

SaFA 2021

PLENARY SESSIONS SATURDAY 14 AUGUST AND SUNDAY 15 AUGUST

1. Africanising African archaeology

Panel discussion chaired by Shadreck Chirikure and featuring Wazi Apoh, Per Ditlef Frederiksen, Albino Jopela, Scott MacEachern and Sada Mire.

This plenary panel discussion addresses growing calls for a more explicitly postcolonial archaeology responsive to African systems of knowledge and needs, rather than those inherited solely from the Western academic tradition or inspired by institutional frameworks that were often set up before independence.

2. African archaeology as heritage development

Panel discussion co-ordinated by Solange Macamo and Chantal Radimilahy and featuring David Gadsby, Gilbert Pwiti, Tore Saetersdal and Alinah Segobye.

This panel explores some of the key challenges we confront in enhancing its relevance to the needs of contemporary African societies and promoting African voices in its theoretical agendas via a focus on the entanglements of archaeology, heritage and community identities. Topics to be explored include the relationship between infrastructural expansion and development and the protection of Africa's archaeological heritage; the latter's role in economic growth and political movements within the continent and in constructing or challenging senses of identity at multiple spatial scales; the potential of — and challenges for — tourism to archaeological sites and museums as a contributor to sustainable development; and initiatives (especially those promoting intra-African co-operation) that facilitate the long-term conservation of cultural resources.

3. Archaeology as long-term anthropology

Panel discussion co-ordinated by Ann Stahl and Ibrahima Thiaw and featuring Noémie Arazi, Shadreck Chirikure, Kate de Luna, Kevin MacDonald and Morongwa Mosothwane.

Key topics in this discussion include archaeology's role in constructing regional histories across Africa and its successes and failures in engaging with complex local narratives and their concerns, contestations and aspirations; recent developments (theoretical and methodological) in the sphere of community archaeology and its relationship to broader developments in public archaeology and Indigenous archaeology; how archaeologists (should) use oral histories; archaeology's role in interrogating, questioning or upholding established community identities; and the roles of museums and material objects in helping to build, recover or challenge community histories.

4. Archaeology, climate change and societal resilience

Panel discussion co-ordinated by Kristina Douglass and Emuobosa Orijemie and featuring Matt Davies, Chap Kusimba, Innocent Pikirayi, and Patrick Roberts.

Key topics in this panel include archaeology's potential for identifying future changes in climate and in mitigating their impact; the place of contemporary debates about climate change within the longer-term perspectives of climate change provided by archaeological research; the threats that climate change may pose to the future of African heritage resources; whether archaeologists can/should contribute to broader societal debates about climate change; and how far — if at all — the current climate emergency should encourage changes in how archaeology is practised, thought about and taught.

5. SAfA Biennial General Meeting

TO FOLLOW AFTER 15 AUGUST 2021

RESEARCH SESSIONS

1. African timelines: which geochronological perspectives?

(Eslem BEN AROUS, Chantal TRIBOLO, Sallie BURROUGH, Simon ARMITAGE and Jean-Luc SCHWENNINGER)

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The importance of absolute chronology for understanding the human past, including cultural and environmental changes, does not need to be demonstrated. Meanwhile, chronological tools (Radiocarbon, Luminescence, U-series/Electron Spin Resonance combined, AAR, Ar/Ar, K/Ar etc.) are constantly improved and these enhancements have benefited, among others, the study of the Palaeolithic in Africa. This session is dedicated to a non-specialist audience and will present these recent methodological improvements. Examples of their application to the African palaeolithic chronological framework throughout the Quaternary will be shown.

2. Chronology and dating of rock art

(Adelphine BONNEAU and David PEARCE)

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A long-term difficulty in studying rock art world-wide is the lack of chronology and absolute dating. This problem is, if anything, more acute in Africa. Without clear chronologies it is difficult to correlate rock art with other archaeological and historical sources and, indeed, to perform subtle temporal and spatial studies of the art itself. The last decade has seen developments of dating methods and a considerable increase in the number of ages available for rock art images. This session draws together papers dealing with new data obtained on rock art in Africa (whether with relative or absolute dating), new methods for the investigation of its age, and discussions on the methods and their results and implications for African archaeology.

