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Hominid Stamps: The Philatelic Medium as a Tool Contributing to Nationalism

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While depiction of iconic archaeological finds or monuments of archaeological, historical, cultural or natural significance on postage stamps printed by many countries around the globe to promote nationalist sentiments as means of creating or promoting national cohesion, especially in ethnically diverse countries, is by no means unusual, the question posed in this paper, with specific focus on paleoanthropological finds, is that how far back in time this practice can be traced, and how images of hominid fossils from hundreds of thousands, sometime millions of years ago, can be of contribution to promoting nationalism in various countries. Using semiotics of how stamps function to convey meaning, it has been explored how images of hominids on stamps contribute to a broad program of building a national identity and strengthening nationalism in different countries around the globe.

Keywords: Nationalism, Paleoanthropology, Hominids, Philately.

ArticleType: Research Article

Introduction

Much has been written about the relationship between archaeology and nationalism. Also, it has been long recognized that stamps are a fundamental and primary source by means of which we can analyze symbolic messages that states try to convey their identity to their citizens and to the world (e.g. Reid, 1984), either as part of popular culture and identity-making (Bushnell, 1982) or to reinforce territorial boundaries on an international arena (Nuessel, 1992). The implementation of postage stamps aligns with the origins of nation-states in the middle to late 19th century. Paleoanthropology and archaeology prior to the 19th century fall outside of the nation-state's immediate purview. Thus, even the 17th century archaeological remains precede the nation-state building. As such, archaeological images on postage stamps sometimes create prehistories of the nation-state that link to nationalism. Stamps have also more recently been used as primary sources to analyze popular culture (cf. Child, 2005, 2008), or in promotion of knowledge and dissemination of science, literature (e.g. Jones, 2001), as a hobby for collectors (cf. Villalobos Acosta, 2011), of "negative heritage" (Meskell, 2002) that helps people to cope with past traumas (e.g., colonialism, slavery, genocide), or, as discussed in this paper, as important means to convey significant messages of nationalism. Yet, specific works devoted to the exploration of relations between archaeology and stamps are still in a nascent phase (cf. Child, 2005; 2008). Thus, a study on how postage stamps bearing images drawn from Paleolithic archaeology are used to deliver symbols of nationalist propaganda appears of relevance for further research.

Nationalism and National Identity

Nationalism and the formation of national identities has had a significant impact in shaping the modern world (Gellner, 1997; Anderson, 2006). Whence civilizations were considered as formed and determined by religion for most of the recorded history (cf. Ford, 1993), by the end of the 18th century,

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political allegiance to a particular nation-state began to define people in terms of their geographic, cultural and ethnic similarities (Hastings, 1997; Hobsbawm 2012). Today, the world, as defined by politics, has become a patchwork of individual nation-states each with their own identity, culture, history and heritage. As a political tool to control the power of the state, nationalism must first and foremost construct a national identity, which presents itself as desirable to the peoples embodied by the state (Wodak *et al*. 2009). In order for nationalism to function effectively as a state of mind underlining a national consciousness, an ideology must be in place to render association with the nation (Breuilly, 1993). National identity can, of course, establish itself according to a particular language or ethnic group (Nagel, 1994). Whatever the characteristic attributes of the identity are, individuals will however not desire an association with their nation unless its identity is deemed attractive.

Nationalism and Stamps

Postage stamps appear with the establishment of modern nation-states in the middle to late 19th century. It is therefore not surprising that stamps were soon appropriated to promote ideologies associated with emerging nation-states. Depictions of natural or built landscapes, scientific-technological achievements, famous individuals on a country's stamps to create or to promote the sense of belonging among its population, was and is fairly common (cf. Jones, 2001; Raento and Brunn 2005; Covington and Braun, 2006). In this regard, depiction of iconic archaeological finds reflect the more recent history (cf. Hassan, 1998; Gounaris, 2003). The present paper focuses on how depictions of archaeological finds pertaining to early hominids on postage stamps have contributed to build a national identity and strengthen nationalism in emerging nation-states. The question posed in this paper is not whether nation-states are allowed to use artifacts of different periods in the past as a national emblem or symbol; for this has been done over and over in practically everywhere – from "underdeveloped Third World" to "developed First World" countries, especially those with a rich cultural heritage – and there is no way or point in stopping it. But the main thrust of the present paper is to pose the question that how far back in time this practice can be traced and how postage stamps have been used in conveying this message. In other words, are we allowed to put images of hominids who lived hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of years ago, when there was no nation-state to speak of, on philatelic medium and call them 'cultural' or 'archaeological' heritage to promote nationalism?

