

Session ID	41
Session Title	Palaeolithic societies, sociality and social life: archaeological perspectives 20 years after Gamble (1999)
Start Time	Tue Dec 17 14:00:00
Room	739

Twenty years ago, Gamble's "Palaeolithic Societies of Europe" was published, representing a landmark moment in the study of the social lives of both archaic hominins and early members of our own species, Homo sapiens. For arguably the first time, Palaeolithic populations, and the archaeological record which they generated, were analysed within an explicitly social framework interpreted in terms of the nested scales of social networks and the resultant interactions within and between individuals, groups, and regional populations. Two decades later, social approaches have become fundamental to Palaeolithic archaeology. However, the Palaeolithic archaeological record does look rather different. Not only does it now extend back in time to 3.3 million years ago, but it also incorporates at least three new hominin species (Homo floresiensis, Homo naledi, the Denisovans and possibly a fourth, Homo luzonensis), and falls increasingly under the purview of geneticists, whose research provides unique insights into hominin interactions and evolution. What has been the impact of these developments on how we conceive of Palaeolithic society, and what should be research priorities moving forward? Taking the 20th anniversary of Gamble (1999) as our impetus, we invite papers from researchers working on all aspects of Palaeolithic society, social life, and sociality, broadly defined. Papers are welcome from all Palaeolithic sub-periods, geographic regions, and theoretical perspectives. Possible topics include, but are not limited to: population connectivity and landscape use; group size, life history and demography; social organisation and economic strategies, including the role of individuals of different ages and sexes in Palaeolithic societies. Complementary perspectives from scholars working on primate archaeology or early farming societies are also welcome.

14:00	Jenni French, UCL; Fiona Coward, Bournemouth University	Introduction	
14:10	Becky Wragg Sykes, Independent scholar / Trowelblazers	Neanderthal Revolutions: radical manifestos for Palaeolithic Societies	<p>For more than 150 years our first-found, closest and best known hominin kindred have been the A-list celebrity of human origins research. Neanderthals have retained this scientific and cultural cachet not only because of dramatic changes in our understanding of them, but because of their deeper significance.</p> <p>This talk discusses how the archaeological evidence has developed since their discovery and particularly in the past three decades, producing a renaissance in what we believe these ancient humans were like. It also considers shifting perceptions around our relationship from the Pleistocene to the 21st century. Finally, it explores where the future lies for these Palaeolithic societies of the past, and of the researchers who study them in the present.</p>
14:25	Gail Hitchens, University of York	Carrying on with Neanderthal mobility: a new approach to understanding group movement	<p>The composition of a social group will undoubtedly influence everyday decisions, including how tasks are divided and how a group moves. We know that 40-60% of Palaeolithic societies consisted of children, yet we rarely consider their presence in our interpretations. Carrying infants is a universal task for humans and ethnographic accounts demonstrate how this behaviour is intricately intertwined with subsistence activities and division of labour, as well as key social behaviours such as cooperation and sharing. It is also a considerable investment and it is this energetic cost that provides a tangible route to looking at its impact in the past. This paper will discuss a GIS-based approach to understanding how group composition, specifically carrying infants, could impact mobility. This will be explored through a Middle Palaeolithic case study, using sites in Northern Spain.</p>

14:40	Annemieke Milks, UCL; Sheina Lew-Levy, Simon Fraser University; Noa Lavi, University of Haifa; Rachel Reckin, University of Cambridge; David Friesem, NA	Creative, influential, and daring! A review of the archaeological evidence for prehistoric hunter-gatherer children	In Palaeolithic Societies, Clive Gamble touched on the significance of children as active members of a group who were involved in the formation of the archaeological record through play, and whose learning takes place in the context of social life. Palaeolithic Societies critiqued models that suggested that children just learned to conform to a society, serving the 'will of the institution'. At the time of publication, a number of studies had already identified the presence of children as active and individual members of past societies, and subsequent research continues to build on this foundation. In this paper we present the results of a systematic review and analysis of over 60 papers with primary data of children in prehistoric modern human ( <i>H. sapiens</i> ) hunter-gatherer societies on six continents. Influenced in part by Gamble's vision of children as active contributors, researchers have progressed beyond a mere identification of the presence of children and have moved towards utilising data to provide insights about their contributions to societies. Much of the evidence demonstrates children learning the manufacture and use of material culture, not just by formal learning to acquire skills such as flint knapping, but also through play and imitation. Children were also mark makers, active producers of symbolism and art, and were potentially drivers of innovation. Grave goods associated with child and adolescent burials variably point to some societies treating children as undifferentiated 'full members', while in others they may have been assigned a special status on the basis of age, gender, or social stratification. There is a wide range of evidence of how hunter-gatherer children in prehistoric societies made use of space in settlements, at social gatherings, or in daring forays into caves - sometimes accessing places that were unavailable to adults, thus confirming Gamble's assertion that their physical bodies structured behaviour. This review of <i>H. sapiens</i> prehistoric hunter gatherer children provides a useful comparative dataset for evidence of children from societies of other species of <i>Homo</i> .
14:55	April Nowell, University of Victoria	Reconsidering the personhood of Gravettian infants	There is a widely held belief among archaeologists that the paucity of infant burials in the European Gravettian (ca. 33,000-22,000 cal. BP) can be attributed to societal attitudes towards these young individuals. Specifically, it has been argued that infants were discriminated against by members of Gravettian society who did not consider infants as "people" until after weaning. Infants who died before this process was complete were not worthy of burial. This paper challenges this characterization of Gravettian infants by considering a wide range of taphonomic factors, drawing on newly discovered as well as existing but reinterpreted burial data, and contextualizing infant burials within the larger context of Gravettian burial practices. It concludes that at certain times and certain places, some Gravettian peoples buried their infants and when they did, it was with great care and likely with great emotion at their passing.
15:10	Session organisers	Discussion	
<b>15:30</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	<b>BREAK</b>
16:00	Juana Maria Olives Pons, Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology; Jordi Estévez Escalera, ARESOCARE-UAB	The social regulation of reproduction among hunter-gather-gatherers: an interdisciplinary and experimental approach	There is an incongruity between the demographic data observed among contemporary hunter-fisher-gatherers (e.g. existence of different growth rates, capability of achieving high growing rates, long-term demographic stability) and that of prehistoric hunter-fisher-gatherers (e.g. low population density, lack of demographic expansion). The low demographic density observed in the Palaeolithic has been often explained as a consequence of low technological capability, intrinsic biology, and ecological and climatic catastrophes. I argue that demographic stability is difficult to achieve through circumstantial and specific external events that affect mortality patterns. For long, it has been neglected that population growth can also be regulated by controlling the social and reproductive relations between men and women. In the case of hunter-fisher-gatherers, the mode of production is not only defining the productive relationships of the components of the workforce, but it is clearly establishing the social relations between the same. The low and stable demographic density during the Palaeolithic requires a different perspective of analysis that takes into account the social organization of the populations, and the social regulation of their reproduction.  In this paper I present the results obtained in my doctoral research, in which I take into account the available socioeconomic and demographic data on modern hunter-fisher-gatherers, in order to organize and prepare several demographic exercises to incorporate in a multi-agent based simulation system. Assessing the effect and long-term impact of specific social regulations of reproduction, the results show that a social normative system alone is sufficiently influential to shape demographic growth in a hunting-fishing-gathering society.

