

Farmers made a sudden and dramatic appearance in Greece around 7000 BC, bringing with them domesticated plants and animals, new crafts and techniques, and establishing settled villages. They were Europe's first farmers, but Catherine Perlès argues that the stimulus for the spread of agriculture to Europe was a maritime colonisation movement involving small groups of people of various origins. With little competition from local hunter-gatherers, they recreated, to an unusual degree, a completely man-made environment, neglecting local resources or raw materials and favouring interaction with other communities. 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 Perlès is Professor in the Department of Ethnology at the University of Paris X. Her major publications include *Préhistoire du feu* (1977) and *Les industries lithiques taillées de Franchthi* (3 vols.; 1987, 1990, in press).



Cover illustration: a sheep pen in Greece.

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