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Radical Anthropology

Zanna Clay

Bonobo 'girl power'

Sheila Coulson and Sigrid Staurset

Ritual at Rhino Cave

Camilla Power

Lunarchy in the Kingdom of England

Graham Purchase

on 'The Art of not being Governed'

£4

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Who we are and what we do

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On the cover:

The journal's logo represents the emergence of culture (dragons feature in myths and legends from around the world) from nature (the DNA double-helix, or selfish gene). The dragon is a symbol of solidarity, especially the blood solidarity that was a necessary precondition for the social revolution that made us human. For more on this, see our website at www.radicalanthropologygroup.org

The cover picture was taken at Lola Ya Bonobo Sanctuary in DR Congo, which rescues orphan bonobos who are typically victims of the bush-meat trade. These juvenile orphan females are currently being cared for in a nursery group at the sanctuary. See Zanna Clay's article on p.5.

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Radical: about the inherent, fundamental roots of an issue.

Anthropology: the study of what it means to be human.

Radical Anthropology is the journal of the Radical Anthropology Group. Anthropology asks one big question: what does it mean to be human? To answer this, we cannot rely on common sense or on philosophical arguments. We must study how humans actually live – and the many different ways in which they have lived. This means learning, for example, how people in non-capitalist societies live, how they organise themselves and resolve conflict in the absence of a state, the different ways in which a ‘family’ can be run, and so on.

Additionally, it means studying other species and other times.

What might it mean to be almost – but not quite – human?

How socially self-aware, for example, is a chimpanzee?

Do nonhuman primates have a sense of morality?

Do they have language? And what about distant times? Who were the Australopithecines and why had they begun walking upright? Where did the Neanderthals come from and why did they become extinct? How, when and why did human art, religion, language and culture first evolve?

The Radical Anthropology Group started in 1984 when Chris Knight's popular ‘Introduction to Anthropology’ course at Morley College, London, was closed down, supposedly for budgetary reasons. Within a few weeks, the students got organised, electing a treasurer, secretary and other officers. They booked a library in Camden – and invited Chris to continue teaching next year. In this way, the Radical Anthropology Group was born.

Later, Lionel Sims, who since the 1960s had been lecturing in sociology at the University of East London, came across Chris's PhD on human origins and – excited by the backing it provided for the anthropology of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, particularly on the subject of ‘primitive communism’ – invited Chris to help set up Anthropology at UEL. During the 1990s several other RAG members including Ian Watts, Camilla Power, Isabel Cardigos and Charles Whitehead completed PhDs at University College London and Kings College London, before going onto further research and teaching.

For almost two decades, Anthropology at UEL retained close ties with the Radical Anthropology Group, Chris becoming Professor of Anthropology in 2001. He was sacked by UEL's corporate management in July 2009 for his role in organising and publicising demonstrations against the G20 in April.

While RAG has never defined itself as a political organization, the implications of some forms of science are intrinsically radical, and this applies in particular to the theory that humanity was born in a social revolution. Many RAG members choose to be active in Survival International and/or other indigenous rights movements to defend the land rights and cultural survival of hunter-gatherers. Additionally, some RAG members combine academic research with activist involvement in environmentalist, anti-capitalist and other campaigns.

For more, see www.radicalanthropologygroup.org

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No sex please, we're scientists!

The world authority on sperm competition, Tim Birkhead, wrote a fascinating piece on how Victorian values affected Charles Darwin's wilder explorations into animal sex lives.¹ Darwin was bold and unflinching in observation and research into female strategies of promiscuity – especially when it came to barnacles. But the closer he got to consideration of monkey sexual behaviour in relation to human evolution, in *The Descent of Man* (1871) – for instance, male monkeys being able to detect women by odour – the more he resorted to Latin circumlocutions.²

This ensured his comments on 'monkeys' bottoms' would not offend the ladies. He could jokingly write to John Ruskin man to man (although the art critic is now famous for his issues with mature women's bodies) of his 'deep and tender interest in the brightly coloured hinder parts of certain

monkeys'. But moral pressure exerted by members of his own family, particularly daughter Etty who corrected his proofs, made him nervous. He ended up emphasizing female tendencies to monogamy, neglecting the implications of his sexual selection theory of female choice.

In pioneering and controversial experiments on variability in ejaculate volume among Manchester University Ph.D students, Robin Baker and Mark Bellis³ found that a man would top up extra (lots extra!) when 'his' woman had been out of sight and potentially able to sneak off with someone else. Are women well-designed for cuckoldry? Had this capacity evolved in response to female ancestors' tactics of double-mating? Female primatologists, primarily Sarah Blaffer Hrdy with *The Woman that Never Evolved* (1981), led the way in looking at the social strategic nature of non-

human primate female sexuality, with a take-home message for hominin evolution.

In this issue, Zanna Clay, working in DR Congo, investigates sexual politics among bonobos, our 'other' closest living relative alongside chimpanzees. So, let's focus on bonobo bottoms. They take us closer than ever to key questions about our evolution. Today, surely, we can boldly go where Darwin feared to tread.

Female bonobos use pronounced and extended oestrous swellings to forge coalitionary bonds with other females, especially junior incomers to a group targeting senior residents. And if a relatively low-ranked or newcomer female scores with a high-ranked female, she will make a lot of noise about it. Because there are so many female bottoms so close together – female bonobos, unlike female chimps have enough

food all year round to aggregate in larger parties – and because they are so active and energetic, the males give up trying to keep track of any particular female bottom, or to monopolise them. Instead, they relax and join in the fun.

The fact that bonobo female sexual signals are so protracted, making it difficult for a male to pinpoint actual time of peak fertility, undermines reproductive advantage in male competition for rank. This is a crucial difference between bonobos and chimps. Female chimps' bottoms also produce magnificent periodic sexual swellings, but the top males can garner information about their timing of maximum swelling, and get in on the act at exactly the right moment. This means there is huge reproductive advantage for a male chimpanzee to fight for dominance to claim this privilege.

So. Hominin evolution. Which ape tells us most about where we came from? Females forced to disperse or able to aggregate? Much depends on resources available and degree of female competition. Female sexual cycle continuously receptive, confusing actual moment of fertility, or marking out maximum likelihood to a dominant male? Females foraging and travelling together in intergenerational coalitions? At the very least, as Clay says, we have to take bonobo models into account as much as chimpanzee versions. Behavioural ecology does not deal in absolute answers, but highlights variability of factors affecting outcomes one way or another. Hominin evolution is complicated with many different branches of species evolving with differing outcomes. But if we are considering our hominin ancestors, larger-brained and bodied than bonobos, able to travel further more efficiently, is that likely to make female-female social bonds more or less critical to reproductive strategies? Could the cooperative breeding envisaged by Hrdy in *Mothers and Others* (2009) emerge if chimp-style male-male alliances were more central?

Possibly all those bonobo female bottoms are still today just a little too much for many scientists investigating human evolution?

'Lately it has become fashionable to deny the existence of this initial stage in human sexual life,' wrote Friedrich Engels in 1884, 'Humanity must be spared this "shame"'.⁴ He was referring to the Bachofen thesis, advanced also by Lewis Henry Morgan, of a stage of sexual promiscuity, from which



Macaca nigra with booty.

derived the earliest human forms of group marriage. Pretty much all of social anthropology after the Russian Revolution was aimed at suppression of this theory. Yet today we have similarly opposed camps in discussion of hominin mating systems. The male-bonding, male control of females via control of resources crew, fairly represented by Rob Foley, Clive Gamble and Richard Wrangham, vs the cooperative breeding/grandmother hypothesis sisterhood, who see females resisting male attempts at control, including Sarah Hrdy, Kristen Hawkes, and the editor of this journal.

In his boldly titled book, *The Origin of Our Species*, reviewed in this edition, top palaeontologist Chris Stringer gives a fair hearing to both sides. More credit to him for being ready to flesh out the fossils with discussion of social and sexual strategies. All too often these days, theoretical approaches from group and multilevel selection, not to mention cognitive and linguistic branches of evolutionary psychology, evade issues of sexual conflict and cooperation. The closer they get to human cultural behaviour, the more reticent they apparently become. Is sex still too risky for scientists who aim to stay respectable?

Most importantly in this edition, we have interviewed two women archaeologists, Sheila Coulson and Sigrid Staurset, who are excavating some of the earliest evidence for what looks like male-centred ritual in Botswana. Excitingly, they are using one of the key behavioural ecology theories of signal evolution, costly signalling, for their analysis of the Rhino Cave site. This is surely a big step forward for the interdisciplinary understanding of the emergence of the African Middle Stone Age symbolic record. They have the assistance of local expert, Xontae Xhao, with insight into the way the giant 'snake' head panel was utilised in recent historic ritual. Snake lore among the Khoisan has many links to trance medicine but equally to the potency of menarcheal maidens.

Radical Anthropology may be guilty of *lèse majesté*, but it appears that a human primate sexual signal is bang, slap in the middle of the English royal coat of arms, obfuscated by Latin circumlocutions (the motto of the Order of the Garter). The editor spent 25 hours from the eve of the Royal Wedding cast into a dungeon, for her proximity to a 12-foot tall guillotine, so at least her article examining the comedy of Falstaff and the English kingship is scientifically and politically consistent. Clearly, human female bottoms mattered in the representation of royal power.

The main thing behavioural ecology teaches us is that in discussing any social system, we cannot leave out sex. Those group selectionists and cognitive anthropologists would do well to remember, 'There are no gender-free human encounters'.⁵

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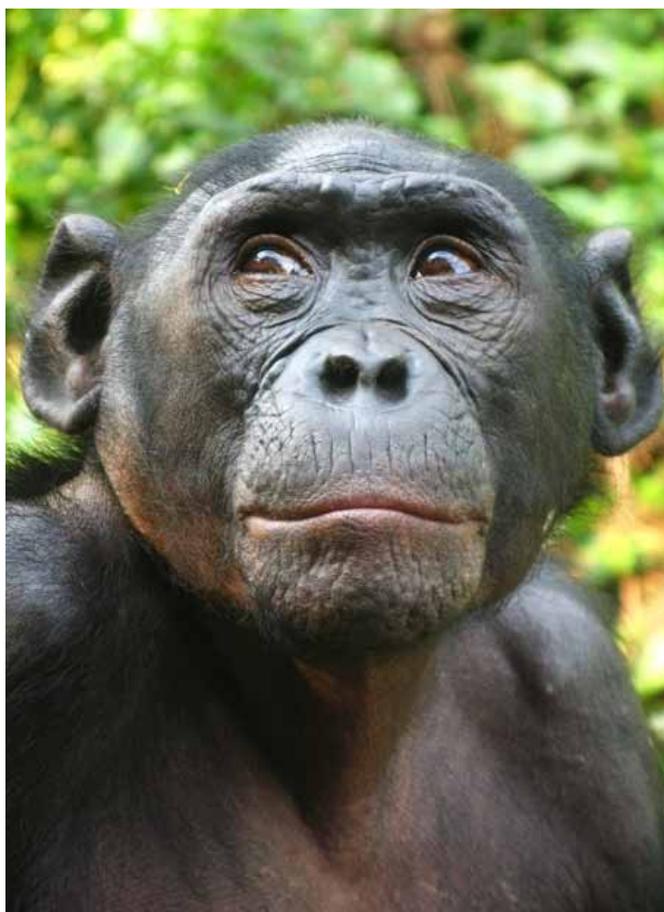
Girl Power: the roots of female dominance and bonding in bonobos

Zanna Clay has studied bonobos in captivity and the wild, searching for the roots of human prosociality.

Despite being one of our closest living relatives, bonobos (*Pan paniscus*) are still one of the least well understood of the great apes, largely remaining in the shadow of their better known cousins, the chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*). For this reason, comparative models of human evolution are typically biased towards the chimpanzee model, where male dominance, ‘war’ between groups and competition prevail. However, despite an extremely close genetic relationship between chimpanzees and bonobos, there are some striking differences in their social behaviour, none more so than in the case of female dominance. This means insights from both *Pan* species are needed in order to construct a balanced model of human evolution.¹ In contrast to chimpanzees, in which males are more bonded, female bonobos are highly gregarious, form strong intra-sexual alliances and are able to dominate males. Factors such as relaxed feeding ecology, reduced levels of male aggression and female reproductive physiology are all thought to contribute to the enhanced power of females in bonobo society. Here I explore the roots of female power in bonobos, how their power may have emerged and how female alliances contribute to female dominance.

Female bonding and female philopatry

Bonding among female group members is a characteristic feature of most Old World primate social systems.² In his seminal socioecological model of primate



insights from both *Pan* species are needed in order to construct a balanced model of human evolution

sociality, Richard Wrangham³ argued that social bonds between females facilitate their collective defence of resources against foraging competitors. By affiliating with one another, females incur a number of advantages. As well as the competitive advantages gained through coalitionary support, female bonding helps to alleviate stress and to develop trust, especially through

grooming and remaining spatially close to chosen allies. A study of baboons revealed that female bonding also led to enhanced offspring survival.⁴ Generally, female bonding is based on kinship as a result of female philopatry, a pattern seen in most Old World monkeys.^{2,3} While males disperse from their natal groups, females remain together within kin-based



Zanna Clay

Female ability to aggregate in parties with other females is at the base of bonobo female power.

matrilines and, consequently, are able to develop close social bonds. Female dispersal does, however, occur in a minority of primate species,⁵ including our closest living ape relatives, the bonobos⁶ and chimpanzees.⁷

In contrast to the close female bonds seen in female-philopatric species, female social bonds in female-dispersing species are typically weak, presumably because females lack strong kin relationships. Female migration may also increase risk of infanticide (typically committed by males), a consequence being that females tend to form small family units and avoid contact with other group members.^{3,8} So female chimpanzees, who emigrate from their natal groups at adolescence, generally show this tendency of low affiliation with other females and, except during oestrus, mostly avoid travelling in mixed parties with males, in order to avoid aggression and food competition.⁹ In general, wild female chimpanzees remain

somewhat solitary for most of their lives, preferring to move with their dependent offspring within overlapping core areas. Of course, there are some exceptions – in communities such as Tai forest, Ivory Coast, females do also form long-term affiliations with one another.¹⁰ In contrast to what is seen *typically* in females, however, male chimpanzees are highly sociable; they form strong affiliations with one another, develop alliances and travel in male-biased parties.⁷ In this manner, chimpanzee society is based around male philopatry, male bonding and male dominance.

Bonobos: female bonding in a male-philopatric species

Compared to chimpanzees and other male-philopatric species, bonobos show some truly striking differences which challenge the traditional comparative models of *Homo* evolution. Despite an absence of genetic ties, female bonobos are highly gregarious and form strong affiliations and alliances with one

another and other group members.^{6, 11-13} For most of the year, females aggregate together and forage in large, mixed parties, sharing food as well as forming strong alliances to support each other in food defence against males.¹³⁻¹⁴ The formation of close affiliations and alliances between females subsequently facilitates a rise in dominance of females within bonobo society. Female bonobos exert considerable social power within their groups and are able to dominate males. In a comparative study of chimpanzees and bonobos, Parish¹⁵ found that female bonobos were able to consistently control access to a limited feeding resource (an artificial termite mound). This sharply contrasted with results for chimpanzees: the dominant male chimpanzee was shown to monopolise all feeding access. Unlike other great ape species, the bonobo social system is described as female-biased; a female typically occupies the alpha position.⁶ However, female dominance is not

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absolute; rather their dominance depends strongly upon the context and the formation of alliances.¹¹ Furthermore, though males are able to dominate some females, aggression by males against females is generally rare. A study of aggression within the context of mating revealed that males are able to gain more reproductive benefits by affiliating with females, rather than by being aggressive to them.¹⁶ This pattern of enhanced

lose this potential ally.¹⁸ Against the possibility that these targeted females are in fact relatives of female immigrants, genetic analyses have consistently supported the assumption that affiliative relations among females are not based upon kinship.¹³ Female alliances are especially apparent during the context of feeding and defence of resources with females typically showing priority access to food in both the wild and captivity.

dominance and bonding has occurred in bonobos in comparison to chimpanzees, especially considering that both chimpanzees and bonobos share many other behavioural, cognitive and ecological similarities. Nevertheless, despite living in apparently similar African forest habitats, two key ecological features of the forests to which bonobos are endemic appear to have promoted the increased sociality of female bonobos, as well

Unlike other great ape species, the bonobo social system is described as female-biased; a female typically occupies the alpha position

female power and consequential reduction in male competition contrasts to what is seen in most other primates and, with bonobos among our closest living relatives, provides a different evolutionary slant onto the evolution of hominin social systems.

The impact of alliance formation

In both the wild and in captivity, the high status of female bonobos is strongly facilitated by the formation of alliances.^{11,14-15,17} In addition to female-female coalitions, females may also join together with males in order to dominate other males. The formation of coalitions is exhibited in a variety of contexts, from securing feeding priority, instigating group travel and to provide support during conflicts. Forming alliances with established females appears especially important for immigrating females joining the group. During the period of integration, females exert particular effort in affiliating with high-ranked females. On arrival, newly immigrating females focus their bonding behaviours toward this female and in the case of party fission, will generally remain close to her, presumably so as not to

A juvenile female tries to initiate sex with a dominant female.



Female dominance is often reported to be much more pronounced in captivity than in the wild.¹⁹ Takeshi Furuichi, one of the most experienced researchers of wild bonobos, suggests that raised levels of female dominance in captive settings may be attributed to more frequent occurrence of competitive interactions over food, the context in which female dominance is at its strongest.

