



A pair of photographs taken on the N9/N10 Kilcullen to Waterford Road Scheme demonstrates the ongoing relationship between road construction and archaeology in Ireland. Top: an excavated section of a slip road in the Townland of Ballybannon shows part of an Iron Age ringfort; the remainder of the ditch is clearly visible as a crop mark in the ripening wheat to the left of the photograph. Bottom: a multi-period site located 10km to the north-east in the Townland of Russelstown was excavated within the main road corridor and included the remains of an Early Neolithic building, Final Neolithic/Early Bronze Age features, a medieval enclosure, archaeometallurgical activity, and post-medieval ditches and features. Both excavations were undertaken on behalf of Kildare and Carlow County Councils and the National Roads Authority by Headland Archaeology (Ireland) Ltd whose collaborator, Brian MacDombnaill, submitted the images.



Three Mursi warriors survey the remains of various stone platforms within a recently cleared monumental landscape near the settlement of Dirikoro, south-western Ethiopia. Whilst it is fairly certain that the features predate the arrival of the Mursi colonialists in the early nineteenth century, the important possible issue of re-use notwithstanding, their antiquity, purpose and cultural origins need further investigation. The photograph was taken on 4 August 2009 by Alberto Arzoz and submitted by Timothy Clack, University of Oxford, UK (timothy.clack@arch.ox.ac.uk). (See www.antiquity.ac.uk/ProjGall/Clack323.html for more on the 'Ella' stone platforms in Mursiland, south-western Ethiopia).

EDITORIAL

What's happening in Southeast Asia? Everything! At the IPPA¹ congress at Hanoi more than 600 delegates in 107 sessions were enlightened, amazed and hugely entertained in the city of a million scooters. The mood was exhilarating — a feeling that the world was young and yet to be explored. Speakers addressed the peopling of the Pacific, volcanic environments, the reconstruction of the Sahul landmass and the extraordinary discoveries



Peter Bellwood, moving force of IPPA and his predecessor, Bill Solheim, at the Vietnam meeting.



Li Liu and Charles Higham in discussion at Cò Loa.

on Flores (where Mike Morwood probes deeper every year). Maybe it is the large number of islands that gives this part of the planet its adventurous feel — the crossing of innumerable waterways in slender craft laden with families, pigs and plants and their various genes. An old paradigm, the expansion of the Austronesian language group, still steams the seas and steams up the seminar rooms, but a new one is replacing it. More complex (of course) and more diverse: peoples migrate and colonise and reflux, but forest people may live parallel lives to coastal people, rice arrives — but doesn't always stick.

Vietnam is the land of the Dong Song drum, hollow, bronze and decorative and featuring in extraordinary burials where a person lies with their head inside one. Vietnam has a historical archaeology like no other: the Ho Chi Minh tunnels and the crashed B52 bombers must rate among the most sobering monuments of any victorious people. And it was interesting to learn that, although the country has a state archaeological service and a socialist ethos, private museums are encouraged by the government as a way of preventing the haemorrhaging of looted objects abroad. Farmers find they can get a better price from collectors than from the state, and so. . . .

The archaeological community of Southeast Asia is strikingly comingled and sociable, often giving confident welcomes to scholars from abroad. The strongest such contingents were from Australia, and now China, where the burgeoning of new work, new ideas and a new style of professional expertise is a story of its own. As a first landfall your editor went to Hong Kong, China's newly repatriated ex-British colony, there to visit Ray Ma

¹ The Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association.



IPPA conference assistant Nguyễn Mai Oanh at the Antiquity stall, Hanoi.

in his stunning new museum, the vigorous Archaeology Society in its premises in the Kowloon Sculpture Garden and an archaeological company, Archaeological Assessments Ltd, operating off Lamma island. I have a soft spot for Hong Kong having been a pupil in Kowloon's KGV (King George V) grammar school at the time of the coronation (Elizabeth II in case you were wondering), and recognised certain heritage items (like the Star Ferry) still in evidence among the clustered concrete towers. I felt not unlike a bit of heritage myself, learning that my dad's old camp at Fan Ling (he was a Gurka colonel) was now a scheduled monument. Archaeologically, Hong Kong sits on fossil beds of empire, and now has unmatched potential for hosting the archaeological dialogue between east and west.

☪ And so to Adelaide for the AAA² meeting, where the mood was jaunty among a community of professional archaeologists who are possibly the most fun to be with anywhere. There are big new research projects, such as the one at Willandra Lakes directed by Nicola Stern, and big new CRM mitigations like the huge open-cast Rio Tinto mining sites. A new Australian prehistory is emerging, which breaks the mould of a perceived 30 000 years of conserved life-ways and reveals more diversity in culture, more responses to changing environments: in brief, an aboriginal past with a stronger narrative. The close involvement and occasional dominance of aboriginal TOs (traditional owners) in the new projects was also marked. The large CRM companies lead the field in many ways, but evaluation was sometimes less thorough than they would wish: at Pilbara not all the potentially occupied caves were given the same in-depth testing. Reacting from the audience, TO Maitland Parker of the Martidja Banyjima rightly insisted he wanted to see *every* rockshelter given equal scrutiny. Open-cast is fairly apocalyptic for a landscape, and suggests an expansion of the whole concept of predictive evaluation. The theme was *Old Guard, New Guard*, but the old guard, led by John Mulvaney and Jack Golson, was self-evidently no less sprightly than the new, and often more astute.

