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Fairweather Eden: Life in Britain Half a Million Years Ago as Revealed by the Excavations at Boxgrove

by M. Pitts and M. Roberts

Century, London, 1997

356 pp. (113 figures, 32 plates, index)

ISBN 0-7126-7686-4

£17.99 (cloth)

reviewed by A.M. Chadwick



During my time as an undergraduate, palaeolithic archaeology was one of the subjects that interested me most, and for four weeks during the summer of 1988 I myself volunteered at the Sussex site of Boxgrove that is the subject of this book. In the years since then, my own archaeological interests have moved on, and I have fallen further behind the literature concerning the period. Reading and reviewing this book was, therefore, a rather curious experience for me, for it reminded me of much I had forgotten, but also showed how much research has moved on and how quickly ideas can change in this particular field.

The excavations at Boxgrove have already been published as an English Heritage monograph, and that publication is, presumably, yet another familiar exercise in detailed empirical evidence and scientific erudition. *Fairweather Eden* is clearly an attempt to do something very different chronicling instead the history of the excavation itself.

Chapters on key excavation events and brief sketches of some of the personalities involved are interleaved with other chapters explaining the history of palaeolithic studies in Britain and the world, as well as some of the main debates concerning hominid tool-making, cognitive abilities, and social organisation. In addition, the intricacies of faunal analysis and geological and palaeo-environmental studies are explained in lay terms that even I can understand! This rather non-linear text is

further divided by some fine illustrations showing everything from geological strata and handaxe manufacture to a selection of the artefacts and animal bones recovered during the excavations. Chapter headings are embellished with drawings of some of the animals and birds that made up the faunal assemblage of the area some 500,000 years ago.

The prose style is generally very readable, and there is much rewarding information within the text, and some intriguing speculation. I particularly liked the idea mooted on page 253 that the degree of wear on a soft hammerstone made from an extinct giant deer antler may indicate that it was a valued and highly curated object, which may have been seen as imparting the strength of the animal itself into the flint tools made using it. This may be one of many potentially controversial ideas presented in the book, which argues for a degree of behavioural sophistication amongst Middle Palaeolithic hominids is an idea that would have been deeply unfashionable only a few years ago. This includes evidence that may indicate hunting with wooden projectiles. Although these issues are argued quite convincingly, many arguments against the ideas are absent. Some of the main papers of the last twenty years regarding hominid behaviour and subsistence practices are touched upon, and they are cited in the small but useful bibliography. However, the feel of the book is more one of reasoned polemic than extensive survey of the available literature, though in all fairness, *Fairweather Eden* does not pretend to be such a review. What does seem to be missing, though, is any direct criticism of some of the more contentious claims raised by the Boxgrove project, as well as the response of the project team members to these criticisms. As the monograph itself was only published in 1997 the same year as *Fairweather Eden*, this is perhaps understandable.

One of the most noteworthy portions of *Fairweather Eden* for me was chapter 55. In this, the authors have produced a more experimental piece of writing -- a short narrative of a hominid group, incorporating ideas of hominid behaviour generated by the excavation results. There is much to admire in this short piece, although I felt that it could have explored more issues of hominid behaviour and, for me at least, the style was somehow never quite convincing. Writing these inhabited archaeologies is not easy and there is the obvious danger that embodied

experiential accounts can descend into poorly worded prose little different to the more banal historical fantasy literature, such as the books of Henry Treece or the extremely unbelievable 'bonkbusting' realms of Jean Auel's Upper Palaeolithic sagas. To their credit the authors of *Fairweather Eden* have been able to avoid this.

Where I think *Fairweather Eden* falls down, or at least stumbles, is in its account of the history of the excavations. Inevitably, perhaps, the director of the project, Mark Roberts, is given centre stage, but this is at the expense of other participants in the project. Almost prescient powers of perception and forward-thinking are attributed to Mark Roberts, and some of the book's more purple passages describe these. I suspect that there is much hindsight involved. What we are presented is a picture of a lone archaeological warrior battling against the archaeological establishment. Whilst this may have been true of the project's early years, modern multidisciplinary research projects simply do not work like that. Although of the individuals who contributed to the research undertaken on the site or who worked on the material from it are mentioned, few of them are shown as real figures with their own voices. It would have been much more interesting to have explored these individual contributions and viewpoints in greater depth.

For example, we could have been presented with the different perspectives of those professionally involved with the project, and the many independent and student volunteers. Mark Roberts is a noted shooting and fishing man, and whilst I was at Boxgrove in 1988, wild game constituted a substantial part of the menu (even including a seagull on one memorable and not too successful occasion!). The remains of these creatures were destined for the faunal collection of the assistant director of the project, Simon Parfitt. I can well remember coming across various animal and bird carcasses and body parts bubbling away in rendering pots in obscure corners of the project buildings. This all lent an unusually morbid and, at times, almost macho atmosphere to the proceedings, and I wonder how all this was perceived by the women who have worked on the project, and what their opinions are of the rugged image of Boxgrove Man [sic] the hunter that is presented in *Fairweather Eden*. This perspective is definitely missing from the story of the excavation itself.

All in all, *Fairweather Eden* is an enjoyable book, and an interesting experiment in archaeological writing. It manages to be accessible and entertaining to both those within the discipline and the more general reader, and it is well illustrated, which makes a change from many archaeological publications. There is no doubting the veracity of many of the excavation's findings, and even the more controversial claims sounded convincing to this non-specialist. However, it should be read with a degree of scepticism concerning the foresightedness of some of those involved, and the title of the book is more than a tad over-romantic. Still, heads roll, there are some fine disarticulation sequences, and the beast count is high. I say check it out.

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African Iron Production: A Review of Recent Publications

The Culture and Technology of African Iron Production

by P.R. Schmidt (ed.)

University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL, 1996

338 pp. (bibliography, index)

ISBN 0-8130-1384-4

£40.00 (cloth)

Iron Technology in East Africa: Symbolism, Science, and Archaeology

by P.R. Schmidt

Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1997

328 pp.(bibliography, index)

ISBN 0-8130-1384-4

£40.00 (cloth), £12.96 (paper)

reviewed by [D. Dungworth](#)



This is an interesting time to be researching traditional iron working in Africa. The topic has long attracted interest from Western academics (both in terms of its technology and its symbolism), but there has been a notable increase in the pace of research in the last decade or two. In addition, there is something of a theoretical/methodological realignment going on. Whereas most early research examined just technological or just symbolic elements, recent ethnographies have included thorough studies of complete 're-enactments' of traditional techniques. In many cases, this work has only been possible through interdisciplinary co-operation. The subject is of considerable importance to archaeologists for the light it sheds on the technology, social organisation, and symbolism of early metalworking in Africa and beyond. These two books represent all that is best in the current re-examination of African iron working.

African iron working has been the subject of Western ethnographies for well over a century. The earliest work was often undertaken by missionaries and colonial administrators. The aspect of this industry which provoked the most interest amongst Westerners was the role of magic and symbolism. The often tacit assumption was that African iron working was 'held back' by the ritual surrounding production. This formed part of a wide-ranging 'project' to portray Black African achievements as inferior compared to those of the West. Africans were assumed to be intellectually inferior, and the 'superstition' surrounding iron working was seen as a clear example of this. Some of the early ethnographies were rather perfunctory, with most emphasis on interviews rather than actual observations of smelting and smithing practice.

As traditional African iron working (in particular smelting) declined economically in the twentieth century, so ethnographies became less frequent. The topic has undergone something of a renaissance in the last few decades, however, due in part to the emergence of archaeometallurgy. In particular, the archaeological and scientific study of early iron working in Europe and elsewhere has benefited greatly from an examination of recent practice in Africa. Almost all iron production in Europe before the Middle Ages was carried out using the bloomery (or direct) process in which the iron was obtained from the

ore as a solid (rather than as a liquid, as is modern practice). In Europe, the bloomery process declined after the development of the blast furnace. By the later twentieth century there were some metallurgists who doubted that iron could be regularly obtained by a direct process. Tylecote's (1965) survey of some of the early ethnographic accounts showed that the technique was widely used in Africa in the nineteenth century. The furnaces, metal and waste products described were all clearly produced by the direct process. Tylecote and his contemporaries, however, showed little or no interest in rituals associated with iron working. Attention was directed exclusively on technological aspects.

Archaeological interest in metal working also focused on the social organisation of metal working and the social standing of the smith. This derived in large part from Childe's influential model of European Bronze Age society (Childe 1942). Childe suggested that smiths in Bronze Age Europe were mobile; they had few social ties and so could travel between different social groups, selling their wares across wide areas. The idea that smiths could operate 'outside' society in such a way received a substantial blow with the publication of Rowlands (1971) survey of the social standing of smiths in African societies (taken from a survey of the then available literature).

The last two decades have seen an enormous increase in interest in traditional iron working in Africa. This recent interest differs from that seen previously in the ways that the research is carried out and how the subject is conceptualised. Despite the decline of traditional African iron working a number of researchers (e.g. Avery, Barndon, Celis, Childs, David, de Barros, de Maret, Echard, Fowler, Goucher, Herbert, Killick, McNaughton, Schmidt, and van der Merwe) have successfully persuaded indigenous groups to carry out iron smelting and smithing (in many different locations across sub-Saharan Africa). In many cases, smelting ceased only a generation or two ago, but by drawing on the knowledge of those who smelted in their youth, as well as the knowledge of younger smiths, it has been possible to smelt ore and produce bloomery iron and steel according to traditional methods. The core of recent field work on traditional iron smelting and smithing has been the direct observation of the processes. This has often been enriched by the co-operation of specialists from many different

academic fields (especially ethnography and metallurgy). This ethnography is extremely important as much of the detailed technological and ritual knowledge of traditional African iron working (especially smelting) is dying out with its last practitioners. In a sense, this is 'rescue ethnography'. The ethnography which is carried out is sophisticated, however, and does not attempt to reconstruct iron working as a 'timeless' practice free from outside (especially Western) influence. Many of the recent ethnographic surveys of iron working have explicitly addressed the changes in metal working forced by changing social and economic conditions in recent centuries.

The Culture and Technology of African Iron Production (hereafter *Culture and Technology*) contains a series of papers on African iron working: some are taken from a conference in 1988, while others are reprints or updates of important papers published elsewhere. Schmidt's introduction places the various papers within a wider context which ranges over changes in how iron working in Africa has been conceptualised by Western scholars, including the role of technology and ritual. De Maret and Thiery review the available evidence for 'How old is the Iron Age in Central Africa?'. The increased excavation of archaeological sites in Africa and the availability of radiocarbon dating has meant that data relevant to this question have burgeoned in recent years. When very little data were available the answer to this question was straight forward. As more data become available the picture is (at least initially) less clear. It seems that iron working was underway in the Gulf of Guinea and the interlacustrine area by the middle of the first millennium BC. There are a few earlier dates (second millennium BC) but these are regarded sceptically at the moment. The next three papers describe iron smelting in two different African societies. In each case local people are persuaded to reconstruct iron smelting technologies which have been abandoned in the last generation or two. Such rescue ethnography may involve imperfectly remembered practices, but it is still important, as it may be impossible to reconstruct in a few generations. Goucher and Herbert present a study of Bassari smelting which was on a sufficient scale to be described as 'proto-industrial' on the eve of colonial conquest. Research on Bassari iron smelting has been relatively intense (e.g. two recent University of California at Los Angeles doctorates). The technology and rituals of iron smelting

amongst the Bassari were adapted to achieve high levels of production (e.g. natural draught and a relaxation of many of the taboos against female participation). Barndon describes how the part-time iron smelters of Ufipa in western Tanzania used a complex technology involving tall forced-draught furnaces for the initial reduction, with a much smaller furnace for bloom purification and consolidation. Barndon pays particular attention to how the technological solutions to Fipa iron smelting are embedded within their culture. The explanations of the symbolic power of rituals draw on associations and relationships found in other contexts of the society. Schmidt's chapter on the Barongo provides a fascinating study of a group who seem to have emerged as a result of social and economic upheaval in the wake of the slave trade. The Barongo survived as iron smelters in western Tanzania longer than many other smelting groups because of the abundant local resources (especially ore and wood) and their remoteness from imported scrap iron and steel. Schmidt argues that many aspects of Barongo iron smelting technology and ritual are drawn from a variety of different sources, reflecting the varied origins of the Barongo themselves. Schmidt employs the concept of *bricolage* to help explain how Barongo iron smelters select solutions from a wide range of technological and ritual options (a theme which is explored in more depth in *Iron Working in East Africa*).

The chapter by David and Robertson offers a welcome examination of iron smithing rather than smelting. The ways in which Montagnard and Muslim smiths in northern Cameroon have responded to changes in the economic landscape (in particular the introduction of cheap imported scrap iron and steel) are explored in great detail. Childs and Dewey examine the ways in which iron was smithed in ancient and modern Zaire and Zimbabwe. Blooms were extensively hammered to produce a series of distinctively shaped axes, some of which were utilitarian while others were invested with considerable symbolic meaning (in particular political power).

A series of papers follows which discusses the extent to which a distinctive and innovative iron smelting technology developed in north-western Tanzania. The idea that placing the greater part of tuyères inside the furnace allowed the air introduced to the furnace to be pre-

heated (and so increasing the temperature reached inside the furnace) was first put forward by Schmidt and Avery in a 1978 article in *Science*. This is reprinted here with a few extra clarifications. This is followed by an updated version of a 1985 article by Schmidt and Childs on the excavation of early iron working sites along the western shores of Lake Victoria (originally published in *African Archaeological Review*, 1985). A critique of the 'pre-heating hypothesis' by Rehder and a reply by Avery and Schmidt from the *Journal of Field Archaeology* (1985) are reprinted here as a single chapter.

This is followed by further criticisms by Killick and defence by Avery and Schmidt. Schmidt and Avery propose that a technologically advanced mode of iron smelting arose in north-western Tanzania in the first millennium BC. Archaeological evidence from the early Iron Age sites at Rugomora Mahe and Kemondo Bay indicate that iron smelting slags were formed at temperatures of at least 1350°-1400° C. This is at least 100° C higher than that implied for European bloomery furnaces. The appearance of the tuyères from these sites (reduced and vitrified on the outer surfaces) suggested that the greater part of the tuyères had been placed inside the furnace and thus allowed the air being forced in to be pre-heated. Pre-heating allowed higher temperatures to be attained, which ensured more efficient reduction with less use of fuel, as well as the reduction of relatively poor ores. A bloom was also excavated from one of the Kemondo Bay furnaces. It was placed in what must have been a ritual context in a small pit dug into the base of the furnace. Metallography showed that this bloom was of steel rather than iron. The pre-heating hypothesis put forward by Schmidt and Avery explained the nature of the used tuyères, how the slags were formed and why steel rather than iron was formed. Schmidt and Avery were aware that their findings had considerable ramifications for the way in which iron and steel production in Africa was viewed: they demonstrated that Africans were capable of considerable technological achievement.

