

# the jawbone

anthropology department † university of california † berkeley



## UPDATE ON THE RECENT RECOVERY OF ISHI'S BRAIN

As most of you probably know, the brain of Ishi, the famous California Yahi Native American, was recently recovered from a Smithsonian museum warehouse. Many questions have arisen over how Ishi's brain got to the Smithsonian, as he had asked that an autopsy not be performed upon his death. At present there is a request for his brain to be returned to appropriate Native American representatives.

Because Ishi worked closely with Alfred Kroeber, one of Berkeley anthropology department's founding fathers, the department of anthropology is hard at work formulating its response to these complicated and controversial questions. There will be a State Senate hearing in Sacramento on Monday, April 5, to discuss the issue. Representatives from Vice Chancellor Joseph Cerny's office will be attending, as will Professor Kent Lightfoot from the anthropology department. Please stay tuned for further details.

## MEG CONKEY, ONE OF FEW TO SEE GROTTES CHAUVET

Late last year Meg Conkey joined the lucky few dozen who have been privileged to see the collection of cave paintings in the Grotte Chauvet in Pont D'Arc, France, since the cave's discovery in 1994. The Grotte Chauvet is considered to be unique and of outstanding importance as there are compositions there that do not correspond to anything seen before. Moreover, the preservation of the paintings far exceeds many younger cave paintings. Early radiocarbon tests dated a sample of the paintings—that of a rhinoceros—showing it to be 32,000 years old, the oldest cave paintings ever discovered. This early date sent shock waves through the archaeological community, because the paintings were as sophisticated as those in caves half as old, such as at Lascaux in the French Dordogne and Altamira in Spain.

Exploration of the cave was blocked for several years, tangled in lawsuits over land and photo rights and a fight over scientific leadership. Now a team of prehistorians has begun work, their aim being to discover who the artists were and why they painted. The leader of the explorations, Jean Clottes, believes some of the art represents the visions of shamans but admits that they may never know for sure. Despite the high-tech methods used to analyze the paintings, he and others say the most telling clues may be those revealed by classic archaeology: foot- and handprints, hearths, and tools. Professor Conkey was quoted in *Science* magazine (February 12, 1999) as saying, "The irony of the Grotte Chauvet is that it is going to be the little things, the tiny subtle kinds of archaeology, that will render the paintings intelligible."

## MARIANE FERME, INVITED PARTICIPANT AT HUMANITIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mariane Ferme will participate in the UC-systemwide Humanities Research Institute which will be held in Irvine, California during Winter Quarter (January-March) 2000. The title of the Residential Research Group is "Islamic Modernities in an Era of Globalization: Discourses, Movements and Diasporas." Applications were encouraged from scholars working in a variety of fields: history, religious studies, Islamic law, media studies, literature, political philosophy, and cultural studies. What Professor Ferme proposed is to explore the connections between regional and global Muslim communities. By building on anthropological fieldwork in Sierra Leone since 1984, and in Cairo, Egypt, in 1993 (to be continued in 2000), she intends to focus on the cultural and religious modernizing roles of clerics who move between regional and global Muslim centers (the latter represented by al-Azhar University of Cairo, for centuries a famous institution of learning in the Muslim world). She will also build on the history of cultural "creolization" in Sierra Leone to argue that despite surface oppositions in representations of Western and Muslim modernities, these have long overlapped in the region. Professor Ferme will be returning to the field in Cairo, Egypt from March-August of 2000.



Mariane Ferme

## ALAN DUNDES, PUPPET IN THE HAND OF SATAN

Professor Dundes has a new book out, *Holy Writ as Oral Lit: The Bible as Folklore*. The book has met with a little hostility from fundamentalist Christians, hence his new epithet.

*What was the most interesting thing you uncovered while writing this book?*

That there were so many varieties of stories in the Bible, and on important matters too—not some itty-bitty detail but variations on the Lord's Prayer or on how many commandments there were. Once I started looking into the Bible, I just kept finding more and more. The hunt to find evidence of the Bible as folklore was fun.

*So if the Bible is folklore, what does this mean?*

Well, it clears up a lot of controversy. In a way, it makes things easier. I'd go into Christian bookstores and I'd find books going to great lengths trying to explain for example why one version of a Bible story said red robe and another said purple robe. The authors would get to the point where they were saying, "well, maybe when the light caught the color in a certain way it would seem . . ." If you look at the Bible from the perspective of the Bible as folklore, then you don't have to worry about reconciling and defending all of these discrepancies. You can enjoy the variety.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 1-30, 1999

