

Guanaco dreaming

This last issue of 2003 brings to a close our series of articles based on papers given at the Australian Rock Art Association (AURA) conference in 2000. The AURA contributions continue two themes featured in previous issues, those of ecological knowledge embedded in imagery (Bennet, Welch) and the creation of cultural landscapes through rock-art (Schaafsma). The inclusion of Schaafsma's analysis of the distribution and cosmological content of Pueblo imagery may seem oddly placed in a journal with an explicit focus on all things hunter-gatherer, but the methodology of archaeological survey combined with ethnographic data has wider application. The close connection between the Pueblo and their land as the source of sustenance, both physical and spiritual, is a theme familiar to hunter-gatherer researchers.

Rock-art has had, and will continue to have, a prominent place in Before Farming because imagery transcends disciplinary divides. It is a nexus between archaeologists and anthropologists, among other interested parties. Also in this issue Larsson, in looking at the impact of rapidly changing sea levels on Mesolithic societies in southern Scandinavia, speculates that rock-art was placed to mark a physical and cosmological boundary between land and sea. Puebloan and Mesolithic landscapes merge as culturally constructed places with imagery playing a central role in the human response to natural and social pressures.

The Larsson paper was originally presented at a session devoted to the 'use of space by hunter-gatherer societies' at the 51e Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, Santiago, Chile held in July 2003. Caroline Wickham-Jones was one of the session coordinators and through her efforts we have been able to bring two papers (Larsson, Mendoza) through the review process and to publication so quickly. A Spanish version of the Larsson paper, as originally presented and not peer-reviewed, is also made available with this issue thanks to Caroline. We will be featuring papers from this session and others in the course of 2004.

Mendoza deftly reconstructs the foraging strategies of once-mobile Toba bands of Argentina from detailed oral histories, historical records and meticulous fieldwork. Much of this data would have been lost forever with the inevitable passing of Toba elders - this was a timely project indeed. Her results will interest both anthropologists and archaeologists, especially those who work in the semi-arid tropics. In another contribution from Argentina, but unrelated to the 51e Congreso, Martinez and Mackie look at hunter-gatherer manipulation of the landscape of the late Holocene Pampas. They argue that the persistent provisioning of lithic-poor places in landscape with stone for making tools had the cumulative effect of opening parts of the Pampas to more sustained human use. An artificial or built environment resulted from the process of 'lithification', which in turn created new social landscapes. This research feeds into our growing awareness of hunter-gatherers as active agents of change in their physical and social environments.

The South American theme is continued in our departmental review from the Departamento de Investigaciones Prehistóricas y Arqueológicas at CONICET, Argentina (Borrero) and in the 'Benefit of foresight' feature from Anna Roosevelt.

Looking ahead, 2004 will bring more papers from South America, and our archaeologically minded readers can expect research from Australia (Fullagar), India (Pappu) and Africa (van Peer), and everyone can look forward to the now usual mix of reviews, news and personal insights.

The editor
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