

Faculty Profile »

NEW EGYPTOLOGIST DISCUSSES LOVE OF DEATH AND ART

An Interview with Kara Cooney

BY SHAUNA K. MECARTEA

You received your Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from Johns Hopkins University in 2002, and your research focuses on Egyptian art and archaeology. How did you become interested in ancient Egyptian culture and art?

Ever since I can remember, I've wanted to learn all I could about ancient civilizations—and for whatever reason ancient Egyptian material culture always resonated with me. I remember when I was six or seven years old, my mother bought me a book on Egyptian mummies from the British Museum and I just adored staring at all those ghoulish dead bodies, coffins, canopic jars, and books of the dead. Little did my mother know that I would become a specialist in funerary arts.

Even though I was enthusiastic about ancient civilizations at a very young age, I didn't have much opportunity to study ancient Egypt in high school or as an undergraduate. Not many people do. It wasn't until my junior year of college that I had the chance to take a class in Egyptian art. I just loved it, and it was then that I started to look into gradu-

ate opportunities. Until then, it hadn't seriously occurred to me that I could study Egyptian art and civilization as a profession.

You were Co-curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) for Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs, a Kress fellow at the National Gallery of Art, and have appeared as the team archaeology expert on the History Channel's Digging for the Truth. With many interesting and diverse achievements under your belt, what do you think has been the most compelling so far—and why?

A Kress fellowship and an NSF dissertation award were invaluable, allowing me to travel all over the world to study the primary evidence for my doctoral research (mostly examining coffins and ostraca in European museums and in Egypt). The Kress fellowship also funded me for second year, during which I wrote the bulk of my thesis. The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., was a supportive and diverse environment that encouraged and reinforced the multidisciplinary style of research that I had been taught at Johns Hopkins.

I'm tremendously proud of my book *The Cost of Death*, which is an extension of the work I did while at the National Gallery—but I have to admit that it is a very academic book with a limited Egyptological audience. On the opposite end of the spectrum, co-curating the King Tut exhibition with Nancy Thomas at LACMA was a great opportunity to work on a much more accessible project and to talk with and lecture to a much broader audience. Plus, it gave me the chance to work closely with some amazing objects and to learn about the complicated world of blockbuster museum exhibits.

While teaching may be my most compelling pursuit (whether it's a graduate class on reading hieroglyphs or an undergrad survey of the ancient Mediterranean), if I had to name my most unexpected project thus far it would be the television series I'm currently writing, producing, and hosting right now for the Discovery Channel. (In fact, as I type this I'm on a plane flying to Sri Lanka from Cambodia—where we just shot part of the show in ancient Angkor.) The series is called *Out of Egypt*, and my husband, Neil Crawford (who's a filmmaker), created the show with me and is an executive



Opposite page: Kara standing in front of a queen's pyramid on the Giza Plateau, Egypt.

Right: Kara in the temple of Medinet Habu, the mortuary complex of Ramses III, west bank of Luxor, Egypt.