Relaxed feeding competition and the rise of female sociality

One obvious question is why this apparent rise in female

as the reduced level of aggression and high social tolerance that exists within and between bonobo groups.^{12,14,22} Bonobos are found in the equatorial forests of the Congo basin in DR Congo, a forest habitat characterised by a high abundance of large, dense food patches, with low seasonality.¹⁴ As a result of a year-round abundance of food, bonobos experience considerable reductions in both foraging competition and travel time between patches, as compared to chimpanzees.^{12,19-20,22} The current opinion is that these two ecological factors, relaxed feeding competition and reduced travel time

between patches, may promote both greater social tolerance and the formation of female aggregations within large, mixed foraging parties, which are generally more stable than for chimpanzees. For example, a study of the seasonal feeding ecology of wild bonobos in the Lomako forest revealed that, although there was some seasonal variation in fruit abundance, there was no period of food shortage in which large foraging parties and female sociality were not feasible.¹⁴

Cohesive female ranging strategies consequently appear to favour more flexible and often solitary ranging strategies in males.²⁰ This follows earlier predictions by van Hooff and van Schaik²¹ who suggested that for species with females living in large or loose aggregations, monopolisation of females by males would be impossible or meaningless. In bonobos, males range more independently and although they join mixed-sex parties, they often remain at the periphery and are not able to monopolise females. For example, studies of male and female ranging patterns in the Lomako forest, DR

between bonobo males are generally weak, with a virtual absence of male-male alliances.^{6,13} Male bonobos do form close associations and alliances with females; this confers competitive benefits to both the male and female.¹⁶ Adult males maintain especially close and enduring relationships with their mothers, something which has been



Females travelling: reduced time between foraging patches helps females maintain stable large groups.

shown to positively influence their dominance rank and reproductive success.^{11,22} For example, long-term studies of the wild bonobos in

case, both mother and son achieve fitness benefits, via the son's mating success. So 'meddling mothers' are not only found in humans, but also appear among our *Pan* relatives.

The mechanisms of female sociality

A number of behavioural mechanisms are thought to underlie bond formation between females.

Adult males maintain especially close and enduring relationships with their mothers

Congo, have revealed that during party travel, males frequently travel alone, in front of the main female-biased party.²⁰ Upon discovery of feeding sites, males may compete among themselves to gain priority access before the females arrive. Consequently, the successful male is able to both copulate with arriving females as well as gain improved foraging opportunities.

The influence of male relationships

An absence of pronounced social bonds between male bonobos is also thought to contribute to the elevated status of females in bonobo society.^{1,15} In contrast to the strong bonds and alliances seen between male chimpanzees, relationships

Wamba, DR Congo, revealed a close link between the dominant males and females within each group, with alpha females often being the mothers of the alpha males.¹¹ By affiliating with their adult sons, mothers also reap benefits, both in terms of gaining coalitionary support as well as indirect reproductive success, through their sons. In a recent study of wild bonobos in the Salonga forest, the presence of the mother was shown to increase her son's mating success.²² Behavioural observations indicated that mothers achieved this either by intervening in the matings of other males, or by increasing their son's access to oestrous females by themselves remaining close to them. In this

This includes grooming behaviour, high social tolerance, food sharing and particularly high levels of social play between adult individuals.^{6,15,23} Play is notably high among adult females, especially compared to chimpanzees and other female-dispersing primates, and appears to be important in the development of their affiliative bonds, for social assessment as well as for the alleviation of tension. A striking increase in adult play typically occurs during prefeeding periods, when apprehension of social conflict is high.²³ This pattern goes against the commonly held assumption that stress suppresses play and instead, highlights the role of play in tension relief and bond consolidation during moments of potential social instability.²³ More generally, considering that play typically declines after adolescence in most other primates, its prevalence into adulthood in bonobos has relevance for the evolutionary role of adult play in humans and its foundations within our ape lineage.

In addition to play, bonobos seem to use sex as an additional tool to establish and maintain their social relationships.^{6,24-26} Homosexual genital contacts have, in fact, been observed in all great apes (*Gorilla*

socio-sexual behaviour appears to serve as a kind of 'social grease' that alleviates tension and facilitates peaceful co-existence

gorilla; *Pan troglodytes*; *Pongo pygmaeus*) as well as in a range of animal species, although bonobos are known to make particularly strong and habitual use of them, both in the wild and in captivity.²⁴⁻²⁵ Furthermore, although sex is freely incorporated into the lives of all group members, the habitual performance of homosexual genital contacts is thought to be particularly important in facilitating peaceful co-existence between females, and for establishing and maintaining their social bonds. Female genital contacts occur during face-to-face embraces, while both participants mutually swing their hips laterally and keep their vulvae in contact.²⁵

Divorced from reproduction, homosexual genital contacts are thought to fulfill a variety of social functions for bonobos. Sex appears to be especially important for reducing social tension and the apprehension of social competition.^{6,24-26} In both the wild and in captivity, studies have shown that rates of female genital contacts increase significantly during periods of social instability and tension, occurring most commonly during feeding, but also after conflict and during inter-group encounters.²⁴⁻²⁵ In addition, sexual contacts are thought to be relevant for enhancing social tolerance, enabling food sharing, reconciling conflicts and for expressing social status.^{15,24-25} Sexual contacts also appear to be used as part of the integration strategy of newly arriving females. During the immigration period, newly arriving females frequently engage

in genital contacts with female group members and in particular, often try to interact sexually with high-ranking, established females.¹⁸ Thus, both for regulating internal group interactions and for

facilitating the arrival of new group members, socio-sexual behaviour appears to serve as a kind of 'social grease' that alleviates tension and facilitates peaceful co-existence and affiliation between group members, who generally lack close genetic ties.

The performance of socio-sexual behaviours may be closely linked to a notably high level of social tolerance seen among bonobos; it may promote food sharing and access to preferred food patches. Indeed, sexual interactions occur most commonly during feeding and typically accompany co-feeding. For example, studies in both the wild and in captivity have demonstrated that females are more likely to co-feed in desirable food patches and gain food from other individuals after engaging in genital contacts with them.¹⁵ In food-sharing and social tolerance studies, Brian Hare and colleagues reported that bonobo subjects frequently engaged in sexual behaviours during testing.

both sexes are active during hunting, with females frequently playing an active role in both the hunting and meat sharing

Reproductive factors

Reproductive factors relating to female physiology and sexual behaviour may also promote the enhanced status and sociability of females in bonobo society. Compared to other primate species, including chimpanzees, bonobo females exhibit an especially

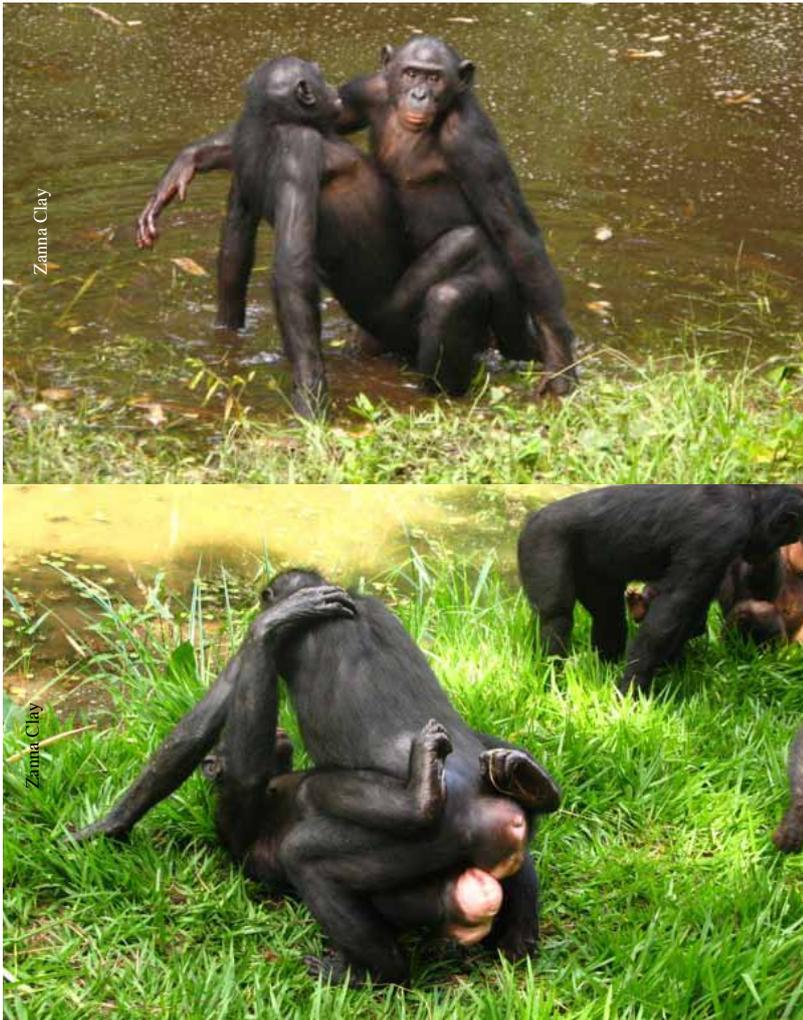
prolonged period of oestrus, both in terms of extended swelling cycles, as well as in the duration of the peak swelling phase.²⁶⁻²⁷ A consequence of this prolonged perineal tumescence appears to be extended female attractivity and a presumably heightened sexuality. With prolonged attractivity, females may experience extended mate choice, leading to an elevation of their social status.^{6,26-27}

Furthermore, homosexual interactions between females have also been shown to increase during the period of maximum swelling size, suggesting that the extended swelling cycle may be attractive to other females as well as males.²⁶ In this way, prolonged oestrus is thought to underlie the formation of more stable and mixed foraging parties. In addition, the fact that females conceal ovulation and mate promiscuously may also account for an apparent lack of interest that male bonobos have in high status positions.^{26,27} If males are not able to dominate females during oestrous periods, there may be less adaptive benefits for males to be aggressive and compete for the high-ranked position.

Flexible female dominance styles

Although females regularly exhibit enhanced status and a female typically occupies the alpha position in a group, patterns of female dominance are nevertheless dynamic and flexible.^{16-17,28} In captivity, linear

dominance hierarchies, headed by an alpha female, have been demonstrated for several different groups.²⁸ However, the steepness and linearity of dominance hierarchies have also been shown to vary considerably among populations. In general, rather than being absolutely dominant over



Genital contacts are key to female relationships.

males, female dominance appears to depend upon both context and the formation of alliances, especially with high-ranked females.^{14,16-17,28} The flexible nature of female dominance is especially seen in the wild. Individually, females in wild communities are most commonly shown to be equal to males in terms of social status.^{11,16} However, they acquire considerable power within the context of foraging and following the formation of alliances.¹⁴ During feeding, individual females can displace males to secure priority access to the best feeding patches, something which also extends to meat eating following hunting.

In chimpanzees, hunting and meat sharing is very much a male affair, centered around dominant male alliances and male-male bonding. Having acquired the meat, male allies typically share the meat

among themselves as well as giving to begging group members and trading with females for sex.²⁹ In bonobos however, both sexes are active during hunting, with females frequently playing an active role in both the hunting and meat sharing.³⁰ Though more studies are required, the emerging data suggest that female bonobos, particularly compared to chimpanzees, have notable power during hunting and are able to secure meat to share with their offspring rather than having to beg from males. Evidence of the active role female bonobos play in hunting challenges previous evolutionary models of hunting in hominoid primates that generally indicate it to be a male-orientated behaviour which serves to enhance male dominance, bonding and mating opportunities. Rather, it suggests that, by developing strong alliances with other females as

well as with males, females are able to overcome the evolutionary trajectory of male dominance and acquire greater power and access to valuable resources.

Female-female competition

Although aggression among females is generally quite rare, competition among females does sometimes occur, particularly within the context of mating.¹⁶ Thus, developing intra-sexual bonds and alliances may also serve to protect females from competitive threats from other female group members. Furthermore, compared to the overt physical aggression of chimpanzee males, competition between female bonobos tends to be more subtle and hence may be harder to detect. Nevertheless, tendencies in their social and communicative behaviours indicate that it is present just below the surface. For instance, call patterns during female-female sexual interactions suggest that female are clearly aware of female dominance hierarchies and may call to advertise social closeness and affiliation with dominant group members. For example, subordinate female bonobos produce loud and acoustically distinctive copulatory calls when sexually interacting with high-ranking females, but in contrast, like high-ranking females, remain totally silent when mating with low-ranking females.³¹

Conclusion

In sum, the intimate relationship between non-related female bonding, female power and its consequent reduction in male dominance in bonobos provide key comparative insights into the evolution of hominin social systems and the role of intra-sexual bonding and social tolerance in the emergence of social power. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of developing balanced models of *Homo* evolution that encompass the dominance systems of both *Pan* relatives, the chimpanzees and bonobos. With relaxed feeding competition and reduced travel

time between patches, females are able to aggregate together in large, mixed social groups, to co-exist peacefully together and to gather resources. Using an array of affiliative mechanisms, including play, homosexual contacts, food-sharing and grooming, females are able to develop, express and consolidate their social relationships

and develop alliances. Furthermore, the existence of close mother-son bonds, weak inter-male affiliations and extended attractivity, via prolonged swelling cycles, all serve to further strengthen the power base of females within bonobo society. These patterns, combined together, contrast to what is seen in chimpanzees and other female-

dispersing species. They provide alternative insights into the putative trajectory of hominin evolution. Enhanced social tolerance and adult play as observed in bonobos boost more prosocial models of *Homo* evolution. The foundations of *Homo* prosociality and cooperation may lie rooted within the ancestral lineage we share with *Pan*. 🦋

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Middle Stone Age ritual at Rhino Cave, Botswana

Rhino Cave, a small hidden fissure in Tsodilo Hills, Botswana, has recently produced compelling evidence of ritual activity during the Middle Stone Age, some 77,000 years ago.

Numerous colourful spearpoints appear to have been ‘sacrificed’. Burnt and smashed, they were left in front of a massive natural rock formation, carved with hundreds of cupules to resemble a snake. Archaeologists **Sheila Coulson** and **Sigrid Staurset** discuss their interpretations with *Radical Anthropology*.

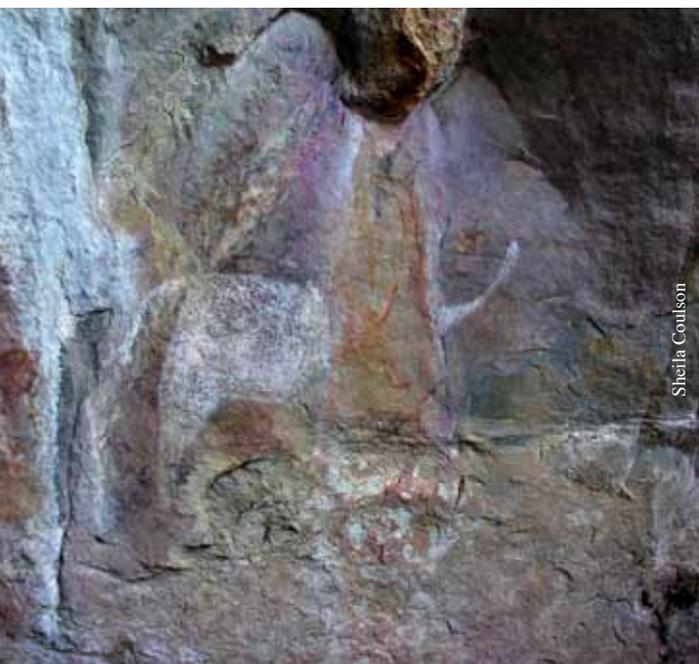


Figure 1 Paintings on the north wall of Rhino Cave, probably of Later Stone Age date

Radical Anthropology: What drew you to Botswana in the first place? Any particular reasons for your focus on the Middle Stone Age?

Sheila Coulson and Sigrid Staurset: We were both affiliated with the Archaeology component of the University of Botswana/Tromsø Collaborative Programme for San Research. For over a decade the component focused on finding and testing new archaeological sites

in Ngamiland, in the northwest of Botswana. A number of these sites contained both Later Stone Age (LSA) and Middle Stone Age (MSA) finds. When the programme ended we continued our research with the MSA, as much less is known about this earlier period in Botswana. It is of particular importance as this period, especially in Southern Africa, has become a focal point for the origins of modern humans and the development of human culture.

RA: Tell us something about the Tsodilo Hills landscape and its local associations.

SC, SS: The vast majority of Botswana is dominated by flat lands and the Kalahari sands. Tsodilo Hills are outstanding exceptions, in that they are the only hills for over 100 km in any direction. They are an obvious aggregation place for meeting, hunting, acquiring resources (such as water, raw materials, colourants)

and also contain natural shelters. Perhaps due to this unusual setting, Tsodilo Hills figure prominently in the origin stories, mythologies and rituals of the inhabitants of the area.^{1,2} They are named by the local Hambukushu and Ju/'hoansi San, as Male, Female, Child, and Grandchild (alternatively North Hill or “The Hill that Wants to Live by Itself”).³ The Hills also contain over 4,500 rock paintings, one of the highest concentrations of rock art in the world, as well as an archaeological record spanning from the MSA to recent times. In 2001, Tsodilo Hills was declared a World Heritage Site.

RA: How was Rhino Cave first discovered? Describe what has been found there.

