

The Early Neolithic in Greece

The First Farming Communities in Europe

Farmers made a sudden and dramatic appearance in Greece around 7000 BC, bringing with them domesticated plants and animals, new ceramics and techniques, and establishing settled villages. They were Europe's first farmers, but Catherine Perles argues that the stimulus for the spread of agriculture to Europe was a maritime colonization movement involving small groups of people. With little competition from local hunter-gatherers, they recreated to an unusual degree a completely man-made environment, neglecting local resources and often relying, despite the cost, on trade with other communities rather than on local raw materials. Drawing evidence from a wide range of archaeological sources, including often neglected 'small finds', and introducing daring new perspectives on funerary rituals and the distribution of figurines, she constructs a complex and subtle picture of early Neolithic societies, overturning the traditional view that these societies were simple and self-sufficient.

CATHERINE PERLES is Professor in the Department of Ethnology at the University of Paris. Her publications include *Préhistoire du feu* (1977) and *Les industries lithiques taillées de Franchthi* (3 vols., 1987, 1990, in press).

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The first farming communities in
Europe

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To Eric

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