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SCIENTISTS DISCOVER THREE NEW AUSSIE DINOSAURS

PALAEONTOLOGISTS HAVE UNVEILED THREE NEW AUSTRALIAN DINOSAUR SKELETONS IN OUTBACK QUEENSLAND TODAY.

THE TWO HERBIVORES AND ONE CARNIVORE, EXCAVATED FROM THE WINTON FORMATION, ROAMED OUR LAND DURING THE CRETACEOUS PERIOD - 98 MILLION YEARS AGO.

THE RESEARCH, PUBLISHED IN THE CURRENT EDITION OF PLOS ONE, PUTS AUSTRALIAN BACK ON THE PALAEONTOLOGY MAP AND DESCRIBES AUSTRALIA'S FAUNA BEFORE IT SEPARATED FROM THE SUPERCONTINENT GONDWANA.

PALAEONTOLOGIST AND LEAD AUTHOR DR SCOTT HOCKNULL, OF THE QUEENSLAND MUSEUM, SAYS IN THE PAST DINOSAUR DISCOVERIES IN AUSTRALIA HAVEN'T BEEN CONSIDERED IMPORTANT BECAUSE THERE WERE SO FEW OF THEM.

"WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO PROVE THAT [VIEW] COMPLETELY WRONG."

HOCKNULL SAYS ALL THREE SKELETONS ARE NEW GENERA OF DINOSAUR, WHICH SHOW EVOLUTIONARY LINKS WITH DINOSAURS FROM THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE.

"DINOSAURS DIVERSIFIED AND SPREAD ALL OVER THE WORLD BUT AUSTRALIA, BEING A VERY ISOLATED PLACE AT THE END OF THE WORLD, DEVELOPED ITS OWN UNIQUE FAUNA."

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MEAT EATER

THE NEW GENERA OF CARNIVORE, NAMED AUSTRALOVENATOR BY THE RESEARCHERS, IS THE MOST COMPLETE MEAT-EATING DINOSAUR SKELETON EVER FOUND IN AUSTRALIA.

HOCKNULL SAYS AUSTRALOVENATOR, NICKNAMED BANJO, WAS THE CHEETAH OF ITS TIME.

"IT WAS TWO METRES FROM THE HIP, SIX METRES LONG AND BUILT FOR SPEED," HE SAYS.

THE PLANT-EATERS, CLANCY AND MATILDA, WERE BOTH TITANOSAUR SAUROPODS.

HOCKNULL SAYS WHILE CLANCY WAS BUILT LIKE A HIPPO, MATILDA WAS MORE LIKE A GIRAFFE.

"IT WAS 16 METRES HIGH WITH A LONG NECK AND SMALL HEAD," HE SAYS.

THE SKELETONS OF MATILDA AND BANJO WERE FOUND TOGETHER AT THE BOTTOM OF AN ANCIENT BILLABONG.

WHATEVER KILLED MATILDA PROBABLY KILLED BANJO, SAYS HOCKNULL.

"WHETHER BANJO WAS TRYING TO EAT MATILDA'S CARCASS OR THEY BOTH GOT STUCK IN THE MUD TOGETHER WE DON'T REALLY KNOW."

HOCKNULL SAYS THE DINOSAURS WERE NAMED AFTER AUSTRALIAN POET BANJO PATTERSON AND HIS CHARACTERS.

"IT'S KIND OF QUIRKY THAT WE HAVE A NATIONAL SONG ABOUT A MAN DYING AT THE BOTTOM OF A BILLABONG AND WE'VE GOT THE SAME SCENARIO PLAYING OUT HERE 100 MILLION YEARS AGO WITH A COUPLE OF DINOSAURS," HE SAYS.

SIGNIFICANT FINDING

PALAEONTOLOGIST AND HEAD OF SCIENCES AT MUSEUM VICTORIA DR JOHN LONG SAYS HOCKNULL AND HIS TEAM'S PAPER IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PAPER EVER PUBLISHED ON AUSTRALIAN DINOSAURS TO DATE.

"IT NOT ONLY PRESENTS US WITH TWO NEW AMAZING LONG-NECKED GIANTS OF THE ANCIENT AUSTRALIAN CONTINENT, BUT ALSO ANNOUNCES OUR FIRST REALLY BIG PREDATOR - AUSTRALOVENATOR," SAYS LONG.