SC, SS: During registration of sites in the early 1990s, archaeologists were first shown the cave by the local Ju/'hoansi San. A small hidden fissure, Rhino Cave is a hard to access location high up on Female Hill. Both main walls of the cave are decorated—the north wall contains a group of rock paintings (Fig.1), while virtually the entire quartzite outcrop that dominates the south wall has been ground to form an impressive series of grooves and depressions (Fig.2).

Excavations at the site revealed Early Iron Age material and traces of sporadic use during the LSA, but quite surprisingly the weight

of $\approx 77,000 \pm 11,000$ BP) the Rhino Cave finds are considered to be of a similar age.⁷ We have, therefore, concentrated on the MSA points in

A large amount of specularite (a locally acquired colourant with a metallic silvery lustre) was also found in the MSA levels. As some



Figure 2 Carved rock panel on the south wall in afternoon light.

of the evidence for use of the cave lies with the substantial body of material attributable to the MSA.^{4,6}

RA: What about the issues of dating at this site? How confident can we be that the carved wall is dating back into the MSA? What about the points? The pigments?

SC, SS: Due to the small size of the cave, the proximity of the rock walls and the stringent requirements of modern dating techniques, the MSA deposits have yet to be satisfactorily dated. However, based on typological comparisons to the well-dated open air site of

our analysis since these artefacts are unquestionably *fossiles directeurs* – that is, signature or hallmark artefacts only produced at this period. Our dating of the carved wall is based on the recovery of a spalled-off section of the carving and hand-held grinding stones for carving from well within the MSA levels. This is currently our only indication for when this panel was made. When people first began and when they ceased carving we do not know, however, as the carvings are in variable condition – some appear very fresh, while others are heavily eroded – it is obvious it was not all done at one time.

of these pieces have rounded edges from grinding it is tempting to speculate they could have been produced by grinding against the carved rock face. The effect, particularly under firelight, would have been dramatic.

RA: Can you explain the importance of the *chaîne opératoire* methods you've utilised with the points and what that has shown?

SC, SS: Unlike typology, which focuses on the morphological aspects of characteristic tool types, the *chaîne opératoire* constitutes an in-depth reading of the entire

assemblage.^{8,9} While a common approach in European archaeology, this is the first application of this method on material from Botswana. The growing popularity of the *chaîne opératoire* is due to its ability to surpass typological description by identifying the sequence of conscious choices made

the destruction of costly objects. Furthermore, the MSA is so far back in time there are no direct ethnographic references that would help us explain these patterns. So we needed an approach that could address human material behaviour on a more general scale, although it should also be added that our

The behaviours we have reported are, as yet, unique within the MSA. However, similar occurrences have been recorded albeit from much more recent periods and often from distant locations. For example, this combination of ritualized actions and alternative attribution has also been argued by Chris Ellis¹⁷ regarding the

once complete, these tools...normally associated with hunting and butchering, never left the cave. Instead,...they were burnt, abandoned...or ...smashed

by the original artefact makers. The combined results of these individual sequences provide insight into behaviour patterns indicative of broader culturally determined traits and norms. This approach has resulted in the production of firm evidence for a variety of aspects of the MSA that in the past would have been beyond our reach. For example, at Rhino Cave there are an unexpectedly large number of MSA points (Fig.3), which for the most part were produced in selective, colourful raw materials that were acquired from a distance of at least 50km. Once complete, these tools, which are normally associated with hunting or butchering, never left the cave. Instead, they were burnt (along with their waste debitage), abandoned, or intentionally smashed. This apparently wasteful treatment of tools was, until now, unheard of in the MSA.

RA: How did you come to apply 'costly signal' models to the data? Were you aware of other examples where it had been done in Palaeolithic archaeology (such as the Kohn/Mithen handaxe theory)?

SC, SS: We were aware of how other applications of this theory to other archaeological investigations¹⁰⁻¹² has refocused long-standing debates in new and controversial directions. We applied costly signalling theory because the behavioural patterns we found at Rhino Cave included

use of the 'costly signal' models was further inspired by its direct application to ritual studies.¹³ This theory explains the surrendering of hard-won resources that frequently take time and energy away from other necessary pursuits – like human collective ritual.

RA: How does this kind of 'potlatch' wastefulness or extravagant destruction of valued resources lead to interpretations in terms of ritual behaviours?

SC, SS: We have argued that the points in Rhino Cave were sacrificed, a feature of effortful behaviour, and that the behavioural patterns associated with these actions gave these artefacts an alternative attribution. This behavioural patterning provides evidence of compulsion (one must perform a particular sequence), rigidity (it must be performed the way it was performed before, with no deviation from the remembered pattern), goal demotion (the actions are divorced from their usual goals), redundancy (the same actions are often repeated), and a restricted range of themes (in this instance, the same artefact type was selected for particular treatment). These are recurrent components of ritualized behaviour¹⁴⁻¹⁶ that can be applied to archaeological materials even in instances where the modernity of the prehistoric peoples is in question.

smashing and intentional burning of newly manufactured Palaeo-Indian bifacial points. He proposes these points, which were made from exotic raw materials, were sacrificed to imbue the landscape with cultural, historic and sacred meanings. A similar conclusion was reached by Paul Taçon¹⁸ in a study of the symbolic attributes of groups of stone artefacts produced over the past 6,000 years in western Arnhem Land, Australia. Taçon identified outcrops of brightly coloured stone, used to produce axes and spearheads that imbued the tool's manufacturer and owner with power and prestige. Ethnoarchaeological investigations revealed that these outcrops, of particularly colourful, iridescent stone, were associated with powerful, dangerous forces: one source was considered to be the petrified bones of Ancestral Beings. These raw materials, which were acquired over considerable distances through exchange networks, were used to produce vibrant red or pink/white spearheads. The colour was linked to life forces, also considered to be brilliant, luminous and iridescent, making the spearhead a more powerful and effective artefact. The stone's killing power came from the stone's source, for it was the 'power within the stone which saps the life out of its target'. Taçon concludes that a narrow functionalist interpretation of these spearheads would have failed to recognize the

interconnection of these artefacts with the larger symbolic complex and belief system of which they are an integral part.

RA: Can we risk any more specific interpretations of what kind of ritual? For instance gender rituals?

SC, SS: Presently it is premature to hypothesize as to what kind of ritual was being performed at Rhino Cave. It is not known if these behaviours are found elsewhere, as the *chaîne opératoire* has yet to be applied to other MSA archaeological collections. Different methods of analysis, particularly typological classifications for the retouched tools, preclude virtually any possibility of identifying separate sequences of behaviour. We hope that our findings will encourage others to re-examine their data.

However, there are a number of tempting speculative avenues of ritual that can be further explored. One of these involves the suitability of the location and setting of the cave for ritual purposes. Although the cave is hidden there are a number of ledges and rocks around the main entrance that are well-suited for spectators. Any activity occurring in the limited area of the cave floor or on the cave walls is in full view. There is also a narrow passage behind the carved panel that can be accessed from a small hole in the rocks above the site.

This would offer an opportunity for a small-bodied person to enter and exit the cave without being seen. Any sounds made from that area would appear to be coming from the panel.

Another area of speculation centres on why the spearheads were the selected objects to be abandoned or destroyed at Rhino Cave. The MSA point is the diagnostic tool type of this period and is frequently reported to bear indications of use as a hunting weapon. As noted by Pierre Liénard and Thomas

Lawson^{19,20} artefacts are ready-to-hand candidates to fulfil various ritual functions, as they are immediately recognizable and their normally intended function can be readily transformed – a feature which is likely to be salient and attention-grabbing. At Rhino Cave the spearheads have no indications of use and were often elaborately and carefully made from vibrantly coloured stone. The most common colour choice was deep red, with some raw materials having been

could this be critiqued because Khoisan narratives may focus on these animals in ritual contexts? Has there been any input on this from local Ju/'hoan people on what the wall might represent? To what extent have local people and Ju/'hoansi people in particular been involved in the discoveries or their interpretation?

SC, SS: Unfortunately, the MSA is a period with no suitable framework within which to discuss rock art; but



Figure 3 Selection of Middle Stone Age points from Rhino Cave. Note burnt point with refitted heat spall (bottom row, second from left) and the pink/red point (top row, second from right) where repeated attempts to smash the piece failed.

altered by fire in such a manner that they turned red: a colour well recognized for its symbolic associations.^{10,12,21-24} These select groups of artefacts were burnt but only to a degree that rendered them unusable as tools - but not unrecognizable. Again, these features are not found at other MSA sites.

RA: About the carved wall and cupules, you've advanced an interpretation of the rock wall as a snake (or perhaps tortoise), with mouth, head, eye (Fig.2), but

to modern eyes, both Western and San, the carving looks like a snake (or tortoise head). Regardless of what it represents, why choose to carve on just this panel, in a patterned style that is also unique to this cave? This is perhaps best explained by David Lewis-Williams²⁵ who noted the use of a particular rock panel as a prop brings to life a seemingly 'dead' cave wall: it becomes a living entity where the rest of the body is inside the wall.

The local San headman, Xontae Xhao, worked with us during our



Figure 4 Sigrd excavating with local Ju/hoansi headman Xontae Xhao.

Kontae Xhao...told us of his father participating in male rituals involving the rubbing of wooden spears, coated in snake fat,...to gain the power of the snake

excavations (Fig.4). He told us of his father participating in male rituals involving the rubbing of wooden spears, coated in snake fat, along the grooves in the panel to gain the power of the snake. He and his father both felt the carving represented a powerful snake. A National Museum employee, Lopang Tatlhago, also told us that during the rainy season water flows along the chamber behind the carved panel and spills out directly under the 'head' of the snake. We did not know this information when we concluded the panel looked like a snake. Admittedly there are numerous myths about powerful snakes and tales of snakes that prefer to live near water. However, it is also a country with a great many dangerous snakes.

RA: And what about the way the wall appears under illumination, whether in sunlight at certain times of year, or firelight? Does this suggest specific types of ritual?

SC, SS: During winter months the sunlight comes through a small crack in the ceiling in the late afternoon. These beams play only across the carved section of the panel. However, cross-culturally, rituals begin around dusk, 'when shadows lurk and the hold of reality fails.'²⁶ Night time experiments with flickering light revealed the 'eye' and also made the panel appear to move and jut directly from with the rock face, very much bringing to mind the phrase above of bringing to life the living entity inside the wall. Keep in mind that during the MSA this panel would

have been head-height or higher and in the confined space of this small cave it is impossible to move any distance away from it. Unfortunately, there is as yet not enough comparative evidence from other MSA sites to determine if the ritual(s) involving the spearheads also included the use of the colourant, specularite, and incorporated the massive carved rock panel. Without question their association is suggestive.

Sheila Coulson

RA: In East Africa, in rock shelter painting sites which may have considerable antiquity, and may be originally produced by hunter-gatherers, we also find very recent ritual activity ongoing, often by local farmers (usually rainmaking). Do the Tsodilo sites still have living or very recent historic ritual? And can we say at all how old is the painting in Rhino Cave is likely to be?

SC, SS: Tsodilo is well known as a site for ritual by both the local San and Hambukushu.² Many of the rock paintings are associated with San rainmaking, and there are several locations where hunting ceremonies have taken place or meat offerings have traditionally been left for the ancestors.²⁷ In addition various modern Christian groups visit the Hills to take the waters from sacred wells, and more recently, Western neo-shamans who come to experience the Hills as a site of ancient rituals.

Regarding the wall paintings (Fig.1), conventional wisdom is that they are from the more recent LSA or later.

RA: Any more you would like to say on other experience in Botswana and related sites, future work?

SC, SS: We are currently focusing on two projects. Firstly, locating the sources of the non-locally acquired stones used to produce the spearheads at Tsodilo Hills, a collaborative project with

the University of Brighton.²⁸ Determining the distance the raw material travelled will give us indications both as to just how costly these materials were, and may also shed light on whether exchange networks were necessary to acquire them. Secondly, a problem with the

unexpected discovery of MSA ritual in Rhino Cave is the question of whether this behaviour was limited to this specific cave. Can it also be found on other sites in the Tsodilo Hills or the surrounding areas? Therefore, we are re-examining finds from the other main MSA sites

of Botswana, which are all located on the Hills and the surrounding areas. Together, we hope that these two avenues of research will shed more light on what our ancient ancestors were doing at Tsodilo Hills – and how like us they actually were. 



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Lunarchy in the Kingdom of England

Decoding comedy from Classical Athens to Elizabethan England, **Camilla Power** asks who is Falstaff, the 'drunken king'?

'**T**here is more life and reality in the first act of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* alone than in all German literature,' wrote Fred Engels to Karl Marx on Dec. 10, 1873. Engels had an unerring instinct for sexual communism wherever it lurked. Shakespeare's play has a lot of fun with pompous husbands' endeavours to assert their marital proprietorial rights, yet, structurally, the drama celebrates women's collective carnival freedom. Ritually potent laughter, riot, rituals of licence, subversion of the established order were called 'misrule' by the powers that be. Comedy in the formal dramatic sense has its roots in popular, ritual action, ritual uprising. Most especially the female kind.

My hero is the mysterious figure of Falstaff, one of the great original creations of English literature, a demiurge leader of the riot who, no matter how ridiculous he seems, is also numinous, tinged with the divine. His appetites are awe-inspiring – for food, for drink, for sex, 'fair hot wenches in flame-coloured taffeta' – his dedication to the pleasures of the flesh is religious. He is himself a 'hill of flesh' – so described by a royal wannabe – and he is also called the meat, the 'sweet beef', that people eat.

I've cast Falstaff in the role of lunar trickster, and I'll bring out salient characteristics that conform to a very ancient type of trickster – one recognisable to the Khoisan peoples of southern Africa. But that's not all there is to Falstaff – he is a Protean being changing shape all the time, and he has a whole

history of state power and kingship behind him. Some literary critics with a smattering of Frazerian anthropology have discussed him in terms of Divine Kingship, seeing his role in the *Henry IV* plays as a Mock King or Interrex. Obviously, there he is defined in terms of his relation to royalty. The ritual sequences of the *Henry IV* chronicles are enacted between Falstaff and Prince Hal on fields of combat – allusion to mock battles of kingship.¹ In *The Merry Wives*, the ritual sequences occur between Falstaff and the women, the *Merry Wives* themselves, but

These different aspects are all ways of expressing the same thing – ritual power. What fascinates me is the resilience and precision of the ritual syntax, preserved in high art, elaborate literary creations produced by individuals of genius, who respect the syntax without wavering. This level of fidelity is impressive because it stretches over thousands of years. I start from the Elizabethan comedy, produced by Shakespeare's company in 1597, for a specific occasion of royal ritual on St George's Day. I then reflect it back onto Ancient Greek

I've cast Falstaff in the role of lunar trickster...but that's not all there is... he has a whole history of state power and kingship behind him

even there, he occupies territory of royalty, as a kind of autochthonic genius of the English Kingdom. In apparent contradiction to such exalted status, Falstaff of *The Merry Wives* is also both the cuckold and the cuckold – he flips from one to the other easily with no clear distinction – and he is both Wild

'devilish' Boito called his libretto 'touch it and it burns'

Huntsman and the Hunted Beast. Sex-strike logic – the logic of the lunar template which switches between ritual and non-ritual phases of the moon (see Box) – makes clear why there should be no distinction between these apparent opposites. In keeping with his lunar character, the only thing constant about him is his ability to metamorphose.

comedy of 5th century B.C. Athens, the Dionysiac festivals of Attic Greece, which is where comedy – the word, and the dramatic form – came from. Using Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, the comedy of the sex-strike, as a template, I can show striking parallels with *The Merry Wives*. Both are comedies of women in subversive action. *The Merry Wives* is remarkable for women winning all the way down the line, they organise everything, pull wool over the men's eyes, remaining merry, honest and full of laughter. I also project the drama forward 300 years to the Italian operatic version, Verdi's *Falstaff* of 1893, set to Arrigo Boito's libretto. If we agree with Lévi-Strauss that every retelling of any myth is equally valid, then the Boito *Falstaff* is really the consummate version. Boito's libretto sparkles, where the Shakespeare *Merry Wives* can be lacklustre and prosaic. Boito fleshed out his Falstaff, where the *Merry*

Wives Falstaff is meagre, a stock buffoon figure; Boito imported the rich, poignant speeches from the chronicle plays, melded onto the plot of *Merry Wives* to give his Falstaff powerful presence. Crystallising out the ritual structure, he pared away every inessential character or episode, revealing the dark and light of the syntax. With Verdi's music, they knew it was magical – 'devilish' Boito called it, 'touch

the local Windsor legend of Herne the Hunter, the guise adopted by Falstaff in the final act. Important among the English sources are the Mummings' Plays, the seasonal ritual folk dramas, particularly played at Christmastide, which are rituals of licence, feasts of fools, where the rustic revellers can get at their betters of the church and aristocracy. These are a pretty close equivalent of the ancient

Aristophanes' polished Classical comedy. Added to the mix were Italianate sources, Roman comedy stock characters, Tuscan stories which Shakespeare raided for his plots, and authors like Boccaccio and G Ser Fiorentino.

Falstaff of *The Merry Wives* is a stock figure, the butt of all jokes, not very interesting unless we know the Falstaff of *Henry IV, Parts 1/2*. But at the level I'm discussing, of ritual episodes and allusion to ritual, there is plenty of overlap between the Falstaff of the chronicle plays and the Falstaff of the Windsor play, especially, in the aspect of lunar trickster. Cunning, wiliness, amoral and irrepressible trickery, these are the chief characteristics of the *Henry IV* Falstaff, who lives on his wits and the ill-gotten gains of his cutpurse cronies. For all the low-life sleaze of the Boar's Head tavern, he is the instructor and sage teacher of the Prince. His very first scene

His very first scene with Prince Hal establishes lunar time and tide as his governing rhythm

it and it burns,' he said. Devilry returned to its mediterranean Dionysiac source.

