NYAME AKUMA No. 64 December 2005

# **■K**ENYA

#### Introduction

Nicola Stern Archaeology Program La Trobe University Bundoora, Victoria 3086 Australia

The Australian Archaeological Association and the Australian Association of Maritime Archaeology held a Joint Conference at the Maritime Museum in Fremantle between the 27th and 30th November, 2005 and for the first time in the history of either organization, included a session on Africa's past (in keeping with the overall conference theme, titled Africa's past: trade, exchange and other recent studies). That this was a first is not surprising because two decades ago Graham Connah was the only archaeologist based in Australia who was undertaking research in Africa (apart from a few Egyptologists), and a decade ago there were still only two (and as they were located in different parts of a large continent they did not actually meet each other until a mutual colleague took it upon himself to introduce them at a conference held, of course, in Africa). It is worth noting, however, the significant contributions to African archaeology that have been made by a number of Australian geologists and geochronologists (eg. Ambrose et al. 2003; Grün and Beaumont 2001; Grün et al. 1996, 2003; McDermott et al. 1996; McDougall 1985; Talbot et al. 2000; Williams 2003; Williams et al. 2000, 2003).

In the past decade Australian researchers, like those from other parts of the world, have taken a much greater interest in the archaeology of the African continent. No longer is it simply the birthplace of the hominin lineage, or the continent on which the first million years of human history were written in uninspiring-looking patches of broken up animal bones and chipped stone tools. It is now widely acknowledged that Africa was the birthplace of our own spe-

cies and as a result it has been catapulted to centre stage in ongoing debate about when and how the modern behavioural repertoire was established (Deacon 1989; Deacon and Wurz 2001; Klein 1989, 2001, McBrearty and Brooks 2000; Wadley 2001; Henshilwood and Marean 2003). But Africa also preserves a unique record of the transformations that have helped to shape the modern world and many of these present challenges to traditional accounts of the rise of metallurgy, food production and complex societies (Marshall and Hildebrand 2002; LaViolette and Fleisher 2005). So it is not surprising that researchers based in Australia have been inspired to pursue many of the different intellectual challenges presented by the archaeology of the African continent and to explore the import of some of the similarities and differences that characterise portions of the archaeological records found in each continent (Schrire 1980; Hiscock, 1996; Hiscock and O'Connor 2005; Smith 2005; Stern n. d.).

The fact that this conference was held on the eastern edge of the Indian Ocean provided the springboard needed to initiate an exchange of ideas between the scattered Africanist archaeologists based in Australia, and between researchers working in Africa and those working in Australia. Many more expressed an interest in participating in this session than were able to attend, which may auger well for future endeavors. The papers presented at this conference ranged across the Pleistocene record as well as including discussion of issues relating to pastoral adaptations and the impact of European trade on specific polities. Three of these papers are published here (Curnoe et al., Simons and Stern) and serve to illustrate the range of interests being pursued by Africanist archaeologists based in Australia.

## References cited

Ambrose, S. H., L. J. Hlusko, D. Kyule, A. Deino and M. Williams

2003 Lemudong'o: a new 6 Ma paleontological site near Narok, Kenya Rift Valley. *Journal of Human Evolution* 44: 737-742.

NYAME AKUMA No. 64 December 2005

# Deacon, H.

1989 Late Pleistocene palaeoecology and archaeology in the southern Cape, South Africa. In P. Mellars and C. Stringer, editors, *The Human Revolution: Behavioural and Biological Perspectives on the Origins of Modern Humans.* Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, pp. 547-564.

## Deacon, H. and S. Wurz

2001 Middle Pleistocene populations of southern Africa and the emergence of modern behaviour. In L. Barham and K. Robson-Brown, editors, *Human Roots: Africa and Asia in the Middle Pleistocene*. Bristol: Western Academic and Specialist Press, pp. 55-63.

