

thankfully, also to engage directly with the evidence in the field and the laboratory.

For those people disappointed not to have more information and discussion about lithic assemblages, they must presumably await the publication of the author's researches at March Hill for which much that has been said in this book will no doubt provide a wholesome context.

Andrew David, English Heritage Archaeology Centre, Fort Cumberland

***Middle Palaeolithic and Middle Stone Age Settlement Systems.* Conard, N.J. & Wendorf, F. (ed.) 1998. International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences, Proceedings of the XIII Congress, Sept. 8-14, Forlì - Italy, Volume 6 - Tome I: 221-326. A.B.A.C.O. Edizioni, Forlì, Italy. ISBN 8886712480. £27.00**

Proceedings of major international conferences like the UISPP have by their nature some inherent limitations: the papers are loosely structured around a common theme, the editing is limited and a reader can be left wondering whether and how the individual components might fit together in a coherent picture of the current state of play on the issue at the heart of the volume. In the book reviewed here these shortcomings are accentuated by the lack of an editors' introduction to the volume, although the first section of Conard's paper could well serve as such. Despite these reservations, the diversity of the contributions to this volume reflects the multiplicity of approaches to the question of European Middle Palaeolithic (hereafter MP) and African Middle Stone Age (hereafter MSA) settlement systems. This is a new field that is still looking to find its footing in both theoretical and methodological terms. Even though the contributions to this volume were written in 1996, most of them are still relevant in the sense that they address issues that continue to be at the heart of heart of research in this sub-field. Although the papers here are by necessity short and the data have had to be presented in summary form, the volume in its entirety can serve as an introduction to a wide range of research on MP and MSA settlement systems and the references given serve well as a guide to further reading on individual projects.

In geographical terms, this volume falls far short of covering all of the Old World. Asia, for example, is not represented at all but for one paper on the Levantine Mousterian. Of the remaining papers, two are on sub-Saharan Africa, one on North Africa and seven on Europe (one additional paper is based entirely on ethnographic material from various continents). Arguably this heavy bias in favour of

Europe is not merely a limitation of the volume but reflects the historical development and the current state of Palaeolithic research dynamics (i.e., availability of rich regional datasets in Europe, disproportionate numbers of researchers working in Europe and a more marked move in Europe beyond chronostratigraphic systematics). It is, however, disappointing that the MSA is covered only by two papers.

Readers of *Lithics* will find this volume particularly relevant to their interests not only because a couple of papers (Rolland, Shea) specifically address the issue of the interpretation of Mousterian lithic assemblage variability in France and the Levant, but also and primarily because lithic finds, due to their durability, often form the basis of discussions of Palaeolithic settlement patterns. In one way or another the papers in this volume address issues such as: (1) high- and/or low density lithic scatters in the landscape and their interpretation, (2) high and low visibility lithic scatters and their relevance to hominid behaviour and/or post-depositional processes, (3) variability in primary flaking technologies and formal toolkits with reference to nature of sites (open-air vs. caves and rockshelters), topographic setting of sites, postulated function of sites, climatic fluctuations, (4) lithic scatters and the structuring of hominid activities within a site or across a region.

The majority of papers in this volume address inter-site relationships and adaptations over a regional scale and only two (Binford, Yellen) focus on intra-site spatial patterns and organisation of activities. In typical processual fashion, Binford moves from 'certain near-constant [...] characteristics of the human species' (p.229), such as posture and anatomy, to projections on the spatial patterning of archaeological debris around hearths and from there to the generalisation that, in contrast to earlier hominids, fully modern humans divide living space in modular units that correspond to family groups. He suggests that this generalisation can be used as a way to separate fully modern human from non-modern human sites. Yellen takes a different route but ends up in a similar point. After a somewhat tedious summary of the taphonomical analysis of a ca. 90,000 years old postulated 'living floor' in eastern Zaire and a short reference to ethnographic data, he concludes that the 'living floor' in questions resulted from a nuclear, family based, pattern of intra-site organisation of activities. The implication (or, the assumption) here is that the MSA evidence from this region reflects modern human behaviour. Considered together these two papers demonstrate that it is difficult to see how generalisations like the one proposed by Binford can do anything other than

confirm our expectations on the development of complexity in hominid behaviour.

