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## Review Articles

### **Spiritual *Habitus* and the Archaeology of Belief**

*Material Culture and Sacred Landscape:  
the Anthropology of the Siberian Khanty,*

by Peter Jordan, 2003. Walnut Creek (CA): AltaMira Press; ISBN 0-7591-0277-5 paperback, £22.95 & US\$29.95; ISBN 0-7591-0276-7 hardback, £61 & US\$80, xxiii + 309 pp., ill.

Neil S. Price

After training first as a human geographer and subsequently as an environmental archaeologist, between 1996 and 1999 Peter Jordan spent a total of ten months conducting anthropological fieldwork in western Siberia. On these visits he followed the lives of several families among the Malyi Iugan Khanty, one branch of the broader Khanty people who live as semi-nomadic hunter-fisher-gatherers in the basin of the Ob' river, in what is now the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District. This fieldwork resulted in a Sheffield PhD thesis in archaeology, reworked into the present book during successive Research Fellowships at the UCL Institute of Archaeology where Jordan currently teaches. In the months since its appearance, *Material Culture and Sacred Landscape* has gained a considerable word-of-mouth reputation among circumpolar scholars, which is more than borne out on closer inspection.

The focus of Jordan's study is the relationship between people and environment, and the ways in which this is played out within the realm of ritual praxis. In particular he explores what he calls 'the veneration of natural landscape features' (p. 282), which for the Khanty involves a complex network of understandings relating to special places such as islands, watercourses, hills and certain kinds of trees. The key to Jordan's argument is that these localities are not 'cult sites' or similar ritual centres in the sense of the terms so often used by archaeologists when describing the prehistoric past, but are instead

viewed by the Khanty actually as animate objects in their own right. These perceptions are underwritten or enhanced by human action in this landscape — by carving into the bark of trees, for example, or by creating anthropomorphic images — but always as part of the same continuous process of interaction with the spiritual *habitus* of the Khanty's taiga home.

Jordan develops this argument over nine chapters, beginning with two theoretical overviews of, respectively, the anthropology of hunter-gatherers and the study of landscape. Chapters Three and Four introduce the Khanty and their world, traced not only through the history of anthropological research in western Siberia but also in the trajectory of Russian expansion and the exploitative colonization of the region. Jordan is careful here to emphasize the dynamic, flexible and adaptive nature of Khanty society. This is examined in relation to changes in traditional subsistence strategies, and in reaction to the long-term economic and political transformation of the region with respect to their non-Khanty neighbours. Jordan explores attitudes to gender and sexuality, the spirit-related kinship system (everyone belongs to either the Beaver, Elk or Bear clan), and the dispersed settlement pattern in *yurts* along the rivers.

Chapter Five introduces the shifting boundaries of the human and animal worlds, with reference to elk, reindeer and especially the bear. In considering Khanty cosmology, especially the complex ceremonies associated with the bear hunt and its aftermath, Jordan takes us onto more familiar ground in Siberian anthropology. Khanty beliefs in the nature of spirits and their relationship to a hunting lifestyle, what Jordan evocatively calls 'an economy of souls' (p. 126) lie at the heart of the debate on circumpolar shamanism and find ready comparison right across the region. To take just one example, Jordan's findings on the Khanty concept of animal personhood (pp. 196–230) are astonishingly closely paralleled in Rane Willerslev's recent work among the Yukaghirs (2001).

In a sense, of course, we have been here before in other studies of what has come to be termed 'the shamanic world-view', the definition of shamanism as nothing less than a specific understanding of the

nature of reality itself. I feel that the book might well have benefited from greater discussion of this earlier work, and the absence of any reference to Åke Hulkrantz's ideas on ecological motors for shamanism (e.g. 1965; 1978) is strange in the light of their similarity to Jordan's own arguments. However, while those working on shamanism will find much of interest in this book, one of the great strengths of *Material Culture and Sacred Landscape* is that the author's focus is so much broader while losing none of its depth. The conventional vocabulary of shamanic studies is in fact largely absent here, though Jordan makes it clear that shamans occupied a central role among Khanty ritual specialists (e.g. pp. 141–8). Modern scholarship on shamanism is sometimes regrettably offhand and muddled in its frame of reference, particularly in terms of an arbitrary assumption of animism and indeed the primacy of the shamanic figure, and it is here that Jordan really comes into his own with the core of the book in Chapters Six to Eight on the landscape itself.

Here we learn how, for the Khanty, spirits are tied to places but also linked to both individuals and kinship groups. They can act as helpers and local guardians, and may require a complicated range of sacrifices. (Jordan is especially interesting on the circumstances and composition of the resulting depositions.) A mobile, physical and direct relationship with these beings is at the centre of Khanty life, in an ongoing dialogue of obligation and reciprocity. In short, Jordan argues that the entire seasonal round of the Khanty's semi-nomadic existence focuses on passage between carefully delineated spaces connected with the sacred, the living and the dead. Movement through this landscape is naturally bound up with the economic necessities of survival, but the Khanty are tied to this system in the most profound way possible through a kinship of souls and ancestral spirits shared with its inhabitants — in our terms both 'animal' and 'inanimate', the places themselves. Overlaid on this is the wider landscape of tenure and territoriality discussed in Chapter Eight, what Jordan terms the Khanty 'enculturation of space'. With access to resources expressed in terms of social and ritual relationships of control, the author here makes his final link to the long-term aspects of Khanty life, with the generational effects of these concepts flowing through families (and, by extension, lines of spiritual power) over time and across the land. *Material Culture and Sacred Landscape* concludes with a final chapter drawing all these threads together and summarizing Jordan's view of the 'landscape anthropology' of the Khanty.

It is easy to bury the subtlety and complexity of Jordan's argument under superlatives, and I should stress firstly that this review cannot do justice to the depth of his field research. For this alone his book must already be considered the worthy peer of earlier Khanty scholarship by Chernetsov, Lukina, Balzer, Kulemzin, Pentikäinen, Bakhlykov, Semenova and their colleagues (previous research on the Ob'-Ugrians is well-referenced by Jordan). When compared with other recent studies of modern Siberian peoples, blending anthropology with a specific concern for spiritual belief, *Material Culture and Sacred Landscape* is the best contextualized socio-cultural analysis that I have encountered since the work of Caroline Humphrey (e.g. 1983; Humphrey & Onon 1996).

The book's second triumph concerns its theoretical framework, tied in not only to circumpolar, Siberian and shamanic scholarship but also into the much wider fields of landscape studies and hunter-gatherer research. Within any of these subjects, what makes Jordan's work different is its focus on the material culture through which these concepts are articulated, in everything from architecture to offerings. He makes us understand how the Khanty's entire physical world is in one way or another structured according to their perception of nature, and he is equally conscious of the archaeological implications of his anthropological observations. Some of Jordan's arguments are familiar from other recent work in archaeology, such as Richard Bradley's *Archaeology of Natural Places* (2000). But where Bradley's book is thematic with short case studies, Jordan's is specific, with a constant concern for the overall material environment of the Khanty. Their contextualized spiritual beliefs permeate all other aspects of life, and 'landscape' is used here in the widest sense as a palimpsest of territories on the ground and in the mind, the latter if anything more 'real' than the former.

The book's structure has clearly been chosen with care, each section almost able to stand alone as a discrete essay on an aspect of Khanty society, with separate introductions and conclusions for each chapter. These are complemented by a comprehensive bibliography and glossary, and frequent diagrams mapping out the complex spiritual networks encoded in the Khanty landscape. The text is well illustrated with a number of lively monochrome photographs taken by the author during his fieldwork, supported by pencil sketches of more sensitive situations and objects. There are some reproduction problems here, as several of the pictures have been rendered rather opaque in printing, but this does not detract from the overall quality of the work.

To conclude, Peter Jordan's book makes a fundamental contribution to the literature on the Siberian peoples. It provides a deep anthropology that belies its modest trappings (at first glance it looks a rather unassuming book), and I have little doubt that in future it will be counted alongside other insightful works such as Shirokogoroff's *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (1935) as a classic of northern spirituality. More importantly from a broader perspective, this volume presents a challenging meditation on the archaeology of belief and its role in society. In a manner relevant to any number of situations in global prehistory, Jordan sets out a powerful argument for the necessity of considering the material articulation of the sacred in the *total* context of social action and environmental response. Not least, he is essentially advocating the death of the 'site' as a meaningful concept in the interpretation of prehistoric societies, or at least with reference to mobile, foraging communities. When supported by the kind of evidence presented here, this is a conclusion that no archaeologist can afford to ignore, and one can only agree with Richard Bradley's comment in the foreword that *Material Culture and Sacred Landscape* deserves to have considerable influence. This is an outstanding book.

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## African Islam

*The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa*, by Tim Insoll, 2003. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; ISBN 0-521-65702-4 paperback, £25.95 & US\$37; ISBN 0-521-65171-9 hardback, £70 & US\$95, xv + 470 pp., ill.

David W. Phillipson

Although its focus and aims are not always clear, this is an enormously useful book. Following an introductory chapter which discusses the nature and distinctiveness of Islam and its archaeological recognition, Insoll presents his basic data in a series of regional chapters, starting with the Horn, Nubia and the East African coast, followed by West Africa and the interior regions of central and southern Africa. The advantage of this arrangement is that regional differences in approach and data availability are clear, but the divisions are necessarily arbitrary and the unfortunate separation between the East coast and its hinterland continues a distortion which has for long impeded comprehension. Inter-regional comparisons are disappointingly few: it would, for example, have been good to see more detailed contrasts made between our understanding of the East African coast, where archaeological data are relatively plentiful, and West Africa where they are exceedingly sparse.