This practice is by no means restricted to recently established countries in search of a unifying past – whether real or invented – but can be traced back to European nation-states who have been around for hundreds of years (cf. Geary, 2002) that no one, as far as we know, has any objection or claim to either their nationhood or heritage.

Nationalism and Paleolithic Archaeology

As it has been discussed in detail, archaeology has often contributed to a strong sense of a national identity and to promote nationalism (cf. Trigger, 1980; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Atkinson *et al*. 1996; Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Kohl 1998; Meskell 1998). It has been explored how archaeology has had a major effect in the formation of a national identity because of its ability to draw connection to physical sites and tangible objects that constitute a large and important part of any nation's identity in its national history and which can be used to create an inclusive group and promote a sense of national pride and legitimacy as a political entity. In many nations, archaeology has served and continues to provide evidence for specific national histories through uncovering of remains and historical accounts (Kohl and Fawcett, 1995). For instance, Ikawa-Smith states that "East Asian archeology is national history or it is nothing," suggesting that for some nations archaeology's construction and contribution to national identity is its "prime business" (Ikawa-Smith, 1999: 626). Today, the concept of national history to legitimize political institutions set in place is becoming increasingly important as regional minorities begin to challenge existing nations and create their own identities as a result of class differentiation and economic turmoil brought by exclusive identities (Brown, 2000). Though morally contentious, many nations turn to archaeology to support nationalistic claims of ethnic, regional or historical assertions to political entitlement (Tilly, 1995).

The complex intertwined relationship between nationalism, identity, archaeology and prehistory has been a matter of research over the years in many European countries (cf. Graves-Brown *et al.* 1996;

Atkinson *et al.* 1996), especially in the Balkans where these subjects are particularly controversial (Roudometof, 2002). Similar processes can be observed in the Eastern Mediterranean (cf. Hallote and Joffe, 2002). But, the role of archaeology in fulfilling a strong nationalistic agenda, especially in the context of Paleolithic archaeology, can perhaps nowhere be seen more than in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and its use of the Peking Man as grounds to legitimize a form of racial nationalism (Leibold, 2006; Schmalzer, 2009). For example, it has been asserted that the PRC's use of anthropological evidence served to establish a racial nationalism distinct from the concept of ethnic nationalism in which it "biologizes and extends group identity further by adding a racial component to distinguish the nation more sharply from its neighbors" (Sautman, 2001: 95-96). Although PRC, as other nations, undoubtedly has capitalized on the discovery of ancient sites aiming to advance the historical existence of an early Chinese state, the PRC's use of early human remains posits a biological entitlement and superiority over its neighbors (Schmalzer, 2009: 76). The PRC managed to use paleoanthropology and the discovery of the Peking Man near Beijing to "[popularize] claims that Peking Man and other fossilized hominids – members of the primate family to which modern humans belong – as evidence for unequalled longevity and unity of the Chinese people (*Zhonghua minzu*)" (Sautman 2001, 96) as well as integrating non-native Chinese émigré into the Chinese society (Wang, 2016).

