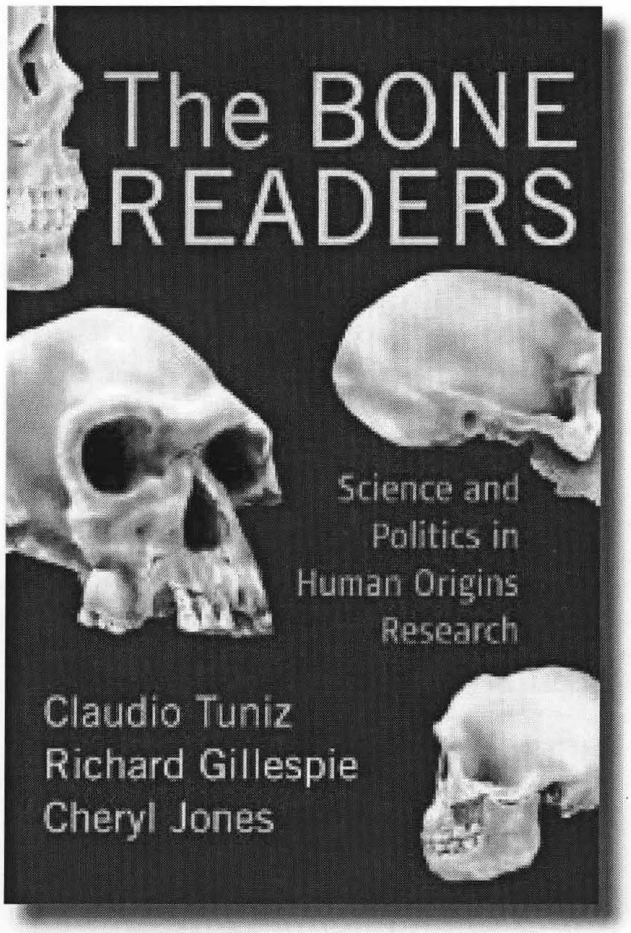
While the focus is on historical archaeology, he occasionally cites interesting examples from antiquity for comparative purposes. Smith also makes a concerted effort to highlight key studies and guide readers towards fruitful avenues of research and away from less productive approaches; he also makes an important (if brief) argument in favour of commodity-based models in archaeology. However, while he makes sure to draw attention to scholarly debates, he rarely offers critical commentary of his own (exceptions pp. 80, 102), leaving it to the reader to sort out the barley from the chaff. Much of the content focuses on the eastern United States, but this is a product of where the bulk of research has been done rather than any bias on the author's part. Likewise, the case study and most of the figures drawn from research in the Caribbean and Virginia reflect where Smith lives and works.

Although I like this book very much, there are in my mind a handful of shortcomings. For example, Smith's discussion of late nineteenth and twentieth century glass beverage containers in Chapter 2 is extremely brief in comparison with earlier periods, despite the considerable volume of archaeological literature devoted to this topic. Such limited coverage belies the enormous functional and dating potential of these later vessels, which also have a much wider geographic distribution (and thus relevance to a broader archaeological readership). In Chapter 5, Smith outlines various individual and collective identities and social boundaries that can be explored through studies of alcohol, and hints at the central problem of disentangling the role of race, class and ethnicity in influencing consumption patterns. However, he does not offer any substantive discussion of this issue or how to address it with respect to alcohol-related material culture. Finally, in Chapter 6 on Mapps Cave, Smith provides a map of Barbados (Figure 6-1) that is valuable in visualizing the island's geography, but on which none of the original text is legible and nothing referred to in the text is marked (a detail or arrows would help). Among the other figures, the plan and profile of the cave (6-2) is initially disorienting and would benefit from the addition of one or more photos plus a profile drawing of the site's stratigraphy to clarify the description in the text (it is an important interpretive point). Furthermore, a summary table of artifact values would help strengthen his argument for the predominance of alcohol-related artifacts at the site, and would make his data of greater comparative value than the generalized percentages (and the frequently used term "many") he cites currently permit.

Despite these drawbacks, this is still a top-notch volume and I refer your back to my opening paragraph. Now go pick up a copy of this book, grab a drink, and happy reading.

Doug Ross recently earned his Ph.D. in archaeology from Simon Fraser University and is currently teaching as a sessional instructor at SFU and UBC. His research interests focus on everyday consumer habits and negotiation of transnational ethnic identities among Chinese and Japanese immigrants in Western North America. He is currently co-directing a project, with Dr. Stacey Camp of the University of Idaho, at the site of a World War II Japanese internment camp in the northern part of that state.



Book Review:
The Bone Readers: Science and Politics in Human Origins Research

Claudio Tuniz, Richard Gillespie, and Cheryl Jones. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, California. viii+256 pages, numerous b&w & colour illustrations, ISBN: 978-1-59874-475-0 (paper). $24.95. 2009.

