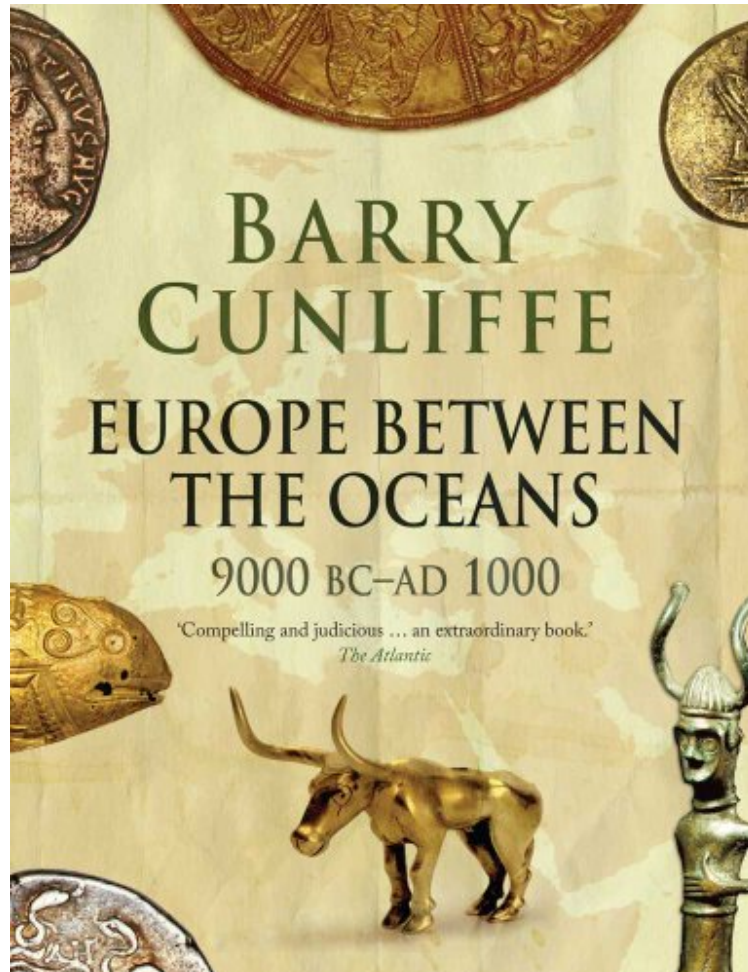


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## Europe Between the Oceans: 9000 BC-AD 1000

Barry Cunliffe

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**Barry Cunliffe : Europe Between the Oceans: 9000 BC-AD 1000** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Europe Between the Oceans: 9000 BC-AD 1000:

72 of 75 people found the following review helpful. A great treasureBy Robert J. MeltonThis book is a great treasure - if I was headed for a desert island it would be one of the ten books I would take with me. (And that is after a good forty years of reading history and literature) Cunliffe gives a wide and deep summary of Europe's growth and evolution from the paleolithic to the Roman empire. Unlike so many historians with narrow views, he weaves together findings from archaeology, climatology, geography, medical genetics, social history and ecology. His prose is a miracle of clarity, conciseness and sparkled here and there with a little wit and mischief. He highlights the big controversies, lets you know where he stands on them, but is never dogmatic or overbearing. He writes from a long career in this field, yet everything in the book is right up to date. The maps, charts and photos are all a graphic designer's dream - perfectly rendered and always completely integrated with the text. In fact, the book is a publisher's

