

EDITOR'S CORNER

In the *American Antiquity* office, we refer to this issue of the journal as the “conflict issue.” In it you will find a series of very good reports and articles, but you will discover that a number of these articles represent different sides of a debate, or different interpretations of the same data set. Some of these pieces are comments on articles previously published in *American Antiquity*; others are debates in which both sides are presented in this issue, with additional comments from the opposite side.

It is the opinion of this editor that debate is healthy, and should be encouraged. That said, it is also this editor's opinion that debates need not be dragged out indefinitely. In an attempt to construct a happy medium, this issue includes a somewhat new approach for *American Antiquity*. Two groups of authors, representing different sides of a debate on the significance of specific environmental changes in southern California, were invited to submit separate manuscripts outlining their perspectives (Arnold et al. and Raab and Larson). After review and revision, each article was given to the other group for a comment in response. The two original articles and the two comments are included in this issue.

While my initial impetus for suggesting this approach was the fear that I would be inundated for years by comments going back and forth over a specific article, I think that the outcome is far better than anything that might have happened had the coordination not been encouraged. The debate is now more focused, and the issues are stated more clearly, with the differences clearly marked. The reader can, in one issue, make up his or her own mind. Although a different form of this approach is familiar to readers of *Current Anthropology*, the opportunity to examine two complete “competing” articles in one issue is not common—and it is a condition one might wish especially for the other comments and responses included in this issue (one set devoted to a forum that appeared in this journal in 1994, the other to a contribution to a volume published by the Smithsonian Institution Press in 1995).

Beyond debates, this issue represents a full range of topics, from problems with some of our interpretations of conditions seen in human bone; to simulating length of site occupation by examination of discarded cooking pot refuse; to using stone tools to identify political shifts and variability, as well as social and economic issues; to refinements in dating techniques, demographics, and the use of photogrammetric mapping.

Archaeological research should always be debated openly, and archaeologists will always weigh the issues and their data to compare with similar but perhaps competing opinions. In the heat of research these differences can sometimes take on a personal tone. It is important to remember to keep these disagreements focused on the archaeology and not on the individuals.

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