Schmidt and Avery chose to test their pre-heating hypothesis in an authentic environment by observing traditional iron smelting in north-western Tanzania. By observing Haya iron smelting, Avery and Schmidt hoped that many technological aspects of iron smelting may

have remained unchanged in the area over two millennia or more. The Haya proceeded to smelt with a furnace, into which were placed the tuyères. Avery and Schmidt measured high temperatures inside the furnace -- in excess of 1820° C at one point. Schmidt and Avery's pre-heating hypothesis is controversial; it overturns many pre-existing and deep-seated notions about the development (or lack of development) of African technology. Rehder's criticism of the pre-heating hypothesis is based primarily on a mathematical model using thermodynamic theory and data. Rehder argues that Haya pre-heating could amount to little more than an extra 10° C, which would have little or no effect on the slags or metal produced. Avery, Schmidt, Rehder, and Killick argue the pre-heating hypothesis backward and forward. It is clear that there are serious technical and practical impediments to the accurate measurement of air temperatures inside tuyères and furnaces and to the production of thermodynamic models of the chemical and physical reactions which take place. In particular, thermocouples placed inside tuyères may be heated more easily than the air flowing past them and so may indicate a higher degree of 'pre-heating' than is actually the case. Attempts to model pre-heating thermodynamically (both by Rehder and by Avery and Schmidt) are less than satisfactory as the valveless bellows lead to an unsteady and turbulent forced draught. On balance, the nature of the slag and the tuyères indicate that pre-heating did occur. Rehder's and Killick's criticisms deserve careful consideration but are not powerful enough to disprove the pre-heating hypothesis.

In the final chapter in the book, Childs presents the detailed scientific examination of ores, slag, and metal from ancient and recent iron smelting in north-western Tanzania. The study of the microstructure of the ores and slags provides support for Schmidt and Avery's interpretation of Haya and earlier smelting procedures. Childs also recognises that, while many blooms are made from steel (containing significant levels of phosphorous *and* carbon), finished artefacts are usually made from phosphoric iron. She suggests that the difficulties of working phosphoric steel led smiths to decarburise the blooms regularly (but not exclusively) before working.

The second book reviewed here, *Iron Technology in East Africa; Symbolism, Science, and Archaeology*, covers some of the same topics

discussed in *Culture and Technology*, but the approach is somewhat different. I knew this book was rather special as soon as I got it; a quick flick through showed that it managed to do justice to complex features of both the technology *and* the symbolism of African iron working. This is exemplified by the use of clear photomicrographs and the use of terms such as *bricolage* to explain the wide variety of sources drawn upon in the development of ritual.

Iron Technology in East Africa represents several decades of research by Schmidt and others amongst the Haya of north-western Tanzania. The book provides a detailed account of the 'experimental ethnoarchaeology' conducted to determine how the Haya smelted iron and specifically tests the pre-heating hypothesis. This book is about much more as well. Schmidt had already used archaeological and ethnohistorical methods to reconstruct Iron Age settlement and history around Lake Victoria. In *Iron Technology in East Africa*, Schmidt draws on his considerable knowledge of the local cultures to place iron smelting in its specific milieu. In doing so, Schmidt provides a particularly 'thick' (Geertz 1973) account of iron smelting as a technological, social, and symbolic process.

The first three chapters introduce the subject and provide a discussion of Haya history and the history of Western study of African iron smelting. Schmidt is at pains to stress that he wants to use a critical methodology to 'deconstruct Western representations about African iron technology' (4). The fourth chapter 'Ethnoarchaeology and *bricolage*' provides a detailed ethnography of Haya iron smelting based on the re-enactment of iron smelting. The Haya had conducted iron smelting regularly until the 1950s, and Schmidt managed to persuade some elders who had smelted in their youth, as well as some younger iron smiths, to conduct smelts for him. Schmidt admits that the results were 'interactive performances conducted in an environment far removed from experience, routine, and memory' (12), but shows sufficient sympathy for technological, social, and symbolic aspects of the process to yield a detailed and reflexive account of iron smelting. Some of the difficulties which Schmidt had to negotiate illustrate how easily one might form a simplistic model of 'traditional' iron smelting. Since iron smelting had been abandoned more than a generation before,

there was initially, at least, very little local interest in the project. The smelters were reticent about rituals associated with smelting, primarily because they were associated with traditional religions which were disapproved of by the local Christian church.

Schmidt's most distinctive insight into the Haya smelting process is the way in which the smelters had a variety of technological and ritual solutions, or 'protocols', which could be deployed when the process was not as successful as expected. Schmidt identifies the process whereby smelters chose some protocols and not others as *bricolage* (expanding on Lévi-Strauss and Lemonnier). The technological and the ritual protocols were often so closely bound together that they could not be separated easily. Altering ritual aspects of a smelt often altered the technology of the smelt. In this way, ritual may actually have had a liberating effect, as opposed to the traditional notion that African iron smelting (and technology in general) was held back by 'superstition'.

Following this are three chapters which provide a detailed scientific analysis of the smelting process, its waste materials and its primary product, as practised by the Haya and as seen from the excavation of early Iron Age sites in the area. This is based in large part on the metallographic work of Terry Childs with some input from Donald Avery. The construction and performance of the tuyères (seen as crucial in the 'pre-heating hypothesis') are discussed at some length.

Chapter eight draws on an analysis of the spatial organisation of Haya smelting and smithing to develop a 'middle-range theory' for the interpretation of archaeological features on early Iron Age smelting and smithing sites. Chapter nine explores structuring principals in Haya song and myth in order to aid in understanding the symbolism of iron and iron working. Iron has long been associated with power and fertility in Bantu-speaking Africa. By drawing on his already considerable knowledge of Haya history, Schmidt is able to construct a detailed analysis of the relationships between iron, iron production, human sexual reproduction, social reproduction, and social power. Such relationships have recently been explored by Herbert (1993), but Schmidt's account benefits from examining a restricted geographical and social space, and thus does not 'smooth out' regional differences, and attempts to see how symbolic relationships are manipulated over

time, rather than construct some idealised ethnographic present. In chapter 10, Schmidt examines some of the more comprehensive ethnographic accounts of iron smelting from elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. This and the last chapter help to produce a coherent picture of the employment of technological and ritual protocols in smelting, which appear to have a considerable history in the region. In particular, ritual offerings are sometimes placed in a tiny pit within both Haya and early Iron Age smelting pits. The rituals associated with iron working can now be seen as an essential part of the search for technological solutions and as integrated into wider attempts to explain the relationships between people and their social and natural environment.

These two books together provide an excellent insight into African iron working. It is clear that the emerging picture of African iron working is a complex one. This is achieved by employing sympathetic ethnographic accounts based on actual practice and indigenous explanations of that practice, as well as rigorous scientific analysis of the practice and its products. Such approaches show that the technology employed was sophisticated and also place that technology within a wider symbolic and social context. We can also now see that African iron working is subject to significant regional and chronological variation. The scope of these two books is almost breath-taking. If they represent the current state of archaeometallurgy and in particular its relationship with ethnography, then the discipline has definitely come of age. I have no hesitation in recommending both of these books to anyone interested in archaeometallurgy, ethnography, the history of technology, African archaeology, and related disciplines.

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About the reviewer

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Excavating Occaneechi Town: Archaeology of an Eighteenth-Century Indian Village in North Carolina
edited by R.P. Stephen Davis, Jr, P.C. Livingood, H. Trawick Ward, and V.P. Steponaitis

Chapel Hill, [University of North Carolina Press](#), 1998

CD-ROM with 8-page booklet

ISBN 0-8078-6503-6

\$39.95 (Microsoft Windows® 3.1 or Windows 95® compatible)

reviewed by M.A. Eccleston



Excavating Occaneechi Town is a fully electronic publication of the excavation reports and post-excavation analysis of objects from a small colonial-period village of the Occaneechi tribe, on the banks of the Eno River in North Carolina, USA. The report contains plans and photographs of all contexts (nearly 1,000), searchable lists of all finds

(some 100,000!), numerous photographs of important objects, and several video-clips.

The CD has several installation options, from 'compact' to education to the full-fledged professional versions (requiring about 25 MB of disk space). The *Main Menu* of the Professional Version contains ten clickable buttons that allow one easily to navigate the various sections of the report. The choices are: **Getting Started, Introduction, Contents, Background, Excavations, Archaeology Primer, Artifacts, Food Remains, Interpretations, and Electronic Dig.**

Getting Started gives the user a brief introduction of the format of the CD and then provides an *Annotated Guide*. This section gives a concise abstract of each section of the CD and introduces the user to the hyper-link capability of the multimedia presentation. Like the Worldwide Web, this allows the user to simply click on highlighted text for instant access to the various sections of the publication.

As the authors mention in **Getting Started**, this CD is designed with three different audiences in mind: '(1) Scholars who need a complete record of archaeological findings from the Fredricks Site (the name archaeologists use to refer to "Occaneechi Town"); (2) interested laypersons who wish to delve into the archaeology of the historic Occaneechi tribe; and (3) students who want to learn more about how archaeologists excavate'. With these varied audiences in mind, it is suggested that one should begin with the **Archaeology Primer**.

Archaeology Primer is probably of most use to the second and third groups mentioned above, as it gives a 25-part, illustrated, step-by-step guide to excavating a site. Every page of information is illustrated and includes five video-clips, photographs, and descriptions of all major features, and artefact types found at the site. This section would be excellent for teaching students ranging from primary-school age to undergraduates at university with no prior excavation experience. The video-clips used are particularly useful for demonstrating certain key aspects of the excavation process. If a picture tells a thousand words, these movies certainly convey several thousand.

When one progresses to the **Excavations** section of the report, a full site plan is presented to the user. This is fully interactive, allowing one to point and click on any feature in the plan for a more detailed description of the feature. When a feature or structure is selected a new menu appears with several options. Generally, one is presented with a plan and section drawing of the feature and several photographs showing different stages of excavation. There are also clickable buttons that allow one to read the archaeological description of the feature, as well as a list of artefacts from each context within that feature.

The 'Description' window of each feature names the author, and gives a general description of each context within that feature and an interpretation of its function. A list of artefacts from each context is also given, with hyper-links to the object data bases. This, I believe, is one of the best features of this publication. By simply clicking on the object that is of interest, a link is made directly into the data base and the particular object that you clicked on is highlighted. Once inside the data base, it is then possible to carry out any number of search options based on the data base fields. This enables one to search for all artefacts of this type and list the features in which they are found. This can allow a researcher to do some preliminary spatial distribution analysis of object types simply and quickly, without having to pore over the entire data base by hand, as one would have to do in a traditional paper publication.

This publication seems to fulfil its stated objectives very well. The detailed archaeological information and interpretation is easy to navigate and allows the serious researcher to access the specialist reports, as well as executing relatively complex searches of the data base. The non-specialist user is able to get a taste of archaeological publication and is able to access the information in a user-friendly and highly graphical manner. The educator is able to use the video-clips and images provided in a manner that certainly seems suitable as an introduction for younger children and a more serious attempt at an overview for the senior high school student or junior undergraduate. The **Electronic Dig**, while being fun, also gives students an appreciation of the constraints of running a project to a budget -- though I suspect

that professional archaeologists will alleviate their frustrations by leaving this in its default setting, 'unlimited'.

I hope that all excavation directors consider publishing their sites in this way. Although it is unlikely to replace more traditional methods of publication for some time, there is a lot of sense in presenting a large amount of data in this format. Combined with the educational value of the Archaeological Primer and the **Electronic Dig**, this is certainly an innovative method of publication that should be seriously considered as the way forward in archaeological publication.

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Routledge Readers in Archaeology

series edited by David S. Whitley

Reader in Archaeological Theory: Post-Processual and Cognitive Approaches (ed. D.S. Whitley)

Routledge, London, 1998

xvi + 347 pp. (figures, index)

ISBN 0-415-14159-1

£55.00 (cloth), £16.99 (paper)

Reader in Gender Archaeology (eds K. Hays-Gilpin and D.S. Whitley)

Routledge, London, 1998

xvi + 383 pp. (figures, glossary, index)

ISBN 0-415-17360-4

£18.99 (paper)

reviewed by M.F. Lane



In the last few years, we have become accustomed to the inauguration of new archaeological series, sometimes in the form of monographs but more often as edited compilations. The bookstore shelves are packed with volumes in standard formats, identifiable at a glance only by a pinstripe or halftone shading differently hued from that of its siblings.

Routledge has started yet another line in this growing community of samplers, its Readers in Archaeology, the first two of which are the *Reader in Archaeological Theory: Post-Processual and Cognitive Approaches* and the *Reader in Gender Archaeology*, published simultaneously this year. The editor of the series is David S. Whitley, a lecturer at the University of California at Los Angeles, the US representative to the rock art committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and an archaeologist with some experience in cultural resource management (CRM).

One might wonder why one should select these two readers from the shelves, given the proliferation of other theoretical collations, and given that hardly a year has passed since Blackwell published R.W. Preucel and I. Hodder's *Contemporary Archaeology in Theory and Practice: A Reader* (1996; part of the look-alike Social Archaeology series). I think there are several reasons. Firstly, if we are to believe the prefaces of the volumes, the series editor intends for them to be introductory textbooks for 'students', particularly 'undergraduates and non-specialists'. Certainly, they would serve well as university textbooks, and the reference to non-specialists seems to be a gesture toward broadening the field of archaeological discourse or drawing in practitioners from other disciplines. Secondly, perhaps toward this latter end and in the interest of promoting debate, the Readers, especially that on the archaeology of gender, consist of articles by authors from a number of countries, including, importantly, some from both sides of the Atlantic. These articles represent several subdisciplinary fields and different, even disparate, methodological and theoretical schools.

Each volume consists of a general introduction by the editors, followed by a several sections of two or three chapters each. Within this structure, the editors have attempted to arrange the material logically. The first few chapters outline the terms of discussion, and these are succeeded by chapters detailing arguments, instances, and differing interpretations, ending in essays on the deeper implication of the trends in question. Every section is also preceded by brief editorial commentary.