The propaganda circulated by the PRC is in direct contention with widely accepted scientific and archaeological evidence that all modern humans are descendant of a common ancestor who lived in what is now Africa some 200 kya (Nitecki and Nitecki, 1994). Some Chinese scholars, however, have taken a polygenic stance on human evolution favoring a 'sinocentric' view in which China is essentially unique and superior to other countries (cf. Yunquan, 2002-3). These politically and ideologically coaxed scholars propose that early ancestors of the Chinese people evolved separately from hominids who developed into African and European populations, as the former developed independently in Asia and that the "Chinese civilization emerged at least several hundreds of thousands of years ago" (Sautman, 2001:100). The attempts of Chinese scholars to distinguish Chinese people from other peoples is a prime example of what David Brown refers to as the "primordialist" approach to nationalism and national identity. Brown suggests that the primordialist approach:

"…emerges in suggestions that nationalist movement are the expression of a group solidarity based on linguistic, racial and cultural affinities; and that claims by such a group to common descent should not be regarded simply as imaginings or inventions, but should be taken seriously as indicators that it is the authentic histories of common ancestry and homeland origin which provide the roots of modern nationalism" (Brown, 2000: 70-71).

The abuse of the Peking Man's discovery to fuel the PRC's agenda of promoting racial nationalism is an extreme case. But it is not the only example of archaeology and paleoanthropology being used to legitimize nationalistic claims (Leibold, 2006). For instance, Basque nationalists claim that people living in the Basque region of France and Spain became "identifiably Basque [by] 12 kya," and are therefore racially superior to Spaniards (Muro, 2008, 86).

Archaeology and paleoanthropology seem to be the best, and most easily legitimizing, tools for propagating concepts of long history, splendid cultural traditions, continuity and integration of any given country. Especially, countries threatened by political conflicts or ethnic encroachment, the distant past can be used to draw irrefutable evidence for political or ethnic authorities. However, archaeology and its related disciplines can also be used to bolster national pride in other ways. For example, the Piltdown Man "discovered" in England in 1912 was at that time welcomed as the first Englishman because of its remarkably large braincase suggesting English superiority evident in prehistoric times. This discovery, albeit later proved to be a fake (Russell, 2012), insinuated a racially determined intellectual prowess, but more importantly placed British paleoanthropology in the spotlight and by doing so encouraged a national pride (Blinderman, 1986). It can be said that warping of historical and scientific facts can contribute to national identity, and that modern discoveries can be just as effective in increasing the appeal of a particular nation's identity. Even though extreme cases of using archaeology to provoke nationalist consciousness, such as the Peking Man (or the 'Piltdown Man') exist, it is often easier for national-

political authorities to invoke pride through national accomplishments. Besides, it is hard to imagine that early hominids had any concepts of national boundaries as political entities embracing their origins do today.

It is apparent that archaeology can play an important role in exploring and contributing to its sense of national pride, but how do the accomplishments of a fairly specific field of anthropology find their way into the public arena? Journals, news sources and other forms of information available today are likely to account for much of the dissemination of important advances in archaeology and anthropology to individuals celebrating the contributions of their nation. However, if a government or political authority is seeking the most widely handled and distributed medium for advertising the glory of their nation, the postage stamp would seem an appropriate place to start.

Enter the Postage Stamps

It has been suggested that certain symbols can be used to "express the solidarity of [a] nation" (Breuilly, 1994: 64). In this capacity, as tiny canvases for the depiction of cultural and political propaganda, throughout the world, postage stamps offer a self-distributing means to deliver symbols of national pride and achievements (cf. Reid, 1984; Raento and Brunn, 2005). Jack Child argues that upon the stamp's introduction in England in the early 19th century, the secondary function of such postage has been to serve as "advertisement or propaganda with themes as far ranging as nationalism, history, politics… and cultural identity" (Child, 2003: 109). In addition to being widely circulated, postage stamps also carry the added benefit of repetition, slowly inserting its message into the public consciousness. Postage stamps also require a certain degree of attention which enables their message a guaranteed recognition. The amount of monetary value prepaid on the stamp and country of origin demand attention and in doing so inevitably draw the users' eye to the graphics of the stamp.