- Monday  
April 5** Faculty Meeting  
3:00 p.m., Gifford Room
- Monday  
April 5** Candidate talks for Med. Anthro. Search  
Dr. Vincanne Adams, Princeton University  
11:00 Mtg. w/Med. Anthro. students  
12:00 Intellectual bio—everyone invited  
1:30 Mtg. w/Med. Anthro faculty  
At: Laurel Heights, room 474, UCSF
- Tuesday  
April 6** Candidate talks for Med. Anthro. Search  
Dr. Vincanne Adams, Princeton University  
5:00 Colloquium, *Tibetan Medicine:  
The Sacred in the Scientific*  
At: Health Sciences West, room 303, UCSF
- Wednesday  
April 7** Archaeology Brown Bag series  
Ruth Tringham  
*The Catal Roof*  
Noon, Rm. 101, 2251 College
- Wednesday  
April 14** Archaeology Brown Bag series  
Sergei Arutiunov  
*Recent Discoveries in the Archaeology  
of Bering Strait Eskimos*  
Noon, Rm. 101, 2251 College
- Monday  
April 19** Faculty Meeting  
3:00 p.m., Gifford Room
- Wednesday  
April 21** Archaeology Brown Bag series  
Dennis Ogburn  
*Travelogue 1961: A Slice of Archaeological  
Tourism in the Andes*  
Noon, Rm. 101, 2251 College
- Monday  
April 26** 290 Seminar  
Speaker TBA  
4:00-6:00 p.m., 160 Kroeber
- Wednesday  
April 28** Archaeology Brown Bag series  
El Casella  
*Separate Treatment: An Archaeological  
Study of the Solitary Confinement Cells,  
Ross Female Factory, Tasmania*  
Noon, Rm. 101, 2251 College



## UCB ANTHROPOLOGY GRADUATES DO WELL

Nicole Constable, Berkeley Anthropology Ph.D. (1989) and currently a professor at the University of Pittsburgh was recently awarded the University of Pittsburgh's 1999 Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award for her outstanding research accomplishments.

Janine Wedel, Berkeley Anthropology Ph.D. (1985) was quoted in the December 7, 1998 issue of *Newsweek* from her recent book, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe 1989-1998* arguing that the Clinton administration was determined to cast Boris Yeltsin's young reformers as the good guys. This, she claims in the *Newsweek* article, unwittingly contributed to Russia's current economic mess.

## THE EAR . . .

Have you ever wondered about the architecture of Kroeber Hall? Basically, it is an L or a lot of L's strung together. But you can't ever get away from that "I'm in an L again" feeling *except* if you go into the spiral staircase that the architect tacked onto things just for practice. But the spiral staircase is not safe. To quote **Nelson Graburn**, "Oh? You're going to take the spiral staircase? You know that will smash just like a pancake if we have an earthquake, might I suggest these stairs over here?" So the only time you get out of a life in right angles you go to the staircase and risk death. And notice how the art students are always trying to jazz up the staircase with dramatic stringing things and funny lights. This, we suspect, is a plot to lure unsuspecting anthropologists into the staircase in hope that an earthquake will happen right then, squishing the anthropologists and thus freeing up more of Kroeber for the art department. But hah. We are on to them. . . . Do you ever wonder how many people get confused about where the Phoebe Hearst Museum is? You walk in the door that says PHM over it but you're really in Kroeber Hall. Then you see two big scary guys with PHS over them, but the door there leads to the Folklore Archives. Then you see a bust of PH herself, but she is ushering you right to the bathrooms. How many people finally turn to the PHM gift shop and think *it* is the museum? *Hmm, cute museum. Look, little primitive tea pots. . . .* Do you ever wonder why other departments get cafeterias and we get a vending machine? Note that machine is singular. Does someone think Kroeber Hall should mimic being in the field? *You see, they don't need a cafeteria, anthropology is a hunter-gatherer society.* And our last comment about environment: If we were a student at Berkeley, we would have stopped reading flyers long ago. Who thought of this as effective advertisement? Does anyone read these? My favorite is the person who says, "Print mine on bright paper—so people will see it."—like your bright-colored flyer is going to look any different from the nine hundred other bright-colored flyers. Actually, the only way your flyer is ever going to be read is if it is posted in some place that you will get in trouble for posting it there. Okay, real news. **Scott Turner** is one of three authors on the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences paper on hypoglossal canal and whether such evidence indicated Neanderthals could speak. This paper is quite an accomplishment since it refutes the paper of two very well-established older scientists. Details to follow in the May *Jawbone*. . . **Katharine Milton** recently attended the annual meeting of the Society of Ethnobiology where she presented the paper entitled, "Is Species Richness a Myth for Indigenous Swiddens?" . . . Remember in the last issue of *The Jawbone* how **Sharon Lilly** won that Distinguished Service Award, to be awarded at a special ceremony on March 10? Well, when March 10th came around, Sharon got so involved hooking up **Nancy Scheper-Hughes's** computer that she missed the ceremony. The only reason she remembered it at all is that it got to be 3 p.m. and she realized that she hadn't eaten lunch. Calling Farnaz Stosik, anthro's computer support person, Sharon said, "Can you come help me set up this computer? And if you see any food along the way, can you bring it?" (See *one vending machine* above.) Farnaz said, "Yeah, I can grab something for you. They had a big ceremony today in the Lipman Room. There's a big spread there." Sharon said, "The Lipman Room? Wait. What day is it? Hey, that's *my* ceremony."

*This newsletter is produced by the Department of Anthropology, UC Berkeley. The next issue of The Jawbone will be published May 1, 1999. Please submit all story suggestions, announcements, and calendar items for the next issue to Holly Halligan at 642.3509 or hollyh@uclink4.berkeley.edu by Friday, April 16.*

April 1, 1999