HOCKNULL SAYS THERE ARE MANY MORE DINOSAURS IN THE WINTON SITE AND THEY HOPE TO FIND AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST MAMMALS AMONG THEM.

"THERE ARE AT LEAST 50 OTHER SITES WE KNOW THAT ARE YET TO BE EXCAVATED SO THE NEXT 20 TO 30 YEARS IN AUSTRALIAN DINOSAUR SCIENCE WILL BE VERY EXCITING."

CLANCY, MATILDA AND BANJO ARE NOW PART OF AN EXHIBITION IN THE AUSTRALIAN AGE OF DINOSAURS MUSEUM, WHICH OPENS TODAY IN WINTON.

HOCKNULL SAYS THE EXHIBITION WOULDN'T HAVE GOT OFF THE GROUND WITHOUT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTEER HOURS HAVE GONE INTO PREPPING THE BONES SO THEY CAN BE STUDIED AND NOW AVAILABLE FOR THE PUBLIC, HE SAYS.

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

FLUTES OFFER CLUES TO STONE-AGE MUSIC

AT LEAST 35,000 YEARS AGO, IN THE DEPTHS OF THE LAST ICE AGE, THE SOUND OF MUSIC FILLED A CAVE IN WHAT IS NOW SOUTHWESTERN GERMANY, THE SAME PLACE AND TIME EARLY HOMO SAPIENS WERE ALSO CARVING THE OLDEST KNOWN EXAMPLES OF FIGURATIVE ART IN THE WORLD.

MUSIC AND SCULPTURE — EXPRESSIONS OF ARTISTIC CREATIVITY, IT SEEMS — WERE EMERGING IN TANDEM AMONG SOME OF THE FIRST MODERN HUMANS WHEN THEY BEGAN SPREADING THROUGH EUROPE OR SOON THEREAFTER.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS REPORTED WEDNESDAY THE DISCOVERY LAST FALL OF A BONE FLUTE AND TWO FRAGMENTS OF IVORY FLUTES THAT THEY SAID REPRESENT THE EARLIEST KNOWN FLOWERING OF MUSIC-MAKING IN STONE AGE CULTURE. THEY SAID THE BONE FLUTE WITH FIVE FINGER HOLES, FOUND AT HOHLE FELS CAVE IN THE HILLS WEST OF ULM, WAS “BY FAR THE MOST COMPLETE OF THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS SO FAR RECOVERED FROM THE CAVES” IN A REGION WHERE PIECES OF OTHER FLUTES HAVE BEEN TURNING UP IN RECENT YEARS.

A THREE-HOLE FLUTE CARVED FROM MAMMOTH IVORY WAS UNCOVERED A FEW YEARS AGO AT ANOTHER CAVE, AS WELL AS TWO FLUTES MADE FROM THE WING BONES OF A MUTE SWAN. IN THE SAME CAVE, ARCHAEOLOGISTS ALSO FOUND BEAUTIFUL CARVINGS OF ANIMALS.

BUT UNTIL NOW THE ARTIFACTS APPEARED TO BE TOO RARE AND NOT AS PRECISELY DATED TO SUPPORT WIDER INTERPRETATIONS OF THE EARLY RISE OF MUSIC. THE EARLIEST SOLID EVIDENCE OF MUSIC INSTRUMENTS HAD PREVIOUSLY COME FROM FRANCE AND AUSTRIA, BUT DATED WELL AFTER 30,000 YEARS AGO.

IN AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED ONLINE BY THE JOURNAL NATURE, NICHOLAS J. CONARD OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TÜBINGEN, IN GERMANY, AND COLLEAGUES WROTE, “THESE FINDS DEMONSTRATE THE PRESENCE OF A WELL-ESTABLISHED MUSICAL TRADITION AT THE TIME WHEN MODERN HUMANS COLONIZED EUROPE.”

ALTHOUGH RADIOCARBON DATES EARLIER THAN 30,000 YEARS AGO CAN BE IMPRECISE, SAMPLES FROM THE BONES AND ASSOCIATED MATERIAL WERE TESTED INDEPENDENTLY BY TWO LABORATORIES, IN ENGLAND AND GERMANY, USING DIFFERENT METHODS. SCIENTISTS SAID THE DATA AGREED ON AGES OF AT LEAST 35,000 YEARS OLD.