In his research on politics and semiotics of the philatelic medium, Child applies Peircian semiotics to suggest how stamps function to convey meaning. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) was an American logician whose tripartite system of signs or semiotics sought to explore and explain the relationship between three classes of signs to a referential object (Peirce, 1991). A stamp is, by design, an index to the country of origin it has been issued in. In Peircian terms this means that the relationship between the stamp as a sign and the country of origin is one in which the stamp directly points to, in spatio-temporal contiguity, it's country of issue. The stamp's deepest level of meaning comes from the iconic nature of its graphic. Peirce's icon was a sign which carried a message inherently without any culturally determined significance (Peirce, 1991). This suggests that graphics on a stamp, as an icon, carry a message that is accessible to all interpreters and when paired with the stamp's index to country of production establishes the message as associated with the particular country. Essentially, the stamp's message is always in some way connected to the country of issue through semiotic relationships (Child, 2003: 115-116). For instance, if there are two stamps of Elvis Preseley, one coming from the United States and the other from Australia, the interpreted messages will be different despite an identical graphic. One stamp depicts the country of Elvis' birth and career, suggesting a claim to some of his fame as a national icon, while the other could simply be interpreted as a commemoration of a well-received foreign celebrity.

Another example of how the philatelic medium can convey messages regarding national ideology and politics comes from a series of Latin American stamps. In the early 20th century, Guatemala witnessed several shifts in political power. Beginning with General George Ubico's presidency in the 1930s, the Guatemalan government issued a number of stamps celebrating the achievement of Ubico's regime. General Ubico himself was depicted on the highest value stamp issued by the government. Following Ubico's resignation, the Guatemalan Revolution of 1945-1955 led by Jose Arevalo and Jacobo Arbenz swept the country. Not surprisingly these two reformists promptly issued a set of stamps "with allegories of the 1945 Revolution, and honoring democracy and labor" (Child, 2003: 116). Another set of stamps depicting a national flag and the exchange of the constitution was issued in 1950 when Arevalo handed his power over to Arbenz by means of a free election. Four years after this, a set of stamps was released, a CIA supported coup led by Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas brought down the Arbenz regime and issued

stamps commemorating the country's liberation and extermination of communism. These examples can all be seen as attempts by the reigning governments to advertise ideological propaganda. Whether by glorifying a leader and the accomplishments of his regime, or depicting the defeat of communism, all of these stamps carry a message meant to elicit support for the government in power and promote solidarity of the nation.

One of the most pervasive graphics on stamps and equally the most powerful in terms of national identity is the country's flag or colors on postage. In an example from Child's research on the subject, Brazil's transition from empire to republic posed a problem for the government of how to maintain a national identity riding on the past achievements of Brazil without relating too much to the country's past as an empire. The decision was made to issue stamps with colors of the Brazilian flag in order to "commemorate the victories and achievements of [Brazil's] army and navy, in the defense of the fatherland…[independent] of the form of government" (Child, 2003: 119).

When indexing a specific country, graphics as simple as the national colors can be effective in evoking pride in the achievements and identity of a nation. It can be suggested that any combination of symbols and icons with colors specific to that country establishes the identity and achievements of the nation. Child (2005: 121) also points out that "heroic feats and national heroes" are often found on stamps which serve to "reinforce the impact of the icon" likely already commemorated in art and history (see also Childe, 2008).

Hominid Stamps

Anthropological and archaeological themes are depicted on the philatelic medium alongside famous citizens with accomplishments in multiple fields. Archaeological finds are important for any nation beyond their potentially legitimizing effects on nationalistic movements because of their existence as tangible evidence of scientific discovery. John Breuilly notes that nationalist ideology selects from existing "values and practices in ways designed to enhance their political significance" (Breuilly, 1994: 69). Not only may these discoveries potentially contribute to a national identity through their existence in history, but can add to a national sense of pride in accomplishment through their contribution to scientific and archaeological progress. One can only imagine how powerful a stamp for a government in charge can be to bolster national pride that celebrates groundbreaking archaeological discoveries, and which legitimizes the current ethnic group of the region.

