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Foreword

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FOREWORD

Alasdair Whittle

To accomplish this ground-breaking study, Inna Mateiciucová needed two things: movement and knowledge. She covered many miles in the course of her researches. I first met her at a conference in Szolnok in Hungary, and then during her study visit to Köln, and at conferences in Vienna and Heidelberg. There were reports of her from other colleagues in Warsaw, Budapest and Frankfurt, and later on she joined our Anglo-Hungarian team working on the Körös culture on the Great Hungarian Plain at Ecsegfalva. But it is not enough just to be busy and constantly on the move around a vast number of collections in central and western Europe and beyond. Inna has brought detailed knowledge and insight to her research, the fruits of which are very important for our understanding of the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition, and subsequent Neolithic development, in significant parts of Europe. It was possible previously, for example, to find quite contradictory views in the literature on the relevance of lithic traditions in the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition in central and western Europe; some said that there was no continuity or shared tradition, while others asserted the exact opposite. Now, laid out as a 'thick description', as Clifford Geertz famously called it, is a most welcome, detailed study of lithic raw materials and their sources, of fundamental techniques of lithic working, and of traditions of tool manufacture and use, across region after region in the heart of Europe. Out of this come many important ideas about the human processes involved, which allow a much more nuanced view of

change and interaction among the many communities and cultural traditions involved — not least, but equally importantly, not only, those of the indigenous people already there.

Movement and knowledge also seem to me to very usefully evoke major features of the world which Inna Mateiciucová has studied. Whatever the merits of continuing debates about whether foragers were mobile and farmers sedentary — which can often seem rather sterile — it is clear from looking at the lithic evidence as a whole that many kinds of movement must have been ingrained in both forager and farmer ways of life: to get to raw material sources, to exchange and distribute both raw material and finished tools, and to assemble and interact with others in both the routine course of life and at special times and places. People must have been knowledgeable and skilful in all these pursuits, but perhaps not all the people knew everything all of the time, so that the shifts in raw materials and techniques of working which Inna documents for us are important elements of changing perceptions of the world from Mesolithic to Neolithic.

This important study deserves to be very widely read.

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