



SafA
2025

Preliminary Session List

Universidade do Algarve

July 22 – July 25, 2025

Session Number

1

Session Typ

Poster Presentation Session

Session Title

General Poster Session

Session Abstract

General poster session - open to everyone. Please email safa2025@ualg.pt for more information.

Primary Organizer Surnam**Primary Organizer Given Nam****Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation**

SAfA

Session Number

2

Session Typ

Poster Presentation Session

Session Title

Ancient Rock Cut Cisterns from Eastern Tigray, Northern Ethiopia.

Session Abstract

This paper presents a results of an archaeological survey conducted in Eastern Tigray, northern Ethiopia. A nine-week survey has been carried out to explore and locate ancient rock-cut cisterns in Eastern Tigray. Thus, twenty-five rock-cut cisterns, within the compound of five ancient rock-hewn churches and monasteries, were identified and assessed. The ancient churches and monasteries have been used these cisterns as an essential elements of their water management systems. Inadequacy of water supply for the churches and monasteries has brought for the need of storing water and demanded the construction of the cisterns. Hence, these cisterns have been utilized to retain runoff water from rainfall during the rainy summer season to meet water needs throughout the year. Even today, most of these cisterns are actively used for different purposes.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Hailu

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Getnet

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Adigrat University, Department of Archaeology and Heritage Management

Session Number

3

Session Typ

Poster Presentation Session

Session Title

The Newly Discovered Ancient Site of Addi Akuffa, Adwa, Ethiopia

Session Abstract

A preliminary archaeological survey in 2018 in Debre Genet, Adwa, Ethiopia, identified a new archaeological site in Addi Akuffa. The site yielded numerous artifacts associated with Aksumite culture, including coins with cross designs, a cruciform clay object, and a clay artifact with an anthropogenic figure, a cross indentation, and Geez letters. Additionally, the site features ancient wall structures and artifacts like beads and glass shards. These findings suggest continuous human habitation in the area since the Early Christian Aksumite period. The Addi Akuffa site holds significant cultural, scientific, and economic value through archaeo-tourism. However, it faces threats and requires immediate management, preservation measures, and archaeological excavation.

Keywords: Archaeological site, Addi Akuffa, Aksumite, coins, Tigray

Primary Organizer Surnam

Kidanu

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Rediat

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Aksum University

Session Number

4

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Archaeology, ethnoarchaeology, and heritage management in the Horn of Africa: Honoring Steve Brandt

Session Abstract

The Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, and Djibouti) contributes key perspectives to almost every debate in archaeology: Human origins and dispersals to other continents, plant domestication, and the emergence of states and empires. Given this, and local communities' active conservation of indigenous knowledge and technologies across the region, the Horn also offers unparalleled opportunities for ethnoarchaeological research and cultural heritage management. In a career spanning almost 50 years, Steve Brandt has engaged with questions along this vast chronological spectrum, mobilized ethnoarchaeological research on stone toolmaking as well as early agriculture, and led major efforts in cultural heritage management; he has also trained an exceptional number of archaeological and heritage professionals from various parts of the Horn either in-country or abroad. This symposium brings together scholars working in the Horn and farther afield to present their own projects in academic research or heritage management. In so doing, participants may wish to offer reflections on Steve's contributions as a researcher, heritage conservation advocate, and intellectual catalyst; participants are also encouraged to articulate the intellectual challenges they see ahead of us in the next 50 years.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Hildebrand

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Elisabeth

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Stony Brook University

Session Number

5

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Advances in Geoarchaeology: Same Seds, Different Day

Session Abstract

Geoarchaeology is fundamental for reconstructing past environments and understanding the natural and anthropogenic processes associated with them. It provides valuable insights into spatio-temporal patterns, using stratigraphy and site formation models, serving as environmental and biological proxies for changing landscapes. Despite the significance of geoarchaeological practices, this multidisciplinary field remains underrepresented within the archaeological discipline. Fine-resolution techniques have provided a myriad of new opportunities to investigate the complex relationships between changing landscapes and resulting human responses. Environmental shifts moulded various biological and cultural adaptations - leading to major evolutionary milestones and technological innovations. Geoarchaeological methods have been especially valuable in southern Africa, highlighting the region's rich archaeological record, preserved in both caves and open-air sites. Numerous sites in this region, ranging from the Plio-Pleistocene to the Holocene, have been investigated using geoarchaeological methods, including: Canteen Kopje, Border Cave, Strathallan Cave, the Sterkfontein Caves, and Makgadikgadi. This session aims at providing a dedicated space to integrate different ideas, findings and approaches, and foster dialogue between specialists. Advocating for increased visibility and the crucial application of geoarchaeology in current and future research.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Horn

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Maryke

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of the Witwatersrand

Session Number

6

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

African perspectives on obsidian studies in Archaeology

Session Abstract

Obsidian has played a central role in archaeological studies of past technology in Africa for decades. Much of this research has centered on compositional studies aimed at sourcing stone tools to their geographic origins. The past two decades in particular have seen an increase in these studies due the introduction of portable X-Ray fluorescence spectroscopy to the discipline. Nonetheless, Africa's potential for advancing the field of obsidian research continues to be underestimated despite its unique geology, exceptional paleontological and archaeological record, and numerous obsidian hotspots. It constitutes a unique and enduring component of lithic toolkits dating to all periods across the continent. Ethiopia alone contains both the oldest examples of obsidian tool manufacture, and modern hide-workers whose economic and ontological worlds center around this material. This session welcomes all recent studies of archaeological obsidian in Arica. These may include studies of volcanic glass geochemistry, geology, techno-typological and/or functional aspects of artifacts, as well as recent research into obsidian sources, quarries, lithic economies, ethnoarchaeology, human dispersal/ mobility, history, and materiality. To celebrate the potential of the continent's obsidian resources and their use from deep prehistory until today, the session organizers will guest edit a special issue in a journal to feature the results of recent/ongoing obsidian research across the continent.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Smith

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Benjamin

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Cultures et Environnements, Préhistoire, Antiquité, Moyen Age (CEPAM) CNRS - UMR 7264 -Université Côte d'Azur

Session Number

7

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Central Africa at the Continental Crossroads

Session Abstract

Historically, Central Africa has been a linguistic and cultural nexus, with connections to neighboring regions across the continent. However, current regional sub-specializations in archaeology have tended to obscure its role in connecting East to West and North to South Africa. Although investigations in Central Africa have been challenged by political and social instability, recent research suggests that perceived geographic barriers to interconnectivity were less formidable than once thought. Areas once thought of as peripheral to cultural developments are now viewed as important avenues of interconnectivity, sometimes spanning long distances. Presentations in this session bring together recent research initiatives aimed at exploring aspects of connectivity across Central Africa that have been previously neglected.

Primary Organizer Surnam

De Maret

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Pierre

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Université Libre de Bruxelles

Session Number

8

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Community outreach and public engagement in Africa: lessons learnt and future goals

Session Abstract

Outreach and education lie at the nexus between archaeological research and the public. While science communication activities play an important role in project design and grant proposals, often the focus is on digital and social media platforms, rather than delivering accessible and relevant initiatives to the local communities in research study areas. Furthermore, academic researchers often lack the training and knowledge to understand the needs of different audiences, as well as the resources to effectively conduct events, produce exhibitions and generate multi-lingual materials. This session aims to showcase public engagement initiatives for varied audiences arising out of research in Africa. We encourage presentations that present existing projects, approaches, resources, and experiences – including reflection on aspects that were and were not successful. Additionally, we hope to stimulate discussion on the priorities, challenges and goals for future archaeological education in Africa at different scales. Finally, we intend to establish a working-group to continue developing strategies and sharing open-access resources for public dissemination activities that transcend cultural and socio-economic boundaries, and have a sustainable and lasting impact.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Hallinan

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Emily

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

ICArEHB

Session Number

9

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Digital Crossroads in African Archaeology & Heritage: Collaborative Online Education & Communication

Session Abstract

As digital education gains prominence, online platforms offer unique opportunities to expand access to African archaeology and heritage studies globally. This session explores the growing field of online education for African archaeology and heritage, bringing together projects and experts committed to broadening educational outreach and fostering digital engagement with African heritage. This session is intended as an inclusive forum to discuss diverse approaches, innovations, and challenges faced by online educational initiatives. Colleagues from various projects are invited to share their insights into enhancing engagement, incorporating local perspectives, and addressing the specific digital needs of African archaeology students and professionals. Discussions will cover essential topics such as curriculum adaptability, digital inclusivity, and cross-cultural heritage communication. Through collaborative dialogue, we aim to outline a framework for sustainable, high-quality online education in African archaeology and heritage, creating pathways for impactful digital learning and establishing a network to support ongoing educational innovations in the field.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Fonseca

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Sofia

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Teiduma, Consultancy on Heritage, Culture and Sustainability

Session Number

10

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Echoes from the Past: New Data, Interpretations, and Buried Narratives from Archaeological Archives

