

# reviews

ONCE more Professor Glob puts us in his debt. Five years ago his best seller *The Bog People* was published in English; now we are presented with its sequel—*The Mound People*—a lively and enthralling account of the inhabitants of Denmark at one of the peaks of the country's cultural development in the second millennium BC. In the first part of the book the author sets out to describe a selection of the remarkably preserved burials by which the Bronze Age inhabitants are known. Having thus introduced them to us, down to the last detail of their clothing, he proceeds to reconstruct something of the social economic and religious background of the times.

That so much is known is because of a combination of factors. The bodies were buried, fully clothed, in coffins made from split oak logs which were hollowed out, and buried beneath high mounds of turf and soil—the barrows which still today dominate the skylines in many parts of Denmark. Gradually the rain water percolated through the mound, and laden with tannin leached out of the oak, penetrated the coffins and thus preserved clothing as well as human skin, hair and sometimes brain tissue.

Early discoveries, dating back to the beginning of the nineteenth century,

## Bringing the dead to life

*The Mound People*. By P. V. Glob. Pp. 184+75 plates. (Faber and Faber: London, May 1974.) £4.25.

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were not particularly well observed and conservation techniques were unable to cope with such delicate material. But more recently there have been several notable successes: the most fascinating is undoubtedly the discovery in 1929 of a young girl of 20 or so from Egtved, whose midriff-exposing tunic and see-through cord skirt were greeted with shocked incredulity by certain members of the Danish academic world until it was pointed out that several contemporary bronze figures were shown clad in similar skirts.

There can be very little doubt, from the surplus energy which must have been expended in constructing the great mounds, and from the richness of the personal equipment buried with

the dead, that the coffin burials represent the aristocratic class of bronze age society. Glob estimates that the turf required for a single barrow mound would have stripped between two and four acres of pasture of its soil cover. When it is remembered that many thousands of these barrows were built in a comparatively short period, something of the devastation of the land can be appreciated.

The conspicuous consumption of labour for constructing the mounds and the wealth of the objects of gold and bronze buried within them, metals which incidentally would have had to be imported into Denmark from further south, is a firm reminder of the stability of the native economy, based on the export of local products such as amber, cattle, furs and perhaps slaves, and of the strength of the military hierarchy. All this is discussed in great detail in the final chapters, which bring together a wealth of archaeological facts moulded into a cohesive story of a people and their lives, with Glob's customary mixture of insight and intelligent speculation.

Professor Glob evidently enjoys his archaeology. In this attractively written and beautifully illustrated book he offers us the chance to share his enjoyment. The opportunity is irresistible.

THE number of books on pesticides must by now be big enough to construct a largish pulpit from which to continue the environmental argument over such chemicals in general, and over the chlorinated insecticides, long since cast as the villains of the piece, in particular. To those of us involved in agriculture, particularly tropical agriculture, and public health, the banning of these particular chemicals would constitute a disaster, with world food production the victim; the oil crisis may indeed yet cause such a shortage of pesticides as to bring about an unfortunate involuntary demonstration of their beneficial effects to mankind.

It is therefore a pity that the various prefaces and introductions to this new series on the chemistry of pesticides seem somewhat apologetic and vague as to the reason why it has been launched "at a time that seems to mark the twilight . . . of the chlorinated insecticides". If men are wise,

this twilight will be a long one, because the much heralded "third generation insecticides" will not be a practical economic proposition for many years during which many more million mouths will need filling. But during that time we need to re-appraise the

## Necessity for DDT

*Chlorinated Insecticides*. Vol. 1: Technology and Application. By G. T. Brooks. Pp. 249. (CRC Press: Cleveland, Ohio, 1974) \$30.00.

potential and refine the deployment of chlorinated pesticides and for this a knowledge of their chemistry will be vital. This is adequately and clearly covered in this volume, built up from a very extensive bibliography; included in the account of each group which

comprise the DDT group, the diene group, HCH and Toxaphene, is a comprehensive summary of its syntheses and properties and the principles of analysis.

The weakest parts of the book are the sections dealing with application, which are mainly a rehash of information already published in such standard texts as A. W. A. Browne and J. R. Busvine. This orthodoxy underrates the vital and increasing importance of correct formulation in application, particularly for the chlorinated insecticides, which can increase their efficiency and reduce their environmental danger, and which must be based on a detailed knowledge of their chemistry.

It is difficult to assess the value of the entire book without reference to volume 2, which will deal with biological and environmental effects, but this volume is competent and covers the ground adequately and will be a useful reference work in pesticide laboratories.

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