

CHOICE

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SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

History, Geography & Area Studies

The following review appeared in the February 2013 issue of CHOICE:

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UFOs and government: a historical inquiry, by Michael Swords et al. Anomalist Books, 2012. 580p bibl indexes ISBN 9781933665580 pbk, \$29.95

The bibliography of the UFO phenomenon is vast but often dreary. This straightforward study of the limited topic of government responses to sightings of UFOs--unidentified flying objects--is an exception. The idea that UFOs had extraterrestrial origins (a hypothesis not favored by governments) is only one of the many explanations the authors discuss. Although UFO sightings have supposedly occurred throughout history, the modern UFO phenomenon had its origins in the final days of WW II. Initially, Western officials feared that UFOs were Nazi or Soviet technology. Cold War fears caused the US and other governments to obsess about the national security implications of UFOs. Scientific investigation and transparency were only occasionally part of the response. Combined with inconsistent government policies, the response resulted in confusion and suspicion, which inspired conspiracy theories. Although these nine authors are part of the UFO community, they are not advocates of fringe theories. Their narrative is firmly based on the available sources. The writing can be dense and sometimes convoluted, reflecting the military sources that form the evidence. A useful resource of the study of a controversial topic. **Summing Up:** Recommended. All levels/libraries. -- R. Fritze, *Athens State University*