DR. CONARD, A PROFESSOR OF ARCHAEOLOGY, SAID IN AN E-MAIL MESSAGE FROM GERMANY THAT “THE NEW FLUTES MUST BE VERY CLOSE TO 40,000 CALENDAR YEARS OLD AND CERTAINLY DATE TO THE INITIAL SETTLEMENT OF THE REGION.”

DR. CONARD’S TEAM SAID THAT AN ABUNDANCE OF STONE AND IVORY ARTIFACTS, FLINT-KNAPPING DEBRIS AND BONES OF HUNTED ANIMALS WERE FOUND IN THE SEDIMENTS WITH THE FLUTES. MANY PEOPLE APPEARED TO HAVE LIVED AND WORKED THERE SOON AFTER THEIR ARRIVAL IN EUROPE, ASSUMED TO BE AROUND 40,000 YEARS AGO AND 10,000 YEARS BEFORE THE NATIVE NEANDERTHALS WERE TO BECOME EXTINCT.

THE NEANDERTHALS, CLOSE HUMAN RELATIVES, APPARENTLY LEFT NO FIRM EVIDENCE OF HAVING BEEN MUSICAL.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OF THE NEW ARTIFACTS, THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS SAID, WAS A FLUTE MADE FROM A HOLLOW BONE FROM A GRIFFON VULTURE, SKELETONS OF WHICH ARE OFTEN FOUND IN THESE CAVES. THE PRESERVED PORTION IS ABOUT 8.5 INCHES LONG AND INCLUDES THE END OF THE INSTRUMENT INTO WHICH THE MUSICIAN BLEW. THE MAKER HAD CARVED TWO DEEP, V-SHAPED NOTCHES THERE, AND FOUR FINE LINES NEAR THE FINGER HOLES. THE OTHER END APPEARS TO BE BROKEN OFF; JUDGING BY THE TYPICAL LENGTH OF THESE BIRD BONES, TWO OR THREE INCHES ARE MISSING.

DR. CONARD’S DISCOVERY IN 2004 OF THE SEVEN-INCH, THREE-HOLED IVORY FLUTE AT THE GEISSENKLÖSTERLE CAVE, ALSO NEAR ULM, INSPIRED HIM TO WIDEN HIS SEARCH OF CAVES, SAYING AT THE TIME THAT SOUTHERN GERMANY “MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE PLACES WHERE HUMAN CULTURE ORIGINATED.”

FRIEDRICH SEEBERGER, A GERMAN SPECIALIST IN ANCIENT MUSIC, REPRODUCED THE IVORY FLUTE IN WOOD. EXPERIMENTING WITH THE REPLICA, HE FOUND THAT THE ANCIENT FLUTE PRODUCED A RANGE OF NOTES COMPARABLE IN MANY WAYS TO MODERN FLUTES. “THE TONES ARE QUITE HARMONIC,” HE SAID.

A REPLICA IS YET TO BE MADE OF THE RECENT DISCOVERY, BUT THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS SAID THEY EXPECTED THE FIVE-HOLE FLUTE WITH ITS LARGER DIAMETER TO “PROVIDE A COMPARABLE, OR PERHAPS GREATER, RANGE OF NOTES AND MUSICAL POSSIBILITIES.”

MEANWHILE, DR. CONARD BEGAN THIS WEEK A NEW SEASON OF EXPLORATION AT HOHLE FELS CAVE. “WE’LL SEE HOW IT GOES,” HE SAID BY E-MAIL. “I NEVER HAVE EXPECTATIONS. ONE NEVER FINDS WHAT ONE IS LOOKING FOR, BUT ONE NORMALLY FINDS SOMETHING INTERESTING.”

ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND OTHER SCHOLARS CAN ONLY SPECULATE AS TO WHAT MOVED THESE EARLY EUROPEANS TO MAKE MUSIC.

IT SO HAPPENS, AS DR. CONARD AND HIS CO-AUTHORS, SUSANNE C. MÜNZEL OF TÜBINGEN AND MARIA MALINA OF THE HEIDELBERG ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, NOTED, THE HOHLE FELS FLUTE WAS UNCOVERED IN SEDIMENTS A FEW FEET AWAY FROM THE CARVED FIGURINE OF A BUSTY, NUDE WOMAN, ALSO AROUND 35,000 YEARS OLD. THE DISCOVERY WAS ANNOUNCED IN MAY BY DR. CONARD.