masterpiece. I could go on and on - but just go out and get this!!14 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Oceans of pleasure  
By Jay C. Smith  
Europe Between the Oceans: 9000 BC-AD 1000  
Europe between the Oceans is a marvelous book on at least three levels. First, it is itself an impressive artifact, a prime example of what a great loss it would be if publishers abandoned the printed page to go exclusively to electronic media. This is the sort of book you will want to own and have on your shelves not only for future reference, but also for purely aesthetic reasons. The hundreds of illustrations -- mostly maps and photos of archeological artifacts and sites -- are often beautiful and are always relevant to the text. They complement and clarify what Cunliffe has to say, as opposed to interfering with the narrative. Second, this volume is a grand synthesis of what archeologists, historians, and other specialists know about the distant past. It is a fine example of "big history," the sort that addresses the "longue dure," not just brief episodes. The total sweep is 10,000 years and even the individual chapters span sufficiently broad periods for Cunliffe to see patterns and trends that would be obscured in finer focus. Europe between the Oceans is also big history in the sense that it is interdisciplinary. Cunliffe is an archeologist and that is the specialized knowledge most on display here, but he also branches into geology, oceanography, genetics, and other sciences applicable to doing history in the absence of written documents. And for the later periods when the texts are there he has absorbed much of the relevant scholarship. Third, Cunliffe offers many illuminating insights and interpretations. I caution that I am a non-specialist reader, so I am not sure of the originality of much of what he has to say, but it impressed me. I will present just a few examples in the summary that follows. Much like Jared Diamond, Cunliffe attends to geographic and environmental factors that may have conferred advantage. He claims that the diets of the coastal peoples of what he call the "European Peninsula" enabled a rapid increase in population and led to a more sedentary lifestyle. Even in much of the interior the European landscape and environment were supportive of human thriving: a wide variety of ecological niches supported development of distinctive economies. Cunliffe notes the favorable location of Middle Europe (the North Alpine area), for instance. It commands the northern approaches to the passes through the Alps and incorporates the headwaters of the major rivers. East-west trade routes passed through this zone and were especially active in the late Bronze age (c. 1300-800 BC), for example. One of Cunliffe's major themes is that the favorable environmental and resource conditions that supported population growth in turn "led to the development of complex societies hierarchically structured and controlled by elites." These societies competed for land, resources, and luxury goods. This competition, Cunliffe continues, "energized society, creating a dynamic that drove forward production, innovation, and exploration." The author draws on Braudel to make the large point that imbalances in the distribution of resources are productive of change. Seas and rivers facilitated exploration and exchange. A major strength of this book lies in how Cunliffe has applied the archeological findings, the distribution of found artifacts, to document trade routes and patterns. For much of the period that he examines he believes that ideas and values flowed primarily through exchange networks. But population pressures also contributed to mass migrations from time to time as well. Cunliffe observes that the period 800-500 BC was pivotal; he entitles this chapter "The Three Hundred Years that Changed the World". Greeks, Phoenicians, Etruscans, Carthaginians, and Romans emerged as big players on the world stage. Whereas previously the trading system was built largely on tribute and gift-giving among elites, by the end of this period it had shifted toward exchange of commodities without further obligations. Cunliffe seeks to restore a balance, to give areas outside the Mediterranean cultures their proper due. He points out that the disparity in the historical information available between the Mediterranean zone and the rest of Europe has contributed to a tendency to treat them separately. Instead, he claims, the two areas "... can only be understood in relation to each other." I especially appreciated Cunliffe's willingness from time to time to speculate beyond the evidence (he clearly calls out when he is doing this). Similarly, he acknowledges at least some of the problems presented by reliance on archeological findings. For instance, he points out that just tracking crude numbers of discovered objects can mislead because the great majority of surviving objects come from hoards -- deposits deliberately buried in the earth -- or from bodies of water where they may have been deposited as votive offerings to the gods. Thus, for example, the increase in recovered bronze items dating to the 1300-800 BC period may reflect shifts in the practices of worshiping deities, rather than an increase in bronze in circulation. We simply cannot say for sure. It will take you awhile to get through Europe between the Oceans if you attend to it carefully, but if you are like me you will find pleasures on virtually every page. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A joy to read  
By E. Moore  
Wonderful book. Cunliffe has created a masterpiece. Large, colorful illustrations accent page after page of information. It's not just a "textbook" for archaeology nuts like myself, but a story. Easily the most immersive textbook i've read to date. This one has a permanent place on my bookshelf.

In this magnificent book, distinguished archaeologist Barry Cunliffe reframes our entire conception of early European history, from prehistory through the ancient world to the medieval Viking period. Cunliffe views Europe not in terms of states and shifting political land boundaries but as a geographical niche particularly favored in facing many seas. These seas, and Europe's great transpeninsular rivers, ensured a rich diversity of natural resources while also encouraging the dynamic interaction of peoples across networks of communication and exchange. The development of these early Europeans is rooted in complex interplays, shifting balances, and geographic and demographic fluidity.

