A ROMAN FORT ON THE RED SEA COAST

MUSIC OF THE MAYA

GREEK VASES IN ETRURIA

MEDIEVAL LOVE POEM WRITTEN IN WAX

IMPORTANT BRONZES STOLEN FROM PALESTRINA

THE ART LOSS REGISTER

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWS FROM CHICAGO

WINTER ANTIQUITIES AUCTIONS REPORT

A Mayan pottery whistle from the Island of Jaina, Mexico, AD 750-900. In 'Music of the Maya' at the San Diego Museum of Man.
Villanova bronze duck hook with 6 prongs and 2 duck heads. Etruria. Circa 7th Century B.C. L. 13 in (33cm) £6,600

Archaic Greek terracotta horse and rider with brown geometric decoration; hand pierced for spear. Boeotia. Circa 560-550 B.C. Ht 5 1/2 in (14cm) £3,700

Early Christian bronze lamp, handle in form of openwork cross in a volute; lid surmounted by a bull’s head. Circa 4th-5th Century A.D. L. 7 1/2 in (19cm) £2,500

Egyptian bronze statue of Mut, the goddess standing with arms at sides, wearing wig and Double Crown. Elaborate cold-worked details. Circa XXVIIIth Dynasty (664-525 B.C.) Ht 6 1/8 in (15.5cm) £4,600

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Medieval Love Poem Scratched in Wax
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Dominic Tweddle

Late Egyptian Art
Symposium in New York
Stavros Aspromoulos

Music of the Maya
An exhibition of Mayan instruments
Grace Johnson

Archaeological News From Chicago
The 93rd Annual Meeting of the AIA
Jerome M. Eisenberg

A New Look at the Bassae Frieze
Recent discoveries and a redisplay
A.J.S. Spawforth

The Winter Antiquities Sales
Jerome M. Eisenberg

Important Bronzes Stolen from Palestrina
Jerome M. Eisenberg

The Art Loss Register
A computerised register to aid recovery of stolen works of art
Caroline Wakeford

Greek Vases in Etruria
A new look at the Etruscans and Greek art
Nigel Spivey

NEXT ISSUE
• Forgery and Fraud in Ancient Art
• The Museums of Rome
The 1992 British Archaeological Awards

The British Archaeological Awards (biennial) are the most prestigious awards in British Archaeology. Since their foundation in 1976, they have grown to include ten awards covering every aspect of British Archaeology. The closing date for entries is 30 June and the winners will be announced at a presentation ceremony in London in November. The awards are made for work in the United Kingdom, in progress or completed during the previous two years. For details, contact John Gorton, Honorary Secretary, British Archaeological Awards, 56 Penn Rd, Beaconsfield, Bucks HP9 2LS.

1. The Pitt-Rivers Award – for the best project by volunteers. Grants of up to £5,000 for the finalists by the Robert Kiln Trust.
2. The Virgin Group Award – for the best presentation of an archaeological project to the public, thus stimulating awareness of and curiosity about our national heritage. Sponsored by the Virgin Group.
3. The Sponsorship Award – for the best sponsorship of archaeology.
4. The Archaeological Book Award – for the best book on British Archaeology published in the last two years. Sponsored by the Ancient and Medieval History Book Club.
5. The Heritage in Britain Award – the best long-term preservation of a site of monument. Supported by English Heritage, CADW, and HBM (Scotland).
6. The Vindolanda Gorge Museum Trust Award – for the best adaptive, innovative, re-use of any historic or industrial building.
7. The Channel Four TV Award – for the best British-made film or video on archaeology (details from BUFVC, 55 Creek St, London W1V 3LR).
8. The BP Award – for the non-archaeologist, e.g. digger-driver, who makes an archaeological find and reports it properly. Sponsored by British Petroleum Co. plc.
9. The Young Archaeologist of the Year Award – sponsored by the Young Archaeologists’ Club (details from YAC, Clifford Chambers, 4 Clifford St, York, Y01 1RD. Tel: 0904 611944).
10. The Nationwide Silver Trowel Award – for the greatest initiative in archaeology. All entrants for the other awards are automatically considered.

Herodian Bathhouse Discovered in Israeli Dig

Remains of an Herodian period public bathhouse some 2,000 years old (above) and an even older fortified tower from the Hellenistic period, have been discovered in excavations conducted this season at Ramat Hanadiv by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Institute of Archaeology.

This was the third season of excavations at the site, known as Hurbat Eleg in Hebrew, or Kirbet Umm el-Aqiq in Arabic. The name, meaning ‘leech ruins’, probably derives from the prevalence of leeches in the swampy ground there. The site is on the eastern slope of Ramat Hanadiv, a lush garden tract. Although about 15 Roman bathhouses have been found in Israel, the one at Ramat Hanadiv is the first discovered in a public area. All previous bathhouses uncovered were part of splendid residences and royal palaces, such as those at Masada, Herodion and Jericho.

The bathhouse contained a hot room (cal-"darium) and a cold room (frigidarium) with a pool. A spacious courtyard in front of the bathhouse was probably used for gymnastics and social meetings.

It was fed by the water of the Ein Zur spring on the eastern slope of Ramat Hanadiv. The water flowed out of a tunnel in the hillside and into a partially-covered Herodian stone conduit, and from there into a reservoir which connected to the bathhouse. The tunnel, conduit and reservoir were all uncovered in last year’s work at the site and further cleared this year.

An aqueduct, traces of which have been uncovered this year, also carried the water of Ein Zur to the small, Roman water-rites theatre at Shuni about three kilometres to the south.

The construction of a bathhouse in this location may be linked with the sanctity of the waters of Ein Zur in ancient times. It was thought that the waters conveyed special qualities of fertility and were especially sought after by women hoping to give birth to a son.

If this is so, then the bathhouse at Hurbat Eleg may not have been an ordinary one, but rather built for therapeutic purposes, especially frequented by women with childbearing problems.

The other major discovery of this season at the site was a Hellenistic fortified tower and adjoining courtyard, lying on a rise overlooking the spring of Ein Zur and the valley of Bqat Hanadiv to the east.

The style of the tower’s construction and the storage jars found within it indicate that it was built in the third century BC, during the Hellenistic period, when the land was divided up among soldier-settlers who controlled their territories in semi-military fashion. The stone tower is thought to have originally reached a height of two to three storeys, with a defensive wall around it.

Ruins of nearby dwellings indicate that a village existed there, most likely occupied by subservient farmers. The last period of habitation was apparently the early Roman period, from the first century BC to the time of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in AD 70.

The fact that the site appears to have been abandoned then is proof that, at least at that stage, it was inhabited by Jews; otherwise there would probably have been no reason to leave rich farmland with a steady supply of water.

The finds from this era in the ruins are impressive, and include imported oil lamps, one of which bears a representation of Nike, ancient goddess of victory.
Ex-Sotheby’s Man Jailed for Theft

At the end of a five and a half week trial at Knightsbridge Crown Court, London, James Hodges, former administrator of Sotheby’s antiquities department, has been jailed for nine months. Hodges had denied 22 charges of theft, obtaining property by deception, false accounting, forgery and using a false document.

A bizarre story was revealed during the course of the trial in which allusions were made to the dubious sources of some antiquities that appeared on the market, smuggling, physical threats, and false accounting to conceal clients’ names.

The theft charges related to two items, a bronze Celtic helmet of the first century BC and a sixth-century BC Greek terracotta covered bowl (a plemochos). The two items, valued at around £50,000, were found to be missing after a routine check on properties held in store at Sotheby’s and Hodges had been interviewed by police at the time. Subsequently, two notes, together with a key, left in the collection plate after Sunday Mass at the Brompton Oratory, Knightsbridge, led police to a left luggage locker at Marylebone Station where the missing items were found. Hodges was arrested and admitted that he was responsible for the recovery.

Hodges was convicted of the theft, of forging a document which gave him authority to remove the two objects, and of false accounting. He was acquitted on 18 of the 22 charges and cleared of one other charge on the judge’s direction.

Stolen Herculaneum Antiquities Retrieved

Italian police have retrieved almost 400 pieces stolen from Herculaneum in 1990 (Minerva, May 1990, pp. 23-5).

The objects were found in a farmhouse near Volla at the end of 1991, apparently en route to Switzerland under an agreement between the Naples mafia and criminals in Rome.

Discoveries in New World Mark Columbus Quincentenary

A crucifix thought to be the oldest evidence of Christianity in the Americas has been unearthed by a team of archaeologists in the Dominican Republic. The tiny cross (below, with a Spanish coin and a buckle from Spanish armour) is just 1½” high and made of pewter and iron, with a copper alloy used for the body of Christ. It was discovered on the site of a settlement founded by Christopher Columbus in 1493 and was probably attached to a rosary belonging to a Spanish soldier. According to Dr Deagan, leader of the Dominican, Venezuelan and North American team, it is “a direct expression of the Catholicism brought to the Americas by the Spanish”. She believes that it is the oldest Christian symbol known in the Americas because it was found in an undisturbed deposit belonging to the settlement of La Isabela, which only existed from 1493 to 1498.

Accompanied by about 1,500 sailors, soldiers and settlers, Columbus founded La Isabela on his second voyage in 1493. But, plagued with problems, the settlement lasted only five years. During the three-year excavation the team has also made discoveries about how Columbus colonised the area – he established not just one settlement, as historians have always believed, but two. They uncovered a second settlement across the bay where a satellite colony of craftsmen and farmers supported the main group with food and pottery.

Meanwhile, archaeologists in North Carolina have found a research laboratory dating back to the 1580s, the first in the New World. The excavation, at Roanoke Island’s Ft. Raleigh National Historical Site, has revealed an old laboratory once used for metallurgical research, described by dig director Ivor Noel Hume as ‘the birthplace of American science’. Specialists in search of metals took part in some of the earliest expeditions to the New World, but this is the first evidence that they stayed for any length of time and set up research facilities. Finds at the site include fragments of glass, crucibles, pots for ointments, and broken distilling apparatus. The thin shards of glass – perhaps used in apothecary work – are the oldest examples of English glass ever found in the Americas. The dig has also uncovered a piece of metallic antimony, slag, clinkers from a forger and traces of molten materials. According to Hume, ‘the objects relate to some kind of smelting operation. But a lot more analysis will be needed to determine what kind of furnace these scientists were using and what they were smelting’. 

Archeology at a Royal Castle

During 1990 and 1991 major engineering works have been in progress at Windsor Castle to consolidate and underpin the massive Round Tower, which has been showing signs of weakness. English Heritage has kept a watching brief on the work, recording any features which are exposed.

Evidence has been found of the timber defences which surmounted the motte – the great earthen mound built to support these defences, and on which the masonry Tower was built in the twelfth century. Associated with the timber works was a well, which was filled before the wall of the Tower was built across it; this undoubtedly was a factor which contributed to the Round Tower’s instability.

