Preface

In 1992 the two of us were colleagues at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We had lots of talks and debates about archaeology at lunch, between classes, and in each other’s offices. Gary is interested in sociopolitical evolution and works primarily with state-level societies in highland Mexico and in eastern China. Doug is interested in hunter-gatherers and the origins of agricultural societies and works primarily in northern Europe. Our common interests often intersected at questions concerned with the origin and nature of social inequality. When does this major organizing principle in human society appear and what forms does it take?

Because of our friendship, shared interests, and these interesting questions, we decided to organize a symposium at the 1993 Society for American Archaeology annual meetings in St. Louis, Missouri. We invited colleagues who had investigated questions relating to status differentiation and social inequality—doing relevant fieldwork and/or probing the theoretical issues involved. Many of the papers from that symposium found their way into the volume Foundations of Social Inequality, published in 1995 by Plenum Press. The volume was well received—still used in university classes and found on the shelves of many archaeologists.

Much has happened in the intervening years. The millennium turned. Terror and war define most of this new era. Terms like deflation, bailout, depression take on meaning in our own lives. The Internet now permeates daily life. Gary Feinman moved to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Plenum Press was acquired by Springer.

The new archaeology editor at Springer, Teresa Kraus, spoke to us a few years ago about the success of Foundations and that it might be time to consider a revised edition. We thought about it for some time, uncertain whether a second version was appropriate. In the end, we decided that so much new information and so many new ideas have appeared in the intervening years that a new volume would in fact be a good thing to do. The topic remains timely and is one of the more interesting addressed through archaeological research. In fact, since the roots of inequality stem deep in the past, this issue is one most appropriately assessed by archaeologists.

We have followed much the same plan as that for the first volume. We organized a symposium at the 2007 Society for American Archaeology meetings in Dallas, Texas. We invited some of the authors from the original volume, along with several new scholars to join us in Dallas. It was a good session with generally excellent
papers. Based on the large audience and the excellent discussion that took place at that meeting, it seems that interest in social inequality has only increased among archaeologists since the original volume was published.

The new volume is entitled *Pathways to Power* for a reason. We borrowed the volume title from the paper by Brian Hayden in *Foundations of Society Inequality*. We believe that this second volume provides much new perspective on questions concerning both the origins and the pathways along which social inequality develops. This phrase emphasizes not just the foundations—the origins—of inequality, but more so the forms, or paths, that it follows in prehistory.

This volume brings together a set of distinguished archaeologists and authors to present their thoughts on the rise and role of human inequality in past human societies. We have organized the volume to present these essays in a coherent and logical order. Our opening essay provides an overview of the topic and a brief look at the papers that follow. We emphasize the major themes that are the focus of the volume. Ken Ames provides an excellent introduction to the general subject of inequality in Chapter 2. Ken’s chapter is followed by an important consideration of the degrees and kinds of inequality by Dick Drennan, Christian Peterson, and Jake Fox. This chapter sets the tone for the volume, emphasizing the evidence for pathways to power, using examples from a variety of prehistoric contexts. Mark Aldenderfer in Chapter 4 examines the role of ritual and religion in creating and maintaining inequality, a reminder that there are many facets to this topic. Brian Hayden and Suzanne Villeneuve consider an ethnographic case from Polynesia for heightened insight on inequality, and how it works. They ask a very pragmatic question: who benefits from status differentiation?

The volume then moves to a series of case studies from the Old World, arranged in chronological order from the Neolithic, to the Bronze, and ultimately the Iron Age. Price and Ofer Bar-Yosef raise again the question of the origins of inequality, arguing that agriculture and status differentiation appear almost simultaneously. Focus is on Southwest Asia and the changes from the Natufian to the PrePottery Neolithic. Kristian Kristiansen examines the Bronze Age of northern Europe and another expression of inequality. Tina Thurston takes a deep look at the European Iron Age and what power and kingship meant in that time of transition to state-level societies. Gary Feinman’s paper is a formidable conclusion to the book, and a very different paper for an archaeology volume, bringing ideas and concepts from studying the past to a perspective on the modern world.

A book such as this one is the result and consequence of many efforts. Teresa Kraus, our editor at Springer, started the ball rolling. The participants in the SAA symposium in Dallas brought their ideas, knowledge, and time to bear on the issue of inequality. The authors of the papers in this volume have spent many hours writing, revising, and finalizing years of thought, laboratory, and field work. We owe a great debt of thanks for their efforts and accomplishment.

We very much hope you find the book to be of use, to inspire your perspectives and to encourage new research on questions regarding human inequality in the past. You will find a few answers, but many more questions. There is much to learn.
Pathways to Power
New Perspectives on the Emergence of Social Inequality
Price, T.D.; Feinman, G.M. (Eds.)
2010, IX, 298 p. 46 illus., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-1-4419-6299-7