WAS THIS EVIDENCE OF HAPPY HOURS AFTER THE HUNT? FERTILITY RITES OR SOCIAL BONDING? THE GERMAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS SUGGESTED THAT MUSIC IN THE STONE AGE “COULD HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE MAINTENANCE OF LARGER SOCIAL NETWORKS, AND THEREBY PERHAPS HAVE HELPED FACILITATE THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND TERRITORIAL EXPANSION OF MODERN HUMANS.”

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THE ARENA GOES ABROAD

BURQA BAN, FRANCE AND SARKOZY

TO BAN OR NOT TO BAN?

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WANTS TO BAN THE BURQA, THE ISLAMIC FULL-BODY CLOAK THAT COVERS WOMEN FROM TOP TO BOTTOM AND ALLOWS THEM ONLY TO LOOK OUT THROUGH A MESH SCREEN OVER THEIR EYES. "IN OUR COUNTRY, WE CANNOT ACCEPT THAT WOMEN BE PRISONERS BEHIND A SCREEN, CUT OFF FROM ALL SOCIAL LIFE, DEPRIVED OF ALL IDENTITY," PRESIDENT NICOLAS SARKOZY SAID IN HIS ADDRESS TO A JOINT SESSION OF BOTH THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT IN THE CHATEAU OF VERSAILLES TO EXTENDED APPLAUSE. "THE BURQA IS NOT A RELIGIOUS SIGN, IT'S A SIGN OF SUBSERVIENCE, A SIGN OF DEBASEMENT — I WANT TO SAY IT SOLEMNLY," HE SAID. "IT WILL NOT BE WELCOME ON THE TERRITORY OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC."

SECULARISM IS NOT ONLY A PILLAR OF THE FRENCH CONSTITUTION; IT IS THE ESSENCE OF MODERN CIVILIZATION AND HAS TO BE DEFENDED AGAINST ALL RELIGIOUS ATTEMPTS TO UNDO HISTORICAL ACHIEVEMENTS. DEFENDING ITS SECULAR IDENTITY, FRANCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ENCOURAGING MODEL FOR THE SIDE OF FREEDOM AND PROGRESS. BUT CAN A DEMOCRATIC STATE SIMPLY BAN A CERTAIN CLOTH BECAUSE IT IS A SIGN OF SUBSERVIENCE, RELIGIOUS OR OTHERWISE? WHAT ABOUT WOMEN WHO INSIST THAT IT IS THEIR CONSIDERED CHOICE TO HIDE THEIR BODIES AND FACES UNDER THIS OMINOUS GOWN? SHOULDN’T THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO DO SO? ON WHAT GROUNDS COULD THEY BE STOPPED?

THE CASE IS DIFFERENT HERE THAN IN IT WAS IN 2004, WHEN FRANCE BANNED THE HIJAB AND OTHER RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS FROM STATE SCHOOLS. THE CONCEPT OF SCHOOLS AS PROTECTORATES, WHERE ALL CHILDREN ARE EQUAL AND CANNOT BE TOUCHED BY THE CLAWS OF POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS OR FAMILY POWERS, IS ONE OF THE BEST GUARANTEES FOR A FREE SOCIETY. AND A SECULAR “UNIFORM”, BARE OF ANY RELIGIOUS POWER SYMBOLS, CAN CONTRIBUTE TO CREATE A CLIMATE THAT ENCOURAGES YOUNG MINDS TO FORM THEIR OWN CONVICTIONS AND FIND THEIR ON WAY OF LIFE.

BUT THE BURQA LADIES ARE RESPONSIBLE ADULTS, FRENCH CITIZENS OR GUESTS, WHO ENJOY THE RIGHT TO INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION. THIS INCLUDES THE RIGHT TO RENOUNCE THEIR LIBERTY. AND IF THEY CHOSE A DRESS THAT LOOKS LIKE A MOBILE PRISON CELL, SO BE IT.

IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THEY DEFEND THE BURQA ONLY OUT OF UNADMITTED FEAR FROM FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PRESSURE AND THAT THEY WOULD CLANDESTINELY HEAVE A SIGH OF RELIEF IF FRENCH STATE AUTHORITY DEFEATED ISLAMIC FAMILY AUTHORITY AND SET THEM FREE. BUT THINGS NEED NOT BE THAT SIMPLE. THERE MAY BE OTHER MOTIVES ALSO, MOTIVES THAT MAY NOT COMPREHENSIBLE OR ACCEPTABLE FOR MANY OF US.