An interesting feature is the evidence of occupation at a level two metres below the top of the earthen motte. This means either that there was a period of delay in building the motte, or that, after a primary period of occupation, the height of the motte was increased for the final phase of the timber defences.

K.E. Jermy.
Unexpected Finds from Rescue Excavations

English Heritage has recently announced the results of rescue excavations which it has sponsored or assisted; two in particular yielded important and unexpected results.

On the line of the A47 by-pass south of Norwich finds were made associated with both the Arminghall henge and the Roman town of Venta Icenorum (Caistor St Edmund). Crop-marks at Harford Farm, Caistor, proved to represent funerary/ceremonial features ranging from the Bronze Age through to the Anglo-Saxon period. The Anglo-Saxon cemetery of 46 graves, one dated to the eighth century, is outstanding for East Anglia.

The graves were arranged with respect to two prehistoric barrows, and three were lavishly equipped with grave-goods. The objects in one included a gold filigree pendant, shears, and a bronze thread-box containing textiles, two silver dresshooks and parts of a set of silver pins. A woman’s grave contained silver-wire rings and beads, a silver toilet set, latchets, knife, buckle, and a gold-and-garnet brooch of disc shape; the brooch was old when buried, and had been repaired twice. On the reverse, next to an interlaced design of animals, is an inscription in runes: ‘Luda repaired this brooch’. A third grave contained a Roman intaglio pendant, shears, and the remains of (probably) a leather bag which held a silver toilet set, silver-wire rings and beads, a latchet and an iron ring.

In Somerset, at Shepton Mallet, two hectares were stripped of topsoil for examining and cleaning ancient remains at a site adjoining the Fosse Way and scheduled for development as a warehouse complex for Showerings Ltd. Initially six weeks were allocated for this work, but the developers extended this to over three months when the importance of the finds became clear. These included cobbled streets and yards, buildings (some on stone foundations), walls, ditches, cemeteries, pits and ovens, with associated artefacts of the Roman period. The pattern emerged of side-streets running back from a frontage on the Fosse Way to industrial, domestic and agricultural areas. The remains, in fact, were those of a small Romano-British town occupied during the second, third and fourth centuries, and possibly on into the fifth. Fortunately the excavated area seems to have been at or near the core of the settlement. Until 1990 nobody knew the existence of this town, and its Roman name is still unknown. A stride the Fosse Way and standing midway between the larger towns of Bath and Ilchester, it could have been a commercial and/or administrative centre for the area between the Mendip Hills and the lowlands of south Somerset. The presence of a small Christian community there, towards the end of the Roman occupation, is attested by the find in a coffin of a silver amulet cross having a circular disc on which is the Christian Chi-Rho emblem.

Further investigations are being made to discover something of the full area of the town, the contemporary local landscape, and the growth of the town in the context of the pre-Roman Iron Age.

K.E. Jermy.

Giza Plateau Still Holds Secrets

It seems incredible that what is perhaps the most visited tourist site in Egypt – the pyramids of Giza and the sphinx just outside Cairo – could still hold secrets to stir the archaeological world, but a recent discovery at the site has done just that. The whole area around the three pyramids of Cheops, Chephren and Mykerinus, plus the sphinx which is associated with the pyramid complex of Chephren, is one vast cemetery of officials who hoped, by being buried close to their royal master, to be able to share just a tiny fragment of the immortality which, at this period, belonged alone to pharaoh, the living god.

Dr Zawi Hawass, Chief Inspector for the Giza necropolis, has been excavating a previously unknown cemetery of workmen and overseers of pharaonic that dates back some five and a half thousand years to the Fourth Dynasty, high point of pyramid building. The cemetery was literally stumbled upon in 1990 when a horse ridden across the desert by an American lady tourist fell into a tomb.

Dr Hawass and his team have so far uncovered 14 large tombs and just over 100 smaller burials. The prize find has undoubtedly been a small limestone statuette of an ancient Egyptian official (left), a mere eight inches high. He wears the standard short official wig and a deep kilt as he purposefully strides forward in the classic pose, arms straight down at his sides and hands loosely clenched around a twist of cloth. The colours of the original paint – blue, black, brown and white – are still bright. In ancient Egypt convention decreed that males were shown with brown or red skins (because they spent time outside) and women had white or light yellow skins, because they stayed indoors.

The man has no name at the moment – there is certainly not one on the statue itself – but he may be identified from other inscribed items to be found in the tomb. Around his neck, suspended on a cord, seems to be a small pot. Dr Hawass has suggested that it might be an insignia of his office, perhaps as a foreman in charge of a pottery. It is more likely, however, that it is a heart (lb) amulet such as is found represented around the necks of high officials in later dynasties, such as Sennufer, mayor of Thebes, whose statue is in the Cairo Museum.

Peter A. Clayton
A ROMAN FORT ON THE RED SEA COAST

Steven E. Sidebotham

Protecting the lengthy borders of the Roman Empire was a constant concern of the Imperial government which spent enormous sums of money and manpower building and maintaining military installations and roads to ensure the security of the State. Different regions required varying methods of defence depending upon the topography, climate, numbers and attitudes of the non-Roman peoples on the opposite side of the frontier. Traditionally, the greatest threats were along the Rhine-Danube river frontiers in western and central Europe, where numerous Germanic tribes resided, and in the Near East, especially in Syria, where inroads by the Parthians and, after their demise in the early third century AD, their successors the Sassanid Persians were expected. It was along these two borders especially that the Romans concentrated their greatest military might.

The North African frontier also received attention, but the troops assigned to its protection were few compared to the great number of legions disposed along the borders in Europe and the Middle East. The garrison in Egypt, throughout the Roman period of occupation from 30 BC until the AD 640s, was there more to keep the troublesome local population in check than to defend against any serious attack expected from outside. The garrison waxed and waned in size over nearly seven centuries of Roman sovereignty depending upon the extent of domestic internal trouble and, to a lesser extent, upon threats posed by marauding bands of nomads and bandits both inside the province and, occasionally, from outside.

French scholars studied the frontier region west of the Nile especially in the Saharan oases and discovered a series of forts there which protected the caravan routes coming from the south as well as the Nile valley from attack. A similar defence has also been noted in Lower Egypt east of the Nile.

Work undertaken in the Upper Egyptian regions of the Eastern Desert, between the Nile and the Red Sea coast, has recently demonstrated the existence of a limes, a frontier/administrative zone, there, too, at least from the early fourth century on. Four seasons of archaeological survey and excavation in the Eastern Desert and along the Red Sea coast by the University of Delaware under my direction have shed light on the existence and nature of this limes and raised more issues for us to answer regarding this region.

Our early work at ‘Abu Sha’ar, about 20 kilometres north of the modern Red Sea resort of Hurghada (Fig 1), demonstrated that the site was a late Roman/Byzantine fort only 25 metres from the sea at high tide (Figs 2 and 3). It was not, however, until subsequent summers of excavation
that more precise dates of activity at the fort were identified. Twenty-five fragments of one or more monumental Latin inscriptions found in excavations at the main (west) gate provided key information. The fort was built in AD 309-10 during the joint reigns of the emperors Galerius (305-311), Licinius I (308-324), Constantine I (306-337) and Maximinus II (309-313) who were recorded along with the Roman governor Aurelius Maximinus. The fort was mentioned ...LIMITIBUS APTA IN LITO(RE) (Fig 4); it was part of the Roman times in this area and was garrisoned by a mounted unit, the Ala Nova Maximiana, made up, no doubt, of Egyptian troops recruited from the Nile valley. Fortunately, the same emperors and governor were recorded on an inscription from the main Roman legioinary camp at Luxor indicating that both installations were contemporary. 'Abu Sha'ar was subordinate to and dependent upon the main installation at Luxor for communications and reinforcements when needed.

The fort at 'Abu Sha'ar was one of the larger ones in the Eastern Desert, yet by Roman standards it was modest: its outer walls were approximately 77.5 metres north-south by about 64 metres east-west. These walls were about 3.5-4 metres high by around 1.5 metres thick. The fort was on high ground defended on the east by the Red Sea, on the north and south by artificial defensive ditches, and on the west by low ground. The installation had two portals: a main one, as noted above, in the centre west wall and a smaller one piercing the centre north wall. Arches spanned both entrances and the western one, at least, in addition to the inscriptions, was also adorned with white gypsum blocks carved and coated with plaster decoration painted yellow and red in an indeterminate design. Consol blocks, decorated with a bead and reel and dentil moulding and plastered and painted red and yellow, rested above the arch (Fig 5). Two Christian crosses, most likely unofficial graffito, appeared on the right front face of the gate. Six pivot holes were discovered for the gate and two of these contained iron nails and parts of the wooden gate made of pine and acacia.

One of the twelve or, possibly, thirteen rectilinear shaped towers has so far been exposed. Excavation of the southern tower flanking the west gate shed light upon its haphazard construction methods which required strengthening at its base with a buttress. This tower seems to have been defended by a catapult. The artillery itself does not survive, but six white gypsum catapult balls found in the tower, and three others in interior areas of the fort, suggest that this was one mode of defence.

Though unexcavated, the huge size of the southwestern-most tower of the fort indicates that all the fort towers were not of uniform size. We speculate that it was substantially larger than the others because it was closest to the road approaching from the Nile at Kainopolis (Qena), 181 kilometres to the south-west. Most potential threats to the fort probably developed from this area. It would have been logical to station a lookout here
to provide the earliest possible warning of approaching visitors, whether hostile or friendly.

In the centre east interior of the fort was a principia (headquarters – identified by its location in the fort and the discovery of a late third/early fourth century ostracon recording a duty roster), later converted into a church. Though there was a dearth of datable artefacts which precluded determining precisely when the conversion of this building took place, the evidence of a church here by the late fourth/early fifth century was, nevertheless, clear. Discoveries included a 27-line papyrus written in Greek by a clergyman of the late fourth/early fifth century, a Christian inscription in Greek of the fourth-sixth centuries, bones of an adult male wrapped in cloth (suggesting burial of a martyr or saint) and a cross beautifully embroidered on cloth (Fig 6). There may also have been a baptistery adjacent to and north of the apse.

Other structures included 54 centuriae (barrack rooms) in the fort interior on the north side. In the south-east quadrant were five horrea (storage magazines) and a kitchen; the latter included an oven 3.4 metres in diameter made of kiln-fired brick with burned food still adhering to its floor. Both unburned and expended fuel in the form of wood chips and ash attested to heavy usage. In the south-west area was a large building of unknown function which may have been the commandant’s quarters (praetorium) or an administrative building. Abutting the interior fort walls on all four sides were 38 or 39 additional rooms of unknown function. There was a small bath outside the north wall of the fort. Rubbish dumps were partially excavated outside the north wall near the sea as well as inside the fort on the southern side. A colonnaded street along the via principalis stretched eastward from the west gate (Fig 7) to join the main north-south street (leading from the north gate) in front of the headquarters-church.