The book brings together an enormous amount of information, but it is not always easy to see the wood for the trees. It is, with some few exceptions, comprehensively referenced with perhaps a superfluity of direct quotations. Insoll has a tendency, however, to concentrate on recent reinterpretations rather than original presentations, to the extent that his discussion of early cultural unity along the East

African coast, for example, depends so heavily on an unpublished doctoral dissertation that it will not be easy for the reader to make his or her own evaluation. Likewise, the possibility of an Ethiopian involvement in the construction of the *kaaba* at Mecca is dismissed with a passing reference to a secondary source and no consideration of the detailed arguments of Cresswell in *Archaeologia* 94 (1951). Although Insoll's own field researches at Gao, Timbuktu and Dahlak Kebir are fully considered, they are not given undue prominence and the book is derived very largely from published materials.

One of the book's strengths is that Insoll provides much background information for the advent of Islam in Africa and for the context of Muslim societies there. In the case of northeast Africa, this is comprehensively done, arguably to excess, while for the central and southern parts of the continent his treatment is much more rudimentary.

A serious problem throughout the book is that archaeological sources relating specifically to Islam are strikingly sparse. Over half of the references cited are not concerned with archaeology at all. It is, of course, entirely proper that the archaeological material should be presented and interpreted in association with historical, linguistic and other relevant sources, but the imbalance is nonetheless disconcerting, particularly for western regions of the continent. Not only has relevant archaeological research often been lacking, that which has been undertaken has usually been designed specifically to support or augment the written record. Insoll generally provides a sound account of historical sources, although he appears unaware of the near-contemporary account by Sihab ad-Din of Ahmed Gragn's incursion into the Ethiopian highlands (French translation by Basset, Paris 1909; English translation by Stenhouse, Hollywood 2003), and could usefully have compared the tendency both of written and oral histories to subsume the origins of subjects with those of their rulers. Insoll is, however, not at his best when dealing with linguistic matters: the derivation of the kiSwahili word for a prison from the Portuguese for a church is of far wider significance than the siting of the Zanzibar *gereza*, and it would have been pertinent to point out that the words *sahel* and *Swahili* are both derived from the same Arabic root, signifying a coast; likewise the Arabic-derived *Sudan* and the Greek-derived *Ethiopia* both mean essentially the same thing, although it might be impolitic to say so in Khartoum.

The book shows unfortunate signs of hasty compilation and inadequate copy-editing. Not only are

contrasts between the regionally-based chapters few and superficial, the writing is sometimes inelegant and repetitive; only rarely, however, is the meaning obscure. More serious is the treatment of numerical data: the city of Boum Massenia is not 6.5 km in length but in circumference, and the plan of Ouara in figure 6.14 suggests an area closer to 7 ha than to the 10 ha noted in the text. Much confusion arises because Insoll usually (but not invariably) uses the form 'x m<sup>2</sup>' not in its correct sense to mean 'x square metres' but incorrectly to signify 'x metres square', so we have the alarming reference on p. 99 to 100 camels being accommodated in a caravanserai courtyard of 40 square metres. The illustrations are not always well chosen or reproduced (fig. 4.23 is a case in point) and some could usefully have been cropped and/or reduced further. Many plans and maps are taken directly from other publications, so there is much diversity in treatment and style which can be confusing: figure 2.14, for example, does not indicate, as Insoll's caption implies, the distribution of stone-built towns in central and southern Ethiopia, but all the sites — mostly megalithic monuments — located by Azaïs and Chambard in the 1920s.

Having noted these detailed criticisms and areas of disagreement, it is pertinent to look at the broader picture. Although the book is entitled *The Archaeology of Islam . . .*, the publisher's blurb calls it 'the first comprehensive study of the impact of Islam . . .'. Neither terminology seems entirely appropriate. The blurb omits to note that the focus is exclusively on the past, while the emphasis on archaeology implied by the title does not always prove possible. While one may regret the scarcity of archaeological research in many areas, Insoll's skilful interweaving of diverse data is a great strength and contributes much to overall understanding. Some general questions arise. Is it strictly appropriate to refer to 'the archaeology of Islam' rather than to 'the archaeology of Islamic societies'? Why is there so little archaeological data directly relevant to the first of these topics? Does this scarcity merely reflect the difficulty of reconstructing past religious practices and beliefs from archaeological sources, or is Islam particularly hard to detect? Insoll does not provide conclusive answers. He devotes disappointingly little space to considering the more general issue but offers suggestions which tend to support the latter contention. He makes the important point that Islam may be more readily adopted by mobile people than by settled communities. In view of the significance to early Islam of desert mobility and trans-Saharan contacts, it is disappointing that more attention is

not paid to the early use of the camel. Perhaps more consideration could be devoted to those of Islam's secondary aspects which might leave recognizable traces in the archaeological record. To secure adequate interpretation of such traces, practices associated with other religions require more detailed attention. Insoll appears unaware that pork is avoided by adherents of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as well as by Muslims; he gives inadequate emphasis to the avoidance of fish by many speakers of Cushitic languages; his attempt to provide a unified account of traditional African religions (pp. 22–6) is unconvincing and probably counterproductive.

It is almost inevitable, given the ambitious scope of this book, that a reviewer will find points of disagreement. This must not detract from appreciation of its overall value. Most overviews of African archaeology are regional in scope or superficial in treatment; Insoll's thematic and continental synthesis is a stimulating pleasure to read and will long remain a valuable work of reference.

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## Palaeoanthropology for Middlebrows

*The Neanderthal's Necklace: In Search of the First Thinkers*, by Juan Luís Arsuaga, 2003. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.; ISBN 0-470-85157-0 cloth, £16.99, xv + 338 pp., 24 ills.

Geoffrey A. Clark & Jessica C. Thompson

*The Neanderthal's Necklace* is a popular book by the prominent Spanish palaeoanthropologist, Juan Luís Arsuaga, best known for his work at the Middle Pleistocene fossil and archaeological localities in the Sierra de Atapuerca, north-central Spain. The title is somewhat misleading because the scope of the work

is much broader than it suggests. Arsuaga aims to convey to an audience of reasonably well-educated people, in a readable non-technical way, the basic outlines of human evolution, the sense of wonder that attends discovery, and the enduring mysteries surrounding how we came to be the way we are today. This aspect of the effort is a modest success, but there are other objectives. Arsuaga also wants to showcase modern Spanish palaeoanthropology, the spectacular finds at the Sima de los Huesos, and give the reader a feeling for the changing landscapes of Iberia over the course of the Pleistocene. Only Chapters 3, 8 and 9 emphasize the Neanderthals.

The book is divided into three sections of three chapters each, and an epilogue. Part 1 (Shadows of the Past) summarizes hominid evolution in Africa prior to the human colonization of Eurasia (Chs. 1,2) and the Neanderthals and their Middle Pleistocene predecessors (Ch. 3). Although most of Part 1 consists of a straightforward description of the human fossil record (a phylogeny is presented on p. 64), along with occasional excursions to introduce the reader to essential methodologies (e.g. how marine palaeotemperature cores are derived, how cladistics works), the focus is on the emergence of *Homo* at c. 2.5 mya, and the implications that has for later cognitive evolution. Arsuaga is interested in the origins of consciousness which he equates with 'the mind'. Humans are viewed as 'radically different from all other animals due to the astonishing phenomena of our intelligence, our capacity for reflection, and a broad self-consciousness in all aspects of our behaviour' (p. 44). In contrast to workers like Davidson and Noble (who receive a mild drubbing throughout the book), he sees the modern human mind as rooted deeply in our evolutionary heritage as social animals. Set against the backdrop of accelerated climatic change over a span of c. 1 million years (17–18 glacial/interglacial oscillations), Chapter 3 describes the hominid colonization of Europe from the perspective of Atapuerca (Dmanisi isn't mentioned), the history of Neanderthal research, Neanderthal precursors and the appearance of the Neanderthals at around the Middle–Upper Pleistocene boundary, at c. 130 kya. A scenario involving two European colonizations (initially by *H. ergaster*→*H. antecessor*, later by *H. sapiens*) is presented wherein *H. antecessor*, from the Gran Dolina at Atapuerca (c. 780 kya), is argued to lie at the root of both modern human and Neanderthal evolution. The nilotic 'tropical morphology' characteristic of Nariokotome and of modern humans thus would have arisen as an adaptation to life in the open in hot, dry environments, rather than

to any particularly close evolutionary relationship between the Africans of *c.* 1.5 mya and those of today. There are some fairly obvious problems with this because *H. sapiens* is portrayed as a lineal descendant of *H. antecessor*, rather than as the African-derived species many believe us to be. A subtext throughout is brain evolution. Arsuaga maintains that both the European lineage (leading to Neanderthals) and the African lineage (leading to modern humans) each evolved larger brains independently (and both to a greater extent than did east Asian *H. erectus*).

Part 2 (Life in the Ice Age) is a natural history of Europe (more accurately, Iberia) from an ecosystemic standpoint. The changing plant and animal communities of Iberia over the last million years are described in Chapters 4 and 5, and the 'great extinction' in Chapter 6. Chapters 4 and 5 have an almost lyrical quality to them, which shows up sporadically elsewhere in the book whenever the author touches on the good design of organisms and the harmony of ecosystems. Arsuaga is very knowledgeable about the natural history of Iberia. It is clear that he has an abiding respect for, and love of, nature, and a genuine concern (shared by many of us) for the devastating impact that 6.3 billion humans are having on global ecosystems. Chapters 4 and 5 are the most ecologically-oriented parts of the book, are uncontroversial, well-written and generally coherent.

