



EDITORIAL



ARCHEOLOGISTS HAVE made the case that one of our advantages in the study of human history and prehistory is the long time frame we are able to employ. This enables archaeologists to observe and interpret changes in the archaeological record at a scale that is rarely accessible to other social scientists, or to historians for that matter. The perspective on prehistoric change provided by archaeologists has begun to diversify as we take advantage of the opportunities afforded by systematic and large-scale archaeological projects and syntheses.

The first two papers in this issue, written by Laura Junker and Peter Bellwood, exemplify these trends, although from somewhat different perspectives. Both identify a problem of potential archaeological interest and then apply a body of method and theory to its resolution. Each of these papers advances our understanding of Southeast Asian prehistory, while simultaneously suggesting new questions or avenues for research in other parts of the region. Both papers use ethnographic or ethnoarchaeological as well as ethnohistorical sources as a means to interpret aspects of archaeological patterning and variability. Finally, these studies anticipate new bodies of evidence that may be used to more fully evaluate the conclusions offered.

One topic of increasing concern among archaeologists in our role as scientists is the replication of data and analyses by different investigators. As our field grows larger and as the number of archaeologists is more evenly spread across Asia and the Pacific, this may require new forms of reporting, assessing, and organizing analyses. The report by Marshall Weisler is forward looking in this regard. The high cost of technical equipment and the limited number of individuals capable of conducting certain kinds of analyses should encourage cooperative laboratory programs and, wherever possible, the sharing of data among contributors. The rewards of such endeavors are likely to be substantial, with more geographic representation and larger numbers for comparison combined with greater precision and accuracy for the technical analyses we undertake. Among the kinds of data and analyses best suited to this approach would be lithic provenancing; ceramic, glass, and metallurgical compositional analyses; and the identification of organic remains, such as plants and animals. I look forward to the creation of laboratory networks throughout the region where archaeological materials can be reliably analyzed and compared.

I have been encouraged by the increasing diversity of interests and views represented in *Asian Perspectives*, and the final two papers of this issue illustrate this point. Pradeep Mohanty describes his research on Mesolithic lithic assemblages and settlement patterns in India, where both Americanist and South Asian

archaeological and intellectual traditions are brought together. In the final paper, Jean Green examines two classes of prehistoric Chinese objects—the spindle whorl and *bi*—and suggests a historical, functional, and symbolic linkage between them. Her approach is intriguing because it combines formal and systematic comparison of these kinds of objects with cautious speculation about why such similarities may have occurred.

The papers included in this issue are indicative of the high quality of scholarly research being done on Asian and Pacific prehistory. They also send a message to our colleagues about the diverse role archaeology can play in advancing knowledge about the past. This helps fulfill one of the goals I set for the journal, and I am pleased to have these authors and their works represented in the pages of *Asian Perspectives*.

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