

Before, during and after farming

For a journal devoted to hunter-gatherers and called *Before Farming* the set of four papers in this issue may appear to be misplaced. On closer inspection there is a thematic unity here that is directly relevant to hunter-gatherer studies – and not just for Africanists, but also for those interested in modelling forager-farmer interaction more generally. (My editorial in the last issue explains the origin of these papers.) The syntheses by Mitchell and Gronenborn should be read together because they offer complementary perspectives on the complex processes of cultural change associated with the expansion of farming communities into landscapes inhabited by hunter-gatherers. Mitchell argues persuasively that the southern African record is an under-appreciated resource of historical, linguistic, ethnographic, genetic and archaeological data that together highlight the fluidity of hunter-gatherer responses to the presence of food producers. Gronenborn takes this Africanist perspective and applies it to a central European context by considering the many possible permutations of interaction between Linienbandkeramik (LBK) farmers and indigenous Mesolithic hunter-gatherers. The result is not a new model to add to the migrationist-diffusionist debate, but a sober appreciation of the complexity and rapidity of hunter-gatherer reaction to changing opportunities and constraints. Both these papers highlight the need for archaeologists to embrace disparate sources of information if we are to begin to approximate the mosaic of behaviours that arose from interactions between differing ways of doing, thinking and being.

The flexibility of hunter-gatherer societies also features in the Hobart's analysis of the late Holocene archaeological record from Lesotho and surrounding regions of South Africa. He argues for the development of small-scale pastoralism among some highland Bushmen groups who were engaged in regional exchange networks with other hunter-gatherers and pastoralists. Here he uses the term neolithic to characterise these highland communities and to recognise their active role in choosing to be hunters, herders, and foragers. This is a timely reminder that as well as re-evaluating the role of Bushmen as agents of change, we as archaeologists need to be alive to alternative interpretations of the archaeological record. Associations of hunter-gatherers' tools with what appear to be signatures of farming or pastoralism need not be simply the result of taphonomic mixing – our natural caution based on field experience may be constraining our interpretive vision.

Archaeological vision, or more properly its material limitations, features in Fauvelle-Aymar's analysis of the identity of Khoekhoe herders in southern Africa. The Khoekhoe have long been characterised by archaeologists as essentially hunters with sheep rather than true pastoralists with all that implies economically and ideologically. This paper counterpoises ethnographic and historic sources for Khoekhoe treatment of their stock (drawing on a wider African database) against the archaeological evidence, and the latter is shown to be wanting. The question of Khoekhoe origins remains unanswered, but their identity as pastoralists seems clearer and consequently the southern African record of the last 2,000 years is enriched with this added cultural diversity. It is tempting to draw modern parallels, but I will resist...

The recent announcement of the discovery of a new human species, *Homo floresiensis*, is generating considerable debate about the validity of the species and by implication the associated behavioural record. We feature an extended news item in this issue that includes critical comments on the finds from Liang Bua cave and a vigorous reply by Peter Brown and Mike Morwood.

After a brief gap, 'Benefit of foresight' returns with a personal account by Mitsuo Ichikawa (Director of the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University) of how he began his research among the Mbuti of the Ituri forest and how three decades later his research interests have both broadened and become more focused at the same time. He charts the impact of shifting academic agendas on his own research, and the rise of an ecological anthropologist actively engaged in efforts to conserve tropical rainforests and those who depend on them. The aspiring student and seasoned anthropologist alike can benefit from Ichikawa's example of remaining open to new and unexpected influences.

The Editor

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