Book Reviews

Archeological Essays

Problems in Economic and Social Archaeology. G. DE G. SIEVEKING, I. H. LONGWORTH, and K. E. WILSON, Eds. Duckworth, London, and Westview Press, Boulder, Colo., 1976. xxvi, 626 pp., illus. $49.75.

This volume consists of 37 essays in honor of J. D. G. Clark, perhaps the most respected prehistorian of this century. Clark's excavations at the Mesolithic site of Starr Carr in Yorkshire set the standards for modern archeological research, from formulation of research design to conservation of artifactual remains. His years as the Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge made Cambridge the archeological center of the British Isles, and his work, in cooperation with Stuart Piggott and others, had an impact that reached well beyond England.

Clark's theoretical orientations have had an enormous if indirect influence on the course of American archeology. In addition to dealing with the aspects of prehistory indicated in the title of this festschrift, Clark has pioneered what is now called "ecological archeology." It has been a constant source of pleasure to point out to various of the "new archeologists" that the approach they discovered in the '60's was what Clark and the others had been doing since the '40's, and with far less jargon and self-importance.

Clark's interests are admirably indicated by the diverse papers in this volume. Africa, America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe are all dealt with, although the majority of the papers have to do with England and Europe. Nearly all the contributors are former students of Clark's. Brian Fagan, Glynn Isaac, Derek Roe, Charles McBurney, Norman Hammond, Martin Biddle, David Clarke, and Paul Mellars are all here, along with many others (for a total of 40). One doubts that any other archeologist has such a distinguished company of students. In putting this festschrift together Sieveking, Longworth, and Wilson have discharged their editorial responsibilities with great merit. The papers are carefully conceived as additions to archeological knowledge while at the same time representing the methodological rigor and catholicity of interest for which Clark is known.

There are probably very few archeologists apart from Clark himself who have sufficient breadth of interest to appreciate the worth of all the articles. A reviewer is thus put in the position of focusing on his own area of competence, in this case the British Isles.

Barry Cunliffe's "Hill-forts and oppida in Britain" concentrates on changes in settlement patterns from the end of the second millennium B.C. to the Roman period. Cunliffe points out that the term hill-fort tends to be misleading, for hilltop enclosures changed in form and function over time. Their martial appearance has caused them to be disregarded as indicators of changing settlement patterns. Some sites, such as Hengistbury, which lies between the supposed boundaries of the tribal territories of the Durotriges and the Atrebates, conform to "the theoretical characteristics of a port-of-trade." Oppida, often confused in the literature with hill-forts, make their appearance prior to the Roman invasion. Cunliffe argues that the increasingly large size and more intensely settled interiors indicate a change to larger tribal centers as the settlement pattern in southeastern England. Whether or not these oppida represent a stage of urbanization is a question Cunliffe avoids, but further discussion of this issue is to be expected.

At the other end of the time spectrum David Wilson takes up the question of "Defence in the Viking age." Defensive architecture in the early medieval period is notoriously difficult to work with. While prehistoric archeologists can be happy with dates ±200 years, the historical archeologist is called upon to be much more precise, and most sites, unhappily, do not lend themselves to the desired precision. Moreover, historical documentation, for the period if not for the sites themselves, must be dealt with.

Wilson's thesis is that the disequilibrium brought about by the Viking incursions caused a rash of private and public fortifications to be built in various parts of western Europe (including Scandinavia). Although the vast population movements of the earlier migration period obviously caused a good deal of disorder, the later concentrated Viking attacks on monasteries and towns seem to have been the stimulus for an amount of fort-building unseen in Europe since the Roman period. In his compact article Wilson deals with the social causes of fort-building and offers a number of tantalizing hypotheses for further study.

In general, *Problems in Economic and Social Archaeology* is well worth the price, though it is somewhat thin on illustrations. Both as a tribute to a master archeologist and as a scholarly work, it is sure to last.

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World Protohistory

The Emergence of Society. A Prehistory of the Establishment. JOHN E. PFEIFFER. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1977. iv, 512 pp., illus. $15.

In *The Emergence of Society* John Pfeiffer has provided us with a lucid and sometimes fascinating compilation of ideas about world protohistory. The book is above all the story of countless archeologists and anthropologists in their quest for knowledge, and it conveys the excitement of scientists at work, unsolved problems, and new discoveries.