Binford's paper also contains an interesting short discussion of ethnographic evidence on the circumstances for the use of rockshelters by hunter-gatherers. This summary ties in well with the first part of Brooks' paper. She first presents a model of the differences between sheltered and open-air sites with reference both to hominid behaviour and the distorting effects of post-depositional processes, and then discusses the discrepancies in behavioural evidence between sheltered and open-air MSA sites.

Building models of hominid behaviour and then using them as a way to interpret regional lithic variability seems to be the methodology used by Rolland, Shea, Wendorf and Schild. The models they construct are based on the local effects of Ice Age climatic conditions and, in the case of Wendorf and Schild, the topographic setting of the sites. Nevertheless, the environment and archaeology of the regions examined (SW France, Levant, eastern Sahara) and the methodologies used are diverse, resulting in three case studies that reflect both the diversity of MP settlement patterns and the multiplicity of archaeological approaches available. Southern France is also examined in Boyle's paper, but on the basis of the faunal evidence. Boyle identifies some intriguing inter-site patterns in hunting and carcass processing practices and in the topographic setting of sites. She does not, however, go on to propose any interpretative models for these patterns, resulting in a paper that reads more as a raw description of the evidence amassed in a database.

The two papers by Conard (Rhineland, Germany) and de Loecker and Roebroeks (Maastricht-Belvédère, Netherlands) address the problem of low-density lithic scatters distributed between high-density patches. Both papers are influenced by Isaac's work in African Early Stone Age sites. De Loecker and Roebroeks postulate a thin "veil of stones" across Maastricht-Belvédère, a background of scatters of isolated artefacts on which the higher-density patches are super-imposed. Therefore, the low-density scatters might give more direct behavioural information since they do not suffer from the palimpsest effect. The scale of analysis is markedly different in Kolen's paper. Using criteria such as habitats selected for hominid occupation, site topography, intra-site organisation of activities and expedient vs. curated lithic technologies, he undertakes a survey of the northern European record of Palaeolithic settlement between 500,000-100,000

BP. He identifies a major change at ca. 300,000 BP (shift to curated technologies and occupation of more diverse environments), and uniformity on either side of that shift.

Finally, two papers by Alhaique et al. (Italy) and Tillet and Bernard-Guelle (the Alps) attempt to combine a site report (Grotta Breuil and Prélétang, respectively) with a discussion of regional settlement patterns. This is done much more successfully in the latter case, where the site excavated challenges the long-standing assumption that there was one uniform Mousterian adaptation to the extreme conditions of Alpine Europe. By contrast, the first paper reads more as a traditional site report with a final half-hearted attempt to address regional settlement patterns only to conclude that not much can be said because rockshelters of the same chronological phase are too far away and the open-air sites closer to the cave are undated.

In addition to a series of regional studies on MP and MSA settlement systems this volume samples the variety of current approaches to Palaeolithic archaeology: from the traditional emphasis on excavated caves and rockshelters to processual behavioural models based on ethnoarchaeological and palaeoenvironmental evidence and to the search for the individual in the Palaeolithic record. As the behaviour of pre-modern hominids is becoming less stereotyped and is allowed room for variability and flexibility, the issue of Palaeolithic settlement patterns is becoming larger in archaeological agendas. Examining data over a regional scale, or analysing intra-site patterns of distribution of activities involves addressing issues that Palaeolithic archaeology has traditionally shied away from: analysing time-averaged sites, integrating evidence from open-air sites with that from caves and rockshelters, and using ethnographic data for the interpretation of the behaviour of pre-modern hominids and of datasets that span thousands of years. Several works in this volume and elsewhere call for a refinement of the chronological resolution of the Palaeolithic data. Notwithstanding the developments in science-based dating techniques, is waiting for more Boxgroves a realistic prospect or should Palaeolithic archaeologists begin to learn how to read palimpsests?

Dimitra Papagianni, Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton, Avenue Campus, Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