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John J. Shea. *Stone tools in human evolution: behavioral differences among technological primates*. 2016. xviii+236 pages, 51 b&w illustrations, 26 tables. New York: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-107-12309-0 hardback £64.99.

John Shea is a Palaeolithic archaeologist, professor of anthropology at Stony Brook University and a skilled flint-knapper. His timely, accessible and succinct book will be welcomed by many. I strongly recommend it, both to undergraduate students embarking on courses in archaeology and palaeoanthropology, and also to their teachers—indeed, especially to the latter. I fear, alas, that it will be wilfully ignored by my grey-haired colleagues in continental Europe who are far too set in their ways to understand the necessity of the radical change of perspective that John Shea expounds. Too bad for them! I am 76; nevertheless, in a journal article about an early Palaeolithic assemblage, I have taken full advantage of Shea's most welcome proposals. Let us see what they are.

He begins by claiming, rightly in my view, that all too often archaeologists have asked inappropriate questions about what can be inferred from stone tool evidence, foremost among which is a self-serving search for an evolutionary narrative in the Palaeolithic record. In Chapter 1, Shea briefly points to significant differences between the ways in which tools are developed and wielded by wild anthropoid apes on the one hand, and are made and used by humans on the other. In Chapter 2 he outlines 'How we know what we think we know about stone tools'. These two chapters state baldly the minimum that a new undergraduate student needs to know. This no-frills approach is refreshing in so far as it dismisses recondite expositions replete with false erudition and bowed under with jargon that initiates are expected to rehearse.

In Chapter 3, Shea criticises traditional archaeological discourses about Palaeolithic artefacts in terms of age-stages, industries and techno-complexes, and offers a novel descriptive framework of stone artefacts in terms of 'Modes A–I'. This approach has enthused me ever since it was first proposed by Shea (2013). Modes A–I are based on a differential diagnostic approach that is grounded in simple mutual exclusivity with regard to physical attributes, nothing more or less. Shea's modes have nothing whatsoever to do with Grahame Clark's well-known modes 1–5 or 1–6 that boil down to no more than quasi-evolutionary homotaxial conjectures for interpreting Palaeolithic archaeology. Shea's descriptive modes dispense with recourse to what elsewhere he has called 'NASTIES', or 'Named Stone Tool Industries', such as Aurignacian, Lupemban, Folsom, Mousterian, Gravettian, Oldowan, Acheulean and Emiran.

Shea proceeds in Chapters 4 and 5 to consider stone cutting tools and logistical mobility, followed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 by reflections on language and symbolic artefacts, dispersal and diaspora, and sedentism. While these chapters are undoubtedly appropriate for introducing undergraduate students to the subject of stone artefacts around the world and across a vast period of time, their synthetic approach, sometimes discursive, sometimes breathless, nevertheless sits rather awkwardly with both the methodological rigour enjoined in Chapter 3 and the succinctness of Chapters 1 and 2. For instance, Box 4 on 'Behavioural modernity and behavioural variability', in Chapter 6, might well have deserved a short chapter in its own right.

One can understand that the publisher seeks wide sales of a short primer such as this among students in North America, Africa and the Antipodes, and is therefore content with the coverage of these continents; less affluent undergraduates who easily can read English in Asian countries are, however,

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2017.156 Published online by Cambridge University Press

less well served by the coverage. Herein lies a worrying problem, namely, that the mighty dollar rules, and increasingly, academic presses focus their attention on the most profitable markets—and their prehistoric territories.

Without doubt John Shea's book is a worthwhile contribution, although I cannot help feeling that really it has compressed two somewhat different books into one. I recommend it both to students and, especially, to their university and college teachers. It is to be hoped that translations into French, German, Italian and Spanish can be published, because students and professors in those languages need this book even more than English-language readers.

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Graeme Barker & Lucy Farr (ed.). *Archaeological investigations in the Niah Caves, Sarawak* (The archaeology of the Niah Caves, Sarawak 2). 2016. xxx +562 pages. 298 b&w illustrations, 115 tables, CD-ROM (with an additional xv+ 339 pages, 76 colour and b&w illustrations, 82 tables). Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 978-1-902937-60-1 hardback £65.

Niah Cave is one of the key sites for documenting the prehistory of island Southeast Asia. Everything about it, from its massive size, the length of its occupation and the demands placed on those involved in its excavation, has a heroic dimension. Located behind the northern coast of Sarawak, Niah was subject to the massive environmental changes that characterised the later Pleistocene freeze and the global warming that inundated Sundaland. The research described in this second volume reporting on the 2000–2004 fieldwork reflects the combined and integrated analyses of 46 specialists under the baton of Graeme Barker. The musical analogy is appropriate, as harmonising such a range of inputs requires both a steady beat of encouragement and precise timing of the finale. The saga of Niah began in 1954, when Tom Harrisson, the curator of the Sarawak Museum, visited the cave complex and described his impressions of its potential as incredible and fantastic. He also appreciated that unprecedented resources would be needed to do the site justice, beginning with the use of a Second World War landing craft simply to gain access to the area at the start of a decade of excavations in 1957. In this endeavour, he was fortunate to have the vital input of his wife, Barbara.

More than four decades later, Barker and his team returned to Niah to deploy all the available analytical techniques that have evolved since the Harrissons completed their excavations. Without the availability in the Sarawak Museum of the original records, notes, photographs and samples of the artefacts and biological remains, it is hard to see how this new research could have progressed, for the fieldwork concentrated on taking samples from the old excavation trenches. The reinterpretation of the sections, left open and subject to 60 years of deterioration, and the sampling strategy for dating material and organic remains from the many sequences across the cave complex, would have presented insurmountable difficulties without archived records, and the book's chapters consistently refer back to them. Niah is a key site for many reasons, not least the discovery of a human cranium, the so-called 'Deep Skull' that has for many years been seen as the earliest evidence for *Homo sapiens* in Southeast Asia. Redating it was an essential part of the research programme.

The field research thus involved sampling the exposed sections identified through the original records, with only very limited new excavation. Over five seasons, this involved a total of 13 weeks in the field. The first of three central objectives was to identify the timing of the arrival of Anatomically Modern Humans in Southeast Asia. This led on to the adaptation of hunter-gatherers to an environment that, for the greater part of the sequence, was dominated by rainforest. The cave incorporates

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2017.156 Published online by Cambridge University Press