Chapter 6, on the other hand, is a rather eclectic set of observations on the role of humans in those ecosystems (with frequent, irrelevant digressions on the adaptations of other species), the subsistence strategies of the genus *Homo*, and the megafaunal extinctions that took place in both hemispheres during the waning phases of the Upper Pleistocene. Included here are topics ranging from the origin of menopause (Arsuaga is skeptical of the 'grandmother hypothesis': Hawkes *et al.* 1997), hominoid socioecology and behavioural cladistics as applied to social evolution (e.g. Foley & Lee 1996) and lithic technologies (e.g. Foley & Lahr 1997), the dietary importance of plant foods (esp. acorns) and the role of women in obtaining them, cave bear adaptations as modelled on those of brown bears, north Spanish Mesolithic coastal foragers, hunting and scavenging in evolutionary and modern forager contexts, evidence for 'modern-like' hunting in the Lower Palaeolithic and its behavioural implications (e.g. Boxgrove, Schöningen, Biache, Áridos), elephant hunting and the competing scenarios for what occurred at Torralba and Ambrona (cf. Freeman 1994; with Klein 1987, Binford 1987: he sides with the lat-

ter two), the adaptive advantages of dwarfism in island faunas (e.g. the Wrangel Island mammoths) and how changing views of site contextual integrity have altered our notions of behavioural modernity. Underlying these diverse subjects is whether or not, and to what extent, macroclimatic change and/or human agency played a role in these extinctions.

Part 3 (The Storytellers) explores the evolution of the mind as inferred from the fossil and archaeological records. Chapter 7 describes the Sima de los Huesos 'ossuary' where, roughly 350 kya, more than 30 human cadavers probably representing a biological population were thrown down a vertical shaft over a very short (*c.* 3–4 generations) period of time. These were large-brained 'pre-Neanderthals', with a mean cranial capacity of *c.* 1250 cc (*n* = 3), a scant 100 cm below the modern human average. Although contested, the evidence for funerary ritual implies to Arsuaga that these people were conscious of the inevitability of death, that they could anticipate events in the socionatural world, and the behaviour to be expected of their conspecifics. They had, in short, a 'theory of mind' not markedly different from our own.

Chapters 8 and 9 are concerned with consciousness, language and the emergence of symbolic behaviour; how they might be inferred from the archaeopalaontological record, and whether or not (or to what extent) Neanderthals differed from modern humans in respect of symbolism. All this reduces to whether or not we can explain animal behaviour without recourse to (self) consciousness. Arsuaga thinks we can (chimpanzees are a possible exception), but presents a range of models and theories that strongly suggests that we can't. After excursions into mind/body dualism (Descartes 1637), the collective consciousness (Wittgenstein 1922), the notion that mind, or consciousness, doesn't exist without language (Noble & Davidson 1996), and that of multiple domain-specific intelligences that become fully integrated only in *H. sapiens* (Mithen 1996), Arsuaga remains somewhat equivocal on the nature of 'mind'. In his (probably futile) quest for an unambiguous criterion to separate us from other animals, he settles on symbolic behaviour manifest as language. Some of Mellars's (e.g. 1989) criteria for behavioural modernity are then examined and evidence for complex technologies, shaped stone tools, ornaments, burial, ritual, fire and 'well-organized campsites' are shown to extend, in some cases, well back into the Middle Pleistocene (see also Hayden 1993). As we do, he thinks language is an emergent property that developed in contexts distinct from those in

which it is found today, but, like Tattersall (1998) and Klein (2003), he sees its fully modern expression as a recent phenomenon that occurred relatively abruptly as an event, rather than a process (here we part company).

Although he takes it to be the defining human characteristic, Arsuaga never actually tells us what he means by 'mind', using it interchangeably with 'spirit' (even, on occasion, 'soul'). As hard-core materialists, we'll go with Darwin (1871) and Gould (1994) on this. What we think of as 'mind' or 'spirit' is a product of brain evolution (more accurately, it is a product of the material substrate of the neurology of the brain). Since we can show that hominid brains have evolved over the past five million years, what constitutes 'mind' must also have evolved. To return to Arsuaga's question (whether we can explain animal behaviour without recourse to consciousness), if animals can think (and we submit that they can: e.g. Hauser 2000; Premack & Premack 2003), animals have minds. Those minds might not be much like ours, but the differences are always going to be differences of degree, rather than kind. Any other explanation would invoke a dualism that has no place in modern palaeoanthropology.

How successful is Arsuaga at making the broad sweep of palaeoanthropology accessible to an informed public? Unfortunately, and despite real strengths, there are some organizational and stylistic weaknesses with *The Neanderthal's Necklace* that make it less effective than it might otherwise have been. For one thing, it is not a scholarly work nor a 'novel-like' presentation that seeks to make the past come alive — rather a little of both. Parts 1 and 3 contain periodic barrages of names, dates and places swept along in a torrent of prose, interrupted by sometimes lengthy digressions of uncertain relevance to the topic at hand (e.g. whether or not human males make better navigators than females: p. 38). For another, the book is poorly organized and edited. There are too many typos, some idiosyncratic usage, occasional grammatical errors, and small, poorly rendered, infrequent, uninformative, and usually unnecessary illustrations. Arsuaga goes back and forth between an informal, breezy literary style, and a straightforward descriptive mode, replete with detailed facts and technical jargon, that can sometimes be jarring. Key concepts and terms that should have been introduced early on pop up unexpectedly throughout the book, making it hard to follow (or even identify) arguments. Keeping in mind that it is a translation, these problems could have been rectified by one more editorial pass by a professional

writer. Too bad he didn't do that. The book is factually accurate, but it leaves (these) readers wishing for a more coherent, focused work.

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## A Remarkable Site, Whatever its Age

*Return to Chauvet Cave: Excavating the Birthplace of Art: the First Full Report*, by Jean Clottes, 2003. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.; ISBN 0-500-51119-5 hardback, £45, 230 pp., 209 ills.

Lawrence Barham

Few archaeological sites have achieved iconic status as quickly as Chauvet cave (Ardèche, France). In the decade since its discovery, it has become established in undergraduate textbooks, both as the oldest known rock-art site and for its challenge to gradualist models for the evolution of complex art. The startling sophistication of much of the imagery and its apparent great antiquity (twice the age of Lascaux, if the dating is correct) have made Chauvet an archaeological paradigm-breaker. The public is interested too: a simple web search (Google, 30 December 2003) throws up 813 entries representing a genuine curiosity, reflected in commercial, educational and personal appropriations of the site. This fascination with Chauvet owes much to the publication, soon after its discovery, of high-quality photographs of the cave's extraordinary art in an accessible coffee-table book (Chauvet *et al.* 1996). The site also featured in another large-format publication (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998) that argued a shamanic role for much of Upper Palaeolithic art, and, of course, in *National Geographic*.

With so much academic and public interest in Chauvet, this interim summary of current research is timely. The monograph continues the tradition of lavish illustrations with a largely non-specialist text. Subtitled 'first full report' and originally published in French (Clottes 2001), it has been translated by Paul Bahn, with bibliographic updating for the English edition. This is a summary of the first three years' investigation by a large, international, interdisciplinary team directed by Jean Clottes, assisted

by Jean-Michel Geneste. The Clottes/Geneste combination brings together considerable expertise in rock-art research and Upper Palaeolithic archaeology; the results show in the project objectives, selection of the team and the care taken to minimize the impact of the project on the cave itself. Chauvet, with its sealed entrance and careful initial investigation by its discoverers, offers a near-pristine interior, ripe for study using the latest methods of digital analysis.

The team's primary objective was to undertake a detailed physical analysis of the site including its formation, human and animal use, and the contexts and content of the imagery. The eight chapters follow these themes, with the final two devoted to broader art-historical and anthropological (shamanic) interpretations. A concluding overview by Clottes addresses continuing concerns about the attribution of the imagery to the Aurignacian (see below).

The reports begin with an overview of the geology of the site and its environmental context. The striking Pont d'Arc that today spans the Ardèche river was also part of the Upper Palaeolithic landscape. The region's occupants would have been aware of this natural feature and the spectacle of flood waters spilling into the former meander beneath Chauvet. (There is clearly potential for a phenomenological study of landscape perceptions founded on this study.) The interior of the cave, with its large phreatic chambers and connecting passages, has changed little since the site was sealed by scree. A brief summary of the palaeoenvironmental data suggests a cold dry steppe flora around the cave. The academic reader will want more information than presented here, and presumably such data will appear in specialist publications. A succinct overview follows of the archaeological record of the Upper Palaeolithic in the Ardèche catchment, supported by published references.

Chapter 3 presents the radiocarbon chronology of Chauvet and spatial analyses of the human and animal footprints. Obtaining direct dates for the art has been a significant achievement of the project, or so it seemed until recently. Two phases of human use of the site emerge from the approximately 40 AMS dates now available (Valladas & Clottes 2003). The first phase in the Aurignacian (32,500–30,000 BP) is associated directly with the art and the second phase is a brief visit in the Gravettian (27,000–26,000 BP). Pettitt & Bahn (2003) highlight the many variables that can affect AMS results on rock art, and call for independent replication of the Chauvet results, because almost all the dating was done by a single



laboratory (Gif-sur-Yvette, France). They also challenge the attribution of the art to the Aurignacian on stylistic grounds. The complexity of the scenes, some techniques and stylistic conventions used and the presence of certain signs occur in later periods, particularly the Magdalenian. Their appeal to the priority of stylistic over radiocarbon dating is based on the work of Züchner (1996) who argues that Chauvet was painted during the Gravettian (red outline images) with the most complex scenes painted (in black) during the Magdalenian. Here stylistic dating and radiocarbon dating are in direct conflict, and it is this dissonance between the sophistication of the art and its unexpected antiquity that has made Chauvet so important, and now so controversial. Is there a systematic error in the radiocarbon dating of this site in the order of 15,000 years or did Magdalenian artists use very old wood to paint Chauvet? This is the nub of the issue and its resolution has a direct bearing on our confidence in direct dating of rock art in general. The call for independent verification of the Chauvet results is legitimate, but for the time being the number of concordant radiocarbon dates combined with consistency of conventions used throughout the cave to portray animals (see below) supports an early age.

