional analyses are interesting and useful, including several chapters dealing with periodization and chronology as well as iconography, technology, status and identity, what makes this collection of essays valuable to scholars of the European Iron Age is the overviews and personal perspectives provided in each thematic section. The meta-analyses of Iron Age studies presented in the last section of the book, which explores European research traditions explicitly, are particularly useful. This is a welcome addition to a growing number of publications dealing with Iron Age Europe that are breaking new ground in the interpretation of a time period that continues to fascinate scholars and the general public alike.

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