

# Before Farming Editorial

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This second issue of Before Farming introduces two new features that we hope will both enliven the journal and be informative. The 'benefit of foresight' column (reviews section) takes as its premise that with experience comes some kind of academic wisdom that may be of value to younger colleagues early in their careers. We have asked a respected academic in the field of hunter-gatherer archaeology to imagine that he (Peter White in this first instance) is starting afresh and to consider what directions his research would now take and why. Peter's reflections are candid and reflect his combined ethnographic and archaeological experience in Australia and Papua New Guinea. He draws attention to the arbitrary boundaries we construct when making distinctions between hunter-gatherers and agriculturists. (Perhaps then the title of this journal is perpetuating an outmoded construct of convenience?) Peter's piece sets the tone for what should be a personal and provocative column. We encourage you to nominate individuals for future issues whose work you respect and who may have something interesting to say to all of us.

The 'department review' which also makes its debut in this issue is intended for prospective students looking at research opportunities and for others who are simply interested in knowing who is doing what in the field of hunter-gatherer research. Our first review features the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. This interdisciplinary body combines active research with academic teaching, but within an ethos that stresses the need to engage local and national support in the conservation and promotion of a shared heritage. And who do you call when you find rock art? RARI of course, with its dedicated rock art rapid response unit. If you would like to suggest a department for this feature (your own perhaps?) please get in touch.

Rock art appears elsewhere in this issue in the review and news section. As well as a book review on Holocene imagery from Europe, we have our first review of a website - in this instance also European in focus but with a broader chronological spread. The web reviewer is based in South Africa which may seem an odd choice, but the result is a revealing interregional perspective on what promises to be the future for online databases of rock art. A looming threat to the survival of thousands of petroglyphs on Australia's Dampier Archipelago is highlighted as a news feature. The International Federation of Rock Art Organisations has organised an online petition and by signing it you may add your voice to the campaign to protect this unique body of imagery.

Rock art is not the only heritage threatened: also in the news section, Katragadda Paddayya highlights a profound dilemma associated with the Acheulean sites of India's Hunsgi and Baichbal valleys - heritage or development, must one deny the other?

Crossing continents now we turn to Africa where our main research article focuses on the site of Broken Hill cave (Kabwe) in Zambia. Well known in palaeoanthropological circles for its human fossils, the behavioural record from this now destroyed cave system has received less scrutiny. Here Barham et al report on some putative bone tools recovered from the site between 1907 and 1921. Scanning electron microscopy of the specimens shows that bone was indeed shaped into tools, and an argument is made that this took place in the Middle Pleistocene, long before the currently accepted age for bone tool making in Africa. These conclusions will no doubt be controversial, and it is hoped that the direct dating of the fauna and human

remains currently underway will go some way to resolving the age of the site. Until then some doubt will linger over the association of the bone artefacts with the stone tools.

The second article focuses on Japan. Simon Kaner reviews the archaeological evidence behind recent revelations of sustained forgery surrounding claims of great antiquity for bifacial artefacts and tool caches in the Lower and Middle Palaeolithic. The revelations have deeply undermined confidence in the Japanese archaeological record and professional reputations have been tarnished by suspicions of complicity in the grand deception. Much remains to be said about personal pride and nationalism as possible motivations, but for the time being this article provides a detailed overview of the scale of the fraud. One of our reviewers did, however, point out that we should beware taking absolutely everything at face value - such as the grandiose-sounding institutions which are often no more than bands of local enthusiasts. It is a quagmire. A follow-up report by Naoko Matsumoto brings news from the most recent meeting of the Japanese Archaeological Association (25 May 2002) where a Special Committee reported on the current state of its ongoing investigations into each of the sites thought to have been falsified. We have to wonder if such a fraud could be perpetrated elsewhere in the Old World and if the current practice of peer review of research is sufficient to detect and deter such acts.

I'm sorry to say that this will be last issue of Before Farming available without charge. The cost of producing the journal can only be met by charging subscriptions and selling advertising. The charges for the online version and annual print compilation will be posted on the website and those who have registered for the journal will be notified directly. If there is a philanthropist out there who would like to step in and help keep this a free journal please get in touch....

As an enticement to potential subscribers we will be publishing a selection of papers from the ninth international Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS 9) which is being held in Edinburgh in early September (see "events"). We hope to have some of these papers in our September issue and any remaining in our December issue. We will give you more details by email if you have registered your interest in subscribing to Before Farming.

And finally, I would like to welcome two new Associate Editors: Paola Villa and Paul Pettitt. Together they add much both to the breadth and the quality of our coverage.

**THE EDITOR**

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