

Pleasure in variety

The 17th century dramatist and novelist Aphra Behn observed that, 'Variety is the soul of pleasure' and though the sentiment referred to matters of love and the arts, it applies to the intellect as well. *Before Farming* has, through its broad coverage of subjects archaeological and anthropological, endeavoured to engage those with wide ranging interests in hunter-gatherer research. This issue epitomises that aim and I hope provides some pleasure in its disparate contents. No single theme unites the papers offered here and to try and tease out some tenuous link would be disingenuous.

Those who prefer greater focus can take some comfort in upcoming issues which will be examining the theme of economic intensification in response to climate change, in particular to the turbulent shifts during the Late Glacial to early Holocene transition and the less extreme but still significant perturbations of the mid-Holocene. Returning to this issue, Helga Vierich's personal account of the changing fortunes of the Kua of Botswana as a consequence of living in an increasingly degraded landscape has wider implications for those studying tropical hunter-gatherers, past and present. Her observation that social responses to changes in resource availability are intertwined with the maintenance of group identity should challenge archaeologists to consider the broader cultural constraints that operate at times of economic stress. Evidence of such constraints may elude archaeological detection, but perhaps we should re-examine elements of foraging theory (eg, diet breadth and patch choice) as a potential window through which to observe the negotiation of identity. This paper originated as a presentation given at the CASCA conference held in honour of the retirement of Richard Lee (see *Before Farming* 2007 for other papers arising from this event).

We have in the past made an effort to provide a forum for work on the prehistory of Patagonia in recognition of the general neglect this region suffers in relation to the more publicised research of northern America. For those who find frustration in the ambiguity of contested images, Natalia Carden makes a clear integration of rock art with the spatial distribution of rock shelters to pose a model of cosmological as well as economic boundary formation in this semi-arid region. Remaining in the southern hemisphere but across the Atlantic in southern Africa, Late Glacial hunter-gatherers have left a technological and spatial signature of their presence in the form of the Robberg microlithic industry. Jayson Orton reports on the first assemblage of this type recovered from a region presumed to be too dry at the time to support a sustained human presence. Although absolute dates are absent from this open site, a close analysis of raw material selection and technological patterning provides a clear contrast to later, well-dated sites making a compelling case for a Robberg occupation of coastal Namaqualand, South Africa.

In the final issue of 2007, Ben Watson argued for the role of dreaming in the production of Upper Palaeolithic art that did not invoke the necessity of altered states of consciousness, shamans or beliefs in the supernatural to explain the location and content of some, if not most imagery. We invited David Lewis-Williams to respond to this challenge to his well-known thesis elucidated in *The Mind in the Cave* (Thames & Hudson 2004). Watson's reply and Lewis-Williams's comments are presented here. Please note, as stated in a previous editorial, we will not publish further discussions of the trance based or hallucinatory origins of art, or arguments to the contrary.

The Editor
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