

Preface

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This book derives from a four-day International Conference, held at Peking University in April 2006, entitled *From Concepts of the Past to Practical Strategies: the teaching of archaeological field techniques* (see Appendix). We would like to acknowledge the support and contribution from Professor Gao Chongwen who, as Director of the School of Archaeology and Museology at Peking University at the time, hosted the conference and ensured its significant success.

The conference was the first to be organised by the International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology (hereafter, ICCHA) set up in 2003 by University College London and Peking University. The primary focus of the conference was the examination of the relationship of archaeological theory to practice, as articulated through excavation and other archaeological field techniques. In this context it discussed the training for archaeological fieldwork that currently exists in higher education institutions in many different areas of the world. Also within this global framework it compared the different archaeological curricula offered by a range of universities and other training institutions, not least in terms of the part played by 'scientific' archaeology in such training.

The conference also investigated what are — or should be — different training strategies for prehistoric as compared with urban sites, as well as variations in training depending on different environmental site conditions. Variations in the lengths of obligatory field training courses for undergraduate university degrees in archaeology were also reviewed, and the range of different methods of assessing student fieldwork exercises.

Discussion also focused on the need to archive archaeological investigations, and how archiving techniques should feature within student training.

A further topic of the conference was the way in which members of the public (whether adults or children) are involved in excavations in different areas of the world. In some national traditions, archaeological fieldwork is restricted to the professional, in others it is also seen as a means of incorporating the amateur into the archaeological domain, and in some it is also viewed as an educative device for children.

The agenda for the conference had been discussed at an earlier meeting in London of the ICCCHA Working Group and Steering Committee, together with European colleagues involved in the study of Chinese archaeology and history. Although the primary orientation of the conference would remain China, it was agreed that this first ICCCHA-organised conference should be overtly global in its scope. For this reason, in addition to Chinese scholars, most of the overseas invited speakers were those responsible for field training in their own universities or other institutions, either at undergraduate or at postgraduate levels. Others had extensive excavation experience in their own countries or abroad, whether of prehistoric settlement or cemetery, or of urban conglomeration and standing buildings.

In all there were some 100 participants who contributed to discussion at the conference.

They came from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Colombia, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Nigeria, Madagascar, Poland, Russia, Southern Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Almost all the universities in China which have training in archaeology sent representatives to participate in the conference, and contributed their curricula (see Chapter 4, Appendix I).

This book is more than the mere proceedings of the conference. First, not all the presentations delivered at the meeting are included here. Second, all the chapters included here have been revised by their authors in the light of discussion at the conference and in the context of the structure of this book. Finally, details of the different curricula have been culled from the individual papers, some precirculated and some presented at the conference (see Chapter 4).

The conference languages were Chinese and English, and two books will be published, this one in English, and the other in Chinese.

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