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Quaternary Glaciations—Extent and Chronology. Part I: Europe, edited by J. Ehlers & P.L. Gibbard, 2004. Developments in Quaternary Science 2. Elsevier (for Europe, Middle East and Africa: Customer Service Department, Linacre House, Jordan Hill, Oxford OX2 8DP, United Kingdom; for USA/Canada: Customer Service Department, 11830 Westline Industrial Drive, St. Louis, MO 63146, USA). Hardbound, xi + 475 pages + CD-ROM. Price USD 185.00; GBP 123.50; EUR 185.00. ISBN 0-444-51462-7.

A second impressive work has been published in the series 'Developments in Quaternary Science'. This second work bears, like the first one, the clear imprint of the series editor, Jim Rose. He has managed to continue the high standard that was reached in the first volume. Obviously, the editors (and the authors) of this volume should be equally praised for their efforts: the book can be considered as a benchmark that will serve as a reference work for a long time.

The book represents activities of Working Group 5 of the INQUA Commission on Glaciation. It may be true that the Quaternary as a separate system is under heavy attack of the International Commission on Stratigraphy, but the activities of this Working Group show once more how much integrated, multi-disciplinary research in Quaternary geology differs from the geological research into other systems. The mission of the INQUA Working Group 5 is to bring together up-to-date information about the extent, volume and timing of Quaternary glaciations. Part of this mission has now been realized by the publication of this work, that will be followed by two more: one covering North America and another one covering South America, Africa, Australia and Antarctica.

The editors of the book detail in their preface by what approach they have attempted to fulfill the Working Group's mission. They do so by attempting to compile three sets of glacial limits from all areas: (1) the maximum limit of the Pleistocene glaciation, (2) the Late Weichselian / Wisconsinan / Valdaian / Würmian Glacial Maximum (Late Glacial Maximum), and (3) the Early (or Middle) Weichselian glacial maximum. These limits serve as the foundation of the maps and the text in the book, which covers, however, many more interesting data.

The structure of the book is, in principle, fairly simple: each (European) country that was covered during the Quaternary by a land-ice cap or where significant mountain glaciers developed, are dealt with. This is done alphabetically, which is, in my opinion, not the best approach, as it would have been more reader-friendly if specific aspects were treated in a geographically logical way. On the other hand, it is easy enough for the reader to read successively about, for instance, the glaciations in the Dutch, the Northern German, the Polish and the Russian lowlands. Apart from chapters devoted to individual countries, there are also chapters devoted to mountain ranges, so that a good overall picture of such geographical units can easily be obtained.

It is difficult to find out what guidelines the editors gave to the authors. It seems that there have been at least some guidelines, for several chapters show a comparable structure. On the other hand, the editors must have realised that an inflexible framework into which the various chapters should be fitted, would have resulted in a considerable loss of specific information. The result is that most of the chapters present a well balanced overview, with sufficient attention for each country's individual characteristics, but that comparison of specific details of the glaciations in different countries or mountain ranges is, as a rule, well possible.

The editors thus did a good job, and they did so in several other respects as well. It is commonly difficult to read contributions from authors who have English as a second language, and if their first language does not belong to the group of Anglo-Saxonian or Roman languages, the manuscripts are commonly even hardly readable at all. The contributions in this volume by authors with a Slavian mother tongue have apparently undergone extensive language editing. This has made them just as understandable and readable as the other contributions: a great achievement that will certainly contribute to a much better understanding by western earth scientists of the glaciations in Eastern Europe.

Of course, the book is not perfect. None of the scientific books published thus far is, and I'm convinced that no future book either will be perfect. The shortcomings are limited, however. Could the presence of a chapter about Turkey be considered as a shortcoming? The glaciations affected only the Asian part of this country, so that the chapter would, in my opinion, have fitted better in one of the volumes that still have to be published. There are also some figures with captions that are not adequate (for instance, p. 49), figures that have been reproduced in black and white from coloured figures, and so lost much of their readability (for instance, p. 136-137), and figures that show hardly readable shading (for instance, p. 297). These are all minor shortcomings, however. I found only one annoying shortcoming: the CD-ROM that is included in the book. In the first place, it cannot be taken from its envelope without damaging the (inside) cover of the book on which it has been glued. In the second place, the CD-ROM shows, when opened, dozens if not hundreds of files and folders. The explanation how to handle them is truly insufficient, and finding specific information from this giant source is an almost inhuman task. It seems to me that the CD-ROM has been prepared by a computer freak who has no idea about the computer capabilities of the average scientist. This aspect certainly deserves attention from the publisher (and the editors) of the volumes that have not yet been published.

One should be forgiving. The book itself should be considered as a valuable treasure. Authors, editors and the publisher should be proud of it. It is certainly worth its price. Only this CD-ROM.

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