

Animals and people

Animals and People. Archaeozoological Papers in Honour of Ina Plug. By Shaw Badenhorst, Peter Mitchell and Jonathan C. Driver (eds). Pp. 228. BAR International, Oxford Series 1849, £36.00. ISBN 978 1 4073 0336 9. 2008.

Shaw Badenhorst *et al.*'s tribute to Ina Plug is a rather unsatisfying volume, though full of data, very well produced and a great technical improvement on the BAR series of the past. Compiling *fest-schriften* is always a difficult task; not only does one need a basis for choosing contributors but also one must organise the papers so as to create order among essentially disparate subjects. Although this collection may reflect Ina Plug's wide-ranging interests, as the editors claim, the volume lacks coherence and fails to provide a clear picture of how her interests dovetail, as surely they must. It gives the impression of having received insufficient thought as to both its target readership and its geographical and scientific coverage.

It is noticeable, for instance, that neither the preface nor Shaw Badenhorst's tribute includes a definition of the term archaeozoology or zooarchaeology. This is an omission—whether the book is aimed at a broad audience or at archaeozoologists—because archaeozoology, as Terry O'Connor discusses later in the volume, means different things to different people. A definition would also have helped provide a framework for organis-

ing the book and constraining its content. On balance, it would appear that the collection is aimed at professionals, not only because of the lack of a definition but also because so many of the papers are primary studies rather than the overviews of fields of study that one frequently finds in *fest-schriften*. Possible exceptions are Karin Scott's paper on archaeozoology at the Transvaal Museum and O'Connor's on zooarchaeology (there is no consistency in the use of the two terms in this publication) in southern Africa, which seem curiously out of place in a volume aimed at professionals. Both, while interesting, are written in a style one would have expected in a more general publication. There is also some confusion as to the geographical coverage by the book. Ina Plug has worked mainly in southern Africa, which many of the papers cover, so it is rather unexpected to see papers on the Sahelian ichthyofauna and fishing in the Senegal River. Even if one expands coverage to sub-Saharan Africa, the paper by C.S. Churcher on shrews from Egypt is geographically out of place.

This said, the papers can perhaps be best characterised as providing a series of

snapshots of the types of information that bones from archaeological sites can provide. This is where the issue of the meaning of archaeozoology becomes important. Archaeozoology, as conventionally understood, refers to the study of human and animal interactions (see the title) during perhaps the last 2 000 years or so, at least in southern Africa. Many of the papers in this book fall into such a category. An example is the paper by Yusuf Juwayeyi on human and animal interactions at Malowa Rockshelter in the Shire Highlands of Malawi. Particularly intriguing is his suggestion that humans caught and ate the micromammals whose remains were found in the site but this interesting hypothesis needs testing in more detail and with greater rigour, particularly as this is a unique observation. Papers that are essentially archaeological studies with a basis in archaeozoological information include Andrew Smith's synthesis of early herder movements. This is part of such a long-running academic discourse (argument?) with Karim Sadr that one is surprised it is still going. Beyond the evidence for sheep in the sites on which this study is based, one would hardly consider this an archaeozoological paper.

Other papers stray out of expected archaeozoological realms and time frames. For instance, palaeoenvironmental reconstruction and the Upper Pleistocene between 60 000 and 37 000 years ago are not generally considered to fall within the ambit of the sub-discipline but the paper by Lyn Wadley *et al.* on Sibudu environments does just this. This paper is also rather instructive in illustrating what could be called the parallel evolution of several sub-disciplines. There are different ways of determining the number of individuals represented; here they are referred to as 'quantified specimens' where one finds 'minimum numbers of individuals' in other publications. There is no taphonomic analysis of the biases affecting the faunal samples such as is considered essential in other branches of faunal interpretation. All in all, one could wish for evidence of cross-pollination among all sub-sectors of palaeozoological analysis so other faunal analysts may find it instructive to dip into this book to see if they can pick up any tips from the archaeologists.

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Faunal remains and stone artefacts from the Ysterfontein Middle Stone Age midden. (Photograph: G. Avery.)