

Alabama Archaeological Society

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STONES & BONES NEWSLETTER

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EVOLUTION OF HUMAN WALKING

Asked to choose the most distinctive feature of the human species, many people would cite our massive brain. Others might mention our ability to make and use sophisticated tools. A third feature also sets us apart: our upright mode of locomotion, which is found only in human beings and our immediate ancestors. All other primates are basically quadrupedal, and with good reason: walking on two limbs instead of four has many drawbacks. It deprives us of speed and agility and all but eliminates our capacity to climb trees, which yield many important primate foods, such as fruits and nuts.

For most of this century evolutionary theorists have held that human ancestors evolved this strange mode of locomotion because it freed their hands to carry the tools their larger brains enabled them to make. Over the past two decades, however, knowledge of the human fossil record has expanded. Neither a unique brain nor stone tools are in evidence among our earliest known ancestors, the australopithecines of three million years ago and more. Yet these same ancestors do clearly show many of the hallmarks of bipedal walking.

I have proposed that bipedality accompanied a set of behavioral adaptations that became the key evolutionary innovation of humanity's earliest ancestors. These adaptations included, in effect, the nuclear family: lasting monogamy together with care of the offspring by both parents. The male's contribution took the form of providing high-energy food, which expanded the mother's ability to nurture and protect each infant and also enabled her to give birth more often. Bipedality figured in this new reproductive scheme because by freeing the hands it made it possible for the male to carry food gathered far from his mate. These developments must have come long before the current hominid fossil record begins.

(From an article by C. Owen Lovejoy in "Scientific American", November 1988)

December 1988

A.A.S. ANNUAL MEETING

The Alabama Archaeological Society met on Saturday, November 12, 1988, at Jacksonville State University. The program encompassed prehistoric and historic archaeology, with papers covering Central America (Guatemala and Costa Rica) and the southeastern United States. Two speakers discussed the history and archaeology of the Battle of Tallasseehatchee. Also discussed were the excavations at Cathedral Caverns and Smith Bottom Cave, and recent and on-going activities of the Alabama Historical Commission. Ms. Patsy Hanvey gave a most interesting presentation on her reproduction of Tallasseehatchee ceramics, and Ms. Deb Slaney gave a slide tour of the Anniston Museum of Natural History.

At the general membership meeting, elections were held for Society officers for 1989 (see slate of officers presented in the November issue of STONES & BONES). Dorothy Luke of Huntsville was named Outstanding Society Member for 1988.

We would like to congratulate Dr. Harry Holstein, Acting Program Chairman, on a very exciting and interesting program. We would also like to thank Dr. Holstein for his hospitality in opening his home for an elegant party after the meeting.

BOOK REVIEW

McINTOSH AND WEATHERFORD, CREEK INDIAN LEADERS - by Benjamin W. Griffith, Jr., 1988. 322 pages. Available from The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487. Griffith - using substantially secondary sources, especially during the early years - interweaves McIntosh and Weatherford with a general history of the Creek Indians. However, nothing new could be found in this book. Griffith failed to use a valuable source on the Creeks and also McIntosh - letters and journals left by Baptist and Methodist missionaries living in the Creek Nation at the time. Griffith does a good job in presenting an objective view of McIntosh and Weatherford, who were giants in the Creek Nation prior to Removal. This book fills a void in that Griffith pulls together many scattered and fragmented records on the two men.

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS - A NEW WORLD DISEASE?

Robert Woods and Bruce Rothschild, writing in "The Journal of Rheumatology", August 1988 (P. 1258), report on their study of 210 skeletal specimens from an Ohio Woodland population, where they found the incidence of rheumatoid arthritis higher in females than males (7% to 2%). The authors state "If rheumatoid arthritis is a New World disease that subsequently spread to the Old World, the question of a vector arises. Such a vector

could represent a microorganism such as virus, mycoplasma, or bacteria, an anthropod or even an alternative environmental factor. The latter include such trade items as tobacco and agricultural crops.

Rothschild, Kenneth Turner and Michael DeLuca, writing one month later in "Science", September 1988 (P. 1498) essentially repeat the article above, except the sample was 84 skeletons from the Late Archaic on the Tennessee River in Northwest Alabama. Their conclusion seems to be less speculative, in that they "suggest that the disease may have originated in the New World and entered the Old World after 1492 but before 1785. We further propose that rheumatoid arthritis may derive from pathogens or allergens originally native to the New World".

ARCHAEOLOGISTS WARN: HALT LOOTING OR ALL WILL BE LOST

Acting on a tip from police last year, archaeologist Walter Alva was led to an ancient burial ground at Huaca Rajada in Peru's Sipan Valley, where excavations of a looted site revealed the tomb of a warrior-priest about 1,500 years old. Inside were some of the most extraordinary artifacts yet found in the Western Hemisphere: beautifully crafted gold and lapidary jewelry, a unique copper headdress and dozens of other ornaments. "There's never been an archaeological find to match the quantity and quality of gold dug up at Huaca Rajada", says Christopher B. Donnan, who worked with Alva at the site. "It's phenomenal".