Dating aside, the remainder of the volume is a *tour de force* of multidisciplinary analysis that yields insights into human use of the cave. A child, probably a boy, made a brief visit to the cave 26,000 years ago, leaving footprints, torch-marks and muddy handprints *en route*. Bears dominate among the footprints and fauna, but a lone wolf entered the cave along much the same route as the child. The intriguing suggestion is made that the morphology of the footprint closely resembles that of a dog. Unfortunately, the two sets of prints cannot be linked in time, spoiling a potentially heart-warming story of a Gravettian boy and his 'dog'. The floors preserve imprints of twigs and branches, hearths used to produce charcoal for painting as well as light and warmth (but not cooking) and a few flint artefacts ( $n = 20$ ). The latter occur in the deeper parts of the cave, randomly scattered, with the exception of debitage found around a hearth with an Aurignacian ivory point. Analysis of the floors also highlights the complex taphonomy of the deposits. Two bear humeri, found lodged vertically in sediments in the Chamber of the Bear Hollows, provide a case study of contrasting interpretations. Palaeontologists Philippe and Fosse suggest a natural origin, with the bones lodged in place by running water, whereas Geneste sees deliberate placement by humans. The

coexistence of such contrasting views is a strength of this volume which reflects the reality of multidisciplinary research.

Chapter 4 describes and illustrates the imagery in each chamber, including areas not accessible to direct study because of self-imposed restrictions to minimize damage to the floor. The structured use of themes and techniques of representation is a well-publicized feature of Chauvet amplified here, with new discoveries added. In brief, red images predominate in the first two-thirds of the site, with an intermediate zone of engravings leading to complex scenes in black that are the hallmark of Chauvet. The extent and large size of the engravings, especially on the Panel of the Scraped Mammoths (4 m × 2 m), is striking and warrants the attention given. At the end of the engraved zone, the Gallery of the Crosshatching is notable for the interpretation of the imagery as stylistically different from the rest of the cave's art and possibly of Gravettian origin. The Horse Sector at the back of the cave contains the now famous compositions of the Horse Panel and Reindeer Panel that frame a natural niche, the Alcove of the Lions. Analysis of this triptych reveals a phased execution and awareness of the visual impact of the setting. The conventions used to depict ears, eyes, manes and other anatomical features are discussed in detail in chapter 5, and these highlight the experience, if not training, of the artists involved. There are important implications here for the organization of Aurignacian society that deserve further discussion.

The passage linking the Horse Sector to the End Chamber has paintings with engravings, below which are hearths and stores of charcoal. Newly discovered engraved triangles, along with other 'vulvas' found in the End Chamber, are now a source of contention (Pettitt & Bahn 2003, 139): are they stylistically Aurignacian or Magdalenian? The End Chamber contains the highest concentration of images in the cave, including the Big Panel that spans 12 m (illustrated with a fold-out) with its distinctive scenes of frantic activity (e.g. 14 lions stalking bison) organized either side of a niche. Images emerge from crevices and some bison face the viewer directly, a rare perspective in Upper Palaeolithic art. The End Chamber also has the only clearly anthropomorphic imagery, a female torso painted in black on a stalactite. This image was discovered with the aid of camera attached to a boom passed behind the formation. When published in 1996 the stalactite was notable for its composite bison-human figure (inevitably called the 'sorcerer'). The woman's hip can now be seen to form part of the lower body of the bison-

being; clearly these two images are linked physically if not conceptually. (Perhaps Leroi-Gourhan's structuralist pairing of bison with women needs revisiting?)

Chapter 6 summarizes the various categories of images including signs, humans and animals. Percentage frequencies and contextual associations are given, and for each animal species behavioural analogues are derived from contemporary populations. In addition to the newly discovered human images, the study has doubled the number of animal figures known and added the musk-ox to the bestiary. Clottes (1996) has drawn attention to images of large and potentially dangerous animals in the art of Chauvet and in Aurignacian art generally. The revised inventory has increased the percentage of felines, mammoths, rhinoceros and bears at Chauvet from 54 per cent to 81 per cent of the total assemblage. Among the handful of Aurignacian sites known in France, Chauvet now stands further apart in the quantity and complexity of its imagery.

In his conclusion, Clottes argues persuasively that Chauvet is a unified construction because of similarities throughout in themes and techniques used to portray animals (except in the Crosshatch Gallery). Artistic conventions could have been transmitted across ten or more generations in the Aurignacian. Alternatively, Clottes suggests a small number of artists were involved for short periods, on separate visits. Debate will undoubtedly continue over the stylistic unity of the site, shamanic interpretations and, of course, its chronology. Public hunger for information about Chauvet is well-served by this accessible report; academics will have to wait a bit longer for the detailed analyses to appear. In the interim, buy the book, marvel at the images and admire the high standards set for future research at Chauvet and rock-art studies in general.

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## To Boldly Go

*Colonisation of Unfamiliar Landscapes: the Archaeology of Adaptation*, edited by Marcy Rockman & James Steele, 2003. London: Routledge; ISBN 0-415-25606-2 hardback, £55 & US\$95; ISBN 0-415-25607-0 paperback, £17.99 & US\$29.95, xxiii + 248 pp., ills.

P.B. Pettitt

Human societies with remarkably different social organization show a distinct tendency to fission and to throw off small migratory groups into new landscapes (Anthony 1997). Although the importance of migration in archaeological explanation has had a chequered history to say the least, it is now generally assumed that such processes, by which the unfamiliar landscapes of the Old and New Worlds were colonized in prehistory, were important human events. Large-scale population movements link people with landscapes in innovative ways, and as such have played major roles in human social and cultural development (Chapman & Hamerow 1997).

Demographers, like biogeographers, distinguish between 'push' and 'pull' factors as stimulants for human migration. The former invoke negative factors in existing home ranges, which may be social as much as population density-dependent, while the latter invoke positive factors in uncolonized territories. The evolutionary preference for certain landscapes may have acted as a strong pull effect, in

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which the perceived aesthetics of landscapes conceals strong selective pressures that guide colonists (Kaplan 1992; Orians & Heerwagen 1992). Such habitat theory further suggests that the payoff between seeing and being seen in the landscape further affects the issue as formalized in prospect-refuge theory (Appleton 1996).

This book arose out of an SAA symposium held in 2000, and aims to define landscape learning as a research field with a definable agenda, and admirably succeeds in this task. Given the current emphasis on human colonization processes in pre-history and migrations in the historical period, alongside interest in more general landscape archaeology, the five conceptual framework papers, six case studies and two theory and method contributions contained within are a very welcome addition to a respectable field. They take us well beyond simple push models which see humans, like animals, as migrating only if they are forced to do so by environmental, demographic or social stress (Clark 1994), and provide enough historical, ethnographic and archaeological data to allow some strong generalizations to be made that are eloquently summarized in Meltzer's concluding chapter.

The scale and rapidity, and therefore ecological and evolutionary importance, of human colonizations as global phenomena should not be underestimated. Models with even the most conservative parameters indicate that the entire New World could have been populated in as little as four and a half millennia (Anderson & Gillam 2000, 54), particularly with 'leap-frogging' colonization streams (Rockman, Fiedel & Anthony) targeting specific resource patches and ignoring others (Meltzer). A potentially serious

problem though, as realized by Chapman & Hamerow (1997, 2) is that the range of explanatory models for human migrations is probably vast, and therefore that '... there is little point in trying to find an essentialist characterisation of migrations ... that would fit every historic or cultural context'. As Roebroeks notes in his analysis of the earliest peopling of Europe, scales of data vary, although even the coarsest available for the subjects covered in the book (the Lower Palaeolithic) are amenable to reconstructing colonizing patterns. Generalizations may apparently be made, however, and in this sense the strength of this volume lies not in its specific case studies, fascinating as they are, but in the sum of the whole.

As Mandryck emphasizes, colonization is a process, not an event, and from a number of the contributions one can further envisage the process

**Table 1.** *Phased colonizations/landscape learning processes.*

Learning process/Phase	Nature	Acquisition	Limitations
<b>Rockman (ethnography/historical information)</b>			
1. Locational	Simple locations/physical characteristics	Rapid, easy to acquire gossip & pointing	Generalized/coarse scale
2. Limitational	Usefulness/reliability of resources, combination of same, periodicity	Lengthy time (> 1 generation)	
<b>Golledge (ethnography)</b>			
1. Naïve/Common sense Information	Things 'noticed' or 'heard about' spatially inaccurate	Rapid	Prone to error, fuzzy
2. Intentional knowledge	Deliberately taught/learned	Longer learning process, stored in material culture	Less prone to error
<b>Hardesty (Gold rushes)</b>			
1. Initial phase	Exploratory, based on prior knowledge	preliminary application of mining technology	
2. Diversification	Learning, technological Innovation, information exchange	Integrational	
3. Social meaning	Selection & integration of acquired knowledge to impart social meaning to landscape	Integrational, social	
<b>Blanton (English in Virginia)</b>			
1. Exploration & hardship phase	Male-dominated imposition of English landscape abroad	Native trade inflexibility militant	Disastrous
2. Initial expansion period	Adaptations, new technology, frontier	Limitational knowledge, dispersed settlements	
3. Emergent Chesapeake society period	Local culture, expanded settlement	Agricultural improvements sophisticated resource extraction, frontier expansion	

as a set of distinct phases (see Table 1) defined by increasing levels of landscape learning that culminate in a socialized landscape (Golledge, Kelly, Tolan-Smith, Fiedel & Anthony, Anderson, and especially Hardesty, Rockman, Blanton). Initial phases of movement equate with generalized, flexible toolkits and cultural homogeneity, and secondary phases with increased use of local raw materials that demonstrate landscape learning in progress (Mandryck), and cultural change such as the Chesapeake culture discussed by Blanton — a mix of traditional English, native American and African. Generalized behavioural strategies with inherent flexibility often characterize these pioneer phases, and seem to have operated for the initial modern human expansion in to Europe (Davies 2001), and for the recolonization of northern Europe after the Last Glacial Maximum (Housley *et al.* 1997). Golledge uses the useful concept of landscape legibility, and suggests that the extent to which environments can be rapidly understood and appropriated presents a strong selective pressure, a phenomenon also observed by Kelly. In this sense, landscape learning will be structured around obvious landmarks, perhaps following animal trails that often demarcate lines of least effort (Zedeño & Stoffle). Landmarks may be strung together to form routes, the resulting web of which determines the structure of the overall occupational network.