Session Abstract

Amid discussions of an 'archival turn' and a surge of projects analysing classified or forgotten documents, archaeological archives are gaining increasing attention. They include field notes, objects collections, grey literature from the field, museums or laboratories and any documents of archaeological value. As sources, they enable the reconstruction of unpublished or poorly documented excavations. Though they may present challenges (conservation issues, lack of inventory/recognition, access difficulties, significant gaps in provenance), they also present great opportunities. Revisiting papers and boxes of artefacts stored by our predecessors increases sample numbers for better comparisons and comprehensive overviews. Retrospective reinterpretation of legacy data can be cross-referenced with current studies, reshaping interpretations. Re-evaluating this material is particularly crucial when sites have disappeared or become inaccessible. They also provide valuable material for a renewed social, political and cultural history of archaeology. They shed light on historically overlooked actors (local workers, women, non-professional contributors) or on erased practices (looting, destruction of sites), and reconstruct the history of collections, illuminating the trajectory and distribution of objects in museums and private collections. We invite papers on any part of Africa, or the African diaspora, from any period, that consider the study of legacy collections along the themes.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Roth

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Léa

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Visiting Fellow at the SRU, University of East Anglia

Session Number

11

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Quantitative approaches to African ethnoarchaeology

Session Abstract

Ethnoarchaeology has been a critical tool for archaeological research in the African continent. Traditionally, ethnoarchaeological studies have been based primarily on descriptive and qualitative analyses. This session aims to explore recent applications of quantitative methods in ethnoarchaeological research within African contexts. Recent efforts have demonstrated that integrating quantitative approaches such as cross-cultural, computer modelling or spatial data analysis within ethnoarchaeological research programs has the potential to significantly improve the archaeological applicability of these studies, offering new perspectives that can enhance archaeological interpretation. Indeed, quantitative ethnoarchaeology can be a key tool in ensuring that archaeological interpretations are grounded in measurable patterns rather than anecdotal analogies, hence helping to strengthen ethnoarchaeological practice. This session invites papers that apply statistical tools, computational models, geospatial analyses, etc. to ethnoarchaeological research in African contexts, as well as those that reflect on the challenges and opportunities of using quantitative methods in ethnoarchaeology.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Ruiz-Giralt

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Abel

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

CASEs UPF

Session Number

12

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Revisiting African timelines: the handling of temporalities in the archaeological record

Session Abstract

Time, like space, has always been a fundamental component to how archaeologists' frame questions, organise research, assemble evidence, and make meaning about the lived past. Despite the widespread use of temporal models, the periodisation and use of chronotypes for constructing Africa's past is contested, diverse in the methods, techniques and terminologies used, and dependent on context and spatial scale. The turn to digital environments for representing and handling chronologies and the push for big data in archaeology provides a new opportunity to rethink existing temporal narratives for the construction of African timelines. This session welcomes contributions from those working with big temporal data, chronometric databases, Bayesian methods, relative chronologies, and other forms of chronologies (Mittler et al. 2022) from different regions in Africa with a focus on reconciling old and new ways of thinking about time and space. Discussions will be guided around the following questions. Are there ways for handling temporality in the African archaeological record that include alternative ways of thinking about time? How can we rethink established models of periodisation (i.e., Eurochronologies) along new trajectories of time, space, material culture and power? What are the new approaches (software design, databases, gazetteers, etc.)? How are chronometric models reconciling material-based or other types of chronological models in the archaeological record?

Primary Organizer Surnam

Lander

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Faye

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

MAEASaM Regional Project Manager, Origins-Centre, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

Session Number

13

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Shaping the Future Role of Primates as Models for the Evolution of Human Behavior

Session Abstract

The application of archaeological methods to the study of extant primate tool use has significantly contributed to our understanding of Africa's hominin technological record. This work has focused primarily on using descriptions of stone tools to highlight key similarities and differences between primate material culture and the hominin archaeological record. However, there remains great potential for primate archaeology to augment reconstructions of past behavior by utilizing perspectives that expand beyond the descriptions of material culture. Little work has been done to reconcile the vast differences in time represented by observation of modern primate material culture and the time-averaged record of hominin behavior. This session aims to examine how primate archaeology can leverage interdisciplinary perspectives to further develop human evolutionary models from a primate perspective. By doing so, this session will generate novel discussions regarding how archaeological perspectives such as landscape archaeology, use-wear, lithic analysis, excavation, and site formation processes can be integrated with novel perspectives from ethology, social learning, biomechanics, and botany to better understand the specific processes and mechanisms that create material patterning across different time scales. This session will facilitate cooperation between researchers across disciplines and create new insights shaping the direction of this emerging field.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Cebeiro

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Adela

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Department of Anthropology, New York University

Session Number

14

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Southern African Stone Age Zooarchaeology – Lifeways, palaeoenvironments and subsistence strategies

Session Abstract

This session presents the opportunity to discuss the multifaceted evidence of past human lifeways, behavior, and habitats unique to the zooarchaeological record of the sub-Saharan African Stone Age. We aim to bring together a variety of presentations incorporating analytical techniques such as ZooMS, stable isotopes, SEM, histology, biomolecules, and aDNA, as well as established techniques used to complement traditional zooarchaeological and taphonomic approaches and explore past human-animal and human-environmental relationships across sub-saharan Africa. Studies focused on the use of faunal ecofacts such as bone, teeth, shell, proteins, and aDNA from any region or time-period are welcome if they explore these materials unique insights into human subsistence strategies, social organization, technologies, cultural expression, and regional migration and dispersal patterns. Additionally, this session examines human-environment dynamics, with a focus on how faunal records illuminate the role of animals as resources and/or evidence of changing environments shaping past human biogeographic patterns.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Rhodes

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Sara

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

ICArEHB

Session Number

15

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

African Women in Archaeology and Paleontology

Session Abstract

In her 2001 publication, Kathreen Weedman raised a critical question: Who is that Girl? This archival research highlights the contributions of women, particularly those of European descent, to African archaeology. There is a pressing need for an edited volume that complements existing works by documenting the experiences of African women in this field. This session will specifically examine the experiences of African women in archaeology and paleontology. Until recently, the representation of African women professionals in these areas has been largely overlooked. Research indicates that African women began formally entering archaeology and paleontology much later than their male counterparts. For instance, the majority of women from Eastern African countries began earning their doctoral degrees in these fields starting in the 2000s. This session will celebrate both pioneering African women in these fields and those who, while not professionally recognized, have actively participated in archaeological and paleontological practices over the past century.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Mehari

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Asmeret Ghebreigziabiher

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Independent Researcher

Session Number

16

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

African Archaeological Archives and Digital Experiments of Care and Repair

Session Abstract

Archaeological archives are constituted of records of archaeological collections in the form of material assemblages, sites, monuments and landscapes, but also of fieldnotes, maps, drawings, sketches that are usable sources for the making of history. In Africa, these archives have often been assembled by expat researchers either in colonial or postcolonial situations and reflect, the paradigms, state-of-the-art methodologies and technologies at the time of their collection. African presence in them is generally involuntary and unconsensual which makes them potentially toxic. Our relations with these archives are not neutral but rather qualified through languages, displays and other forms of media as part of processes of meaning-making. They speak to the contexts in which they were first assembled and to the many untold histories they embody which make them invaluable primary sources for Africa's archaeological legacies. Over the past four years, the Mapping of Africa's Endangered Sites and Monuments project permitted researchers working in different parts of the continent to explore digital and geospatial technologies to revisit sites' geolocalization, material inventories and recording systems with important curatorial implications. Building on MAEASaM's decolonial curatorial possibilities in Senegal, this session explores new practices of care and repair of African archaeological heritage for the 21st century and beyond.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Thiaw

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Ibrahima

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire/Cheikh Anta Diop

Session Number

17

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Chronological issues in open air vs cave sites

Session Abstract

Our ability to establish the chronology of archaeological sites is often limited by post-depositional processes that may affect the accuracy of the age results obtained using absolute dating methods. On one hand, bioturbation caused by vegetation and animal activity may induce sediment mixing within or between layers, and this is particularly problematic when dating small objects such as charcoal fragments and quartz/feldspar grains from open-air sites. On the other hand, diagenesis may affect the composition of anthropogenic materials and natural materials such as speleothems and sediments. This is especially the case in caves, where, for instance, the breakdown of bat and bird guano may favour the nucleation of authigenic minerals embedded within pre-existing sediments (e.g., secondary calcite, hydroxyapatite and less soluble phosphate minerals). This session aims at discussing the various difficulties encountered when dating sites with preservation issues, and at presenting age results and methodologies used on bioturbated sedimentary contexts and/or diagenetically altered samples. We welcome abstracts that deal with all absolute dating methods, with an emphasis on methodological improvements related to applications in archaeological settings.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Richard

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Maillys

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Archéosciences Bordeaux, UMR 6034 CNRS-Université Bordeaux Montaigne, Pessac, France

Session Number

18

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Climate Change and Human Responses in Past African Societies: Lessons for a Changing World

Session Abstract

This session delves into the complex relationships between climate change and human adaptation in ancient Africa, examining how past populations responded to significant environmental shifts. As we face increasingly severe climatic challenges today, the archaeological record provides a crucial perspective on resilience, migration, innovation, and collapse in the face of ecological stress. By focusing on periods of environmental and climatic transition, presenters will offer insights from sites across the continent, highlighting diverse strategies employed by past African societies. From shifts in subsistence patterns to changes in settlement organization, this session will showcase interdisciplinary approaches, incorporating archaeological evidence, paleoenvironmental reconstructions, and perspectives from social and biological anthropology. Contributions from a large panel of disciplines are encouraged to enrich the discussion and draw connections between past responses and contemporary challenges. This broad dialogue aims to underscore the relevance of the sciences of the past in informing present-day climate discourse and policy, particularly in regions vulnerable to environmental and socio-political pressures.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Maréchal