Given the potential of archaeology and paleoanthropology to strengthen national identity, and the semiotic power of stamps for conveying messages of a nationalistic ideology, it is apparent that philatelic depictions of early hominids are of importance to understanding how nations can use anthropology to fulfill political agendas.

Case Studies

No paleontological site in the world might be more associated with groundbreaking discoveries in human evolution than Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. For several decades, several generations of members of the Leaky family have been exploring Olduvai Gorge and nearby sites (Morell, 1995). It is, therefore, not surprising that in 1965, just a few months after its formation, Tanzania was the first country to issue a stamp with a hominid image. In this case Mary Leaky celebrated the discovery of the *Zinjanthropus Boisei* (*Australopithecus robustus*) (Figure. 1) in 1959 that put the newly-established country of Tanzania on the paleoanthropological map.

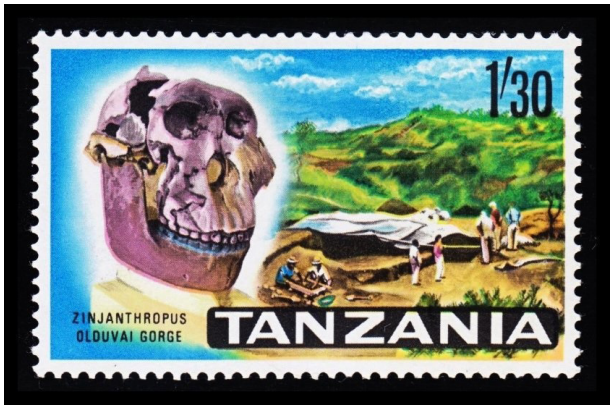


Figure. 1: *The Tanzanian "Zinjanthropus Boisei" stamp. (Postal History and Philately of Tanzania: http://www.paleophilatelie.eu/country/tanzania.html)*

Another complete fossilized skull of *Australopithecus africanus* was discovered in Koobi Fora, Kenya, in 1969 by Richard Leakey, son of Mary and Louis Leakey, for which the government of Kenya, evidently also keen to capitalize on the hominid fever of the time, soon issued a commemorative stamp of the "Origins of Mankind"

series (Figure. 2) followed by more stamps in the same series in 1982 when new discoveries revealed more fossils.

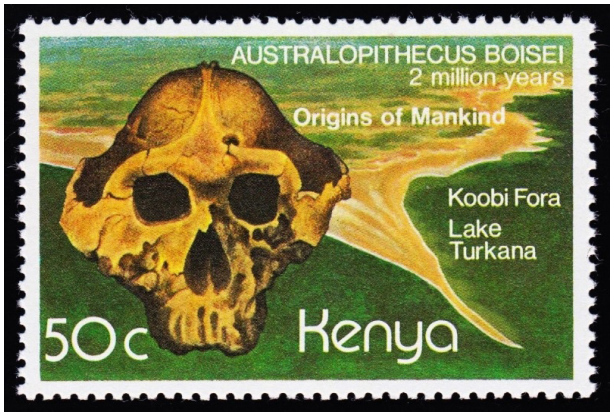


Figure. 2: *The first Kenyan "Origins of Mankind" stamp. (Postal History and Philately of Kenya: http://www.paleophilatelie.eu/country/kenya.html)*

Lucy, the most celebrated and famous hominid in history, a 3.2 million years old *Australopithecus afarensis*, whose partial remains were discovered by Donald Johanson and his colleagues in Hadar, Afar region of Ethiopia, in 1974, captivated the world's attention and turned the spotlight from Tanzania and Kenya to Ethiopia. An exhilarating account of the discovery and its significance (Johanson and Edey, 1981), as well as subsequent discoveries and books (Johanson and Shreeve, 1989; Johanson and Blake, 1996; Johanson and Wong, 2009), kept the "Lucy fever" and fascination with paleoanthropology and human evolution, which triggered the Ethiopian government to issue a stamp depicting Lucy skeleton in association with the Ethiopian state borders of 1986 (Figure. 3).