The Bone Readers addresses a number of controversial issues in current archaeological research with a strong focus on Australasian prehistory and Australian researchers. In particular, the authors discuss the debates over: the dating of the earliest human presence in Australia; the cause of the Pleistocene large mammal extinctions in Australia and the Americas; the role of genetic research in the emergence of modern humans; South East Asia's *Homo floresiensis*; and the use of indigenous peoples' genetic data in prehistoric research.

The book is 220 pages long and includes 20 chapters, which are divided up into three main sections. Section I, "Landfall", includes the first four chapters and deals with the history of research into the earliest peopling of Australia. This has long been a controversial topic of research and the main focus of this section is a discussion of the politics behind Pleistocene archaeology in Australia. The authors attempt to present the underlying conflicts within the community of researchers (especially between differ-

ent absolute dating projects) and between the researchers and aboriginal groups on the issue of attempting to determine the earliest arrival of people in Australia. Maps would have been a huge help for the reader in this section.

Section II, "Extinctions," includes ten chapters and covers the debate about the cause of Pleistocene large mammal extinctions in Australia and North America where the arguments have tended to be boiled down to two opposing views: either overhunting on the part of the earliest people or major climate change. In both regions dating has been a particularly important line of evidence in the debates. The question of the timing of people's arrival and the disappearance of many Pleistocene genera is seen as strong circumstantial evidence for one side of the debate or the other depending on how closely the two events appear to coincide. While the authors believe they are presenting an unbiased view of the debate, their own biases do come through. By the end of the section there is little doubt that they fall strongly on the side of human overhunting as the main explanation for both Australian and North American Pleistocene extinctions. In fact, it often appears that their own personal axes are being ground when it comes to certain issues (especially debates over the dating) and certain individuals. There is nothing wrong with this *per se*—it is their book—but having it dressed up as objective third person observations is a bit disingenuous. It also seems to have resulted in a certain degree of watering down of the views of those who argue against the overhunting hypothesis. For example, the arguments against overhunting made by Donald Grayson, one of the more prominent researchers in the debate, tend to be a bit more sophisticated than they are presented by the authors here.

Section III, "Origins," includes six chapters which deal to some extent with research into the emergence of modern humans, the nature of our evolutionary family tree, and modern human variability. There is a fairly well presented coverage of current genetic research, although it is already outdated in some respects (for example, there is now evidence for Neandertal-modern human interbreeding). The last two chapters deal mainly with the problems faced by the two major projects (Human Genome Diversity Project and National Geographic's Genographic Project) that have been attempting to accumulate large databases on modern human genetic variability. Most of the problems faced by these two projects have come from indigenous groups fearful of exploitation – the discussion of this is fairly even but refreshingly open.

Overall the book is an interesting read although I don't think many readers with any background in archaeology (or any science for that matter) will be particularly surprised or scandalized by the authors revealing the underlying politics and occasionally bitter personality clashes among researchers. I do think they have gone a bit out of their way to over-dramatize the extent to which these conflicts are actually so black and white and two-sided and I think they might be overplaying, a bit, how much long-term influence these conflicts typically have on the course of research.

Absolute dating methods is a main theme throughout the book and two of the authors, Tuniz and Gillespie, are dating specialists. Brief, concise, and generally well-written explanations of the underlying bases of almost all the current dating methods is perhaps the most important contribution of the book. Students who have had little exposure to dating methods might find the book useful for this reason at least. However, I don't get the feeling that this was necessarily intentional, since the book's value as an introduction to dating methods could have been very easily improved with a few simple graphics. When it came to the politics, the account of the conflicts between the different research groups addressing the question of the oldest Australian sites, I frequently found myself wanting to consult a dating specialist myself to get an unbiased expert opinion of what was being presented in the book. However, in spite of not always trusting their accounts of events, I found that the authors did succeed in making the stories of these conflicts quite interesting.

I did find some aspects of the book irritating. Firstly, there is a constant, selective use of *plea to authority* in the presentation of particular points of view in the debates. The researchers discussed in the book who are major contributors in the debates and who, apparently, have views that coincide with those of the authors, are described as 'renowned', 'leading', 'noted', 'eminent', 'elite', 'world's foremost', 'respected' or have 'formidable credentials'. Those players in the debates whose point of view or arguments were not quite in accord with the authors' notably lacked these characteristics. Secondly, the writing style is unfortunately quite poor, and way too sarcastic and tongue-in-cheek in places (a style particularly incongruent with the general coverage of the topics more suitable for intro-level students), and there are numerous attempts at prose that seriously made me cringe: e.g., "The [humic acid] ... is sometimes the only organic material left in the fireplace—like the Cheshire Cat's grin after the cat has disappeared" or "Tracing the effects of water, wind, and sun on the lake is like analyzing the harmony of a baroque fugue, however Miller and Magee read Lake Eyre's complex hydrology like maestros reading a Bach score." The last two chapters in particular have very awkward sentence structure, poor organization, and are generally very confusing. One might have expected better from Jones at least, a "*noted science journalist*". The book as a whole would have benefited immensely from some serious editing – starting with the authors' using the epithet "*Timelords*" to describe the dating specialists—Discovery Channel writers might have even thought twice about that one.

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