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Laura

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

ARCAN, University of Geneva

Session Number

19

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Creative approaches to interdisciplinary research practice and dissemination

Session Abstract

With the emergence of a 'material turn' within African historiography, questions of material culture and technology have become popular themes of enquiry for historians, bridging the thematic divide between the sibling disciplines of archaeology and history, and prompting reliance on interdisciplinary datasets. Yet efforts at interdisciplinary collaboration and co-authorship have become less common. Familiarity with literature, context, and practice is required to assess interpretations presented by either discipline. Added to this are the varying, non-linear ways in which the past is historicised beyond academia by communities across the continent. How do we conceptualise frameworks for critically sound interdisciplinary research that are simultaneously collaborative and anti-colonial, and that account for this plurality? Further, as archaeologists infrequently write for general audiences, their findings are often popularly disseminated by historians who may lack familiarity with the field to engage with this work critically. This is notable for the African continent where the precolonial past has been the realm of archaeologists, or historians and linguistic historians utilising archaeological data. This session explores innovative and collaborative mechanisms for disseminating interdisciplinary research. We encourage research that moves beyond conventional disciplinary praxis and aims to reach new audiences and promote decoloniality in popular and academic understanding.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Dunleavy

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Scott

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Cambridge

Session Number

20

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

High elevation foragers in Africa

Session Abstract

The ability to cope with variable environments is a key component in understanding the wide geographic dispersal of Homo sapiens. From hyper-arid to glacial and tropical habitats, the technological skills developed by humans allowed successful use of diverse resources and their integration into sophisticated economies, providing the basis for expansion into new regions and habitats. Often absent from these discussions is the role of altitude in H. sapiens' expanded use of landscapes. Pleistocene and Holocene sites in Africa and elsewhere suggest behavioral strategies that increasingly incorporated highland areas and resources, with present-day populations in areas such as Tibet, Papua New Guinea, South America, and parts of Ethiopia showing biological adaptations to such conditions. The nature of past use of and adaption to highlands and how their use might have been connected to surrounding areas (e.g., seasonal use of different altitudes) have only rarely been considered in detail. This session aims to describe the state of the scholarship on human adaptation to high elevations across Africa, including highland regions in the Horn of Africa, eastern Africa, and southern Africa and to identify shared patterns of economic and social use of different landscapes.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Mutri

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Giuseppina

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Firenze

Session Number

21

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Human-Insect Relations in Africa: Past, Present and Future

Session Abstract

From early humans to modern African societies, there is evidence of a spectrum of human-insect relations. Both humans and insects act as ecosystem engineers, mutually shaping and influencing their environments. This dynamic is evident in the historical ecology of landscapes, the evolution and spread of diseases, and is deeply embedded in ecological knowledge systems, rituals, and cosmologies across the continent. Insects are also depicted in various rock art traditions, highlighting their significance in human cognitive and social aspects. Archaeologists recognize insects as indicators of past environments, climates, and ecosystems. Growing interest in archaeoentomology over the past decade has spurred research into topics such as exchange, transhumance, hygiene, and human adaptations to specific ecologies. However, despite their cultural, economic, and ecological importance, there remains a research gap in archaeoentomology in Africa, particularly in integrating new advancements in entomological sciences. This session invites scholars studying human-insect relations within the African context to share their work. It encompasses research in archaeoentomology, geomorphology, taphonomy, anthropology, rock art studies, and contemporary ethnography. Our aim is to present diverse perspectives on human-insect relations, their implications for human societies, for archaeology as a discipline, and for offering inspiration to tackle environmental challenges.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Shen

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Benny Q.

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge

Session Number

22

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

In Memory of Prof. Merrick Posnansky: Archaeology in African Universities

Session Abstract

This session is organized in memory of Prof. Merrick Posnansky, honoring his significant contributions to African archaeology through teaching, research, and outreach. Previous SAFA conferences have featured roundtable discussions focused on archaeology in African universities. In 2010, the theme was “Decolonizing Pedagogy of Archaeology,” and in 2023, the focus was on archaeology in African universities. Prof. Posnansky served as the discussant for the 2010 roundtable. As a continuation of these discussions, this session invites contributors to examine the current state of archaeology in African higher education. The introduction of archaeology into African universities varies widely across the continent. In some countries, it began much earlier; for instance, South Africa established programs in the late 1920s, while Ghana followed in 1951. In contrast, other countries introduced or reintroduced archaeology much later, such as the University of Asmara in Eritrea in 1997 and Makerere University in Uganda in 2013. Despite this, there are limited publications addressing archaeology in African universities, with existing works primarily from Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, and South Africa. Overall, the state of archaeology in many African universities remains underexplored. This session aims to bring together several participants to discuss the current landscape of archaeology in African universities, focusing on three key themes: teaching, research, and community engagement.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Mehari

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Asmeret Ghebreigziabiher

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Independent Researcher

Session Number

23

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

In service to African human remains: ethics, repatriation, and emerging challenges in bioarchaeology

Session Abstract

As our field becomes increasingly ethics-minded, we consider the state of bioarchaeology in Africa. Colonial legacies continue to keep many African human remains outside their countries of origin. Repatriation efforts, when supported and pursued, are stymied by a lack of guiding policy and legislation, funding, and geopolitical conflicts that make it impossible to safely return archaeological materials. When individuals are curated within their country of origin, bioarchaeologists often grapple with other issues such as underfunded and understaffed institutions and insufficient space, resources, and/or equipment. Few bioarchaeology-focused training opportunities and degree programs across the continent mean that fewer African scholars have the background to address the shifting needs of skeletal collections. Finally, the growth of (usually destructive) archaeological science methods without local investment in laboratory infrastructure necessitates continued export of human remains without consistent timelines or requirements for return. In this session, we explore case studies focused on African human remains and discuss how our academic community can work together to support ethical stewardship and, wherever possible, address repatriation. As our professional ethics transform to prioritize anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and equitable science, we must ask how we can best serve African human remains and the communities, past and present, connected to them.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Sawchuk

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Elizabeth

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Cleveland Museum of Natural History

Session Number

24

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

New perspectives on Gender in the African past

Session Abstract

This session highlights new research and perspectives for studying gender in African archaeology. An interest in gender in the archaeological record is not novel, and research into gender has addressed gendered household spaces, the division of labour, craft industries, dietary reconstructions, social hierarchies and so on. Despite the significant strides that have taken place within the discipline challenges to studying gender in the past remain. For one, gender remains an underprioritised research area in African archaeology, and is not often the specific focus of data collection and analysis. Secondly, gender is often approached as a specific category of identity in the past that is fixed, stable and often binary. Gender is thus considered something that is evident and can be 'read' in specific spaces and objects. This session aims to critically interrogate evidence of the construction and negotiation of gendered identities in the past. We particularly encourage explorations of how gender was imagined, configured and re-configured and the implications of this on the material record. We also encourage explorations of intersectionality that address multiple identities. Papers can address the following themes: 1. Methods of examining gender in the archaeological record. 2. How gender was formed, expressed, contested and reconfigured in past societies. 3. The intersectionality of gender with other identities. 4. Controversies and breakthroughs in gender archaeology.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Mania

Primary Organizer Given Nam

David

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Kenyatta University

Session Number

25

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

The ancient DNA revolution in Africa: New data, broader applications and evolving research practices

Session Abstract

Africa—the birthplace of our species and cradle of unparalleled genetic diversity—is now at the forefront of the ancient DNA revolution. The arrival of this ‘revolution’ in Africa was fueled by significant advancements in sequencing technology and methods to analyze ancient genomic data and is carried by the increased involvement of African researchers. A decade after the groundbreaking publication of the first ancient African genome of a 4,500 BP Ethiopian individual, DNA from individuals who lived across the continent hundreds to thousands of years ago has shed new light on the intricacies of African population history. Together with archaeological findings, genomic insights have allowed for a more nuanced understanding of deep population structure around the continent, networks of connectivity (e.g., trading networks), migration events that spread languages and subsistence practices to new places, and the lasting impacts of colonialism. Presentations in this session (i) introduce new genomic data collected from various regions across Africa, integrating these findings within archaeology-based frameworks, (ii) explore innovative applications of paleogenomic research that extend beyond extracting DNA from human remains or (iii) emphasize the importance of conducting research that is engaged, equitable, and empowering, with a dedicated focus on building scientific capacity to support sustainable research practices.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Sirak

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Kendra

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Harvard University

Session Number

26

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

The Acheulean to MSA Transition at the crossroads: new multidisciplinary research in Africa