3. Geoarchaeology and palaeoecology at open-air prehistoric sites

(Michael TOFFOLO, Kristen WORTH and Britt BOUSMAN)

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The interpretation of the archaeological record at prehistoric sites depends primarily on its degree of preservation. In this regard, caves and rock shelters may offer long sequences of relatively undisturbed deposits that help the preservation of artefacts and sedimentary matrix.

However, sheltered sites are not always available and often provide a biased view of some important human activities, such as foraging behaviours typical of hunter-gatherer groups that took place in the wider landscape. This information may be retrieved from open-air sites, although these are located within active sedimentary systems that may alter or obliterate traces of past occupations. Such gaps in our understanding hinder the interpretation of human-environmental interactions at key stages of human evolution. There is thus a need to better characterise the depositional and taphonomic contexts of open-air sites by looking at both macroscopic and microscopic records, especially where sediments are affected by the action of water. This session therefore aims at exploring geoarchaeological and palaeoecological approaches that can improve the assessment of the archaeological record at prehistoric sites in alluvial and lacustrine landscapes. Methods may include (but are not limited to) micromorphology, infrared spectroscopy, absolute dating, stable isotopes, phytoliths, pollens and high-resolution spatial analysis.

4. Stable isotopes: papers in honour of Julia Lee Thorp

(Michaela ECKER and Emma LOFTUS)

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Julia Lee-Thorp has made wide-ranging and influential contributions to African archaeology and hominin studies, primarily through the development and application of stable isotope techniques. She is well known for her research on early hominin diet and African palaeoenvironments in deep time. Her foundational doctoral research has particularly influenced how we analyse fossil remains and has substantially contributed to the establishment of carbonate geochemistry as an invaluable method in the archaeological sciences. In celebration of her career, this session presents diverse examples of new research that illustrate this legacy, including topics on palaeoenvironmental and dietary reconstructions and novel applications and methodological innovations of biogeochemistry within African archaeology. A keynote talk will provide an opportunity to reflect on how the field has developed over the last few decades.

5. Early Stone Age technology and regionality

(Rosa MOLL and Carmen MARTIN-RAMOS)

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Early Stone Age (ESA) assemblages are found across the African continent, with archaeological assemblages ranging from 3.3 mya to 300 kya. Recent studies have revealed new sites and technocomplexes, as well as emphasising the need for inter-site comparative studies to determine the diversity of the Oldowan and Acheulean technocomplexes. This session brings together archaeologists working across the African continent who are interested in the technological trends of the Early Stone Age to present new and established studies and ideas that will hopefully lead to future collaboration. ESA archaeology is identified in multiple regions and advances in comparative work should begin to cover these questions of regionality. It may also be of interest to investigate and discuss the nature of transitional sites, behaviours and technologies. Exploring current hypotheses and theories will allow co-operation between institutions and researchers and new opportunities and avenues for insight.

6. Early Holocene paleoclimate and human adaptations in Africa: current state of research

(Amanuel BEYIN)

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The early Holocene (c. 12,000–6000 years ago) was a period of remarkable ecological and cultural change globally. Emerging palaeoclimatic studies demonstrate multiple climatic swings between humid episodes and dry spells throughout this period. These climatic shifts are known to have stimulated novel cultural developments and human territorial expansion. Among other things, current research by Africanist archaeologists into this period seeks to elucidate how African foragers modified their adaptive behaviours in response to the prevailing environmental changes and how the cultural novelties that appeared during it may have contributed to the onset of food production and social complexity. With these overarching questions in mind, this session brings together archaeologists and geo-scientists whose research is contributing new archaeological, chronological and palaeoclimatic datasets, as well as new theoretical insights, to our understanding of early Holocene climatic conditions and human adaptations across all regions of Africa.