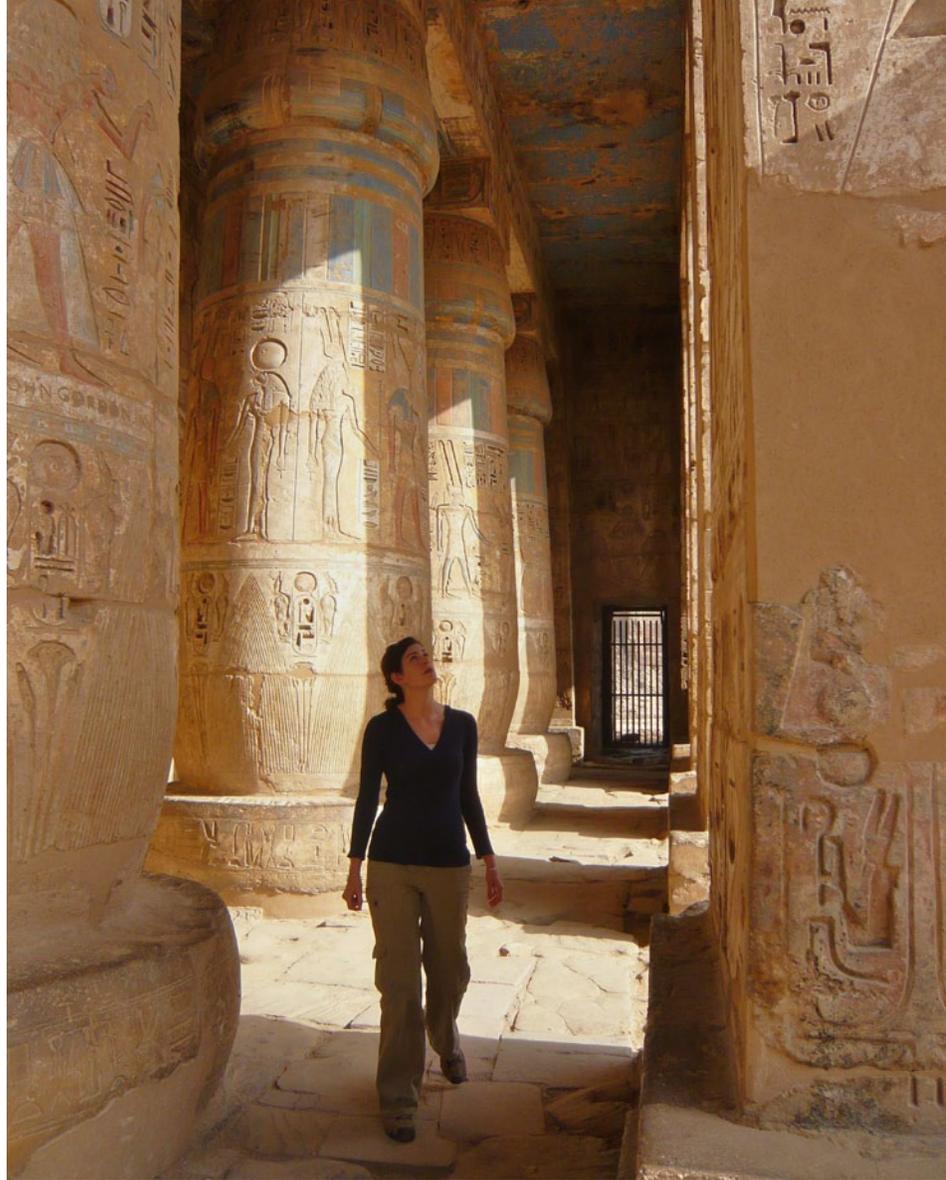
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producer. Because it's a comparative archaeology series, I've been given the extraordinary opportunity to step out of Egyptology—and out of my own comfort zone—to learn about ancient and modern civilizations all over the world.

Television is easily dismissed by some academics, but as an Egyptologist I've learned that this medium is an important opportunity to communicate to the public. And it gives me the chance to (informally) apply and test some of my ideas about ancient Egypt on other cultures as disconnected as Vietnamese Buddhists and the Moche culture in Peru. This kind of broad, comparative examination isn't necessarily well suited for an academic peer-reviewed journal or a university press monograph, but the medium of television welcomes (and even demands) telling an accessible story in which I step out into the unknown—and out of my own area of expertise.

Your previous position was at the Getty Research Institute (GRI) as Research Associate. What projects did you focus on during your tenure there?

At the GRI, I ran the Villa Scholars Program. I read hundreds of applications and sat on a number of decision committees. I also ran the annual dissertation workshop at the Getty Center—a three-day seminar for graduate students in the writing stages of art historical dissertations. One of the highlights of my time at the Getty Villa was working closely with Dr. Erich Gruen, implementing his scholar year focusing on cultural identity in



the ancient Mediterranean. I was the only Egyptologist at the Getty Villa, which brought a unique perspective to a place that traditionally focuses on Greco-Roman civilizations. Not only did I learn a great deal about other parts of the Mediterranean but many Getty colleagues and research fellows had the chance to learn about ancient Egypt from me. And I made some lifelong friends. And thankfully, because I was at the Research Institute, my own academic writing was a part of my job. I finished my book *The Cost of Death* there.

As a new faculty member in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, what are some of your upcoming projects?

I'm knee deep into my second book, *The Life and Death of a Coffin: How and Why the Ancient Egyptians Spent So Much on Their Funerary Arts*, which will reach out to a larger audience than my first book. Most of the manuscript is finished, but it still needs polishing. This book will reach out to as many people as possible: fellow academics, students, archaeologists in other fields, and the general public with an interest in Egyptology. There are so

many people out there with such enthusiasm for the ancient world, and for ancient Egypt in particular.

