

Report of the Last Mohican

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Bernhard Ziegler 1998. Einführung in die Paläobiologie. Teil 3. Spezielle Palaontologie: Würmer, Arthropoden, Lophophoraten, Echinodermaten. 666 pp., 631 text-figs. E. Schweitzerbart'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Stuttgart.

Professor Bernhard Ziegler of Stuttgart may be the Last Mohican of 'textbookology'. Single-handedly, he has produced a textbook which is detailed and of high standard, treating general and systematic paleontology, and very well illustrated. This contrasts with the general belief that current scientific knowledge has become so wide-ranging, that an important textbook can be only written by a team of specialists and illustrators.

The third volume of Ziegler's opus, reviewed herein, is published twenty-six years after the first part and comprises morphological, ontogenetic, phylogenetic, ecological, and taphonomic characteristics, as well as systematics and stratigraphic significance of such groups as 'worms' (in the very broad sense), arthropods, lophophorates (including brachiopods, bryozoans and graptolites) and echinoderms.

Praiseworthy is the completeness of the book. Even small, problematic or newly described groups are not forgotten, so that the text presents an up-to-date review of our current knowledge of fossil invertebrates. The emphasis is mostly on higher rank taxa, i.e. no definitions of families or genera are given. Thus the text cannot serve as a fossil identification guide, although numerous specimens belonging to species representing various higher-rank groups are illustrated.

Professor Ziegler is a very zealous but modest author. His main purpose seems to be a presentation of a very accurate and well-organized report on what others, or idiographic paleontology as a whole, have achieved. As neither change nor novelty has scientific value in itself, Bernhard Ziegler's own creative contribution consists also of care and skepticism in relation to the faddism of some innovative phylogenetic theories. Occasionally, however, Ziegler makes brave taxonomic decisions, e.g., when he places the famous Burgess Shale fossils *Anomalocaris* and *Opabinia* among the onychophorans.

The author has succeeded in justly selecting from the plethora of the world literature the really important publications as sources for his text. An extensive bibliography of more than seven hundred papers is included. Numerous examples document the stratigraphic and facies distribution of fossils from German and other European outcrops that the author knows best.

The language of the book is simple and very clear. The scope of the text is between standard introductory texts and the *Treatise on Invertebrate Paleontology*. Its arrangement is classic in that the emphasis is on the morphology of fossils (and not, e.g., on their ecology, evolution nor nomothetic paleobiology).

Formerly, particularly in Germany, a genuine professor had to write a textbook to put together the scientific production of his time for the benefit of his students, followers and posterity. Thanks to Bernhard Ziegler, this important tradition of earlier masters of the German 'textbookology', such as Karl A. von Zittel or Arno Hermann Müller is still alive. While von Zittel and Müller still characterized the most common fossil genera, Ziegler no longer includes lower-rank descriptions, probably because competing with the *Treatise* by a single individual is impossible, and because the ranges of genera change so rapidly today, that it makes no sense to include these ephemeral names and ranges in a textbook that should last longer.

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