The find at Sipan has focused renewed attention on the growing problem of looting and the subsequent loss of the archaeological resources. It has also reopened the debate over ownership and protection of ancient artifacts, pitting the interests and rights of dealers and collectors against those of the scientists and governments.

The looting itself, whether by peasants digging up the odd pot or by well-organized and well-financed teams of professionals, is widespread around the world and has become particularly acute in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile.

Nevertheless, government officials are hard pressed to stem the tide. With the pre-Columbian artifacts market so strong, they say, and the problems of policing the illegal traffic so extensive, looting and smuggling take place almost openly in many countries.

While the looting is undeniably fueled by the strong market in the United States and Europe, dealers and collectors are quick to deny charges that they are ultimately, if indirectly, responsible for the problem. None condones looting, yet most insist that the objects are better treated and more carefully preserved in collections than they would be in the countries of origin.

"When an American collector purchases Maya pottery, you can be very sure he takes good care of it", says Douglas C. Ewing, president of the American Association of Dealers in Ancient, Oriental and Primitive Art. Most U.S. museums provide better care than Latin American museums can afford, but "the old excuse that other nations are not taking care of the things, therefore they should be given to American museums, is a red herring", says Robert Sharer, an archaeologist at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dealers also reject the argument that Latin American governments have a legitimate claim of patrimony over artifacts dating back many centuries. "The people in the seats of power in Mexico City have no ancestral pretensions to the Maya at all and would be insulted by the suggestion", says Ewing. "The predominant culture, which makes such a strong effort to reclaim Maya culture, at the same time tries to suppress the Maya themselves. And it's even worse in South America."

Much of the looting is done by local people, many of whom are continuing a tradition started by their fathers or grandfathers. Many of them live at a bare subsistence level, and digging up artifacts and selling them to tourists provides them an important, even irresistible, source of income. A good deal of the tomb robbing, however, is done by professional or semi-professional bands, operating with varying degrees of collusion from government officials. For example, at the Rio Azul site in Guatemala, discovered in 1984, archaeologists led by Richard Adams of the University of Texas at San Antonio found hundreds of trenches dug randomly into the sides of pyramid mounds, some of them almost 60 feet deep. "To move that much earth", Adams estimated, "there must have been 40 men at work for about eight months".

"Just the scale - the number of people digging, the money behind the looting - far outweighs what archaeologists can raise for research, so it's kind of a losing battle", says Sharer. "Unless something is done in the next generation, there's going to be nothing left to dig".

(From an article by Stephen Brookes in "Insight", November 7, 1988)

CHAPTER NEWS

Birmingham Chapter

Our meeting this month was November 10th at the Red Mountain Museum Auditorium. The guest speaker, Marie Jeff, presented a lecture on pottery.

Cullman Chapter

Our November chapter meeting was held on the 21st at 7:30 p.m. at the Cullman Courthouse.

Huntsville Chapter

The Huntsville Chapter meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Auditorium of the public library on St. Clair Avenue. The public is welcome.

The chapter met on November 22 to hear Bart Henson give an overview of pictograph and petroglyph sites in the southeastern U.S. He dealt with the making of plaster casts from petroglyphs for study purposes. He displayed a large latex mold and its resulting plaster cast; also on display were photographs and typical publications on this subject.

Elections were held for 1989 Huntsville Chapter officers. Elected unanimously were:

President: Ms. Jody Perroni
1st Vice President (Program Chairman): Mr. O. D. Hartley
2nd Vice President (Membership): Ms. Delores Godfrey
Secretary/Treasurer: Ms. Nancy Rohr
Librarian: Mrs. Georgia Dunn

Several members of the Huntsville Chapter recently attended the American Chemical Society lecture at The University of Alabama in Huntsville entitled "Uncovering the Secrets of Medieval Artists through Chemistry". The speaker, Sister Dr. Mary Virginia Orna, O.S.U., gave a most interesting talk. She described how, by using modern chemical techniques, scholars are able to determine, for example, how many artists participated in the illumination of a medieval manuscript, what materials each artist used, and how these materials have stood the test of time. Sister Mary Virginia also described how she attempted to recreate some of the pigments used in the Middle Ages - from what she learned from her chemical analyses and from "recipes" found in medieval manuscripts. This was a most fascinating lecture, even to someone with no background in chemistry.

Tuscaloosa Chapter

The Tuscaloosa Chapter's October meeting was held at the town library. Guest speaker was Mr. Brown Hawkins, paleontologist from the Alabama Natural History Museum located on the campus of The University of Alabama. Mr. Hawkins showed slides and spoke on fossils found in the west central Alabama region.

