

Paul Bahn, ed. *Archaeology: The Whole Story* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017, 576pp., numerous illustr., soft cover, ISBN 978-0-500-2975-1)

At first glance one might be forgiven for thinking that this book is just another picture book of archaeology, an interesting addition to the coffee-table library but little more. However, the book merits much more than a glance and is in fact a very useful tour of world archaeology from over four million years ago to the present day.

The entries are accompanied by a useful timeline, entitled 'key events' running across the bottom of key pages and giving the reader a sense of what occurred in a given period of time; the chapters are arranged chronologically so that the reader has some sense of where in human (pre-) history events took place. The point might have been further reinforced by a bar showing where the 'key events' bar fitted within the whole chronology of the book, but this is a minor quibble.

There are seven broad chapters or sections, each colour-coded for convenience. They are 'Deep Prehistory 4 million–10,000 BC' (Ch. 1), 'From Hunters to Farmers 10,000–3000 BC' (Ch. 2), 'The Rise of Civilizations 3000–1000 BC' (Ch. 3), 'The Iron Age and the Ancient World 1000 BC–AD 500' (Ch. 4), 'The Medieval World AD 900–1600' (Ch. 5), 'The Modern World AD 1600–Present' (Ch. 6), and 'How Archaeology Works' (Ch. 7).

Most of the entries comprise of two well illustrated pages, one of which generally has a boxed feature on a particular theme or site, e.g. Chryselephantine statues or the Hallstatt Cemetery. The topics are covered in a brisk and interesting way but despite their brevity there is no attempt to provide references to further reading, something which is at times rather frustrating. Perhaps it was felt that a bibliography would add too many pages to what is already a substantial volume. One oddity, presumably

because the publishers expect to sell mainly in the USA, is that all measurements are given first in imperial with the metric conversion following in brackets.

The 'Deep Prehistory.' chapter is as near up-to-date as it is possible to be with such a rapidly changing subject. However, the Denisovans, over which there has been much recent discussion (Krause et al, 2010; Pennisi, 2013) are mentioned only in passing. There is a summary explanation of the 'Out of Africa' hypothesis and the editor has been careful to ensure that the book is not focussed primarily on Europe; 'Australia' and the 'First Americans' are both covered.

That the book has a wide geographical focus is clear in the 'From Hunters to Farmers.' chapter where not only are the usual sites of the Near East and Europe discussed, but also a number in the Far East and the Americas. Like other major chapters of the book, the first parts of the chapter introduce themes, such as 'Ancient Climate Change', 'Farming around the World' and 'Towards Farming and Sedentism'. It has a dedicated sub-section, 'The Archaic in the Americas', dealing with that period (8000–2000 BC) and looks at the Chinchorro (c. 5000–1200 BC), a group which flourished on the fringes of the Atacama desert. These and others provide the context into which the reader can place sites or cultures with which they may otherwise be unfamiliar, for example the Mesolithic of Japan or the first farmers of New Guinea.

Chapter 3, 'The Rise of Civilisations 3000–1000 BC', mainly deals with familiar sites in the Old World (though it is good to see the city of Kerma in the Sudan included) as well as a few from the Americas and China. Unusually, the first of the 'essay' sections within the chapter is

not 'Defining Civilization' but a section on bronze as an agent of transformation. Egypt is well covered and Kerma featured, though not the nearby and important site of Dokki Gel, which does not feature anywhere in the book (for information on the most recent results of the Swiss-French-Sudanese mission in Kerma and Doukki Gel see <http://kerma-doukkigel.ch/>). The inclusion of the Sanxingdui culture of China (twelfth-eleventh centuries BC) is a welcome addition (Sanxingdui Museum, 2006) and a sign that this book is not just the usual fare where China is represented by the Terracotta Army and nothing more (they are of course included in the subsequent chapter). The Indus Civilisation is discussed, not only using Mohenjo-daro and Harappa as examples but also the important regional centre of Dholavira and the smaller industrial and residential town of Lothal (both 3000–1500 BC).