The extramural rubbish dump proved to be late third/fourth century and the rubbish inside the fort was late fourth/fifth-seventh century. Sizeable quantities of organic materials were recovered from these deposits revealing a great deal about the daily life, activities and diets of the troops. While much of their food came from the sea (fish bones, fish hooks and nets, fishing weights), they also ate fowl and a few larger animals and consumed an abundant supply of fruit (dates, dom palm fruit, grapes, watermelon, peaches), olives, almonds, walnuts, vegetables including onions, grains (wheat and barley) and pepper. They made stone bowls, rope, baskets, tanned leather and repaired their own clothing and shoes. Recovery of a large number of amphora fragments indicated the importation of oil, wine and, perhaps, beer from the Nile valley and elsewhere in the Mediterranean including Tripolitania, Gaza, Cilicia and one yet unidentified location in the Aegean. The majority of their food – other than that acquired from the sea – may have been cultivated 5.5-6 kilometres to the west at the foot of Gebel (Mount) ‘Abu Sha’ar where there are wells and, nearby, a small fort contemporary with the latest phases of the one at ‘Abu Sha’ar. Recently, an Egyptian began cultivating the area and many of his crops were the same as the remains we found in our excavations. Early Christian monasteries produced the majority of their food with well water from the desert as do some bedouin still today. There is no reason to doubt that the garrison at ‘Abu Sha’ar may have used the same technique. We estimated that about two to three dozen soldiers were sent in rotation out to the smaller fort at the foot of Gebel ‘Abu Sha’ar and spent time cultivating the food consumed by the main garrison which would have numbered, at its peak, approximately 200 men. The smaller garri-
son would also have protected the wells which were the sole source of drinking water in the area.

The fort at ‘Abu Sha’ar was inhabited from the early fourth until the seventh century. We are unsure if this occupation was continuous or if there was, possibly, a break sometime in the late fourth or early fifth century. We know – due to the abandonment of rooms on the southern interior side of the fort which were converted, in some cases, into rubbish dumps – that fewer people resided here in the later period than in the earlier part of the fourth century. Whether these later fort occupants were military or civilian (perhaps Christian monks or hermits?) cannot be determined at the moment. The fort was peacefully abandoned sometime in the first half of the seventh century. The reason for its abandonment remains unknown; it may have been the Sassanian Persian invasion of Egypt in 619 or the Muslim Arab conquest of Egypt in the 640s.

Communication between ‘Abu Sha’ar and the main garrison at Luxor was via a road most of whose length had been in use since at least the first century. Hydreumata (fortified water installations) and other facilities including signal towers, watch towers and cairns dotted the thoroughfare between ‘Abu Sha’ar and the Nile at Kainopolis. In the early centuries of Roman occupation prior to the construction of the fort at ‘Abu Sha’ar these had served, in part, as support facilities for work crews and draught animals hauling stone from the quarries at Mons Porphyrites and Mons Claudianus. These communication points could also have monitored movements of potentially hostile peoples in the region. In the later period, after the construction of the fort at ‘Abu Sha’ar and after the quarries had ceased to be worked (apparently by the fourth century), this highway acted as a communication link between the Nile and the

fort at ‘Abu Sha’ar. At that time most of the forts along this road seem to have been abandoned. Those few still functioning, along with the fort at ‘Abu Sha’ar, may also have facilitated the movement of Christian pilgrims between Upper Egypt along the Nile on the one hand and the holy sites in the Eastern Desert (monasteries of St Paul and St Anthony), Sinai (monastery of St Catherine) or the Holy Land itself on the other.

The timing of the founding of a fort at ‘Abu Sha’ar early in the fourth century accords well with major modifications made along the empire’s frontier during the reigns of the emperors Diocletian (284-305) and Constantine I (306-37). One of the questions which remains for us to answer is whether the fort at ‘Abu Sha’ar was part of a comprehensive plan to reorganise defences all along the eastern Roman frontier from the Red Sea to the Black Sea at that time, or one of more local concern to protect the region from pirates or from increasingly devastating raids by the nomadic Blemmys and Nobatae. One tantalising part of the inscription from the west gate mentions MERCATOR (‘merchant’). Could the fort have also played an official role in the commerce of the region as well? Work at the site in the coming summers should answer these and other questions.

Steven E. Sidebotham is Associate Professor of History at the University of Delaware.
The Samuel Eilenberg Collection of Indian and Southeast Asian Art

An exhibition of some 200 small sculptures, vessels, and other ritual objects from India and Southeast Asia, drawn from the Samuel Eilenberg Collection, can be seen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York until 28 June. The Lotus Transcendent: Indian and Southeast Asian Art from the Samuel Eilenberg Collection includes what is generally considered the finest collection of Javanese bronzes that was in private hands. Also on view from the Eilenberg Collection are a selection of Gandharan minor arts - small objects from the first to the fourth centuries, and very rare pieces of fine early Indian art as well as some remarkable examples of the arts of Thailand, Cambodia, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The works range from objects of deep religious significance to secular objects intended for domestic use.

The exhibition comprises about half the Eilenberg Collection which the Museum acquired in 1987. Many other works from the collection will be on view when the Museum opens its permanent galleries for Indian and Southeast Asian art in several years.

According to Philippe de Montebello, Director of the Metropolitan Museum, 'the gift of more than 400 works from Samuel Eilenberg in 1987, combined with our purchase from Columbia University of an additional 24 sculptures formerly in his collection, marked a turning point in the growth of the Museum's collections of Indian and Southeast Asian art. It has completely transformed the Museum's holdings in two important areas - the early arts of India and Pakistan and the bronzes of Indonesia'.

Striking among the Javanese bronzes, which comprise nearly a third of the exhibition, is a ninth-century Buddha reflecting influences of north-east Indian style (below). It is seated in the cross-legged yogic position on a double lotus pedestal and its raised right hand conveys the gesture of teaching. Other superb examples include a rare ninth-century Buddha (left) seated in western fashion with legs pendant on a stepped, lion throne, the hands in the preaching gesture indicating his first sermon; and a figure of a celestial Kinnara, half bird, half human, of the type that often populated temple reliefs. This bronze was originally part of a suspension system for a hanging lamp or bell. Here, the Kinnara plays a kind of lute.

Dr Eilenberg is University Professor Emeritus at Columbia University. Born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1913, he came to the United States in 1939 and to the Columbia faculty in 1947. He was twice chairman of the mathematics department and in 1974 was given Columbia's highest rank, University Professor. He is recognised as one of the most influential of today's mathematicians.

A fully-illustrated catalogue by Martin Lemer, Curator of Indian and Southeast Asian art, and Steven M. Kossak, Assistant Curator, Department of Asian Art, accompanies the exhibition, price $60.

(left) Copper Shiva seated with Uma (Umamahesvaran), Nepal, Thakuri dynasty, 11th century. Height: 11¾".

(right) Bronze seated transcendental Buddha Vairochana, Indonesia, Eastern Javanese period, c. late 9th century. Height: 7¾".

(above) Bronze seated transcendental Buddha Vairochana(?) seated in western fashion, Indonesia, Central Javanese period, c. mid-9th century. Height: 5¾". 

MINERVA 9
MEDIEVAL LOVE POEM
WRITTEN IN WAX

Dominic Tweddle

One of the most extraordinary and significant finds ever made by the York Archaeological Trust – eight leather-encased medieval waxed writing tablets with discernible text – is nearing the end of its conservation process, with exciting results.

British medieval archaeologists can only look with something approaching envy on the wonders uncovered by their colleagues working in Egypt and the Middle East. In much of that region the very dry conditions preserve in almost pristine condition things which in Britain have usually long since decayed away – objects of wood, leather and textile. Even documents written on frail materials like papyrus will survive in the ground, giving a vivid insight into life in the past to complement the picture derived from the objects. In Britain, by contrast, it is only on very rare sites indeed that such organic materials will survive. Here, paradoxically, it is the opposite conditions which aid survival, for ground which is completely waterlogged will preserve objects almost as well as ground which is desiccated. But even where there is waterlogging, medieval documents cannot usually survive, for the normal medieval writing material, parchment, will rot in even these conditions. For documents to complement our artefacts we are usually dependent on surviving archives, apart from the occasional inscription on wood, bone or stone. In 1990, however, the near impossible happened. After two decades of almost continual excavation in York, a medieval document came to light. Not a document written in ink on parchment, but instead one written with a sharp point pressed into a waxed surface.

The discovery was made during excavations sponsored by General Accident in Swinegate in the heart of the medieval walled city, only a few hundred yards from York Minster. Here a trench parallel to the road revealed a number of wickerwork fence lines running back at right angles to the street and dividing the site into four properties. The deposits suggested that the areas under excavation were backyards used for cultivation, the dumping of domestic rubbish and for cess pits.

Within one of these properties, in a layer containing fourteenth-century pottery, was found a set of waxed tablets in a leather case, almost perfectly preserved due to the waterlogging of the surrounding soil.

Once discovered, the tablets were carefully lifted and removed to the conservation laboratory. Here it rapidly became clear that there were eight boxwood tablets each only 50mm by 30mm and in total forming a stack only 15mm thick – about the size of a standard matchbox. Each tablet was between 1 and 2 mm thick. The tablets were partially enclosed in the remains of a leather case consisting of a strip of calfskin about 40mm wide wrapped around the tablets and with a seam at one corner of the stack. There was no base, and the front and back of the case were both decorated with a finely-drawn leaf pattern against a hatched background.

During excavation the seam in the leather case had come open, and two of the tablets, 1 and 2, had separated. This allowed the conservators to see that the surfaces of the tablets were recessed leaving a narrow frame, and that in each case the recess was filled with wax preserving written text. The wax was very brittle and decayed. Since the two outer faces of the stack of tablets were blank, there was a possible total of 14 waxed surfaces with writing still preserved, placed face to face.

Unfortunately, the other tablets were very firmly stuck together, and a method had to be devised for getting them apart without either destroying the writing or pulling the wax away from the wood. Eventually this was done by removing the leather case and then inserting a thin sheet of Melinex between each pair of tablets in turn. Melinex is a very thin, but very strong, clear plastic film which is virtually friction free when wet. Even so, the process required nerves of steel and very great skill on the part of the conservator. Eventually all the tablets were separated, and although sometimes wax from
one tablet had adhered to its neighbour, the process was surprisingly successful, revealing the writing for the first time in 500 years.

When the tablets were examined more closely, three different documents were revealed, distributed among the 14 waxed faces, in each case with the writing placed lengthwise on the tablet. The script is of a type dating to the last quarter of the fourteenth century, a date which fits well with that of the pottery from the layer in which the tablets were found. The script suggests a northern origin for the tablets, and there seems little doubt that they were used, if not made, in York, rather than being brought there from elsewhere.