I'm also actively researching another book project on spending for death in ancient Egypt during a well-known economic and political downturn—the late New Kingdom and the so-called Third Intermediate period. I'm very interested in the ways that economic recession and political insecurity affect the manner in which people prepare for something as culturally conservative as funeral rituals and burial. And I've got some amazing evidence with which to work, including tombs, coffins, mummies, and even receipts and letters that suggest less ostentatious and more defensive patterns of burial during this specific time period.

Finally, I'm working on a number of articles, including at least three submissions for the UCLA *Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (UEE)—a groundbreaking online resource (edited by my colleagues Willeke Wendrich, Associate Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures,

and Jacco Dieleman, Assistant Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures) that will make academic Egyptological information accessible to the entire world, not just specialist libraries. I've just submitted a UEE article on scarabs, and I'm rewriting another on burial deposits. Next up is an article on a little-known building in the Karnak complex that I've studied quite a lot, called the Edifice of Taharka.

How do you think ancient art informs specialists about ancient cultures?

If one defines “ancient art” quite broadly, then there is no question that it can provide a more complete picture of a civilization. It's likely that less than five percent of ancient Egyptians were literate, so to learn about the bulk of the population we have to turn to non-textual, visual sources. Some of this material culture is well made by high-level craftsmen. Other examples were produced by lower-tier and poorly paid individuals. These value and quality differences are very informative about the makeup of ancient Egyptian society.

A broader perspective of “art” in the ancient world brings up two disciplinary problems. First, many art historians do not consider lower-quality visual culture to be “art.” And second, there has long been a schism in Egyptology (as in just about every other field of ancient studies) between those who study texts and those who study objects. Obviously, this divide is arbitrary and based on our modern disciplinary divisions and methods of organizing data. My work seeks to address these divisions, on the one hand, by integrating both text and art in my research projects—and on the other by including objects in my data sets that might not be considered “fine art” by some specialists.

You are interested in the cost of death (which is the title of your first book). Can your research in ancient Egypt lend insight into the funerary practices of today?

I just read a book called *The Undertaking* by John Lynch, a poet and undertaker in the northeast U.S. It's a beautiful book, and it just reinforced that American funerary practices are fundamentally different from the ancient Egyptians. Where the elite Egyptians were aggressive and systematic in giving the dead all that they needed for a successful transition to the next world, we put off preparations—moving forward in our arrangements in a tentative and even embarrassed fashion.

The Egyptians were so obsessed with getting the necessary funerary materials for their dead, like coffins and amulets, that they often usurped objects that had been made for others. And we shouldn't forget that the purchasing of funerary objects far in advance of death probably allowed psychological preparation for the Egyptian family as well. American funerals focus much less on the materiality of death and more about denial of it. In fact, the more I study the ways that the Egyptians spent tremendous amounts of their income on preparations for death the more appropriate the analogy of a modern American wedding becomes. Both the Egyptian funeral and the American wedding involve a tremendous amount of money spent for one moment of ritual display—a display that can instantaneously communicate status level, spending abilities, gender, and even geographic and cultural identities.

KARA COONEY IS ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES. SHE BEGAN TEACHING AT UCLA IN JANUARY.



Kara at a Coptic period cemetery near Karanis, Fayum.

Faculty Profile »

FROM NUMISMATICS TO CHINESE ARCHAEOLOGY

An Interview with Li Min

BY ERIC C. GARDNER

How did you first become interested in archaeology?

Archaeology was not an adulthood intellectual revelation for me. Having grown up in a small coastal city in China, I had become interested in history and archaeology in my childhood. After the traumatic experience of the Cultural Revolution, the early 1980s was a time of optimism and imagination. There was a great desire among intellectuals to inspire the next generation. Archaeologists such as Tong Enzheng wrote science-fiction novels with archaeological themes, which captivated young readers like myself.

There was no public archaeology program available at the time to help the public. The city science education committee kindly took on the responsibility and invited a well-respected history teacher from a local middle school to coach me. I would visit him after school on a weekly basis after my classes at the elementary school for a conversation in history. This volunteer intellectual support was provided to me on the basis of my interest, for which I am deeply grateful.

With the help of local engineers, I went to the copper foundry to compile a “research collection”

of bronze coins and objects from scrap metal before they were melted down. I started to publish my works on coins in *China Numismatics* when I was 12. I still care very much about the development of numismatics. When I heard John Papadopoulos, UCLA Professor of Classics, deliver a great talk on Greek coinage at Michigan many years ago, I thought it had the potential to transform our field. Although I developed broad intellectual interests in the following years, the appeal of archaeology—which allows you to have a conversation with the past through its actual remnants—never lost its hold on me.