## Grün, R. and P. Beaumont

2001 Border Cave revisited: A revised ESR chronology. *Journal of Human Evolution* 40: 467-482.

# Grün, R., P. Beaumont, P. V. Tobias and S. Eggins

2003 On the age of Border Cave 5 human mandible. *Journal of Human Evolution* 45: 155-167.

Grün, R., J. S. Brink, N. A. Spooner, L. Taylor, C. B. Stringer, R. G. Franciscus, and A. S. Murray

1996 Direct Dating of Florisbad Hominid. *Nature* 382: 500-501.

## Hiscock, P.

1996 Transformations of Upper Palaeolithic implements in the Dabba industry from Haua Fteah (Libya). *Antiquity* 70: 657-664.

## Hiscock, P. and S. O'Connor

Arid paradises or dangerous landscapes. A review of explanations for Paleolithic assemblage change in arid Australia and Africa. In P. Veth, M. Smith and P.Hiscock, editors, Desert Peoples: Archaeological perspectives.
Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 58-77.

McDermott, F., C. Stringer, R. Grün, C. T. Williams, V. K. Din and C. J. Hawkesworth

1996 New Late-Pleistocene uranium-thorium and ESR dates for the Singa hominid (Sudan). *Journal of Human Evolution* 31: 507-516.

#### Henshilwood, C. and C. W. Marean

2003 The origin of modern human behavior: critique of the models and their test implication. *Current Anthropology* 44: 627-651.

# Klein, R. G.

1989a Biological and behavioural perspectives on modern human origins in southern Africa. In P. Mellars and C. Stringer, editors, *The Human Revolution: Behavioural and Biological Perspectives on the Origins of Modern Humans.* Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, pp. 529-546.

2001 Southern Africa and modern human origins. Journal of Anthropological Research 57: 1-16.

#### LaViolette, A. and J. Fleisher

2005 The archaeology of urbanism: cities and their countrysides. In A. B. Stahl, editor, African Archaeology: A Critical Introduction. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 327-352.

## McBrearty, S. and A. Brooks

2000 The revolution that wasn't: a new interpretation of the origin of modern human behavior. *Journal of Human Evolution* 39: 453-563.

# McDougall, I.

1985 K-Ar and <sup>40</sup>Ar/<sup>39</sup>Ar dating of the hominidbearing Pliocene-Pleistocene sequence at Koobi Fora, Lake Turkana, northern Kenya. Bulletin of the Geological Society of America 96: 169-175. NYAME AKUMA No. 64 December 2005

#### Marshall, F. B. and E. Hildebrand

2002 Cattle before crops: the beginning of food production in Africa. *Journal of World Prehistory* 16: 99-143.

# Stern, N.

n. d. African perspectives on the origins of modern cognition and behaviour: implications for discussions of the Australian archaeological record. In I. Davidson, editor, Colonisation of Australia in Narratives of Human Evolution. Special edition of Australian Aboriginal Studies.

## Talbot, M. R., M. A. J. Williams and D. A. Adamson

2000 Strontium isotopic evidence for Late Pleistocene re-establishment of an integrated Nile drainage network. *Geology* 28(4): 343-346.

# Wadley, L.

2001 What is cultural modernity? A general view and a South African perspective from Rose Cottage Cave. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 11: 201-221.

# Williams, M.

2003 Changing land use and environmental fluctuations in the African savanna. In T. J. Bassett and D. Crummey, editors, *African Savannas: Global narratives and local knowledge of environmental change.* Oxford: James Currey, pp. 31-52.

# Williams, M. A. J., D. Adamson, B. Cock and R. McEvedy

2000 Late Quaternary environments in the White Nile region, Sudan. *Global and Planetary Change* 26: 305-316.

## Williams, F. M., M. A. J. Williams and F. Aumento

2003 Tensional fissures and crustal extension rates in the northern part of the Main Ethiopian Rift. *Journal of African Earth Sciences* 38 (2): 183-197.