Shakespeare's sources are subject of debate, variegated, fused through the ritual syntax. They include classical sources like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, myths of Actaeon and Jove-Europa, correlated with

Athenian *kōmoi*, the rude choruses of Dionysiac revellers, who took the piss of Athenian aristocracy with all kinds of horseplay, cross-dressing, wrong-sex, wrong-species ritual masquerade. That is the original root of comedy. The Mummings' Plays stand in the same relation to Shakespeare's comedy as the old *kōmoi* of 6-7th century Attica to

Sheer lunarchy: Sex-strike logic and the ritual syntax

The original sex-strike model outlined in Chris Knight's Blood Relations (1991) argues that human culture was born in a revolution when women went on strike. Women with their kin, sons and brothers, would celebrate ritually at dark moon, signaled by menstrual blood (real or fake); as the moon waxed and the night sky got brighter, men would go hunting for large game, bringing back kills to their wives' camp for the full moon feast, when all taboos on marital sex and meat were relaxed. At the next dark moon, women would go on sex-strike again to keep the cosmos turning. This syntax, waxing vs waning, raw vs cooked, blood vs fire, kinship vs marriage etc. persists at the core of all magical myths, fairytales and ritually derived narrative dramas.



with Hal in *Henry IV/1* establishes lunar time and tide as his governing rhythm:

we that take purses go by the moon and the seven stars, and not by Phoebus....sweet wag, when thou art king, let not us that are squires of the night's body be called thieves of the day's beauty; let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon; and let men say we be men of good government, being governed, as the sea is, by our noble and chaste mistress the moon, under whose countenance we steal. (Act I, sc.ii)

And Prince Hal echoes this: *the fortune of us that are the moon's men doth ebb and flow like the sea, being governed, as the sea is, by the moon. The death of Falstaff is also tidal: ev'n just between Twelve and One, ev'n at the turning o' th' Tyde* (King Henry V, Act II, sc.iii).

The notion of ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning underlies the imagery of his huge size. For all his solidity, Falstaff fears that he may dissolve and melt away like

This is just as he is about to introduce news of rebellion and rottenness in the body politic, the Kingdom.

Growth and decay, cyclical logic of swelling and fading characterize trickster lore worldwide. To give a Khoisan example, the Nama folk hero Heitsi-Eibib starts as a small child on his mother's back, suddenly grows huge and takes advantage of his size to rape her, then reverts to his original size – a story which Hahn identified as describing the lunar cycle.² In the Southern San concept of the lunar phases, the New Moon was addressed with prayers to bring luck to the hunt, but the moon as it grew big became a figure of fun, conceived as an enlarging stomach.

Falstaff's stomach is just such a subject of ridicule, yet we know that for the Bushmen, fatness has a sacred aspect of potency.³ It is not fanciful to think of Falstaff's fat as the fat of the Eland Bull: when he appears in his stag's horns at the end of *Merry Wives*, he says: *I am here a Windsor Stag, and the fattest, I think, I' th' forest.* He threatens to piss his tallow, which is doubtless obscene, but is supposed to refer



Falstaff as Windsor Stag (William Gardiner, 1798)

In the opera libretto, Boito makes great play of the thinness/fatness opposition. In one of the first arias, he brings in a section of the 'womb' speech. Falstaff addresses his subjects Bardolph and Pistol:

*You're eating up my substance
If Falstaff ever got thin
he wouldn't be himself,
nobody would love him;
in this great abdomen
are the thousand tongues
that proclaim my name....
this is my kingdom.
I'll make it greater.*

The Moon is strangely absent from the text of *Merry Wives*, but of course the whole final scene is dedicated to 'moonshine revelry', and the moon is so much part of the scenery that it is hardly necessary to refer to it. Boito uses lunar themes throughout his libretto very deliberately, interweaving old Tuscan proverbs on the reviving powers of the moon, where Shakespeare has no particular reference. I'll try to expound the plot of *Merry Wives* as lunar/menstrual logic.

I'll focus on the ritual structure, boiling it down as Boito did, leaving aside incidental scenes. The dealings between Falstaff and the women give the ritual action, the

the dealings between Falstaff and the women give the ritual action, the core of the comedy

butter or grease – he is referred to as tallow; his followers live upon his substance, and threaten to eat him up – he is referred to as meat. There seems to be anxiety about lean times ahead. When Prince Hal is teasing 'here comes lean Jack, here comes bare-bone' and asks 'How long is't ago, Jack, since thou sawest thine own knee?' Falstaff says:

My own knee! when I was about thy years, Hal, I was not an eagle's talon in the waist; I could have crept into any alderman's thumb-ring: a plague of sighing and grief! It blows a man up like a bladder...(King Henry IV/1 Act II, sc.iv.)

to the way stags waste away during the rutting season – perfect lunar logic, start as fat as possible, get thinner and thinner with lots of sex. Falstaff is called an ox, a town bull, a boar – and he mocks himself: *I do here walk before thee like a sow that hath overwhelmed all her litter but one*, meaning his little page following after him like a piglet. Falstaff conforms to wrong sex/wrong species logic. His fatness has a female connotation. At one point in *Henry IV/2* he calls his stomach a womb, with a ritualistic repetition: *my womb, my womb, my womb undoes me.* The idea draws on a Mummings' Plays motif, the false womb.

core of the comedy. There are two spheres of action, the men's and the women's, which until the end of the play are not united. The scheming and machination among the men – a motley crew with no real interests in common – is fraudulent, deceptive, cheating on each other, competitive. The only thing that tenuously unites them is gripes against Falstaff. The women, by contrast, are genuinely cooperative. These are Mistresses Page and Ford, the wives, the older go-between, busybody and gossip, Mistress Quickly, and the young beauty, Anne Page. There is some conflict between mother and daughter about who she is going to marry, but apart from that, there's real loyalty among the women, they share all information, act together, work as a coalition.

Of the men, Justice Shallow has complaints against Falstaff's riotous behaviour: *Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer and broken open my lodge.* To which Falstaff retorts: *But not kissed your keeper's daughter?* Slender, Shallow's nephew and one of the three suitors for Anne Page, has had his pocket picked by one of Falstaff's men. Even Falstaff's cronies turn against him when he is *almost out at heels*. Pistol and Nym refuse to carry letters to the wives, whom Falstaff plans to seduce, to get at the husbands' money boxes. When Falstaff throws them out, Pistol revenges himself by going to Ford, the jealous husband, spilling Falstaff's plans. He raises the ugly spectre of cuckoldry, which is one of the insistent themes of the play, symbolised by the horns and the mythical name Actaeon. Ford, disguised as Master Brook, goes to Falstaff engaging in false plots to test his own wife's fidelity. Falstaff can't believe his luck, he's actually getting paid (by Ford) to put his plans of seduction into operation. But the chicanery backfires on both men. Falstaff is made a fool of by the women as a fat, old buffoon who could not possibly

be attractive to them; while Ford is made a fool of for his excessive jealousy and suspicion. *I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my aquavita bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling gelding, than my wife with herself* (Merry Wives, Act II, sc.iii). Falstaff and Ford are *alter egos*, and there's an uncertainty running through the play about who is really the cuckold, who wears the horns. At the level of its surface, bourgeois morality of protecting the marriage bond, the play is in denial of what is going on at the structural level. Much as the women protest their outrage at Falstaff's attempts on their virtue, the whole comedy is generated by the women making repeated plots to come back into

when he would put us two. (MW, Act II, sc.i)

The chief objection of the women to Falstaff seems to be that he's such a big, fat ugly whale, rather than moral principles, but anyway they decide to conspire to humiliate the would-be philanderer: *let us consult together against this greasy knight.*

Now I'd like to read these identical letters as a 'message from a moon husband'. Falstaff as lunar trickster *should* woo all women with the same message of blood, whether they are rich or poor, high or low, old or young; as Pistol says, *he courts all women*. Do the subsequent meetings between Falstaff and the wives have a menstrual/lunar character? I think there's no doubt they do.

the whole comedy is generated by the women making repeated plots to come back into contact with Falstaff, in a series of increasingly dodgy circumstances

contact with Falstaff, in a series of increasingly dodgy circumstances. At the same time, contact gets disrupted between husband and wife. It is the jealousy of the husband that is really a threat to the women's well-being, especially Alice Ford's.

So what are the contacts between Falstaff and the women?

1. He writes an identical love letter to Alice Ford and Meg Page. The women compare notes and are outraged to see it's exactly the same but for the names:-

I warrant he hath a thousand of these letters, writ with blank space for different names – sure, more, and these are of the second edition. He will print them, out of doubt; for he cares not what he puts into the press

2. Alice Ford makes an assignation with Falstaff at her house when her jealous husband is away. But Falstaff in his conspiracy with Ford-as-Brook has given away the information about the meeting to Ford. Meg Page runs in to tell Alice that her husband is coming with a whole posse of men from Windsor to expose his wife's infidelity. The women hide Falstaff in the only place that's big enough, a giant laundry basket, covering him over with piles of dirty linen.

A great deal is made of the stinking villainous quality of this linen – so I think it's pretty reasonably a euphemism for menstrual rags. As the men rush in, the women order servants to carry the big basket to the Thames, leaving the men to search in vain. Falstaff gets thrown into the Thames *like a barrow of butcher's offal*. He tells Ford as Brook how

he was rammed... in with foul shirts and smocks, socks...the rankest compound of villainous smell that ever offended nostril... and he was cooked in this grease: think of that – a man of my kidney – think of that: that am as subject to heat as butter; a man of continual dissolution and thaw. It was a miracle to 'scape suffocation. And in the height of this bath, when I was more than half-stewed in grease, like a Dutch dish, to be thrown into the Thames, and cooled, glowing hot, in that surge, like a horseshoe. Think of that – hissing hot – think of that, Master Brook (MW Act IV, sc.i).

So the women cool the fire of Falstaff's lust. Boito in the opera makes superb drama out of the laundry basket scene. The men come in hunting down Falstaff as the beast. Every one is confused because the young lovers Fenton and Anne are behind the screens making kissing noises, and they all jump on Fenton thinking it's Falstaff. Meanwhile Falstaff is sweltering in the basket by the fireplace, getting cooked before he gets soaked – Boito plays fire against water beautifully. Jealous Ford and his wife confront each other over the dirty linen, *foul woman, hell with these rags!* Proper marital disruption by the menstrual rags.

The women are getting the bit between their teeth by now. *I know not which pleases me better, says Alice Ford, that my husband is deceived, or Sir John.* So they decide to pull the trick again, making another assignation through Quickly.

3. This time when Meg runs in to say Ford is coming they can't find a hiding place, there's no escape, so they disguise Falstaff as an old woman, the Witch of Brentford, whom Ford hates. Ford comes in and makes the servants empty out the laundry basket, just to check. Meg comes down with

the old Witch, dressed up in a huge gown. Ford flies into a rage, and runs Falstaff as the witch out of the house beating him black and blue with a cudgel.



The Witch of Brentford

According to the sex-strike syntax, in ritual phase, each sex acquires attributes of the other or 'wrong' sex, presenting gender ambiguity. So, this is thoroughly appropriate gender of power cross-dressing, with Falstaff acting the old witch.

From now on, the women involve the men in their plans, shaming Ford to give up his stupid jealousy, and together conspiring to bring about Falstaff's public downfall in the final 'fairy scene'.

4. Again with the promise of meeting Alice, he is going to be lured to Herne's Oak in Windsor Forest at midnight, in a disguise as the eponymous hunter, with stag's horns and a rattling chain.

He's going to be set upon by the whole company of fairies and elves, hobgoblins and jackanapes, pinched and burned, tormented and scared out of his wits, until he gives up his wicked philandering ways. Ford gets his opportunity to say, *well who now wears the horns?* There's a subplot going on, concerning the marriage of Anne Page. Her parents each want her to marry a different suitor, and are arranging for her to be disguised in a particular colour, so that their desired son-in-law can

sneak off with Anne to get married. Of course she outwits them by eloping with her lover Fenton, leaving little boys disguised in the fairy gowns she's supposed to be wearing. So we have wrong-sex marriages at the end.

Now this scene is obviously rich with ritual and mythical allusions – the Oak, the Black Hunter, horned gods, also the references to the Garter which is a potent emblem of the English kingship. But at the general level, I argue that

in these contacts between Falstaff and the women, the full 'gender of power' logic is operating – *wrong sex, wrong species, bloody time* expressed in these repeated episodes. He's treated as a menstrual rag, thrown like dirty linen into the river; he is feminised, but as a ritually potent female, a witch; he becomes the hunted beast to be devoured.

When I saw that structure, I realised I'd seen it before, in Aristophanes' famous comedy of the sex-strike, *Lysistrata*. And the points of comparison are exact (see Table). This similarity is generic, it is not just these two comedies. *Lysistrata* represented a tradition of 'women's rule' comedies in Athens, and *Merry Wives* is a mild Elizabethan version of that. *Wrong sex, wrong species, bloody time* are fully expressed in both comedies. A strong hypothesis is that all true comedy contains some combination of these 'tricks'.

Only when I looked at Falstaff did it become clear how directly hunting lore and ritual – as the Black Hunter rites, for instance – connects with comedy, carnival and riot. One of the figures who most obviously links them is Dionysos himself, the presiding deity of the comic festivals, who has an archaic aspect as Zagreus, the hunter. One of the

The menstrual potency that governs hunting and fertility in hunter-gatherer conception has been co-opted to legitimize kingship, and Falstaff is intimately bound up in this process

oldest layers of ritual associated with Dionysos is the *agriōnia*, very widespread in Greece, where the priest of Dionysos, blackened in guise of the Black Hunter, chases away women from a sacred precinct – women who are whitened.⁴ Plutarch reported the priest hunting them down to the point of killing anyone he catches. Think of the sequence in *Merry Wives* where Falstaff, as Black Hunter, chases the women away from the Oak – that is immediately recognisable as the ancient Greek *agriōnia*. This ritual appears to be a form of male ritual appropriation of female potency – the dark colour connoting potency of paint/blood associated with hunting/menstruation. Real females, with mere biological blood, lacking ritual potency, are driven away on pain of death from a secret initiation site.

Dionysos is a menstrual/lunar deity of enormous antiquity, the god of the maenad rioters on the mountains where hunted beasts are torn to pieces; his savage imagery is all blood, rawness, incest, transvestism, the horns, the bull-snake. Yet he's also Bacchus, the light-hearted bringer of wine to civilisation, with his laughing train of satyrs. One of the chief companions of Dionysos is Silenos, a likely ancestor of Falstaff. Fat, pot-bellied, of gross appetites, Silenos was renowned for his craftiness; if you got hold of him when he was drunk, he might be induced to utter words of wisdom and deep perception.

A Greek mask shows Silenos with horns, beneath a bacchic crown of grapes, and a great beard. Extremely devilish. Prince Hal calls Falstaff *that old white-bearded Satan*. Just as Silenos and his company were part of the revelry in the Attic *kōmoi*, fat, bearded,

Merry Wives	Episode	Lysistrata
Initiated by the identical letters	Women's conspiracy	Sex-strike sisterhood sworn over wine as blood
Ducking of Falstaff in the Thames with dirty linen (after cooking)	Women wet males	Battle of water and fire between female and male chorus
Falstaff as Witch of Brentford	Cross-dressing of male antagonist	Magistrate veiled by sex-striking women, driven from Acropolis
Herne the Hunter	'Black hunter' rite	Male chorus of Melanion

Table 1: The ritual structure of comedy

masked and horned characters acted as the masters of ceremonies in the Mummings' Plays,⁵ particularly Beelzebub – who could be dressed as an old woman, like Falstaff as the witch – and Father Christmas, hugely fat, red, with a red mask with horns, usually a bull mask. We associate Father Christmas with reindeer, but it seems this kind of mask was more common. Father Christmas officiated in the battles between the King of England and the King of France, or between St George and the Turkish Knight. When one of the adversaries fell, he would have some red ochre in his hand, applying it to the groin of the fallen knight, then sling him over his shoulder and carry him to the doctor who would revive the knight, so another battle could be fought.

Death and rebirth associates with the blood applied to the groin. There's a sequence in *Henry IV/1*, right at the end on the Field of Shrewsbury where Falstaff, after playing dead, finds Percy the rebel dead – he's been killed by Prince Hal – wounds him in the thigh, picks him up and carries him off to Hal, saying he's killed him. That sequence has some heritage from the Mummings' Plays, with their lunar logic of death and miraculous resurrection.

The horned gods reach right back to Palaeolithic sites of ritual and rock art. But if I want to find a historic ethnographic example of ritual that governs the hunt, which is also licentious 'riot', I can't do better than point to the Bushman menarcheal ritual, the Eland Bull



Henry VIII startled out riding by Herne the Hunter, by George Cruikshank

dance.⁶ How closely can the action of Falstaff and the women in the forest be compared to the Eland Bull Dance? Well, he's the *fattest stag I th' forest, chasing my doe with the black scut. Divide me like a bribe-buck, each a haunch*, he says, going on to designate parts of his body to be divvied up like a game animal's. He is performing a dance of fantasy animal sex with both women. The key difference between the hunter-gatherer rituals and what's going on in the comedies is the association with royalty. The menstrual potency that governs hunting, fertility, the fat of the land, in hunter-gatherer conception, has been co-opted to legitimize kingship, and Falstaff is intimately bound up in this process.

