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Bruce G. Trigger

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To BARBARA

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PREFACE

This study is a combined product of book-learning, archaeological experience, and oral tradition. It grew out of a course on the 'History of Archaeological Theory' that I have taught annually since 1975. Since I began the course, I intended to write a book on this subject. My first efforts resulted in the original essays published in *Time and Traditions* (Trigger 1978a) and *Gordon Childe: Revolutions in Archaeology* (Trigger 1980a). While I continued to write papers on various aspects of the history of archaeology (see especially Trigger 1980b, 1981a, 1984a, 1984c, 1985a, 1985c, 1986b), for various reasons two more attempts in the early 1980s to begin this book came to nothing. One of the reasons was my feeling that the time was not yet propitious. Then, in the spring of 1986, I made a third attempt and found that the book was 'writing itself'. I believe that this change reflects my growing satisfaction with current developments in archaeological interpretation. Many archaeologists, not only in the West but apparently also in the Soviet Union, are expressing concern about what they perceive as the theoretical fragmentation of their discipline. On the contrary, I believe that current developments are helping archaeologists to transcend the limitations of narrowly focused sectarian approaches and resulting in more holistic and fruitful interpretations of archaeological data. There is also growing realism in assessing the limitations of archaeological data at the same time that there is greater flexibility in seeking ways to overcome these limitations. These developments draw upon past as well as present archaeological accomplishments. It is therefore a useful time to review archaeological thinking from a historical perspective.

A brief statement of my own theoretical position is in order. I have always regarded a materialist outlook as being more productive of an understanding of human behaviour than any other approach. Intelligently applied, it in no way diminishes an appreciation of the

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unique characteristics of the human mind, while it facilitates the insertion of social science theory into a broader biological understanding of human origins and behaviour. Yet I have never found that ecological determinism, neo-evolutionary theory, or cultural materialism provide satisfactory explanations of the full range of variation found in human behaviour or of the various complexities of concrete sequences of cultural change. Throughout my career I have sought to reconcile a materialist approach with efforts to account for the historical diversity that characterizes the archaeological record. This has fostered my growing appreciation of historical materialism, to which I was initially attracted by my efforts to understand the past rather than as a result of dogmatic political convictions. In particular, I have found Gordon Childe's historically and contextually oriented Marxism to be infinitely preferable to the more deterministic forms of evolutionary Marxism or the flirting with idealism that characterizes much so-called neo-Marxism.

While this book has been written as a unit, I have drawn to varying degrees upon my previous writings. The outline of the study of the history of archaeology in the bibliographical essay for chapter one is based heavily on Trigger (1985a). Many of the ideas used to structure chapters four and five were developed in Trigger (1978a) and (1984a), while the sections dealing with Childe in chapters five and seven are based on Trigger (1980a) and more particularly Trigger (1984b) and (1986c). Chapter six is based in part on Trigger (1984c), although the views that I have expressed about Soviet archaeology in that paper have been considerably modified. Chapter nine makes use of ideas developed in Trigger (1982a, 1984c, 1985b, 1985d, 1988). Some of the references cited in chapter six were located by Rosemarie Bernard in the course of writing her McGill undergraduate honours thesis 'Marxist Archaeologies: A History of their Development in the U.S.S.R., Europe, and the Americas' (1985). I am also grateful to Peter Timmins for his advice in drafting the section of chapter nine dealing with site-formation processes. For factual information and bibliographical assistance I thank Chen Chun, Margaret Deith, Brian Fagan, Norman Hammond, Fumiko Ikawa-Smith, June Kelley, Philip Kohl, Isabel McBryde, Mary Mason, Valerie Pinsky, Neil Silberman, Robert Vogel, Alexander von Gernet, Michael Woloch, and Alison Wylie, as well as many other colleagues around the world who have sent me reprints of their papers.

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The history of archaeology is not a new subject. Hence anyone writing a general study is standing on the shoulders of his predecessors. Because of that, wherever it has seemed appropriate to do so, I have cited authoritative secondary sources rather than extended an already mammoth bibliography with references to still more primary sources that are impossible to obtain in most libraries. I have, however, whenever possible, examined these primary sources and where discrepancies have been found I have abandoned defective secondary ones or drawn attention to their shortcomings. Where old and inaccessible works are easily available in reprinted form (and in English translation), I have cited the latter, adding the date of the original in square brackets.

Research for this book was greatly assisted by a sabbatical leave from McGill University and a Canada Council Leave Fellowship in 1976–7, while some further work was done during another sabbatical leave when I held a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Leave Fellowship in 1983. I wish to thank both undergraduate and graduate students who have taken ‘History of Archaeological Theory’ for their many contributions to the development of the ideas expounded in this book. I also thank my daughters, Isabel and Rosalyn, for help with word-processing and encouraging maximum clarity of expression. Finally I dedicate this book to my wife, Barbara.