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0521619378 - Interpreting the Axe Trade: Production and Exchange in Neolithic Britain

Richard Bradley and Mark Edmonds

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Interpreting the axe trade documents the changing character and context of stone axe production and exchange in the British Neolithic. Drawing on a variety of studies, the authors explore some of the problems and potentials that attend archaeological discussions of exchange at both a theoretical and a methodological level. Out of this critique arises an argument for an integrated approach to the production, circulation and consumption of past material – an approach which acknowledges the subtle and complex roles that ‘things’ may play in the reproduction of social life. These arguments provide the basis for a case study which explores the links between the social contexts within which Neolithic stone axes circulated in Britain, and the social and material conditions under which those objects were originally produced. Field survey, excavation and detailed technological studies at the largest stone axe source in Britain are set alongside analyses of the changing character and social context of axe circulation and deposition across the country as a whole. These different analytical threads are then woven together in the final section of the book, where the authors suggest that the patterns explored in the course of their work reflect major changes in the nature of social life during the Neolithic.

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RICHARD BRADLEY and MARK EDMONDS

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For Clare Fell

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