



Late Postclassic (c. AD 1200–1500) Maya mosaic mask (acc. no. PC.B.557) in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (Washington, DC, USA) depicting the aged sun deity K'inich Ajaw. The mask (H. 13.4cm, W. 13.2cm, D. 8.0cm) is composed of turquoise, malachite, aventurine, jadeite, mollusc shell, tortoiseshell, human and animal teeth, resin adhesives, pigments, plant and animal fibres, and other materials on a substrate of Montezuma bald cypress wood. The use of tortoiseshell—the epidermal, keratinous scutes of the hawksbill sea turtle—on the proper left ear is the only demonstrated use of this organic material in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica, and is the subject of an article in this issue by Jack Frazier and Reiko Ishihara-Brito (©Pre-Columbian Collection, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, DC).

© Antiquity Publications Ltd.



Cultivating culture. The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute is fielding a new generation of remote mapping machines, and achieving new levels of precision at high speed. Top) motorised magnetometer prospecting at the Iron Age site of Uppåkra in southern Sweden using a multichannel Foerster gradiometer array mounted on a non-magnetic cart. Bottom) motorised GPR survey with the 16-channel MALÅ Imaging Radar Array at the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site of Birka-Hovgården. Data positioning is conducted with the GPS antenna mounted on top of the GPR system (images courtesy of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Archaeological Prospection and Virtual Archaeology).

EDITORIAL

‘Retired but active’ is the rather facetious verdict that us over-seventies attract, but one thing is certain: active or not, our minds turn increasingly to the next generation. The most important thing for any profession is to ensure that new young talent has access to a career and that the career has a structure in which creativity is rewarded. In Britain, we have done next to nothing in this regard—and it would be difficult to say who has been the more feckless—the directors of large companies or the heads of archaeology departments in universities.

The new lecturers are drawn in principle from the cohort of doctoral students, implying that the PhD is intended to provide an apprenticeship. Accordingly it has been streamlined: instead of spending twenty years on an enormous topic, the student spends three years on something more manageable, a course or programme likely to provide a useful experience and destined for expeditious completion. Strangely however, the required output remains the same: a book-length treatise. Articles are not encouraged as they hold up the delivery of the ill-digested lump. This is odd on two counts: first, students are made to write a book before they have written an article, and second, the articles, not the book, are what their prospective employer actually requires. Given this prescription, the newly appointed lecturer is expected to hit the ground running, with four peer-reviewed and citable articles in the knapsack, not one unpublished, unobtainable tome. Indeed, humanities staff have been heard to say that (in their department) you would need a minimum of four publications even to get an interview.

And another thing. If the PhD is an apprenticeship, why does it include no formal training in fieldwork—our method of recovering primary data? Quite apart from the fact that the world is already full of academics who don’t know how to dig (but think they do), not every doctoral student is destined for a job in a university. The commercial sector, as archaeology’s largest employer, needs their talents too—but it would help if they were trained. Six months in the field, out of 36 months in a library, strikes me as a minimum (leaving 30 months to write four articles).

Meanwhile what of the students who are not doing PhDs, but want to be archaeologists; do they fare any better? No they don’t. It has become ever more difficult for promising young people to gain access to the profession. The old way was simple enough: you volunteered and received training in exchange for your labour. Now you pay to be trained or indeed, in some reprehensible cases, pay not to be trained. So what are you paying for?: to buy an experience without making any commitment to it, known in other walks of life as prostitution. ‘Community’ archaeology does become ethical if the project has its own rationale and funding, and community members are fully integrated and given progressive training for a token sum that includes the keenest but does not exclude the poorest. This means a commitment on their part for a minimum of three weeks. Otherwise it becomes a different kind of slavery—volunteers shackled by chains of condescension.

The reason that our tyros are pushed through these narrow turnstiles is firstly because universities don’t have the resources (or often the knowledge) to train students in the field,

and secondly because the commercial sector likes to pretend that it is contrary to the regulations of their industry to take volunteers, which anyway results in unfair competition, exploited labour, and so forth. On the contrary, the commercial sector can very often employ trainees in circumstances that disadvantage no-one, are perfectly consistent with health and safety and actually deliver better archaeology. Consider the case of large flat sites that require excavation in area. The effective method, as we have known for decades, requires definition of a horizon by lines of trowellers, viewed from a tower. There isn't a better way of doing this, but the practice was discontinued because it didn't suit the economics of archaeological firms; they prefer to deploy antiquated two-man trenches or test pits in which little will be seen, but nobody will realise it.