7. The PAGES Landcover6k land use group

(Nadia KHALAF, Stefania MERLO and Leanne PHELPS)

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It has been acknowledged that land-use and land-cover scenarios used for climate modelling are simplistic, limited and often incorrect, making them unrealistic. As such, the PAGES LandCover6k initiative aims to produce data-driven reconstructions of past land-cover and land-use at continental and global spatial scales. The LandCover6k working group seeks to create comprehensive maps of human land use for different time-slices. The classification system used is the result of several years of consultation and refinement at workshops and meetings across research groups. Several methodological and practical challenges of developing generalised land use categories have been discussed within regional chapters. Although the African chapter of the project has participated in several working group meetings, issues central to the creation of land-use maps in Africa have not been discussed within the broader community of Africanist archaeologists. This symposium seeks to engage participants in a discussion on how the LandCover6k classification fits (or does not fit) in Africa. The session aims, first, to exemplify some of the work done so far on classification systems and regional maps, and second, to dive into vivid case studies and perspectives that illustrate the benefits and drawbacks of global land use classification approaches, as well as the political implications behind existing forms of land use representation in Africa.

8. Complex societies revisited

(Plan SHENJERE, Gilbert PWITI, Elton SAGIYA and Shadreck CHIRIKURE)

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This symposium re-visits and explores the development of complex societies, either states or other polities, in Africa and the wide array of interactions that framed the relationship between them and the stateless societies in contact with them, either outside or within their borders. The objective is to provide a richer and more accurate vision of the developmental frameworks, nature and character of pre-colonial African complex socio-political formations. This includes exploration of the economic, religious, ideological and political factors that evolved into spheres where groups with highly different political systems could interact, co-operate or even develop shared identities based on common interests and the manifold ways in which authority, legitimacy and control were achieved or contested. An understanding of these developments has direct relevance to societies today and in the future, particularly in those contexts where there are demonstrable historical and cultural links between the past and the present people. This session invites papers from archaeology and related disciplines in the form of reports on recent research, re-examinations of past approaches and theoretically based papers offering new paradigms for the investigation and understanding of the road to complexity on the African continent that cover: 1) interactions between African states and stateless societies in a broad sense (from Ancient Egypt to the twentieth century); 2) the role of minorities within African states; 3) strategies of statehood and state consolidation; and 4) strategies of dissent and resistance. Note that the session focuses on African complex systems (states) and does not examine the interactions between colonial European powers and African societies.

9. Technologies and terminologies of subsistence (Marianna FUSCO and Rocco ROTUNNO)

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Though often marginalised in the development of models for food procurement, production and management, Africa presents unique and theoretically informative case studies for global comparison. The archaeological record from the mid-late Pleistocene up to the early and middle Holocene presents an extraordinary wealth of data concerning the adoption of different subsistence strategies related to environmental changes and cultural variability. From food's production/procurement to food processing and consumption and on to its ultimate discard, the stages and actions performed are commonly indicative of social identity and complexity. Reconstructions and interpretations of the relationship between people and food are more often weakened by inadequate terminologies considering recent advances in archaeological research. This session aims to draw together research and data gathered from African prehistoric contexts. With a focus on the northern and eastern parts of the continent, the contributions will help to develop updated explicative models to better define the highlighted variability of subsistence strategies within human groups and cultural entities. The following research topics are emphasised: 1) technologies and economies (lithic analysis, pottery studies, faunal and botanical remains; 2) landscape and sites (landscape and territorial analysis, site function, environmental studies; 3) people and mobility (bioarchaeological analysis, mobility patterns, trade and exchange studies).

