

### Falling from my tree

Each of us operates in a social world in which we have multiple identities, many of which are context specific (eg, parent, spouse, teacher, student, editor, reader, and so on). These socially defined roles come with agreed rights and obligations, and our many roles underpin our sense of self as an individual and participant in ever larger networks of groups. I state this anthropological truism as the starting point for considering the collection of news, papers and reviews in this issue.

The news and views deal with the collective identity of the Bushmen of the Kalahari and of the BaTwa of the Bangweulu swamps, Zambia. Both communities are marginalised politically and economically in their respective nation-states, and both are struggling with their collective identities. We have covered previously the long-running court case brought forward on behalf of the Bushmen evicted from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) against the government of Botswana. The historic ruling last December in favour of the plaintiffs allowed them to return to the CKGR, but with considerable strings attached. Sidsel Saugestad brings us up-to-date on the political and practical fallout of the decision, and draws attention of the continuing reluctance of the government of Botswana to recognise the concept and existence of an indigenous people. As a consequence, it has yet to ratify the UN Declaration on the Rights for Indigenous Peoples. Can a rapidly developing nation-state, conscious of its internal and international reputation, wishing to be seen to economically and socially progressive, allow a small group to define itself as the first people, the true sons and daughters of the land, and let them live a lifestyle which the state perceives as an embarrassment? Issues of identity are operating at many levels here and are clearly a source of ongoing tensions that will continue to reverberate in Botswana and much further afield.

In stark contrast, the BaTwa living in and on the fringes of the Bangweulu swamps have sublimated, if not abandoned, their social identity as a distinctive fishing, foraging and hunting community in order to blend into the world of their more numerous and politically powerful Bantu-speaking neighbours. Which of us hasn't felt the pressure to conform to peer pressure, whether in the schoolyard or in choice of newspaper, clothes, car and lifestyle more generally? My experience with the BaTwa is not newsworthy, but is offered as a personal awakening to the power of social prejudice extending into the otherwise apolitical world of Later Stone Age research in Zambia; a world in which no claims of ancestral rights to land exist and are never likely to arise from communities who feel ashamed of who they were, and are.

Rock art serves as a visible expression of individual and group identity, and as such lends itself to multiple, socially defined and changing meanings for its makers and users, including those of us who are academic viewers. David Lewis-Williams and his colleagues at the Rock Art Research Institute have, over the past twenty years, carefully crafted the most nuanced and influential interpretation of southern African rock art based on the practice of shamanism. Their interpretive model, with its bridging argument grounded on the neuropsychology of consciousness, has been applied widely in Europe and North America, and not just to hunter-gatherer art. This isn't the place to review the sometimes acrimonious and *ad hominem* attacks that have disfigured discussions of the shamanic model; David Lewis-Williams does that here with his usual eloquence. We invited David to assess the history of shamanism as an anthropological concept and consider its application to rock art research in particular, including the objections raised. He was also asked to sketch a way forward through what has ceased to be a debate because of the polarisation of views. We then invited rock art researchers working in the Americas, Australia, Africa and Europe to consider David's overview in light of the traditions with which they were familiar, and submit brief comments on the applicability of shamanism to their research. Most commentators were chosen because they were not associated with one particular view, though David Whitley's contribution will inevitably be seen as partisan. (Whitley takes the challenging stance that in reality there is no real debate, but a sensationalised clash that smacks of journalism rather than science.) Unfortunately, the majority of promised comments never materialised and this was especially disappointing in the

case of the South American record which has no advocate here. This limitation aside, the overall tone is constructive and perhaps now the field can move forward and accommodate multiple points of view in the spirit of testing alternatives based on a clearer understanding of what shamanism means and how it can be applied.

Kaplan provides a timely review of the many disorders of consciousness that can produce visions and altered states of self that may have relevance to work of shamans, but also to the evolution of capacity to create symbols. The literature cited will be unfamiliar to most readers and as such this should be read as a summary rather than a research article, and considered as complementary to the more familiar and contentious neuropsychological data on trance states and associated imagery. Kaplan expands his review to consider the evolutionary potential of psychiatric disorders, and suggests that conditions such as schizophrenia may have had long-term selective value by expanding the range of creativity in small-scale societies. The creative ark would include individuals with greater sensitivity to supernatural phenomena who could contribute to group cohesion as initiators and participants in rituals linked to a spirit world. The neurological roots of symbolism and shamanism arguably lie in increased brain lateralisation which took place at least 200,000 years ago, a thought which intrigues me given my own research on pigment use in the mid-Pleistocene.

Coolidge and Wynn expand on the evolutionary and cognitive theme in framing a stimulating hypothesis that the transition to sleeping on the ground rather than in trees enabled the mind of early *Homo* (probably *Homo erectus*) to develop the patterns of sleep and dreaming which have the restorative and problem-solving abilities seen among modern humans. Dreams help us develop solutions to daily problems by replaying events and outcomes which become embedded in memory, providing a reservoir of anticipated responses. For hunters and gatherers this has direct application to the food quest and in dealing with predators and competitors. More generally, greater creativity and innovation are consequences, they argue, of the comparative security of sleeping on the ground and the shifts in the patterns and quality of sleep. They readily admit to the difficulties of testing this hypothesis, but for archaeologists they highlight the innovation of complex hierarchical technologies, such as prepared cores, as possible evidence of the dream enhanced capacity to innovate. It's worth adding that the Levallois technique is now known to have been developed in the mid-Pleistocene among later Acheulean tool-makers, perhaps 600,000 years ago with big-brained *H heidelbergensis* or late *H erectus*. Should we now be looking for early evidence of schizophrenia, shamans and identity conscious social groups too? The prospect might give some of you methodological nightmares.

The extended book review by Kenneth Ames brings us bang up-to-date on current research on complex hunter-gatherers, a theme to be taken up later in *Before Farming*. Ames reviews the history of the concept of complexity, and its lingering association with Northwest Coast societies and assesses attempts to reformulate discussions away from ecological models based on delayed return economies to ones grounded in agency and decision-making. It seems that the concept of complexity itself is undergoing a change of identity, but has the transition been successful? I won't spoil a good read by giving away the answer.

The Editor  
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