If we visualise him prowling around the Oak at midnight, we have a picture similar to James Frazer's opening scene in *The Golden Bough* – the priest-king of Aricia, the grove of Diana, who watches warily for any challenger to his office. Falstaff's phrase about 'Diana's foresters' is precisely applicable. Numerous 17th to 18th century prints record the tree reputed to be Herne's Oak before it got cut down by mad King George; Cruikshank's fantasy view over Windsor royal hunting forest to the castle shows Henry VIII, epitome of the Tudor monarch, in a ghostly encounter with Herne.

The oak was sacred to Jove/Jupiter/Zeus, especially as the blasted oak, struck by lightning. Mistress Page describes how Herne walks round about and himself 'blasts the tree'. Falstaff invokes Jove, with the legend of how the god in guise of the bull carried off Europa, comparing his rampant sexuality with the god's. This story has analogs in southern /Xam Bushman lore of the Rain Bull !Khwa carrying off menstrual maidens.

So can we derive direct linkages between hunting, royal power and menstrual potency in *Merry Wives*? Let's hear how Ms Page recounts the Herne legend:

*There is an old tale goes that
Herne the Hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in
Windsor Forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still
midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with
great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree, and
takes the cattle,
And makes milch-kine yield
blood, and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful
manner. (MW, Act IV, sc.iv)*

This is reminiscent, in the imagery of blasting or blighting and the cows milking blood, of descriptions

of witches and menstrual women in widespread folklore.

Supposedly, Herne was a huntsman of a Plantagenet king, who stood in the way when a white hart charged his master, and was wounded by the antlers in the thigh. Of course, the one who really bleeds and dies is the true indigenous king; the so-called royals – Plantagenet, Tudor or Saxe-Coburg as they may be – are the fakes. I argue these rituals and myths of an authentic English tradition enabled expansionist warring kings to claim legitimacy as national rulers through powers over fertility (menstruation) and fat of the land (hunting), in a manner akin to the series of Central Bantu myths of tribal kingship analysed by Luc de Heusch.⁷ Christians held in deep suspicion such lunarchy, unless exercised by royal prerogative. Listen to Theodore, 7th Archbishop of Canterbury:-

'if anyone in the Kalends of January goes about as a stag or a bull; that is making himself into a wild animal and dressing in the skin of a herd animal, and putting on the head of beasts; those who in such wise transform themselves into the appearance of the wild animal, penance for three years for this is devilish.'



HARLEQUIN DISGUISED AS DIANA
Seventeenth century print

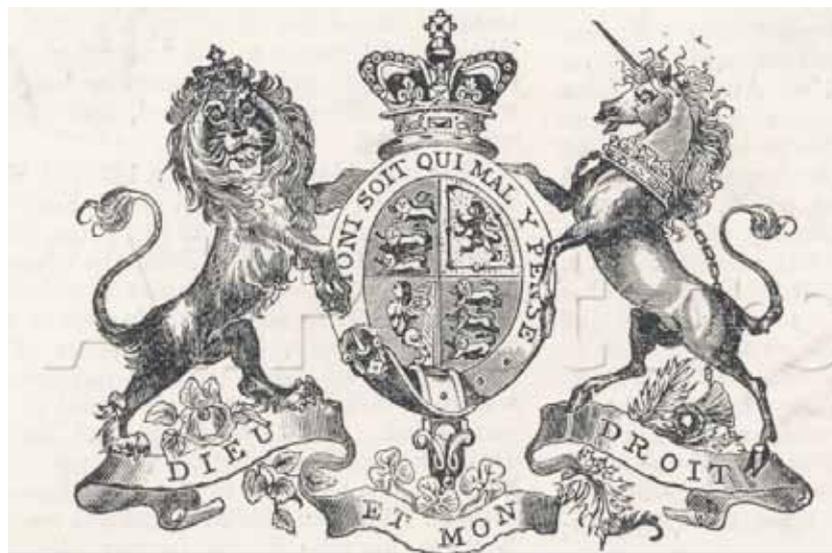
Herne belongs to a swathe of stories across Europe of the wild hunt, usually led by some blasphemous, pagan king who has been cursed to hunt forever, stuck forever in one lunar mode, who may appear

fool, the comedy king, leader of the carnival. Falstaff stands at exactly the same crossroads as Harlequin, both Wild Huntsman and carnival king. A beautiful print expresses full gender of power logic, identifying

to have the motto written inside. So, Shakespeare toadies up to his aristocratic patrons.

The legend of the garter tells that in the reign of Edward III, he was

**The Garter... places female reproductive potency
– cunt power –
central to the English royal coat of arms.**



Royal coat of arms

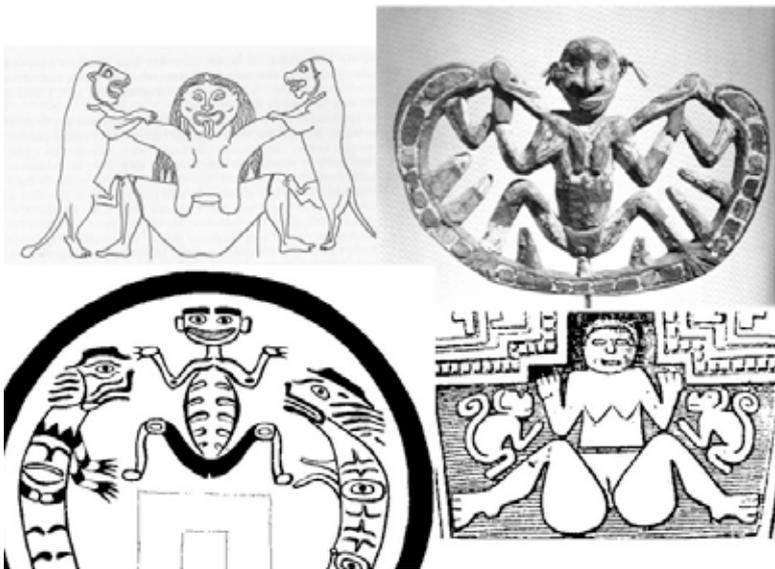
to mortals at crucial times of the year. These stories not only express antagonism of pagan and christian rites, but something much older, an irreconcilable opposition between hunting and farming. They are described always in terms of barrenness, sterility, blasting. Herne's name in particular may be connected to Herian, a title of Woden, the Norse king of the gods (as Jove), also to Herla, a British king who was subject of medieval legends of the wild hunt. These Germanic names were Latinized as *Herlechini*, the people of Herlechin, who were described in visions by monks and priests of Northern France as souls in damnation, all black and fiery, riding on saddles with red-hot nails. The leader of the hunt is Harlequin, the very same who becomes in the *commedia dell'Arte* tradition in Latin lands, the

Harlequin as the goddess Diana, goddess of the hunt and the New Moon. He too was a gender-bender in the carnival – particularly with regard to reproductive processes; he might have false pregnancies or breast-feed babies.

The symbol which really ties English royal power and menstrual potency together is the Garter. And this emblem has a special place in *The Merry Wives*. Firstly, the play was produced for the Garter Feast at which one Lord Hunsdon, the patron of Shakespeare's company, was installed as a Knight of the Garter; the Garter Inn is one of the key settings of the play, and indeed it is Falstaff's seat, it's where he resides. The speech by Ms Quickly as the Fairy Queen is a rather ludicrous literary conceit about the Garter, the flowers are supposed

dancing with the Countess of Salisbury and her 'garter' fell down – I suggest, on analogy with highly similar African myths of royalty, that the 'garter' is a euphemism for a menstrual cloth. The king picked it up and uttered the motto *Honi soit qui mal y pense -- evil be to him who thinks it while he tied it on himself!* Definitely gender-bending.

The English coat of arms shows a structure of the lion opposed to the unicorn, horned beast, rampant around the Garter, with the motto inscribed. The garter's shape is what's known as *vesica piscis*, the image of female potency, similar to Sheela-na-gig, the vulva exposed, spread apart between the thighs. This is an example of something generic, a worldwide tradition of emblems of ritual power sharing the structure of two beasts either side of



Saville/Fraser/Uht

Spread legs across continents, counterclockwise from bottom left: Nootka, Canada house painting; Manabi, Ecuador slab; Sepik River, New Guinea carving; Etruscan bronze Gorgon.

a symbol of female potency, more or less overt. It can be traced in Bushman rock art widespread from south to central Africa, showing so-called 'spread legged figures'.⁹ It's found in the beautiful Dame à la Licorne tapestries at Musée de Cluny (see back cover) which clearly unite lion and unicorn to a red, ritually potent, lunarchic lady, surrounded by a fertile sward of wild creatures. The Garter therefore places female reproductive potency – cunt power – central to the English royal coat of arms.

The one remaining conundrum of the play is its theme of cuckoldry: Why symbolised by horns, why the name

Actaeon? Why is the cuckold also the cuckold (Falstaff/Ford)? Why is the mythical hunter who turns into a hunted beast identified as cuckold? Why is possessing horns – that is possessing ritual power – a sign of the cuckold? Well I think the sex-strike logic – in the form of ritual of licence, carnival at dark moon – solves these problems at a stroke. From the view point of the male, if you observe the sex-strike, you go back to your kin at dark moon. Your wife stays with her kin at dark moon, and is involved with 'incestuous' licentious ritual with classificatory kin. You may be cuckolded, but as wrong species, donning the horns, you are also

cuckolding the husbands of your clan sisters. You are in ritual power mode, sharing the gender of power with your kin. So in a classic moiety system we should see reciprocal cuckoldry as marital bonds are broken up. Falstaff decrees 'and my horns I bequeath to your husbands'. That is the ritual logic of the play which on the surface moralises about privatised sexual interests of christian husbands.

Verdi and Boito provide a suitably majestic ending in their final fugal chorus celebrating the world-shaking power of laughter. Their Falstaff is the most ample, and all-encompassing. In terms of magico-ritual structure, he acts as lunar trickster, wild huntsman, Windsor stag and carnival king. All the signals of ritual potency derived from the ancient logic of hunting and fertility by the moon are contained by his mighty stomach/womb. Licentious and riotous, he is the common weal on which all the people live – the 'whole world as a jest'. Without annexing his enormity, as the aboriginal 'drunken king', those Tudor upstarts would remain just that – nonentities. Falstaff, Lord of Misrule, and his cronies are portrayed as a riotous mob, looting and thieving; the truth is, these crowned heads with their secret star chambers have stolen the magic and trickery which right royally belongs to us all. *WSP*



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Notes

1. For mock combats of the Shilluk kingship see Evans-Pritchard 1962 The divine kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan. In *Essays in Social Anthropology*, London: Faber & Faber, p.79. Following the Gadshill robbery, when Falstaff's crew run away, but try to make out they've been in a fight, Bardolph (*King Henry IV*, Act II, scene iv) bemoans having to shove speargrass up his nose to make it bleed – action typical of male initiation.
2. Hahn, T. 1881. *Tsun-i-goam: the supreme*

- being of the Khoi-khoi*. London: Trubner & co., pp.135-136.
3. Power, C. and I. Watts 1997. The woman with the zebra's penis. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N. S.) 3: 537-560.
 4. Burkert, W. *Homo Necans. The anthropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth*. Berkeley, CA: Univ of California Press, pp.175-176; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 112, *Quaest. Graecae* 38.
 5. Marshall, R. 1989. *Falstaff, the archetypal myth*. Shaftesbury: Element Books, pp.14-19.

6. Power and Watts, *The woman with the zebra's penis*.
7. de Heusch, L. 1982. *The Drunken King, or the Origins of the State*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
8. Fraser, D. 1966. The heraldic woman: A study in diffusion. In D. Fraser (ed.) *The many faces of primitive art*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, pp.36-99.
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***The Art of not being Governed: an anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia*, by James C. Scott**

In a feature review, *Graham Purchase* looks into a major work dissecting notions of ‘tribalism’ or ‘primitivism’.

This is the most important and informed work of anthropological theory and scholarship to appear in the last 30 years concerning the social-evolutionary processes and interactions leading to the historical development of state and stateless societies, of ‘subject’ and ‘self-governing peoples’ (p.31).

Scott builds upon the pioneering work of Kropotkin and the highly influential French anarchist-anthropologist Pierre Clastres¹ who ‘argues persuasively that, the so-called primitive Amerindian societies of South America were not ancient societies that had failed to invent settled agriculture or state forms but rather previously sedentary cultivators who abandoned agriculture and fixed villages in response to the effects of conquest’ (p.29).

Scott’s comprehensive and substantive analysis will interest those searching for an authoritative yet understandable empirical and conceptual antidote to pseudo-leftist primitivist/tribalist cults and (ethnic) identity politics. This book also appeals to those seeking deeper knowledge about a number of currently fashionable ethnic or minority struggles, particularly that of the Karen about whom the author provides a detailed insight into their origin, history, dynamics, beliefs, outlooks, practices and ecology.

Introductory overview

Scott focuses on the peoples of the South East Asian Mainland Massif: ‘all the lands at altitudes

above 300m all the way from the Central Highlands of Vietnam to northeastern India and traversing five Southeast Asian nations (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Burma) and four provinces of China (Yunan,

the many different peoples and individuals who sought refuge as well as ‘a space of political resistance’ to states through the purposeful creation of an alpine ‘zone of cultural refusal’ (p.20).

This is an anarchist history of those who got away, and state making cannot be understood apart from it.



Map of S.E. Asian massif

Guizhou, Guangxi, and parts of Sichuan)...an expanse of 2.5 million square kilometers containing about one hundred million minority peoples of truly bewildering ethnic and linguistic variety’ (p.ix). Their history, together with ‘the exceptional ecological diversity and the geographical isolation of the region, has produced perhaps the largest mosaic of relatively stateless peoples in the world’ (p.281).

A vast ‘fugitive population’ arose in this great mountain realm in opposition and/or flight from the ‘precocious early expansion of the Han-Chinese’ (p.24) and later Indic paddy states. S.E. Asian hill societies blended and hybridized

‘Hill peoples’ says Scott, ‘are best understood as runaway communities who over two millennia have been fleeing the oppressions

of state-making projects in the valleys—slavery, conscription, taxes, corvee labor, epidemics, and warfare. Most of the areas in which they reside may be aptly called “shatter zones” or “zones of refuge”. Virtually everything about these people’s livelihoods, social organization and ideologies can be read as strategic positioning designed to keep the state at arm’s length. This is an anarchist history of those who got away, and state making cannot be understood apart from it. This argument reverses much received wisdom about “primitivism” generally. Pastoralism, foraging, shifting cultivation, and segmentary lineage systems are often a “secondary adaptation”, a kind of “self-barbarianization” ... adapted to state evasion. Usually, forms of subsistence and kinship are taken as given, as ecologically and culturally determined. I treat such givens largely as political choice. My argument is a deconstruction of Chinese and other civilization discourses about the “barbarian”, the “raw”, the “primitive”. Civilizational discourses never entertain the possibility of people voluntarily going over to the barbarians, hence such statuses are stigmatized and ethnicized.

Ethnicity and “tribe” begin exactly where taxes and sovereignty end in the Roman Empire as in the Chinese’ (pp.ix-xi).

Scott’s picture is ‘radically at odds with older prevailing assumptions of a primeval population in the hills abandoned by those who moved downhill and developed civilizations. Far from being successive stages in social evolution, states and hill peoples are

Hmong village on ridgetop



sustaining the paddy state is premised on extensive and laborious preparation in the construction of walls, terraces, dams, canals, tunnels and channels for water supply and soil retention. This immense groundwork was generally accomplished in prehistoric times by countless peoples over many generations. ‘The state might batten itself onto a wet-rice core, and even extend it, but rarely did the state create it,’ Scott claims. Wet-rice cores ‘frequently survived the collapse of many a state that had taken temporary advantage’ (p.42). One important exception to this ‘landlocked and compact’ conception of pre-modern S.E. Asian Kingdoms was that of the Malay Maritime state whose geographical extent and influence Scott compares to the Vikings, extending from ‘Easter Island to the coast of Southern Africa’ (pp.48-49). In contrast most S.E. Asian kingdoms ‘shrank virtually to the ramparts of its palace walls once the monsoon rains began in earnest’

inconceivable except as a “position” vis-à-vis the state’ (pp.122-123).

Co-evolution and economic symbiosis of valley states and stateless highland peoples

The highland barbarians and the valley state inhabit and exploit ‘complementary agro-ecological niches’ but are ‘bound by ties of indissoluble mutuality’ because ‘each is economically impoverished without its natural trading partner’ (p.105). Forest produce of both South and South East Asia is immense. Non-state people of the Hills provided the paddy state with raw materials as more or less equal partners in highly lucrative international trading networks:

‘Hill people since the 9th century scoured for commodities that could be traded advantageously at valley markets and at the coast. Many such products were part of an extensive international luxury trade. During the extraordinary long pepper boom from 1450-1650, pepper

Non-state people of the Hills provided the paddy state with raw materials as... equal partners in highly lucrative international trading networks

twins, born more or less at the same time and joined in a sometimes rancorous but unavoidable embrace’ (pp.28-29).

Genesis and ecology of paddy state and barbarian periphery

Pre modern states in S.E. Asia found in ecological settings that were favorable to irrigated rice-cultivation, near navigable water courses, but above the flood plain. Shifting cultivation, typical of hill societies, ‘might provide a higher return to the cultivator’s labor’ but ‘was a form of wealth that was inaccessible to the state’ (p.77).