10. Entangled Africa: interactions, relations and networks within Africa (Alexa HÖHN and Friederike JESSE)

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This session addresses questions of entanglements and their contribution to the formation and development of human societies in Africa in the past. Presentations address intra-African interactions, whether they involve the transfer of ideas, knowledge, material culture, animals, plants or people. The spatial scale of entanglement may cover long distances or be confined to a limited area. In addition, the means of interaction (e.g. migration, trade, networking or war), the necessary infrastructure (e.g. pack animals, routes and roads, marketplaces), the external conditions and the motivations for entanglement and interaction are all of interest. The session includes theoretical and methodological papers as well as case studies aiming at a better understanding of the indicators, forms, patterns and consequences of entanglement and interaction within Africa. It is hosted by researchers involved in the project “Entangled Africa: Intra-African relations between rain forest and Mediterranean, c. 6000–500 BP” (<https://www.dainst.blog/entangled-africa/en/home/>), but seeks to initiate discussions with researchers from outside the project working on or interested in this challenging subject.

11. Landscape perspectives

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Landscape archaeology is a productive framework for contextualising spatial relationships over time with landscapes providing reference and context for human activity. Theoretical and methodological approaches vary widely, as do the temporal and spatial scales for research activities. Regardless of this, landscape archaeology is fundamentally about humans and their relationships with both the built and the ‘natural’ environment (with the recognition that the latter almost always has anthropogenic alterations, whether intentional or not). This session concerns landscape archaeology as it has been taken up by African archaeologists. With the longest record of human history, as well as having an enormously diverse range of environments and correspondingly varied human responses (social, economic, political) to their surroundings, Africa is a rich subject for landscape approaches to archaeology. Accordingly, this session includes papers from multiple places, periods and perspectives. The papers consider how they use the concept of “landscape,” their corresponding research design and their contribution towards local and broader archaeological contexts. The session aims to build a set of present and emerging approaches that will collectively add value to our understanding of past and present human-environmental relationships in Africa.

12. Sudan under the rule of Sennar. Material culture perspectives on Nubian society in the Funj period

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This session discusses topics related to Nubian society in the Funj period with special focus on its material aspects. The main focal point is on the changes that occurred in the wake of the fall of the Christian kingdoms and the transition to Islam in the fourteenth-sixteenth centuries, how these changes influenced social structures and identity of the Nubians and how Islam was

perceived and adapted by the inhabitants of the Middle Nile Valley. The growing volume of material evidence on the life of Nubians in the Funj Period provides an opportunity for revisiting ethno-historic sources concerning Nubian society, which were very often written from a Eurocentric viewpoint. Papers present archaeological studies focused on the Funj period, socio- historical research and discussions on the role of the Funj material culture in Sudan's heritage and studies of memory.

13. The Sahel: rethinking 'marginal' environments

(Mike BRASS, Isabelle GREGORY and Paul SERENO)

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To what extent is marginalisation grounded in historical trajectories? This session examines the marginalisation of dynamic areas, specifically the Sahel. While it is a transitional place in terms of its ecoclimate and biogeography, the Sahel nevertheless hosts a diversity of life and cultures over a span of 5400 km, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. It is defined by a diversity of environments, people and history, but is also an area that continues to face desertification and social instability. Papers consider two main themes. The first of these considers the dynamism of 'marginal' environments. What are the historical dynamics behind some areas being overlooked and thereby excluded from research, how has this impacted the current knowledge of a particular region and how are individual research projects working to overcome this? Secondly, the session considers how, despite a wealth of cultural heritage, indigenous research programs and heritage preservation are poorly developed in communities living in what have long been regarded as modern marginal environments across most of northern Africa. This theme therefore provides an opportunity for papers on new initiatives for local educational and heritage preservation programs, as well as work on developing methods and approaches based on local knowledge.

