

A feature of the book which it is very pleasing to see carried over from The Prehistoric Settlement of Britain is the use of apophorisms and frequently witty epigraphs at the head of each chapter. These add a literary flavour to an already stimulating book, which no serious student of British prehistory can afford to ignore.

References

- Ashbee, Paul. 1978. The Ancient British: A Social-Archaeological Narrative. Norwich, Geo Abstracts.
- Bradley, Richard. 1978. The Prehistoric Settlement of Britain. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

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JAMES MOORE and ARTHUR S. KEENE, (EDS) Archaeological Hammers and Theories. Academic Press, New York and London, 1983. 309pp. £20.00. (hard) ISBN 0-12-505980-9.

Reviewed by Valerie Pinsky

At a time when extensive discussion of the 'Big Questions' in archaeology has been neglected in favour of increasingly more detailed studies of site formation mechanics (or, as the editors of this volume put it, "stone and bone physics" (p.7)), it is extremely refreshing to encounter a renewed consideration of the broader issues of sociocultural process and change. Starting from the critical position that contemporary archaeology has been overwhelmingly dominated by methodological concerns (the "tyranny of methodology" (p.5)) to the exclusion of conceptual issues, this volume seeks to redress the balance between theory -- as questions and problems relevant to particular social and historical contexts -- and the operational procedures by which empirical links are established with the archaeological past.

Method, whether originally archaeological or foraged from a host of other disciplines, is seen to be useful only within the context of relevant and carefully considered questions and theoretical premises. The "Law of the Hammer" (pp. 4-5) is in this connection invoked to warn that the random application of methods to any and all questions will surely be inappropriate, and will generate the dangerous impression that methods are absolute. Moreover, in rejecting both "a narrow particularistic empiricism and a relativism that suggests that all questions merit equal attention" (p. 8), the book clearly implies that some theories -- namely those which focus on the dynamics of sociocultural reproduction and transformation -- deserve primary emphasis in archaeological research.

Following the Introduction (Part 1), the book's twelve substantive contributions are organised into two major sections which examine the products and the precedents of the archaeological record, respectively. The four contributions to Part 2 (the products) by DeBoer, Wobst, Cross and Braun examine the progress, assumptions and limitations of various bodies of method in studies of site formation process and behavioural archaeology, sampling, lithic analysis and ceramic analysis, respectively. Each develops an alternative approach to the received views in these areas invoking specific data to provide examples. The primary value of each has been precisely to lay bare their assumptions, limitations and potential with respect to specific questions and bodies of data. These contributions converge in providing additional, general 'state-of-the-art' overviews of particular areas of methodological concern. They do not attempt, however, to 'hammer' any particular methods home.

In contrast to the fairly limited set of issues raised in

Part 2, the eight contributions to Part 3 (the precedents) tackle the conceptual basis of archaeological interpretation. There is considerable overlap in the problems raised and in the choice of alternative perspectives, and all are highly critical of the undirected importation of concepts and models from other disciplines. Papers by Keene, Jochim and Blanton review and evaluate various ecological models and the relevance of their assumptions of optimisation and maximisation for human actors and social systems. Particular attention is drawn to problems such as the choice of appropriate units of analysis, scale, and the formulation of alternative models and working hypotheses. Similarly, a focus on society as an information processing and exchanging mechanism unites the contributions by Moore and Root, while focus on improving the range and character of settlement studies is also common to those by Root and Paynter. The last two chapters by Kus and Saitta are more philosophical in their outlook. Kus examines the sociocultural and symbolic meaning of space, particularly in urban centres where such space is constructed on highly complex organisational levels. Much of the discussion draws on bodies of Marxist social theory and semiotics, and this discussion is anchored to her own research on the Merina Kingdom of Madagascar in the 18th century. Saitta's paper is highly critical of the empiricism of contemporary archaeology because of its preoccupation with methodological issues, and its parallel failure to accommodate values in both archaeology and society.

The book's separation of the products and precedents of the archaeological record somewhat indirectly fosters the dreaded separation of method and theory, despite critical discussions of the limitations of method, and consideration of methodological implica-

tions of theory. Fortunately this does not radically undermine the central message of the book, however it does prove to be an annoyance worth mentioning. Perhaps the main objection to be made is that, in the process of 'hammering out' the implications and assumptions of various theories and models, the reader is left, yet again, with a seemingly open-ended choice of alternatives which require the same critical scrutiny as the original source models and concepts, and ultimately with another set of cautionary tales. Since conceptual and methodological criticism are held to be more than ends in themselves, it is hard to see precisely how method and theory are synthesised.

The primary focus on theories of social reproduction and change does stand out as the major asset of this volume. Coupled with the effort to tease out the implications of existing concepts and their methodological counterparts, it goes a long way towards reinstating one of archaeology's central, though recently neglected, objectives. The book will certainly stimulate discussion and foster an internal search for archaeologically and socially meaningful approaches to the past, and in this will go a long way towards combating the tyranny of method in contemporary archaeology.

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MERRILEE SALMON, Philosophy and Archaeology. Academic Press, New York, 1982. 203 pp. \$21.00 (Hard). ISBN 0-12-615650-6

Reviewed by Polly J. Fahnestock.

Merilee Salmon's Philosophy and Archaeology has proved to be an unexpectedly difficult book to review, partly because the project it embodies is itself difficult and ambitious, and partly because different aspects and different por-