Session Abstract

The archaeological record of the Middle Pleistocene (MP), during which *Homo sapiens* emerged in Africa, is still poorly known. Although well dated African sedimentary MP records are rare, the available data show this period is marked by the disappearance of the Acheulean between 300-150 ka and the asynchronous and non-linear establishment of the MSA from ca. 300 ka onwards. Despite the significance of this period in the evolutionary history of our species, the geographic distribution and tempo of technological innovation across the ESA-MSA gradient remains poorly documented in regions such as Western, Central, or Northern Africa. The nature of this ESA/MSA transition is limited by i) the absence of preserved stratigraphic sequences, ii) the complexities of site formation processes at many MP sites, iii) poor chronological resolution and iv) variability in the naming of stone tool assemblages (i.e., cultural taxonomy and stone tool systematics) from one region to another. As a result, developing a broader, continent-wide comparison of the ESA-MSA transition in Africa is difficult. This session welcomes contributions focusing on the ESA-MSA transition and late Acheulean and early MSA sites with updated chronological, environmental, sedimentary, technological data or concepts from different geographical regions of Africa. This session aims to incorporate multi-disciplinary research and a wide range of contributions to discuss the ESA-MSA transition at the Pan-African scale.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Blackwood

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Alexander

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Max Planck Institute for Geoanthropology

Session Number

27

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

The Albertine Rift Valley: Human Adaptation, Cultural Development, and Capacity Building

Session Abstract

Despite its potential significance to human history, the Albertine Rift has received comparatively limited archaeological research attention compared to more intensively studied areas such as the East, South, and North Africa. Various factors have contributed to this imbalance, including regional political instability, insufficient funding, and logistical challenges. Consequently, much of the archaeological potential of the Albertine Rift remains underexplored. This session focuses on the archaeological record of the Albertine Rift Valley, covering parts of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Tanzania. It encourages presentations on the cultural and environmental dynamics that have shaped human occupation and adaptation in this unique ecological zone. We invite papers (especially from Early Career Researchers) that examine the interaction between humans and their environment, the role of the Albertine Rift in human evolution, migration and settlement patterns, and the preservation of archaeological sites. Furthermore, the session seeks to address the pressing need for capacity building, emphasising the importance of developing local expertise, resources, and international collaborations in archaeological research and heritage management. By fostering partnerships and increasing local research capacities, this session aims to deepen our understanding of the Albertine Rift as a crucial area for understanding human history in Africa.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Proffitt

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Tomos

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

ICArEHB

Session Number

28

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Challenges and opportunities of surface sites: The Kalahari basin and adjoining arid regions

Session Abstract

The Kalahari basin is the largest semi-desert in southern Africa. Despite the lack of caves and rockshelters in most parts, vast amounts of artefacts can be found on the surface in many areas of the Kalahari. This rich record of archaeological material is diverse, and is going as far back as the Early Pleistocene. Recent studies of ESA and MSA typologies have focused particularly on the links to humid and arid phases of the Kalahari's environmental history. A particular challenge, however, is establishing robust radiometric dating for these sites in order to integrate them into the regional palaeoenvironmental record, which still suffers from a paucity of high-resolution terrestrial proxy records. The Kalahari is not unique in these challenges, as adjoining arid regions (e.g. Namib, Karoo) of southern Africa show similar occupation patterns and challenges. Nevertheless, in the last 10 years, the arid to semi-arid southern African interior has ceased to be a blank space on archaeological maps and this session showcases the latest results to discuss best practises and methodological advances. We invite contributions covering any period of the Stone Age as well as contributions that compare or link assemblages from these arid regions within or to established data from other parts of Africa. The aim of this session is to create synergies across projects and to highlight the importance of the arid interior of southern Africa for human development.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Ecker

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Michaela

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Institute of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Archaeology, Kiel University, 24118 Kiel, Germany

Session Number

29

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

The Origins and Evolution of Early Technology

Session Abstract

The point at which hominins started to habitually use technology to interact with their surroundings was a watershed, not only for its evolutionary significance but also as it marks the threshold where these behaviours become recognizable in the archaeological record. While the Oldowan is traditionally seen as the earliest stone tool culture, recent archaeological discoveries challenge the idea that stone tool use was exclusive to Homo. While the study of non-human primates supports the hypothesis that the ability to use tools and a long-lasting material signature is not unique to the hominin clade. Understanding when, where, and why hominins, and potentially other species, began using technology remains a central question in the study of human evolution. To investigate this, we must think about tool use in terms of behaviour but also as an adaptive strategy that potentially enhanced fitness. This requires us to explore the relationship between technology, adaptation, and survival, and to ask how we can derive insights into these processes from archaeological data, what evolutionary advantages they offered and how to better understand the selective pressures and benefits that shaped these behaviours. This session encourages perspectives from archaeology, palaeoanthropology, palaeontology, and contemporary living systems to examine the origins of tool use, its underlying evolutionary mechanisms, the species involved, and our ability to identify this material signature.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Proffitt

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Tomos

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

ICArEHB

Session Number

30

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Catastrophes in African Archaeology: Exploring Responses to both Extreme and Incremental Challenges

Session Abstract

Disasters and crises have profoundly shaped both historical societies and the contemporary world. By viewing the past as a completed experiment and employing a usable pasts framework, this session aims to uncover how lessons from historical disaster responses can enhance modern resilience and preparedness. This session seeks to bring together archaeologists focused on human responses to various disaster scenarios in Africa's past. Contributions will alternate between catastrophist and gradualist frameworks to highlight not only sudden, violent events but also incremental stressors. Analyses will review punctuated and accelerated disruptions, as well as progressive and cumulative changes, investigating both causes as well as immediate and long-term impacts on societies. Participants will explore how African communities navigated diverse forms of disaster. Topics include climatic and environmental events, or sociopolitical upheavals like civic and institutional disintegration, colonialism, and warfare. Investigations will highlight how these events reshaped societies, economies, and governance structures, providing valuable insights into how past societies adapted to and managed such challenges.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Alders

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Wolfgang

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

New York University

Session Number

31

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Villages of the Dead: Remote Sensing Mortuary Landscapes

Session Abstract

The advent of modern satellite technology, most notably through platforms like Google Earth and Bing Maps, has heralded a transformational shift in the study of cultural landscapes . The very cost-efficient, non-invasive and synoptic-view approach has redefined archaeological enquiry across the globe offering a vast, near-comprehensive window on the ancient deployment of mortuary landscapes. Across Africa, and particularly in more open, arid zones, the perception of concentrations and arrangements of burial monuments is providing a new dimension in their 'completeness' - far beyond earlier foot and vehicular surveys. At a time of heightened insecurity such work is timely, both for the protection of sites, and ultimately in preparation for future fieldwork. MAEASaM is one project that has been actively assembling a large database of mortuary monument concentration. Our component studies have often found these mortuary complexes discrete from areas of settlement and, with some exceptions, relatively little studied. We propose a session to both discuss the interpretive use of such data, aspects of burial monument typology, and their diverse nomenclature - and welcome paper proposals from colleagues working with remote sensing survey data of mortuary landscapes anywhere on the continent.

Primary Organizer Surnam

MacDonald

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Kevin

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University College London

Session Number

32

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Bridging the Gaps: Investigating how Iron Age Transformations reshaped Eastern and Southern Africa

Session Abstract

The cultural, economic, linguistic and genetic mosaics of eastern and southern Africa were transformed through the spread of diverse forms of farming and pastoralism. This was not a single process, but instead social and strategic realignments were ongoing throughout the later Holocene and into recent centuries. Recent research has dramatically improved our understanding of early food producers in these regions, but the complex dynamics that continued to reform strategies through the “Iron Age” periods remain far less resolved. This session aims to highlight research focused on Iron Age transformations with the goal of bridging the gaps between our knowledge of early food producer and ethnohistoric lifeways across eastern and southern Africa. In honor of the contributions to this field by John E.G. Sutton, we especially aim to understand the role of migration, forager interaction, environmental change, language, and alliance/conflict in addressing these critical questions. Papers contribute to efforts to move beyond temporal divisions in research to build deep histories for the development of key strategies, social systems, and economic strategies in sub-Saharan Africa.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Goldstein

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Steven

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Pittsburgh

Session Number

33

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Cows, Snames, and Flies: Papers in Honour of Denbow, Huffman, and Wilmsen

Session Abstract

The deaths of Tom Huffman and Ed Wilmsen in 2023, and of Jim Denbow in 2024, mark the passing of three highly influential pioneers of Early Iron Age archaeology in southern Africa. They were all trained in the USA just as processual archaeology was breaking from the “culture history” approach, and all three blended both approaches in their work in southern Africa. This was particularly evident in their insistence on close analysis of pottery for time/space systematics, which put them at odds with those who thought that radiocarbon dating would fill this need by itself. Another common thread in their work was their commitment to integrating archaeology and social/cultural anthropology. This is seen in Huffman’s interpretations of spatial organization within Iron Age sites, and also in Wilmsen and Denbow’s critiques of the claims by prominent social anthropologists that Kalahari hunter gatherers had little or no contact with pastoralists and farmers before the late 19th century CE. Throughout their careers, they emphasized the connectedness across southern Africa, and the mobility of people, of goods, and of the ideas that define the Iron Age. This session will explore the legacies of their work for current archaeology in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Killick

Primary Organizer Given Nam

David

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Arizona

Session Number

34

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Food Production and Archaeobotanical Research in Africa: the State of our Knowledge.