Volunteers do not steal work from professionals; they enhance professional contracts; they make poor archaeology better; they allow the profession to select a new entry. Nor does it require much extra work: the local archaeology societies, long ignored by the greater number of commercial firms, can supply locally-based volunteers able to work off site and on—a collaboration that is rightly regarded by planners and developers alike as giving projects added value.

🗨️ “Militants from the Ansar Dine group, which controls much of northern Mali, have started to destroy Timbuktu's ancient tombs. In three days, half of the town's shrines have been destroyed in a display of fanaticism”. So begins a report from Irina Bokova of CNN¹. In what Benjamin Smith, president of the PanAfrican Archaeological Association called “the wisest statement on Timbuktu so far”, she continues, “there is much more at stake than a handful of structures made of mud and wood—as valuable as they are. Timbuktu is no ordinary town. The fabled *City of 333 Saints* is an ancient desert crossroads and a historic seat of Islamic learning and faith. [. . .]The attack on Timbuktu's cultural heritage is an attack against this history and the values it carries—values of tolerance, exchange and living together, which lie at the heart of Islam.”

Numerous institutions have expressed their horror at the destruction, including members of the West African Archaeology Association, meeting in Niamey on 28 June. They condemned the profanation of the mausolea of saints and the monument of martyrs, the monuments of Gina Dogon in Douenza, and the Alfarouk monument, classified as UNESCO World Heritage sites, perpetrated by fundamentalist groups, and expressed their urgent concern about the threat hanging over the manuscripts of Timbuktu and all the cultural wealth located in the north of Mali.

Among former presidents of the WAAA is Alpha Ouma Konaré, who was also president of Mali (1992–2002), founded Radio Bamakan, and brought the African Cup of Nations to Mali. Like successive presidents of Mali and Niger, he also confronted the rebellions of the Tuaregs who live in the environs of Timbuktu and have been struggling for autonomy (and against desertification) for more than 20 years. Ag Ghaly, current leader of Ansar Dine, is a veteran of earlier rebellions, but thought to be aiming for a reformed theocracy in Mali rather than independence².

¹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/07/02/opinion/unesco-mali-opinion/>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ansar_Dine (accessed 12 July 2012).

In a forceful statement, Claire Smith, president of the World Archaeological Congress, points out that the situation is unusual “because it is an attack on Muslim heritage by Muslim people, albeit from different religious factions. However, using cultural heritage as a weapon of war is self-defeating—the other side is likely to hit back by destroying your heritage sites. [...] An attack on cultural heritage is an attack on another group’s source of pride, cultural strength and, ultimately, identity.” Exactly so. For which reason it would be wrong to call these destructions random or uninformed; their success in attracting the world’s attention is only too obvious.

Benjamin Smith states, with some reason, that this situation cannot be resolved without international intervention. And yet home-grown resistance has perhaps a firmer moral foundation, so it was good to read that members of Timbuktu’s community have set up an armed brigade to prevent further destruction of the tombs. “Today we have a vigilance brigade so that no one touches the mausolea of Araouane and Gasser-Cheick,” said Tahel Ould Sidy, leader of the unit, referring to two tombs in the greater Timbuktu region. “We are not going to allow people who know nothing about Islam to come and destroy our treasures. I studied in Mauritania and Saudi Arabia; no one tells us in the Koran that we should destroy tombs.” However French anthropologist Jean-Claude Penrad discerns the motives of iconoclasts, for whom the veneration of tombs “is a sort of heresy, a way of stepping away from the oneness of God³.”

Clearly understanding such motives is not straightforward, and there are inherent risks in adding “heritage crime” to the Ten Commandments. The morality offers a curious echo of the World Heritage debate, where local values are trumped by those of expert panels, acting for a righteous and context-free future. The criteria for establishing global value are by no means clear cut, as we know in this journal where we are obliged to judge it on a daily basis. But when all is said and done, the idea of world heritage is still aligned with cultural property rather than the universal history to which *Antiquity* aspires. The destruction of items of cultural property affects many more people than its owners, so the wrong is that much greater. But greater still is the loss to the human story of not knowing, or discussing, what they meant.