David Whitley is the sole editor of the *Reader in Archaeological Theory*. This volume comprises 16 articles, most of which date to the last decade. As Whitley makes clear in his preface, he has made a deliberate

and, to my mind, admirable effort to make the majority of articles works by archaeologists working in North America, in order to combat what he perceives as a pervasive attitude among scholars on that continent of regarding post-processualism (including most 'cognitive' approaches) as a European -- mainly British -- trend of little relevance to their studies. Whitley is providing an important lesson in this, since such rejection belies the universalist pretensions of many processualists among them, based, as the dismissal often is, on arguments that the archaeological record or archaeological pragmatics are considerably different in North America. I think there may be a lesson for archaeologists in Britain and Europe, as well, to the extent that they have developed their own approaches in relatively limited regions and may have little notion of what is happening in North American archaeology, even when parallel critiques and theoretical debates have developed on the other side of the ocean.

Whitley recognises that 'post-processual' is a vague term, and he defines it broadly to include diverse 'interpretative', anthropologically oriented, and social historical archaeologies. He defines 'cognitive archaeology' so as to include structuralist theories. His introduction explains why he has paired post-processual and cognitive archaeologies in this Reader. Not only does he consider them inimical to the positivism which, as has been argued ad nauseam elsewhere, characterised so much of processual archaeology, but he also thinks that they both confront the special dangers of *behaviourism*. Behaviourism is the theory that human behaviour, including mental and emotional activity, is determined by the environment. He seems to believe, as a consequence, that there can be productive exchanges between the two approaches. Citing Hodder (1987) he argues that at the 'simplest level' post-processual trends represent archaeologists' efforts to catch up with changes in social and critical theory in the past few decades. If irony is to be found here, it is in Whitley's apparent regard of cognitive science as breaking ground only recently, while, in fact, there have been decades of cognitivist/rationalist critiques of empiricism (by Chomsky, Popper, and Quine, among others; q.v. Morick 1980). Although he does allude to Chomskyan transformational and generative theory as an American 'alternative' to French structuralism, post-processualists, for the most

part, still ignore these critiques, the argumentative form and rhetoric of which are quite different from those which they have adopted.

Whitley remarks that cognitive approaches do not reject traditional scientific methodology, and he notes, as others have, that self-described post-processual and interpretative archaeologists are highly critical, if not dismissive, of 'science'. He seems to ally himself with the 'moderates' (p. 15 ff.) in the interminable debate about the degrees and pernicious potential of 'relativism' in post-processual archaeologies, opting for a grudging political compromise between a presumably totalitarian Science and thoroughly unaccountable relativism. In this respect, he disappoints me. Granted that there are irreconcilable differences between processual and post-processual approaches, he seems to be misled by caricatures of both of them, based on some of the more brainless and irresponsible comments of their respective exponents. Thus he has been brought to the naive position of trying to make both sides in the debate happy, by handling them in separate cages, rather than trying to discover points there might be in a dialectic between them, or simply rejecting one side (or both sides). Such attempts at compartmentalisation, like Pragmatists' sharp distinction between 'public' and 'private' life, promise unhappy results at best and politically combustible outcomes at worst.

Following the introductory chapter is a section comprising three much cited, if not well known, articles: Flannery and Marcus's 'Cognitive archaeology', Leone's 'Symbolic, structural, and critical archaeology', and Shanks and Hodder's 'Processual, postprocessual and interpretive archaeologies'. Some would consider the first of these rather processualist, given its emphasis on positive evidence and the boundaries it draws between cosmology, religion, ideology, and iconography (albeit treated in a 'holistic' manner), but the chapter goes some small way toward pointing archaeologists in the direction of the classes of evidence they should consider in reconstructing past ideologies and social institutions. The second chapter, originally published in 1986, is Leone's exhortation that we try constantly to tease the ideology out of our archaeological practices, especially as they are linked to colonialism and capitalism: 'to write the history of domination and resistance, which must by definition include the use of archaeology

itself'. The last article sketches out the elements of the 'act of interpretation', as it pertains to material culture, and contains Shanks and Hodder's famous distinction, following Bhaskar (1979), between *epistemic* relativism (holding that knowledge is particular to a time and culture) and *judgemental* relativism (claiming that all forms of knowledge are equally valid), the latter of which they implicitly reject.

Hosler's 'Sound, color and meaning in metallurgy' starts the section entitled 'The Meanings of Things'. It is a well documented and clearly argued example of how, in human society, things both *do* something and *mean* something, and both their functions and meaning can be read in their various qualities. (She has presented her study of pre-Columbian West Mexico at length in a book [Hosler 1994].) In the same section, Clarkson's 'archaeological imaginings' of the 'geoglyphs' at Nazca in Peru almost take the form of confessions of a positivist. He criticises 'Euro-derived' concepts of landscape as an empty stage upon which social systems play themselves out, and of 'textuality', especially in a visual sense. In relation to this last point, he quotes Pickles (1992), who calls for a 'theory of writing and reading which moves beyond naive empiricism and representationalism' -- a call which I heartily applaud.

Two chapters on 'Prehistoric Cognition' follow. The first, by Mithen, outlines the 'modular' theory of cognition (or the theory of 'multiple intelligences') as developed by various cognitive scientists, and applies it to a critique of cognitive 'thresholds', as hypothesised by Binford (1985), Whallon (1989), and others, which are supposed to account for stepwise changes in human social organisation. He gives special emphasis to the role recognising 'visual symbolism', among other modes of intelligence that have gradually, each along its own trajectory, become integrated in human beings. Mithen's contribution is followed by Lewis-Williams's article on finding valid measures of analogy, in which he decides that the mental wiring that is the basis of sense-deprived hallucination is an 'enabling mechanism' which gives us a baseline for studying parallels between the forms of certain kinds of depiction in different societies at different points in time.

Works by Peebles and Cobb make up the section on 'Archaeology and History'. A quotation of Peebles's well crafted prose provides the premise of the first:

I shall argue that prehistory must be in some measure both art and science, in which the latter is embedded in the former. It can be more of one than the other, it can choose to be one rather than the other, but it cannot choose to be neither the one nor the other (183).

He goes on to say he believes that any 'hybrid' will be infertile, resulting only in relativism, solipsism, and nihilism. Peebles is an advocate of the French *Annalistes* school of historiography, which pays special attention to the multiple, embedded scales of human history, and his article is an interesting study in how what archaeologists do not read -- including the eponymous historical journal *Annales* -- shapes their discourse. Moreover, Peebles's quotation of an article by the archaeologist Leroi-Gourhan published in *Annales* in 1974 in *French* serves as a lesson in how archaeologists who read only what is in their native language can be similarly limited. The second article in the section is an application of *Annaliste* concepts of 'cyclical change' and the *longue durée* (ultra-lifetime changes, often not perceptible to individual) to theories of social reproduction in the prehistory of the mid-continental United States.

The two constituents of the 'Gendering the Past' section are also found in the *Reader in Gender Archaeology*: Watson and Kennedy's 'The development of horticulture in the eastern woodlands of North America' and Knapp's 'Boys will be boys: masculinist approaches to a gendered archaeology'. Watson and Kennedy's elegant piece first appeared in Gero and Conkey's *Engendering Archaeology* (1991). It uses the very logic of certain theories of male invention of horticulture in North America to support the case for women as innovators and cultivators. Basically, anyone who has not read it yet should; it is the kind of work that should make the most prudish positivists check their premises. Despite what one might make of its title, Knapp's contribution is an assault on 'remedial feminism' -- the substitution of a female-centred for a male-centred archaeology, or an 'add women and stir' treatment of the field -- which he opposes in favour of a more radical approach toward gender dynamics. He argues, inter alia, that if feminism has not made it incumbent upon us (especially men) to rethink *masculinity*, then it has made no real advances at all.

'Ideology and Social Theory' comprises articles by the volume's editor and by McGuire and Saitta. Whitley's piece on rock art in the American Great Basin makes several important points, which echo what Clarkson has written (see above), including the case that rock art is not representational but rather *mediates* social relations, that 'text' as a metaphor for examining material culture is problematic because 'reading' means different things to different people, and that landscapes can be highly conceptual, sometimes thought of as containing intangible 'powers' (as opposed to structured in an immediately visual manner, as some landscape archaeologists presuppose). McGuire and Saitta's re-examination of the terms of the debate in 1980s about social stratification and hierarchy in the Pueblo societies of the American South-West begins with a condemnation of the dichotomous thinking that results from processualism and offers as an alternative a sketch of dialectical epistemology and method. Following this tack and building upon earlier work by Saitta (1994), they suggest that 'communal hierarchies' without permanent exploitative 'classes' are possible in Pueblo and other societies -- a thesis that bears upon the [article which he co-authored for this issue of *assemblage*](#).

The final section of the *Reader in Archaeological Theory* concerns 'Archaeology and Social Responsibility'. Whitley's preface to this section illustrates neatly the contradiction which processual archaeologists worked themselves into by trying to separate science from politics: even while they were insisting that their archaeology was 'value-neutral' and apolitical, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAPGRA) was passed, which discomfited many of them. Some interpreted it as vengeful measure by Native Americans or just a perverse exercise in making their lives difficult. Yet it was precisely because they tried to compartmentalise their lives -- raising a partition between their archaeological and political activities -- that the US Congress (not even Native Americans directly) enacted the NAPGRA. As Leone predicted some years ago (1991), their practice has become less and less socially relevant, in spite of their splendid scientific and technological raiment, because they continue to keep their heads in the sand.

The section itself includes Tilley's 'Archaeology as socio-political action in the present', originally published in 1989, which is at least as relevant today as it was nearly a decade ago. 'New Archaeology' or processual archaeology is 'scientific', he argues, justified by 'instrumental' reason and driven by calculable rewards -- a profoundly technocratic, even capitalistic attitude toward the world, which is reflected in their models of prehistoric social interaction. This argument in itself, one might think, would militate against those who would insist that their science is 'neutral'. Processualist theories of social evolution driven by natural selection are uninteresting and unhelpful: 'adaptation' in social evolutionary theory is the 'cause, consequence, and outcome of change' (p. 313); societies are thought either to have adapted or not, which is not an explanation of social change. Tilley criticises museums as receptacles of monotonous commoditised fragments of the past, out of context and presented as reified value. In some ways, I think that the situation has become worse. Under neo-liberal economic regimes, tourism and the 'heritage industry' have become increasingly important parts of the economic service sector. There are now 'heritage' sites where one can have all the superficial multiculturalism and crass populism a bonus cheque can buy: photographic essays on inner city housing projects inhabited by quaint 'ethnic minorities' (less race riots), carefully sanitised exhibits of 'everyday life' in different neighbourhoods (but not of urban planning for population control), and taped 'oral histories' of the when the city was a 'boom town' (where now the warehouses have been converted into guarded condominiums and the wharves are full of boutiques and 'sports bars'). To be sure, this is just commodity diversification, but the commodities are wrapped up in more glamorous packets and all the more insidious for it.

This final section (and the volume) ends with a short essay by Gary White Deer, a Choctaw author and Keeper of the nation's treasures. It begins with a poignant example of how the very people who respect Westminster Abbey as a sacralised archaeological site, in which even photography is forbidden, would deny the same lofty status to a Native American burial ground. He also brings up the contest in Alabama, USA, about whether Native American skeletal remains should be repatriated, the side opposed arguing that they might one day be used in cancer research. There are shades of the Human Genome Diversity

Project, headed by Luca Cavalli-Sforza, well known in archaeological circles and notorious among indigenous peoples for suggesting their genomes be quarried and 'immortalised' before they become extinct (q.v. ['Patenting people'](#) by the Rural Advancement Foundation International). If I have a quibble with this volume, it is because it does not include enough on CRM, the impact of archaeology on indigenous and other oppressed peoples, the archaeology of political economy, and (not least) the political economy of archaeology.

David Whitley had a collaborator in editing the *Reader in Gender Archaeology*: Kelley Hays-Gilpin, an associate professor of archaeology at Northern Arizona State University who specialises in ceramics and 'visual arts' in the South-West of the US. This Reader consists of 21 articles, divided into seven sections, which range from an introduction to 'Sex, Gender and Archaeology' to 'Human Origins', through several closely related sections pertaining to gender distinctions, dynamics, hierarchies, and end with examples of 'New Narratives [and] New Visions'. Following the prefatory acknowledgements is a short glossary spelling out some of the common gender-ethnographic terms used throughout the book. Hays-Gilpin and Whitley, in their introductory chapter, comment on the frustrating state of gender archaeology: although there have been several international conferences on the topic (Wedge in 1988, Chacmool in 1989, Boone and Women in Archaeology both in 1991, and Gender and Material Culture in 1994), little progress has been made in the field, and proponents find themselves levelling the same criticisms and repeating the same arguments. This is not because their concerns have been sufficiently answered, and the answers ignored. The binary classification of male/female, even for 'non-sexed' material culture, has not been roundly deconstructed in the strict sense: either man/masculinity has been considered dominant, or, in lieu of a corrective, the past is regarded as inhabited by genderless beings. Hays-Gilpin and Whitley suggest the expansion of 'womanist' studies in archaeology, subsuming both feminist agendas and gender studies, as a strategy for tackling this obstacle to the archaeology of gender. I hope that other works published in the last year, such as Nelson's *Gender in Archaeology* (1997) and Moore and Scott's *Invisible People and Processes* (1997), will help further to promulgate these issues and promote debate.

As if to illustrate how much remains to be done, the next chapter is Conkey and Spector's renowned 'Archaeology and the study of gender', first published in 1984. Like Tilley's (1989) article in the *Reader in Archaeological Theory*, this piece seems urgently relevant, though was written nearly 15 years ago. Conkey and Spector's article encompasses most of the issues that are revisited in later chapters of the *Reader in Gender Archaeology*. They point out that many archaeologists who would be careful in the use of ethnographic analogy when interpreting archaeological evidence are not so cautious when assuming gender associations. Part of the problem stems from the historic tendency in ethnography (and other fields) to regard the men or male activity as normative, complete, manifestly evident, and reliable. Ethnographers have dealt with women and female activity only as they relate to (or fall short of) that of their male counterparts -- a persistent problem, as seen today in women bearing their partners' names as epithets (whether surnames or references like 'Jack's Jill'). Part of the problem surely also stems from male dominance in the field of archaeology. Processualists have trammelled themselves in contradiction trying, in the first instance, to refrain from employing ethnographic analogies of social organisation and then treating sex/gender as an 'equal' and unproblematic factor in the creation of the archaeological record (q.v. Binford and Binford 1968). Furthermore, the authors argue, even if we are to treat gender roles as an 'elementary structure' of human society, it should not imply that they are static or the same in every place. In fact, our intimate (but sometimes silent) knowledge of the complexity of gender roles and relations seems to be basis for overcoming the much noted 'disjuncture' between small-scale fragmentary remains and theoretical, 'systemic' relationships. Conkey and Spector therefore proffer a summary 'task differentiation framework' in which the social, temporal, spatial, and material aspects of archaeological evidence are taken into account.