The Tuscaloosa Chapter meets on the fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 at the Tuscaloosa town library, located on River Road.

EARLY IRON SMELTING IN CENTRAL AFRICA

In the early 1950's people of the Bahunde tribe in southern Zaire made a curious find while digging for sand not far from their village. What they found was a group of clay objects resembling rough bricks, many of them

decorated with circular or linear impressions. Two investigators from the Institute for Scientific Research in Central Africa, Jean Hiernaux and Emma Maquet, were called in to examine the serendipitously uncovered material. Their excavation showed that the bricks had formed part of a tall furnace for the smelting of iron. When the Bahunde people were confronted with that interpretation, they could see no connection between such furnaces and their own culture. They were inclined to believe the furnaces had been built by people with a more sophisticated iron-smelting technique than their own.

The Bahunde were right. Discoveries in the past decade indicate that the tall furnaces represent a remarkable Early Iron Age technology that was widespread in the interlacustrine region of Central Africa (which includes eastern Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, northern Tanzania, southwestern Kenya and Uganda). Employing only simple materials, the Iron Age smelters were able to generate temperatures as high as 1,400 degrees Celsius, providing an efficient means of obtaining iron from its ore. The smelting technology was not only efficient, but also long lived: it appeared in the interlacustrine region sometime during the first millennium B.C. and persisted in many areas until the beginning of the 20th century. Although its origins remain obscure, systematic excavations combined with ethnographic work have begun to yield a detailed picture of how the tall furnaces actually worked.

(From an article by Francis Van Noten and Jan Raymaekers in "Scientific American", June 1988)

ALABAMA STATE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
COLLOQUIUM SERIES IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Wednesdays at 4:00 p.m. - Room 205 - Smith Hall. Sue Scott, Program Coordinator. Free of charge and open to the public.

January 25, 1988

Dr. Michael Collins, Geo-Archaeologist, Consultant, ASMNH - "Rock Shelter Degradation and Early Cultural Evidence in the Americas: Background to Research at Smith Bottom"

Dr. Boyce Driskell, Senior Research Archaeologist, ASMNH - "Excavations at Smith Bottom: A Cave with Two Tales"

February 22, 1989

Mr. Carey B. Oakley, Assistant Director (Archaeology), ASMNH - "Trouble in Paradise: The Story of Pinson Cave"

March 29, 1989

Dr. Douglas Jones, Acting Vice President of Academic Affairs, Director of University Museums, UA - "New Guinea Diary"

April 26, 1989

Mr. Charles Hubbert, Staff Archaeologist, ASMNH - "Pachyderms or Politics: A Fresh Look at Paleo-Indian Settlement Patterns in the Middle Tennessee Valley"

NEW MEMBERS FOR 1989

Ms. Frederica R. Dimmick (Ind.)	10 Sassamon Road South Natick, MA 01760
Mr. Marvin L. Ellis, III (Ind.)	318 Forest Hills Drive Montgomery, AL 36109
Mr. Lewis R. Humphries (Ind.)	425 Cherokee Trail Ohatchee, AL 36271
Mr. Terry L. McClung (Ind.)	417 Reed Street, #18A Tuscaloosa, AL 35401
Miss Christy L. Reed (Assoc.)	Route One, Box 1750 Brookwood, AL 35203
Ms. Kathryn Reinhart (Ind.)	812 Fifth Avenue Birmingham 35444
Mr. Jimmy Tucker (Fam.)	Route Two, Box 1242 Ohatchee, AL 36271

1989 DUES

If you have not yet paid your 1989 dues, please remember that they are due by January 1, 1989. If you would like to mail your dues, please send your check to:

Mrs. Bettye T. Henson
Secretary/Treasurer
Alabama Archaeological Society
7608 Teal Drive, S.W.
Huntsville, Alabama 35802

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Available issues of <i>Journal of Alabama Archaeology</i> Vol. 20-29 each issue	(\$2.50 to Members) \$5.00 pp
<i>Stanfield-Worley Bluff Shelter Excavations</i> (Journal of Alabama Archaeology) Vol. VIII Nos. 1 & 2 - Reprint, each issue	\$5.00 pp
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Special Publication 2 — <i>The Archaeological Sequence at Durant Bend, Dallas County Alabama</i>	\$4.50 pp
Special Publication 3 — <i>Archaeological Investigations at Horseshoe Bend</i>	\$6.50 pp
<i>Handbook of Alabama Archaeology Part 1, Point Types</i>	\$10.00 pp
Lively, Long, Josselyn - <i>Pebble Tool Paper</i>	\$3.00 pp
<i>Investigations in Russell Cave</i> , published by the National Park Service	\$7.50 pp
<i>Exploring Prehistoric Alabama through Archaeology</i> (Juvenile)	\$7.00 pp

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1 Mound State Monument, Moundville, Alabama 35474

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