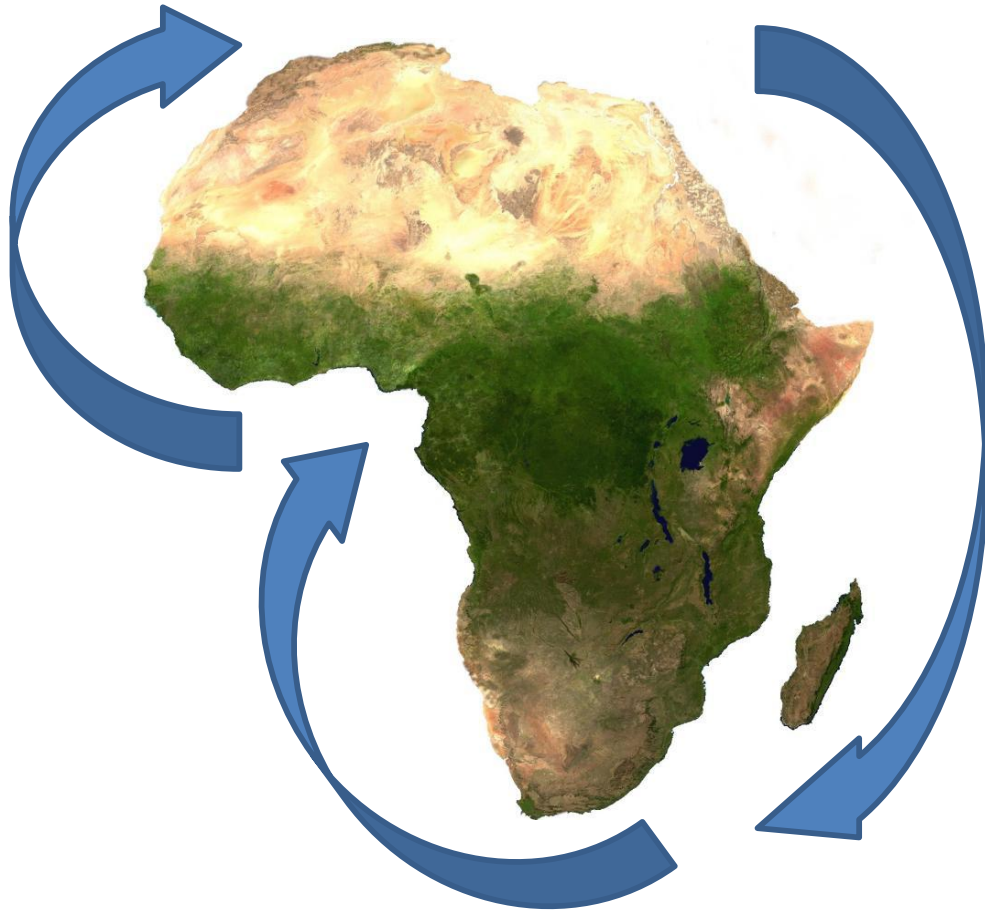
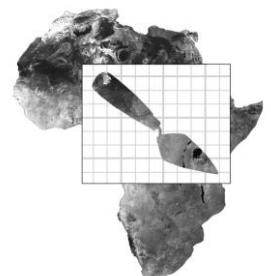


Connections, Contributions and Complexity: Africa's Later Holocene Archaeology in Global Perspective



The McDonald Institute for
Archaeological Research
University of Cambridge

21st-23rd September 2012



 **UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

The Cambridge African Archaeology Group
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Conference aims and rationale

Africa's later Holocene archaeology has not always been given fair treatment in popular accounts of world prehistory. This neglect is striking because much of human history is situated in Africa and portrayed as a history of all human kind. However, this history is also presented as a movement or migration away from Africa such that Africa's later past, the past of today's Africans, is marginalised and less well known on the global stage.

