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The Cambridge Ancient History by John Boardmann

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contemporary industry by noting that Hong Kong, where capitalists from east and west exploit the new technology with cheap labor, "is now the leading exporter of watches in the world" (p. 359) and that a still more advanced technology may soon be inserted into a still cheaper labor site than Hong Kong. The conditions for Swiss achievement, wherein a highly skilled labor force was required to utilize the latest technology, no longer apply.

Revolution in Time is a labor of love. Never turgid or pretentious, within it the author of the now classic *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in the Western World from 1750 to the Present* (1969) reveals a humor and intellectual playfulness that is both pleasing and provocative. Historians of many fields will find much of interest in this remarkably penetrating essay in comparative history. Landes makes no claim to having said the last word; indeed, on many topics he may be saying the first word. For these reasons *Revolution in Time* is a landmark among studies of Western economic and cultural history.

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ANCIENT

JOHN BOARDMAN *et al.*, editors. *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Volume 3, part 1, *The Prehistory of the Balkans; and the Middle East and the Aegean World, Tenth to Eighth Centuries B.C.* 2d ed. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1982. Pp. xx, 1059. \$79.50.

By any standards common in the field, *The Cambridge Ancient History* is a major work of reference—in fact, as far as ancient Near Eastern history is concerned, it is certainly the major work available at present. Two volumes of the second edition have appeared for a total of almost 4000 pages, and the current volume adds some additional 1080 pages to that figure. These are fact-filled pages, generally quite readable in style and well structured in terms of chapter subdivisions and indexes, so as to provide easy access to the more minute levels of information. A new departure in this volume is the inclusion of the Balkans. As a natural neighbor and partner of both the Aegean and the northern sector of the Near East (Turkey, the Caucasus, northwestern Iran), the Balkan area is indeed pertinent in terms of overall developmental patterns. In this volume the Balkans are treated quite independently of the Near East, in line with the overall design of the work.

This design calls for a detailed presentation of

each area in and of itself, without any specific interest in the interconnections between areas. Rather than "Ancient History," this is indeed a collection of "Ancient Histories," more encyclopedic and atomistic than integrated. To some extent, this is simply a matter of the editorial orientation of John Boardman and his fellow editors. *The Cambridge Ancient History* is meant to provide information on matters of detail, while the presentation of historical trends and problems is left in the background. But in a way the series is also a good monitor of the historical mentality that prevails in the discipline, a mentality geared toward a diligent collection of data, sorted in as accurate a chronological sequence as possible. It is a bit as if a linguist simply asked an informant to talk, and dutifully recorded each utterance without, however, asking any leading questions. There is, in other words, an emphasis on fact-finding rather than on seeking meaningful associations, a clustering of obvious categories rather than a search for hidden patterns, an insistence on direct sequentiality rather than on structured interconnections.

But we can readily accept the limits set forth by *The Cambridge Ancient History*, since within those parameters the authors have done such an excellent job. Yet precisely within these limits, we must take issue with one major point of editorial preference. Even if the work is accepted as a kaleidoscope of ancient histories, we must question the overall balance of the particular histories chosen. This particular volume includes 232 pages on the prehistory of the Balkans, 200 pages on the early history of the Balkans and the Aegean, 342 pages on the Near East including Cyprus in the early first millennium, and 80 pages on the history of alphabetic writing. This means that there are some major omissions indeed: the Caucasus is not included, for instance, and nothing comparable to alphabetic writing is given (either in this or in earlier volumes) for the cuneiform or the hieroglyphic writing systems. Yet both of these topics are of essential importance for the overall economy of the work. What is more, writing is singled out as a specific topic of special importance, but nothing comparable is accorded to broader issues of technology.

So then the great Cambridge series is not just "Ancient Histories," but rather "Some Ancient Histories." Nor is this just a minor quibble with a title. Given the prestige of the work, and the unified editorial garb in which it is presented, significant omissions acquire significant weight. It is not that I advocate cutting off parts of the work in order to give equal time to areas and topics that well deserve it. Rather, if publishing policies dictate certain limitations on space, then a more committed editorial introduction should be given. As it is, the short introduction is primarily of an organizational rather than a conceptual nature.

