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Edited by Geoff Bailey

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HUNTER-GATHERER ECONOMY  
IN PREHISTORY

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## PREFACE

Studies of hunters and gatherers have gained a wide popularity in recent years. Within archaeology they have created an international focus for people working in many different areas of the world. At a broader level they have provided a meeting ground for a range of disciplines concerned in one way or another with various features of human behaviour. The exotic remoteness of hunters and gatherers from our more immediate experience of human life has added to the sense of intellectual challenge. In the resulting interplay of new ideas and theoretical perspectives, analysis of the prehistoric record has inevitably lagged behind, preoccupied with fundamental technical problems of dating, stratigraphic correlation, data-interpretation, and field survey of the many remaining geographical blanks in our knowledge of the Palaeolithic era. Interest in the traditional Palaeolithic sequences of Europe has been further overshadowed by the excitement of new discoveries, new dates and new culture sequences in Africa, Australasia and the Far East. The intellectual attractions and imperative urgency, as well as the humanitarian claims of ethnographic and ethno-archaeological work in the few remaining areas where this is still possible, have offered further diversions. The result has been, if anything, a widening of the gap between theories and ideas on the one side, and their practical realization through analysis of archaeological data on the other. This book is intended to stimulate a more effective interaction

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between theory and data – between knowledge of the present and knowledge of the past – by bringing together a series of case studies which combine an awareness of recent developments in hunter-gatherer theory with a commitment to the analysis and interpretation of prehistoric material. Students of developments in archaeological thought during the past decade will recognize the influence of a number of theoretical ‘schools’ in the chapters that follow (functionalist, ecological, palaeoeconomic and social, to name only the most obvious). Such plurality, and the divergence of thinking that accompanies it, is perhaps the best indication of future potential in the subject – of problems remaining to be solved (and hence of new directions to be explored). It is also hopefully the best antidote to the imperialistic ambitions of new and intolerant orthodoxies. I am grateful to the contributors for providing a range of chapters which has forced me to reconsider the problem of integration in archaeology (without arriving at any satisfactory solution to it), and for their various comments and occasional disagreements. I am further indebted to Tim Murray for cheerfully challenging all my assumptions about knowledge of the prehistoric past; to Suzanne Bailey for tolerating my frequent neglect of matters in the present; to Sue Rowley for preparing the index; and to Robin Derricourt and Kate Owen at Cambridge University Press for their helpful advice and encouragement.

Geoff Bailey