

Man and Forest in Prehistoric Europe

The Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe: a Study of the Food-Gathering Peoples of Northern Europe during the Early Post-Glacial Period. By Dr. J. G. D. Clark. Pp. xvi+284+8 plates. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1936.) 25s. net.

THE passing of the last Ice Age left northern Europe open to human settlement; but the environment which the settlers encountered was still slowly changing. They had to adjust their equipment to land movements (including the opening of the Channel and the submergence of the Dogger Bank), to the change from a cold 'Pre-Boreal' to a warm continental 'Boreal' climate and then to a moister 'Atlantic' phase, to spread of forests, first of birch and willow, then of pine, then of mixed oak woods, and to consequent alterations in the country's fauna. Of these changes and of the geological, botanical and zoological evidence from which they are reconstructed, Dr. Clark gives a clear account, illustrated with maps and documented with copious references. The successive phases provide not only the background as adjustments to which human cultures must be interpreted, but also the chronological framework in which they must be arranged. Indeed, accepting at least the method of de Geer's geochronology, Clark provisionally offers absolute dates for the climatic phases: 6800-5000 B.C. for the Boreal, 5000-2500 for the Atlantic.

The first colonists are known almost exclusively from their flint artefacts, among which tanged points are the most conspicuous, but Rust and Schwantes found also their 'harpoons' and other tools of reindeers' antler near Hamburg just in time for inclusion in this book. A little later, axe-like and adze-like tools of reindeer antler illustrate men's first efforts at coping with the Boreal forests that were invading the tundras and steppes. Clark accepts Schwantes' thesis that these so-called Lyngby axes of antler are the prototypes of the later north European flint axes, but admits the possibility of their derivation from some still unknown culture to the south-east—a possibility that cannot be excluded while Russia remains almost unexplored. The familiar Maglemose culture (this name, signifying Great Moss, is retained for the whole complex, Mullerup being used for the facies peculiar to Zealand) can then be treated as a further adjustment to the forest environment, though the author insists that its

microliths are derived from the Tardenoisian, the spread of which round the fringe of the wooded plains is discussed in a special chapter.

Otherwise the principal novelties in the treatment of the well-known complex are the illustrations of the gravers, included among the relics from the type sites but ignored until Westerby noted them in 1927, and an accurate classification of the various bone points that constitute the best-known type-fossils of the complex. Independently of Bøe (whose work presumably appeared too late for mention), Clark exposes the inaccuracy of the conventional explanation of these as harpoons. He gives a very instructive map of the distribution of selected types from England to the Baltic States (but omitting the new Norwegian finds).

Clark's treatment convincingly establishes the underlying uniformity of culture prevailing throughout the region surveyed—a uniformity that really extends beyond it at least to the Urals. But the differentiation of local groups within this unity is no less interesting sociologically; for it must reflect the crystallization of distinct social units out of an ethnic continuum in Boreal times. It is graphically illustrated by the distribution of types 7 and 14 on Clark's map, and of the Vögthland club-heads and other types recently mapped by Germans. But still more striking is the rarity of axe-like tools in the forested plains east of the Baltic, suggested to the reviewer by a recent examination of Russian collections.

Regional differentiation is more emphasized in Atlantic times. Clark establishes very convincingly the continuity between the Maglemose and Ertebølle cultures in Denmark, and the contrast between the latter and its English and Scandinavian contemporaries. The differences between Maglemose and Ertebølle are due mainly to changed environment, between Ertebølle and say Lower Halstow to the isolation consequent upon land-sinking.

Its comprehensive bibliography, its tables of sites, of fauna and of flora, and its copious and beautifully executed figures and maps, make this book a standard work on the northern mesolithic. Its author's mastery of British as well as Baltic archaeology should commend it even to the most insular local antiquary. As an objective record of human adaptation to changing environments and of the divergence of industrial traditions, it possesses a wider historical interest.

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