The first document occupies from the front face of tablet 2 to the front face of tablet 5; on each tablet there are six lines of writing. The text is in Middle English and appears to be a prose poem. It is very difficult to read, but the repetition of the phrase ‘scho sayd me noht not may’ (she said to me nothing not no) suggests that it is a love poem. The best preserved part of the poem is on the front of tablet 2, where over 80% survives: ‘T—scho sayd me noht not may my way wille—ne—wend t—ha (we)est my will holy halle a(nd) — a(nd) wit he playd my fille ya scho (an)d stille seyd scho.’ (Though she said nothing to me not no, my way will go... He played until I was satisfied and still she said nothing not no). The rest of the poem is much less well preserved; usually the ends of each line have been lost during burial. So far this poem has not been identified elsewhere, and it may be a completely new work from the age of Chaucer (c. 1342-1400).

The poem is followed by a document filling the rear face of tablet 5 and the front face of tablet 6. On the back of tablet 5 the face is divided into three columns by a pair of vertical lines. The left-hand column occupies about a third of the tablet and contains a list. The middle column is narrow and contains a row of figures corresponding to the list. The rest of the face is filled by the right-hand column; this again contains a text corresponding to the numbers. This layout is the typical format for a set of medieval accounts. It is repeated on the front face of tablet 6, but here with another narrow column to the extreme left, giving a layout of alternating narrow and wide columns. Very little of these accounts can be read, but they are in Latin. The final document fills from the rear face of tablet 6 to the front face of tablet 8. Again it is in Latin, but extremely difficult to read. However, a few words can be made out, such as magister (master) and minister (a minor official), while the phrase qui possident habeo(n)da et —cliam—tene(n)da is one common in the phraseology of legal documents. This text, however, is unlikely to be such a document as it closes with a salutation as would a letter: salutet(m) et producet(m) (mane) — tia — amice—. The most likely explanation for these facts is that it is the draft of a letter about a legal matter. This leaves only the two lines of text on the back of tablet 1. These, like the following poem, are in Middle English and appear to act as a title page. Only the phrase ‘sille a(nd) set’ (given and proper) can be picked out with ease.

The front of tablet 1 and the rear of tablet 8 were flat and without wax, but attached to the back of tablet 8 was a mysterious concretion. This had first showed as a bulge in the leather case, and, when the leather had been removed, as a hard concretion. X-radiography and physical examination suggest that this is not a natural concretion, but the remains of the iron stylus used to make the writing. Originally it was about 35mm long and 2.5 to 3mm in diameter, flattened at one end and tapering to a point at the other. The point was used to make the writing, the flattened end to erase it.

As investigative work in the laboratory draws to a close, it is now possible to reconstruct the original appearance of the tablets with some certainty. The eight tablets were placed in a leather case; the surviving strip of leather wrapped around the tablets represented the body of the case. Stitch holes around the lower edge suggest that there was originally a base, which was lost or decayed away during burial. There was also probably a lid which fitted over the exposed upper ends of the tablets. It is very likely that a cord was fixed to each side of the leather case, slotting through the pairs of slits in these positions. The cord may have passed through similar slits in the sides of the lost lid, allowing it to slide up and down when the tablets had to be removed. The tablets themselves probably originally had green-
coloured wax against which the writing would show well; copper salts were detected by analysis, mixed with the beeswax which formed the writing surface. The iron stylus was kept behind the last tablet, slippec in between it and the leather case. Probably the tablets were worn around the neck of their owner, or perhaps worn hung from the belt.

The owner of these tablets was clearly reasonably well off; such fine objects, the smallest and finest tablets ever found in Europe, were probably expensive. He or she was also literate, and able to write in both English and Latin. This again suggests someone of reasonable wealth, for education was confined to the upper and middle classes and the clergy. Perhaps the owner was one of the minor officials mentioned in draft letter; York as a major ecclesiastical centre and a centre of royal administration was well supplied with such folk. The misspelling of certain words in the Latin letter, such as necessitas for necessita, however, suggests that it was not the property of a notary.

It seems reasonably clear that the tablets were used to keep notes, such as the accounts, to draft letters, and either to compose poetry or to write down poetry that caught the owner’s eye — they might be regarded as a very early form of Filofax! As such they fall into quite a well-known class of object; for although few of them survive, waxed tablets were used throughout medieval Europe for every sort of note taking. They only fell out of general use as paper became cheap and abundant. Problems still remain to be solved, however. The most pressing of these is how to conserve the tablets without losing the writing, or separating the wax from the wood. The slightest shrinkage as the water is removed during conservation will cause this to happen, and it must be avoided at all costs if vital data is not to be lost. When conservation is finished in a few months time this unique object can at last go on public view — an object as extraordinary and as moving as any to have come from the sands of Egypt.

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Late Egyptian Art

A symposium held in honour of Professor Bernard V. Bothmer

Stavros Aspropoulos

Under the able direction of its director, Dr Terry Walz, the American Research Center in Egypt, in co-operation with New York University’s School of Continuing Education, held its third annual symposium on the New York University campus last December entitled ‘Ancient Egypt’s Final Glory: The Art of the Late Period’. This symposium was, however, more of a fête, a celebration ‘dedicated to the work and enduring contributions of Bernard V. Bothmer’ to the field of ancient Egyptian art, as Dr Walz remarked. Indeed, Professor Bothmer’s contributions to the study of Egyptian art are staggering. As a scholar, connoisseur, curator and teacher almost no other individual alive today has so affected the discipline. His students have been or continue to be employed in the curatorial departments of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge and the Egyptian Museum in Charlottenburg in Berlin. The narrow focus of this symposium, however, was intended to call attention to Professor Bothmer’s pioneering efforts to define the nature of ancient Egyptian art of the Late Period. In a sense, one can justifiably assert that a systematic study of the art and the aesthetics of the Egyptian Late Period emerged only after the epoch-making exhibition ‘Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period’ was mounted at the Brooklyn Museum in 1960. The catalogue, written by Professor Bothmer in collaboration with the late Dr Hans Wolfgang Müller and Professor Herman De Meulenaere, remains a primary reference work for the period, an era which is difficult to define with precision.

It was for this reason that Mr T.G.H. James, former Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, was invited to provide a background to the Late Period from the beginning of the Late Period, which ended, according to some, with Dynasty XXX, but, according to others, with the Graeco-Roman Period. Mr James was amenable to the suggestion that the Late Period should encompass the broadest chronological sweep possible, a position which then allowed him to set the stage for the presentations later in the day dealing with aspects of Kushite and Ptolemaic art.

Throughout his presentation, Mr James was preoccupied with two themes, archaizing and Egyptianism. He defined the former as a peculiarly Egyptian cultural phenomenon whereby the art of the past might be consciously evoked by a succeeding period which utilised that older art as a kind of model, and the latter as a characteristic whereby foreigners – Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans and others – accommodated themselves to Egyptian forms of expression when resident in the country. Time and again he cautioned against the hazards of assigning purposeful intentions to these two phenomena, but admitted that one could ‘detect changes in mood producing a new spirit’ by carefully documenting each. He concluded his comments by astutely observing that ancient pharaonic civilisation expired slowly in the course of the Roman Imperial Period because the influx of so many foreigners to the land made it less and less possible for these new masses to become culturally assim-
Egyptian Art

and the like) to a head in Berlin and suggested that both should be dated to Dynasty XXX, or shortly afterwards. He explained that the colossal head in quartzite, also in New York, might better be regarded as a product of Dynasty XIIII and not of Dynasty XXV (Fig 1), as he had originally suggested. Indicative of his grasp of the range of ancient Egyptian art he added, somewhat parenthetically, that this head and others from Dynasty XIII are dolichocephalic, that is, they are wider from the nose to occipital bulge than from ear to ear. This indicates that the elongated heads of the Amarna princesses are no longer unique and have artistic precedents, the meanings of which must now be investigated anew. The vigour with which this presentation was delivered was greeted with applause from the audience.

Dr Gay Robins, of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, followed with a continuation of her work on grids, proportions and composition. She reiterated Mr James’s position that Dynasty XXV belonged to the Late Period and supported her contention by showing that the new grid of 21 squares used during the Ptolemaic Period was first introduced during Dynasty XXV, as seen in relief decoration in the tomb of Montuemhat in Western Thebes in which both the older grid of 18 squares and the newer one of 21 occur. In a thought-provoking presentation Dr Robins demonstrated how the system of grids was used not only to determine the proportions of individual figures but also employed as an organisational device by which all the figures of any given scene, together with their attributes and accompanying hieroglyphic inscriptions, were arranged across two-dimensional surfaces in planned compositions. She concentrated her remarks on the so-called gateway of Ptolemy III Euergetes at Karnak, superimposing a grid of 21 squares on selected scenes in order to elucidate her theories. The results were truly remarkable. So, for example, the vertical attributes held by gods, usually the was-sceptre, were invariably placed seven squares away from any figure’s vertical central axis, whereas those of goddesses, the sily sceptre in particular, were only six squares away. Dr Robins explained this difference as causal with the attitudes of the figures. Since gods are depicted striding and goddesses standing, the extra space for the former is consistent with the space necessary to reproduce the stride. In other scenes, certain proportional relationships were varied because of the nature of the figures and their attitudes in the composition. Dr Robins thereby concluded by remarking that the grid ‘was an aid, not a strait jacket,’ and that one should not regard these scenes as the mechanical equivalents of ‘painting by numbers’ compositions.

Professor Herman De Meulenaere, former Director General of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels and currently professor of Egyptology at the University of Ghent, reminded the audience of his long association with Professor Bothmer which began on a festive day in 1951 when the two met for the first time. Professor Bothmer showed him black and white photographs of Late Period ‘inscriptions that made my mouth water!’ Professor De Meulenaere’s work on these texts has provided the chronological evidence so necessary for Professor Bothmer’s stylistic analyses. As a result, Professor De Meulenaere addressed the audience on memebta dispera of the Late Period – that is, statues, broken in ancient times into one or more fragments, which he has been able to join, at least on paper, as a result of Professor Bothmer’s extensive photographic archive. He explained his success as the result of ‘learning the rules of the game’, because this avenue of academic investigation is a game. ‘Homo ludens, men like to play,’ is the way he explained it, but he stressed that the quest to find joins is not to be confused with ‘relaxation’.

Professor De Meulenaere asserted that he seeks data about the following three categories as he studies inscriptions: (a) the identity of the individual represented and his/her role in society; (b) the provenance of the object; and (c) the period or the period of the object’s reign over which it lived. Throughout his presentation, Professor De Meulenaere revealed how heads and busts, very often assigned to anonymous individuals, had been identified because certain peculiarities of their hieroglyphic inscriptions could be paralleled on a lower part, often in a completely different museum on another continent. Some joins were spectacular, such as that which produced a complete statue of Bakenrenef. The bust had always been in Belgium and the bottom had been spotted by Professor Bothmer on the art market in New York City. Professor De Meulenaere, noticing that the title, sm, associated with Memphite priests, was common to both halves, questioned Professor Bothmer about the material and the bottom of New York piece. These were so close that steps were taken to unite the two halves. When the Brussels bust came

ilated. They were no longer being Egyptianised and the models of the past were no longer being invoked to serve the artistic needs of the newcomers.