Chapter 4, 'The Iron Age and the Ancient World 1000 BC–AD 500', provides a very useful overview of this complicated period and the interrelationships between regions. The selection of sites is extensive and informative and includes an interesting and useful section on the Silk Road and some of the sites along its route (though the route varies somewhat over time). Merv (Turkmenistan) and Begram (Afghanistan) are well summarised as part of this chapter, though the lack of references to further reading is regrettable here as elsewhere.

Chapter 5, 'The Medieval World AD 900–1600', gives a near global coverage with an interesting range of example sites, including Fatehpur Sikri (India) and Angkor Wat (Cambodia). The Mongols and the Ottomans receive general coverage as do Medieval towns and the warfare of the period. The inclusion in this chapter of sections on 'Huacas de Moche' (c. AD 100–850), 'The Lords of Sipan' (c. AD 200–600), and on the Maya helps to emphasise the broad sweep of the book,

making it clear that the 'Medieval period' does not have to be confined to Europe. As elsewhere in the book, readers will be interested to see the range of contacts and exchanges between people, provoking thought over national identities and cultural exchange. The peoples of the ancient world are often a good deal more cosmopolitan than is sometimes assumed.

Chapter 6, 'The Modern World AD 1600–Present', is much more thematic with relatively few sites (just four—the *Geldermalsen*, Shakespeare's Theatres, Ironbridge, and the Little Bighorn) given as examples to support the essay treatments of shipwrecks, industrial archaeology, conflict archaeology, early modern life, etc. The site chosen for special discussion in the conflict archaeology section is not one of the World War One battlefields which one might expect, but rather the Battle of the Little Bighorn (1876) in today's Montana (USA) (see Scott et al., 1989). This is an excellent example and the necessarily short summary given is both informative of the event and the way it has been reassessed following the grass fire at the site in 1983. This chapter also includes sections on indigenous archaeology and on archaeology and tourism, and archaeology and politics—sections which may well be surprising to general readers but which are an important part of the modern discipline.

Chapter 7, 'How Archaeology Works', begins by looking at theory and practice before going into the familiar realms of survey and excavation. However, the survey section includes geophysics and LiDAR. In the dating section there are good explanations of how relative and absolute chronology work including the use of Bayesian statistics.

Those familiar with the usual picture books of archaeology may find this book unfamiliar in that it is ordered by broad themes with smaller themes within and

illustrated with examples of sites. Its greater length allows the authors the luxury of space and so removes the limitations which often necessitate a more usual regional approach with a few ‘top-picks’ which readers are most likely to have heard of (e.g. Branigan, 1982). The approach here is very well thought out and readers can quickly gain an understanding of events across the globe rather than having a very patchy history of particular countries as illustrated by a selection of familiar sites. The approach to archaeology is also broad and interesting with some unusual themes (such as politics and tourism). If this book is intended to appeal to the armchair archaeologist then it will do so, but it is perhaps targeted toward the more serious of that group.

The book is illustrated in full colour throughout and should encourage even those whose interest in archaeology is minimal (and I am told that such people exist!) to pick up the book and read sections of it. The photography is excellent, though there are no scales on artefacts and the captions do not usually give any indication of size. Whilst the text is very readable I found the print itself slightly small, no doubt the result of the need to cram in as much as possible, but an unfortunate decision nonetheless.

The book has a glossary as well as a good index and is easy to search for information, though it misses some key terms—there is no definition of hominid or hominin for example though both are used in the book, and given that the definition of hominid has now changed to mean all great apes and their ancestors whereas it was previously used in the way that hominin now is—namely, to refer to modern humans, extinct humans, and their ancestors. Nonetheless, the glossary is something which should make it popular amongst students as well as general readers. For the former audience, it might profitably be used alongside Renfrew and Bahn’s *Archaeology: Theories, Methods*,

and *Practice*, indeed this book covers some of the same ground, albeit with the emphasis here on sites and methods rather than on theories. The Renfrew and Bahn (2016) volume also has a very useful bibliography which can be used to supplement the information given in this book.

Overall, this is a volume which will be enjoyed by the general reader and which should prove useful to students. The lack of text references/further reading is regrettable, but the book is nonetheless an excellent ‘look up’ for sites and especially for their broader context and can be recommended wholeheartedly!

#### REFERENCE

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