

NEW DIRECTIONS IN ARCHAEOLOGY*Editors*

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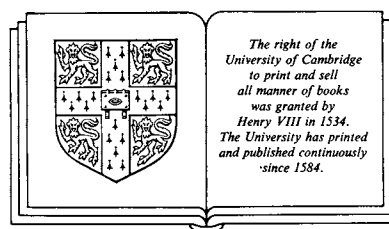
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**ARCHAEOLOGY AS
LONG-TERM HISTORY**

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Edited by Ian Hodder
Frontmatter
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PREFACE

Archaeology has, particularly over the past two decades, emphasised systemic interrelationships. Indeed systems theory is a primary concept within processual archaeology. More recently, the analysis of social and symbolic structures has become increasingly prominent in the discipline. Both systemic and structural analyses are concerned to place things in their contemporary setting – the aim is to explain an object or event as part of a synchronic whole.

Thus a dichotomy is set up between synchronic and diachronic, historical, analysis. The natural links between two disciplines specifically concerned with the past, history and archaeology, were explicitly decried by many anthropological archaeologists within the New Archaeology.

Yet, at about the same time, many social and cultural anthropologists were themselves embracing history. Turning to archaeology, anthropologists would often be surprised to find little interest in their historical questions. Archaeology had become to a great extent ahistorical.

More recently, however, within the post-processual phase in archaeology, the links to history are being resought, and it is within this renewed effort to capture the traditional links between archaeology and history that this volume seeks to play its part. The causes of this renewed archaeological interest in history may be varied. There is the awakened interest in history within anthropology itself. There is the emergence of a stronger

and more theoretically vocal historical archaeology. There is, for example, the sustained denial by Bruce Trigger of the need for a split between history and archaeology. And there are the internal doubts within archaeology about the adequacies of the processual programme. Whether particular causes can be given or not, there is a recurring pattern, a stream of interest across a range of disciplines – an interest in, and a questioning of, history.

Archaeology can, in particular, offer its long time span to this debate. But, as this volume demonstrates, the incorporation of history involves more than recognising the long term. It also involves a wider discussion of historical method and the philosophy of history. The notion that archaeology provides additional data for the study of historical processes gives this book its title.

There is a close connection here between the discussion of history and the discussion of context provided in a companion volume (I. Hodder (ed.), *The Archaeology of Contextual Meanings*, Cambridge University Press). The historical context is one component in the overall context relevant to an understanding of any material culture product. The analysis of historical texts has much to contribute to the analysis of material culture 'texts'. In this volume, historical analysis is probed in relation to the wider concern with all forms of contextual interpretation.