Title: Age Profiles of Stegodon death assemblages from archaeological sites on Flores

Mata Menge is an open-air archaeological site dating to the early Middle Pleistocene of Flores, Indonesia. The site forms part of an up to 100 m thick sequence of primary and secondary volcaniclastic and lacustrine deposits filling in the So’a Basin. The So’a Basin fill is dated to between 1.8 and 0.65 myr, and hominin occupation of the basin extends back to at least 1 myr. The So’a Basin hominins are the most likely ancestral candidates for Homo floresiensis, the late Pleistocene hominin from Liang Bua, ca. 70 km west of the So’a Basin.

In 2010, large-scale excavations were initiated at Mata Menge, in search of fossil evidence of the So’a Basin hominins. The excavations have yielded an insular vertebrate fauna consisting of the intermediate-sized Stegodon florensis, a giant rat (Hooijeromys nusatenggara), Komodo Dragon (Varanus komodoensis), crocodile, birds and frogs. To date, ~17,000 fossil specimens and over 3,000 stone artefacts have been excavated from the site. These artefacts provide clear evidence for hominin activity at Mata Menge. Despite the large amount of finds, it remains uncertain whether hominins played a significant role (or any role) in the accumulation of fossil fauna at the site, in particular Stegodon.

During the seminar I will present sedimentological and taphonomic data trying to answer this question. Important aspects of this taphonomic study are the Stegodon death assemblage age profiles. I will compare the Mata Menge age profile with those of other archaeological and palaeontological sites from Flores, including the hobbit cave Liang Bua.

For more information visit: smah.uow.edu.au/sees

CAS Seminar Details:

When: Thursday 2nd April
Where: Bldg 41, Room 153
Time: 12:30 – 1:30pm

Presenter: Gert van den Bergh

Gert van den Bergh has a professional training in sedimentology and vertebrate palaeontology. He completed his PhD at the University of Utrecht on the Quaternary faunal evolution of Java and Wallacean islands, particularly focussing on fossil elephants and their relatives. In 2008 van den Bergh came to UOW to work on the faunal analysis of archaeological sites in Indonesia together with Prof Mike Morwood. In collaboration with other researchers he has worked on the fossil fauna remains from Liang Bua and open air sites in Flores, Java and Sulawesi. In 2011 he was granted an ARC Future fellowship to work on the evolution of proboscideans, megafauna extinctions, and the relationship between early hominins and elephants in the SE Asian region. He is now leading the large-scale excavations in the So’a Basin on Flores in collaboration with the Indonesian Geological Agency and the National Centre for Archaeology, and is currently also working in the Philippines in collaboration with the University of the Philippines.