In a quite unexpected turn of events, Professor Bothmer himself, although not on the programme, was introduced and took the podium. As he slowly mounted the stage, his right arm in a sling, the audience fell silent. Within seconds, however, his infectious rhetorical style drew everyone in the audience to the edge of their seat. Professor Bothmer, obviously moved by the proceedings, explained that he wished to correct in public three errors which he had made in his landmark catalogue Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period. He conceded that the wrap-around garment with the fold going from the left to the right was already in fashion during the latter half of Dynasty XVI and could, therefore, no longer be considered an innovation of the Persian Period of Dynasty XVII, as he had long maintained. He compared a bust of an official, now in New York, whose face was marked by signs of age (a phrase coined by Professor Bothmer as a designation for images exhibiting crows’ feet, deep naso-labial furrows, Fig 2. The Béhague wooden kneeling king, 795, sold at Sotheby’s, Monaco, 5 December 1982, now considered to be Nectanebo I (378-360 BC) of Dynasty XXX, rather than Ptolemaic. The serpent on the nomes-headress is a viper, not a uraeus (cobra).
to New York, it fitted the piece in the art market, break to break. The complete statue is now on view in Brussels, having been reunited for the first time since antiquity. This was just one of the many joins which Professor De Maleleus had worked towards during the course of his collaboration with Professor Bothmer. His presentation included an amazing number of similar unions, many of which were illustrated only with views of the back pillars, on which the inscriptions by which the joins were effected are to be found.

Mr Jack A. Josephson, described in the programme as 'one of the world's foremost collectors of ancient Egyptian art', began by stating that his association with Professor Bothmer went back twenty years, during which time the professor had been his 'full time friend and part-time mentor'. Mr Josephson's well-deserved reputation as a connoisseur with a keen eye emerged during the course of his presentation in which he drew attention to the fact that the serpent on the nemes-headress of the Béhague sale's wooden statuette (Fig 2), long known from the 1920s when it was in Paris and still retained traces of its silver covering, was not a uraeus, but rather a viper, because of its triangular-shaped head and the absence of a hood. This detail, apparently having escaped the notice of most scholars, enabled Mr Josephson to keep an on-going investigation into the nature of serpents in ancient Egyptian art and to question their identifications. He was inclined, therefore, to regard the serpent on the Béhague statuette as a depiction, perhaps, of an Echis cornuta. Having described its characteristics, Mr Josephson then presented several other royal heads with the same attribute and revealed that they shared a certain simplification in their surface modelling accompanied by a marked depression, the result of the drill, at each corner of the mouth. As a group, these heads were stylistically removed from that group of representations of the kings of Dynasty XXVI, about which Mr Josephson has written several journal articles. He concluded, therefore, that these royal representations, of which the Béhague statuette is the finest, must be Nitocris I or Dynasty XXX. He left open the question of the significance of the viper for this particular king, but added that knowledge of serpents is increasing as a result of much recent work by such recently published works as Sauneron's Un traité égyptien d'ophiologie.

The final paper was delivered by Ms Edna R. Russmann who reaffirmed the position of both Mr James and Dr Robins that Dynasty XXV is to be considered part of the Late Period. She examined the issue of Egyptian portraiture and the Kushite kings. The focal point of her presentation was a small granite head, now in a private collection in New York, which had been collected in a nineteenth-century UK collection. Ms Russmann remarked that a careful examination of this head revealed that it had been reworked in antiquity because traces of the double cobra uraeus, the indelible mark of the Kushite sovereigns, had been left behind after this motif had been transformed into a single uraeus. Although uninscribed, Ms Russmann maintained that the image represented a Kushite monarch, supporting her claim by reference to images of Mycerinos of Dynasty IV which she regarded as portraits of that monarch. She insisted on the existence of portraiture in ancient Egyptian art and defined that term as 'a recognisable likeness of a specific historical person'. She then proceeded to trace the development of Kushite royal portraiture which became 'standardised with the addition of a signature feature' over time. Because she was able to document this process of standardisation to the period after the reign of Shabako, she cogently suggested that the head in question was a portrait of that king.

This significant symposium on the art of the Late Period was concluded by Dr Terry Walz who presented to the Kervorkian Center of New York University a complete, bound set of the Newsletter of the American Research Center in Egypt as a permanent reminder of this day's celebration of the work and enduring contribution of Professor Bernard V. Bothmer, Lila Acheson Wallace Professor of Ancient Egyptian Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.
Music of the Maya
Grace Johnson

Music played a leading role in the spiritual lives of the ancient Maya people of Central America. An exhibition of musical instruments from pre-Columbian times to the present at the San Diego Museum of Man shows the visitor how many of the ancient musical traditions of the Maya are still alive today.

The ancient Maya created one of the most outstanding civilizations of pre-Columbian America, characterized by its art, well-developed calendar, architecture based on the corbelled arch, and hieroglyphic writing system. The Classic Period, during which the Maya reached their prominence, lasted from about AD 250 to 850/900. During these years we see an increase of population, the rise of cities, more elaborate ceremonial centres, and increased socio-economic differentiation of the population. Living in varied environments, including the tropical rain forest, the Maya left behind hundreds of monumental ruins. The ceremonial centres arose, flourished, and vanished in a little under a thousand years. These impressive centres, with pyramids, temples, palaces and low-relief sculptured stone monuments, were inhabited by the elite of the social hierarchy — nobility, religious, military and occupational specialists such as artisans and musicians.

The Maya civilization is renowned for its architecture and the arts of carving, painting, and drawing — intangible arts that leave evidence for us to appreciate and analyze. However, like our own society, the Maya also possessed intangible arts such as music, dance, drama, epic tales and poetry. We see a hint of these in murals, vase paintings and figurines: the stately movement of men in the Bonampak murals of a wind and percussion band, the graceful dance of Bird-Jaguar of Yaxchilán on the Altar de Sacrificios Vase, and many other vessels. We know that music and dance formed essential parts of indigenous rites and ceremonies, in both religious and civil realms. There are many pre-Columbian depictions of musicians, and some of their instruments survive. However, although modern musicians can use similar instruments to play the very notes that were heard more than a thousand years ago, the melody, rhythm and harmony are gone forever.

Among pre-Columbian musical instruments were rattles and shakers, ceramic and bone whistles, rasps, drums, sticks, turtle shells, conch shell trumpets, ocarinas, flutes, and wooden trumpets. Various types of rattle were in common use during the Classic Period of the Maya, including rattlesnake rattles, gourds filled with seeds and pellets, and oth-
ers made of clay. Many ocarinas and whistles, popular in the Classic Period, have been found in archaeological sites and tombs. Those that have survived are made from clay in the shape of animals, warriors, and probably important people.

Conch shells used as trumpets may have announced ceremonies or sent messages long distances. Various artefacts were used as percussion instruments by the pre-Columbian Maya. However, there is no evidence of the use of stringed instruments before the arrival of the Spanish.

The Mayan site of Bonampak, dating to the Late Classic (AD 450-750), is located in Chiapas, Mexico, and was first discovered in 1946. The Temple of the Paintings contains three rooms, each with a stone lintel carved in relief, and fresco paintings that cover the walls from floor to ceiling. The walls were first prepared with a lime coating, and while they were still damp the paintings were rendered in orange, yellow, green, dark red and turquoise blue. Bonampak's unique mural paintings of the ancient Maya provide exquisite details of dress, processional scenes, musicians, sacrifices, sacred rites, and warfare — invaluable, seldom preserved ethnographic data. They portray slaves, servants, commoners, members of the nobility, warriors, and such occupational specialists as artisans and musicians, all engaged in a variety of ceremonial and daily activities. The processional figures are shown in fancy headdresses and elaborate attire, wearing animal disguises and masks, dancing, and conversing. Musicians beat turtle shell drums and shake clay or gourd rattles. An upright drum with hide top is very similar in shape, including the design at the base which forms the tripod support, to surviving examples of Mexican upright drums. These were called huchuetl in Aztec, and are also seen in Mexican codices, where, as in the murals, the player drums with his hands.

Turtle shells, ayoti, are beaten with deer antlers or bones. The ayoti of Classic Maya times is one of the oldest instruments of natural origin and was known as 'the hardest skin.' The Bonampak mural shows four men beating on turtle shells with deer antlers in a ritual. This particular technique produces three resonant notes. Today, the turtle shell instrument accompanies the traditional Deer Dance in the Ixil area of Guatemala, along with other wind instruments (left). It is also often used by indigenous and Ladino peoples during pre-Christmas processions called posadas.

Although there is not much substantial evidence of the use of trumpets, the Bonampak murals and some vases depict these instruments. They are described by the Spaniard chronicles as long tubular wooden trumpets, sometimes with a gourd on one end acting as a horn to project the sound.

Since pre-Columbian times, music and dance have been important in Mayan spiritual lives. Today, descendants of the ancient Maya from the highlands of Guatemala and southern Mexico preserve their languages, costumes, rituals, and music. The Music of the Maya is produced in cooperation with Casa K’ojom, a museum in Antigua, Guatemala, dedicated to the preservation of the music of the Maya. (K’ojom means music in three Indian languages.)

The display includes paintings by Mayan artist Miguel Chavez from Santiago Atitlán, complementing the collection of instruments, both with pre-Columbian and old world influence. Photographs and a video by Samuel Franco, Director of Casa K’ojom, reflects traditional and contemporary Mayan music in the exhibition.

Music of the Maya is at the San Diego Museum of Man until 3 May.
Archaeological News from Chicago

Monumental Early Bronze Age Tombs Excavated in Sicily
Laura Maniscalco McConnell, Soprintendenza di Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Catania, announced the recent discovery of a series of monumental rock-cut chamber tombs of the Castelluccian culture dating to the late third millennium BC. Found along the cliffs of Santa Febronia in Palagonia, Catania, they are the first tombs with facades decorated with false pilasters to be found with their funerary assemblages. They are usually marked by rare, sometimes imported, prestige objects. One imported assemblage included a copper dagger and a jadeite pendant, suggesting the staging of a post-burial funerary ritual as practiced in Irish tombs of the third millennium BC.