Figure. 3: *The Ethiopian "Lucy" stamp. (Postal History and Philately of Ethiopia: http://www.paleophilatelie.eu/country/ethiopia.html)*

No African government has been as active in printing hominid stamps as that of South Africa. Especially in the post-Apartheid era, when South Africa was trying to reinvent itself. Given the fact that South Africa has been another country in Africa contributing many early finds to the archaeology of early humans and hominid evolution, it is no wonder that the country boasts a fairly extensive collection of stamps depicting groundbreaking contributions to the field. It is not surprising that the Taung Boy, a juvenile specimen of *Australopithecus africanus*, discovered in the vicinity of the small town of Taung in the North West Province of South Africa in 1924, by the Australian anatomist and anthropologist Raymond Dart, found its way onto South African postage (Figure. 4). The significance of this find comes from the fact that it was one of the first fossils found in the early 20th century to be correctly classified as a member of the Hominidae discovered in Africa which contributed to our rudimentary understanding of human evolution in those days, and hence validated Charles Darwin's theory of human evolution and his conviction that the origins of humanity should be sought in Africa (Parker and Jaffe, 2008). The fossil was found by a quarryman working in a limestone deposit in 1924, who handed it over to Raymond Dart for analysis. Dart's classification of the fossil to a species in the line of the human ancestry was treated with criticism because of the contrast between the Taung Boy's small cranial size and the larger brain case size of the "Piltdown Man" (the index for morphological evolution of human at the time). Although Dart's discovery was indeed correct and the fossil was later classified as that of an *Australopithecus africanus* living nearly 2.5 mya, it took many years for Dart to receive due credit for his achievement.



Figure. 4: *The South African "Taung Boy" stamp. (Postal History and Philately of South Africa: http://www.paleophilatelie.eu/country/south_africa.html)*

The implications presented by the Taung Boy skull on both the postage canceller and envelope issued by the South African Post Office in November of 2006 are obvious Raymond Dart's classification was important in terms of the hominid fossil record and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. As can be seen on the postage canceller depicted below (Figure. 5), all elements of successful nationalist propaganda are included: the country of origin, the graphic icon of the find and the words "cradle of humankind" work together to suggest South Africa's importance not only to archaeology but to entire human history.



Figure. 5: *The South African postage canceller. (Postal History and Philately of South Africa: http:// www.paleophilatelie.eu/country/south_africa.html)*

A further stamp issued in the same series by the South African Post Office depicts the relatively complete *Australopithecus africanus* skull which Robert Broom discovered at Sterkfontein in the Gauteng province, about 40 km northwest of Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1947. The significance of this fossil lies in its wholeness; it was one of the first complete *Australopithecus africanus* skulls, and thus provided valuable paleontological information. The stamp below shows the characteristic inclusion of the country of origin along with a graphic depiction of the skull and brief information of the find (Figure. 6).

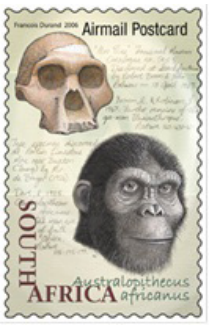


Figure. 6: *The South African "Australopithecus africanus" stamp. (Postal History and Philately of South Africa: http://www. paleophilatelie.eu/country/south_africa.html)*

This particular stamp is part of a set that also includes depictions of other important archaeological finds unique to South Africa, as well as the World Heritage property "Cradle of Humankind" in South Africa (COHWHS). The skull of *Paranthropus robustus* can be found on one of the issued stamps commemorating Robert Broom's discovery of the first fossil of this species. It should be noted that both *Paranthropus robustus* and *Australopithecus africanus* are common to South Africa. The limited geographical range in which these fossils have been found can be seen as a unique resource for archaeology and also as the suggestive role of South Africa in the history of humankind. While not all of the early hominid fossils in the aforementioned series are iconic for groundbreaking finds in South Africa, all are important as major archaeological developments in the region.