Session Abstract

In the last one hundred years, archaeobotanical research projects, including systematic sampling for plant remains in Africa has expanded. These archaeobotanical exploration and research activities have elucidated that certain food crops were dominant in different ecological settings and advanced reasons for such occurrence. For instance, cereal agriculture is generally thought to be very important in the grasslands and savannas, while tuber and root crops, oil-bearing seeds and vegetables were significant in the forest regions. These give the impression that food production followed different and parallel trajectories in the different regions of Africa. Recent data from parts of Africa, the West in particular, based on established methods and complimented by modern techniques and adopted in hitherto 'uncharted territories', indicate that some of the 'so-called' savanna crops, such as cereals, were equally important for other regions. This suggests that several factors such as trade and environmental stability, played important roles in the evolution of the culture of food production in Africa and that assumptions and models require testing to ascertain their validity. In this session, we seek to appraise the current state of knowledge of food production through archaeobotanical research in Africa. In particular, we welcome data from starch grains, organic residue, charcoal, pollen, phytoliths, seeds and isotope analyses that advance our knowledge of food production culture in the continent.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Orijemie

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Emuobosa Akpo

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; Max Planck Institute of Geoanthropology, Jena, Germany

Session Number

35

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Archaeological Insights to Apiculture in Africa

Session Abstract

The global history of human engagement with bees and apicultural products arguably has the longest documented antiquity in Africa, with early evidence including cave paintings dating to ca. 8000 BCE in what is today Zimbabwe and depictions in 3rd millennium BCE Pharaonic Egyptian funerary scenes. 'The Archaeology of Beekeeping' advanced by Eva Crane over forty years ago now notes that Africa preserves the richest diversity of evidence of hive types utilised. In the intervening decades, broader archaeological syntheses around the antiquity of apiculture, the keeping of bees, and the use of bee products have expanded widely, particularly in circum-Mediterranean regions. Yet, African contexts, by contrast, remain an area of great potential for further development from which comparatively less engagement around the archaeology of apiculture has been addressed to date. This session seeks to gain insights from research related to archaeological evidence of beekeeping practices in Africa, from artefactual materials of such, to graphical depictions, textual accounts, and documentary sources of product use and trade, as well as molecular and palynological approaches to bee product utilisation, and insights from ethnoarchaeological and ethnographic research. By adopting a broad scope, it is hoped that a diversity of perspectives and thus a deeper archaeological discourse can be developed around addressing questions of apicultural practices in ancient and premodern African contexts.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Stark

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Robert

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Waterloo

Session Number

36

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Early Pottery in Africa: Origins, Development, and Cultural Contexts

Session Abstract

This session aims to explore the emergence and development of pottery in Africa, focusing on its technological innovation, stylistic diversity, and cultural significance. Pottery is a critical archaeological marker that provides insights into the lives of prehistoric communities, reflecting their daily practices, social identities, and interactions with their environment. We will focus on the earliest evidence of pottery-making across Africa, analyzing regional styles and techniques in various contexts and timeframes. This comparative approach highlights how local resources, environmental adaptations, and social organization influenced pottery production. By examining pottery's roles in both domestic and ritual contexts, we aim to understand its significance beyond functionality—as a medium of social expression and identity. The session will also explore pottery's role in cultural exchange networks within Africa, shedding light on the interconnectedness of early communities. Recent archaeological findings will be discussed to address how pottery production and distribution relate to wider socioeconomic and environmental changes. Bringing together scholars specializing in African prehistory, this session encourages interdisciplinary dialogue and seeks to identify future research directions. Pottery is highlighted as a dynamic cultural artifact, central to reconstructing the complex histories of ancient African communities and understanding its broader archaeological landscape.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Rotunno

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Rocco

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

The McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge UK; The Archaeological Mission in the Sahara, Sapeinza University of Rome

Session Number

37

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Rethinking the social and economic dynamics of the later prehistoric Maghreb, ca. 10,000-500 BC

Session Abstract

The Maghreb's position between the environments and social worlds of the Mediterranean and the Sahara suggests a rich set of possibilities concerning the social and economic lives of its prehistoric Holocene inhabitants, and their inter-connections with surrounding regions. Early Holocene lifeways evolved in relations to dramatically changing conditions along the coastal zone, in the upland interior, and across the northwest Saharan region. The sixth millennium BC witnessed the earliest adoption of domesticated plant and animal species, indicating connections between northwest Africa and Iberia. Later, new evidence from the western Maghreb establishes the existence of complex farming communities during the fourth and early third millennium BC, and further emergent information from different sites points to ongoing developments during the remainder of prehistory and into the Iron Age. Meanwhile, improving data from the adjacent areas of the western and central Mediterranean provide resolution on the patterning and direction of maritime connections from and to the African shore. This session will draw together what we now know, present fresh interpretative models, and encourage an explicitly comparative approach to the Maghreb's later prehistoric dynamics within both African and Mediterranean contexts.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Broodbank

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Cyprian

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge

Session Number

38

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

What's on the menu? Shifting lifestyles at the transition from procuring to producing

Session Abstract

Subsistence strategies, including the shift from procurement to producing lifestyles, are among the most critical aspects of human existence and frequently connected to other changes, such as sedentism and population growth. This session welcomes contributions from archaeology, archaeobotany/zoology and chemical analysis, with a focus on the shift from foraging to pastoralism and agriculture from all over Africa to illustrate how factors like climate fluctuations, resource availability, and interaction with other groups influenced subsistence strategies. The discussions aim to uncover regional variability and the long-term impacts of these subsistence changes on social organisation, mobility, and resilience in African communities, and want to highlight the importance of indigenous knowledge, trade networks, and technological advancements in domesticating plants and animals. By integrating archaeology and other disciplines, this session seeks to deepen our interdisciplinary understanding of how subsistence strategies evolved in Africa and contribute to broader debates on human adaptation, sustainability, and the significance of the African archaeological record.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Katharina

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Jungnickel

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Goethe University Frankfurt

Session Number

39

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Investigating settlements vs cemeteries: Competing or complementing interests? A view from Sudan

Session Abstract

During numerous historical periods in Sudan, there has been a marked inclination in research towards the study of burials rather than settlements, with cemeteries being considered the most significant social units offering invaluable insights for archaeological interpretation and the reconstruction of social, economic and gender patterns. Cemeteries, easy to recognise during a survey, have often been considered more 'worthwhile' to excavate because of their wealth of often intact finds. In contrast, settlements are more challenging to identify and generally produce fragmented artefacts, but in a greater variety and quantity, providing a richer insight into daily life, social and human-landscape interactions. More recently, significant progress has been made in the methodological approach to Sudanese archaeology with a growing awareness on a close interplay of data from cemeteries and settlements. Based on case studies from different parts of ancient Sudan, especially from the Middle Nile Valley, from the Jezira Plain, and the hinterlands, this session will present different methodological and theoretical aspects as well as challenges and opportunities in this field of study. We will look at case studies from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age as well as from the Meroitic and Post-Meroitic periods. This will allow us to discuss social patterns and cultural behaviours through the ages and to link the assessment of settlement patterns with burial customs.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Budka

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Julia

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Department of Cultural and Ancient Studies, LMU Munich University, Germany

Session Number

40

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

African metallurgy : Techniques and Societies / Métallurgie africaine : techniques et sociétés

Session Abstract

The session is open to all researches on metals and metallurgies in African archaeology. Its goal is to compare different approaches and points of view, but also different geographical areas and chronologies. Remains related to primary production (mines, furnaces, slag heaps) can be found throughout Africa. The diversity of the techniques remains largely unknown. It is essential to continue with thematic surveys and specialist excavations. New dates are still needed to strengthen the chronological framework for the emergence, development and technical innovations. This data sheds light on the relationships between technical traditions and socio-cultural groups, and highlights the processes of innovation and/or dissemination of technical culture. Metals play a variable, often important and always complex role in societies. Tools are essential for economic development. Weapons confer a military advantage. Metals are used as a means of exchange and travel over long distances. Finally, they also occupied symbolic space. Behind the metal objects and the production remains, we can see the people. Those involved in production - miners, metalworkers and blacksmiths - often occupy a special position in societies. As the repositories of specific know-how, they interacted with other craftsmen. The availability or scarcity of metals imposed constraints on users and contributed to changes in lifestyles. For those in political power, control over production and/or trade is essential.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Serneels

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Vincent

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Department Geosciences, University of Fribourg, Switzerland

Session Number

41

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Archaeologies of the contemporary past in Africa

Session Abstract

Africa has been described as the cradle of humanity or civilisation, tropes that have stimulated many generations of archaeologists. The centrality of African in world history, however, is far from being just about our origins. The modern world, in its current economic and political configuration, emerged out of processes that have been taking shape in continent since the late 19th century or were at least greatly influenced by relationships with the African continent. This session explores the emergence and development of modernity in Africa, and how its materiality has engendered new life-worlds. We welcome papers that deal with imperialism, past and present, and its legacies, but also histories of refusal and resistance. We are also interested in contributions that examine the ways in which the project of modernity and its notions of progress and development, despite their colonial roots, have been claimed and reinvented from within. We encourage community-engaged contributors to speak about their experiences while doing heritage work and to discuss how research on recent events and histories carry potential for social change, or present particular challenges. We hope the session will encourage reflections on the role and relevance of contemporary archaeology in Africa.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Gomes Coelho

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Rui

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Department of Archaeology, Durham University; Centre for Archaeology, University of Lisbon

Session Number

42

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Quantitative analysis of the African Middle Stone Age