As in volume 2, there is a clear double standard applied to archaeology: it is accepted in full for the periods for which material culture is the only source of information available, but it takes second place at best by the time written sources become available. If so much can be made of archaeology before the beginning of writing, why can only so little be made of it afterwards? One gets the impression at times that material culture all but vanished in certain periods: if ceramic typology is so important in one period to justify long lists of site names and typological attributes, why does it lose all interest to the historian in another period? I am of course aware of the simplistic answer that can be given: if so much can be obtained from the written sources, why bother with the rest? Such an answer really misses the point. The material given for the prehistoric periods is most often quite heterogeneous to the issues asked for the historical periods: often the chapters that are archaeologically oriented do not in fact pose, much less answer, historical questions, they only show that we have much information about a given area or period. There are few chapters that really integrate the archaeological information into a historical framework (one such chapter is the one on Albania)—otherwise they are but catalogues of information about areas and periods. Again, I would not want to bemoan the wealth of information that is made available. But I do bemoan the double standard used that creates a confusing conceptual picture.

One matter of detail. In a work that deals at the same time with the Near East and with the Balkans, one misses very sorely a thorough discussion of the Tartaria tablets, which are of such major importance for the possible connection between the two worlds. Brief mention on pages 84 and 126 is quite inadequate.

It is worth noting that the new format of the bibliography (especially the chapter headings) is much preferable to that adopted in the first two volumes of the second edition.

Finally, I wish to note that the criticisms advanced here are as much a commentary on the discipline as on the book itself. It is somewhat like the converse of the mirror on the wall in Snow White's story. *The Cambridge Ancient History* reflects only what is at hand, it does not of its own generate new domains of thought, it does not point, beyond the reflection of current standards, to a more promising line of research.

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EHSAN YARSHATER, editor. *The Cambridge History of Iran*. Volume 3, *The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian*

Periods. In two parts. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1983. Pp. lxxv, 624; 627–1488. \$74.50 each.

The two-part, third volume of *The Cambridge History of Iran*, edited by Ehsan Yarshater, is now our most important reference dealing with Iranian history in the millennium of the Seleucids, the Parthians, and the Sasanids. These centuries involved constant conflicts with the Romans and the Byzantines in the west and recurring invasions by nomads from Central Asia in the east.

The thirty-seven chapters written by leading international Iranologists are divided into nine sections: political history, numismatics, Iranian historical tradition, Iran and its neighbors, institutions, religious history, art history, language and literature, and bibliography. The editor provides an introductory overview (pp. xvii–lxxv) and helpful cross references throughout. The work is richly supplied with plates, especially of coins. The interspersed appendixes listing kings should have been indicated in the table of contents.

It is inevitable that a work of this magnitude will have considerable time lags between the writing and publication of the various essays. The editor informs us: "Whereas some chapters were received as late as 1980 a few were written in the early seventies and the majority in the middle seventies" (p. xv). Carsten Colpe's chapter was completed in 1970; titles from 1970 to 1977 were added to the bibliography but were *not* used (p. 819). Alas, a number of authors did not live to see their contributions in print, including the late Otto Kurz, J. P. de Menasce, and Daniel Schlumberger. The latter's chapter on "Parthian Art" had been written in 1965–66.

After Alexander's death in 323 B.C. his generals seized different segments of his empire. Seleucus obtained the lion's share of the territories, including Iran and Mesopotamia. His successors constantly fought both external and internal enemies: "Of fourteen Seleucids who reigned between 312 and 129 B.C. only two died in bed" (E. Bickerman, p. 10). Mesopotamia was eventually lost to the Parthians in 141 (Yarshater, p. xviii) or 144 B.C. (W. Eilers, p. 483).

About 250 B.C. the Parni tribe from Transoxiana invaded Parthia, the area southeast of the Caspian Sea. Later known as the Parthians or Arsacids, after Arsaces I the founder of the dynasty in 247, they were to rule Iran for five centuries. The Parthians became the Romans' most formidable foe as the debacle at Carrhae in 53 B.C. demonstrated. From the Iranian background we may understand Crassus's invasion not just as a vain attempt to garner glory but as a move to support a candidate for the Parthian throne (A. D. H. Bivar, pp. 48–50).

The new Sasanian dynasty was established by Artashir I, who overthrew his Arsacid overlord in A.D.