Generalized technologies may also have been crucial to the initial (i.e. pre-Clovis) human expansion across the Americas, as may the relatively predictable resource base of terrestrial fauna which allows the deployment of prior knowledge (Kelly & Todd 1988, although see Meltzer's reservations). Hazelwood and Steele use mathematical models to detect such initial phases, and suggest that these can be 'reversed' to source the colonization of the Americas to Beringia. Mandryck is concerned with social stimuli to migration, an often overlooked factor but one notably emphasized by Gamble (1993), to whom social thresholds were crucial to the dispersing pulses of early hominines out of Africa and their subsequent colonization of high latitudes and the New World. Certainly, the landscape learning process can be seen to be a social response to the lack of landscape knowledge and access to that knowledge (Mandryck).

A common theme across the papers is an accumulative, multi-phased set of landscape learning processes. These — usually two or three phases — see colonists enter unfamiliar landscapes as pioneers, learning the general resource layout by seeing and doing and much pointing and gossip (locational knowledge in Rockman's terminology) — or not in

Blanton's analysis of the disastrous English colonists at Jamestown. Following this phase, colonists gather over a generation or so an appreciation of resource predictability, fluctuation and limitations (limitational knowledge), and finally arrive at a combination of knowledge sets and the encoding of resulting knowledge in oral and written tradition to form social landscapes (Kelly). Such accumulative phases operating at rapid and generational scales are illustrated through hunter-gatherers (Kelly), other small-scale societies (Golledge) and through specific case studies (Zedeño & Stoffle on the Ojibway, Hardesty on the gold rush, Anderson on the colonization of the Polynesian 'seascapes', Fiedel & Anderson on the spread of the Neolithic in Europe, and, less convincingly, Tolan-Smith on the recolonization of Britain after the Last Glacial Maximum). Gender differences are apparent in landscape learning (Golledge, Meltzer), with women generally accumulating information on gathered resources of more local environments and male wayfinders on more distant regions. The apparent universality of phased exploration and colonization is clearly brought out by Anderson, who demonstrates that such pertain equally to sea-going dispersals, not just on land masses.

Anglocentric and arrogant English colonists in Virginia aside, we can learn much about human dispersals from their mistakes and from the parts they apparently did not reach as a result of variable landscape learning. Roebroeks notes how Middle Pleistocene humans apparently did not learn the landscapes of large part of Europe, probably because range extensions will have been limited by the distribution of faunal resources crucial for survival in northern latitudes, and the (small) size of social groups and their corresponding ability to fission. Perhaps surprisingly, as Golledge points out, wayfinders appear to show little concern about efficient exploration of unfamiliar landscapes, being instead satisfied with reaching target destinations. Given this, and the universal tendency of wanderers to veer (around 18°), the importance of topography in landscape learning is clear. We are, after all, only human.

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## Death, Emotion and Identity in Late Mesolithic Cemeteries

*Embodied Rituals and Ritualized Bodies: Tracing Ritual Practices in Late Mesolithic Burials*, by Liv Nilsson Stutz, 2003. (Acta Archaeologica Lundensia 46.)  
Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell International;  
ISBN 91-22-02037-3 hardback, US\$85, 395 pp., ills.

Chris Scarre

The Mesolithic cemeteries of the south Scandinavian Ertebølle have attracted considerable attention, not only from European prehistorians, but more generally as evidence of the kind of social differentiation to be expected among complex hunter-gatherers. Since the discovery of the Vedbaek cemetery on Zealand in the 1970s, models of social hierarchy have been proposed to account for the differences in treatment of the dead, and more particularly in the number and type of objects placed in the graves. This gave rise to the notion that Ertebølle societies were characterized by both horizontal differentiation, based on age and sex, and vertical ranking, indicative of social status. The discovery in 1980–81 of two further cemeteries at Skateholm in southern Sweden gave added impetus to these debates. Two of these cemeteries, however, contained relatively small numbers of graves (18 at Vedbaek, 22 at Skateholm II; as compared with 63 at Skateholm I), and it is clear moreover that cemetery burial was not the only practice of the period. A number of Late Mesolithic single graves are known, and other corpses may have been disposed of in ways that are less easy to recognize archaeologically. The Ertebølle boat burial from Møllegabet II provides evidence of offshore or underwater burial (Grøn & Skaarup 1991), while the Koelbjerg Woman, dated to the ninth millennium BC, is the oldest known bog body, though whether a formal burial or simply a victim of drowning remains uncertain (van der Sanden 1996).

It is important, then, not to consider cemeteries as evidence of a standardized Ertebølle burial practice, and this caveat must compromise any attempt to read them as evidence of social structure. To do so, furthermore, is to miss the opportunity to understand them in different and perhaps more meaningful terms. It was recognized from the very outset that these cemeteries provide evidence of human qualities such as emotion and family ties. The sense

is perhaps most graphically conveyed by grave 8 at Vedbaek, where the body of a young woman had been laid on her back, with a newborn infant resting on swan's wing at her side. The image of mother and child in death transports the discussion of Ertebølle societies beyond the domain of ecology and subsistence in which so much study of the Mesolithic is couched, and forces us to consider these cemeteries as human responses to death.

In this lengthy study, Liv Nilsson Stutz reassesses the Vedbaek and Skateholm cemeteries from a dual perspective. In first place, she seeks to focus not on reconstructing Ertebølle society but in using the evidence of these cemeteries to understand how these people coped with death: with the disappearance of a living individual and the emergence of a dead body. Her aims are ambitious:

to look for what the handling of the dead body can tell us about the attitudes to the body in life and in death, about physical change and decay, about conceptions about death as a phenomenon, about the integrity of the individual and the conceptual relationship between individual and individual body. (p. 316)

Much of the first half of the book is devoted to discussion of embodiment, and the theory of ritual practices.

She couples this approach with a second, however, one derived from a very different theoretical school: the French 'anthropologie de terrain'. This heavily empirical approach was developed in the 1970s and aims to reconstruct mortuary practices at a high level of detail by focusing closely on the natural processes through which the human body decays, so as to understand the relationship between the position of the excavated remains and the way in which a body was placed in the grave. It advocates that burials should be excavated by specialist anthropologists. Especially important are the relative chronology of decomposition of the skeletal articulations, and the dynamic between the formation of empty spaces as organic material decomposes and the filling of these empty spaces as sediment penetrates. 'Anthropologie de terrain' is indeed a powerful tool for inferring features of burial that are not preserved, such as the presence of a shroud or container, or of padding or pillows placed beneath the body. It also provides detailed insight into treatment of the body before burial, and post-mortem disturbance of the remains.

Yet despite its obvious meticulousness, we may question whether 'anthropologie de terrain' represents a novel and revolutionary approach. Tapho-

nomy is hardly a new discovery in archaeology, and the involvement of specialists in excavating skeletons is hardly an innovation attributable exclusively to one school of anthropology. It is more a symptom of a general improvement in the forensic detail of funerary excavations over recent decades. There is also a certain irony here: in that Vedbaek and Skateholm had been excavated long before she began her research. Stutz's analysis of these cemeteries is hence based not on first-hand experiences during excavation but on drawings and photographs taken in the field.

That reservation aside, Stutz's approach to these cemeteries offers many and important new insights. She observes, for example, that in discussing mortuary sites, archaeologists have 'preferred to talk of the clean skeletons in the ground and of living reconstructed societies' (p. 93). The processes of decomposition, and the challenge that a dead body poses to the living, have rarely been adequately addressed. Stutz also evokes the role of emotion, referring to work by Tarlow, Meskell and Kus. Yet this in itself is not unproblematic. First there is the question of universality: is the human emotional response to death a recurrent feature of all human societies, or is it strictly culturally- or context-specific? Then there is the problem of recoverability: is the archaeological evidence of mortuary behaviour sufficient for us to interpret burials as 'structured expressions of embodied emotion'?

Stutz observes that the burial practices at Skateholm and Vedbaek appear designed to hide the processes of decomposition. The body was placed in the grave as an integral entity, and there was generally no post-mortem interference with the dead. 'Primary burial is thus a strategy that appears to deny the post mortem changes of the body. . . . The body was buried once and for all in a state that resembled the living individual that had died' (p. 345). This contrasts sharply with the common practice of secondary burial encountered in other Mesolithic contexts in western Europe. In drawing this distinction, however, it is important not to overlook the exceptions. Thus the three cremations in the Skateholm and Vedbaek cemeteries might be classed as secondary burials; though they join the main group in evading or denying natural processes of bodily decay. Other exceptions are less easy to reconcile. In grave 28 at Skateholm I, parts of the body had been removed after burial. This indicates an awareness of decomposition processes and ties in with the human bones found in occupation layers. It is possible that the grave had been covered by a wooden lid, with

the express intention of allowing later access so that bones could be removed. A second more striking exception is grave 13 at Skateholm I, where the body was incomplete and had been dismembered before burial; there were no traces of cut marks on the bones, but some of the labile articulations had been preserved whereas more stable articulations had not. This body cannot therefore have decomposed naturally. One final category are the 'cenotaph' graves (Vedbaek 11 and Skateholm II unnumbered), which were found empty of human remains, though they contained deposits of red deer antler. It is possible that bodies had been buried in these graves but that the graves were later opened and the bones removed.