Session Abstract

The Middle Stone Age (MSA) is the longest and earliest cultural phase most closely associated with the emergence and diversification of our species, *Homo sapiens*, in Africa. It is notable for both a core consistency through time and space, and distinct but sporadic periods of cultural efflorescence and regionalisation. Recently it has been proposed that environmentally driven population structure may explain this patterning, with fragmentation and coalescence of suitable environments mediating population isolation and interaction respectively, leaving signatures in the MSA record. To understand this spatiotemporal complexity in our species' evolution, robust comparative work is crucial. Quantitative methods offer critical tools for comparative studies to consider inter-regional connectivity, diachronic variability, links with environmental changes and diversity in behavioural expression. Moreover, they provide the analytical framework within which we can build and test hypotheses, allowing for mediation between data at the site and regional level. This session invites papers reporting comparative analyses of the MSA, exploring cultural and/or technological variation through quantitative synthetic approaches. We hope to explore how quantitative methods can contribute to renewed discussions about the MSA, particularly the cultural nexus between different areas of the continent and how changing ecological conditions may have provided intermittent crossroads through time.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Timbrell

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Lucy

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Human Palaeosystems Group, Max Planck Institute of Geoanthropology, and Department of Archaeology, Classics and Egyptology, University of Liverpool

Session Number

43

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Early human behaviour and environmental change in the Middle and Late Pleistocene of Morocco

Session Abstract

This session examines the relationship between climate variability and behavioural change in early modern humans in northwest Africa. It focuses on Morocco which now boasts amongst the earliest fossil evidence for Homo sapiens (~300,000 years) and some of the longest archaeological records for modern humans anywhere in Africa. Covering most of this timespan is the Middle Stone Age (MSA), but also the transition to the Later Stone Age (LSA) and subsequent developments. These periods are characterised by a number of major shifts in cultural and technological innovation, including the emergence of symbolic activity, the beginnings of complex funerary behaviour and critical changes in landscape use and economic practices. Climate change is frequently postulated as a major agency in driving such innovatory behaviours but, up until now, few well-integrated chronological and palaeoenvironmental studies have been advanced to support such claims. We aim in this session to discuss a wide range of different approaches to these questions and to invite presentations of new results and interpretations by researchers working in a diversity of scientific fields from archaeology and palaeoanthropology to the environmental and chronological sciences.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Barton

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Nick

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Oxford

Session Number

44

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

From source to society: Ochre exploitation in Africa

Session Abstract

Mineral pigments, or 'ochre', have been used for over 300,000 years. From around 160,000 years ago, the utilisation of ochre became increasingly common and encompassed a wide variety of applications. These ranged from symbolic purposes, such as rock art pigments, body paints or as a nonverbal communication agent, to more technical-economical functions, such as abrasive or tanning agents. This diversity of uses provided a cumulative inheritance of knowledge and skills through time, as well as communities of practice. Many of these applications and customs are still valued around the world today. While the study of ochre has been widely developed in the last two decades, several questions remain unanswered and we lack clarity on when and how ochre exploitation was standardised according to social and cultural norms. Due to its richness and variability, African ochre assemblages are key to understanding socio-cultural human evolution over the last 160,000 years. Can we identify distinct traditions related to ochre exploitation, and when did these traditions emerge? Understanding this will help determine how - and whether - the use of ochre aligns with the development and utilisation of other artefacts related to cultural traditions within various societies. Through an examination of these questions, our session aims to provide a deeper insight into the prehistoric exploitation of ochre in Africa and beyond and its significance in understanding human socio-cultural evolution.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Hodgskiss

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Tammy

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of the Witwatersrand

Session Number

45

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Identify the Bones, Identify the Past: Overcoming Identification Challenges in Paleolithic

Session Abstract

When preserved, bones from Paleolithic sites in East Africa offer a rare opportunity to investigate human-environment dynamics. These remains, however, are often highly fragmented and of the Bovidae family, a taxonomically diversified group comprising multiple subfamilies and species. While these species exhibit varied feeding strategies, shared osteological characters combined with their fragmentary state of preservation, make species-level identification challenging. This hampers paleoenvironmental analysis and limits our reconstruction of human-animal interactions. The goal of this session is to review the current state of research on human-environment dynamics including behavioral interpretations during the Paleolithic showcasing both classical and innovative studies including, but not limited to morphometrics, stable isotope analyses and ZooMS. This session aims to establish a solid foundation for studying African fauna and in particular Bovidae. It will foster reflection on the challenges of faunal identification and interpretation, encourage discussions on shared methodologies and innovative approaches and expand the conversation to include researchers dealing with similar issues related to different Paleolithic faunas. It will address challenges related to faunal identification and paleoenvironmental reconstruction, with the goal of deepening our understanding of human behavior and human-environment relationships during the Paleolithic.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Aureli

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Caterina

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Department of Ancient World Studies, University of Rome, La Sapienza

Session Number

46

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Bridging Intergenerational Research on African Pleistocene Archaeology: Advances and remaining gaps

Session Abstract

Current understandings of human evolutionary history remain anchored in Africa's Pleistocene fossil and archaeological records. These records owe much to the generations of committed researchers whose field expeditions to various corners of Africa produced seminal finds that have illuminated our understanding of hominin lifeways in diverse ecosystems and laid the foundations for successful field projects. However, while research into Africa's Pleistocene archaeology is accelerating, many gaps remain regarding the chronological, behavioral, and ecological contexts of hominin settlement histories in different regions of the continent. These gaps emanate from varying colonial experiences, highly variable preservation conditions, mismatches in data recovery and analytic methods across generations, and variable research infrastructure in the host countries. Driven by lessons we learned from editing the Handbook of Pleistocene Archaeology of Africa (Springer, 2023), this session aims to probe the current advances and remaining gaps in African Pleistocene archaeology. The goal is to provide a forum for Africanist paleo-scientists from different generations to discuss key aspects of their research activities, stimulate collaboration, identify common issues, and celebrate past and ongoing efforts to promote the Pleistocene archaeology of Africa at regional and local levels. Presentations may synthesize site records or be focused on case studies that showcase methodological advances.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Beyin

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Amanuel

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Louisville, USA

Session Number

47

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Pleistocene archaeology and environments across the Nile and desert regions in NE- Africa

Session Abstract

Few regions in Africa possess the contrasted environments characterising North-Eastern Africa (current Egypt and Sudan), with the lush Nile Valley quickly transitioning to hyper-arid deserts. Pleistocene environmental changes in the region have provided humans with access to different resources (water, vegetation, fauna, raw material) over time. Understanding how humans have coped with these dynamics occurring at different time (seasonal vs millennial) and spatial (local, regional or supra-regional) scales is challenging as few stratified geo- and archaeological archives exist. This is due to both the research history and the preservation of archives. While our environmental knowledge of climatic changes at larger scale improved, insights from regional to local scales are still rare. With the exception of a handful of stratified sequences, the Pleistocene archaeological record (Acheulean, MSA and UP/LP) of the region is mostly known from surface sites. These chronologically poorly constrained assemblages however present a unique opportunity – based on their archaeological visibility – to discuss human occupation at the landscape scale. The session will bring together current developments in Pleistocene geo-/archaeological research in Northeastern Africa. In addition to case studies, we invite discussions on general methodological challenges and approaches, in particular from an interdisciplinary perspective to facilitate exchanges for ongoing and future work.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Leplongeon

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Alice

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

UMR CNRS 7194 HNHP, Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris & Department of Anthropology, University of Connecticut, Storrs, USA

Session Number

48

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Exploitation of Aquatic Resources in the African Stone Age

Session Abstract

With only a few notable exceptions, evolutionary research and models have focused on terrestrial resources and foods as the key drivers of, technological, cognitive, and dietary change throughout the Stone Age. Africa features extensive aquatic systems, including saline coasts and lakes, freshwater lakes, wetlands, and rivers, which provided durable aquatic resources that hominins could have relied on, regardless of seasonal shifts that might have affected terrestrial food supplies during the Plio-Pleistocene. The continent's aquatic environments harbour rich aquatic and amphibious biota, including relatively mobile (e.g., fishes, aquatic mammals) and more sedentary (e.g., molluscs) taxa that offer potentially plentiful sources of protein and fats. Furthermore, these ecosystems also supply floral and mineral resources with unique properties suitable for modification and use for exploitation by technologically-driven hominin foragers. This session aims to open a broad discussion about aquatic resource use across the Plio-Pleistocene in Africa and draws together current research including comparative work from Europe and Asia. We particularly encourage contributions focusing on the selection, modification and use, and/or consumption of coastal and lacustrine biota, particularly molluscs, but also welcome the potentially important role of aquatic resources in human evolution, including (but not restricted to) examples of symbolic or decorative items.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Harmand

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Sonia

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

CNRS

Session Number

49

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Archaeology of liminality and transition: eco-cultural strategies in African prehistoric ecotones.