This fundamental chapter is followed by Gilchrist's 'Women's archaeology' in which she outlines the evidence of 'androcentrism' in archaeology and then marshals arguments with which to refute it. Importantly, she notes that many post-processualist concepts of 'agency' are based on modern masculine identity; although it is presented as an idea of a *gender-neutral individual*, it is still doubly in error by neglecting

gendered experience and making assumptions about contemporary, individualistic identity. She argues that gender must be considered a central concept, or 'structuring principle', in archaeological theory. Wylie's contribution to this volume 'The interplay of evidential constraints and political interests' -- which, of all the chapters, interested me the most -- builds upon Gilchrist's themes. She asks incisive questions: why has gender archaeology appeared at this juncture (that is, what are the institutional conditions)? to what extent is the 'relativism' espoused by many post-processualists a privilege sustained by their institutions? how do data become 'theory-laden' as post-processualists insist? and what reconciliation (perhaps dialectic) can be found between 'hyperrelativism' and empiricist 'objectivism'? The issues raised are too many to be treated here; suffice it to say that she makes many penetrating critiques and offers recommendations which must be taken seriously.

The *Reader* then turns to the Pleistocene and the origin of anatomically modern humans, which is a topic fraught with normative and naturalistic assumptions about sex/gender roles. Zihlman's chapter on 'Woman the gatherer' argues straightforwardly that women performed tasks such as scavenging and foraging which led to classic physiological changes in early hominids, contra those who cling to the 'man the hunter' model of human social evolution. This chapter is followed by McKell's study the manufacture and use of stone tools among indigenous Australian women. She reinforces the argument that the 'man the hunter' model, particularly as applied to the interpretation of stone tools, is a projection of the modern notion of 'man the breadwinner', and she too laments how little progress has been made in gender archaeology since its rise in the 1980s, and how the removal of sexist language in archaeological writing has left much of archaeological theory genderless. I had a good laugh at the beginning of Falk's article on 'Brain evolution in females: an answer to Mr Lovejoy', which completes the section, since he does a fine job ridiculing Lovejoy's (1981) argument that hominid bipedalism evolved because men had hang-ups about monogamy and thus had to exercise 'copulatory vigilance'. This argument probably reveals more about Lovejoy and his peers than about the development of humans. In fact, it does not stand up to the evidence, and Falk goes on to explain sexual dimorphism alternatively

in terms of the evolution of brain 'wiring', the origins of which he traces deep into mammalian prehistory. Implicit in Falk's work is that 'deep' prehistory has been easily naturalised, though it is no less speculative than most ethnoarchaeological pursuits.

The next four sections -- on division of labour by gender, gender dynamics, ideology, and hierarchy, respectively -- blend one into the next, to the extent that their separation appears a little artificial. Spector's (1983) article on male/female task differentiation among the Hidatsa of North America leads the procession. It is a re-analysis of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century (male-biased) ethnographic reports, and her 'mapping' of activities extrapolated from the descriptions is the basis of her and Conkey's task differentiation framework mentioned above. Sassaman's chapter starts from the observation that archaeologists' shift from lithics to pottery as chronological markers between earlier and later prehistory biases the interpretation of gender relations at sites and site 'types'. He then assumes (precariously) that the change from 'formal biface' to 'expedient' stone tools correlates with the appearance of pottery -- presumed to be women's technology -- and he links expedient tools to women's increased mobility in a changing Holocene landscape, as access to subsistence resources and access to lithic resources were disjoined. Watson and Kennedy's (1991) article discussed above rounds off the section on division of labour.

The section on gender dynamics begins with Galloway's 'Where have all the menstrual huts gone?', which, to start with, points out that 'huts' is an instance of sexist language and that in various societies these structures are anything but hovels. She challenges the idea that menstrual houses are necessarily related to matrilineal/matrilocal societies and she questions archaeologists' silence toward what women have done in menstrual seclusion, and their tendency to ascribe a specifically feminine quality only to 'anomalous' structures. McCafferty and McCafferty's 'Spinning and weaving as female gender identity in Post-Classic Mexico' proposes a discourse on female power and symbolism like Hodder's interpretation of communities the Baringo region of Kenya (Hodder 1982). Unlike many of the ethnographic studies in the *Reader in Gender Archaeology*, theirs does not privilege

'historical texts'; the authors are aware of the biases inherent in them, and they examine pictorial evidence as well as written accounts. Gibbs's concluding chapter concerns identifying gender in the archaeological record. She notes four major historical biases: the presumed universal evolution of patrilineal societies from matrilineal societies; the 'man the hunter model'; the definition of women by their reproductive capacity and men by their social roles; and the acceptance of a domestic/public divide corresponding to female and male theatres of activity. She basically makes that case that in the Late Bronze Age of Denmark there was a phase of domestic/female resistance against male-driven social change, rooted in particularly female sources of power. She gives primacy to social relations (organisation and interaction) over hierarchy and stratified, abstract 'power'.

The section of the iconography and ideology of gender consists of just two articles. Russell sums up all the critiques of the cult of the 'Mother Goddess', from the romanticism of some feminists to the sexual fantasies of male Victorian scholars. With regard to the Palaeolithic 'Venus' evidence, her critique is best summed up in her trenchantly asking why mobile hunter-gatherers in the Ice Age would have worshipped fecundity and the production of more children. Guillén considers women, rituals, and social dynamics among the Early and Middle Pre-Classic inhabitant of Chalcatzingo, Mexico. She notes that 'cult' has become a catch-all term for that which has no obvious function, and she suggests that the clay figurines of women found at Chalcatzingo may have been used in 'life-crisis' ceremonies, such as conducted at menarche or menopause.

The editors' foreword to 'Power and Social Hierarchies' usefully frames the current debate in gender archaeology in terms of those who follow Engels (1972) in tracing the origins of gender hierarchy to the rise of state societies versus those who see it as a universal phenomenon. Nelson's contribution to this section explores some of the possible relations between gender hierarchy and the problematic concept of 'state', drawing on the evidence of Silla society in Korea during the first millennium CE. She describes how women in the Old Silla period travelled independently, held public office, and were shown filial respect. Men made claims to rulership through women's blood lines,

and Nelson tentatively concludes that gender inequality can arise well *after* the formation of what we call the 'state'. However, she astutely qualifies her conclusion by remarking, 'A basic problem of the Silla case is the reification of the state in the literature on cultural evolution' (331). The two other articles in this section are useful, if less remarkable: Cohen and Bennet proffer skeletal analysis and an 'independent' means of corroborating arguments about gender hierarchies, and they sum up the methods available and provide a 'sampler' of evidence from diverse regions; Dommasnes examines Norwegian Viking 'grave goods' for signs of gender hierarchy, but her analysis is perhaps vitiated by an over-reliance on a Binfordian representational view of material culture (q.v. Binford 1971), and she seems unfamiliar with the numerous recent critiques of this approach.

The final section 'New Narratives, New Visions' is an delectable exploration of ways of changing the rhetoric and emphasis of archaeological description and interpretation in ways concordant with an 'engendered' archaeology. Emma Lou Davis's 'The ancient Californians', her look back on excavating the Palaeo-Indians sites of China Lake -- first published in 1975 -- is wonderfully written, full of the vivid narrative, metaphor, irony, person, and reflection on methodology to which so many post-processualists aspire today and yet fail to attain. This is followed by excerpts from Spector's similar venture, 'What this awl means', a well known monograph published in 1993. One wonders whether Spector is over-represented in this *Reader in Gender Archaeology*, or whether, sadly, too few other people are devoting attention to the issues she has raised. Knapp's 'Boys will be boys', published in the *Reader in Archaeological Theory* also (see above), concludes the volume and points to new horizons for research.

I feel both the Routledge *Reader in Archaeological Theory* and the *Reader in Gender Archaeology* accomplish their aim of being introductory textbooks. They are chrestomathies, even: the best of what is on offer in archaeological theory today. They should provide ample material for discussion for a new generation of archaeologists and perhaps provoke productive debate between archaeologists, in Europe and America at least, who have isolated themselves too long in their specialities or dug their trenches too deep. The *Reader in Gender Archaeology* is the more

important of the two volumes, if I am correct in judging the way in which Wylie, chiefly, and some of her colleagues take to task certain post-processualists for their neglect of gender-oriented interpretations, as well as for the privilege implied by their predominantly negative critiques and by their particularism, of the sort helpful only in seeking unique dissertation topics. I hope all the articles in this volume will finally achieve the respect that many of them have long deserved. Perhaps they will be bolstered by the recent publication of other 'womanist' archaeologies.

I have a few minor complaints about both volumes that may seem trivial to some. They appear to have been collated in haste: more attention seems to have been paid to typography than to proofreading; citations are missing from bibliographies; and articles seem to have been published in their original form (thus, for example, the misleading reference to other works 'in this volume' in Dommasnes's chapter). However, I expect good things from the Routledge Readers. Archaeological issues are hardly exhausted by the two volumes published so far. Given the unhappy compromises of the Kyoto Conference on the global climate and the recent financial crises in Russia and South-East Asia, I would suggest a further volume on (non-deterministic) approaches to environmental and economic archaeology. The past is present, even if fragmented by sound bites and advert-length memories.

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reviewed by [P.S. Quinn](#)



The application of micropalaeontology to archaeological problems is a very promising area of collaborative science (see Quinn 1997, for a general review). One of the fields in which this has been true is the analysis of micro-fossils from archaeological pottery, where skilled micropalaeontologists have worked with archaeological scientists for some years to address questions pertaining to the provenance and technology of ceramic artefacts. The bulk of this analysis has been carried out in north-western Europe by a handful of scientists studying diatoms and other siliceous micro-fossils isolated from low-fired pottery from the Stone Age to Iron Age (Alhonen and Matiskainen 1980; Alhonen et al. 1980; Jansma 1977, 1981, 1982, 1990; Matiskainen and Alhonen 1984; Håkansson and Hulthén 1986, 1988 etc.). The approach which was pioneered by these authors (see Battarbee 1988, for a review) has been continued by the work of Stilborg, et al. (1997), which demonstrates the current level of information that can be achieved by the study of micro-fossils in ceramics.

Shards of Iron Age Communications is a multidisciplinary study of the internal structure and external contacts in the Gudme-Lundeborg area, Funen, Denmark, during the late Roman Iron Age. In it, Stilborg recruits Hannelore Håkansson to analyse the siliceous micro-fossils contained within certain samples of pottery. Håkansson isolated the diatoms and other siliceous structures by digesting pottery samples in hydrofluoric acid according to the method of Håkansson and Hulthén (1988) and prepared slides from the digested residues according to the procedure described in Håkansson (1982).

The micro-fossils contained within the Iron-Age pottery from the Gudme-Lundeborg area are used in four ways: (1) to group and separate the various pottery samples; (2) to ascertain information pertaining to the nature of the micro-fossiliferous deposits which were procured for the manufacture of some of the pottery; (3) to indicate the likely provenance of some of these raw materials, and (4) to infer details of the ceramic technology used in the manufacturing process.

1. The presence and absence of siliceous and calcareous micro-fossils has been used to group and separate the pottery sherds. Two broad micro-fossiliferous pottery groups were established: the 'D-ware' pottery, so-called because it was found to contain diatoms and other siliceous micro-fossils in thin section; and the 'F-ware' pottery, which contained foraminifera. These fabric groups were found to be mutually exclusive except for one sample, which contained both diatoms and foraminifera.
2. By studying in detail the nature of the siliceous micro-fossils from the D-ware pottery, Stilborg, et al. are able to subdivide this group into those sherds containing exclusively marine or a mixture of marine and non-marine diatoms, those containing exclusively non-marine diatoms, and a sub-group which contains siliceous plant remains and no diatoms. From this subdivision it is possible to ascertain the nature of the various deposits used for the construction of the D-ware pottery. These are a marine clay, a fresh-water clay, and clays indicating brackish water conditions (possibly an estuary) because of their mixture of marine and non-marine diatoms.
3. On a large scale the distinction between marine and non-marine clays (as represented by diatoms) has been used to indicate coastal vs inland provenance (q.v. Jansma 1982). However, a consideration of the local geology can often lead to a more detailed provenance interpretation (e.g. Matiskainen and Alhonen 1984). Stilborg, et al. (1990) were able to infer that the marine clays used in some of the sub-samples of the D-ware pottery could have been procured from anywhere along the coast in this region and therefore could have been collected at Lundeborg, where the pottery was excavated.

If estuarine clay was in fact used for the samples of D-ware pottery which contained a mixture of marine and non-marine diatoms, then this may also have been procured near Lundemborg, where the Tange stream empties into the sea. The single sample which forms the non-marine subgroup of D-ware pottery was excavated from the inland site of Gudme; there is a large fresh-water lake (Gudme Lake) from which the clay used to construct this vessel is likely to have come. A suitable source of foraminifera-rich marine clay was also found in the Lundemborg area. The F-ware pottery may have been manufactured from this clay.

4. One micro-fossiliferous pottery sherd contained both diatoms and foraminifera. In thin section it can be seen that this sample is made from a mixture of two different clays, which agrees with the results of the micropalaeontological analysis. It is likely that diatomaceous marine clays from the coast at Lundemborg and foraminifera-rich clays from the F-ware deposits nearby were mixed to produce this vessel.

The sort of multidisciplinary approach to material-based archaeology which is presented in this book is very important for the development of the subject and permits the retrieval of data which would otherwise be unavailable. The collaboration between Ole Stilborg and Hannelore Håkansson outlined above highlights this point very well. Micro-fossils can be a common component of much archaeological pottery, and their detailed study by skilled micropalaeontologists has much to offer ceramic petrology, as well as archaeology in general.

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*An Introduction to Optical Dating: the Dating of
Quaternary Sediments by the Use of Photon-Stimulated
Luminescence*

by M.J.Aitken

London, Oxford University Press, 1998

xi + 267 pp. (figures, bibliography, index)

ISBN 0-19-854092-2

£75.00 (cloth)



A sequel to the classic text *Thermoluminescence Dating* (1985) by the same author, *An Introduction to Optical Dating* follows very much the same format as its predecessor. Indeed the continuation of style is, for me at least, the most disappointing element of his volume in as much as it again utilises the addition of a 'Technical notes' section at the end of each chapter. This is a style that can be frustrating, continuity of reading being disrupted by having to move to and from appropriate technical notes whilst part way through a chapter. A more 'readable' style would have been insertion of sidebars alongside appropriate passages in the text.