14. Les États Sénégaubiens sous l'ère atlantique: les dynamiques de l'économie monde dans la traite atlantique

(Sidy NDOUR)

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Cette session examine l'impact de la mise en place de l'économie monde sur les sociétés sénégaubiennes sur la longue durée. Elle examine l'évolution des sociétés sénégaubienne sous l'ère atlantique dans une perspective régionale (Sine et Saloum, Gaadjaga, Baol, Buundu, etc.) et sous-régionale (Sénégal, Gambie et Guinée). Également, elle étudie la manière dont les sociétés sénégaubiennes et occidentales ont interagi dans le temps et l'espace.

15. Igbo-Ukwu at 50

(Susan McINTOSH and Akin OGUNDIRAN)

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Fifty years after the landmark publication of excavations at Igbo Ukwu by Thurstan Shaw, the site remains one of the most iconic, enigmatic, and sumptuous sites ever documented in West Africa. Its astonishing corpus of 75 kg of copper and bronze artifacts, plus over 165,000 glass and carnelian beads, has generated debate for decades on the possible origins of these materials and their likely chronology, given radiocarbon dates with a 2-sigma range between the eighth and twelfth centuries AD. Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Shaw's publication, this session focuses on recent archaeological, archaeometric, radiometric and analytic studies that provide new evidence for understanding the context and connections of Igbo Ukwu, and new insights into its local and global intersections.

16. Prehistory and palaeoenvironments of Central Africa

(Christopher KIAHTIPES, Karen Lupo and Dave SCHMITT)

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Central African rain forests have long presented challenges to archaeological research. Densely vegetated landscapes, highly eroded surfaces, and disturbed acidic sediments obscure the visibility of archaeological materials and limit site preservation. Armed with an absence of evidence, many conventional portrayals cast rain forests as depauperate and vulnerable biomes where permanent human settlement requires food production and climatically or anthropogenically driven forest degradation. This stance is contradicted by a growing body of evidence supporting long-term human influence on global rain forests as well as on key African biomes. These interpretations influence management and conservation policy, which does not benefit from treating forests as homogeneous, either as relicts of past human impacts or true wilderness. Recent research has produced archaeological and palaeoecological proxy data that speak to the timing, context, and nature of human occupations of Africa's rain forests. From hunter-gatherer occupations to the spread of food production, metallurgy, and Bantu languages, this session brings together scholars from a variety of disciplines to present recent data on the archaeological and palaeoecological record of the Congo Basin. Together, the papers in this symposium outline the state of archaeological and paleoenvironmental knowledge in Central Africa's rain forests and define research questions for the future.

17. Southern Tanzania and human origins: papers in honour of Pam Willoughby

(Katie BIITNER and Pastory BUSHOZI)

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This honorary session offered to Professor Pamela Willoughby as she approaches retirement brings together past and present students and colleagues who have contributed to her examination of the archaeological and cultural heritage of southern Tanzania. For fifteen years Prof. Willoughby has been the principal investigator of the Iringa Region Archaeological Project (IRAP) in the Iringa Region of south-central Tanzania and for decades before this worked in the Mbeya Region of south-western Tanzania. This session will focus on the archaeological record of southern Tanzania including a history of research, evidence for the origins of modern humans, lithic technologies in the Middle and Later Stone Ages, Iron Age production and subsistence practices, the ethnoarchaeology of Iringa baskets and cultural

heritage and public outreach. The implications and outcomes of the research done to date and future directions for work in this critical region will be examined.

18. Madagascar and the southwestern Indian Ocean

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This session provides an opportunity to gather researchers working on the archaeology of Madagascar to present and discuss research from across the island. Madagascar has recently attracted more attention from scholars as interest has grown in its connections across the Indian Ocean and the Mozambique Channel. Given the island's enormous size, researchers working in disparate areas rarely have the chance to meet each other to learn about and discuss recent developments. This session therefore deliberately includes researchers working in different regions of the island, both those who have worked there for decades and those who have more recently initiated projects with the aim of sharing results and in the hope of building a framework for future study and collaboration.