The agricultural infrastructure

(p.61).

The genesis of barbarian tribal identities began as a state-initiated process involving the ‘invention of ethnic categories’ for the purposes of ‘administrative control at the frontier’ (p.121). At certain historical moments, Scott argues, ‘the process of becoming a barbarian has been more common than becoming civilized. As early as the 9th century, Chinese officials report that a people called the Shang in S.W. China had originally been Han but had gradually blended with the barbarians. The ethnicized barbarian Shan-Yue had been ordinary Min who had fled to avoid taxes. Barbarians are a state effect

exceeded all other commodities traded internationally in value save gold and silver. Commercial gathering of forest produce is a “secondary adaptation” and not some primitive condition and we would do better to consider the hill population as a component of a composite economic and social system’ (p.108).

Unlike the Indian sub-continent, S.E. Asia was underpopulated for most of its history. Inter-state wars, famines, pestilence and other afflictions associated with monoculture and urban concentrations of people and their animals resulted in ‘evanescent or convulsive growth and collapse’ of

paddy states (p.94). The existence of a sedentary peasantry at a 'fixed point of production' (p.74) did not guarantee long-term success. Hence, like Sparta and Athens, the 'major tradable commodity' by the paddy state from the hills was slaves (p.71) and 'not a few hill societies as a whole became deeply implicated in the trade' (p.87).

Location and mobility

Scott sees the location and mobility of hill peoples as historical and strategic choice, observable in contemporary 'Karen Hiding Villages' that are seeking to elude the colonization, brutality and forced labor of a Fascist Burmese State (p, 179).

close to military-dominant, and often hostile agriculturalists. From the standpoint of security their adaptation also makes sense because nomads are 'much harder to catch than settled farmers' (p. 185).

Agriculture of escape

Scott observes how 'irrigated rice and shifting cultivation are not a temporal, evolutionary sequence.' Swiddening 'is not representative of a primitive stage of agricultural history' but rather an 'intentional agro-political strategy' (pp.191-193). Shifting cultivation or swiddening affords 'less mobility than foraging but much more mobility than fixed-field farming, let alone irrigated rice padis' (p.185). In reality 'they are not mutually exclusive. Many hill populations practice both irrigated-rice cultivation and shifting cultivation simultaneously, adjusting the balance according to political and economic advantage' (p.192).

Swiddening is far from being a static technique. The steel axe made it far easier and enabled cultivation of hard to clear areas. Crop choice is a key component of agricultural escape and evasion. Agro-forest products like spices, medicinal herbs and aromatic woods fetched astronomical profits from at least the 8th century. The arrival of an entire suite of New World plants from the 16th century 'vastly extended the scope and ease of swiddening' (p.197). The introduction of highly nutritious easily cultivatable high altitude crops like maize almost overnight made an 'autonomous existence outside the padi state far easier and more tempting' (p.201). Champion New World escape crop was without question the large tuberous root plant 'cassava' (p.205). Root crops like cassava and potatoes unlike wheat fields and 'granaries cannot be burnt or confiscated.' The cultivators are able to 'move back immediately



Karen people flee into the forest from Burmese military, Nov. 2004; and build their new village.

State evasion and state prevention

Scott analyses the portfolio of strategies available to individuals, peoples and minorities seeking to flee or distance themselves from the state and prevent state-like structures developing within stateless hill societies as communities form, migrate, mature and change over time. 'The first

Pastoral nomadism such as that practiced by the Berbers or Yomut Turkmen is 'the classic example of physical mobility'. Although pastoralism is not available to the peoples of upland S.E. Asia, 'pastoral nomads aggregated into "tribal" confederations have often posed the most serious military threat to sedentary grain-producing states' (p.184).

Scott sees the location and mobility of hill peoples as historical and strategic choice, observable in contemporary 'Karen Hiding Villages'

principle of evasion is location. Inaccessibility and dispersal are the enemies of appropriation that is the key to state survival. Location is one of many possible forms by which marginality to state power finds expression. Physical mobility, subsistence practices, social organization and settlement patterns can also be deployed, often in combination, to place distance between a community and state appropriation' (pp.182-183).

In the Massif 'foraging' is comparable to nomadic pastoralism because it affords the greatest mobility for groups wanting to give the state a wide berth. The foraging Semang of the Malay Peninsula appear to be very primitive not because they represent a surviving Palaeolithic stratum, but rather because a nomadic, foraging adaptation is the safest, most profitable strategy for a defensively weak minority ethnic group living

after military danger had passed and dig up their staple, a meal at a time' (p.196). A society that cultivates roots and tubers can 'disperse more widely and cooperate less than grain growers, thereby encouraging a social structure more resistant to incorporation, and perhaps to hierarchy and subordination' (p.207).

so long manifested these state-repelling and state-preventing characteristics that the invocation of the very name conjures up statelessness. The Lahu, Lisu, gumalao Kachin, Akha, Wa, Khmu, and Hmong to mention a few, largely fit this description' (pp.278-279).

life and co-operative practices and traditions of both animals and remote human communities in Siberia. These impressions informed his famous book, *Mutual Aid* (1902), based upon two pivotal premises in human biological and social anthropological theory and history: That humans were social before they were human and

Jellyfish Tribes... Ichoose! ... 'patterns of social and political organization that are resistant to monitoring and subordination'

Culture and social structure of escape and state prevention

'Jellyfish Tribes' exhibit 'social shape changing' by choosing a variety of 'patterns of social and political organization that are resistant to monitoring and subordination. Social structure is not a given, it is a choice that is in a broad sense political. Social structure is not a permanent social trait of a particular community but a variable that changes in response to ongoing relations with neighboring civilizations.'

Like pastoral nomads, many of the more egalitarian and democratic stateless hill groups have the 'capacity to divide and segment into small independent units and reassemble as required'. Disintegration into minimal units and the adoption of subsistence strategies that favor small, scattered bands is a 'deliberate choice' that 'impedes the development of large permanent distinctions in wealth or private property' and evades the tentacles of civilization through acting upon the principle of 'Divide that ye be not ruled' (pp.207-211). An open common property frontier seems particularly vital to the maintenance of egalitarianism because it 'equalizes access to subsistence resources and permits the frequent fission of villages and lineages. Certain peoples have for



Pyotr Kropotkin

Against primitivism: Ethnogenesis as universal social- evolutionary process

As an act of rebellion against court life in Tsarist Russia, Kropotkin joined the Mounted Cossacks of the Amur. In the 19th Century, Siberia (N.E. Asia) – like the S.E. Asian Massif – was refuge and melting pot for all manner of political exiles and other people wishing to escape from the grasp of an aggressive and expansive imperialism. In Siberia, dissident intellectuals, mobile peasant villages, convicts and rebels all mixed together with barbarian tribes and remnant aboriginal cultures. Kropotkin was deeply impressed by the social

evolved complex cultures prior to the evolution of civilization such that mutual-aid practices always re-emerge wherever and whenever the state is absent. Secondly, human populations had undergone a radical intermixing or secondary remixing in response and as an effect of the rise of the state. In those sections of *Mutual Aid* dealing with social cooperation and the evolution of human communities, Kropotkin divides our history into two distinct stages, the aboriginal and barbarian periods that are dealt with separately in two sequential chapters.

In his pioneering anthropological work, Kropotkin argues that the integration of hierarchical religions with economic and military statecraft led to continual large-scale and widespread conflict:

'When we observe the savages whose manners of life are still those of Neolithic peoples, we find them closely bound together by an extremely ancient clan organization which enables them to enjoy life in common and to progress. However as soon as we come to a higher state of civilization we are bewildered by the struggles and conflicts. The old bonds seem entirely to be broken and out of this chaotic contest of



Christophe Meneboeuf

Flower Hmong woman in Vietnam

hostile forces, mankind issues divided into castes, enslaved to despots, separated into states always ready to wage war against each other.²

Kropotkin thought that the cataclysmic effects of state expansion and warfare had historically been exacerbated by environmental catastrophes particularly adverse climatic change leading to massive waves of migration:

‘Races were mixing with races during those migrations, aborigines with immigrants and it would have been no wonder if their social institutions had been totally wrecked. But they were not wrecked; they simply underwent the modification which was required for the new conditions of life.’³

The convulsive effects of statism resulted in the decomposition of original aboriginal or primitive communities, remnants or glimpses of which were only to be found in remote regions that had only very recently become subject to

state violence, corruption and incorporation. Kropotkin argues that people’s reaction and revolt against onslaughts of state slavery, religious trickery and ecological change resulted in the natural re-emergence or novel re-evolution of mutual aid practices among hybrid barbarian tribes. Some evolved egalitarian and anti-hierarchical cultural traditions in the context of their village confederations that bore some similarity to the tribal-communism practiced by aboriginal populations (Scott follows Kropotkin when he states that ‘confederation constitutes the most complex level of stable integration’ among barbarian hill tribes, p. 36).

Kropotkin and the Reclus brothers didn’t regard the state-barbarian evolutionary dynamic as obviously or necessarily an improvement or socially progressive development. All three anarchist-anthropologists argued that extant aboriginal or ‘primitive’ cultures (of Australia, Papua and the Bushmen of S. Africa) exhibited communistic practices only rarely replicated in the barbarian re-tribalization of non-state and anti-state peoples

on the periphery of slave-based civilizations.

Ethnography and the history and distribution of ethnogenesis

Comparative ethnography was pioneered by Elie Reclus and describes, compares and categorizes the practices and distribution of different peoples around the world upon the basis and perspective of ‘moral and intellectual equality of these [primitive and barbarian] cultures to that of so called civilized states’.⁴

Scott’s historical ethnography focuses upon the ethnogenesis of statism and barbarianism in S.E. Asia. But, it is also a work of comparative ethnography specifically premised and informed by the principle of moral and cultural equality between states and barbarian societies. Scott examines and compares the historical co-evolution and ethnogenesis of statism and barbarianism within various ethno-geographical regions and upon different continents. Scott compares the ethnogenic histories of the Incas (p.131), Berbers

(pp.30-31), Cossacks (p.133, p.260), Iraqi Marsh Arabs (p.170), Roma (p. 133), and Slave/maroon settlements of the Americas such as: 'The Great Dismal Swamp on the E. Virginia-N. Carolina border that was home to thousands of escaped slaves for several generations, right in the midst of the strongest slave-holding communities in the south' (p.170).

Far more egalitarian settlements 'were founded by runaways than by revolutionaries'



Village abandoned by residents, 2009, to evade Burmese military

Scott's ethnographical survey of the co-evolution of civilization and barbarian self-organization leads him to similar conclusions to those of Kropotkin. The decomposition of aboriginality through secondary re-tribalization or ethnogenesis resulted in a barbarian periphery created in relation and reaction to the rise and expansion of states. Scott and Kropotkin argue that this is a nearly universal (though in no sense inevitable, progressive or irreversible) evolutionary stage or global level anthropological phenomenon in the development of human social dynamics and structure.

In the Philippines, the Ifugao were created out of people who escaped Islamic and then Spanish Christian

invasions by fleeing North to the hills (p.136). In Java, the Tengger Highlanders became a new ethnic barbarian tribe in reaction and flight from Islamic and then Dutch colonizers (p.134). On the Malay Peninsular 'Islam created the tribals'. The forest populations never converted to Islam but supplied the coastal ports of the Malay state with much of the forest

produce upon which it depended. Notions of 'Malayness' post-1874, says Scott, 'converted these populations virtually overnight into the "aborigines" they are considered today' (p.111). Genetic evidence does not support 'the theory of separate waves of migrating people and the tribes are nothing more than a fraction of the population that has refused the state' (p.183).

The South East Asian Highlands have similarly been a vast asylum for individuals and peoples from Indic and Chinese Empires. The ethnogenic history of the Miao/Hmong (Montagnards) population that inhabit the S.W. mountain periphery of the Chinese Empire (p.154) offers the longest running, most extensive example of this 'routine extrusion of beleaguered subjects' (p.142) into the hills. Far more egalitarian settlements 'were founded by runaways than by revolutionaries' (p.218).

Scott's thesis contributes to a lively contemporary debate in academic anthropology concerning whether groups such as the Australian Aborigines and Southern African Bushmen can or could ever have been realistically 'depicted as a wild Stone Age remnants from the dawn of human history' (p.394,fn.61). With respect to the Bushman, Scott is unequivocal in his rejection of the primordial remnant or 'social fossil' thesis. But Scott makes his assertion upon the basis of a single

authority (E.N. Wilmsen) out of the thousands of published academic books and articles concerning the Bushmen. Moreover, the Bushmen exist as a complex mosaic of people spread over a vast geographical area and subject to a wide range of different historical influences. A more considered overview of the vast literature upon the Bushmen in relation to primitivism and evolutionism is offered by Alan Barnard.⁵ Barnard concludes that Kropotkin thought these remnants of 'primitive communism were fast disappearing as a result of foreign influence'. But, rather than suggesting (as Wilmsen and Scott have done) that racial intermixing and integration among Bushmen has long-since destroyed any vestige of 'primitive purity', Kropotkin focuses upon cultural inheritance of 'sharing practices' rather than the ethnic or racial lineages and composition of any particular group. Barnard argues that Kropotkin is essentially correct in this regard. 'Food sharing' and the 'foraging mode of thought' persisted culturally among the Bushmen despite considerable racial intermixing and integration of foreign ideas.

Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid* bases his assessment of the Australian Aborigines on one of several collections of essays on the Natives of South Australia published by E.S. Wigg & Sons in Adelaide during 1879. Despite being written by rulers and colonizers these essays contain some insightful and sensitive passages, most relevantly the observation that the effects of colonization (epidemics, loss of traditional hunting grounds, escape to marginal habitats on colonial periphery) had severely damaged their cultural integrity and led to an increase in abhorrent practices (e.g. infanticide) because of starvation or desperation. Scott is correct in citing recent work claiming that the 'Australian aboriginal population was originally located more densely in the most productive regions of

the country and was driven into drier areas the Europeans didn't want' (p.367,fn. 6).

was reshuffled and transformed so frequently that there is no reason whatever to assume

Thai repertoire will dress, speak and behave differently in the Thai marketplace than in the context of

I'm not altogether sure how much sense it makes to describe rapidly disappearing stateless hill societies as anarchist

Scott boldly asserts: 'Tribes and states are mutually constituting entities. There is no evolutionary sequence; tribes are not prior to states. Tribes are, rather, a social formation defined by its relation to the state' (p.208). But, the Australian Aborigines are clearly the exception that proves Scott's rule. They contradict his claim that all indigenous cultures were destroyed long prior to the modern age in some universal evolutionary path to statism and barbarianism. Australian Aborigines divided, identified and defined themselves into some 7-800 tribal nations and language groups, each with their own name and specific geographical location. This scheme was based upon their own sense of space and place. Ethnic identities weren't imposed in any strong sense or overall way by the British through some process of ethnicization and ethnogenesis initiated by administrative authorities as (Scott persuasively claims) occurred in all other parts of the ancient and modern World.

Cosmopolitan culture and multiple identities

Scott emphasizes the cosmopolitan nature of both the state and barbarian societies of the region. The sparse population that encouraged slaving also led both hill tribes and states to continuously absorb and adopt a wide variety of peoples. The Barbarians of upland S.E. Asia are often well-traveled multiethnic polyglots:

'In the jumble of repeated migrations and cultural collision, group after group

any long-run genealogical or linguistic continuity to such peoples' (p.137).

The large group (7.5 million in China alone) known as Miao and the related Hmong in Thailand and Laos speak 3 major languages, according to Scott, and within each of those languages there are dialects that are mutually unintelligible. 'Beyond that' he continues, 'most Miao men and many Miao women can speak 3 languages or more. At the micro level of an individual village, the same cultural sprawl is evident. Inter-marriage between Miao and other groups is common as is adoption from other groups. The diversity of the Karen is no less daunting' (p.240).

The S.E Asian Massif is the size of America and its 'crazy-quilt pattern' of history and topography make it just as ethnically and linguistically diverse and confusing as modern European life is today. Here, for example, somebody might reside in France but come from Norway and be married to an Italian who speaks with her Polish-Italian mother in Frulano (Language of the N. Italian region of Friuli). Scott argues that hill peoples display similar multiethnic inclusiveness where individual identities are 'plural, porous, ambiguous, unstable, fluid, changeable and intentional'. Rather than being the necessary, passive or automatic transmission of a single mother culture or language (like inheriting the family photo album), 'ethnic identity' is often a matter of individual and group choices and as such is in some sense a 'political' act or 'project' (pp.242-3). Someone with 'a broad Karen-

the Karen village festival. There is of course, no reason at all to suppose one part of the repertoire is more authentic or 'real' than any other' (p.255).

Against tribalism: the genesis of ethnic identity

As a general observation of human cultural evolution, Scott is correct to emphasize the idea of the tribe as we encounter it today as a 'secondary form' of social organization 'created in the context of a state or empire' and 'the antonym or binary to the peasantry. The 'tribe' might be called a 'module of rule'. Designating tribes 'was an artifact of the imperial imagination. A technique for classifying and, if possible, administering the non-or-not-yet-peasants.' The State 'created, however arbitrarily, a named people and their supposed location for purpose of bureaucratic order precisely to cut through the flux and formlessness that characterize vernacular social relations' (p.257, p.269). Once invented, however, Scott notes, 'the tribe took on a life of its own' as 'the recognized idiom for claims outside state space' (p.259).