There is the question of studying Chinese archaeology abroad. The motivation comes from the appeal of anthropology. When I was in high school, I met a young local archaeologist who attended K. C. Chang’s lecture series on anthropological archaeology at Peking University. I was fascinated by Chang’s ingenuity in approaching early China in the broader context of early civilization and past human experiences. I aspired to study abroad and went to Canada for my B.A. and M.A. in Anthropology, and completed my Ph.D. at the University of Michigan. The program in anthropological archaeology at Michigan provided me with training on the emergence of states and early civilizations in a comparative framework. Faculty members there were keen to provide hands-on training and assistance for graduate students. Faculty members Henry Wright and Richard Redding participated in the fieldwork and contributed their expertise in archaeological science.

Tell us a bit about your own research. What areas or methods have you focused on in your work? What it is that attracts you to them.

My dissertation research (“Conquest, Concord, and Consumption: Becoming Shang in Eastern China”) investigates the ways aspects of symbolic, social, and natural worlds converged in human interactions with animals—particularly in the realms of food and religious communication on the frontiers of Shang civilization in the late second millennium B.C. The research consisted of excavation at the Bronze Age site of Daxinzhuang and zooarchaeological analysis of the excavated material from the site.





“The attraction of archaeology is its ability to uncover diverse human experience through minute observations of contextual remains from the distant past. The reward of being a detective of past societies is the potential to bring the past alive and reveal the genealogy of our own ideas.”

Now that you are part of the faculty at UCLA, what upcoming projects are you planning?

My forthcoming project will be a regional survey of the Qufu region in the Wen-Si River Basin of Southern Shandong, not far from where I did my dissertation fieldwork. Some of the important Chinese archaeological works were carried out in this region (for example, the excavations of Dawenkou, Wangyin, Yinjiacheng, and the Bronze Age Lu city at Qufu). A regional archaeological project would help to put everything together and address many unresolved questions. I elaborate on the project in my article in this issue.

For much of China’s recent history, society—at least officially—has been more interested in the future than in the past. At times a great emphasis was placed on making a decisive break with old traditions and old ways of life. How does archaeology fit into contemporary Chinese culture (both academic and popular), given that history of tension with the past?

When one tries to make a break with the past, it involves investigating the past in order to say “We are so different.” There has been a lot of archaeology done in an evolutionary scheme in the twentieth century in order to demonstrate that we are in a different stage of society. In the 1970s, for example, prehistoric archaeologists emphasized gender inequality and wealth differences in their effort to understand changes from an egalitarian social structure to one with entrenched inequality—leading to social stratification and the rise of early states.

In contemporary China, the image of the future is often represented as somewhat resembling the Golden Ages of Chinese society in the past—when

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My major field research centers on two major themes. The first is the transformation of regional society in the context of early state formation and expansion. It involves understanding regional site distribution through survey, and changes in everyday life through excavation. The second is the transformation of regional society in the context of early global trade and colonialism. It involves studying maritime societies and their connections, which explains my research on coastal China and southeast Asia.

The questions of the two realms are not dissimilar. How did local conceptions and pursuit of power figure into the workings of the larger framework? How did the political dynamics at the local scale work through existing structures and transform them? One adjusts the research strategy in response to the changing scale and nature of interaction, from interregional to global. The attraction of archaeology is its ability to uncover diverse human experience through minute observations of contextual remains from the distant past. The reward of being a detective of past societies is the potential to bring the past alive and reveal the genealogy of our own ideas.



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efforts to “develop” the cultural heritage for tourism, which could be equally destructive. There is more than ever a great need for an educated public genuinely interested in the inquiry of past societies and appreciative of the intellectual journey of such inquiry. Therefore, archaeologists have to play an active role in defining what type of future lies ahead for Chinese society—in that diverse ways of representing the past would be a major part of that future.

What is the most important thing the study of the past can teach people today?

the people lived in peace and society prospered. The past is a potent conceptual tool for political expression in making arguments about what has been achieved or what should be achieved. Attitudes toward archaeology and traditions in contemporary society seem contradictory. On the one hand, the economic development and grand construction projects are rapidly destroying the cultural heritage across the country—and some local governments perceive cultural preservation as an obstacle to development. On the other hand, Chinese society—at both an intellectual and popular level—is increasingly fascinated by archaeology.