19. Hunter-gatherer mineral resource use in southern Africa

(Laure DAYET, Guilhem MAURAN and Patrick SCHMIDT)

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Mineral resources were long exploited by hominins: anvils, cutting tools, hammerstones, projectile points, grindstones, pigments, etc. Their exploitation requires them to be transported from the geological sources where they are available to the places where they are used, normally human occupational sites. In this respect, raw materials are major proxies of human mobility and territoriality. At a broader scale, long-distance acquisition through mobility, exchanges of resources or manufactured goods may reflect group interactions and networks. The choice of certain techniques for processing them (heat treatment, pressure flaking, etc.) yields important information on the social organisation of groups (level of technical skills, specialisation, etc.). Moreover, functional and symbolic preferences for certain raw materials might represent essential markers of human cultures. Raw material characterisation and sourcing have gradually developed during the past decades and are now powerful tools for addressing these issues, especially in southern Africa where raw material studies have the potential to shed new light on hunter-gatherer socio-economical organisation through time.

20. Populations and interactions in late Holocene southern Africa

(Tim FORSSMAN and Iris GUILLEMARD)

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Southern Africa's Late Holocene sequence integrates a wide array of identities and cultural sequences that frequently overlap. Hunting and gathering societies, for example, lived in contrasting environments and expressed variation in terms of material culture, mobility patterns and exploitation of natural resources. From around 2000 BP, evidence of sheep occurs in LSA

contexts which some suggest indicates the arrival of livestock herding, stone-tool producing communities. It is followed a few centuries later by the appearance of agropastoralist communities associated with several widespread migrations. Archaeological, linguistic and genetic studies have highlighted the many interactions occurring between groups of people during this time. Beyond these interactions, the internal dynamics of diverse societies are also considered as factors of change, notably regarding the adoption of food-producing economies. This session aims to review the archaeological sequence of the Late Holocene in order to investigate the relationships between societies practicing different or episodic subsistence strategies and engaging in various forms of social, economic and political networks across southern Africa. Theoretical perspectives on how to conceive past populations, by moving away from essentialist conceptions, will be encouraged. Researchers from different fields, including archaeology, rock art, anthropology, linguistics and genetics are invited to contribute to the discussion.

WORKSHOPS

Archaeology in Zambia: new and ongoing work
(Evin GRODY and Zach McKEEBY)

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In recent years an increasing number of research projects have launched in Zambia, loosely centred around understanding the country's history and its place in the history of the larger subcontinent. Given the richness of this region and the breadth of research, these recent and ongoing projects have likewise been wide-ranging and multidisciplinary. This workshop seeks to highlight the exciting scope of this new research and to provide an opportunity for various researchers and teams working on the archaeology and history of Zambia to discuss recent research from across the country. Overall, it examines the rich and dynamic relationships between humans, technology, plants, animals and the broader landscapes within which they have all interacted in Zambia.

ROUNDTABLES

Cultural heritage management: the question of private collections and how to deal with them
(Friederike JESSE and Tilman LENSSEN-ERZ)

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When discussing cultural heritage management in Africa we should not forget about the many private collections existing in Europe, America and other places of the world. Many of them were established by travellers interested in Africa but nevertheless circumventing legal prescriptions and not considering that their behaviour is considered disrespectful by most Africans. At least some of these collections are comparatively well documented and curated. From time to time our institute gets requests about whether we are interested in such a private collection of archaeological artefacts. This is mainly the case when the original collector dies and his or her heirs are not interested in the collection. To deal with such requests is always a difficult task, not only because they are illicit but also because possibilities for curation at single institutes are limited and there is no central institution dealing with this question whom one

could address. It is, however, a pressing issue since the first generation of collectors is passing away and more and more collections are being 'set free'. This roundtable offers an opportunity of discussing this matter with all interested colleagues to initiate a process for finding a solution suitable for all parties (e.g. a central institution that could either organise storage and exhibition space or ultimately help to arrange the handing over of such private collections to the country (or countries) from which the objects once came) or at least to get an idea of how this question has been dealt with (successfully or unsuccessfully) so far.