Pfeiffer states that "the emergence of complex society was the most radical development in human evolution since the emergence of the family of man from ancestral apes" yet remains "one of science's deepest mysteries" (p. 20). For countless generations, the world's population and their lifeways remained relatively constant. However, during the past 15,000 years all that changed. Population size exploded. Human groups no longer lived within the constraints of their environments, but attempted to manipulate them to suit their needs. Most of all, Pfeiffer suggests, there has been a change in the nature of people themselves and the way they relate to each other.

Pfeiffer depicts the antecedent hunter-gatherer groups as stable, sharing, egalitarian, and without greed, arrogance, or excessive pomp. Accumulation of wealth or power not only was rare but was systematically prevented by many societies. It was the settling down in permanent agricultural villages about 10,000 years ago that initiated a cycle of change that enlarged group size, differentiated access to wealth and power, increased

the frequency and devastation of conflict, and led to the downgrading of the female. These changes, although revolutionary in cumulative effect, took place gradually, and their occurrence may not have been recognized by the participants. Pfeiffer believes that maintaining tradition and limiting change were preeminent rules among hunter-gatherer groups. Adaptation to varying environmental conditions was often makeshift, consisting in attempts to minimize the change in lifeways or to postpone an impending food crisis.

In Pfeiffer's account, the changes in environment at the end of the last ice age, most notably rising sea levels with consequent diminution of human living space, were the primary stimulus that created a situation of overpopulation which he sees as the prime mover in the introduction of agriculture and ultimately urbanism. "The last ten millenniums have been a struggle to keep in balance, a race between rising population and increasingly sophisticated use of the land, with population always running ahead" (p. 21). Initially, population pressure meant less moving around for the once mobile groups and a concentration on food sources that were previously only supplemental. Efforts were made to control food sources by herding the animals and cultivating the plants to be eaten. Population continued to grow, only now at an increased rate, necessitating further innovations. Storage of surpluses against bad years, irrigation to increase yields, cooperation to improve productivity, and many other practices were introduced as part of the agricultural revolution. Although the hypothesis that population pressure was the primary cause of agricultural innovation, as championed by Pfeiffer, enjoys considerable popularity among scholars today, some, myself included, find it simplistic and unconvincing, seeing population pressure as probably only a secondary variable in a constellation of other cultural-environmental factors.

While early agriculture is examined in detail for only the Near East and Mexico, the rise of urbanism and state society is discussed as it occurred in nine regions of the world. Pfeiffer's treatment of this phenomenon in Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Pacific is noteworthy because most global historians take little or no notice of those areas when discussing it. Pfeiffer does not focus solely on the earliest civilizations but is interested in the emergence of complex society wherever and whenever it occurred. Numerous factors are cited for the growth of cities and administrative elites in each region. Expanding population remains the primary variable, while conflict, trade, and economic planning are suggested as contributing factors. With respect to the growing divisions within early societies, Pfeiffer sees people in positions of power attempting to increase their status through ceremony as well as direct control. Human fears about the unknown, awe of spectacular monuments and ceremonies, knowledge of calendrical cycles, improved productivity and security gained through land management and storage, and military might are all manipulated to establish societies based on inequality.

Overall, *The Emergence of Society* is provocative reading, and I recommend it to anthropologists and other social scientists who want the flavor of what this generation of archeologsts is doing combined with current views of a broad spectrum of scholars on the rise of complex society. Unfortunately, though, Pfeiffer has fallen victim to the magnitude of the endeavor. With so many leads to follow, so many people to talk with, he took seven years to complete this book. Too many subjects and ideas are presented too briefly. Many of the subjects presented are intriguing, and it is frustrating to have only a few sentences about each before being transported to the next item. Moreover, diverse theories, especially concerning the growth of cities, are uncritically abstracted from the words of their proponents, with too little effort at comparison and integration. Ideas and theories of Carneiro (p. 87), Boserup (p. 146), Adams (p. 154ff), Rathje (p. 367), Lathrap (p. 390), Flannery (p. 466), Wright and Johnson (p. 468), and numerous others are interestingly presented, but the presentation does not reveal the contradictions that exist between many of their elements. Similarly, a wide variety of methods still in an experimental stage are presented as if they were operational and formed the basis of current knowledge. And Pfeiffer, although he explicitly expresses concern with the origins of sexism, continues to use the word "man" to refer to the human species.

In spite of the flaws of his book the field of archeology is better off because of Pfeiffer's efforts. The countless probing interviews he conducted while collecting his information stimulated many of those he interviewed to seek new directions as well as brought them up to date on the discoveries of their colleagues.

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