Session Abstract

In ecology, an "ecotone" refers to a transition zone between two biological communities, often marked by tension and interaction between distinct ecological systems. Derived from eco (ecology) and tonos (tension), it is a space where diverse ecosystems converge, creating unique conditions. This session seeks to extend this concept into the archaeological and cultural realm, focusing on liminal, transitional, and tension-filled landscapes that prehistoric communities inhabited and shaped. We aim to explore the adaptive strategies employed by prehistoric communities in Africa as they navigated spaces where overlapping or merging habitats demanded diverse settlement and subsistence techniques. These landscapes were not only ecological thresholds but also cultural ones, centre of significant innovation and adaptation. The session invites inter- and multidisciplinary approaches, bringing together archaeologists, anthropologists, and environmental scientists. We will discuss how various forms of liminality - spatial, temporal, cultural - inform our understanding of prehistoric landscapes. Participants are encouraged to consider scales ranging from the micro-landscapes of excavation trenches to the macro, regional-scale environments. This session is particularly suited for scholars focused on African quaternary prehistory, aiming to foster discussions that integrate ecological, archaeological, and cultural perspectives on human interaction with diverse environments.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Di Matteo

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Martina

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

The Archaeological Mission in the Sahara, Department of Ancient World Studies - Sapienza University of Rome

Session Number

50

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Archaeological Heritage Management in Central and North-western Zone of Tigray.

Session Abstract

This "Archaeological Heritage Management" work is carried out in the central and northwestern zones of Tigray. The preservation of archaeological heritages in the study areas has suffered from a lack of management frameworks, funds, expertise, and development activities, which encourage looting and heritage trafficking. Despite the indispensable historical, economic, socio-cultural, and research values of the archaeological heritage, their management conditions are too poor and neglected, but the recent devastating war in the region worsens it. Thus, this work was primarily initiated to document the pertinent potential challenges for archaeological heritage preservation. To achieve the stated goals, systematic field observation and interviewing local communities were employed purposely. The conditions of the site were described, and the collected data was analyzed qualitatively. The major challenges to the archaeological sites and their material cultures are war-born economic crises, looting, unauthorized mining, settlement expansion, lack of awareness, land degradation, poor heritage management culture, etc. The result indicated that the archaeological sites demand urgent heritage community engagement and empowerment to save such finite, non-renewable, fragile resources of the past.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Zeru

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Hadgu

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Aksum University

Session Number

51

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

At the core of the Acheulean: flake production methods across the Early and Middle Pleistocene

Session Abstract

The ability to produce large flakes is commonly regarded as a milestone in human evolution, marking the emergence of new cognitive abilities and a turning point between Oldowan and Acheulean productions. Despite this, the handaxe has traditionally eclipsed the study of the Acheulean techno-complex, and the methods associated with flake production, both on giant and on small and medium-sized cores remain largely undocumented. Yet, the identification of highly predetermined debitage methods for cleaver production, such as the Victoria West or the Tabelballa, highlights the impact of these research gaps on our understanding of the technical complexity of Acheulean groups. Today, the increasing evidence of small and medium-sized Levallois cores in the Late Acheulean record, alongside blade- and bladelet-like production in some sites in Northern and Southern Africa, underscores the need to redirect research toward flake production methods and prompts a re-evaluation of current paradigms related to Acheulean studies. In this session we would like to shift the focus of analysis to debitage production in order to gain a more holistic perspective on the Early and Middle Pleistocene lithic record. We aim to include the production of both large and small flakes, and we invite contributions that go beyond the scope of the Acheulean to discuss the origin and development of debitage methods and possible phylogenetic links.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Sánchez-Dehesa Galán

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Sol

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Salamanca

Session Number

52

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Landscapes of Investment: Urban-Rural Dynamics in Northeast and East African Communities

Session Abstract

The period from 1600 BCE to 1700 CE in Northeast and East Africa witnessed significant transformations in urban and rural lifeways, marked by the development of landesque capital— both permanent and temporary alterations to the environment that provided long-term returns on human investment. These persistent landscape transformations were manifested in maritime infrastructure, stone architecture, innovation in ceramic and craft technologies, agricultural intensification, and the emergence of diverse food webs and trade networks. The emergence of unique urban sites at the nexus of the Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and Gulf of Aden fostered the development of writing systems, religious institutions, and distinctive artistic traditions. These investments in the landscape significantly influenced subsistence strategies and socio-political organization. This symposium examines the socioeconomic and technological diversity of urban and rural communities positioned at the intersection of coastal zones, hinterlands, and major regional and global trade networks during this critical historical period. Through examination of archaeological data from different sites about the access and management of local and non-local resource, we aim to understand their impacts at micro (household), meso (community), and macro (regional) scales. This approach elucidates how sustained landscape investments shaped long-term urban-rural interaction and societal complexity.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Kusimba

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Chapurukha

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of South Florida

Session Number

53

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

General Oral Presentation Session

Session Abstract

General oral presentation session - open to all participants. Please email safa2025@ualg.pt for more information.

Primary Organizer Surnam**Primary Organizer Given Nam****Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation**

SAfA

Session Number

54

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Africa World Heritage Session

Session Abstract

By Invitation Only

Primary Organizer Surnam**Primary Organizer Given Nam****Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation**

SAfA

Session Number

55

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Mapping African archaeology: a critical exploration of past and present approaches and practices

Session Abstract

The development of archaeological cartographical critiques has been relatively slow as opposed to other disciplines, but it has seen an increased engagement in recent years. Nevertheless, in these reflections, an Africanist and African perspective has been almost completely absent. This session aims at offering an opportunity to scrutinise the archaeological mapping of Africa and its entanglement with past and present practices of data collection, analysis and representation. Among the issues that we would like to explore in this session are the need for a critique of traditional archaeological maps and mapping, both in the past and present practices of data creation and presentation alongside the exploration of alternative ways of mapping. Papers on maps as story telling; gender issues in archaeological mapping; participatory mapping; archaeological maps in the digital age; the archaeological map as creative and artistic production; entanglements of archaeology's data practice and mapping practice; cartography and archaeological mapping in the past and the present; scales of archaeological maps production from measurements and from analysis and many other mapping related aspects relevant to African archaeology are welcome.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Merlo

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Stefania

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Cambridge

Session Number

56

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Digital Pathways: Uniting Archaeology, Palaeoanthropology, and Human Evolutionary Insights

Session Abstract

Recent advances in digital technologies are transforming how we investigate Africa's past, providing archaeologists and palaeoanthropologists with enhanced tools for documentation, analysis, and interpretation. This session will explore cutting-edge digital methods, such as 3D scanning, digital modelling, GIS, photogrammetry, and machine learning, revolutionising research on archaeological sites and fossil hominins. These technologies enable innovative approaches to visualise and reconstruction, facilitating a deeper understanding of the connection between human anatomy and behaviour. We invite contributions highlighting how digital tools are being applied across various projects in African archaeology and palaeoanthropology, particularly those that examine early human behaviour and anatomy. Studies that showcase the impact of these innovations on data collection, comparative analysis, and interpretation are particularly welcome, alongside discussions on the broader significance of digital methods in interdisciplinary research, public engagement, and heritage conservation. By fostering dialogue between palaeoanthropology and archaeology, this session aims to explore how digital technologies can bridge the gap between these fields, offering new insights into human behaviour within its evolutionary context. We seek to explore the opportunities and challenges of integrating these methods, with a focus on advancing our understanding of Africa's past through digital innovation.

Primary Organizer Surnam

de Jager

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Edwin

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge

Session Number

57

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Beyond Traditional Labels: Multidisciplinary perspectives on transitions in Africa during the Late Pleistocene and H

Session Abstract

In archaeology, transitions are identified based on the appearance of new elements and the disappearance of old ones. This has led to the introduction of specific taxonomies for technocomplexes and transitional industries based on the presence of a series of common characteristics. However, traits considered distinctive of a phase often appear gradually and/or asynchronously, challenging the interpretation of a clear-cut break. As a result, such labels are overly simplistic and fail to capture the complexity of socio-cultural and behavioral changes, making them increasingly inadequate. With regard e.g. to the MSA-LSA transition, these boundaries have become increasingly blurry over the past decades due to the discovery of personal ornaments, symbolic items, rock paintings and the evidence for burials in MSA contexts, previously assumed to be pure characteristics of the LSA. Furthermore, research over the past decades stressed the role of temporal and regional variability in assemblages, which might be linked to diverse environmental and social drivers, questioning the validity of a continental unified taxonomy. Similarly, the transition from hunter-gatherers to pastoralists during the Holocene varied in tempo and mode across the continent. It is time to rethink the state of the art and incorporate new evidence from various contexts. This session invites researchers working on Late Pleistocene and Holocene transitions in Africa to explore the topic more broadly, moving beyond artificial labels, and re-examine the characteristics of these phenomena on a multidisciplinary scale to assess their current classification.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Pruvost

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Charlotte

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Laboratory ARCAN, University of Geneva, Switzerland

Session Number

58

Session Typ

Roundtable Session

Session Title

Trans-Atlantic Trades and Entanglements: Unveiling Narratives, Heritage and Legacies