☪ TAG³ in Durham (England) was my last port of call in a nomadic autumn. Here the mood was maudlin: where were the theories of yesteryear? Empiricism, processualism, structuralism, cognition, reflexivity — what's next? The snow fell and our spirits with it. Celebrity guest speaker Lyn Meskell had little time for these paradigm anxieties and the craving for 'positionality'. Folk might be snivelling in a blizzard in Durham (we were), but in California things were sun-drenched, vigorous and morally uplifting.

² Australian Archaeological Association.

³ Theoretical Archaeology Group.

It's true that each generation seems to yearn for its panpharmakon, a prescription for everything, requiring no more thought. Religion has the same problem, and a lull in active philosophy usually results in a reprise of some old creed in a new form – and this may happen to us. It never seems to occur to the proponents of either archaeology or religion that inquiring is more meritorious than believing — although much harder work. Inquiry is a solitary business, which is why it is good to relieve our solitude at a conference. But heaven forbid we should do so by all thinking in the same way.

If TAG had less theory, it had more delegates than ever. Of course people do need to see their friends before the year's end, but there was another yearning too: a need to know that it is all worthwhile — not so much a Theoretical Archaeology Group as an Archaeological Therapy Group. They can be reassured: the past of the world has never been so interesting; we discover more and understand more every year. And we do it by doing it. And if each year we meet to swap experiences, and say why we did what we did and what we think it means — well, that'll do for theory, even when icy winds blow.

☞ Commercial and academic sectors were well represented at TAG but a contrast between their agendas is still noticeable. The business of archaeological investigation in the field, which sets out to unearth things not seen before, does not seem in some eyes to carry as much research kudos as a critique of theories, which essentially recycles the already recycled. Interesting that many of the newest monographs from the commercial sector are notable for their cautious presentation of the facts, and dispassionate commentary — i.e. their scholarship, while some of the outputs from the university are triumphs of complexity over content. *Scholarship* is an activity recently defined by the British Research Assessment Exercise as *the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases*.⁴ Apparently the gamekeepers of the current knowledge-ecology hope to draw a distinction between research, which discovers new stuff, and scholarship, which manages old stuff. One suspects the influence of a business model here (marketing *vs.* accounting). But surely scholarship is the foundation on which all else stands: scholars are the senior service, the people who actually understand what is going on, who speak seldom, and publish only when they have something to say, who know when something really is new?

One grieves for the difficulties of ministers of higher education; on the one hand they need their academics to be masters of a broad range of knowledge, able to offer a balanced view on, say, the origins of agriculture, hedged about with ifs and buts, disclaimers and rejoinders, quotes and quiddities — scholarship in fact; on the other they need to see them batting for the nation, scoring points and holding the high ground in the celebrity battlefield, both armed and blinded by conviction.

☞ Briefly offered for sale at Christie's in early 2010 was a curious ballot-box in the form of a human skull with a hinged lid, together with two long bones, one inscribed with the

⁴ RAE 2008 *The Results* (<http://www.rae.ac.uk/results/>).

name Thor. They belonged originally to Yale University's *Skull and Bones* society, founded in 1832 and said to be one of the oldest and most prestigious secret societies in the United States. Members were called Bonesmen and included President Bush Snr and Massachusetts Senator John Kerry. The Lot, which included a book of members, was expected to make between \$10–20 000, but was withdrawn on 15 January, 'due to a title claim'.

The withdrawal was perhaps not unconnected with the protests of the World Archaeological Congress: *'The Skull and Bones Society has long been accused of having the remains of the celebrated Apache chief, Geronimo, and WAC is concerned about the cultural origin of the remains being offered for sale, as well as the affront to human dignity resulting from the sale of human body parts.'* The Congress based its objection on its Code of Ethics, which includes the Vermillion Accord on Human Remains and the Tamaki Makau-rau Accord on the Display of Human Remains and Sacred Objects. WAC president Dr Smith noted that the first principle of the Vermillion Accord declared *'Respect for the mortal remains of the dead shall be accorded to all, irrespective of origin, race, religion, nationality, custom and tradition'*, and she commented *'The buying and selling of human remains cannot be considered respectful treatment.'*

While congratulating WAC on their successful stance, I for one regret that such an amazing assemblage should never be displayed. The skull must count among the most vocal and revealing objects in the life of a nation, and I would be sorry not to be able to see it again⁵.

📖 It was our pleasure last year to greet *Azania, Archaeological Research in Africa*, but I should also have noted that *African Archaeological Review* has gone quarterly, and under its new editor Adria La Violette and her advisory editors is helping African archaeology to go global. There will be special Review Essays and prizes for authors and students. Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Ghana all feature in the latest (September) issue.

📖 Browsing the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for a book about Early Medieval Stafford, I read: *'In this year (1124) King Henry . . . ordered that all the moneyers who were in England should be mutilated . . . That was because the man who had a pound could not get a pennyworth at a market. And Bishop Roger of Salisbury sent over all England and ordered them to come to Winchester. . . When they got there, they were taken one by one and each deprived of the right hand and castrated. All this was done before Twelfth Night, and it was done very justly because they had ruined all the country with their great false dealing, which they all paid for'*⁶. They did indeed; obviously we have become a bit more relaxed about financiers losing our money since those tough times.

📖 *Typescript gems*: 'The doorway into the tomb was bridged by a massive lentil, 40cms across and nearly 2m long'.

Martin Carver
York, 1 March 2010

⁵ Christie's declined our request to reproduce an image of the Lot.

⁶ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* E-text s.a.1125.