Notwithstanding this criticism, however, the book is destined to be an important text to any practitioner of luminescence dating. Optical dating is a fairly recent innovation (Huntley, et al. 1985), and the announcement of its development coincided with the publication of *Thermoluminescence Dating* ; hence it received only the briefest of notes in that volume, and likewise in *Science-Based Dating in Archaeology* by the same author (1990). The progress in the technique in the thirteen years since its inception has been reflected in the wealth of papers published on the subject, and a single text summarising its development is very welcome.

The volume itself is remarkably up to date. Developments in optical dating are very rapid and the inclusion of many references from 1998 puts *An Introduction to Optical Dating* at the forefront of the discipline. Simultaneously, the timing of its publication has allowed the technique to develop sufficiently to prevent the book being rapidly outdated. The book itself comprises a brief prologue followed by seven chapters and five appendices. The prologue serves to establish the position of optical dating in relation to other absolute dating techniques, and this is followed by two introductory chapters which outline the basic principles behind luminescence dating and the nature of the ionising radiation responsible for the accumulation of the luminescence signal. The latter part of the second chapter is dedicated to artificial irradiation

in the laboratory, including important references to the possible health hazards of working in close proximity to radiation sources.

In the subsequent two chapters the author moves on to explain how an optical date is obtained, detailing sample collection and preparation, dosimetry, current commercially available luminescence dating systems, and palaeodose evaluation. Whilst some of this may appear at times a little too basic to proficient practitioners, it is a welcome inclusion in an overtly scientific publication, in that it ensures that even the most fundamental elements are presented to all, regardless of experience. The absence in palaeodose evaluation of a conclusion as to which of the many techniques is *the* one to use may appear a little vague, but this reflects the nature of the discipline rather than any omission on the part of the author. The fairly short history of optical dating, allied to the complexity of the technique and subject materials, means that the technique still remains in a state of flux, something reflected in the fact no optimum method is cited.

Chapter five is used to illustrate some of the depositional environments from which material has been sampled and subjected to optical dating. As stated by the author at the start of the chapter, the examples cited are 'not a comprehensive review' (108), but they do demonstrate the broad potential of the technique. Importantly, whilst aeolian deposits are identified as those most amenable to the technique, a necessary warning against the blind assumption that all such sediments relate to adequate bleaching and correct optical-series luminescence dates is included, which the author illustrates with an example of loess from British Columbia that produced less than ideal results. At times the transition between subsections within this chapter feels abrupt but this reflects the need to balance content and chapter size, and it is essential that this chapter is treated as a summary leading to further reading. An attempt to broaden the scope of this section could have justified one, if not several, additional volumes.

The sixth chapter considers the nature of re-setting the signal upon exposure to light, summarising the variability of the time taken to bleach different types of material adequately, according to depositional context and prevailing light conditions. As a natural progression from this, the author then moves on to outline some of the ways in which

practitioners have attempted to accommodate partial bleaching, both for material that is equally, but partially, bleached and for material that comprises a mix of grains that have received various degrees of light exposure. As the scope of optical dating expands to incorporate sediments from ever more diverse environments, the importance of dating partially bleached material is likely to grow, and the inclusion of a chapter on the subject is essential. It is also likely that partial-bleaching techniques are likely to develop much further, thereby making this chapter one that is at risk of becoming fairly rapidly outdated, though the inclusion of the most recently published developments in partial-bleaching methodology provides the basis for further research.

Chapter seven details the principles of pre-heating in optical dating, outlining its disadvantages and advantages. The significance of pre-heating is illustrated by its warranting a full chapter, and the disparity of views of which pre-heating regime is appropriate is well documented here. The evidence presented from a variety of sources leads one to conclude that the adoption of universal pre-heats for all samples, a practice often adopted in the past, is a simplistic approach. However, as with the preceding chapter, the inclusion of the latest research still leaves the impression that here is an area that has far to go before a conclusive methodology is determined.

Finally, and again following the style established in *Thermoluminescence Dating*, the author includes several appendices detailing radioactivity, filters, undesirable signal components, anomalous fading, and sensitisation of the 110° C peak. Some of these appendices are developed from similar sections in the earlier volume whilst others are new and more specific to optical dating. As with the 'Technical notes' sections, better continuity might have been achieved by their inclusion earlier within relevant chapters wherever possible (e.g. Appendix A: radioactivity data, could have been included in chapter 2: Basic notions: radioactivity and irradiation, and Appendix B: Optical filters, could have been included in chapter 4: Palaeodose evaluation).

In summary then, *An Introduction to Optical Dating* is a very scientific tome that really would be of limited interest to those outside the discipline of luminescence dating. A better introduction to anyone with

a general interest in absolute dating techniques is *Science-Based Dating in Archaeology* (1990). However, as a companion volume to *Thermoluminescence Dating* (1985), this volume will prove invaluable to luminescence-dating practitioners. Perhaps the best summary of the whole is to say that its contents make me wish that I was starting my research now, rather than three years ago when no such text was available.

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About the reviewer

Dave Sainty is in the final year of his PhD at Sheffield researching the feasibility of applying luminescence dating to cave sediments. Having spent three years working in the dark, he is now preparing to face the outside world once again.

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The Oxford Companion to Archaeology

edited by B.M. Fagan

London, Oxford University Press, 1996

844 pp. (figures)

ISBN 0-19-507618-4

\$55.00 (cloth)

*reviewed by E.C. Wager, M.A. Eccleston, K. Fewster,
M.C. Giles, and A. Tyrrell*



Introduction to the Companion

by [E.C. Wager](#)

The *Oxford Companion to Archaeology* is one of the latest additions to the Oxford Companion series, an eclectic collection of reference volumes providing comprehensive overviews of topics ranging from Australian folklore (1993) to world politics (1993). In common with other volumes in the series, the entries in the *Companion to Archaeology* are both indexed and arranged alphabetically. Cross-references are highlighted at the end of each entry and throughout the text, and many entries provide suggestions for further reading. This structure is designed to facilitate a range of approaches to the information held between the *Companion's* covers: searches for a specific reference, 'sustained browsing' (1996: xi) and exploration of related topics or themes.

The [Oxford University Press](#) publicity highlights other ways in which the *Companion to Archaeology* complements and extends the Companion Series range:

Every Oxford Companion aspires to be the definitive overview of a field of study at a particular moment of time. The new **Oxford Companion to Archaeology** is no exception ... [I]t is both authoritative and comprehensive. Its purpose is to define archaeology as a critical intellectual phenomenon of the later twentieth century world -- one of the seminal ways in which we humans can achieve a better understanding of our common roots, differences, and similarities (OUP Press release, 1997).

These are big claims, extended even further by [Brian Fagan](#), the editor in chief of the *Companion to Archaeology*, in his introduction to the volume. He sees the Companion as a timely reminder of the significance of the past to both the present and the future (viii) and as a long-overdue encyclopaedic assessment of archaeology's achievements and significance on a global scale (vii). As with other Companions, it aims to make specialised knowledge of the discipline easily available to a wide audience, including interested non-specialists.

Brian Fagan and the four other editors have adopted four broad interconnecting themes -- how archaeology began and developed, how archaeology works, how archaeology explains the past, archaeology and the human past -- in order to achieve these aims and to tie the entries in the Companion together. These themes are arranged as a series of subdivisions around which the volume's entries are organised: world prehistory, the origins of civilisation, states and civilisations,

historical archaeology, and archaeology in the late twentieth century (vii-x). According to Fagan, 'These subdivisions have emerged from generations of archaeological research' (ix), the inference being that these categories have validity and meaning in and of themselves. However, such categories are merely products of the ways in which we as archaeologists have chosen to chop up the world, developing the analytical frameworks we need to write the histories we choose. The editors have fallen prey to a circular argument: we adopt these categories in order to give the world meaning; these categories have meaning because we have always conceived of the world in this way.

The subdivisions chosen also coincide with 'broad slices across prehistoric and historic time' (ix), peddling the misconception that assigning objects and events to a particular time period imbues both them and the slice of time itself with meaning. The editors may have chosen such a simplistic approach to conceiving of the past precisely because it is so simple -- it provides both a convenient framework within which to organise the large amount of data assembled for the volume, and a description of archaeology as a discipline concerned with divining 'which period?' that will be familiar to the general reader. Perhaps the editors hope that the individual entries themselves will highlight the fact that, leaving chronology aside, there are many more subtle ways to classify the past.

The editors themselves are certainly aware that there are other ways of seeing. In his introduction, Fagan proposes that we examine world history 'not from a narrowly American or European perspective, but as a truly global phenomenon' (ix). He is also keen for the reader to appreciate the diversity of approaches to the past and a minimal editing policy has been adopted to preserve the style and perspective of each contributor (viii). To an extent, this multivocality has been successfully achieved, a point [Melanie Giles](#) makes in her review of the volume. However, a closer look reveals that the *Companion* is only global in the sense that it discusses world prehistory -- in general, the only voices to be heard, whether discussing African archaeology or the prehistory of the Indian subcontinent, are familiar ones, heralding (despite their differences) from the same Western tradition. Only 15 of the more than 400 contributors are *not* from North America, Western Europe, or

Australia. Only one is from Russia, and there are no entries by archaeologists from Eastern Europe. Africa is represented by archaeologists from Zimbabwe (four), South Africa (three) and Kenya (one), and South America by either one or two archaeologists from each Panama, Chile, Mexico, and Brazil (xiii-xx). Hence the *Companion* is a definitive overview of an archaeology with which we in the West are all familiar and comfortable; the 'common past' (viii) it describes is one we have produced and sanctioned.

Similarly, Fagan displays considerable idealism when assessing the role of archaeology in the construction of social identities, downplaying some of the less savoury aspects of the discipline:

To archaeologists, the human past is owned by no one. It represents the cultural heritage of everyone who has ever lived on Earth or will ever live on it in the future. Archaeology puts all human societies on an equal footing (viii).

Archaeology may have the potential to do so, but a glance at the history of the development of the discipline reveals that it has rarely achieved such lofty aims, traditionally tending to privilege the viewpoints of white, Western, middle-class males over other ways of being and seeing. Archaeologists have also, until recently, claimed the right of 'ownership' over the past and its material remains, ignoring the interests and concerns of people in the areas where we work. Fortunately, many of these contradictions are raised and discussed by individual entries. For example, the role of archaeology in the development of ethnic and national identities and the political uses of the past is discussed in sections such as 'Critical Theory' (152-4) and 'Nationalism' (487-8). The section on Reburial and Repatriation (589-90) succinctly tackles the issue of who owns the past and admits that, though we now acknowledge that 'there are [sic] a number of ways to interpret the past, and that no one group holds exclusive rights to its interpretation or possession' (589), archaeologists have not always displayed such sensitivity.

Finally, Fagan appears keen to emphasise the scientific dimension of the discipline, referring many times in his introduction to archaeologists' 'full use of the remarkable technologies of contemporary science' (vii). Perhaps he is keen to dispel the public perception of archaeologists as 'tough, pith-helmet-clad men and women slashing their way through clinging jungle or penetrating the secrets of ancient pyramids' (vii) and

feels that this can only be achieved by explicitly allying archaeology to scientific development and innovation. Scientific techniques do play an important role in archaeology, but they are just one aspect of a complex and multifaceted discipline, and by positing their pre-eminence, Fagan may be overstating the case.

To address some of these comments and to find out more about the processes involved in compiling and editing such an encyclopaedic volume, [we interviewed Brian Fagan](#). [Mark Eccleston](#), [Kathy Fewster](#), [Melanie Giles](#), and [Andy Tyrrell](#), all PhD students or researchers in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Sheffield, also reviewed the *Companion*. Each reviewer adopted a different approach to reading the volume, from a brief flick through, to searching for detail on a specific topic, to following a number of themes. They discuss their different encounters with the *Companion* and assess to what extent it is a 'definitive overview' of archaeology. Unsurprisingly, their conclusions are as varied as their approaches (and likely those of the prospective audience), highlighting the *Companion's* strengths and weaknesses.

About the reviewer

Emma Wager is still working on her PhD, looking at the practical and social context of prehistoric copper mining on the Great Orme, North Wales. Her e-mail address is [<prp96ecw@sheffield.ac.uk>](mailto:prp96ecw@sheffield.ac.uk)

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[Introduction by E.C. Wager](#)

[Interview with B.M. Fagan \(ed.\)](#)

[M.A. Eccleston on Egyptian section](#)

[K. Fewster on agricultural references](#)

[M.C. Giles on sections relevant to Iron Age](#)

[A. Tyrrell on the *Companion* as whole](#)



The Significance of Monuments: On the Shaping of Experience in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe

by R. Bradley

Routledge, London, 1998

192 pp. (figures, bibliography, index)
ISBN 0-415-15204-6
£14.99 (paper)

reviewed by G. Warren



In this book, Richard Bradley explores the 'human experience of time and place' (163) from the Later Mesolithic Period through the transformations in the archaeological record that occur in many areas during the Bronze Age. He argues that people's involvement with monuments was central to the creation of new senses of time and place, and that this eventually facilitated the adoption of different agricultural and residential practices (161, and *passim*). The theoretical framework of the book is not radically new. Bradley weaves together many recent concerns: phenomenology, everyday life, and the creation and maintenance of identity. These varied themes have been pulled together into one narrative of this length too rarely, and here Bradley deserves much credit. This is an excellent and generally satisfying text, introducing a number of ideas in simple terms. As ever, Bradley's writing is lucid and refreshing. At times his excitement and pleasure in an insight is palpable.

The Significance of Monuments is quite short (179 pages including indexes) but well illustrated. It is divided into 10 chapters, many of which are modified versions of papers that have appeared elsewhere. (Bradley notes that the book is 'conceived less as a continuous narrative than as a series of linked essays' [14].) In Part 1, 'From the House of the Dead', Bradley examines the adoption and transformations of monumentality in Neolithic north-west Europe. He tries to focus on the interplay between everyday life and conventions of meaning, thus avoiding both the excesses of approaches which 'have treated symbolism and ideology at such an abstract level that these issues hardly ever deal with the experience of people in the past' (50) and the sterility of paradigms which suggest that 'the prehistoric landscape was structured by practical considerations' (37). In Part 2, 'Describing a Circle', Bradley's attention shifts to the later Neolithic and Bronze Age, and he examines the transformations and continuities in monument

form during these periods. Chapter 8 'Theatre in the round' is a particularly satisfying account of some of the differences between henges and stone circles, and their 'integration with the landscape' (116). A critique of formal descriptions of monument types continues throughout the book and runs alongside Bradley's gentle teasing apart of our chronological categories, most notably the unity of the Neolithic.