This conference draws on the now extensive body of research into Africa's later archaeology so as to resituate Africa's later past within global frameworks. We believe that archaeological research into Africa's later past, particularly into its diverse social forms, original technologies, extensive trade networks (both within and beyond the continent) and its unique theoretical and methodological challenges, have much to contribute to the study of archaeology worldwide and that a reassessment of this contribution is timely and will be well received. The primary aim of this conference is therefore to evaluate where Africa's later archaeology sits within current global frameworks and to identify key areas of fruitful dialogue between Africanists and others. It is envisaged that this process will culminate in the production of a high quality publication which will set an agenda for future research in Africa.

Confirmed speakers can be found in the provisional programme (below).

Structure and themes

The conference will be organised around three overlapping themes each with its own dedicated session. The themes we have highlighted encompass three major research trends in Africa's later archaeology which we believe coincide with broader non-Africanist interests.

Theme 1: African Contributions

Much archaeological research in Africa is conducted with the aim of 'reconstructing' a specifically African past. In contrast, this theme asks what can be learnt about human activity in general, *through* the unique examples and case studies presented by Africa's later past. African ethnography has long been central to understandings of human action/behaviour and throughout the 1970s and 1980s ethnoarchaeology conducted in Africa played an important formative role in the development of the New Archaeology and subsequently the post-processual movement (e.g. Hodder 1982); for a review see Lane 2005). However, in recent years, the centrality of African archaeological data has declined. Few recent theoretical works on African archaeology have been picked up and incorporated into the main corpus of archaeological knowledge and teaching (see McIntosh 1999 for a good exception). This theme will review the use and status of various theoretical models in African archaeology and explore their possible contributions to global archaeology. Possible areas of innovative contribution include African approaches to historical archaeology including 'direct historical approaches' (see Stahl 2005); pioneering work in African Historical Ecologies; African approaches to materiality; and African approaches to identity/ethnicity.

Theme 2: African Complexity

The goal of this session is to explore how contemporary archaeology is engaging with political complexity in Africa via anthropologically and historically informed approaches. Recent work

combining archaeology, oral history and (sometimes) texts, particularly in the middle belt of Africa, is providing new and nuanced ways of digging cultural complexity in Africa. Old historical and archaeological truisms, deeply embedded in the literature, are being questioned and re-interpreted. Social evolutionary organisational concepts – from ‘chiefdoms’ to ‘capitals’ to ‘empires’- are being challenged and more particularistic models put in place. For example, local traditions of political complexity (e.g. Mande, Kongo, etc...) are being explored as fundamentally shaping succeeding generations of political order, albeit descents with ongoing modification. However, inter-regional comparisons are still of fundamental importance at the level of *attributes* of political complexity as opposed to increasingly suspect, universal organisational categories. Such attributes can include modes of labour organisation, ideologies, systems of political succession, military structures, ‘castedness’ (or ‘non-castedness’), trade webs, settlement systems, subsistence economies, etc... Speakers for this session have been chosen from amongst those moving this agenda forward: making archaeology interface with the historic political traditions of Sub-Saharan Africa, showing the way into constructing regionally informed deep-time approaches.

Theme 3: African Connections

Africa has often been presented as a passive recipient of external influence and isolated from the grand events of world prehistory. Recent research has, however, emphasised Africa’s dynamic interactions with the wider world including the export of African crops and mineral resources and through the African Diaspora. Polities in Western and Eastern Africa, the Sahara and along the Nile Valley have long been integrated into global networks of trade and exchange and their role is increasingly appreciated (see Mitchell 2005 for a summary). Other regions too have contributed their influence and have interacted with regions beyond the African continent. The papers within this theme will review interactions between Africa and the wider world during the Holocene and present new and novel research into this theme within Africa. Papers will include a focus on connections relative to domestic crops and animals, people/genes, languages, trade goods and ideas.

A final keynote session entitled ‘**Resituating African Archaeology**’ will offer an overview of some of the intersecting trends of the first three sessions and explicitly explore the ways in which Africa’s later archaeology has and might contribute to broader archaeological debates.