📖 The editors of a revitalised *Journal of Field Archaeology* (37.2, 2012) invite us to reconsider the presence of an Old Stone Age on the North American continent. The hypothesis that European settlers crossed the Atlantic 20 000 years ago, which has already achieved a respectable maturity, has had another boost with the publication of a new book hailed as “radical” by the *Washington Post*⁴. Dennis Stanford (Smithsonian Institution) and Bruce Bradley (Exeter University, UK) refine the proposition that the Clovis culture originated in Solutrean France and delve into earlier literature implying that North America had an even earlier Palaeolithic, peopled by travellers (including *Homo erectus*) from across the oceans. Many have maintained a distant scepticism to this notion over five decades; for others it is, like a great deal of archaeology, perfectly possible but not adequately demonstrated.

Curtis Runnels and Norman Hammond, *JFA*’s editors, would like to persuade us to take a positive and proactive stance: “the time has come for new research designs

³ <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Timbuktu-Arabs-protect-ancient-tombs-20120711>

⁴ Dennis Stanford & Bruce Bradley. 2012. *Across Atlantic ice: the origin of America’s Clovis culture*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

using palaeo-environmental modeling to predict likely habitats in the New World for archaic and early modern humans in the Middle and Upper Pleistocene, and these habitats should be searched for in situ assemblages that can be excavated and dated.” The thought of a new wave of Palaeolithic material from this massive territory is daunting and exciting. Cue to get those puzzling eoliths out of the bottom drawer. . . and watch this space.

It is my solemn duty to report the death of my erstwhile mentor and curmudgeonly colleague Prof H. Harumpher, who died in the queue for the car-ferry returning from a month’s strenuous fieldwork in the vineyards of his beloved Gascony. Harumpher was well-known for his trenchant views on the Romanisation of Orkney and his large scale, four-decade excavations at Passé-les-Vacances, which are even now approaching their triumphant termination. He was a colourful character, given to making observations that would have seemed impertinent in a less imposing figure. His numerous students were inspired by his brilliantly acid comments on the authors of the textbooks and articles they were meant to have read, situating their names by means of memorable epithets (*sherd face, theory head, boy scout, drunk-by-lunchtime, skater’s legs, left luggage*). He was no friend of theory and on one occasion he reprimanded a colleague for ‘harbouring a pernicious paradigm’.

Harumpher was fond of committees and sat on a large number, finding them a useful way of advancing personal alliances, attracting honours, deflecting criticism and avoiding more solitary kinds of work. One committee invariably led to another, and there is no doubt that grant-giving bodies, and government in particular, liked his air of vicarious authority and his genius for non-committal resolutions. He leaves a wife, Esmeralda, née Blenkinsop, or rather she left him, complaining of migraines brought on by post-mortems of Departmental meetings (she was not at them of course, but may as well have been). “He reduced all intelligent activity to sets of three initials” she once told me, ruefully.

Humphrey will be much missed in the meeting rooms of societies, councils and trusts where his ghost still lingers, occasionally startling the living with its dry sniff of superior amusement. His death marks the passing of an era in British archaeology, one that should arguably have passed about 30 years ago.

The *World Archaeological Congress* is calling for bids to host their Eighth Congress, due to be held in 2016 or 2017. Bids for WAC-8 will be presented to the WAC Council at WAC-7, to be held at the Dead Sea, Jordan, in January 2013. Guidance in preparing a bid can be found on the WAC website (<http://www.worldarchaeologicalcongress.org/site/home.php>). Contact: Secretary of WAC, Ines Domingo Sanz (Ines.domingo@ub.edu).

Meanwhile the 17th congress of the rejuvenated UISPP (*Union Internationale des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques*) is to be held in Burgos, Spain on 1–7 September 2014 (contact: org.uispp2014@fundacionatapuerca.es). And watch out for the Union’s new website at <http://uispp.org/>

Martin Carver
York, 1 September 2012