Linking the two halves of the book, and in many ways central to its thesis, is Chapter 6, 'The persistence of memory'. This is a 'much revised version' of an earlier paper 'Ritual, time and history' (Bradley 1991). Following Bloch, Braudel, and Sahlins, Bradley suggests that ritual in the Neolithic may have been *prescriptive* in character, thus preserving forms of practice into the *longue durée*. Therefore, studying changes in ritual allows archaeologists to begin to approach societal change and social history. In this theoretical construct, monuments and the transformation of their forms are absolutely central to archaeologists' efforts to write history. This is the principal justification for this book and its discussion of such a wide range of monumental evidence.

And it is here that some doubts arise, for it is so easy to be swept along with Bradley's prose that at times we can forget just how far we have travelled and how many monuments we have enthusiastically visited with him. In Part 1 the discussion ranges from Kujavia, Bohemia, and Poitou to Britain. And from the Mesolithic and the Linearband Keramik into the later Neolithic periods. Part 2 is more restrictive, but still covers all of the British Isles, from Orkney to Cranbourne Chase. Bradley is, of course, well aware of the difficulties in balancing narratives between local details and the wealth of high-quality evidence available (14), but there still appears to be too much tension between this analytical range and the scale at which many lives must have been lived in prehistory. If monuments allow us to write history, they may also restrict the sort of histories we can write. When one uses only the best evidence or the clearest sequences, one runs the risk of emphasising quasi-universal structures at the expense of local agency. The stability of ritual time and practice in the *longue durée* in some locations may mask resistance and contestation in others.

In fact, Bradley stresses the importance of agency, and (following Johnson 1989) suggests that this can be witnessed archaeologically

through the local manipulation of existing structures (73). He draws upon this conception of agency in discussing long mounds and causewayed enclosures. For example, in Kujavia the symbolic associations and transformations between long mounds and long houses are clear (Chapter 3, 'The death of the house') and his sensitive discussion of the transformations in the context of enclosures across Europe is stimulating (Chapter 5, 'Small worlds'). However, this agency feels a little disembodied and contextless, and it is also notable that, although a number of comments about the potentials of places to draw distinctions between people are made in this text, we hear little of gender or power.

Identifying local agency is probably tied up with our ability to integrate evidence of day-to-day life with monumental forms. This is partly a question of resolution: matching the activities responsible for a flint scatter to those responsible for a carbon-dated posthole is a genuine intellectual challenge. This tension runs throughout the account of Stonehenge offered in Chapter 6. Still, Bradley's statement that 'although sites of many different kinds may contain the new styles of artefacts adopted during the Neolithic, there seems little prospect of using this evidence to interpret patterns of everyday life' (10) is deeply troubling. For if true, we seem destined to interpret Neolithic life in terms of cosmologies derived from monuments alone.

Monuments have dominated our approaches to the Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age, and Bradley's book is a treatise on monuments, probably the best introduction to the subject written yet. Perhaps we now face a rather different kind of intellectual challenge: to find ways of interrogating the character of everyday life in these periods. Only by finding these approaches will we be able fully to integrate ritual and the everyday, and as a corollary, we may also find ways of linking the Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic within similar theoretical frameworks (Chapter 2 'Thinking the Neolithic'). Creating these local, day-to-day histories may require significant shifts in the forms of our narratives.

Bradley has identified some aspects of cosmological significance at a broad European level. *The Significance of Monuments* is stimulating, interesting, and enjoyable; I would highly recommend it for teaching. Yet his book also asks us two inescapable questions: firstly, whether

archaeological data has the resolution to allow us to access day-to-day life and local transformations of society in the past; and secondly, whether archaeologists have the imagination to write these kinds of histories. A gauntlet has rarely been thrown so politely.

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Environmental Archaeology: The Journal of Human Palaeoecology

Association for Environmental Archaeology and [Oxbow Books](#), 1998-
ISSN 1461-4103

Annual subscription £24 institutional, £16 ordinary, £8 student

reviewed by M.F. Lane



Hardly a day seems to pass at the archaeology department at Sheffield, when I don't hear some attempt at witty repartee between one of the so called 'theory' students and one of the 'lab-based' students. On sight of a white smock or crucible of dark vitreous matter, the 'theorists' can be heard to murmur 'Science' in tones of feigned awe, while the 'scientists' often greet exchanges in which such terms as 'inhabitation' and 'transformation' are dropped with 'Well, that's Theory; I wouldn't understand', smiling sheepishly but in self-knowledge. Each contingent seems to acknowledge the value of what the other does: many of the students oriented toward social theory accept as fact the conclusions of their environmentally or technologically oriented colleagues, and many lab-based students seem to regard 'interpretation' as that part of the research process which is left after the difficult work of teasing useful

data out of fragmentary material has been done. They even seem to need each other. Still, each group seems content in its ways, and hard methodological and interpretative questions rarely arise between them. Thus the ritual -- or better, the *game* -- of mutual identification through disjuncture continues.

The department is divided between two buildings, only one containing the laboratories for the analysis of bone, seed, pollen, ceramic, glass, and other materials. The lab-based and theory students have, in general, segregated themselves appropriately, though this was not, I'm sure, the intention of the designers. Obviously, this segregation does not make communication any easier. I am sure, nonetheless that the divide between the 'scientists' and the 'theorists', in terms of their research, is not peculiar to Sheffield but is a widespread phenomenon with deeper roots. One has only to look at how little mixing is found in the academic literature. Yet, at the beginning of the decade, Shanks and Tilley, two stars of post-processualism, wrote in 'Archaeology into the 1990s' that one of the elements of 'any progressive archaeology' should be 'fresh consideration of the ecological context and economic practices' (1992: 260). Of all the points in their 'programme for the 1990s', involving the critical examination of 'sensuous practice', this seems to have been heeded the least by their fans. An answer seems to have come first from the environmental specialists -- who are often identified as 'processualists' -- if we can judge from the contents of the recently launched [Environmental Archaeology: The Journal of Human Palaeocology](#).

First some description and an apology. Two issues/volumes of *Environmental Archaeology* have been published to date, both in 1998. The new journal is produced by the Association for Environmental Archaeology (AEA) and printed by [Oxbow Books](#), and it replaces *Circaea*, the previous journal of the AEA. *Environmental Archaeology* is well edited, laid out, and produced -- though some authors had to sully the first issue with an alliterative title, the sort that irritates me but which seems to be popular in certain academic circles ('Fuel, fodder and faeces ...' in this case). There is also the problem of a corrigendum slip in volume 2. [Glynis Jones](#) of the University of Sheffield is the Co-ordinating Editor.

Not only is the title of the new journal intelligible to the non-Latinists among us, but the subtitle also bodes of a scope which will broadly treat human-environment relations. Unfortunately, it is more difficult than usual, given only two issues, to foretell how the discussion in this journal will play out, since volume 1 is essentially the proceedings of the session 'The Archaeology of Fodder' at the AEA's meeting in 1995. This session seems to have been dominated by scholars working at the University of Sheffield, or closely associated with its environmental archaeology programme: seven of the fifteen articles in this first issue involve authors from Sheffield. Nevertheless, there are clear signs in *Environmental Archaeology* of an ecumenical attitude, if not actual content, and of promising new directions in human palaeoecology.

I will not attempt to scrutinise the methodology and inferential validity of each article in the two volumes; I haven't the technical expertise in any one of the many topics covered, let alone in all of them. A highly analytical review might be expected in a specialist journal, but **assemblage** is not such a publication. I am sorry if I disappoint some of my colleagues, to whose hearts the material discussed within the pages of *Environmental Archaeology* is close. I can only hope they will read the journal and give me their expert opinion. Instead, I wish to concentrate on a few issues raised in the articles in *Environmental Archaeology* which I think may be entry points for building bridges between lab and library, if you will, and for meeting Shanks and Tilley's programmatic challenge by exploring the social implications of these issues.

Volume 2 -- apparently the first issue of the regular series -- contains Terry O'Connor's 'Environmental archaeology: a matter of definition', a stimulating and hopeful article, which usefully sums up current debates in environmental archaeology (loosely defined) and which emphasises the complex interaction of human societies with the non-human world. To begin, O'Connor notes that there has been an historical division in environmental archaeology between a British school devoted to biological evidence and an American school concerned mainly with physical aspects of the environment. He suggests that the dichotomous thinking that has resulted may be wrongheaded: are not soil processes, for example, both 'biotic' and 'abiotic'? He notes the shortcomings of

relatively early works, such as Birks and Birks' *Quaternary Palaeoecology* (1980), which was 'descriptive, opportunistic in methodology, uniformitarian in philosophy, and bedevilled by complex, incomplete data' (p. 2); and he applauds the recent, more theoretically minded works which have emphasised human interaction with the environment, as opposed to simple environmental reconstruction or simplistic 'selection pressures'. He proffers a model of 'long-term, gradual environmental change' that is 'akin to Braudel's *longue durée*' (p. 3) -- change which people may not have perceived as such in their lifetime but some of the small-scale effects of which they may have responded to according to their own understandings. (At this point, I am also reminded of the geographer David Harvey's sketch of different scales of both 'political-economic' and 'social-ecological' relations in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (1997); Harvey's writings about modern societies may, I think, have some application to the pre-modern past.) I would think that post-processualists would welcome the alternative provided to simplistic stimulus-response models, which has room for human knowledge, agency, and choice, but I have yet to see a positive response concerning the classes of evidence in question. I do take issue with one point O'Connor makes in conclusion: his suggestion that perhaps environmental archaeologists should not worry about the definition of their discipline seems to represent a retreat from criticism and theory and into the unaccountability that has long vitiated academic cloisters. However, he makes up for his error in large measure by stating that he has persistently argued that archaeologists should always consider their common 'ends', rather than getting lost in proliferating 'means'.

Other works in *Environmental Archaeology* continue the themes laid out by O'Connor. The journal's title on volume 1 is misleading, as the editors admit, since it consists almost entirely of historic and ethnographic studies, and is therefore not strictly 'palaeoecological'. Almost all the studies in both volumes are restricted to Europe, and great many come from the Mediterranean basin. I hope that in future issues more territory may be covered. However, what the articles lack in geographic variety, they make up for in quality. The studies served up are not simply lab reports or extended analogies. Almost all the major contributions consider, in some framework, strategic options in

subsistence, agrarian ideologies (past and present), the varying nature of the archaeological evidence even within so circumscribed a region, and the need to debunk 'uniformitarian' assumptions. Indeed, as is stated in the front of volume 1, the fact that '[o]ne of the defining characteristics of Old World farming is the interdependence between crop and livestock husbandry' demands consideration of the such subtleties and complexities.

Here are a few examples from both volumes. Palmer's article on the use of fodder in northern Jordan emphasises 'the factors that influence farmers in the choice of crops they cultivate and in the way they manage them ...' and concludes that farmers in the area must constantly make choices in order to 'balance' investments in labour, land, task differentiation, and productivity, among other things. While the rhetoric may seem like systems theory, only the most simple-minded could fail to see that all these choices must be mediated through social structures. Williamson's 'Fodder crops and the "Agricultural Revolution" in England, 1700-1850' makes the important argument that the urbanisation that came with the Industrial Revolution would not have been viable without agricultural intensification, which in turn required a change in exploitation of biological resources, producing, *inter alia*, fodder for the over-wintering of livestock. Although he doesn't state as much, this agricultural intensification eventually led to the wholesale 'industrialisation' of agriculture, and to begin to undo the social and ecological havoc wreaked its inheritors in modern agribusiness, we must pay greater heed to the rural-urban interdependency which is the central theme of his work. Forbes questions the 'separatist ideology' that maintains a distinction between grazing land and foraging land in northern Europe (an ideology encapsulated in the English nursery rhyme 'Little boy blue'). His case study from Greece shows how, under certain conditions, the two are 'enmeshed', stressing the differences between the evidence in northern Europe and that in Greece and arguing, along with Halstead (1987), against uniformitarian assumptions about 'traditional' agricultural practices. Brothwell's theoretical tract on the relevance of the concept of environmental stress (access to resources, climatic conditions, degree of confinement, disease, etc.) to human palaeoecology revisits anthropological literature of the first half of the twentieth century. His article seems to me to have much

to offer long-term projects in *historic* archaeology, in particular, which might want to take into account the wide range of deleterious 'externalities', as the economists call them, brought on by agricultural intensification, industrialisation, and rapid urbanisation in the last few hundred years.

Of course, as in any journal, not all the articles in *Environmental Archaeology* are provocative. Some are strictly studies in comparative methodologies, while others, in the face of ambiguous evidence of an experiment or a hypothetical formation process, seem unable to present a plausible contextual inference. Food and fodder, for example, needn't only be distinguished by the mechanisms by which they are sorted or by unquestionable evidence of cooking; food in any society is highly symbolic and consequently is associated with various kinds of material culture, even if their species character is 'flexible'. Perhaps some environmental specialists don't think such explanations are within their disciplinary purview.

As some of us are painfully aware, both sides in the processualist/post-processualist debate have made straw persons of each other's work. The caricature of the environmental archaeologist as a stuck-in-the-mud determinist, obsessed with natural selection and the rhythms of geological time may have been funny for a while, but its best-before date has passed. As Paul Halstead said in [his interview for this issue of assemblage](#), 'the notion that nature determines culture had long since ceased to be a necessary precondition for identifying a bone' by the time he was completing his undergraduate degree. Yet, many critical social theorists in archaeology act as if they will pollute themselves if they cross the subdisciplinary boundary and handle geophysical and biological evidence -- if they start playing the identity game by different rules. How will they reply to the overture to dialogue presented by *Environmental Archaeology*, whatever its failings may be? Will they respond in kind, or will they simply mutter 'Science...!'?

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The 'Northern Pasts' conference

3-5 April 1998

Newcastle University

reviewed by A.M. Chadwick



The Northern Pasts conference took place in Newcastle (UK) from April 3 to 5 of this year, and was hosted by Jan Harding and the Department of Archaeology at Newcastle University. It was also supported by the Neolithic Studies Group, the Lithic Studies Society, and the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group. It was an eclectic gathering of academics, contract archaeologists, and independent field workers. The papers themselves were equally heterogeneous. Although prehistory remained the main focus of the meeting, the papers covered a wide range of themes from the Mesolithic through the pre-Roman Iron Age and the Romano-British periods, and included areas stretching from the northern Midlands of England to central-southern Scotland. The quality of papers was variable, but that is often the case at other large conferences such as Theoretical Archaeological Group.