Second Millennium BC Stone Sculpture Found off Sicily
A female torso (Fig. 1), 19cm, carved in a native lamellar tufa was found in 1990 in a Late Bronze Age building at Faraglioni on the island of Ustica (in the Tyrrhenian Sea, 36 nautical miles north of Palermo, Sicily). Belonging to the Milazzese Culture, C. 1400-1200 BC, it is the first stone sculpture of the second millennium BC to have been found in either Italy or Sicily. R. Ross Holloway of Brown University and Susan S. Lukesh of Hofstra University noted that the torso, found in two pieces, had clearly been used as a building stone in the wall of a building. The complete figure would have been about 40 to 50 cm in height. The unworked back probably indicates its being placed against a wall or other background. A dentritic design below the breasts perhaps indicates clothing. Both the dentritic pattern and the knot-like breasts are found in the contemporary Thapsos Culture pottery of south central Sicily. No doubt this unique figure was based upon the pottery of the area. The building in which it was found contained features which may be interpreted as altars, with a nearby pit filled with pottery fragments and bones, especially those of cattle, and apparently the first sanctuary to have been found in the

The 93rd Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America
Jerome M. Eisenberg, Ph.D.
The annual meeting of the AIA, held in Chicago on 27-30 December 1991, again presented little in the way of newsworthy discoveries. The colloquia and sessions held, in order of presentation, were: Prehistoric Cretan; Age, Gender, and Sexuality; Prehistory of the Eastern Provinces; Greece and the Near East: 1100–600 BC; Aegean Prehistory; Assur to Athens: Sculpture in the East and Archaic Greece; Archaeology in the Levant; Recent Excavations: Mainland Greece and Asia Minor; Sanctuaries in Outer Space: Locating Cult in Ancient Greece; Roman Portraiture; Archaeology in Cyprus; Recent Excavations: The Greek Islands; Origins of the Polis: Homer and the Monuments Revisited; ‘In Small Things Forgotten’; Classical and Hellenistic Greek Sculpture; The Western Mediterranean: From the Iron Age to Late Antiquity; The Present and Future Status of North American Archaeology in Egypt; Aegean Prehistory; Greek Architecture; Medieval Archaeology: East and West; Art and Architecture in the Greek West: Recent Work at Morgantina; Greek Painting; Recent Excavations: Italy and Sicily; Patrons, Audiences, and Worshippers in the Roman World; The Archaeology of Çayönü South-eastern Anatolia. The following were among the more interesting papers presented.

Greek Bronze Casting and Egypt: The Evidence from Samos
Robert S. Bianchi, of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, presented a group of small bronze statuettes (Fig 2) of the Early Iron Age, eighth to seventh century BC, excavated on Samos, that he believes were manufactured in Egypt and imported into Samos shortly thereafter. He suggested that Egypt was the source for the technology of bronze casting for the Greeks, who by tradition ascribe its invention to one Theodorus of Samos. He also noted that the Greeks viewed bronze as a divine medium, conforming to the Egyptian idea that the metal possessed magical properties.

Largest Monumental Kouros Found on Samos
In the mid-1930s a right hand and a leg with a partial thigh of a huge nude marble figure (kouros) of the sixth century BC were found on the island of Samos. Further excavations over several years in the 1980s revealed a nearly complete kouros, lacking only its feet and a small section of the back of the head. The ‘fishes kouros’ measures well over 16 feet in height, the largest
complete kourous discovered to date. The pieces discovered in the 1930s apparently belong to a companion figure which will hopefully be uncovered in the near future. The 'Isches kourous' gave Eleanor Guralnick of the AIA Chicago Society an opportunity to determine that the largest kourous was carved in accordance with a predetermined Egyptian canon, rather than a Greek one. The archaeological evidence proves that the Samian 'Herakles had close ties with Egypt. In fact, nearly two hundred Egyptian bronzes have been excavated on Samos (see above, 'Greek Bronze Casting and Egypt'). The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus wrote that the sons of Rhodok, Theodorus and Teleklees, made a wooden statue of the Pythian Apollo for the Samians in accordance with Egyptian methods and proportions.

An analysis of the measurements, proportions and profiles indicate that the 'Isches kourous' had a unique set of grid-determined measurements, perhaps due to its great size and the resulting singular perspective of viewers.

Over 10,000 Terracotta Sculptures Uncovered at Marion in Cyprus

Marion was an important trading centre on the north-west coast of Cyprus, especially during the Archaic and Classical periods (c. 750-325 BC). A series of excavations conducted by Princeton University since 1983 have produced over 10,000 terracotta sculptures, from fragments to complete pieces, both human and zoomorphic, from small figurines to over life-size statues.

Nancy Servint of Arizona State University discussed the diversity of styles of the sculptures from both an Archaic and a Classical sanctuary, representing influences from Phoenicia, North Syria, Egypt, Nubia, the Greek East, and Athens. She also demonstrated their value in providing information on cult activity and trade patterns.

Cartoceto Bronzes Linked to a Late Republican-Early Imperial Family

Four over life-size gilded bronzes, two equestrian males and two standing female figures, were discovered near Cartoceto di Pergola, Pезzo, Italy in 1946. The museum in which the they are housed, the Museo Archeologico Nazionale delle Marche in Ancona, has been closed for many years due to the 1972 earthquake, and their conservation and reassembly previously delayed for some time after their discovery due to the 1966 flood in Florence. John Pollini of the University of Southern California disputed their past identifications as members of the Julian or Julio-Claudian family. He suggested that one of the equestrian statues (Fig. 3) is the same individual as a previously overlooked late Republican-Early Imperial portrait in the Lateran Museum. He proposed that the group represents members of the Domitii Ahenobarbi family, the statues commissioned by Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus (consul of 32 BC) and his mother Porcia; the other two fragments figures Gnaeus' father Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus (consul of 54 BC) and Gnaeus' wife, postulated to have been Aemilia Lepida. (Note: this paper was not actually presented in Casarica due to the illness of the author.)

Roman Glass 'Workshop of the Floating Handles'

Very few Roman glassmakers signed their works as did Ennodius and Aristaes. E. Marianne Stern of the Toledo Museum of Art has identified an Augustan workshop specializing in small finely decorated mould-blown bottles located in or near Sidon and closely connected with the work of Ennodius and Aristaes. She described ten series of mould-blown vessels to this 'Workshop of the Floating Handles', so named because the lower end of each handle is not quite attached to the wall of the vessel, the earliest known series of head flasks with portrait characters; bottles shaped like fruit; miniature amphorae encased in wicker; other series decorated with tendrils, scrolls, birds and animals; and mythological motifs. The typical nodus configuration of the head flasks indicates an early first-century date, confirmed by a stylistic analysis of some of the decorative motifs typical of the Augustan period.

Hoard of Coins and Jewellery Discovered in Jordan

During a 1991 survey two kilometres west of the settlement centre of Auara (Humieina), Jordan, an excavation team accidentally came across a hoard of gold and silver coins and jewellery. John P. Olesen of the University of Victoria, Khaiheir 'Amr of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, and Robert Schick of Case Western Reserve University reported that the hoard consisted of five gold solidi of the Byzantine Emperor Arcadius (AD383-408), eighteen silver drachm of the Sasanian King Yazdegard 1 (AD399-420), all in mint state, the solidi being struck from the same dies and the drachms from very few dies.
For years the Bassai frieze’s twenty-three lively slabs of battling Greeks, Amazons and monstrous horse-men (Centaurs) were tucked away in a mezzanine gallery which hardly did justice to their importance. Now – thanks to the generosity of two American benefactors, Mr and Mrs Larry Fleischman – the British Museum has carried out a long-overdue remodelling. The main benefit (achieved by turning the staircase around) is to give the gallery’s existence greater prominence – visitors approaching at ground floor level are now made properly aware of the first time the sculptures displayed above them.

The frieze originally adorned the Classical sanctuary of Apollo at Bassai. Set high in the mountains of south-west Arcadia, this sanctuary is one of the loveliest archaeological sites in Greece. Spectacular scenery and solitude combine to evoke here, if anywhere, the mythical Arcady of the poets and painters.

In antiquity too this corner of Greece was hardly less rustic. The other deities known to have haunted the remote landscape around the temple included Artemis, protectress of hunters, and goat-footed Pan, whose chief concern was to make flocks fertile; both had shrines nearby. Their local worshippers – in particular the citizens of Little Phigaleia, five miles to the west – would have been mainly herdsmen and hunters dependent on the pine-covered hills of Bassai for their livelihood.

The proceeds of these activities alone, however, would not have paid for a grand architectural commission like Bassai. How did the ancient inhabitants of this numerous but impoverished landscape manage to fund one of the most ostentatious temples in the whole Peloponnese?

That this temple was an extremely ambitious project is not in doubt. Its design was entrusted to a celebrity architect from Athens, the same Iktinos who built the Parthenon, and the result was a highly imaginative structure in which the famous Corinthian column made its first recorded appearance in Greek architecture.

Although built from local limestone, which would have helped to keep costs down, the ‘client’ could also afford marble roof-tiles, not to mention the added expense of the sculptural decoration – also in the same fine marble, which was probably quarried in the Cyclades and laboriously hauled overland to Bassai (the nearest sea-landing is some twenty miles away).

Professor Fred Cooper of Minneapolis University, who has spent many years studying the temple, may have found the answer – the money, he thinks, came from the remittances of local men serving as mercenaries in foreign armies.

Archaeology bears out this theory. Recent excavations by Professor N. Valouris of the Greek Archaeological Service have shown that Apollo’s sanctuary always had strong military associations – most of the surviving dedications, which begin in the 600s BC, consist of bronze and iron miniatures of weapons and armour.

A mountainous land offering a living for only limited numbers, ancient Arcadia was a famous breeding ground for mercenaries. Moreover, at the time that building work on the temple began (430-420 BC), Arcadian mercenaries were fighting for Athens in the Peloponnesian War – the longest of all Greek wars, and no doubt very profitable to the mercenaries who managed to survive it.

Cooper’s theory clears up another puzzle. According to the travel-writer Pausanias, who visited Bassai around AD 140, the Apollo there bore the nickname ‘Epikourios’ (‘Helper’), supposedly because the god had helped to deliver the nearby Phigaleians from the Great Plague which struck Athens in 429 BC. This story is odd, not least, because the Greek historian Thucydides says that the plague never reached the Peloponnese. Since the ancient Greeks also called mercenaries ‘helpers’ (epikouroi), Cooper argues that Pausanias has muddled the story the Phigaleians of his day told him. What he really heard, Cooper thinks, was a local tradition that there were Phigaleians among the Arcadian mercenaries hired by Athens. If they were in that city when the Great Plague struck and survived, they might well have felt gratitude to

A New Look at the Bassai Frieze

The recent redisplay of the Bassai frieze in the British Museum provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at one of the key monuments of fifth-century Greek art and its ancient setting.

A.J.S. Spawforth
their patron deity back home and clubbed together to dedicate the bronze colossus of Apollo Epikourios (i.e. 'Apollo Mercenary') which — so Pausanias says — once stood in the temple.

So much for the setting of the 'Phigaleian marbles', as the sculptures from Bassai used to be called. Their journey to the British Museum began in 1811, when they were disinterred from the temple's long-collapsed superstructure by local workmen in the pay of two Germans and two Englishmen, including the architect Charles Cockerell.

The sculptural haul pieced together by the working party was bought at an auction by the British Museum in 1814. It comprises the twenty-three slabs of frieze, a few very fragmentary metopes and some pieces from a marble cult-statue.

