



Book Reviews

THE DIVERSITY OF HUNTER-GATHERER PASTS BY BILL FINLAYSON AND GRAEME WARREN (EDS)

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More than thirty years ago I was sitting in a plush armchair in the LSE at the Fourth Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHaGS4). For an archaeologist it was a depressing conference; dominated by social anthropologists who had little or no interest in historical questions and even less in deep history. This was reflected in the publications it spawned and where almost none of the archaeological contributions were included. The lesson was clear. The anthropologist's understanding of hunter-gatherer societies was the only one possible. Issues of diversity and change could only be studied with living peoples.

At one level this was an understandable reaction to the horrors of early twentieth century evolutionism. But it also betrayed a distaste for the material and a prioritising of social and linguistic contexts above historical development. Yet again, the split between social anthropology and archaeology, initiated by one of the LSE's most famous sons, Malinowski, was laid bare.

It was with some trepidation, therefore, that I agreed to review this volume edited by Finlayson and Warren that resulted from the CHaGS11 held in Vienna in 2015. I need not have worried. The volume is entirely in the capable hands of archaeologists and although there is no index I would be surprised to find any entry for kinship and cross cousin marriage. As a result we have a wide ranging and interesting set of papers that explore what a deep history approach brings to the understanding of fishers, gatherers and hunters (FGH). Diversity is the theme. It is used to explore alternatives to prescriptive local and global models of FGH. The temporal focus is towards the Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic of Europe. Elsewhere in the Americas, Japan, Central Africa and Highland Nepal the temporal mix is greater as is also the complexity of neighbouring societies. The continent of hunters and gatherers, Australia, is not represented. The volume is about *Homo sapiens*, with one exception, the Neanderthals (Spikins, Hitchens and Needham).

The volume is divided into two sections; *Patterns of diversity and change*, and *Diversity, comparisons and analogies* with six papers in each section. It begins with a well-judged introduction by the editors that sets out the scope and enquiry that follows.

In the first section attention is paid to the concept of complex hunters (Hudson; Estévez and Prieto; Grier) and in examining what happened in the move to agriculture. As Finlayson shows for Southwest Asia, and using Gobekli Tepe as an example, this can no longer be presented as a shift from simple to complex. In a paper that draws on the linguistic history of central Africa, de Luna, shows that farming created hunting bushcraft rather than being preceded by it. What occurred was the invention of a distinction between the labours of agriculture and the work of the bush. This was transformative for the history of the region. Both papers point to more complicated histories than the models of change normally allow. Grier analyses the coastal Salish, a 'classic' complex group of hunters to reveal four core principles; physical and long term construction of place; ownership and the maintenance of economic diversity; proprietorship (sustainable resource use); local autonomy. Hudson presents the Okhotsk hunters of Iron Age Japan and shows how they have also suffered, historically, from being treated as different and blandly homogenous from their bigger neighbours; aspects which he rightly criticises. The different cultural and economic trajectories in Tierra del Fuego and the Northwest Coast have long stood as an antidote to simple ecological models determining FGH adaptations. In their paper, Estévez and Prieto give more weight to social strategies of production and reproduction than to ecological opportunities to account for the trajectories of change in both regions.

In the second section the focus shifts to the role of analogy in the study of FGH diversity. It is good to have Blumauer's paper that examines the 'Vienna School' and the indefatigable Father Wilhelm Schmidt who, at the turn of the twentieth century, mixed language with material culture to produce the *Kulturkreislehre*. While abandoned as a way to categorise FGH, there are undoubted lessons to be drawn for interdisciplinary schemes that neither respect nor reconcile competing ideologies and methods. This is also the conclusion in a paper on emergent creativity in Middle Palaeolithic Europe by Spikins, Hitchens and Needham. The old models of Neanderthal uniqueness – difference and homogeneity when compared to modern humans (whatever those are) – are coming apart at the seams. They argue for a micro-sociality that begins with the dyad and where social relationships are constructed from below rather than imposed from above. The result is a highly diverse Neanderthal. Experimental archaeology allows Carracedo-Recasens and García-Piquer to reveal the diversity among the peoples living in Tierra del Fuego. Warren takes as his theme the re-colonisation by FGH of northern Europe. He restricts discussion to the Mesolithic rather than the earlier expansion as shown by genetics, linguistics and radiocarbon dates from the southern refuges of the LGM. The diversity of Mesolithic expansions would have been clearer against such a baseline. In their study of the

Raute people of Nepal, Fortier and Goldstein return to the question; do modern FGH provide valid analogies for prehistoric foraging populations? Unsurprisingly they find that homology fails but that analogies employed as thought experiments and applied comparatively produce valid results. The final paper by Lane provides an insightful overview. His call for more deconstruction is borne out by the problems that exist when the archaeological evidence for European FGH is put alongside modern FGH. The fit is often poor and you can hear a grinding noise like continental plates moving over and under each other.

The volume is against shoehorning FGHs either into pre-conceived historical categories or typological schemes. It is an obvious conclusion from this volume that we have hardly begun to scratch the surface on FGH diversity. But diversity cannot, as some of the papers hint, be a synonym for complexity. This muddle suggests to me that we still do not know what a history and a deep history of FGH might look like. What we do know is that the people from 'outside history' need to be welcomed into the big tent of deep history.

To make that tent a more hospitable place for FGH I suggest the following. The diversity of FGH on a seasonal basis was pointed out in these *Proceedings* eighty years ago by Donald Thomson (1939). More recently, Wengrow and Graeber (2015) have argued that FGH diversity exists on an annual basis. They can change from simple to complex, egalitarian to authoritarian, mobile to sedentary all in the course of a year. This fluidity in social and economic structures is possible when mobility is allied with the demographic re-alignments achieved by fission and fusion. This is where the diversity of FGH, ancient or modern, stems from. Mobility is our ancestral strategy that dealt with other people and the vicissitudes of the environment. Marcel Mauss (1979) understood this in his seminal essay on the public and private times of the Inuit year. An essay that appeared when Father Schmidt was pronouncing unhelpfully from Vienna on African Pygmies. Mauss' insights have been largely ignored by archaeologists but they remain a route towards demolishing the myth that there ever was a 'simple' FGH. They point us to the deficiencies in our approaches rather than the inadequacies of our data. If we are to maximise on the excellent interdisciplinary work into FGH societies, showcased so effectively in this volume, then we need to re-think the fundamental property of mobility and use it as the way into the deep histories of societies and by so doing confound their stereotype.

References

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