My own archaeological experience and research interests are in the later prehistory of northern England and landscape-based studies, and inevitably it was these to which I paid closest attention, and will outline here. There were some particularly cogent presentations which covered many of these themes. Jan Harding of Newcastle University and Paul Frodsham from the Northumberland National Park both gave wide-ranging introductory papers. These sought to debunk many myths of northern prehistory and to present new visions of northern pasts which rely on the strengths of the northern evidence rather than the continued comparisons to the south and to Wessex in particular, which bedevil much writing on the prehistory of the region. They both view northern prehistory as a series of varied, localised pasts, rather than as an overall grand narrative, and they put forward frameworks for research which could be tested and explored by future work.

Peter Halkon from the University of Hull/East Riding Archaeology Society outlined some of the rich and varied evidence for iron age metallurgy and settlement in the East Yorkshire lowlands, and Robert Young of Leicester University examined definitions of 'marginality' in the later prehistoric settlement of the northern uplands. Robert Johnston from Newcastle University gave an informative talk on the links between cultivation and death in the cairnfields of Northumberland, and Kenneth Brophy from Glasgow University investigated the Ayrshire cursus of Wet Drybridge from a contextual and phenomenological framework. Clive Waddington from Newcastle University examined the mesolithic-neolithic transition in the Millfield Basin, and Graeme Guilbert of the Trent and Peak Archaeological Trust showed in an entertaining manner how 'factoids' can so easily become established in the archaeological literature and enshrined in subsequent reconstruction drawings.

Locally based archaeologists were well represented, with good papers from John Barnatt of the Peak Park Authority on the bronze age in the Peak District, and a well argued presentation from Bill Bevan, also of the Peak Park Authority, which illustrated how the formation of the British nation-state in the nineteenth century and twentieth century and subsequent political developments have continued to hamper archaeological enquiry in northern England. The on-going project at

Gardom's Edge in the Peak District was summarised by Mark Edmonds of University of Sheffield. His paper had many resonances with that given by Max Adams concerning the Durham University project at Ingram in the Cheviots. In both cases, empirically rigorous survey and small-scale excavation methodologies coupled with dynamic and flexible interpretative ideas has meant that archaeologists are now much closer to understanding how prehistoric societies inhabited these landscapes. The complicated palimpsests of features already known in these two study areas have been shown to be just the tips of the archaeological icebergs that lie under the surface, and in both instances, the targeting of selected areas for more extensive excavation has produced a wealth of evidence for phasing and prehistoric lifeways. Both Gardom's Edge and Ingram show the potential for future research-driven projects in northern Britain.

There were some drawbacks to the conference, the most obvious being that too many papers were included in the programme. In the one full day's meeting, there were sixteen presentations for example, and this inevitably meant that these were often tantalizingly brief. Discussion after them was severely limited or non-existent. The attempt to cover so much geographical and chronological ground was laudable, but I think that fewer papers and longer and more focused discussion sessions would have been more conducive to debate. That out of the thirty people presenting papers, only two were women was also a cause for concern. Although I am aware of the many difficulties still faced by women in academic and contract archaeology, I hope that this conference reflected a temporary aberration, rather than a trend of women not becoming involved in northern landscape archaeology, or even being excluded from it. Many of my female friends and colleagues from the department here in Sheffield will certainly be making important contributions in the years ahead.

There were some tremendously disappointing papers too. One presentation on the neolithic and bronze age pottery traditions of northern England was almost unbearably turgid, and in its detailing of fabric types and decorative schemes it gave absolutely no impression of the human lives which had surrounded the manufacture and use of this pottery, nor of the many and varied meanings such vessels may have

had for these people. Similarly, extensive surveys of prehistoric settlement morphology in south-west Scotland and lithic scatters in the Tyne Valley appeared to put classification and sample analyses ahead of any consideration of what it meant to dwell within these landscapes during the study periods concerned. One paper in particular talked of sites clustering along the 50-metre contour, as if prehistoric people had mental Ordnance Survey maps to assist them as they carried out their routine, everyday movements and tasks around the landscape!

Without challenging and considered theoretical research frameworks, even the most extensive and methodologically rigorous landscape studies cannot bring the lives of ordinary people in the past any closer to us in the present. As archaeologists, I think we should be writing more interesting histories of these communities for others within the discipline and for the wider public too. The Northern Pasts conference not only illustrated the regional diversity and richness of the archaeology of northern Britain, but also highlighted the differences between those archaeologists committed to the writing of new histories and those trapped in more moribund worlds of enclosure typologies and slope aspect ratios. We must, of course, be continually striving to improve our surveying, excavation, and recording techniques, but this will be of little use in itself if we cannot use more contextual perspectives critically to assess our results. The archaeological field work process should be made more accessible to the public, and new ways of presenting the results explored. New forums for discussion must be encouraged, and more conferences in the same spirit of Northern Pasts would be most welcome -- though with fewer papers and more discussion next time, please.

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*Bell Beakers Today: International Colloquium on Pottery,
People, Culture, and Symbols in Prehistoric Europe*

Riva del Garda, Trento, Italy

1-16 May 1998



The Servizio Beni Culturali Ufficio - Beni Archeologici of the Autonomous Province of Trento organised an international meeting of 'Beaker archaeologists' in the beautiful environment of Lago di Garda. These archaeologists have devoted their studies to the renowned Bell Beaker 'phenomenon' or 'archaeological culture', evidence of which is widespread in central and north-western Europe in the late Neolithic Period and Early Bronze Age (c. 2500-2000 BC). Franco Nicolis, the Coordinator of the International Scientific Committee, must take most of the credit for the exceptional organisation of the meeting. The services available for the participants were of a very high standard, including the simultaneous translation into English, French, and Italian. The beginning of the colloquium was the opening ceremony of the Beaker exhibition in the Museo Civico Riva del Garda -- 'Simbolo ed enigma: Il bicchiere campaniforme e l'Italia nella preistoria europea del III millennio a.C.' (May 12 - September 30, 1998). The exhibition includes an excellent display of Italian Bell Beakers and new discoveries dating to the third millennium BC. The exhibits are divided into three parts: finds from Northern Italy, Central Italy, Sicily and Sardinia, respectively.

The conference trip was taken to the brand new exhibition of the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano. The interest of all visitors was focused on Ötzi the Iceman, the frozen Copper Age body found in 1991 in Hauslabjoch. The general meeting of the Association Archéologie des Gobelets also took place during the colloquium in Riva.

In five days, 34 lectures and over 30 posters were presented. Papers were divided into four blocs discussing: (1) the Beaker phenomenon and ideology, (2) research on particular regional groups, (3) extraction of raw materials and technology, and (4) burial rites.

In the inaugural speech, A. Gallay discussed the relations of regional Bell Beaker material culture to the possible background of ethnogenesis of particular branches of Indo-Europeans. This was followed by the *first bloc* of papers, which included discussion of the analysis of the

technology and design of Beakers, so as better to understand what L. Salanova called the 'Beaker European Union' and its spread across the continent. Attention was also given to reviewing the relevant radiocarbon chronology and to the connection of Bell Beakers to social rank of early metallurgists. The *second bloc* concerned studies of Bell Beakers from different parts of Europe and the comparison of associated material culture among these regions and between these regions and others in which the phenomenon is not attested. Special discussion was devoted to the margins of the Beaker area. The *third bloc* of papers on Beaker technology and materials included papers ranging across all of Europe -- from central to northern, and from the Atlantic coast to the Mediterranean littoral. Discussion ranged from the long-distance exchange of materials to their social context. The *final bloc* focused on evidence of gender and age-group differences in graves from eastern Europe, especially Bohemia and Moravia. Significant remarks were made about how determination of sex based on analysis of gender-associated grave goods and that based on biological analysis do not always match.

The final discussion touched various subjects mentioned earlier during four days of lectures. It seems that studying the local sequences and understanding Bell Beakers in their regional cultural background is exercising specialists more than the question of their origin and 'homeland'. The issues of the physical anthropology of Bell Beaker populations were discussed only marginally. The importance that used to be attached to the specific brachycranial character of some Beaker individuals was at this conference only rarely used as an argument for cultural-historical interpretation of Bell Beaker distribution in Europe. Science is being frequently employed in an attempt to examine particular problems of the Beaker period. Petrographic, palaeometallurgical, or palaeoenvironmental analyses are becoming a standard part of Beaker research. Let us hope that at the next Beaker conference we will be able to discuss the crucial problems associated with population dynamics, using the data of macromolecular biology. DNA analysis may in future give answers to various problems that puzzle us, since with traditional methods we have hardly been able to solve them. The distribution of the Bell Beaker material culture over the vast area of the European continent is today most commonly explained

as the result of a spread of an enigmatic phenomenon -- ideology. The question of the origin of Bell Beakers was not even this time satisfactorily answered. If we ask the question: 'Was there any progress made in the Bell Beaker Archaeology since Oberried 1974?' then the answer must be a resounding yes, but, as Laure Salanova said in Feldberg 1997, 'There is still long way to go'.

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The New Nubia Museum in Aswan

reviewed by [O.E. Kaper](#)



After lengthy preparations which involved great numbers of people and organisations, the new Nubia Museum has been built. It was formally opened by president Mubarak of Egypt on 23 November 1997, but some parts of the building will only be in operation at a later date. The new museum is of major significance for Egyptian archaeology, for tourism in Egypt, and last (but not least) for the Nubian people.

The museum is set on a hill in the cataract region, just beyond the Cataract Hotel, surrounded by a garden with views of the surrounding landscape. The building itself is already spectacular, even beautiful. It was designed by Dr Mahmud el-Hakim, who was responsible for the design of the Luxor Museum of Ancient Egyptian Art, which opened in 1975. Its exterior is decorated in simple forms, entirely executed in the local Nubian sandstone and suggesting Nubian temple walls. A decorative band of stones in a zigzag pattern imitates the mudbrick courses of Nubian house architecture. Different architects were responsible for the garden and the interior of the building, respectively.

The exhibition inside the museum is arranged in chronological order, devoting equal space to the different eras of Nubian history. The

museum is devoted to the Egyptian part of Nubia, or Lower Nubia, which was entirely drowned by the waters of Lake Nasser, after the building of the Aswan dam. The country no longer exists, but as a result of systematic archaeological surveys and excavations, many objects and even entire monuments were saved. Several museums in foreign countries have in recent years devoted displays to the history of Nubia, such as the British Museum and the museums of Boston and Toronto. Now, finally, Egypt itself has amassed the largest exhibition of all in Aswan, surrendering to the present-day Nubians their history. The success of the museum with the local Nubian population is demonstrated daily by the hundreds of Nubian visitors to the museum, many of whom now live in the region of Aswan. In fact, the museum has been designed to be more than just an art collection and an historical display. On the grounds of the building, two theatres have been added, and a gallery has been included for showing contemporary work by Nubian artists. A library is to be housed in it as well, stimulating the academic study of the Nubian past.

The display cases of the museum contain over 2000 items, all of which are well lit and labelled in state-of-the-art show cases. Efforts have been made to evoke the original surroundings of the exhibits, which are lost, through the regular insertion of scale models of buildings from the historical periods represented. At the start of the exhibition, a large model of the Egyptian Nile Valley indicates the large number of Egyptian temples which once stood along the Nubian Nile.

It is entirely fitting that the centrepiece of the entire display should be a colossal statue of Rameses II, which once formed part of the rock temple of Gerf Hussein. Many of the unique Nubian temples were saved during the international campaign organized by UNESCO in the 1960s, and the remains of several of these temples were donated by Egypt to the foreign participants in this campaign. Standing there dwarfed by the colossal statue of Rameses, one is reminded of the sad fact that many more monuments have had to be sacrificed. The temple of Gerf Hussein is one of the pharaonic style temples which could not be saved, and today only this colossus and some odd fragments of sculpture and relief remain. These pieces make, to my mind, a dramatic statement about the scale of the sacrifice which Egypt made by building the High Dam at

Aswan in the attempt to secure for itself a prosperous future. Likewise, only a few fragments of the chapel of Horemheb at Abu Oda survive, and only one of the original four decorated rock chapels from Qasr Ibrim were included in the museum (the largest shrine, of Usersatet, from the reign of Amenophis II). The remaining three chapels had to be abandoned at the base of the cliff, where they had been carved some 3500 years ago.

The museum presents the history of Nubia in the terms coined for the history of Egypt. The terms Old, Middle, and New Kingdom are used throughout, which is rather artificial but it has the advantage, apart from being familiar terms of reference for the visitor, of highlighting the intimate association of the Nubian culture with the Egyptian. The museum displays highlight these connections specifically. For instance, it includes a copy of the famous wooden tomb model of a group of Nubian archers in the Cairo Museum, which was found in Asyut in Middle Egypt, and which attests to the presence of Nubian soldiers in Middle Kingdom Egypt.

The history of the town of Aswan itself has also been incorporated into the museum's displays, and for good reason. The border town of Aswan has always stood under the influence of both cultures, as is evidenced, for instance, by the Middle Kingdom coffin of Heqata (formerly kept in the Egyptian Museum), who was a Nubian buried in Aswan in the Egyptian fashion. Other, purely Egyptian artefacts from Aswan are also shown here, such as the powerful statues from the Heqa-ib chapel and a head of Nectanebo II found on Elephantine Island.

Another period which is represented in the collection, for obvious reasons, is the Egyptian Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, during which the Nubians ruled over Egypt. A number of masterpieces have been selected dating from this period, both from the southern capital of Napata (Sudan) and from the area of Luxor. Thus, we see the 'dream stela' of Tanutamun from Gebel Barkal, and the beautiful statues of Harwa and of Horemakhet from Karnak.

As state above, the emphasis in the collection lies on the region of Lower Nubia. The visitor is first introduced to the large collection of prehistoric material, with its beautiful flint tools and rock carvings

(petroglyphs). Part of the latter collection has been effectively displayed inside an artificial cave in the garden of the museum. Unfortunately, these pieces have been excluded from the otherwise excellent labelling, and the numbers and places of origin of the individual pieces are not clear.

The A-Group and C-Group cultures are introduced mainly through the effective use of text panels in the display. These cultures represent the original indigenous way of life of the Nubians before the Egyptian influence became pervasive. The Egyptians colonized the region and built massive defence systems during the Middle Kingdom at its southern border in the Second Cataract. A model of the fortress of Buhen suggests the large scale of these structures of mudbrick, of which none could be saved from inundation. Otherwise, only a small selection of objects, mainly ceramics, is shown, as well as a reconstructed A-Group burial.