Scott observes that the assertion and crafting of a 'new tribal identity' by egalitarian stateless people in order to function within the colonial framework was in almost all cases completely 'fabricated'. But, it often 'succeeded admirably' in 'controlling resources' and defining territories by 'reciprocally ethnicizing' neighbours they wished to exclude from 'exclusive claims to those same resources. The more successful the identity is

in winning resources and prestige the more such an identity, however fabricated its origin, will take on essentialist features and many will inspire passionate loyalty' (pp.263-265).

Anarchism, capitalism and stateless societies

Statelessness cannot straightforwardly or simplistically be equated with Anarchism. Pakistan's Tribal Agencies bordering Afghanistan have successfully resisted all attempts to incorporate or colonize them in the modern period. This doesn't make the Waziris anarchists! Like capitalism, rejecting the social oppression of authoritarian religious mindsets and practices typically observed within Waziri culture is an integral component of anarchism as classically conceived.

Anarchism is a form of socialism that is opposed to god, capital and state and believes in the possibility and desirability of a future egalitarian stateless society self-organized through federations of mutual aid organizations, coordinating every conceivable human interest and economic necessity. I'm not altogether sure how much sense it makes to describe rapidly disappearing stateless hill societies as anarchist. Scott uses the technical term for statelessness—acephalous societies—on a number of occasions. But, statelessness only becomes anarchism when it is opposed to capitalism combined with a belief that non-state socialism can be created right now in the modern world. Ethnogenesis of acephalous peoples of Indo-China is a far less catchy and provocative title for Scott's book, but is the more correct one. Many of the tribes Scott examined were involved in slaving and the international trade in luxury goods such that some sort of critical anthropology of capitalism would also be necessary to make Scott's book a truly anarchist account. In the 20th century, some of these

peoples were involved in the opium trade; a deeper consideration of the black or criminal capitalist economy of non-state space might also have been included. In the



KHRG photo

Hmong Resistance Camp, Laos 2006

post 1945 world (which Scott does not cover), corporate capitalism has become as much a threat to traditional societies and their ecosystems as that of imperialism and the internal colonization of post-colonial independent states. Tyranny, logically and actually, results from corporate culture or rather the lack of it. Corporatism involves the heightening of hierarchy, tightening of control and an assault upon political accountability through the cultural corrosiveness of money-centered mismanagement of the social and natural environment. Corporate capitalism displaces or destroys the so-called barbarian in 'a new gold rush' (p. 11) and replaces them with a bullying and truly barbaric cultureless life-way based solely upon profit where populations are controlled by means of faceless but all-powerful private unaccountable international bureaucracies.

Scott believes that we now live in an era of global statism. All weather roads, satellite spy technologies and drones are driving the 'last great enclosure' (p.4, p.282) that will ensure the option of statelessness will not be available for the first time in human history. Scott regards this as very regrettable but doesn't feel that anarchism as a political movement or ideology really provides a realistic alternative. In a recent interview conducted by Dilip Menon and published in *The Hindu* newspaper, Scott states: 'Anarchism is more successful as

an argument against states than as a programme on its own.'⁶ Scott's book is an objective work of history and social anthropology and not a political manifesto of any kind. In this respect Scott provides a valuable non-partisan, non-political and scientific critique of the pseudo-anthropological theories of primitivism and identity politics whilst debunking the equation of state-civilization with social, political or evolutionary progress. A truly anarchist anthropology would however also have to include an equally powerful critique of the unaccountable international hierarchies of industrial-corporate control of our social environment.

Anarchism, state-capitalism and ethnic or minority nationalism

What then should we say about the myriad of petty nationalist and land/resource battles presently being fought under the banner of one ethnic minority or another all around the world?

Identity politics and tribal resistance to industrial capitalist developments have become a part of the political landscapes of many countries including Mexico, India, Canada and Australia. Capitalist exploitation of natural resources (uranium, aluminum, oil etc.) and tourism has seen the state act in a variety of contradictory ways according to the politics of the region in question. Government, when it is the direct owner, sponsor or promoter of ecologically or socially inappropriate commercial or industrial capitalist developments in tribal areas, has often led to local rebellions such as occurred in the city of Oaxaca (S. Mexico) in 2006.⁷ In 2010 tribal groups in Orissa, N.E. India, won a high-court case to protect their lands from aluminum mining. Here the state is acting as the protector of tribal lands against greedy corporate capitalism.⁸ In Australia and Canada, the land rights of indigenous groups and their cultural autonomy is

constitutionally guaranteed. Several of the tribal nations in the N.E. India/Burmese border area are engaged in armed struggle to achieve independent nationhood. Such political aspirations involve violence in support of nationalist-racist ideologies for the attainment of statehood. Tribal identity politics is a very mixed bag that can accommodate the whole range of political positions. But why (in the Indian context) should relatively very small groups of tribal peoples often in very thinly populated and remote areas be given special legal privileges while the needs of hundreds of millions of workers in urban slums are routinely ignored? Ethnic identity politics is a confused category of politics that caters to the special 'needs' or requests of a particular local group who claim traditional ownership, guardianship or rights over land or resources upon the basis of a shared and unique ancestry and exclusive membership of a minority race. On the face of it this isn't a promising basis for progressive and inclusive social institutions. Fostering ethnic identities perpetuates perceptions of difference and ethnic division that can all too easily rapidly descend into ethnic divisiveness and then outright hostility as expressed in racism.

It seems to me that aboriginal land claims and ethnic minority



Semang people from Malay Peninsula, photo by Paul Schebesta in 1924

identity politics are a Trojan Horse for a host of other anxieties, concerns and causes especially the conservation of agro-biodiversity, ecologically sustainable lifestyles and local or community knowledge bases. Traditional environmental knowledge and practices are now often seen as valuable in themselves regardless of the particular ethnic group or population in question. Preserving endangered environments, many contemporary environmental activists believe, can best be accomplished through the preservation of local cultures and lifeways. Unfortunately, important locally and socially complex environmental debates and issues

too often become fogged over by a shroud of quasi-religious nonsense exalting the false values and facts of 'sacredness' and 'primitivism'. Scott does a great job of undermining any anthropological support for these pervasive expressions of intellectual degeneracy currently plaguing environmental and radical political thought and activism. 

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Graham Purchase is author of *Evolution and revolution. An introduction to the life and thought of Peter Kropotkin*.

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***Debt: the first five thousand years*, by David Graeber**

A review by **Chris Knight**

‘**S**urely one has to pay one’s debts?’ With these words, David Graeber opens his monumental work. Everyone knows: you have to honour your debts. That’s not just one moral imperative among others: it’s the *foundational* moral imperative. For cooperative relationships to be maintained, we must all trust one another not to cheat, not to default.

So who spoke those self-evident words? The author was chatting with a young activist whose job was to provide legal support for anti-poverty groups. Hearing of Graeber’s anti-globalisation involvements, she asked him what the International Monetary Fund was. ‘You might say, the high-finance equivalent of the guys who come to break your legs’, Graeber explained. Then he launched into the historical background. During



Patriarchal thug: Hernan Cortes

the 1970s oil crisis, OPEC countries had poured their newfound riches into western banks; unable to figure out where to invest such vast sums, Citibank and Chase persuaded Third World dictators to take out loans for extravagant

‘development’ projects at very low rates of interest; tight U.S. monetary policies then drove up these interest rates, triggering the Third World debt crisis – in response to which the IMF stepped in to insist that, to qualify for refinancing, recently ruined governments now had to abandon all forms of welfare and hand over decision-making powers to their creditors. The author (p.2) continues: ‘I spoke of poverty, of the looting of public resources, the collapse of societies, endemic violence, malnutrition, hopelessness, and broken lives’. So what would Graeber do? ‘Abolish the IMF! Cancel the debt!’, he replied – whereupon the young lawyer responded indignantly: ‘*But they’d borrowed the money! Surely one has to pay one’s debts?*’

This magnificent book is a 500-page response. Not only does Graeber make sense of the earliest origins of monetary debt some 5,000 years ago, when militaristic states first appeared. The investigation broadens into an extraordinarily ambitious overview of the entire span of written history. As Graeber proceeds, he confidently overturns the conceptual underpinnings of the entire discipline of economics, together with its many insidious extensions into religion, philosophy and science. Money didn’t emerge as a medium of exchange between free agents. Graeber pours scorn on Adam Smith’s mythic narrative in which men engage in barter until the arrival of that brilliant new invention – money. He turns instead to Marcel Mauss’ classic, *The Gift*. Left to themselves, humans are spontaneous communists. They value their relationships more than they value things. Why lay claim to a possession, if not to pass it on as a gift? The tension between giving and receiving would be cancelled

out by an immediate return. The longer the interval between gift and counter-gift, the more impressive the demonstration of trust. Money annihilates all this.

So how did money originate? It began, explains Graeber, with conquest and extortion. Some violent patriarchal thug – Hernan Cortes in Mexico is a recent European illustration – persuades his henchmen to sign up for a campaign of rape, pillage and slaughter. The project rests on a promise: once the loot has been stolen, the accomplices may expect their share. So before setting out, the adventurer must issue his promissory notes – his advance undertakings to pay. These can be accepted and circulated as tokens of value – but only on one condition. Sufficient trust must prevail. But trust in this context differs in kind from that which so inspired Mauss. We’re not talking about gift-giving or love. All that’s required is trust in the prospects of the military campaign – confidence that sufficient loot will be obtained. In the final analysis, ‘money’ rests on that and nothing else: the henchmen’s expectation that their leader’s campaign will succeed in extracting the promised loot for subsequent distribution among the thieves. Should that confidence falter, the entire system will inevitably collapse.

Graeber shows how ‘primitive money’ was used not to exchange arrows for teepee frames but to gain control over lives, especially women’s lives. In ancient Ireland, chieftains counted their debts to one another in slave girls. What turns a naked body into a person with dignity and autonomy? The answer is: clothing, jewelry, cosmetics. Take these away – and

you have power. It may not be coincidental, then, that personal ornaments – materials such as beads, shells, whale teeth, gold and silver – so often comprised the earliest forms of money.

Until recently among the Lele of the Kasai, small change usually took the form of raffia-palm cloths; the high-denomination currency was camwood, bars of which were used to make the red paste valued as a cosmetic. This was used in marriage negotiations, but since the Lele were matrilineal, husbands couldn't easily control women that way. On the other hand, a man's wife might die in childbirth. Since no death was innocent – it was always someone's fault – the husband might blame the ill-fated pregnancy on some adulterer. Only a life can compensate for a life: no amount of camwood will suffice. So to pay off his debt, the accused might have to transfer his sister as a 'pawn', her children inheriting that status. In exchanging and settling debts of this kind, Lele men were engaged in a constant game of securing, swapping or redeeming pawns. 'Young women', observes Graeber (p.140), 'were thus the credits and debits – the pieces being moved around the chessboard – while the hands that moved them were invariably male'. This and other African examples of 'blood debt' suggest how a woman – once she has been brutally severed from her kin – might be turned into a generic value capable of being added and subtracted as an abstract unit of debt. 'This', notes Graeber, 'requires a certain violence. To make her equivalent to a bar of camwood takes even more violence, and it takes an enormous amount of sustained and systematic violence to rip her so completely from her context that she becomes a slave' (p. 159).

By 'violence', Graeber means not conceptual metaphors but physical ropes and chains, punches



Early silver coins: invented to pay off mercenaries

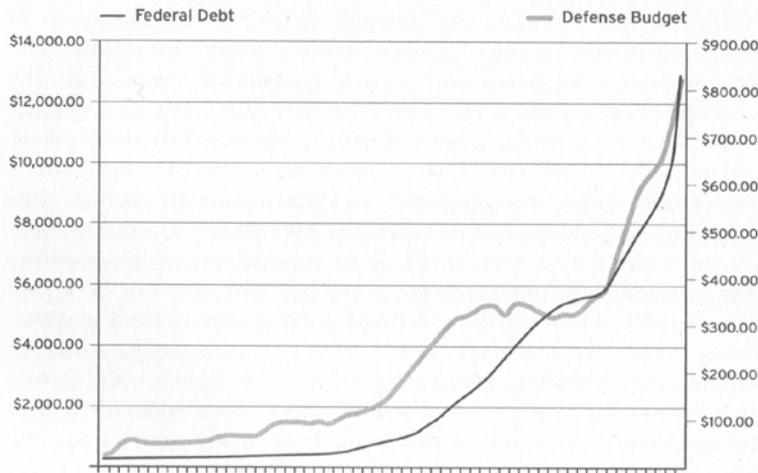
and kicks. And what applies to witchcraft accusations and blood-debts in Africa applies equally to high finance in the modern western world. We've all been indoctrinated to view 'the market' as a self-regulating system, with the rising and falling of prices akin to a force of nature. In reality, as the business pages of any newspaper will confirm, markets today rise and fall mainly in anticipation of, or in reaction to, decisions on interest rates taken by some financial wizard vested somehow with enormous power. Who is this wizard? It's Alan Greenspan, or Ben Bernanke, or whoever is currently the chairman of the Federal Reserve. This man possesses a strange magic: he can create money out of nothing. No part of official economic doctrine can explain how this works. But then that's because conquest, pillage and slaughter must be kept carefully hidden behind the screen. Strip it away, and the hideous secret is revealed: 'There's a reason why the wizard has such a strange capacity to create money out of nothing. Behind him, there's a man with a gun' (p. 364).

But what happens when that 'man with a gun' runs out of ideas? The Pentagon's prospects for continued conquest and expansion no longer look good. Yes, wars generally do run on debt. Yes, money itself originated in such debt. But despite all this, there is a limit. To fund its

recent deprivations, subsidise its client states and maintain its 800 or so military bases around the world, the U.S. government has begun sinking into massive and accelerating debt. In his final chapter, Graeber provides a graph showing this debt rising in tandem with the defence budget, both now soaring almost exponentially. To offset this ballooning debt, America's global banking operations are designed to extract tribute from all corners of the planet. Confidence in the monetary system amounts ultimately to confidence that this project can be sustained.

For this to work, the empire must be perceived as eternal. 'In fact', writes Graeber (p.382),

'it could well be said that the last thirty years have seen the construction of a vast bureaucratic apparatus for the creation and maintenance of hopelessness, a giant machine designed, first and foremost, to destroy any sense of possible alternative futures. At its root is a veritable obsession on the part of the rulers of the world – in response to the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s – with ensuring that social movements cannot be seen to grow, flourish or propose alternatives; that those who challenge existing power



Exponential rise in Federal Reserve debt in tandem with US defence budget (billions of dollars)

arrangements can never, under any circumstances, be perceived to win. To do so requires creating a vast apparatus of prisons, police, various forms of private security firms and police and military intelligence apparatus, and propaganda engines of every conceivable variety, most of which do not attack alternatives directly so much as create a pervasive climate of fear, jingoistic conformity, and simple despair that renders any thought of changing the world seem an idle fantasy’.

Paradoxically, however, it was precisely the success of this project that culminated in its spectacular collapse. Seduced by their own narrative of immortality, the master wizards felt licensed to postpone repayment of America’s war debts to an indefinite future. In the meantime, they could borrow and borrow without constraint. American imperial power, writes Graeber (p.367),

‘is based on a debt that will never – can never – be repaid. Its national debt has become

a promise, not just to its own people, but to the nations of the entire world, that everyone knows will not be kept.

At the same time, U.S. policy was to insist that those countries relying on U.S. treasury bonds as their reserve currency behaved in exactly the opposite way as they did: observing tight money policies and scrupulously repaying their debts’.

An exponentially increasing loan which need never be repaid? While the government claiming this unique privilege deploys hit-squads to make lesser governments pay up on time? The incongruities stacked up as incomprehensibility piled upon absurdity. From around September 2008, with the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the fiction of immortality proceeded to self-destruct. The Federal Reserve’s witchcraft no longer worked. As with previous empires, once the henchmen and camp-followers lose confidence – once defeat on all fronts begins to loom – then panic inevitably ensues.

Like any good anthropologist, Graeber has no time for economics. The very idea that there is such a thing as ‘the economy’ is itself an ideological fiction. More historian than economist, Graeber discusses how, from earliest times, politics, warfare, violence and deception – not to mention sex, love, solidarity and truth – have combined in complex ways to constitute our productive and imaginative lives. If you don’t appreciate anthropology, you may not like any of this.

I can imagine Graeber’s academic critics accusing him of not being sufficiently theoretical. He burdens us with almost no specialist terminology; he steers clear of arcane debates. If you want a technical treatise on the underpinnings of the current financial crisis, you may feel disappointed. Avoiding the temptation to blind us with science, Graeber writes like a proletarian – in straightforward, comprehensible English. The book includes exhaustive notes and references, direct quotes, illuminating graphs where needed, a bibliography and a good index. My copy was sprinkled throughout with minor typographical errors, adding nicely to the impression of an anarchist at work.

I love this book because it strips away so many myths. Money is rooted in extortion. ‘Debt’ is a vague concept, its very ambiguities serving to disguise extortion as moral obligation. The conquered must pay up because – runs the argument – we inhabit a moral universe. Graeber concludes by asking: Do we *really* owe those bankers anything at all? 

Debt: The First Five Thousand Years, by David Graeber, New York: Melville House, 2011, pp.534.

Chris Knight is Professor of Anthropology at Comenius University, Bratislava.