The frieze had been displayed in a highly-unusual way, forming a continuous band above a colonnade in the main interior chamber (the Parthenon frieze, by contrast, was displayed on the outside of the inner building). The frieze's subject-matter was traditional — two battles, one between Greeks and Amazons, the other between Greeks and Centaurs. The carving is vivid and mannered — richly billowing cloaks are a hallmark — and is thought to be the work of local craftsmen, but the composition has numerous Athenian echoes, recalling the metopes and friezes adorning the temples of the great building programme in mid-fifth-century Athens, and points to a master-design by an artist with Athenian ties.

For the Museum, one pressing problem in the redisplay of the frieze has been to establish the correct order of the slabs. Here controversy rages, not least because the frieze as preserved is a botched job. At the moment of installation in the finished temple the slabs were rearranged, some having as much as a third hacked off to fit the space, as if to compensate for some major change of plan. By studying the matches between individual slabs and the remains of their architectural frame on site at Bassai, Fred Cooper has produced a new reconstruction of the 'installed' order, to be published in a planned book with Dr Brian Madigan of Wayne State University on the temple and its sculptural decora-

tion. The redisplay of the frieze offered a unique chance to test and verify this 'paper' sequence. In collaboration with Cooper, this is just what the British Museum did — only to conclude that his arrangement could not be completely correct.

In the belief that no certain order can be attained at present, the Museum has preferred to reinstate the sequence followed in the old display. This arrangement, by Professor Peter Corbett, has the virtue of taking account not only of the architectural evidence for the order of installation, but also of the sculptural relations between neighbouring slabs. It may not have solved all the problems, but without doubt it is correct in many places.

The frieze has always been controversial — even its artistic merits have been both denigrated and sung, the Napoleonic antiquary Fauvel dismissing it as 'feeble and in bad taste', while for Goethe, no less, it was 'a fathomless source of beauty'. Now visitors can once more judge for themselves, helped by the Museum's agreeable new display.

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The Winter Antiquities Sales

Jerome M. Eisenberg, Ph.D.

Important Egyptian Diorite Head of Amun
Sold at Christie’s, London

An impressive life-size (11½") diorite head of the god Amun (Fig 1), the great Theban ‘king of gods’, wearing a crown with a fragmentary double plume, from the Temple of Mut in Asher at South Karnak, dominated the Christie’s antiquities sale held in London on 2 December 1991. Dating from the reign of the Nubian King Taharqa (690-664 BC) of the XXV Dynasty (see also the Boston sale, overleaf), it was discovered in 1896 by an amateur English archaeologist, Margaret Benson, daughter of the Archbiishop of Canterbury, who was allowed by the Egyptian authorities to keep a number of antiquities unearthed during her excavations, including this head. In 1985 Richard Fazzini of the Brooklyn Museum located parts of a pair statue of Amun and his consort, the goddess Mut, very close to the site of the head. Estimated at £500,000-£700,000, it sold for £572,000 ($1,001,000) to an undisclosed telephone bidder, the underbidders being an American dealer. When it was previously offered for sale at Christie’s on 5 December 1972, it realised just 17,000 guineas. It was most recently owned by Alan M. May, a Dallas collector.

A fine bronze statuette of Artemis (5½"), probably first century BC/AD rather than c. fourth century BC as catalogued, estimated at £20,000-£30,000, realised £35,200. An unusually large (18½") Egyptian bronze Isis nursing the infant Horus, of the Ptolemaic Period, estimate £35,000-£36,000, brought £35,200, while a large (14") XXVth Dynasty Osiris sold for £22,000, also within its estimate of £20,000-£30,000.

A Greek Pentelic marble funerary stele depicting a child holding a dove, a dog at his feet, the latter two both headless, dating from the second half of the fourth century BC, 31" in height, estimated at £30,000-£35,000, was knocked down for just £33,000. A fine Roman marble head of Aphrodite (10") from the Hagop Kevorjian collection, acquired by him in 1927 as a Greek original of the fourth century BC, but now accepted as a Roman copy of the second century AD, with an estimate of £30,000-£35,000, brought £27,500. A very sensitive Parian marble bust of a young man (Minerva, Nov/Dec 1991, inside front cover), probably a North African nobleman, 21½", c. AD 100, with a similar estimate of £30,000-£35,000, also realised £27,500. All of the last five lots were purchased by Royal Athena Galleries of New York. No other objects in the sale realised over £16,500.

An unusually large number of lots were unsold, but most of these were minor objects, under £1,500, primarily glass, bronzes, terracottas, jewellery and lesser marbles with rather optimistically high estimates. Only £4 per cent of the 232 lots sold for £963,633, although they represented 82.5 per cent by value, a successful sale, after all, for this recession period.

Sotheby’s, London Sale Features South Italian Situla

The Sotheby’s, London, antiquities sale of 3 December 1991 featured a fine Apulian situla (Fig 3) from the Group of the Dublin Situlae, c. 360 BC, with banquetees, probably to be identified as Apollo, Hermes and Dionysus. Estimated at only £30,000-£40,000 before the sale, the estimate was revised to £50,000-£60,000 and it was purchased for £55,000 by a Spanish collector.

A Corinthian bronze helmet (Fig 4) with remains of a silver inlay, from the second quarter of the sixth century BC, formerly belonging to Sir Arthur Colegate, brought £66,000, the conservative estimate of £30,000-£40,000 probably due to the damage on one of the integral cheekpieces. A very fragmentary piece of an Assyrian gypsum relief of two bearded warriors from the seventh century BC (Fig 5), 14" by 18", originally acquired prior to 1860, estimated at £50,000-£60,000, sold to a Swiss dealer for just £33,000. The inner section of an Egyptian Old Kingdom false door (39½" x 27½") and two of the outer door jambs, estimated at £35,000-£40,000, were also pur-
chased by a Spanish bidder for £33,000.

An Attic red-figure kalpis, 11¾", probably by the Tithonos Painter, c. 470 BC, with Eos pursuing Repha-los, estimated at £25,000-£30,000, sold for £27,500 to the Palladin Gallery in Basle. An amusing Attic black-figure neck amphora by the Painter of Louvre S1, c. 530 BC, 10¾", depicting a courting scene between two nude athletes, with an estimate of £20,000-£30,000, brought £26,400.

The sale of 443 lots totalled £1,261,765, with only 79.4 per cent of the lots sold by value. The unsold lots represented 46 per cent of the sale by number, identical to the Christie's sale the day before, and were mostly minor objects in the second session.

One of the unsold lots, the front of a large Roman stiriglar sarcophagus, 39" x 86", c. third century AD, with a farewell scene, estimated at £40,000-£60,000, was sold privately immediately after the sale. The sales at both London auction houses confirmed the strength of the antiquities market in this recessionary period. The prices were consistently firm, the only softness being the reluctance of dealers to add to their stocks with an unknown business climate in the months ahead, thus the unsold lots totalled 17.5 per cent to 20.6 per cent in value, compared with 12.3 per cent to 12.9 per cent in the July sales.

Classical Marbles from the Walters Art Gallery Sold at Sotheby's, New York

A group of 37 Greek and Roman marbles were de-accessioned by the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, and sold at Sotheby's, New York, on 12 December 1991 to benefit their acquisition fund. Most of them were from the Massarenti collection in the Palazzo Accoramboni, Rome, purchased by Henry Walters in 1902. None of the best pieces were de-accessioned; many were pastiches of ancient torsos and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century heads and limbs, or lesser pieces taken out of storage. A monumental (86") Athena Giustiniani from the Massarenti collection (Fig 6), c. first century AD, with head, right arm and other areas restored, sold for $154,000. A Massarenti Roman marble youth (Fig 7) (36½") with a first-century AD torso was actually restored with a perfectly genuine Greek fourth-century BC head from a grave stele. This was an example of a restoration with more value than the rest of the statues. Estimated at only $30,000-$50,000, it sold for $88,000.

The highlight of the sale was a fine Egyptian limestone seated male figure of the early Xllth Dynasty (c. 1759-1700 BC) (Fig 8), 13¾" with a partially preserved inscription, originally from the William Randolph Hearst collection. Estimated at a conservative $100,000-$150,000, it finally sold for $242,000 to an American dealer. An exquisite headless marble figure of the Lysipplian Eros (Fig 9), c. first century AD, 32¾", from the collection of Gertrude Vanderbilt, with an estimate of only $80,000-$120,000, sold to a dealer for $143,000. A Roman marble Sylvarus, early third century AD, 27¾", estimate $40,000-$60,000, brought $93,500 from a European dealer even though the accompanying figure of a dog (not a goat as catalogued) had its head and feet restored as a ram.

A late Severan polished marble portrait head of a lady (Fig 10), c. AD 218-235, 10¾", recently from the estate of Florence J. Gould, estimated at $100,000-$120,000, reached $132,000, with an American private collector outbidding an English dealer. A large (1.6") bronze Roman bronze winged Nike alighting on an orb, c. third century AD, estimated at $80,000-$100,000, was sold for $110,000 to another American collector.

This sale of 407 lots realised a healthy total of $3,203,365, nearly meeting the pre-sale high estimate of $3,400,000. An unusually high 93 per cent of the lots sold by value, with just 8 unsold lots, or 20 per cent by number. Conservative estimates for most of the better pieces obviously helped the sale to reach these impressive totals, but it also seemed that the number of fine items offered in this sale, especially the large, well-provenanced Walters marbles, kept some of the bidders from acquiring more material in the London sales held ten days earlier and which normally follow the New York sale. This sale again confirmed the unusual strength of the ancient art market in a weak economy.

Fig 3 (top). Apollo situla from the Group of the Dublin Situlae, c. 360 BC, with banqueters, probably Apollo, Hermes and Dionysus.

Fig 4 (bottom). Greek bronze helmet of Corinthian type, 2nd quarter of the 6th century BC, with a motif based on the palmette or lotus in the centre of the forehead and the remains of a narrow thin layer of silver or tin on the upper part of the nose guard and curving up onto either side of the forehead.

Fig 5 (centre). Assyrian gypsum relief fragment, 7th century BC, with the head of a bearded soldier on the left followed in procession by another fragmentary figure of a soldier.
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Three Sudanese Stone Ushabtis Sold in Boston

A trio of fine royal stone ushabtis from the Upper Nubian Kingdom of Kush (Fig 11, below), given by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, to the Holyoke Public Library in the 1920s, was auctioned by Grogran and Company in Boston on 6 December 1991 to benefit the library's endowment. A large (11 1/4") calcite (alabaster) ushabti (centre) of the Nubian King Taharqa (690-664 BC) of the XXVIth Dynasty brought $29,700. Two steatite ushabtis (left and right) of King Senkamanisken (643-623 BC) of the Napatan Period were sold for $13,200 (8") and $19,800 (6 1/2").

All three ushabtis were excavated by George Reisner in 1916-17 at Nuri, where he recovered 1070 calcite, green ankerite and black granite ushabtis of King Taharqa at Pyramid no. 1 and 410 steatite ushabtis of King Senkamanisken. They are rarely offered for sale since the only ones outside the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, were given to other museums and public institutions. Three similar ushabtis were de-accessioned by the museum and sold at Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, on 14 December 1978, where they realised from $7,000-$9,000 each.

