



74th

Plains Anthropological Conference

Banquet Speaker – Dr. Simon Holdaway

Friday, October 14, 2016

Determining Indigenous Land Use from Archaeological Remains: An Alternative View from Down Under

Australian rainfall in semi-arid regions is variable; long periods with little or no rain are separated by short episodes with very abrupt downpours. Australian soils are infertile, largely a result of the continent's age and tectonic history. For Aboriginal people, both factors meant that resources varied in ways that were not easy to predict. A location rich in edible resources at one moment might become depleted at another. Australian Aboriginal people coped with such uncertainty in part by using an ideology that emphasized engagement with the land by moving through country. How can we match such responses to the concentrations of stone artifacts and the remains of hearths that define the archaeological record? A new approach to understanding land use and settlement pattern is needed that focuses on mobility in relation to large-scale environmental patterns, in a landscape where the ecology and topography led to dispersal of settlement activities rather than their consolidation in occupation sites.



Western New South Wales, Australia.
Photo courtesy of Simon Holdaway

The Speaker



Professor Simon Holdaway holds a personal chair in archaeology at the University of Auckland, New Zealand where he is head of the School of Social Sciences. He also holds honorary chairs at the University of Queensland (Australia), Macquarie University (Australia), and the University of York (UK). Educated at the University of Pennsylvania, his research interests include low-level food production societies, hunter-gatherers, landscape archaeology, and the study of material culture. He has active field research programs in arid and tropical regions of Australia, the Fayum region of Egypt, and the North Island of New Zealand. He has written articles on stone artifact analysis, mobility, time theory, and landscape archaeology. His books include *A Record in Stone: The Study of Australia's Flaked Stone Artefacts* with Nicola Stern, *Time in Archaeology* with LuAnn Wandsnider, and *A Geoarchaeology of Aboriginal Landscapes in Semiarid Australia* with Patricia Fanning. His latest volume *The Desert Fayum Reinvestigated: The Early to Mid-Holocene Landscape Archaeology of the Fayum North Shore, Egypt* with Willeke Wendrich will appear later this year, published by the Cotswold Institute of Archaeology.

Thunderbird logo design adapted from original artwork courtesy of Nebraska Capitol Collections.