Referring to Child's application of Peirce's semiotic system in relation to philatelic meaning, discussed above, all of these stamp series suggest an importance of South Africa in the field of paleoanthropology. Each hominid graphic is iconic for the human history and indexical to the fact that our ancestors lived and died in what is nowadays known as South Africa. Apart from the strengthening of the South African national pride through scientific contributions, the stamps serve to assert the nation's place as the "cradle of humankind" through intimate paleoanthropological relation to human prehistory.

In South Africa and like in other African countries a relative majority of hominid fossil remains had been uncovered both in breadth and depth. Despite the apparent primacy of Africa in the field of early human archaeology, many other countries as well have seized upon the potential of hominid finds to empower national identity. Various examples of philately, which depict contributions and achievements to the archaeology of early humans, can be seen in European countries.

Germany, not wasting a chance to bolster national pride and establish itself as a major contributor to the field of archaeology among other European nations, was quick to commemorate the first recognized remains of the Neanderthal man. Even though, Germany does not claim the first finds of *Homo neanderthalensis* (Gibraltar does), the remains found by a German road crew in the Neander valley in 1856 were the first fossils to be recognized as an early form of a human. The Neander

valley is surrounded by four cities: Mettmann, Erkrath, Gruiten and Vohwinkel, which, before the formation of the unified German Reich in 1871, incorporated the discovery of Neanderthal into their postage. These stamps had a similar purpose as the French and English examples of Jacques Boucher de Perthes and John Frere and their message of the national accomplishment and contribution.

Another important German archaeological find appearing on the national postage stamps is the Steinheim skull (Figure. 7). The skull was found along the Murr River near Stuttgart, Germany in 1933 and featured a cranial capacity within the range of modern *Homo sapiens sapiens*. The skull has been dated to approximately 350 kya, suggesting that either archaic *Homo sapiens* or *Homo heidelbergensis* with significant cranial capacity lived within the borders of present-day Germany. German postage stamps, advertising the discovery, depict the skull superimposed on a modern-looking human head. The label *Homo steinheimensis* is also included despite the possibility that the fossil might belonged to the more prolific species, i.e., *Homo heidelbergensis*. While the depiction of the skull superimposed on a human head may simply reference a stage in the human evolution. It was, however, more likely depicted as such to suggest the prevalence of the ancestral humans with large brains and relatively modern skulls in prehistoric Germany.

Similar, although to a lesser degree, to the way the PRC used the Peking Man to propagate theories of Chinese superiority, the depiction of the Steinheim skull apparently attempts to place Germany in a biologically superior (pre)historical position.



Figure. 7: *The German "Steinheim skull" stamp. (Postal History and Philately of Germany:http://www.paleophilatelie.eu/images/pm/germany_1983_pm2.jpg)*

Following the German example, similar depictions can be found on Italian postage stamps. The Italian stamp seems to be a pre-paid postage stamp (Figure. 8). Interestingly, the graphic does not explicitly state any early species or specific archaeological sites. However, the text "primi abitanti europei" (first inhabitant of Europe) encircles a superimposed skull of likely ancient origin. The inclusion of this text can be taken as Italy's attempt to legitimize its origins and ethnic entitlement to an ethnically Italian national identity. It is distinctly possible that by including such a text, the Italian government wishes to make apparent its knowledge of early human pre-historic occupation of Italy. Accounting for all possible meanings, it cannot be ruled out that the text was meant to underline the Italian people's place in European history.



Figure. 8: *The Italian pre-paid postage stamp. (Postal History and Philately of Italy: http://www.paleophilatelie.eu/country/italy.html)*

In 2001, Spain issued a stamp to celebrate the inscription of a cluster of sites at Atapuerca to UNESCO's list of World Heritage properties where several decades of excavations have uncovered remains of *Homo erectus*, *Homo antecessor*, and *Homo heidelbergensis*, dating to 1.2 million to 600 kya, making Atapuerca the earliest hominid site in Europe (Figure. 9).