WEARING BURQA IS NOT A FASHION STATEMENT. IT IS SUBMISSION TO A DRESS CODE. VIOLATING IT MAY CAUSE DISCOMFORT, EVEN PANIC FEAR. THIS MAY BE UNREALISTIC IN FRANCE, WHERE NO TALIBAN MORAL POLICE CAN HARASS THEM, BUT THE FEAR OF BREAKING A SOCIO-CULTURAL TABOO CAN BE SO DEEP-ROOTED THAT IT SURVIVES THE CHANGE OF CULTURAL CONTEXT. IN MOST SOCIETIES PUBLIC NAKEDNESS IS THE MOST POWERFUL TABOO. BEING PARADED NAKED IS THEREFORE ONE OF THE HARDEST TORTURE METHODS. MANY PEOPLE ARE NOT ABLE TO OVERCOME THEIR INHIBITIONS AND ENTER A FINNISH SAUNA, THOUGH NAKEDNESS IS ACCEPTED HERE AND DOES NOT POSE ANY WHATSOEVER DANGER. FOR SOME WOMEN WHO HAVE NEVER IN THEIR ADULT LIVES SHOWN THEIR FACES IN PUBLIC, IT MAY BE EQUALLY HARD TO PUT DOWN THE VEILS. IN SUCH CASES, FRIENDLY ENCOURAGEMENT MAY BE FAR MORE HELPFUL THAN A CLOTH-DOWN-ORDER.

IF SARKOZY’S INTENTION IS TO HELP THESE WOMEN TO LIBERATE THEMSELVES – PROVIDED THEY WISH TO BE HELPED AT ALL – THERE WOULD CERTAINLY BE BETTER METHODS THAN THE BAN. DISCRETE CONSULTATION COULD BE HELPFUL, A TELEPHONE HELPLINE, FINANCIAL SUPPORT, SAFE HOUSES, EDUCATION AND ASSISTANCE IN FINDING JOBS. SUCH AN OFFER SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ALL OTHERS AS WELL, MALE OR FEMALE, WHO NEED A HELPING HAND TO BREAK OUT OF THEIR PRIVATE PRISONS.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER SIDE TO IT. THE FACELESS MUMMIES LEAVE MANY FELLOW CITIZENS UNEASY AND WORRIED WHAT SAD, CRUEL AND PERHAPS DANGEROUS SECRETS THEIR OMINOUS GARB MAY CONCEAL. IT IS A SCARY ENCOUNTER, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE LOOMING TERRORIST THREAT. FOR OTHERS IT IS OFFENDING TO BE FORCED TO WITNESS THE DEGRADATION OF A HUMAN INTO A FACELESS BUNDLE OF BLACK CLOTH. IT IS LIKE MEETING HUMANS IN SLAVERY CHAINS OR ON DOG LEASHES: DEEPLY DISTURBING, AN OFFENCE AGAINST CIVILITY, PUBLIC DECENCY AND MORALE. IF NOT BACKED BY RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS OR TRADITIONS, VICTIMS WHO FIGHT FOR THEIR CHAINS RUN THE RISK OF BEING BRANDED MENTAL PATIENTS.

STRANGELY, THE MORE FAMILIAR SIGHT OF CHRISTIAN NUNS IN THEIR WRAP UPS, ANCIENT EXECUTION EQUIPMENT AROUND THEIR NECKS, DOES NOT DISTURB THE PUBLIC TOO MUCH. IF SARKOZY COULD MANAGE TO TAKE AN IMPARTIAL LOOK, THEY SHOULD BE THE NEXT CANDIDATES FOR A BAN. REGARDING FREE CHOICE, MOST NUNS ARE NOT BETTER OFF THAN THEIR BURQA SISTERS. THEY HAVE BEEN HAPLESS UNDER-AGED GIRLS, WHEN THEY WERE PUSHED UNDER THE VEIL, AND THERE WAS NO RETURN TICKET. UNFORTUNATELY, SARKOZY’S IMPARTIALITY IS NOT BEYOND ANY DOUBT. “I AM OF CATHOLIC CULTURE, CATHOLIC TRADITION, CATHOLIC FAITH…” HE STATES IN HIS BOOK, ‘THE REPUBLIC, RELIGIONS, AND HOPE’. AS A CATHOLIC HE MAY BE PRAYING TO VIRGIN MARY, WHO IS IN ALL TRADITIONAL DEPICTIONS SHOWN COVERED BY A VEIL. AND IF HE DECIDES TO VISIT THE POPE TOGETHER WITH CARLA BRUNI, SHE WOULD HAVE TO BOW TO THE VATICAN PROTOCOL THAT DEMANDS THAT VISITING FIRST LADIES BE DRESSED IN BLACK AND VEILED. PRINCE CHARLES’ WIFE CAMILLA RECENTLY HAD TO DO SO. RADICAL ‘SECULARIST’ ACTIVISM THAT TURNS A BLIND EYE TO ONE RELIGION IS NOT VERY CONVINCING AND CAN UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES EVEN INVITE COMMUNALISM – A DANGEROUS MESSAGE.