Recent emphasis has shifted more toward the cultural history of Chinese civilization, in contrast to the early research—when more focus was placed on evolutionary changes. The current interest in the past, however, is a double-edged sword—as some local governments are rather heavy handed in their

Wisdom, I would say. We make our decisions based on past experience, whether it is personal experience or the long-term experience of our society written in history or preserved in memory. Understanding the past, especially through archaeology, gives us a more nuanced understanding of human experience. Archaeology can help give us the wisdom of understanding past failures or how things came about. We can use it to understand the past as well as to understand how our conceptual vocabularies about the past come about.

LI MIN IS ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES AND THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAM.

Visiting Scholar Profile »

RESEARCHER STUDIES PATHWAYS TO AGRICULTURE IN ETHIOPIA AND YEMEN

An Interview with Michael Harrower
BY ERIC C. GARDNER

What is your background in archaeology?

I first became interested in archaeology after a year at Simon Fraser University as an undergraduate, while visiting museums and archaeological sites in Thailand. I was particularly fascinated that so little seemed to be known about sites and ancient history there. I came back and declared a major in archaeology, and really developed enthusiasm for it after that. Archaeology also appealed to me because it offered a mixture of sciences and humanities, which is something I remain very interested in. After graduating from Simon Fraser, I completed a Master of Arts and a Ph.D. in Anthropology from The Ohio State University.

What made you interested in coming to work as a visiting scholar at the Cotsen Institute?

The Cotsen Institute has a renowned history and reputation as an outstanding program and has hosted an impressive list of visiting scholars. Everything that excited me about the Institute has been confirmed in the time I've been here. There is a great community of people who are drawn together because of mutual interests. You have people from different departments that see a lot in common with archaeologists in other academic units.



The Cotsen Institute gives them an opportunity for scholarly interchange.

Some of your research deals with transitions to agriculture in Ethiopia and Yemen, areas that are not traditionally well represented in many American institutions. What drew you to this part of the world?

As an undergraduate I became very interested in Near Eastern agricultural origins. I started contacting people who were scholars in that field, one of whom was Joy McCorriston—who became my Ph.D. advisor. She was starting a project in Yemen at the time, and although that isn't one of the core regions where agriculture first begins for a variety of different reasons I became interested in the beginnings of agriculture there and got involved in her project. Yemen has not been as well studied as many other parts of the world for a variety of reasons, including that access has been difficult (definitely until the 1960s, but also after that time)—so there has been a series of wide lacunae in the knowledge of the archaeological history of Yemen, and that makes it a particularly fascinating place to work in part because some of the basic questions about what happened when and where are really open questions.

In some ways the same applies to Ethiopia. Because of political conflicts and access issues, it's been a challenging place to work over the years—although things have improved recently. Of course there are lots of connections between these two parts of the world. The Horn of Africa is only 30 km away from southern Arabia, and their histories are unique but closely interconnected.

How do developments here compare to more familiar cases in Egypt, or the Levant?

That's a very interesting question. Many are coming to recognize that our understandings of early agriculture have been dramatically shaped by a handful of regions that have been studied in considerable detail because they have the earliest evidence of crops and domesticated animals. Some of the patterns in surrounding areas really differ. For instance, in Yemen some of the earliest farming doesn't involve sedentary agricultural villages. It involved more what one sees ethnographically in



parts of Africa where people move quite frequently during the year and spend two or three months in one area raising crops (for instance, sorghum) and move with their animals to a different area in different times of year—returning cyclically rather than staying in one place. Sedentism was thought to be necessary for agriculture based on findings in the Levant, and we just don't see that in other areas.

The other thing that really is quite striking is that agriculture really appears quite late in the Horn of Africa and southern Arabia compared to these other regions. It's not that people wouldn't have been aware of the opportunities (they were in contact with peoples in other regions and knew that their neighbors were sustained by more than just hunted animals and gathered plants, that they had these different lifeways), but they, probably for a range of

different reasons, chose not to adopt agriculture for an extended period of time—so that's a fascinating issue about transitions. They seem to be quite

significantly delayed for reasons that are very different from those that inhibited the spread of agriculture in Europe.

What might account for this delay in the areas where you work?