***The Origin of Our Species*, by Chris Stringer**

A review by **Simon Wells**

Professor Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum is one of the world's leading experts on human fossils, famous for advancing the Recent African Origin model. *The Origin of Our Species*, a semi-autobiographical account, describes how human origins research has developed. As he explains in the introduction: 'I want to try and provide a comprehensive – but comprehensible – account of the origin of our species from my position in these debates over the last thirty years or so' (p.1). Nobody interested in human origins should do without this book.

The book's nine chapters range over archaeology, fossil specimens, life history, DNA, language and symbolism to the future evolution of the human species. Some of these subjects may seem daunting to the uninitiated, with terms and concepts unfamiliar to those seeking an introductory text. However, each chapter is clear and concise, the terms are explained, and the reader comes away having learnt something.

Stringer aims to address the big questions about what made us human. His wide-ranging interdisciplinary approach is impressive. Obviously, his knowledge is greatest in addressing the fossils with which he has worked so closely, augmented by his up-to-date grasp of relevant developments in molecular genetics. When it comes to questions of language and symbolism, discussing archaeological evidence on possible ritual and religious activity, he is probably weakest, lacking a social anthropology background. But his treatment of data and models is always meticulous, as he explains them all clearly and dispassionately.



Stringer acknowledges evidence of Neanderthal symbolic activity: Scallop shell from Cueva Antón, with perforation and traces of pigment

The problem for any scientist in this area is to discern how new discoveries add to our understanding and enable us to pose questions to guide future research. One of the most interesting chapters, 'What Lies Beneath', looks at techniques applied to teeth, including computerized tomography – CT scans. The most modern and minute versions of CT scans require subatomic particle accelerators, such as the synchrotron at Grenoble, on a smaller scale than the Large Hadron Collider. This is now revealing fascinating differences in the childhood of modern humans compared with Neanderthals, who appear to have grown up at a faster rate.

Comparing Neanderthals with modern humans has always been at the heart of Stringer's work since his Ph.D from the early 1970s, right

at the beginning of multivariate computer analysis of fossils. To get his data, he trundled around museums from west to east of Europe as a long-haired hippy in an old banger. Luckily, the long hair and unkempt beard got him across the Czech border to measure some important fossils at Brno; the guards relented since he reminded them of Che Guevara!

Through this foot-slogging detailed work examining far-flung specimens, Stringer became certain that Neanderthals were not ancestral to Europeans, whether Cro-Magnons or people today. Fossil evidence accumulating from Africa led him to develop his Out of Africa stance by the early 1980s when it was highly controversial. The ensuing battle between adherents of the Multiregional and Recent African Origin (RAO) models

caused a rift in the palaeontological community, with Stringer and colleagues emerging victorious.

Besides the fossils, the new molecular genetic studies from the 1980s onwards gave almost unequivocal backing to RAO. Mitochondrial DNA, found outside the nucleus of cells and inherited through females only, shows that the last mtDNA common ancestor

have come down to us today, marking out population movement and migration, genes in themselves explain nothing. To answer the question of what made us human, we need to understand the behavioural selection pressures, or other factors, which led to those genes being the ones that made it. For instance, FOXP2 genes may determine ability to coordinate certain facial muscles, without which speech

now ties in so well with the dates for modern speciation, it's a little surprising that Stringer doesn't seize on this with both hands to say yes to the 'Human Revolution' in that 150,000-year timeframe. All the previous problems of explaining why we have modern anatomy at that early date in Africa, but can't seem to see any symbolic activity till much later in Europe, have now been resolved.

Stringer as one of the original authors of the 'Human Revolution' ... has never been afraid to look at social arguments.

of all humans living today, so-called African Eve, can be dated at less than 150,000 years old. Since diversity of mtDNA lineages is greater in Africa than the rest of the planet put together, her homeland was definitely Africa.

Cann, Stoneking and Wilson's original African Eve results have stood up surprisingly well. In this book, Stringer examines closely how the RAO model measures up to the latest exciting genetic evidence on both Neanderthals and the even more mysterious Denisovans. Analysis of mtDNA from a Siberian fossil little finger (dating 40,000 years at present) shows that it is neither modern human nor Neanderthal, with a time span of separation reaching back 500,000 years. There are shared genetic links with Melanesian peoples. If you are European or Asian, about 2 per cent more of your DNA is shared with Neanderthals, compared with if you are African. This suggests a model of some interbreeding perhaps 60,000 years ago in the Middle East as modern humans exited Africa. Stringer claims that he never absolutely ruled out some mating going on between these populations, and he concedes the picture of our origin is shown to be more complex.

But whatever genetic sequences

can't work. But FOXP2's presence or absence tells us nothing about the Darwinian selection pressures leading to language.

To get at that, we need to engage in modelling hominin social and sexual lives. Stringer, as one of the original authors of the 'Human Revolution' with Paul Mellars, has never been afraid to look at social arguments. He gives a solid overview of the archaeological evidence that has been piling up in Africa (and the Middle East) over the past decade, indicating symbolic activity and challenging the Eurocentric idea of the Upper Palaeolithic as the main stage of the Human Symbolic Revolution. He outlines the positions that various archaeologists have now adopted in response to the African record, and the debate about defining modern behaviour. These run from the Brooks/McBrearty 'The revolution that wasn't', through the D'Errico/Zilhão 'multispecies' account of comparable Neanderthal symbolic activity, to the Henshilwood 'symbolic organisation' watershed of the modern human species, and the last-ditch defence by Richard Klein of genetic mutations making a sudden cognitive change c.50,000 years ago.

Because the African evidence on regular pigment (red ochre) use

Instead, he inclines to the rather fiddly version of Robin Dunbar's 'social brain' hypothesis arguing for incremental levels of intentionality. Each clause here represents one of those: 'I believe that you think that John did something bad which God knows about and will punish him for', representing steps from basic Theory of Mind to full-scale belief in the supernatural, forming a basis for moral values. Stringer gives a fair account of how this 'levels of intentionality' argument has been practically applied to increasing elaboration of symbolic practice in the archaeological record, notably by Paul Pettit.

While this may sound perfectly sensible from a bourgeois, individualistic perspective, any classic social anthropology text on ritual experience – Durkheim, Rappaport or Victor Turner – rips apart this flimsy house of cards. Ritual does not do understanding of 'I think you said he did this or that'. Ritual does "WE", 'we are here', 'we belong to God!', and it is the only possible medium for generating that. It is the engine of what Michael Tomasello calls 'collective intentionality'. Placing collective intentionality in charge was surely the essence of the human revolution. What revolution reflects only 'a low level of symbolic intent'? A revolution is a ground-

breaking event, transforming and turning the world upside down. The preoccupation with incremental levels of intentionality risks missing this point. There are no different levels of intent. What counts is only one intention: Revolution!

This theoretical dispute underlies the debate about whether red ochre in the archaeological record indicates symbolism. According to Pettit, who would certainly not claim to know much about anthropology or even the pigment record, smears of pigment have no more significance than trying to show off one's rosy cheeks. Using ochre on the body somehow does not count as symbolic by comparison with carving marks into ochre, or stringing tick shells together. The trouble is Stringer has not well represented the counterargument to all this, best made by Ian Watts, the major expert on the African Middle Stone Age pigment record. Watts has assiduously examined the colour selection and dating on regular and ubiquitous pigment use in the southern African record to argue that it marks a ritual tradition. Yet all his thorough, anthropologically informed arguments have been airbrushed out here.

Stringer pulls his biggest rabbit out of the hat in the last chapter with his very personal account of the story of the Kabwe or Broken Hill skull, in some ways, a leitmotif of his whole life. He vividly remembers seeing it (or a cast) as a boy in the Natural History Museum; the first important human fossil from Africa, it now resides outside his office. It was dug out from a Zambian ore mine in 1921, and with the destruction of



The primitive, enigmatic Kabwe skull from Zambia may not be much older than the first modern humans.

the site, all hope of dating the fossil accurately seemed to be long gone. Enigmatic and primitive, Kabwe combines a close-to-modern brain size with a low forehead, massive browridges and sharply angled back of the skull – almost *Homo erectus*-like – a strange puncture wound, and abscessing. While old estimates often placed Kabwe around 300,000 years, many have argued it could be a more distant ancestor, even more than half a million years old. Fifteen years of detective work with colleagues at the Natural History Museum have produced a new estimate which is quite startling: Kabwe could be closer to 200 than 300,000 years. That would put it within a few tens of thousands of years of the first modern human, now recognised as the Omo Kibish 1 skull from Ethiopia, c.195,000 years old.

The lesson is that Africa, a vast continent containing virtually all of our recent evolutionary ancestry, contains yet unknown degrees of

diversity. At the same time that modern humans were emerging, they would have lived in landscapes alongside more archaic populations, possibly into very recent times. This implies also that at least some of the traces of archaic genetic markers still found in people today may have arisen as a result of intermixing of archaic and modern populations within Africa, rather than interbreeding of 'pristine' modern people with archaic populations only after leaving Africa.

Despite its subject matter, this book is far from intimidating, and written in a relaxed style full of anecdotes, while referencing cutting edge research. Unfortunately, the dim and dark illustrations are not on a par with the lavish presentation in Stringer's previous volumes *Homo Britannicus*, and *The Complete World of Human Evolution* (with colleague Peter Andrews).

The Origin of our Species, by Chris Stringer, Allen Wood, 2011, pp. 333.

Simon Wells is an activist and student of anthropology at University of East London.

***Meat Market: Female flesh under capitalism*, by Laurie Penny**

A review by **Anna Heath**

Laurie Penny's book could serve as an introduction to feminism for young people. It is easy, short and in places quite moving; we could all (men included) identify with much of the book. She examines contemporary feminist thought by analysing the views of Ariel Levy, Shulamith Firestone, Germaine Greer, Juliet Mitchell and Nina Power among others. Her four chapters deal with the sex industry, eating disorders, gender capital and domestic labour, with a short conclusion.

The first chapter is about the frigidity of the sex industry and the use of women's bodies as sales props – a critique of consumer culture repackaged for a younger generation. Against a background rhythm of expressionless sterile hydraulic pumping porn machines, she conjures up a variety of disturbing mental images. However, when this descriptive layer is peeled back, the result is confused. Her focus is on modern commercialism; nowhere does she ground her arguments in a historical analysis of the dynamic of capitalism. In a chapter on how women's bodies are not our own, she fails to mention fertility, contraception, menstruation and pregnancy.

Penny experienced anorexia as a teen, so her chapter on eating disorders is both honest and painful. She trashes many common misconceptions about anorexia. But while encouraging women to not starve themselves, she fails to mention the flip side of the food problem. Obesity affects millions more people, while the junk food industry creates huge profits.

Penny is at her most interesting when discussing transgender issues. She comments on the views of anti-trans feminists such as Germaine Greer, and on the role of trans-

women as feminists. She discusses the struggle of transformation by comparing the experience to that of puberty in non-trans teenage girls and how it highlights the pain of female conformity.

The chapter on housework concentrates on the battle/picket lines that fill our kitchens with conflict over who will tackle the washing up. She is critical of men for not helping, capitalism for enslaving women and of the women who 'domestically disempower' men. Class is briefly brought up in the question of how some solve the drudgery issue (foreign low paid maids) but she seems indecisive about who the enemy is: men or capitalism?

Then out of the blue she launches a scathing criticism on some women who make lifestyle choices of cookery classes and knitting clubs, all while wearing 1950s dresses despite not knowing how to 'iron pleats' – tasks she describes as 'brain bleedingly pointless'. In a book that lacks political grounding and ideological direction, this is one striking example of Penny's political naivety. This overly generalised frustration with a small number of middle-class fashionistas is dismissive of some very real human truths. Humans – men included – need to eat; and we need a varied diet. A lot of women learn to cook to make the money go further. Learning to make Pad Thai won't take away our voting rights!

As for knitting clubs, a social and creative event for mainly women, what's the problem? For many they are an attempt to connect with others in an increasingly impersonal world, while arts and crafts offer a flexible livelihood for some who could otherwise be unemployed. As for creative hobbies, maybe when we women have done with the days'

chores we want to sit back and let our creative juices flow!

I get the impression she has written about what, and who, she knows. She does not mention education, obesity, the need for flexible jobs, or the struggle experienced by a single mother on benefits. Neither has she given men a part to play; there are many men out there who are our allies! Penny's anger and frustration appear directionless as she fails to identify the oppressor.

She ends by telling us that we need to stop playing the game. She calls for an all-out strike of women. We need to say 'NO' to low paid jobs, food shopping, having babies (!) and being beautiful. Ok... but who are we striking against? Is the enemy men, or capitalism? What are our demands? What happens if we win? Is she calling for revolution or reform? Penny leaves these questions hanging. She never discusses other ways of living; could we learn from more gender egalitarian cultures, for example? She offers no solutions to drudgery. We are simply supposed to go on strike, and watch the world collapse.

Penny spoke on the platform at the London Slutwalk and her comments then were much like this book, accurate but basic and lacking in historical/political depth. There are other anthropological and Marxist theories about female strikes (plus, historic examples) and revolutions in general that are more informed and convincing. It's not enough to say 'no' without arguing for what happens next. 

Meat Market: Female flesh under capitalism, by Laurie Penny, Zero Books, 2011, pp. 66.

Anna Heath is a socialist, feminist and first-year anthropology student at University of East London.

SIGMUND, LET US SAY FAREWELL

By **Chris Gray**

The horde obeys its primal father.
He loves them, but that makes things harder:
He's a tyrant, swings his caber,
Makes his sons go out and labour.

While they toil, he lives for pleasure,
Fucks the women at his leisure,
Violates his youngest daughter
And miches where he didn't ougter.

Sons abhor his domination,
So they plot assassination;
Frustrated, they in turn frustrate him,
In revenge kill and castrate him.

To ensure that they defeat him
They proceed to cook and eat him;
"Vive la liberte!" they cry ...
Then 'mongst themselves begin to vie.

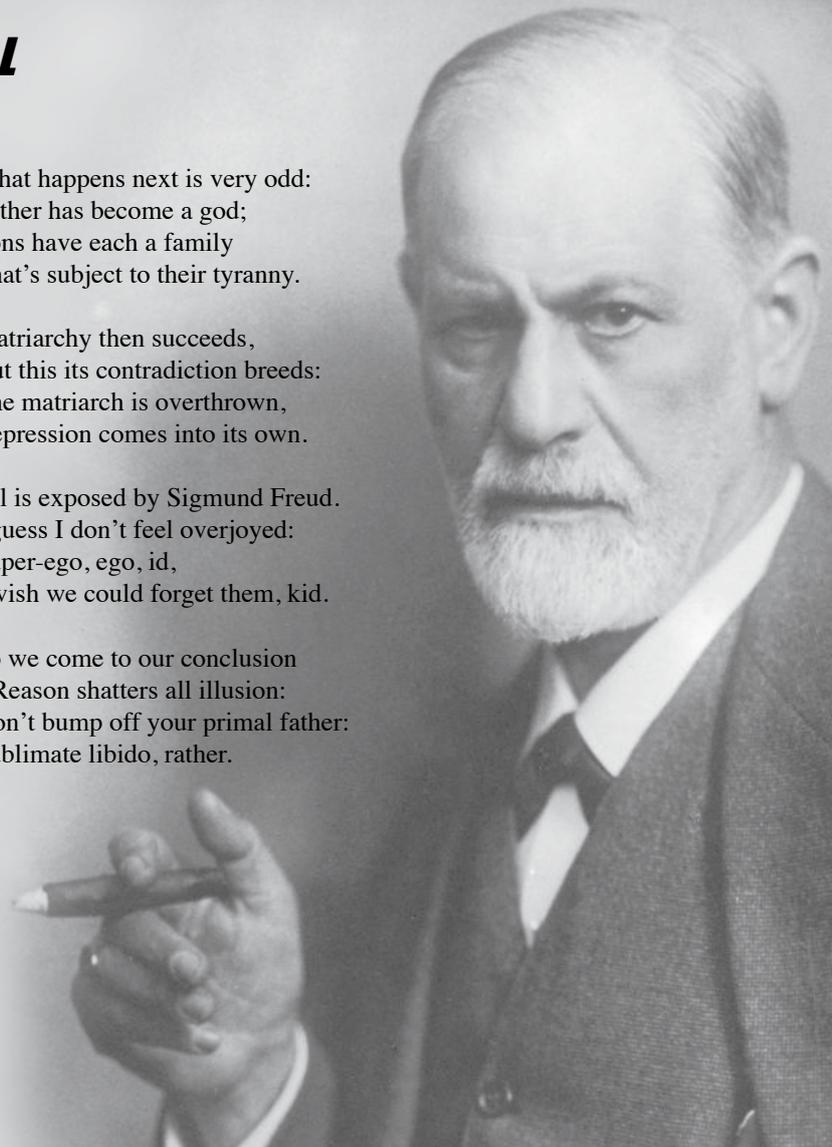
Incessant warfare they find wearing:
They stop fighting and start sharing.
Guilt they feel, and form a plan,
And so we get ... the Brother Clan.

What happens next is very odd:
Father has become a god;
Sons have each a family
That's subject to their tyranny.

Matriarchy then succeeds,
But this its contradiction breeds:
The matriarch is overthrown,
Repression comes into its own.

All is exposed by Sigmund Freud.
I guess I don't feel overjoyed:
Super-ego, ego, id,
I wish we could forget them, kid.

So we come to our conclusion
--Reason shatters all illusion:
Don't bump off your primal father:
Sublimate libido, rather.



ANTHROPOLOGY

AN EVENING CLASS INTRODUCTION

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