

VI. Book reviews

Dilip K. Chakrabarti 2003 *Archaeology in the Third World – A History of Indian Archaeology Since 1947*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld x + 281pp. ISBN 81-246-0217-4 (Hard Back). \$40 US.

This is a fine book standing as a major contribution to the history of archaeology in India, as well as to the developing discourse about the nature of a Third World archaeology. Given the current focus on issues associated with the incorporation of postcolonial discourse into archaeology, this second element of Chakrabarti's book should guarantee that it receives the attention of archaeologists with a stronger interest in archaeological theory.

The primary purpose of the volume is to continue the history of archaeology from 1947 where Chakrabarti left off in his 1988 contribution *A History of Indian Archaeology From the Beginning to 1947*. In this the author identifies significant continuities of approach and practice, but he also recognises that the importance of archaeology to the Indian nation plays itself out rather differently over the last 50 or so years. Here the issues raised by the construction of identities (national, ethnic and religious) and of course the rise of religious fundamentalisms (Islamic and Hindu are just two examples) have created new possibilities and challenges for archaeologists as well as for the State level bureaucracies that have to manage the archaeological heritage of the world's largest democracy. Certainly such challenges operate at a scale and intensity that make them globally significant.

All of this takes place against a backdrop of careful analysis of the primary sources, particularly of major publications and journals and the institutions that encompass the national archaeological effort such as Universities, museums, and government agencies. I was particularly struck by the close attention Chakrabarti made to the impact of dam building, of the introduction of archaeology into the Indian school curriculum, and the ever-present evil of looting. This discussion is further sharpened by a consideration of the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas and of the Mosque at Ayodhya, as well as of the more long standing controversies over the nature of the Aryans.

The great themes of nationalism and the particular context of India as a Third World nation receive fuller consideration in the last two chapters (one of which is designated as an Appendix: Towards a nationalist Archaeology of India). Chakrabarti is surely correct in his analysis that there are great dangers in dealing with monolithic blocks on interest and interaction, but it is also the case that we are here given strong grounds for welcoming the development of a Third World archaeology as a potential distinct and valuable addition to the realm of archaeological thought and action.

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***The Beast on the Table: Conferencing with Anthropologists*, by Sydel Silverman. 2002. Walnut Creek CA: Altamira. \$29.95 (paper) ISBN 0-7591-0240-6, \$75.00 (cloth) ISBN 0-7592-0239-2. 272 pp., references, index.**

Silverman succeeded Lita Osmundsen as president of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research in 1987, retiring at the end of 1999. During her thirteen years she

attended all the week-long scholarly conferences hosted by the Foundation, twenty-five by my count, not including a 1999 capstone conference with the leaders of the twenty-five that she convened to analyze their process and effects. The book discusses only the conferences under Silverman's tenure, describing each in minute-by-minute detail, seeking to elucidate means to create a successful conference and to evaluate the impact of each on the discipline.

Consonant with the dominance of cultural anthropology in the United States version of the discipline, the majority of Silverman's meetings were about issues in this field, although Silverman sought to promote four-field approaches. The first archaeological conference was in 1989, developed from her notice of TAG in Britain, RAT (Radical Archaeological Theorists) in the U.S. Northeast, and a similar group, the Unkel Circle, in Germany. James Moore and Robert Paynter were the organizers, with Dean Saitta the young monitor (what Osmundsen termed *rapportuer*). Attendees included Susan Kus, Mark Leone, William Marquardt, Randall McGuire, Thomas Patterson, Dolores Root, Martin Wobst, Alison Wylie, Barbara Bender, Ian Hodder, Micahel Rowlands, Sander van der Leeuw, Michael Gebühr, Kristian Kristiansen, Alain Schnapp, Maurizio Tosi, Luis Bate, Iraida Vargas Arenas, and Tim Murray. They met in a hotel on the sea in Portugal. Silverman is disappointed that no significant volume articulating a critical archaeology came out of the conference. She makes no mention of the watershed World Archaeology Congress three years previously; I think continuing WAC's agenda engaged the energies of most at the conference, and there is a glaring contrast between WAC's efforts to be democratic and encouraging to the broadest range of practitioners, and Wenner-Gren's where-the-elite-meet-to-eat invitation-only gatherings.