Drawing on archaeology, anthropology, and history, Cunliffe has produced an interdisciplinary tour de force. His is a bold book of exceptional scholarship, erudite and engaging, and it heralds an entirely new understanding of Old Europe.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Cunliffe, emeritus professor of archeology at Oxford, colorfully weaves history, geography archeology and anthropology into a mesmerizing tapestry chronicling the development of Europe. The sheer size of the European coastlines, as well as the inland rivers pouring into these seas, enabled many groups to move easily from one place to another and establish cultures that flourished commercially. Between 2800 and 1300 B.C., for example, Britain, the Nordic states, Greece and the western Mediterranean states were bound together by their maritime exchange of bronze, whose use in Britain and Ireland had spread by 1400 B.C. to Greece and the Aegean. From 800 to 500 B.C. the three hundred years that changed the world the Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans and Carthaginians emerged from relative obscurity into major empires whose struggles to control the seas were for the first time recorded in writing. Cunliffe points out that each oceanic culture developed unique sailing vessels for the kinds of commerce peculiar to it. Richly told, Cunliffe's tale yields a wealth of insights into the earliest days of European civilization. Illus., maps. (Sept.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "When history is written in this way, conventional priorities are overthrown. . . . An admirable distillation of an enormous amount of evidence full of what is beautiful, interesting and true." James Fenton, *The Sunday Times* (London) "Colorfully weaves history, geography archaeology and anthropology into a mesmerizing tapestry chronicling the development of Europe. . . . Richly told, Cunliffe's tale yields a wealth of insights into the earliest days of European civilization." Publishers Weekly (starred review) "Vibrant. . . . Europe Between the Oceans is eminently readable [and] synthesizes major themes in archaeology and history. . . . One of the most accessible discussions available." Cheryl Ward, *International Journal of Maritime History* "Europe Between the Oceans, at once compelling and judicious, is an extraordinary book. A work of analytical depth and imaginative sweep. . . . Lavishly illustrated and replete with a sumptuous array of creatively conceived color maps." Benjamin Schwarz, *Atlantic* "Europe Between the Oceans, at once compelling and judicious, is an extraordinary book. A work of analytical depth and imaginative sweep. . . . Lavishly illustrated and replete with a sumptuous array of creatively conceived color maps, Cunliffe's book is further proof that its publisher produces the most beautiful and intelligently designed works of scholarship in the humanities. I can't think of a better gift this year for the historically minded reader." Benjamin Schwarz, *Atlantic Monthly* "Europe Between the Oceans is a work of great humanity, looking back across the abyss of time to catch a dim echo of our earlier selves. What is re-constructed is the early history of Europe, from the end of the last glaciation to the emergence of the continent's first nations. What is re-interpreted is something closer to human nature itself." Peter N. Miller, *New Republic* "Europe Between the Oceans, at once compelling and judicious, is an extraordinary book. A work of analytical depth and imaginative sweep. . . . Lavishly illustrated and replete with a sumptuous array of creatively conceived color maps. . ." Benjamin Schwarz, *Atlantic Monthly* ". . . a work of great humanity. . . . What is re-constructed is the early history of Europe. . . . What is re-interpreted is something closer to human nature itself." Peter N. Miller, *New Republic* "[Europe Between the Oceans] will become a permanent fixture in the libraries of all those for whom the origins of Europe remain a subject of fascination." Bettina Arnold, *American Scientist* "A magnificent work by a credible authority who can actually write engaging prose and, in his area of expertise archaeology establish a new standard in excellence for this subject. . ." Tilly Wren, *Bloomsbury* "This tale is a human one, admirably told within a variety of geographical and ecological contexts. . . . Remarkable. . . . Europe between the Oceans is a model of interdisciplinary environmental history and a thoroughly enjoyable work. Cunliffe gracefully distills the essence of European development across a span of time as few authors would attempt, and he does so without sacrificing detail. It is admirable in its accessibility, currency, and scope, with much to offer general readers as well as historians and archaeologists." Vicki Ellen Szabo, *Journal of World History* "This is a truly remarkable book. . . . It is immensely readable and totally authoritative. . . . No one could read this book, one of its distinguished author's finest achievements, without pleasure and profit. Simply put, it is excellent: original, exciting and a delight to read." Roger Collins, author of *Visigoth Spain, 409-711* and *Early Medieval Europe, 300-1000* "Cunliffe provides an enthralling history of Europe from end of the last ice age to the brink of global exploration, an extraordinary story told with unsurpassed knowledge and insight." Steven Mithen, author of *After the Ice: A Global Human History 20,000-5000 BC* "A fluent and authoritative overview from one of our best known and most respected archaeological writers highlighting the formative influence of contacts, coasts and rivers on the development of European societies from earliest times." Chris Scarre, University of Durham, editor of *The Human Past* "An astonishment: a transformation of prehistoric and early Europe from a minor outpost of the five continents into a restless and influential maritime member of an expanding world. Provocative but persuasive." Aubrey Burl, author of *A Guide to the Stone Circles of Britain, Ireland and Brittany* "This book is an achievement of astonishing scope: the first to present the whole prehistory of Europe from the origins of farming to the rise of urban society with evident authority, and then to go on to review the Roman world right through to the dawn of the Middle Ages. A pioneering work of synthesis on a continental scale, this is the first coherent overview of the origins of Europe which meets the

challenge of treading the path from prehistory into the full light of history. Only an archaeologist could have written it, yet Professor Cunliffe has an impressive grasp also of the historical sources for the Roman world and its aftermath. His easy style should please the general reader, while the boldness and assurance of his masterly treatment will challenge and intrigue the specialist."Lord Colin Renfrew, Formerly Disney Professor of Archaeology and Director of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge