

*The "Annales" School and Archaeology*, edited by J. Bintliff, New York University Press, New York, 1991, price unknown.(Cloth)

by

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At a superficial level we could argue that application of concepts of the French "Annales" School of History to archaeology merely amounts to yet another semantic game, new fad, old wine in new skins. Some of the studies of this slim collection do seem a bit contrived, consisting of attempts to fit particular evidence (mainly from classical archaeology) into one or more of Braudel's three categories or temporal constructs: *événements*, *conjonctures* and *structures de longue durée*. Does archaeology advance in its unending search for some new truth by merely borrowing and applying terms that have common in Continental history for at least a half century?

At a more significant level however, Bintliff's book strikes another small blow in the Anglophone world at the misleading and ultimately pernicious separation of archaeology from history. In America at least, we have grown accustomed to accepting a false dichotomy between science and history—because history has been too narrowly and parochially defined as particularistic (i.e., "bad"), whereas science has been defined as nomothetic (i.e. "good"). Few American archaeologists, it seems have read the works of such French socioeconomic historians as Braudel, Bloch, Leroy Ladurie, et. al., and thus they have a limited vision of the potential of historiography for going well beyond the battles and "great men", that weigh so heavily in the usual teaching of general history in the United States. It should tell us something about the nature of the French school of history that the term "archaeology" is frequently used in such seminal works as *Montaillou: Village Occitan*. This is the history of human adaptations, close to the conception of processual archaeology.

But what are the causal forces in the human story? Are they always Pavlovian general laws of behavior, valid in all times and all places? Are they always just particular, proximal development, accidents or brilliant ideas—stochastic, non-repetitive, one-time happenings? Or can both sorts of phenomena be involved? And once a society takes a certain path, is not that path-given a range of tolerance or "error"—likely to be followed simply out of "habit", so long as the basic parameters (e.g., physical environment, demography) do not change—perhaps even if other "paths" would have worked out as well or maybe even slightly better? Is there room for such "slack" in strict processual archaeology—let alone for the will-o'-the-wisp forces that may propel human groups toward one course of action as opposed to another. Was Leslie White a bit harsh on the role of the pharaoh Ikhtanton in history?

My point is simply that in seeking to explain everything by universal forces, "processual archaeology" not only overlooked the role of events and ideas (the stuff of the generation of variability for the "selectionist" school of archaeology) in the course of human existence, but it also failed to acknowledge that history can do every well at the study of long-term, large-scale processes of human adaptations (e.g., Braudel's Mediterranean through the centuries). Why must history be the "straw man" or "red herring" of the once "new" archaeology, when the even older "new" history had long been seeking a convergence with anthropological archaeology as a social science? The course of human existence really is a mixture of all three of Braudel's structures.

The book begins with an admirably lucid, succinct discussion of the chief tenets, history and accomplishments of the *Annales* School by Bintliff, who concludes with all too brief application of the Braudelian concepts to a survey region of central Greece. This abbreviated section is, unlike the rest of Bintliff's introduction, rather unsatisfying.

Unfortunately, such is also the case of many of the other examples given in the book—in general little developed. A welcome exception is G. Banker's discussion of the late prehistoric and historical settlement history (a really *longue durée*) of the Biferno valley in east-central Italy. A. Snodgrass' chapter on the potential of classical archaeology to write histories of the *moyenne* and *longue durées* is especially well-argued and bodes well if actually put into practice by more Greek and Roman archaeologists. He points out that Braudel's view of the Mediterranean world needs to be extended back into Roman times in greater detail—and this can especially be the contribution of archaeology.

J.P-Vallat's chapter on application of the *Annales* concepts to the study of Roman rural economy is quite technical and of less general interest, especially to this non-specialist reader. R. Jones presents a nice study contrasting the settlement history of two Roman frontier military camps in northern England, and shows how the underlying geographical factors of the *longue durées* explain far from everything, whereas "medium-term" phenomena can be documented archaeologically and brought to bear to propose causal arguments for such phenomena as settlement abandonment vs. continuation.

The only New World example comes from Moundville, Alabama, after a scholarly discourse by C. Peebles, who lucidly discusses how American archaeology has long rejected history (perhaps because of its close association with anthropology and because the practitioners—mostly Euro-Americans—were not writing their own history, but were rather extending back in time the ethnography of native Americans). The linkage between his Moundville example and the *Annales* school is, unfortunately, neither very fully developed nor very clear.

In conclusion, this is a useful, thought-provoking book, but all-too-short and imbalanced. More fully developed examples from remote prehistory and from other world regions would have been useful. At any rate, one hopes that this and other works will help effectuate a rapprochement between anthropological archeology and socioeconomic history.

*Oral History Index: An International Directory of Oral History Interviews*, Meckler Corporation, 1990. \$75.00 (Cloth)

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Meckler Corporation has done a great service to those of us interested in using the vehicle of oral history of aid in the writing of the history of archaeology. There are close to 2000 entries in the volume. Among the entries there are a few archaeologists listed from North America.

The listings of oral histories are alphabetically arranged in the volume. There is also a very handy and informative listing Oral History Centers in the back of the volume that researchers interest in the history of archaeology might find valuable. The Meckler Corporation has not indicated whether this volume will be continually updated. If it is in the future, the volume would be better used in a computerized database format for easy access. If the current effort is indeed continually updated it will be a great source of information to those of us doing work in the history of archaeology in the future.

*Recovering the Tracks. The Story of Australian Archaeology*, by David Horton, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, xviii + 360pp., illustrations, ISBN 0-85575-1, 1991, (Paper Only)

by

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This history of archaeology in Australia has been pretty well served since Mulvaney's highly influential survey of three hundred years of opinion about the nature of Australian Aboriginal people (1958). Indeed, the long-running debate about the identity of Australian archaeology, particularly about the extent to which it has developed a distinctive style, or whether its fundamental precepts and orientations remain essentially undeveloped derivations from English and North American influences, has tended to provide a ready market for research into the history of Australian archaeology (see e.g. Golson 1986; McBryde 1986; Meehand and Jones 1988; Murray and White 1981, Murray *in press* (a) in press (b).

Other spurs to research such as the need to monitor the development of heritage legislation (McBryde 1985, Mulvaney 1979, 1989;) of major institutions such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (Mulvaney 1986; Peterson 1990) or of various of the other Museums or Departments of Anthropology or Archaeology around the country (have created a situation where practitioners seek a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and context of archaeology as a social and cultural institution, as well as a discipline.

On a slightly more abstract level Australian historians of archaeology have focused their attention on the professionalisation of their discipline, on parallel (but sometimes divergent) histories of Aboriginal anthropology and history, and of course on the role of postcolonial science in the building of postcolonial cultures (see Mulvaney 1988; Murray *in press* (c). To put the matter bluntly, the history of Australian archaeology is also a sociology of Australian archaeologists, as well as a context within which observers of the Australian cultural scene can help to study the genesis and development of Australianess. Naturally these concerns are shared by many historians of archaeology in other parts of the world (see e.g. the contributions of Pinsky and Wylie 1990), and I raise them here because *Recovering the Tracks* pursues a very different course, one that would have seemed mainstream as recently as five years ago. This feeling that we have something out of time, if not out of place, makes reviewing the present work a difficult task.