Select References

Hodder, I. 1982. *Symbols in Action: ethnoarchaeological studies of material culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lane, P. 2005. Barbarous tribes and unrewarding gyrations? The changing role of ethnographic imagination in African archaeology. In A.B. Stahl (ed.) *African Archaeology. A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 24-54.

Mitchell, P. 2005: *African Connections: an archaeological perspective on Africa and the wider world*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Kohring, S. and Wynne-Jones, S. 2007 (ed) *Socialising Complexity: structure, interaction and power in archaeological discourse*. Oxford: Oxbow.

Stahl, A. 2005 (ed) *African Archaeology: A critical introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Provisional Programme

Friday 21st September

- 3pm onwards. REGISTRATION, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research
5.30 pm Welcome, opening address and dedication to the memory of Professor John Alexander
(Dr Laurence Smith and Dr Shadia Taha)
5.45 pm Keynote speech Professor David Phillipson, University of Cambridge (retired)
6.30 pm Keynote speech Professor Chap Kusimba, Field Museum of Natural History and University of
Illinois-Chicago
7.15 pm Overview, aims and structure (Dr Jacke Phillips)
7.30 pm DRINKS RECEPTION, Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

Saturday 22nd September

8.30 am REGISTRATION, Tea/Coffee

Session: Contributions

- 9 am Introduction Dr Matthew Davies, University of Cambridge
9.25 am PAPER Dr Paul Lane, University of York
9.50 am PAPER Dr Zoe Crossland, University of Columbia
10.15 am PAPER Dr Gilbert Pwiti, University of Zimbabwe
10.40 COFFEE BREAK
11.10 am PAPER Professor Paul Sinclair, University of Uppsala
11.35 am PAPER TBC
12 pm DISCUSSION Professor Ann Stahl, University of Victoria

12.30 to 1.45 LUNCH, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research

Session: Complexity

- 1.45 pm INTRODUCTION Professor Kevin MacDonald, University College London
2.10 pm PAPER Dr Stephen Dueppen, University of Oregon
2.35 pm PAPER Dr Francois Richard, University of Chicago
3.00 pm PAPER Professor Akin Ogundiran, University of North Carolina
3.25 pm PAPER Dr Andrew Reid, University College London
3.50 pm COFFEE BREAK
4.20 pm PAPER Dr Stephanie Wynne-Jones, University of York
4.45 pm PAPER Dr Alex Schoeman, University of Witwatersrand
5.10 pm DISCUSSION Professor Andrew Reynolds, University College London

5.40 DRINKS RECEPTION, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research

7.30 CONFERENCE DINNER, Michael House

***Speech in Honour of Professor John Alexander, Dr Intisar Soghayroun el Zein, University of
Khartoum***

Sunday 23rd September

Session: Connections

9 am INTRODUCTION Professor Peter Mitchell, University of Oxford and Dr Anne Haour, University of East Anglia

9.25 PAPER Professor Rudolfo Fattovich, University of Naples

9.50 am PAPER Dr Nicole Boivin, University of Oxford

10.15 am PAPER Professor Innocent Pikirayi, University of Pretoria

10.40 COFFEE BREAK

11.10 am PAPER Professor David Mattingly, University of Leicester

11.35 am PAPER Dr Sonja Magnavita, DAI Bonn

12 pm PAPER Professor Scott MacEachern, Bowdoin College, Maine

12.25 DISCUSSION Professor Norman Hammond, Boston University

12.50 to 2 pm LUNCH, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research

Concluding session: Resituating African Archaeology

2pm KEYNOTE Professor Timothy Insoll, University of Manchester

2.45 pm KEYNOTE DISCUSSION PAPER Professor Kodzo Gavua, University of Ghana

3.30 pm KEYNOTE DISCUSSION PAPER Professor Brian Fagan

4.15 pm CONCLUDING REMARKS Professor Graeme Barker, University of Cambridge

4.45 pm THANKS AND FAREWELL.