16:15	Matt Grove, University of Liverpool	An unbounded social landscape: demography, complexity, and inter-assemblage variability	Gamble (1999) suggested that a series of expansions in the scale of social life were associated with key stages in hominin socio-cultural evolution. His work of the early 1980s also demonstrated that climatic and environmental pressures could lead to changes in the distances over which material culture was transmitted. This paper situates these ideas within the framework of recent research into the relationship between demography and cultural complexity and argues that in identifying networks of encounters as the primary focus Gamble highlighted a crucial facet of hominin adaptation that subsequent research has often overlooked. Low-productivity environments lead to lower population densities, and recent research suggests that this in turn would lead to reduced cultural complexity. Results of empirical analyses, however, are equivocal. Ethnographic analyses and case studies from Upper Palaeolithic Europe show that population density and cultural complexity do not covary, because network structures act to equalise encounter rates between individuals as population density fluctuates. Instead, the archaeological signature of low-productivity environments is greater spatial homogeneity in assemblage composition, as originally suggested by Gamble's work on Gravettian 'Venus' figurines.
16:30	Natasha Reynolds, University of Bordeaux	Scaling up, scaling down: how to describe a heterogeneous European Upper Palaeolithic record	<p>We are accustomed to describing the European Upper Palaeolithic record in terms of a series of geographically and temporally restricted technocomplexes (or archaeological taxonomic units, etc.): Aurignacian, Gravettian, Solutrean, Epigravettian/Magdalenian, etc. These units shape our conceptualisations of the Upper Palaeolithic in Europe and our research questions. However, as is widely acknowledged, there are numerous theoretical and empirical shortcomings to this current framework. My experience of studying the Mid Upper Palaeolithic record of European Russia has made some of these shortcomings starkly obvious, and as a result I have been looking for better ways of describing the Upper Palaeolithic record on a large scale. This is not straightforward: there are significant theoretical issues that need to be tackled, perhaps especially to do with population concepts and how they intersect with cultural taxonomy. Furthermore, we have to deal with the heterogeneity of the record itself and the existence of diverse research traditions that have been applied to the record across Europe. We also have to consider that any robust revision of the Upper Palaeolithic record almost certainly requires a return to studying the basic archaeological material itself at a huge scale.</p> <p>Here I will discuss some of the theoretical and practical issues that I have encountered in my attempts to find better ways of describing the European Upper Palaeolithic record and how it may be possible to move forward.</p>
16:45	Taryn Bell, University of York	Emotional baggage? Emotion, material culture and social life in the Palaeolithic	Emotion gets a rough ride in archaeology. We often think of it as too ephemeral to be accessible on a prehistoric timescale, and too variable to be of much interest. Yet, psychological and neuroscientific research clearly demonstrate the significant role of emotional experiences in the shaping of our social lives. Any attempt to understand social life in the past should therefore seriously consider the influence of emotion. Doing so is fraught with difficulty, yet there are ways forward. Material culture in particular has much potential for refining our understanding of emotional experiences in prehistory. Palaeolithic archaeologists are already aware of the role that objects play as 'symbolic storage' or as a 'release from social proximity', but we focus less often on its role as a socio-emotional conduit, connecting people together and having palpable effects on the way we think, feel, and act. This paper will focus on the socio-emotional significance of material culture as seen through the lens of attachment theory, an approach used widely in psychology to explain and interpret interpersonal relationships. It will consider how an understanding of 'attachment objects' may be able to inform our understanding of the evolution of our social and emotional capacities, as well as the evolution of material culture itself. This approach, it is hoped, will demonstrate how archaeologists can study emotion in a theoretically and methodologically grounded manner, for even the most distant periods of the human past.
17:00	Clive Gamble, University of Southampton	Discussion	
17:30	<b>END</b>	<b>END</b>	<b>END</b>