Session Abstract

Triangular trades remain one of the significant events in world history during the Atlantic period. The impacts of this period were majorly felt across the continents (Africa, America and Europe) that bordered the Atlantic. Communities on the coasts and inlands were influenced by the period's activities - leaving behind legacies - contributing, and or affecting their tangible and intangible heritages. Many existing civilizations and cultures were tempered, some were destroyed, and likewise, some new cultures emanated as a result of the activities. There is a need to explore further on how the period plays a pivotal role in shaping the global economy, culture, history, and heritage. Studying this interconnectedness of global history will untangle how heritages including arts, music, drama, religion, foodways, and traditions were exchange during this period. Likewise, how slavery, colonialism, and exploitation continue to shape social, economic, and political dynamics of different regions. We welcome papers from participants including archaeologists, historians, heritage practitioners, and anthropologists addressing the cultural practices, heritage and creativity, resilience and resistance, politics and migrations, livelihood strategies, exchange patterns, and adaptations reflecting the Atlantic trades and entanglements.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Abdulmalik

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Abdulmalik Abdulrahman

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia, Norwich

Session Number

59

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Underwater archaeology and study of past and present environments

Session Abstract

In Africa, maritime archaeology has not yet been a privileged area of research. We are now beginning to appreciate its contribution to the study of the fascinating and highly complex interactions linked to Africa, its peoples and its relations with the rest of the world. For over four centuries, the trade between Europeans and Africans carried out by slave ships had a profound impact on the interbreeding of populations and the way landscapes were shaped. It shaped the human relationships, political activism and economies that govern the world today. This session, with its focus on maritime archaeology, will provide a forum for discussing work on the expression, preservation and revival of African memories. By conducting a historical African underwater archaeological study whose perspectives are endogenous, we are exposing the buried cultures that have accumulated over the long term, bringing into the spotlight the shadow stories that underpin our modernity. An analytical study of the maritime cultural landscapes of the Atlantic slave trade provides a better understanding of the mutual construction of European and African social environments. This approach offers comparisons that explore how endogenous knowledge might inform European modernity. Underwater archaeology establishes the co-temporality of African and European cultures, and deconstructs the thesis that modernity, capitalism and the Enlightenment are extra-African.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Gueye

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Madick

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

URICA-IFAN-UNIVERSITY CHEIKH ANTA DIOP DAKAR

Session Number

60

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

In the Shadow of Atlantic Crossroads: Archaeological Science Illuminates African Diasporic Lives

Session Abstract

This session explores the multifaceted applications of bioarchaeological science in investigating the life histories of enslaved Africans in the Diaspora. By integrating isotope biogeochemistry, genetics, and bioarchaeological assessments, we are able to uncover complex narratives surrounding individual origins and lived experiences of African captives, which so far remained untold. Isotope biogeochemistry, particularly the analysis of strontium, carbon, and oxygen isotopes, provides insights into the geographic origins of enslaved individuals. Similarly, aDNA analysis allows to uncover genetic heritage and possible ancestral origins. Examining human skeletal remains can additionally reveal vital information on the physical condition and health of individuals, illuminating the harsh realities of enslaved life. In this research, engaging with descendant communities or communities of care is paramount. We emphasize community involvement and dialogue, ensuring our methodologies serve as tools for healing and empowerment, fostering respect for those whose histories we seek to uncover. This session aims to create dialogue among scholars from diverse fields, highlighting the importance of collaborative and community engaged research in illuminating the complexities of the transatlantic slave trade and its enduring legacies.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Oelze

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Vicky M.

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of California Santa Cruz

Session Number

61

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Deconstructing the concept of 'crossroads'

Session Abstract

The concept of 'crossroads' often represents places with histories of movement and interaction between groups of people that includes, but is not limited to, genetic, technological, and social exchange. Crossroads can be viewed positively as ways to mediate stress or maintain cultural or linguistic ties. Yet crossroads can also be non-consensual, destructive, and harmful to individuals and groups via enslavement, displacement of people, and the loss of cultural identity. This session addresses the question: What does it mean to call a place a 'crossroads'? The session is open to all participants of SAfA, all geographic regions, and time periods. Please email safa2025@ualg.pt for more information.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Fisher

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Erich

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

ICArEHB

Session Number

62

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Bridging Continents: Origins, Evolution, and Expansion of the Acheulian technology between Africa and Europe

Session Abstract

Over the last two decades, research on African and European Acheulian has involved the discovery and excavation of new sites and revisiting known important localities, resulting in many new insights about the chronology, technology and ecological context of this technocomplex. Recent works trace the origin of this technology in Africa to around a 2.0 Ma, stimulating debate among researchers. Whereas, the earliest evidence of this technocomplex in southwestern Europe appears around 0.8 Ma, indicating significant chronological gap between the two continents. Moreover, our understanding of the mode of the Acheulian evolution from the Oldowan, the causes and defining characteristics of fully developed Acheulian technology, the subsistence and resource acquisition strategies, and how the Acheulian hominins arrived in Europe and adapted to the new region, remains poorly understood. Meanwhile, recent discoveries based on the application of cutting-edge technologies in the field and laboratory studies are providing new evidence about the diverse paleoecological contexts in which Acheulian hominins adapted and evolved. Still, the drivers of geographic expansion(s) of Acheulian hominins within and out of Africa remains marginally understood. This session aims to bring together researchers investigating different aspects of the African and European Acheulian with the hope of creating a multi-disciplinary context for addressing these and related questions. It aims to review recent advances in studying chronological, technological, and subsistence aspects of the Acheulian, as well as paleoenvironmental and paleoclimatic proxies.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Aredo

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Tegenu Gossa

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Session Number

63

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Functional studies from the Pleistocene record: new solutions to giving life to artefacts

Session Abstract

Functional research applied to African archaeological contexts has gained important stable continuity over time. Understanding the functionality of tools, archaeological sites, and different activities conducted by prehistoric human groups has motivated the development of pioneering research concerning the functionality. Experimental and archaeological projects have been posing significant analytical challenges, as these contexts exhibit a wide variability of raw materials, artefacts (design and function), in a broad chronological sequence, and a vast and diverse archaeological record. A core aim of functional studies is to infer artefact design and function. Use-wear traces offer invaluable clues to interpret stone tools, revealing their specific purposes and the tasks they were designed to accomplish. By understanding these traces, researchers can better reconstruct the behaviours and strategies of prehistoric human groups. Furthermore, the scenarios provided by African sites have allowed for the application of new analytical techniques, such as residual analysis and post-depositional studies, contributing to the methodological advancement of the discipline. This session invites researchers to explore the functional aspects of prehistoric tools—including lithics, bone, shell, and wood—within African contexts. It proposes a multiscale approach to discuss analytical methods, equipment, scales of analysis, and current hypotheses. The goal is to outline the state of the art in functionality studies, highlighting their potential to shed light on the behaviours and societal dynamics of ancestral groups, positioning functional research as essential to understanding human evolution and culture.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Bello-Alonso

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Patricia

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Archaeology, Antiquity and Territory Studies Group (GEAAT), University of Vigo, Vigo, Spain; TraCEr, Laboratory for Traceology and Controlled Experiments at MONREPOS Archaeological Research Centre and Museum for Human Behavioural Evolution, The Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA), Schloss Monrepos, 56567 Neuwied, Germany

Session Number

64

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

New Directions in the Archaeology of the Yoruba-Edo Region (West Africa)

Session Abstract

The ancestral Yoruba-Edo region (Nigeria, Benin Republic, Togo) has recently witnessed a burst of archaeological activities and material culture studies focusing on the questions of state formation, migration, commerce, political economies, technology, social ecology, and human-environment interactions. Archaeological fieldwork has enriched the temporality and cultural history of the region, adding new data that goes back to the Early Iron Age (400-300 BC), revealing new sites, and suggesting new models of sociopolitical organization and resource management. Archaeometry research, including archaeobotany, zooarchaeology, geoarchaeology, and archaeochemistry, has also opened new areas and topics for research engagement. This session offers the opportunity for collaborators and both emerging and established scholars to present their work, explore how new data challenge and sometimes reinforce old models, and engage with the larger audience about the implications of the new work on Yoruba-Edo region for heritage management and African archaeology in general.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Ayelagbe

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Timilehin

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

University of Michigan

Session Number

65

Session Typ

Oral Presentation Session

Session Title

Archaeology, the Museum of West African Art, and Pre-Construction Fieldwork in Benin City, Nigeria

Session Abstract

The last two decades have witnessed a tremendous increase in interest and activity in archaeology across Nigeria, with previously researched sites being revisited with new approaches and new areas opened for investigation. With the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigerian universities, other project partners, the Museum of West African Art (MOWAA) brings new dynamics to the archaeological and heritage discourses in Nigeria and West Africa more widely. MOWAA's wider mission as an organisation is to provide a regional focus for research and creativity from its new developing campus in Benin City. Amongst MOWAA's various archaeological and heritage management endeavours, the ongoing project in Benin aims to deliver the most extensive archaeological research undertaken in Benin City since the 1960s through a groundbreaking multi-year partnership between MOWAA, NCMM, the BM, and UK delivery partners, Cambridge Archaeological Unit and Wessex Archaeology. MOWAA has also extensively focused on digital mapping of the massive Benin earthworks through partnership with the DAI to develop its Edo|cation programme. This double panel session presents MOWAA's vision and agenda for pre-construction archaeology and heritage management, including digitalization of the Benin earthworks and community engagement. Part one focuses on the early results of excavations from the MOWAA Archaeology Project, while part two presents other MOWAA activities beyond the MOWAA campus.

Primary Organizer Surnam

Opadeji

Primary Organizer Given Nam

Olusegun

Primary Organizer Institutional Affiliation

Museum of West African Art (MOWAA)