Many archaeologists are recognizing that rather than an invention or technological advance agriculture entails societal transformation. That recognition makes

it clear that it's very diverse and very unique in specific areas. So, if we do indeed think of agriculture as a societal transformation then we really need to rethink some of the ways we've been thinking about

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its spread and about its reformulation or even reinvention in different parts of the world. That's part of the reason I think these lesser-known areas are so important for future work in archaeology, because they really round out the picture that's been relatively narrowed by a focus on a small handful of regions with the earliest and most spectacular finds.

Do you have an ongoing project in Yemen right now where you are studying this?

We are planning fieldwork in January to March in Oman, which is an outgrowth of collaborative work we've been doing with a team in Yemen involving McCorriston, Prem Goel, Dorota Brzezinska, Tara Steimer-Herbet, and others. We've been looking at tombs and other stone monuments in southern Arabia and how their spatial patterning reflects social relations among ancient tribes and emerging states in southern Arabia. One type of tomb (sometimes referred to as a "high circular tomb" or a "cairn tomb") first appears during the late fourth millennium B.C., so about six thousand years ago.

Many arid parts of Yemen are sparsely populated, and there is an incredible level of preservation of some of these tombs—fields of thousands of tombs in some places. Another prevalent type of monument, called a trilith, appears about 2000 years ago and is arguably linked to camel caravans which would have been taking incense (mainly frankincense) from eastern Yemen and carrying it to the capitols of desert kingdoms, including Ma'rib, and eventually transporting that incense to Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean. So, these monuments are part of an important material record of hinterland peoples and their activities in these highland desert landscapes.

You work extensively with GIS technology. How do you use GIS technology in the work you do? What impact has this technology had on archaeology as a discipline?

My work with GIS not only involves GIS computer software but also remote-sensing data such as satellite imagery, and GPS mapping technologies that are powerful tools for archaeological fieldwork and analysis. These three things appear as a triad that is sometimes referred to as geomatics or Geographic Information Science that encompasses a whole realm of technologies for collecting, managing, and analyzing spatial data. These tools have had important impacts in archaeology. Particularly in the last three years, with the unveiling of Google Earth, many have come to realize how important spatial perspectives can be for a variety of different reasons—not limited to archaeology but certainly including it. So, it is really a burgeoning specialization and one that has an exciting future role to play.

It is interesting how GIS has also become embroiled in some of the theoretical debates which have sprung up in archaeology over the last 20 years. You see a lot of archaeologists struggling to incorporate or reconcile GIS with their theoretical orientations and interests. So, you have a group of people that have really emphasized quantitative analyses and statistics and the scientific aspects of archaeology who have been interested in GIS, and many people who have been more interested in the humanistic and interpretive and qualitative research also using GIS. How that plays out within the community of those interested in GIS is quite interesting to me—how it's shaped by those orientations and how it in turn shapes peoples notions about where archaeology should be going, what kinds of questions are appropriate, and how we arrive at satisfying answers to the questions we decide to ask. So, that's been one point that makes GIS very interesting to me.

MICHAEL HARROWER IS THE FIRST TWO-YEAR COTSEN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW AT THE COTSEN INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY.

Volunteer Profile »

UNEARTHING CALIFORNIA'S PREHISTORY

An Interview with Judy Porcasi

BY ERIC C. GARDNER

How did you become interested in archaeology? What is your background in the field?

Archaeology is a second career for me. I worked for about 25 years in California's aerospace industry before becoming an archaeologist. I was a specialized technical writer and management analyst with several of the major aerospace companies, and so was my husband. Well, after he retired and was having fun taking courses at UCLA I decided that I wanted to do that too. We took paleontology, geology, and archaeology classes and enjoyed these very much. My first archaeology class was a rock art field class with Jo Anne van Tilburg, Research Associate of the Cotsen Institute. I had been out of college for decades, and I wondered if I could handle some "hardcore" academic work. But all went well and then I took a faunal analysis class with Dr. Roy Salls. It was a very inspiring class, especially since it related to the life sciences—which were always an interest of mine.

After completing the class, I decided to volunteer in the bone lab. The staff of the lab mentored me for awhile, and soon I was doing faunal identifications and analysis. In the meantime, my husband and I continued to take the other archaeology classes required to finish the UCLA Extension Certificate in Archaeology. My final project for that was a faunal report that now has been published. To become more professional, I entered the Cal State Northridge Master's program in Anthropology—again focused on the faunal aspect of archaeology. As part of this program, I had the opportunity to do both excavation and faunal analysis on important sites on Catalina and San Clemente Islands. On Catalina Island I worked at Little Harbor and on San Clemente I worked at Eel Point.