### Ertebølle and other Mesolithic burials

Cemeteries are relatively rare in the earlier prehistory of western Europe. By contrast, there is considerable evidence for the great antiquity of funerary practices that involved the manipulation of human remains (Cauwe 1996; 2001a). Scattered human skeletal elements are found in what might otherwise be classified as settlement contexts at Magdalenien occupation sites such as Isturitz in the Pyrenees and the Grotte du Placard in Charente. The manipulation of the human corpse may have a considerably longer history, if cut marks observed on human skulls from Bilzingsleben, Germany (archaic *Homo sapiens*: 400,000 BP) and Bodo, Ethiopia (300,000 BP) are considered as evidence of flesh removal as part of an early mortuary ritual rather than simple dietary cannibalism (Parker Pearson 1999, 154–6). Manipulated corpses — or skeletal elements testifying to such practices — are found widely in western Europe at sites dating to the Mesolithic period. Many of these are from specifically funerary contexts. A good example is provided by Cauwe's excavations at the Abri des Autours in the Meuse Valley (Cauwe 2001b). At the back of this rock-shelter a pit contained remains of three adults, all of them secondary burials. The bodies had decomposed elsewhere before they were placed in the pit: two of them perhaps within the rock-shelter, but a third had been cremated and the absence of traces of burning suggested that this had taken place elsewhere than in the rock-shelter itself. Elements of two or three more adult skeletons lay on the surface nearby, along with those of six children. The remains of the children were incomplete: there were no skulls, femora, tibiae or fibulae. But most striking of all was the discovery that 32 adult phalanges had been pushed into a rock cleft in the rear wall of the shelter: these comprised foot

bones taken perhaps from a single individual, plus hand bones from three different individuals. The evidence for secondary burial or disturbance of the dead is striking, and involved the removal and sorting of bones that were treated in a symbolically potent manner.

There is a chronological as well as a geographical element to this pattern. Many of the 'manipulated' burials date to the earlier Mesolithic period; the funerary activity at the Abri des Autours, for instance, has a date of 9090±140 BP (8715–7830 cal. BC). By contrast, it is in the Late Mesolithic that cemeteries appear around the fringes of western Europe: at Skateholm and Vedbaek in Scandinavia, at Tévéc and Hoëdic in Brittany, at Moita do Sebastião and other sites in Portugal. They contrast with the earlier Mesolithic burials in that the integrity of the individual corpses is respected. Moita do Sebastião belongs to the group of Tagus shell middens dated to the late seventh and early sixth millennium BC (Zilhão 2000). Excavations by Abbé Roche in 1952–54 recovered 34 skeletons, and while his interpretation that all came from individual graves may be questioned, it is clear from the photographs in his report that the corpses were at least for the most part buried intact (Roche 1960). The chronology of the earliest Neolithic in this region (central Portugal) has been subject of some dispute but its beginning is probably to be placed at around 5500 BC. Thus the first Mesolithic burials in Moita do Sebastião precede the local Neolithic transition by at least five centuries.

At Tévéc and Hoëdic, the dates are more difficult to interpret, but 10 out of 14 form a coherent group falling between 6645 and 6000 BP (Schulting 1999), which may correspond approximately to the range 5500–5000 BC in calibrated terms (Scarre 2002). The date of the earliest Neolithic in this region of southern Brittany is once again subject to question, but lies probably three to five centuries later. It is possible that the latest graves at Tévéc and Hoëdic may overlap chronologically with the settlement probably of colonist farmers on the borders of Brittany, represented notably at Le Haut Mée (c. 4800 BC) (Cassen *et al.* 1998). Nonetheless, there is no evidence that the inception of the Neolithic locally precedes the beginning of the burial activity at Tévéc and Hoëdic, which must have begun in a purely Mesolithic context without farming contact.

The same is true of the Skateholm and Vedbaek cemeteries, dated to the later sixth and earlier fifth millennium BC. Radiocarbon dates for the beginning of the south Scandinavian Neolithic stand at around 4000 BC. Hence the dating evidence suggests that

respect for the integrity of the corpse in burial was developing around the margins of western Europe in the Late Mesolithic, several centuries before the beginning of the Neolithic. This appears to indicate major changes in the concept of identity, personhood and community among the complex hunter-gatherers of this period: a transformation that precedes the spread of farming and may be unconnected with it.

Stutz does not explore this wider European background in much detail, though she does refer to contrasts and parallels from other sites. The great virtue of her analysis, rather, is the ‘humanization’ of the south Scandinavian Mesolithic. We begin to envisage the individual bodies as they were laid out in the graves, arrow wound packed with bandaging (Skateholm IX), head resting on a rolled-up dress (Vedbaek 8), or body wrapped in skins, hides, or (Skateholm IV) birch bark. The swan’s wing beneath the new-born infant in Vedbaek 8 cannot fail to conjure up emotive (and symbolic) connotations. The adult male with four-year old child placed between his hands (Skateholm 41) is likewise highly evocative of human emotional bonds. Much of this has already been remarked upon in earlier publications about these sites, but Stutz seeks to foreground the human response to death that these dispositions reflect: ‘how people in the past responded ritually to the crisis of death as a way to create a more meaningful world.’ In so doing she encourages us to think about these cemeteries as burial places of real individuals, not simply codified versions of anonymous Mesolithic societies.

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## Aboriginal (pre)History, in Black and White

*Landscapes, Rock Art and the Dreaming: an Archaeology of Preunderstanding*, by Bruno David, 2002.  
London: Leicester University Press; ISBN 0-7185-0243-4 hardback, £75, xiii + 235 pp., ills.

David S. Whitley

History casts a long shadow, and not least upon archaeologists who, as western scientists, often seek interpretations, models, and/or explanations of indigenous non-western pasts. For much of this century, Anglophone archaeology followed closely in the structural-functionalist footsteps of British social anthropology, resulting in a study of this past that was avowedly ahistorical and, sometimes, even anti-historical. Explicit archaeological interest in the past seen in (at least partly) historical terms revived in the 1980s. Somewhat ironically, much of this took inspiration from R.G. Collingwood who, as Peter Nabokov (2002, 15) has observed, denied any real historicity to ‘very primitive societies’, as Colling-

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wood (1994, 227) himself quaintly labelled the topic of much of our archaeological interest. It fell then largely to cultural anthropologists, perhaps best illustrated by Marshall Sahlins's (1985) *Islands of History*, to pluralize history and nudge our thinking beyond the Colonialist metanarrative wherein 'history' equals a 'history of civilization' from an entirely western perspective.

The flip-side of this same metanarrative is the derogation of the non-western indigenous past to little more than a series of faceless evolutionary stages. Societies and cultures here are reduced to ideal-typic models; prehistory is seen as primordial and largely timeless; and processes of change are reduced to graduated steps in a framework of comparative statics. Though deeply entrenched, this Eurocentric bias is more than an idle concern for those of us studying prehistory in regions with contemporary indigenous societies. As Thomas Dowson (1994, 342) observes, the Eurocentric promotion of a strictly sectional history perpetuates ethnic and racial divisions, and the increasing interdigitation of ethnic politics and archaeological practice in regions like North America, southern Africa and Australia renders foolhardy the continued insistence on a past studied or described in these terms.

Bruno David brings these issues to bear in an ambitious, readable and provocative book that, in essence, serves as a kind of synthesis of late Holocene Australian Aboriginal prehistory. His goal is to step beyond long-standing western perceptions of Aboriginality, in part by writing a history of peoples who heretofore were denied one, with sentient, sensual and engaged humans at its core. Central to this task is an archaeological analysis of *the Dreaming*. This is more than a mytho-poetic concept, as a folklorist might label it. It is instead a system of meaning and symbolism, an approach to cognition, a worldview and a set of social rules and relationships that define, order and promote the unfolding of Aboriginal life. David acknowledges the fact that Aboriginal Australia had (and continues to have) more than one Dreaming. His book is, in this sense, an archaeological analysis of the prehistory of Australian aboriginal *Dreamings*. An anthropologist would call it an archaeological study of Australian aboriginal *cultures*.

David starts with an analysis of three material expressions of the Dreaming. The first is the cultural significance of landscape. Explicitly recognizing that place is socially constructed, he looks initially to the ethnographically documented significance of Ngarrabullgan Mountain (Mount Mulligan), and next to its archaeological record, finding a disjunction

between the two. This location was associated ethnographically with potentially dangerous spirit-beings and was approached only very carefully: Ngarrabullgan was avoided during the ethnographic present. This is supported by the archaeological record which shows little if any use or occupation of it in the recent past. But there is evidence for significant use of Ngarrabullgan prior to about 600 BP, with its apparent abandonment at that point not evident in surrounding regions, suggesting an abandonment due to forces other than changing economy or environment. David argues in fact that this represents 'the onset of a new system of signification that rendered the mountain inappropriate for habitation' (p. 46).

He looks in his second case study to the archaeology of ritual, drawing upon the previously published works of Mike Smith (e.g. 1996) concerning the antiquity of the central Australian totemic landscape. David notes that:

Through ritual roles and ritual participation, during ethnographic times relations between peoples, place and the Dreaming were maintained, giving individuals and groups social and experiential emplacement (p. 51).

Smith's research specifically concerned the Arrernte totemic ritual centre of Therreyererte, in the arid zone. This site was used into the twentieth century for large ceremonial gatherings involving hundreds of peoples, thereby creating an archaeological record useful for understanding the time-depth of this ritual aggregation and, by implication, the religious beliefs and social system related to its creation and use. Somewhat paralleling the implications of the Ngarrabullgan example, the use of Therreyererte appears to have started *circa* 3400 BP but to have intensified significantly about 600 BP. Based on this evidence both Smith and David cite this last date as the approximate appearance of the ethnographic totemic ritual-social system in this portion of Australia.

The third analysis involves the rock art of the Wardaman country of northern Australia: the symbols of the Dreaming. As in the first two examples, his concern is the antiquity of the ethnographic system of meaning expressed by the art:

If rock art symbolizes a particular Dreaming belief today, then the art's antiquity must necessarily give a maximum age for the artistic expression of that Dreaming belief at the considered site (pp. 73–4).