Figure. 9: *The Spanish "Atapuerca" stamp. (Postal History and Philately of Spain: http://www.paleophilatelie.eu/country/spain.html)*

Further examples are coming from the Republic of Georgia depicting an early hominid skull from Dmanisi (Figure. 10). The stamp set, issued in 2002, depicts a hominid skull whose discovery helped to support theories which illustrates the migration of early humans throughout Europe. The stamp shows the migration of early humans from Africa into Europe and Asia and Georgia at its crossroad of hominids who originated from Africa and split into groups heading to Asia and Europe. Although not directly on the stamp itself, this image and the phrase "First European" are powerful examples of how such images can serve to place Georgia in a heightened position of historical importance. Evidence and common sense suggest that early men likely spread throughout Europe and Asia following different paths. The visualization of Georgia as the midpoint of of men on their route out of Africa, carries an obvious message of Georgia's importance in the human evolution and migration.



Figure. 10: *The Georgian "Dmanisi" stamp. (Postal History and Philately of Georgia: http://www.paleophilatelie.eu/country/georgia.html)*

Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout the world, material of the past of humankind has found its way into various forms of media, including postage stamps. Differences in content and manner of depiction would render various examples as suggestive of a common goal. Postage stamps are not issued by the public and therefore represent conscious decisions made by state authorities.

In the realm of archaeology and in a broader sense that of science, developments and discoveries can be seen as an economic resource. Some countries can produce numerous and significant archaeological finds due to many factors, including geography and history of habitation. Just as nations may use their economic stability or success to advertise scientific, technological, economic or cultural accomplishment, countries with rich archaeological records may wish to publicize their finds and establish themselves as a contributor to the scientific marketplace. Jack Child states in his research on philately and politics in Latin America that the "nationalization of key economic resources which had previously been under foreign control is frequently the object of postal issues and cancellations" (Child, 2005: 123). Following the analogy, 'foreign control' of such economic resources can be viewed as certain nation's possession of archaeological interest and study at any given time. The more empirical and theoretical developments stemming from sites within a given region, the more scientific and public attention will be drawn to that particular region. This position in the archaeological spotlight can affect a nation's identity and pride in both the short and long term by immediately publicizing its contributions and then establishing its place in the scheme of humankind's deep history. Regarding a nation's real economy as opposed to its analogical archaeological economy, anthropological sites can function to contribute to a nation's wealth, and in turn it's sense of national pride. De la Torre and Mason suggest that "it is self-evident that no society makes an effort to conserve what it does not value" (De la Torre and Mason, 2002, 3). Archaeological sites and the developments they enable are of value to archaeology and paleoanthropology, but also to a nation's economic value. As archaeological sites are tangible portals to a time past, they can attract tourism and further archaeological ventures.

In conclusion, archaeology and more specifically the depiction of hominid-related images on philatelic medium seem to have become powerful tools for defining national identity and giving legitimacy to nationalistic ideologies. Human history, however, seems to become flexible, capable of being manipulated by well-organized authoritative institutions. Archaeology, through its role in uncovering the past of human history, is the primary source of information for establishing a nation's history. This history can be used to legitimize a claim to ethnic entitlement to a particular region, or even warp a nation's perception of their racial superiority.

Many of the ways in which archaeology functions to affect a nation's identity are only as effective as their ability to enter the public's consciousness.

The philatelic medium offers an efficient way of disseminating powerful messages through simple semiotic signaling. The graphics may be small but through a synergistic effect of semiotic signaling they can be used to convey powerful messages. Postage is also a means of communicating messages to the public against their will or without force. Although the prevalence of the internet and the information age are operating to see the golden age of the stamp on its way out, stamps are still widely circulated out of necessity and function rather than public intent to distribute propaganda.

As a final point, not every archaeological discovery or contribution on some form of postage serves some nationalistic agenda. Many depictions likely exist as genuine celebrations and commemorations for valuable scientific achievements. However, it is here that the observers subject themselves to the influence of national pride. Simple indulgence in the shared achievement of a recognized archaeological discovery can still make associating with the nation that much more appealing.

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