The most extensive temple building in the region dates to the New Kingdom, and this remains the best known feature of Lower Nubia. Recently, a number of cruise ships have started to traverse Lake Nasser between Aswan and Abu Simbel in order to allow visits to the temples which have been relocated along the shores of the lake. In the museum, the subject of temple building is addressed by the fragments saved from the sites of Gerf Hussein, Qasr Ibrim, and Abu Oda, already mentioned, as well as by the contents of a small solar chapel which formed part of the Great Temple at Abu Simbel. These items, a shrine with statues, two obelisks, and four baboon statues, were brought to Cairo after their discovery in 1909. Unfortunately, and here we touch on a flaw of the new museum display, the exhibition has opted for an artistic rather than a historical display, so that the individual pieces are not grouped as they were originally intended but as separate items, and, worse still, in entirely artificial groupings. The baboon statues, which originally stood on top of the solar altar of the chapel, have now been displayed at the base of one of the two obelisks from the same chapel, in the manner of the baboons at the base of the Luxor obelisks. This is an unacceptable piece of falsification on the part of the museum. Elsewhere, the chronological order of the objects in the museum has been sacrificed in favour of a more modern visual arrangement. The Kerma ceramics (four

vessels) are displayed in the New Kingdom hall together with ceramics from Napata, Meroë, as well as the C-Group culture.

Many of the statues in the museum are displayed without protective cases, but fortunately, these are all out of reach. The labelling is effective, with much additional information provided in separate text panels on the walls, in both Arabic and English. For children, the objects themselves will certainly capture the imagination: for instance, the exotic royal burial equipment from Ballana, which was formerly kept in the Cairo Museum. The horse trappings and jewellery from these tombs continue the tradition of blending the Egyptian and African artistic styles which already characterises the earlier Meroitic culture. The Meroitic culture was centred in Sudanese Nubia, and this important historical phase has, as a consequence, received only scant attention in the current museum display. Only some of the famous decorated ceramics from this period are shown and some of the characteristic funerary statues known as *ba*-birds.

The Christian and Islamic periods are represented in a small number of well chosen objects. The delicate church frescos from Abdallah Nirqi have been transferred here from the Coptic Museum in Cairo. The Islamic display includes some stunning textiles from the fourteenth century AD, found at Gebel Adda and Qasr el-Wizz. These are followed by a lengthy description on a series of text panels describing the building of the High Dam. Separate text panels are devoted to the ensuing international rescue campaign which has yielded so many of the pieces in the museum.

The final section of the museum's tour through Nubian history is an ethnographic one. The contemporary Nubian folklore is presented here in a series of life-size dioramas which represent scenes from village life. During my visits to the museum, the Nubian visitors were much attracted by this display, which elicited many remarks of recognition.

In the near future, a cafeteria is due to open inside the building. A bookshop is already functioning, but strangely enough, no books on Nubian culture are offered for sale, but only the run-of-the-mill books on Egyptian antiquities. There is a brief colour catalogue of the museum with photographs of some of the highlights. The storerooms of the

museum are said to contain another 3000 objects, which are, of course, only to be studied by specialist visitors. The staff of the museum, which is mostly Nubian, numbers about a hundred people and is under the direction of Dr Sabri Abd el-Aziz, and the chief conservator Ossama Abd el-Wareth.

I highly recommend the museum to all who visit Egypt. It is worth a detour to Aswan especially to see it. Reserve at least three hours for your visit, and do not miss the beautiful garden, which also contains some stone antiquities of various kinds. A few Fatimid tombs which were already present on the hill have been restored and are incorporated in the garden. The opening hours are 9 am to 1 pm and 5 pm to 9 pm in winter, and until 10 pm in summer. The tickets (full price) are 20 Egyptian pounds.

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Television and Radio Reviews

by [J. Fletcher](#)



At the time of writing, the **assemblage** TV and radio reviewer's attempts to obtain schedules for future programmes relating to archaeology have met with no success. The independent terrestrial channels have ignored requests, whilst the BBC feels unable to provide information so far ahead (i.e. 3 to 6 months). As a consequence, most of the programmes reviewed have been shown previously, and in the case of BBC2's 'Meet the Ancestors' the original and repeat showings have occurred within the time between the last issue of **assemblage** and this one.

I am at a loss to understand the reluctance of the TV channels to provide information about their future programming. The request, after all, is not for a minute-by-minute schedule, but simply for a 'what to look out for in the near future' list. Given that many people do not find the time to comb through the TV listings in fine detail, this might actually gain them viewers. I also feel that it is important for people with interest and expertise in a particular subject area to be able to view programmes related to that subject area. The broadcasting media have immense influence over thought and opinion, and those with knowledge of the field covered in any programme must have the right to view and comment on the quality and accuracy of the material presented.

I hope that, in some small way, this section provides one small voice in appraisal of this quality and accuracy.

Radio programmes

'Mapping the Town', presented by Julian Richards, BBC Radio 4, Monday, 11.00 am

As ever with radio programmes 'the scenery is better and the girls are prettier'. In this series of programmes we are given access to enthusiastic and expert discussion with a total absence of the 'professional broadcaster'. Archaeologist Julian Richards explores the history and geography of a town through the debate of two expert contributors. The concept of a 'map', creating a picture of the geographical development of a town, then putting this concept across on radio, is a tribute to the skill of the programme makers as well as to the presenter and contributors.

The series successfully combines archaeology and travel log formats and takes us on a journey through the main areas of historical development of the town in question, with the contributors taking differing views on the influences that shaped that development. Locations and periods are skilfully evoked and linked to each other and to the present day. This creates a picture of dynamic change and development of town geography that is inextricably linked with the activities of its inhabitants. Finally, the discussions and disagreements between the contributors are balanced and resolved using past plans

and current architecture, to leave the listener with a solid mental picture of the town in question, past, and present.

Television programmes

'Meet the Ancestors', presented by Julian Richards, BBC2, Tuesday, 8.00 pm

The general format of this series covers the discovery of human remains, excavation and recovery of a relatively intact skull, description and discussion of the excavation techniques and the evidence, and the [facial reconstruction](#) using the skull. The quality of the discussion is good, and though there is a clear agenda -- to wit, facial reconstruction - - this is not allowed to obscure the rest of the archaeological investigation. The periods covered range from Bronze Age to Medieval.

The programme explores how archaeologists reach their conclusions. The evidence discussed covers burial date, environmental analysis, and palaeopathology. The analysis of artefacts is explained, the viewer learns what sort of environment the individual inhabited, and sex, age at death, diet, diseases, and lifestyle are all discussed. Importantly, and without labouring the point, the reasons why each specialist reaches these conclusions are presented in every programme, and the doubts and uncertainties surrounding interpretation of any archaeological evidence are also always discussed. The fact that the programme does not make definitive statements is its main strength.

Generally, the coverage of the archaeology is briefer than that of the palaeopathology, but it is nevertheless clear. The emphasis is on the biological sciences, and in particular the wonders of facial reconstruction, using a variety of techniques, and DNA sequencing in the last programme traced direct descendants of the excavated individual.

We are left with a face at the end of each programme, a face that looks no different than any we might see on the street or in the supermarket. Here we meet the ancestor, and together with the good, clear discussion of the evidence, a whole picture of the period under study emerges. We are left with a strong impression of the positive aspects of archaeology - - as an integral part of the social and scientific community.

Overall, this is a series you can warm to on many levels, and it is an example of the excellence that can be achieved in a 'popular' television series, where accuracy and integrity are not sacrificed to ratings or the agenda of the producer.

Unfortunately, this cannot be said of the recent BBC2 'Horizon' series, and in particular the following programme.

'Horizon -- Shipwreck', BBC2, Sunday, 30 August, 1998

The general expectation when viewing BBC's 'Horizon' series is that the programme will explore a particular topic in detail and from many different angles, ultimately leaving the viewers to reach their own conclusions based on a wealth of evidence. This latest episode totally failed to satisfy this expectation.

'Shipwreck' was ostensibly an investigation into the wreck of a sixteenth-century ship sunk off Alderney in the English Channel. The initial archaeological investigation produced artefacts from a number of different European countries. However, from ten minutes into the programme the agenda was set, and the race was on to prove that this was in fact a ship from the Elizabethan fleet commissioned in the 1590s.

We are steered (please pardon the nautical allusions) into exploring a theory which is continually presented as fact. The investigation sets out to prove that this is, in fact, one particular ship, the pinnace *Makeshift*, which disappeared from the shipping lists in the 1590s. The assumption is she is the wreck, and no other possibilities are adequately explored by maritime archaeologist Michael Bowyer. English weights found on board are used to date the ship post 1590, when it could have been built much earlier, and to claim it as English, when any ship trading with England would have used these weights.

Enter the historian Dr John Nolan of the University of Maryland in Europe. His particular hope is to link the ship with one Sir John Norris, one of Lord Burleigh's agents. This is done with the help of a letter from Norris to Burleigh dated to 1592, detailing the ship carrying packets (presumably orders) 'that is cast away about Aldernay'.

So far the evidence is promising but tenuous. We are then subjected to a long, tedious documenting of the attempts first to get permission from the trust, then to raise a timber for dating. The doubts expressed by the trust were fully justified, the lifting of the rudder onto the boat was dangerous for both crew and artefact and was a health and safety nightmare. This further contributed to the impression that nobody involved so far with this excavation knew what he or she was doing.

We then progressed to the 'science'. Owain Roberts of the University of Bangor used the dimensions of the rudder to calculate the dimensions of the whole ship, based on the shipbuilding formula used by Elizabethan shipwrights. The original dimensions for the 'Makeshift' are documented, and they do not tally with the reconstruction. The wreck off Alderney was over six feet wider and was probably a cargo ship, rather than the fast, manoeuvrable pinnace style.

Another disappointment was that the rudder did not yield enough rings for dendrochronological dating. The agenda of the programme is reinforced here when Ian Panter of York Archaeological Trust expresses disappointment at not being able to 'prove what we want to prove'. Here archaeology is seen as failing when, in fact, the failure lies in the desire to prove a theory at all costs. The desire is that we have an Elizabethan ship that has now changed from a pinnace carrying vital intelligence to a cargo ship carrying arms to combat the next Spanish Armada, which Nolan admits would fit his theory better.

Finally, we have a gunport cover, with adequate tree rings, sent for dating to Dendrochronology at the University of Sheffield. The procedure and results are not discussed; we are instead treated to some fancy, dramatic camerawork with close-ups on the computer cross-match identifying the wood as English. We then cut to the pub, with Bowyer revealing to Nolan that the date of the cutting of the timber is 1575, and the wood is English. Therefore we have an Elizabethan ship, which is apparently satisfactory, and the programme closes on the implication that the ship does relate to Sir John after all.

The whole programme was trivial, poorly presented, and lacked integrity. The real experts were not properly consulted, and the real evidence neither presented or discussed. The programme was

determined to prove a theory, not explore the potentials and problems of the evidence; the science was almost completely absent and the investigation was poor. The content created the impression that there was not enough to fill the time, therefore they needed to spend long periods filming people on the telephone and examining rusted modern rudders attached to boats, or discussing the weather. This time would have been better employed exploring the implications of the dendrochronological dates, the methodology used, etc., and seeking out a few more maritime experts to comment on the quality of the evidence.

This programme series as a whole, and this episode in particular, are indicative of the problems involved when competitive tendering takes priority over programme integrity.

[Over to independent television's contribution to archaeology now and unfortunately to another disappointment -- but one that perhaps is to be expected....]

'Time Team Live', presented by Tony Robinson, Channel 4, 29-31 August 1998

The August Bank Holiday Live Special was started last year with a more-than-hoped-for spectacle of the discovery of a new Roman villa. The problem here is the standard was set high at the inauguration, and now it is a case of 'follow that'. This year we were introduced to a Norman Church and possible Saxon religious site in Norfolk. Again we had a large site, but we also had an agenda -- that only the Saxon material was in any way important to Tony Robinson, and any other finds were 'very nice' but glossed over. The impression the programme gave during its live bulletins was that this site was not as prestigious as last year and not spectacular enough to draw the public interest. Consequently, the hype set in early and never left. We were subjected to a frantic, disjointed presentation leaving the interested viewer frustrated for real information.

The usual format of trenches, computer-generated models, and 3-D images was employed. The presence of a Saxon reconstruction society set the agenda for what period was considered most important. However, there was little or no recognition of the contribution made by these people's skills and dedication to detail. Demonstrations involved

weaving, wood turning, making a coin die, creating a replica of a Saxon strap end found on site, building a bread oven, and baking and cooking a Saxon feast. Instead of recognising that this group made a big contribution to understanding the lifestyle of Saxon England, we were led to believe it was all the work of TV cook Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. In fact, his contribution consisted of asking everyone 'What are you doing?' or 'What have you done?' The most disgraceful treatment of all came at the end of the final programme when a mason, having reconstructed the Romanesque arch in the church, was interviewed by Robinson, who was quite clearly not interested in any of the processes involved and effectively turned his back on the man!

The programme has become too celebrity-centred and the problem celebrity is its presenter Tony Robinson. He still fails to ask the questions that require clarification, and he displays no respect for the archaeology or the archaeologists. His contribution consisted largely of rushing from one trench to another and interrupting informative discussions. On one occasion, he cut across a discussion of geophysics to talk to the TV celebrity cook, and on another he climbed down into a trench to look at an 'exciting' skeleton and kicked some human bones out of the way to do so. The evidence is reduced to a 'soundbite' interpretation made by the 'star'. The archaeologists involved in this programme lack no expertise or skill, what is lacking is the integrity of the programme makers and producers in allowing this 'star' status centred on Tony Robinson. The future of any site invaded by this three-day army is always an issue that is not addressed satisfactorily by Channel 4's 'Time Team' producers. The complexity of this site justifies far more detailed excavation and interpretation. The cavalier treatment of this three-day media event is not adequate.

The 'live' dig and 'Time Team' in general fail to present archaeology as it could and indeed should be presented. It does not have to be dull and dry as dust to appeal to the audience as the production team of 'Meet the Ancestors' has shown. It is a sad reflection that those in charge of presenting our past feel the need to shout at us in bursts aimed at a 30-second attention span. If our level of attention is so short, can we remember that we have a past?

Given the poor standard of representation in the last two programmes reviewed, it appears that media representation of data and evidence in all fields can turn out to be misrepresentation.

Questionnaire

If any **assemblage** readers have experienced this problem perhaps you would like to send e-mail to the TV and Radio Review Editor and either detail your grouch or answer any or all of the following few questions. Every response will be treated confidentially, and the questionnaire is only to satisfy my curiosity in the form of a straw poll. If the response is big enough, we can present some results in the next issue, so you know you are not alone.

It's the truth Jim, but not as we know it.

1. Have you, as an expert in your field, ever been consulted by the printed or broadcast media?
2. If so, were you satisfied/dissatisfied with the final presentation?
3. Have you ever, as a result of dissatisfaction, turned down subsequent approaches?
4. Have you been able to influence the media presentation of data or information in a way that satisfied you?