Based on a variety of lines of evidence, David concludes that, while rock painting in this region may extend back about 2900 years, intensified rock-art production only began between 900 and 1400 BP. The

implication here is that the ethnographic system for representing beliefs is again a product of late Holocene transformations.

Each of David's initial case studies, in other words, supports a relatively recent origin for the Australian Aboriginal ethnographic present, thereby, he would argue, contradicting the primordial and timeless qualities ascribed to Aboriginality especially by the popular press. David further contextualizes these studies by looking to selected eastern Australian regions, where he notes that the mid to late Holocene was characterized by major socio-demographic changes. These were expressed in increases in artefact deposition rates, new tool types, new plant foods, and expansions onto new islands; and they resulted in more intensive use of marginal environments, intensification in landscape management practices (especially burning), and a broadening of the resource base. Key among these changes was the appearance of intensive seed exploitation, which appears to have occurred as early as 3500–3000 BP in the semi-arid zone and 1400–1000 BP in the arid zone. This was important not simply due to its subsistence/dietary implications, but also because plant staples were critical to the large ritual aggregations of peoples described in the ethnographic record.

The concluding analysis is an examination of the development of regional rock-art traditions in the Cape York area of northeastern Australia. This development involved geographically localized uses of motif forms, colours, techniques and depicted animal species, signalling 'a radical restructuring of the chain of signifiers in which rock art operated, a new division of knowledge and experience' (p. 204). As in his other examples, the emergence of these regionalized art traditions was a decidedly late Holocene phenomenon.

David's empirical studies and syntheses represent a remarkable integration of the artistic, ceremonial, settlement and subsistence aspects of the archaeological record, and I found them exciting to read. I know of no better example of this kind of holistic analytical approach to the archaeological record, and this book should serve as a convincing antidote to any remaining hard-line behaviourists who still contend that we cannot (or need not) consider the cognitive aspects of the past in our archaeological research.

Despite this well-deserved praise, there is another aspect of this book — almost in fact another book within the book — that I found less satisfactory and, at times, frustrating. This concerns the theoretical discussions which, their high rhetoric aside, some-

times appear as efforts to shoe-horn partly relevant concepts into places where they do not really fit, meanwhile ignoring more useful bodies of theory that would enhance David's arguments and analyses and better lead him to his desired end. Too often I felt that, in the theoretical discussions, the tail was wagging the dog.

The main example here is the concept of 'preunderstanding' which, as David outlines in detail, he takes from Hans-Georg Gadamer's writings. Preunderstanding is an important concept in hermeneutics, ultimately derived from Martin Heidegger's concept of 'situated interpretation'. As commonly used it pertains to the implicit and explicit preconceived notions, understandings and biases that an individual brings to textual interpretation and — based on the now common analogy between analyses of texts and analyses of human social life (e.g. Taylor 1971, 3; King-Farlow & Cooper 1983, 177) — that inform an individual's apprehension of her or his world. In the analogical extension of this concept, we understand, interpret and react to the world around us at least partly if not largely based on what we already know and have experienced and, in this sense, all understanding is historically and culturally based, and biased.

Preunderstanding then describes a significant element of individual cognitive processes. But the key word here is *individual*. Preunderstanding is a condition or quality of individual understanding and interpretation; it varies from circumstance to circumstance and person to person, and it changes over an individual's life. Granted, aspects (but not all) of our preunderstandings are shared. Probably the most important of these are provided by culture — which an anthropologist would define as a system of symbolism, meaning, belief and worldview (e.g. D'Andrade 1984).

But preunderstanding and culture are neither fully equivalent nor immediately interchangeable, in part because they represent phenomena at different scales and thus because any analysis of them necessarily involves distinctive kinds of data. David claims that he provides 'an archaeology of preunderstanding' but nowhere do his regional scale studies and syntheses approach the kinds of data that would be required for such a task. (And I am uncertain where, in the archaeological record, data appropriate to a true archaeology of preunderstanding might be found.) What he in fact provides — and this itself is a significant achievement — is *an archaeology of culture*: the shared system of symbolism and belief that structured and gave meaning to

Aboriginal lives. Certainly Aboriginal preunderstandings are/were informed by the cultural systems that David analyzes, but the cultural systems are still a considerable distance from these preunderstandings, full-stop.

This specific issue is frustrating because, in his discussions, David briefly acknowledges the differences between culture and preunderstanding, but nowhere does he critically consider the implications of these distinctions for archaeological data collection, analysis and interpretation. This results partly, I suspect, from a narrow reading of theory which has emphasized hermeneutics and semiotics to the near-exclusion of anthropological theory (and this, surprisingly, despite ample attention to Aboriginal ethnography). But it also stems from another characteristic of the theoretical discussions, which (to borrow a writer's concept) is a failure to distinguish between *telling* and *showing*. It is for example one thing to tell us, on theoretical grounds, that people are engaged in systems of meaning. But regardless of how often this claim is repeated, this telling still stops short of showing us how (or why) this engagement occurs in a particular case. Theoretical claims are not analytical inferences or interpretive conclusions, and it is inferences and conclusions that concern us in empirical research (informed though they may be by theory), as his study aims to be. David's arguments suffer because, in a series of instances, there is at best only a fuzzy recognition of the fundamental difference between theoretical assertion and empirical inference.

These conceptual and analytical distinctions matter because of their implications for one of David's ultimate goals: writing a history of Aboriginal peoples based on an analysis of their cognitive and symbolic prehistory and, by this writing, countering popular/Colonialist perceptions of Aboriginality that emphasize their putative timeless and primordial nature. To be sure, such a goal can only be met using well-conceived theories of how, and why, systems of meaning change over time, especially in relation to other changes in social, political and other spheres of human social life. Cultural anthropology provides these kinds of theories and models, even if in various competing alternative forms. Maurice Bloch (1986; 1992), to cite one example, has shown how elements of a ritual system will change adaptively with alterations in socio-political conditions, whereas a core element of a ritual system will persist through these changes yielding, simultaneously, continuity and change at different levels of analysis. Theories and models such as these are required if archaeolo-

gists are to move beyond writing static *culture history*, as defined by objects or traits, to a *cultural history* that is dynamic, nuanced and based on cognitive systems — as, apparently, is David's goal. But insofar as his discussions reveal, the theoretical sources that David cites provide few conceptual tools useful at the scale that archaeologists study the historical dynamics of societies and cultures. Despite his lengthy theoretical discussions, David's empirical data and case studies are in this sense (and to turn a well-known phrase) under-determined by theory, causing him, I believe, to founder on and fail to achieve this major goal.

What David ultimately then provides — addressing a key sub-text of his book — is a demonstration that the previous hypothesis for 6000 years of Aboriginal cultural continuity, suggested by Paul Taçon, Meredith Wilson and Chris Chippindale (1996), is wrong; that instead the Aboriginal ethnographic present is only 600 to at most about 3000 years long; and that, during the late Holocene, a series of changes in Aboriginal cultures occurred. These ranged from uses of the symbolic landscape, to systems of ritual and signification, to environmental adaptations and subsistence practices. But we are left wondering why these changes occurred, and especially why they seemingly were so widespread across different social and cultural units, as well as what they developed out of.

Though David's arguments for shorter rather than longer cultural continuity are compelling and important, these alone are far from a nuanced and dynamic history of the Aboriginal past with sentient, sensual and engaged humans at its core. David has in fact then not provided us with a history of the Aboriginal past that will alter Colonialist perceptions of it. Instead he ironically has lowered the bar on the antiquity of the ethnographic present by providing us with a better and more detailed understanding of the timing of the appearance of a series of key cultural traits — ironically because of his criticism of precisely the emphasis on the first appearance of traits in Australian archaeological research (p. 37). His analysis in this sense is painted solely in black and white: traits either existed, or they did not, yielding a kind of catastrophist's perspective on the past, even though the cultural traits did not all change at precisely the same time and despite his explicit recognition of the dynamics of cultural change which, again, he tells us about in theoretical terms, but does not really engage analytically.

While David's empirical contribution is at one level just a lowered bar for the antiquity of the Dream-

ing, his book equally represents a greatly raised bar for socially relevant, self-reflective archaeological research. I do not believe he has achieved this yet, but I applaud his identification of the issues and his initial efforts to resolve them. I greatly look forward to his next attempt, for he has set out a series of admirable and difficult goals and, realistically speaking, it would be unfair to expect full resolution at first try. In the meantime this book is a very important contribution to Australian prehistory, and it deserves wide reading on this account as well as owing to the theoretical problems it raises, even if these are not yet solved.

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## Identity, Fundamentalism and Archaeology in Modern South Asia

*Archaeology in the Third World: a History of Indian Archaeology since 1947*, by D.K. Chakrabarti, 2003. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd; ISBN 81-246-0217-4 hardback, £30.00, ix + 281 pp.

Robin Coningham & Catherine Hardman

A section focusing on the relationship between archaeology and identity in South Asia was published in *Antiquity* in 2000. As editors, Nick Lewer (conflict resolution) and Coningham (South Asian archaeology) wished to investigate the role played by archaeology and politics in the creation of identities. Expectations of a close relationship between archaeology and politics were realized as one potential contributor withdrew as he left his country following a coup and another after being appointed a High Commissioner. That collection of papers forms part of a growing corpus of studies of the development of archaeology within South Asia (Ratnagar in press), to which Dilip Chakrabarti's book is one of the most recent contributions. Those expecting this book to be a continuation of his *History of Indian Archaeology: from the Beginning to 1947* will be surprised. Not only is the new volume entirely dedicated to India but, whilst the former was organized around the work of Alexander Cunningham, John Marshall and Mortimer Wheeler, his new volume covers 1947 to 2000 through a series of reviews of publications. Furthermore, the bulk of the volume focuses on four issues of archaeological significance: education, religious fundamentalism, Third World archaeology and nationalism. Here we will first review Chakrabarti's book before discussing one of the broader issues that it raises: that of identity and the destruction of cultural heritage.