Overall, I find archaeology to be very stimulating—especially because it brings in so many diverse but related disciplines. When working with bone collections you invariably find an interesting aspect that needs additional research focus. This is my primary interest. If a question presents itself, I love to "dig" into it. Before studying archaeology I had been trained in investigative reporting as a journalism student at both USC and UCLA, so I've always been doing some type of research. Faunal analysis is like solving puzzles all day. I just recently finished my Ph.D. at Leicester University in the United Kingdom, again doing a very extensive faunal study.



again doing a very extensive faunal study.

Can you talk a little bit about the work you do in the bone lab? What kinds of puzzles are you able to solve there?

Archaeological bone collections come into the lab either from academic projects or from cultural resource management (i.e., commercial) projects, and it's our responsibility to identify and analyze each bone or fragment to the most definitive level possible. We identify the animal species and any modifications, such as burning or tool

making, that might have been made to the bone by people. This gives us insight into the dietary and other uses people might have been making of animals in their environment. We can get an image of the ecological situation, ritual activities, and so on. Studying changes in use of animal products over long periods of time, we can determine when things were going well for site occupants or when there were economic or societal problems impacting their ability to get or use certain foods. The faunal record tells a lot about the people who have left little or no other evidence of their lifeways.

You mentioned that for your master's you did some work in the Channel Islands, and that you are currently working with Wendy Teeter. Tell us about some of the fieldwork you've done.

I've done fieldwork on Catalina, on San Clemente Island, in Baja California, and on the coastal mainland of California. I especially enjoyed working in some of the early Spanish missions in San Luis Obispo and Monterey Counties. In addition to my work at the Institute, I am also an independent faunal consultant. I work on commercial contracts for collections excavated all over California and a few from Mexico. While most of my work is done in a lab setting, I enjoy working in the field as much as possible.

Care to share any especially memorable experiences from any of your projects?

I think it is especially important to report and disseminate archaeological findings. I make it a point to publish any significant findings from my faunal projects. For example, at Catalina and San Clemente I was able to identify the remains of the enormous *Mola mola* ocean sunfish, which had not been previously identified at those islands. It turns out that prehistoric islanders exploited an intensive fishery of this species. This is rather amazing since the Mola is the size of a Volkswagen and can weigh more than 3,000 pounds. We found remains of thousands of these fish.

Another finding was that the islanders on both Catalina and San Clemente were big-time dolphin hunters. How these people captured the ocean sunfish and hundreds of dolphins remains a mystery. Recently I co-published the story of the now-extinct flightless duck (*Chendytes lawi*). We were able to track when, where, and how long it took this animal to become extinct once people arrived on the California coast. Since the duck was flightless, it had no protection from terrestrial predators—whether human or animal.

Do you feel like you have a fair conception of what life was like for some of these populations in prehistoric coastal California?

Much is known about the recent populations, the proto-historic people, and those occupying the coast when the Spanish arrived. My interest really goes back to the very beginning. My dissertation and the research I'm working on now goes back 10,000 years, and really nothing is known about the people of coastal California at that time. There are only a few faunal collections from that time period. Other than the faunal record, very little remains as evidence of these earlier occupations.

There are conflicting ideas about who these people might have been and how they arrived here. I believe that there was a significant maritime migration along the coast between 13,000 and 10,000 years ago. We really don't know much about these people other than what we can discern from the debris they've left behind. More recent populations have left a variety of artifacts and other evidence of complex societies. You don't find any of that in the earlier sites. Part of the problem is that rising sea level over the millennia has drowned many of the oldest sites.

Right. You're talking about a period when much of North America was in an Ice Age.

Yes. I believe that people were able to get to western North America by sea following along the coast from northwestern Asia. There were inlets called *refugia*, where they could sustain themselves and find resources. They knew how to make use of whatever the sea provided. It's not as if there was nothing but ice along the coast. The open coastal areas and the kelp forests provided adequate resources for them. They also seemed to find early refuge on the islands.

Closing thoughts?

I'm very excited about being a Research Associate at the Cotsen Institute. Hopefully this will give me the opportunity to find new lines of inquiry and research. I hope to be able to join with and assist the other Cotsen researchers in any way I can.

JUDY PORCASI IS A NEW RESEARCH ASSOCIATE AT THE COTSEN INSTITUTE AND A LONG-TIME VOLUNTEER.