LOOKING AT IT POLITICALLY, BURQAS ARE LIKE BANNERS SYMBOLISING ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST TRIUMPH: A HIGHLY OFFENSIVE AND PROVOCATIVE SIGNAL FOR ANY SECULAR SOCIETY. IF YOU TRY TO FORCE THEM DOWN, THEY COULD MULTIPLY AND PRODUCE MARTYRS. CHINA WAS NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL WITH THE SUPPRESSION OF THE FALUNG GONG, BECAUSE IN A COUNTRY WITH A GREAT CONTINGENT OF UNHAPPY CITIZENS, EVEN THIS OBSCURE MOVEMENT COULD EMERGE AS A SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE AND BECOME A CATALYST FOR SERIOUS UNREST. MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATURK, THE FATHER OF MODERN SECULAR AND DEMOCRATIC TURKEY, CAMPAIGNED VIGOROUSLY AGAINST BURQA, BUT DID NOT BAN IT WHEN HE IMPLEMENTED HIS BROAD POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL REFORMS IN THE SPIRIT OF ENLIGHTENMENT. HE ESTABLISHED LAICITY AND EQUALITY OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE YOUNG REPUBLIC AND CREATED GREAT ENTHUSIASM, PRIDE AND HOPE. IN A SIMILAR MOVE, FRANCE ONCE CURBED THE DOMINANT INFLUENCE OF THE ALL POWERFUL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ESTABLISHED THE LAY SOCIETY. NOW IT TRIES TO DEFEND ITS SECULAR IDENTITY AGAINST THE NEW RELIGIOUS WAVE OF WORLDWIDE RISING ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM.

BUT IS A BURQA BAN REALLY THE BEST DEFENSE? ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS AND THEIR BURQAS ARE A TINY MINORITY AMONG FRANCES’ ESTIMATED FIVE MILLION IMMIGRANTS FROM MUSLIM COUNTRIES. IF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT DECIDES TO CRACK DOWN ON THEM, THE DAMAGE CAUSED TO A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY COMMITTED TO THE VALUES OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION COULD OUTSTRIP THE BENEFIT. RIDDING THE PUBLIC EYE OF THE DISTURBING SIGHT OF A FEW WILLING VICTIMS OF RELIGIOUS SUPPRESSION DOES NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM; IT PUSHES IT INTO THE DARK AND OUT OF CONTROL. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE OFFER OF SUPPORT TO THOSE WHO WANT TO COME OUT WOULD BE IN EVERY RESPECT A BETTER SOLUTION.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

JOHN BICE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK "A 21ST CENTURY RATIONALIST IN MEDIEVAL AMERICA"

EARNED HIS DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY WHILE WRITING FOR THE SCHOOL NEWSPAPER.

YOU CAN READ MY REVIEW OF HIS BOOK AT "THESKEPTICARENA.COM."

“THE HAPLESS AND UNEDUCATED MEN AND WOMEN LIVING IN THE 6TH CENTURY HAD AN EXCUSE FOR THEIR STUNTED CRITICAL-THINKING SKILLS, PATHETICALLY MYOPIC WORLDVIEW AND PERVASIVE BELIEF IN THE SUPERNATURAL AND MYSTICAL; THE CURRENT INHABITANTS OF THE DEVELOPED WORLD, HOWEVER, OUGHT TO KNOW BETTER.”

“WHAT A SLAP IN THE FACE – BESTED BY GODLESS HEATHENS IN A MORALITY CONTEST.”