The first half of the volume narrates the development of Indian archaeology from 1947 to 2000 in two chapters, 1947 to 1973, and 1974 to 2000. The first section of Chapter 1 details the period between 1947 and 1952 through a study of the journal of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), *Ancient India*. Editorials written by ASI Directors-General are blended with individual papers and books in order to chart the foundations of post-colonial archaeology. This is followed by an examination of the period from 1954 to 1965, a timespan which the author

admits is 'arbitrary' (p. 14) but coincides with the publication of the journal, *Indian Archaeology – a Review*, which contains annual reports of fieldwork throughout India. Reviews of individual papers and books are linked by commentaries but certain sections appear descriptive, for example, the recording of the two-year delay to *Ancient India* (p. 21). In contrast, Chakrabarti then analyzes every excavation in India between 1953 and 1965 and concludes that only 39 of 144 sites were published (p. 31).

The third section covers 1966 to 1973 and includes the publication of *Puratattva* (the Bulletin of the Indian Archaeological Society) as well as textbooks by the Allchins (1968) and Malik (1968). For this, the final section of Chapter 1, Chakrabarti records a poorer record of excavation publication with only 19 out of 112 published (p. 51) but he concludes that this period was one of the expansion of archaeology, both in terms of the number of excavations as well as in the participation of Indian universities.

The next phase, covered in Chapter 2, opens with the publication of Sankalia's synthesis *Prehistory and Protohistory of India and Pakistan* (1974) and considers two of the most commonly used textbooks Agrawal's *Archaeology of India* (1982) and Allchin & Allchin's *Rise of Civilisation in India and Pakistan* (1982) before reviewing recent contributions, including his own book (Chakrabarti 1999). Strangely, Deccan College's magnificent volumes on Chalcolithic Inamgaon (Dhavalikar *et al.* 1988) are not heralded as the best Indian excavation publication and there is no mention of Mark Kenoyer *et al.*'s pioneering ethnoarchaeological studies (1991). Assessing the publication rates for this period, Chakrabarti concludes that although India invests a substantial sum in archaeological infrastructure, little attention is paid to outcomes (p. 153) and blame is laid at the feet of the 'authorities'.

The second half of the book tackles issues confronting Indian archaeology today. The first issue concerns the relationship between heritage management, education and nationalism. Identifying a misapplication of Ford Foundation grants (p. 162), Chakrabarti opens a fascinating study of the Indian legal framework and its articulation with the ASI and considers the impact of dams (p. 178) and the illicit trade in antiquities (p. 180). An equally stimulating section summarizes the relationship between archaeology and education in India, with Chakrabarti concluding that India is still dominated by colonial Indology (p. 194). Chapter 4 discusses religious fundamentalism with reference to the 1992 Ayodhya incident but also expands the book's Indian remit to

discuss the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas. Unlike many commentators who have concentrated on the sequence at Ayodhya (Ratnagar *in press*), Chakrabarti concentrates on the professional gulf, which divides Indian academics into 'progressives' or 'reactionaries' (p. 203) and comments on their links with political parties (p. 204). Chapter 5 offers a definition of Third World archaeology and argues that archaeology in the third world should remain part of historical studies to remain relevant. Chakrabarti also suggests that there is a tension between foreign and local scholars 'There is a distinct First World tradition of academic intolerance and/or contempt for any contrary opinion emerging from the Third World' (pp. 221–2), although acknowledging that this is lessened by 'one world archaeology'. The volume has no conclusion but ends with an appendix, which incorporates sections of his earlier *Antiquity* contribution (Chakrabarti 2000).

The volume, devoid of illustrations, is a fascinating personal analysis of post-colonial archaeology in India, all the more so as it is written by an individual who straddles both worlds. Not only does it provide original data, such as excavation publication rates, but it does not hesitate to name issues facing Indian archaeologists and attribute responsibility for failings.

Let us develop Chakrabarti's suggestion that incidents like those at Ayodhya and Bamiyan 'are likely to get worse' (p. 208) by examining three South Asian examples in order to explore whether there was a commonality, related to identity, between them. The three are the 1992 destruction of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya by militant Hindus, the 1998 destruction of the Temple of the Buddha's Tooth in Sri Lanka by Tamil separatists and the 2001 destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban.

Whilst each is complex, it is possible to identify factors involved in their targeting. The Babri mosque, for example, was destroyed because of the strength of popular belief that it was constructed on a Hindu temple marking the birthplace of Rama, a temple destroyed by the Mughal ruler, Babur (Rao 1999, 46). Unsupported archaeologically, this concept captivated the minds of militant Hindu groups who wished to release Rama from his 'imprisonment' (Rao 1999, 47) by destroying the mosque and building a new temple. In effect, the 'destruction of the mosque became a direct response to a perceived wrong of 500 years ago' (Bernbeck & Pollock 1996, 140), although the ongoing dispute concerning Kashmir, as well as the Indo-Pak wars had further polarized these identities.

The Temple of the Tooth in Sri Lanka was se-

lected as a target owing to the importance of the Buddha's Relic to the majority Sinhalese population (Coningham & Lewer 1999, 863). Although Sri Lanka is a Democratic Socialist Republic, the close link between the Buddhist order, political patronage and the majority Sinhalese population led some to state after the bombing (*The Tamil Monitor* 30/3/1998): 'While the bombing of the Temple of the Tooth ought to be condemned . . . the targeting of the temple, a symbol of Buddhist chauvinism is the unfortunate consequence of militant Buddhism'. The fact that the majority of restored cultural sites in the island are Buddhist has added to this perception that the past supports the identity of a single section of the island's population — the Sinhalese (Coningham & Lewer 1999, 865). Indeed, it is ironic that Tambiah stated in 1986 that the government of Sri Lanka must feel 'free to sponsor the restoration of Buddhist monuments . . . It would also behove a Sri Lankan government to recognize at the same time that there are monuments . . . that are neither Sinhalese or Buddhist' (1986, 126).

In the case of Bamiyan, the situation is more complex as Afghanistan is predominately Muslim and has no population of Buddhists. The Hazara minority, however, are Shi'a as opposed to the Sunni Taliban and some commentators have stressed this difference. Indeed, Rashid stated that the Buddhas had become identified with this minority (*The Daily Telegraph* 3/3/2001): 'The statues have become a symbol of Hazara pride and resistance to the Taliban. By destroying them, the Taliban aims to destroy the Hazara cultural identity'. Undoubtedly, the destruction of the Buddhas was also linked to the enhancement of the Taliban's identity as an ultra-orthodox group destroying images.

Whilst it is clearly ironic that one of the explanations for the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, built by an extinct Buddhist community, by the orthodox Muslim Taliban was to rob the Shi'a Hazara community of their identity, similar patterns are encapsulated within the other two examples. The Temple of the Tooth was constructed by Sri Vikrama Rajasimha II, a south Indian Tamil-speaking Hindu, who was requested to take the Sri Lankan throne by Sinhalese nobles because the last king died heirless (Coningham & Lewer 2000a,b, 709). As a result, Tamil separatists damaged the creation of a Tamil ruler as well as adjacent shrines to Vishnu and Pattini — Hindu deities incorporated into Buddhism. Finally, 'Muslims living in India are in many cases not even the descendants of the Mughal invaders of the Mid-

dle Ages but rather member of low Hindu castes who have converted to Islam' (Bernback & Pollock 1996, 140) and many of those targeted by the militants in the aftermath of the Babri destruction were probably the descendants of such converts.

On reflection, we have to stress the very different variables involved in these three disasters. All are geographically diverse and have involved the targeting of monuments of very different religious traditions. The perpetrators and victims of each are also different; the crowd at Ayodhya, including militants from the majority Hindu population, was supported, or rather not halted by the government; the Temple of the Tooth — associated with the majority identity — was bombed by separatists from the Tamil minority; and the Bamiyan Buddhas, representing no contemporary community in Afghanistan, were destroyed by the Taliban government. The three monuments are also very different in terms of age as the Babri mosque was dated to the fifteenth century AD, the Temple of the Tooth between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries AD and the Buddhas to the first millennium AD. Each was afforded different protection as the Babri mosque and Bamiyan Buddhas were protected by national laws, and the Temple of the Tooth internationally by UNESCO. Finally although it may be fashionable to attribute such conflicts to the legacy of colonial Indologies, this cannot be the case for Afghanistan, which was historically independent.

In conclusion, it should be stated that the one element of commonality between these incidents is that the historical rationale behind the suppression or emulation of identities was based on incorrect readings of the past. Despite this absence of pattern, it is very worrying that they all occurred within a span of ten years. Indeed, it is to be expected that as long as identities, whether regional, religious or national, derive part of their strength from the past, cultural monuments will be targeted for enhancement or suppression. It is also to be expected that with increasing availability of weaponry, such episodes will become more frequent; in this light, Chakrabarti's bleak prediction may well be proven.

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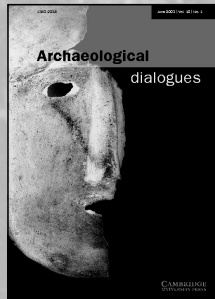
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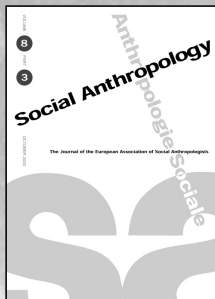
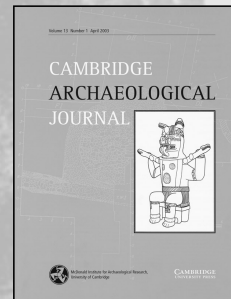
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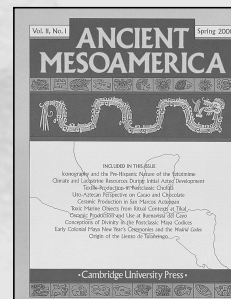
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