Later in 1989, Anna Roosevelt organized a conference called "Amazonian Synthesis," meeting in Brazil, with five Brazilians, a Venezuelan, a French, and English participant, and ten Americans. Silverman says (p. 71) that "a number of Brazilians who were invited declined, as the site so close to home was not a draw for them." The reader cannot tell whether Silverman remains unaware of the controversies and enmity Roosevelt creates, or chose not to discuss that possible cause for Brazilians' unwillingness to attend. Not until 1997 was there another archaeological conference, this one in Spain, on "Imperial Designs: Comparative Dynamics of early Empires," organized by Carla Sinopoli, Susan Alcock, Terence D'Altroy, and Kathleen Morrison. Again, half of the twenty participants were Americans, the others from England, France, Italy, and Canada. (Oddly, Henry Wright wasn't in the group.) Silverman was impressed (page 219) by the "potential of a unified anthropology" shown by the conferees' foci on "themes ... of major interest in contemporary cultural anthropology: hegemony, colonialism, the interplay of ideology and force, the construction of identities and ethnicities, social memory, borderlands, globalization." My, my, as Susan Fencher argues in her *Mirrored Images* (Bergin and Garvey, 2000), anthropologists naively reflect the fads and fashions of their own society. "An impressive volume" (page 218) edited by Alcock, D'Altroy, Morrison, and Sinopoli (Cambridge, 2001) resulted from the conference.

Some others of the conferences included archaeology, notably "African Biogeography, Climate Change, and Early Hominid Evolution," in Malawi, 1995. Yusuf Juwayeyi and Nancy Sikes were the archaeologists in the group, exploring "notions of niche axis, preferences, and ecotolerance (the contrast to ecosensitivity)" (page 179). Four archaeologists – Iain Davidson, Gordon Hewes, Nicholas Toth, and Thomas Wynn – participated in a 1990 conference, also in Portugal, on "Tools, Language and Intelligence: Evolutionary Implications," organized by Tim Ingold and Kathleen Gibson. Kristiansen gets his photo leading the midsection illustrations: he's playing the piano in the hotel. Nick Toth is shown flintknapping on the next page.

Silverman's ethnography of her conferences will be most useful for sociology-of-science analyses. What can one say when every conference is predominantly American but held in a subtropical resort? One conference cost as much as half-a-dozen research grants (page 260). Did these conferences, for the most part, advance their topics to a degree that would not otherwise have happened? Were the extraordinary conferences producing "Anthropology Today," "Man the Hunter," "Courses Toward Urban Life," and Washburn's field primatology studies an artifact of the resumption and reconfigurations of anthropology after the World War II hiatus? One notices that these symposia were held at universities (page xii); more select meetings at Burg Wartenstein castle came later. Silverman only very briefly comments, page 246, on choosing participants, mentioning the goal of "a healthy mix by nationality, age/seniority, and gender" without discussing quoting circles, prestige of institutional affiliation, or New York bias. I'll close by contrasting Silverman's conferences with one Osmundsen had supported, a 1977 peripatetic meeting in Mexico organized by David Kelley and myself, to bring Joseph Needham face to face in situ with data adduced for pre-Columbian transpacific contacts. We traveled to the Museo Nacional collections in Mexico City, Teotihuacán, Palenque, Monte Albán, Olmec Park in Villahermosa, and Tajín; at each site Needham and his collaborator Lu Gwei-Djen spoke with archaeologists who had worked with the site and collections as they examined data. As an archaeologist, I can't help wishing Wenner-Gren had continued supporting discussions where major issues could be directly confronted by in-the-field data experience, and local practitioners accommodated.

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Hilary du Cros 2002 *Much More Than Stones and Bones*. Melbourne University Press. xviii + 204pp. ISBN 0-522-85020-0 (paperback).

This is a book about the changing authority of archaeology (and archaeologists) in Australia over the last 20 years. It argues that the forces that created archaeology in Australia during the 1960s and 1970s, which are said to be those of the academy and of science, have since lost their sway to the field of heritage archaeology and the interests of indigenous people and of the marginalised in society. Archaeology is now far too culturally and socially significant to be left in the hands of academic archaeologists. Indeed, the interests of this now minority group have to 'managed' by heritage bureaucrats and others in a way that allows for the interests of others be given their due.

This argument is largely made by assertion and exemplified by case studies drawn from some of the most significant heritage sites in the country (both historic and prehistoric) such as Lake Mungo, First Government House (Sydney), Little Lon (Melbourne), and the cave sites of south west Tasmania. The book focuses the bulk of its attention on the growing cultural, social and political significance of archaeology in Australia – on how it has become a lightning rod for debate about the meaning of Australian history and of relationships between indigenous Australians and other members of the society.

There has long been agreement about many of these core issues, even among the small group of academic archaeologists. Indeed the overwhelming impression to be gained from *Much More Than Stones and Bones* is of how familiar much of this territory is. While it might be argued that Du Cros is not writing for professional archaeologists but for others not so steeped in the debates, the fact remains that Du Cros' account is generally shallow and impressionistic. Beginning with a slight and now dated history of Australian archaeology