NEW DIRECTIONS IN ARCHAEOLOGY

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RANKING, RESOURCE AND EXCHANGE
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To the memory of
David L. Clarke

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PREFACE

Over the past fifteen years several processual studies in the field of European archaeology have appeared. It is noteworthy however that this is the first substantial volume taking such an approach which has set out to make Europe the primary focus of all its contributions, and to embrace the long time range from the period of the first farmers up to the Middle Ages. There is a tendency, both in the United States and in Europe, to regard processual archaeology as a purely American invention — a view which offers a source of chauvinistic self-congratulation to some, and a reason for ignoring it to others. In fact Europe has enjoyed a long tradition of ecologically based studies which has been especially strong in Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Britain. Many of the elements of contemporary processual archaeology can be recognised already in the writings of O.G.S. Crawford and Gordon Childe in the 1920s, and in the subsequent development of the ecological approach. A distinctive European tradition of ‘new archaeology’ has run parallel with that in the United States from the start, most strongly in those same three regions.

The rich archaeological data from early Europe indeed offer potential insights into the workings of culture process whose interest and relevance extend far beyond Europe. It was in this belief that a symposium, focussing on the European material and entitled ‘Socio-economic change in ranked societies’, was offered to the Society for American
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Archaeology, for its 45th Annual Meeting at Philadelphia. Some twenty participants crossed the Atlantic to take part in the all-day symposium, held on 1 May 1980.

The occasion proved a fruitful one, both in exposing the participants to Americanist archaeology, and in reminding the Americanists that the practice of processual archaeology is not restricted to those residing in the New World. It was decided to put together a volume, based on the theme of the symposium, with papers revised in the light of the discussions which took place both then and subsequently on much less formal occasions. All the speakers at the symposium, with the exception of Graeme Barker and Richard Bradley (whose papers were already committed for publication elsewhere) have contributed.

Robert K. Evans and Patricia Phillips respectively acted with Colin Renfrew as Chairman for the morning and afternoon sessions. Ian Hodder and Robert Whallon were discussants for the morning session and Ruth Tringham and Lewis Binford in the afternoon.

We hope that the studies presented in this volume will demonstrate to the American audience that there is indeed a distinctive European processual approach, perhaps rather more catholic in its outlook than the transatlantic version; and to the seared ranks of European traditionalists that processual archaeology can no longer be ignored.