
Peter Breunig is professor of African Archaeology at the University of Frankfurt/Main. He started his academic career more than 30 years ago in Namibia. Despite shifting his research interest to West Africa later on, Namibia has remained close to his heart and he is a regular visitor to the country, alone or with archaeology students, to explore its rich archaeological heritage. As an internationally recognized expert he is undoubtedly a most appropriate author for an archaeological tourist guide to Namibia.

The main concern with this book, which is also recognized by the author in his preface, is whether such a book should be written at all. A tourist guide is useless without exact location; the aim is to lead tourists to the sites. However, visitors can also pose a threat to cultural heritage. This risk can be minimized by raising awareness of the importance of protecting archaeological sites. Peter Breunig mentions this issue several times, but it would have more appropriate if the paragraph “Schutz der Vergangenheit” had been included in a more prominent position than the preface.

Aside from this principle objection the book can be recommended to any traveller who is interested in the archaeology of this fascinating country. It starts with a comprehensive introduction to African archaeology in general and Namibian archaeology in particular. Short paragraphs deal with the dawn of mankind, a period for which there is no evidence (yet) of human settlement in Namibia. Stone artefacts and rock paintings provide the main evidence for prehistoric human settlement and the chapter about the identification of these finds is therefore most expedient. In this chapter and throughout the entire book all technical terms are clearly explained and therefore easily comprehensible even to the complete layperson.

In the following chapters the characteristics of the main periods of the Stone Age in Southern Africa are outlined, always with the focus on Namibia. Starting with the Early Stone Age, the period of the hand-axes up to the beginning of the colonial period, the reader is presented with an excellent introduction to the Stone Age archaeology of the region. One chapter is devoted to rock art and its interpretation. The author’s writing is always scientifically sound as well as entertaining and lucid.

In the second part 49 archaeological sites, covering the entire spectrum of Namibian prehistory are described. The selection of sites according to their accessibility from the main tourist routes proceeding from the northern parts of the country southwards makes sense. Numerous excellent colour prints complete the description of the sites. It is, however, vexing to see collected artefacts held in hands or arranged on the bonnets of cars or on rocks. This contradicts the appeal not to disturb the context of artefact distribution. The same applies to hands used as a scale touching the walls of rock-painting sites. How many tourists will follow this lead and collect artefacts to take pictures or
use their hands as a scale and unwittingly touch faded rock-paintings? This criticism might sound petty but such points detract from an otherwise excellent book.

The book concludes with a helpful glossary of archaeological terms and an extensive subject index. I strongly recommend the guide to all tourists interested in archaeology, trusting that they will make every effort to avoid damaging these invaluable heritage sites.

Ralf Vogelsang
Institute for Prehistory, University of Cologne