Limestone Relief of Hatshepsut Acquired by the Louvre at Boisgirard Sale in Paris

An important bas-relief from the XVIIIth Dynasty (Fig 12, below) representing porters carrying offerings, from the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari was sold for 650,000 FFr (with charges, 680,329 FFr, or £69,760) at the Claude Boisgirard sale in Paris, 3 December 1991, and was then pre-empted by the Musée du Louvre. In 1971 an archaeologist, B. Van de Walle, discovered that this relief belonged to the north wall of the offering chapel of the father of Hatshepsut, Tuthmosis I, and that it joined with another piece already at the Louvre. It had never before been offered at a public sale. Hatshepsut, who ruled for 21 years, (1504-1483 BC), proved her power by declaring herself king rather than acting as queen-regent for Tuthmosis III.
Auction Reports

Two Sales Held by NFA Classical Auctions in New York

On 13 December, 1991, a second auction of antiquities, the first part devoted solely to Egyptian scarabs, was held by NFA Classical Auctions, Inc., a newly reorganised division of Bruce P. McNeill's NFA International, Inc., of Los Angeles (the November 1990 sale was conducted as Hesperia Arts Auction, Inc.). The first session featured part of a fine collection of Egyptian scarabs formed by a New York collector. An excellent catalogue of the 206 lots prepared by Joyce Haynes and Yvonne Markowitz, Scarabs and Design Amulets: A Glimpse of Ancient Egypt in Miniature, describes each piece in great detail and illustrates not only the obverse and reverse of each item but also excellent enlargements, with 40 pieces in colour. In addition there is a nine-page introduction to the history and study of scarabs. The catalogue is still available in limited numbers from NFA (10100 Santa Monica Boulevard, 6th floor, Los Angeles, CA 90067) for $40.

The star of the sale was a bright blue-green glazed steatite commemorative 'lion hunt' scarab (Fig 13) of the XVIIIth Dynasty issued by Amenophis III (1417-1379 BC). It records that the king slew 102 lions in the first ten years of his reign. Estimated at $20,000-$25,000, it sold for $29,700. All of the other top ten lots brought from $2,640 to $5,225 each. Most of the other pieces fetched from about $200 to $1,000 each. The sale realised $207,070.

The second session offered just 180 lots, but the selection of better pieces was outstanding, especially the Greek vases. A fine Roman two-handled mould-blown pale blue-green glass cup signed by Ennion, 1st century BC, Fig 14, of the first century BC, 3½", was hotly contested, finally being sold to a Swiss dealer for $253,000, far above its estimate of $120,000-$150,000, with a British dealer as underbidder. An enigmatic bronze portrait head of a young woman, attributed to c. first century AD, sold for $440,000. A lovely Hellenistic marble headless nude Aphrodite (Fig 15), also missing part of her limbs, with the punitelli remaining, 32½", estimated at $100,000-$125,000, was purchased for $165,000 by T. Fujita of Lugano. A superb Roman marble head of Hermes (Fig 16), late first century BC/first century AD, after a fourth-century prototype by Lysippus, sold for just $121,000, perhaps affected by the estimate of $120,000-$140,000.

An excellent selection of Attic and South Italian vases was enhanced by an intact Attic red-figure kylix (diameter 7¾") attributed to the Ambroclas Painter (Fig 17), c. 500 BC, with an Amazon in the tondo, the sides portraying Herakles fighting nine Amazons (Fig 17a). Estimated at $100,000-$150,000, it realised $115,500. A superb Campanian red-figure bell krater (13¾") by the Ison Painter, c. 300 BC, depicting the victory of Apollo over Marsyas, estimated at $100,000-$125,000, was apparently sold for $93,500. A striking Attic black-figure amphora (16¾"), possibly by the Kleophon Painter, c. 515-500 BC, illustrating the death of Pelam and the rape of Cassandra, estimated $80,000-$100,000, brought $93,500.

The most interesting of the several Egyptian and Near Eastern lots offered was a very rare Judean malachite scaraboid seal (15 mm) from the reign of King Zedekiah, c. 596-586 BC, inscribed 'belonging to Malkiyahu, Son of the King', the same title as the official in charge of the prison in this period when the prophet Jeremiah was imprisoned. Estimated at $20,000-$30,000, it was purchased after spirited bidding by Shraga Qedar, an Israeli dealer, for $56,100. A number of other pieces in this sale sold from $50,000 to $88,000 each. The session was said to total $3,707,775, though it was difficult to determine which lots were bought in. McNeill has shown himself to be the first serious competition to Sotherby's in New York for the sale of better antiquities, due to his ability to work with some of the key European sources. This surprised those who considered his first sales in December 1990 to be a one-time shot, since they were based primarily upon the liquidation of antiquities from Atlantis Antiq-
In the early 1930s Ada Small Moore began her exceptional collection of ancient Near Eastern cylinder and stamp seals. Published by G. A. Eissen in 1948, the collection had been on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for 35 years. The Museum published 65 of the seals in a catalogue in 1976. It was a surprise to the scholastic world, and especially to the Museum, that the collection was to be sold at auction in New York on 12 December, but we are compensated by the magnificent catalogue prepared by Richard M. Keresy of Sotheby's, with twelve colour plates of enlargements of some of the better cylinder seals and excellent photographs and enlarged impressions of every one of the 155 seals. This excellent (though unpaginated) reference to the finest collection of cylinder seals ever offered at auction is available from Sotheby's for $25 ($32 by mail, $39 overseas). It makes an excellent companion to the superb catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Stamp Seals and Amulets prepared by Dr Dominique Collon for the Christie's sale in London on 6 June, 1989.

An exceptional early Akkadian lapis lazuli cylinder seal (Fig 18), c. 2334-2278 BC, excavated at Kish, depicting a battle among eight gods, 28mm, estimated at $50,000-$80,000, brought a stunning $143,000, far surpassing the previous world record for a seal which stood at $80,000. The cover piece, a finely carved and colourful late Akkadian red jasper cylinder seal (Fig 19), c. 2254-2154 BC, with four symbols of the water god Ea above four nude bearded heroes, 28mm, with an estimate of $40,000-$60,000, sold for $132,000. A second early Akkadian lapis lazuli cylinder seal (Fig 20) with a contest scene of a bearded hero with various beasts, 38 mm, with the same estimate as the second seal, reached $126,500. A large (46mm) Early Dynastic IIIb Sumerian white marble cylinder seal (Fig 21), c. 2500-2334 BC, with another contest scene, estimated at $30,000-$50,000, brought $121,000.

Many of the other better cylinders brought several times their estimates and the active bidding left few seals available for less than $1000. The sale realised a total of $1,597,420, with all but one lot sold, a remarkable achievement in today's market. In fact, all of the seals were sold, for the writer purchased the unsold Sumerian marble stamp seal immediately following the sale. The principal buyers of the major pieces were reported to be a Japanese industrialist, a Japanese dealer (Horiuchi), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Even though the collection has now been dispersed, it is comforting to know that the owner, the late Bishop Paul Moore, grandson of Mrs Moore, had set up a charitable remainder trust and that the principal proceeds of the sale will be given through it to the Yale University Babylonian Collection.
Middleham Ring
Export Licence
Deferred

Ralph de Neville, first Earl of Westmorland and Lord of Middleham, who died in 1425, and who was succeeded by his son Richard, Earl of Salisbury, who died in 1460. East Park, where the ring was found, remained in the Neville family for a further eleven years, until 1471.

If an export licence is granted for the Middleham Ring it will be just one more example of how significant objects, often integral pieces of England's history, are allowed to leave the country because of inadequate protection from Government sources and resources.

The Reviewing Committee

The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art advises the UK Government on the principals which should govern the control over the export of works of art, antiques and collectors' items. Its brief is to recommend the granting, withholding or deferring of decisions on export licences for specific objects on the grounds of their national artistic or historical importance. The current chairman is Mr Jonathan Scott, Executive Director of Barclays de Zoete Wedd. Members of the Committee are: Mr Henry Fotheringham, an expert on silver; Professor Francis Haskell, Professor of Art History, Oxford University; Mr Gervase Jackson-Stoppa, Architectural Adviser to the National Trust; Dr Jennifer Montagu, formerly Curator of the Photographic Collection, Warburg Institute, and Sir Keith Thomas, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

The members of the Committee call upon experts from areas outside their knowledge to make recommendations and comment upon objects submitted for an export licence. What is very obvious from the Committee's composition, however, is that there is no archaeological representation on it. More and more objects of archaeological and historical importance are being brought before the Committee, the Middleham Ring being a case in point. The Elsenham pyxis (see box on this page) and the Middleham Jewel (now in York) are cases where the objects remained in this country, but the Wintetnghym gold reliquary cross was lost and went abroad to a New York gallery (Minerva September 1990, p.38).

It is evident that because it has no archaeological representative the Reviewing Committee is not as sensitive to the excavated heritage as it might be. Like the Treasure Trove Committee, the Reviewing Committee should direct some of its members from broader spheres, have representatives from relevant learned societies and, dare one suggest, even those professionally engaged in‘trade’, with useful expertise and practical knowledge of the market.

The Elsenham Pyxis

Occupying pride of place in a special recent acquisitions display at the British Museum is a tiny but outstanding 1,800-year-old millefiori enamelled Roman bronze box which, it has now been disclosed, was at one point destined to go abroad following its sale in London.

The Elsenham pyxis, was featured in Minerva's report on the 1991 summer antiquity sales (Sept/Oct 1991, p.43), where it was reported that it had been sold at Christie’s for £33,000, not as part of the group, as the finders would have preferred, but as a single object. It was bought by an agent acting for a dealer in Switzerland. It has now emerged that the box, known as the Elsenham pyxis after the site in Essex where it was found, was bound for foreign shores and, worse, in a manner which would have meant its detachment from the crucial archaeological context in which it was discovered. On advice from the British Museum, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry imposed a three-month export licence delay on the hexagonal box, an imported luxury item of great rarity. Then the British Museum Society intervened and acquired the box for the Museum to mark the fifteen-year directorship of Sir David Wilson, who retired in December 1991. Unquestionably it is a fitting tribute, but the background circumstances raise yet again the vexed question of the inadequacy, as the Reviewing Committee's, of the law governing archaeological finds, or portable antiquities as they are known.

The discovery was made by two amateur archaeologists who were investigating, with the landowner’s consent, a ploughed field at Elsenham. The box was undoubtedly the prize find, but the other objects, from what had been a rich cremation burial, were also of enormous importance. Following their discovery the finders immediately contacted the Essex County archaeologists at Chelmsford. A subsequent investigation of the field revealed large quantities of Roman pottery. The burial, it seems, either formed part of a larger cremation cemetery, or was attached to a settlement site. Yet it could quite easily have been the treasure that ‘got away’. Another season’s ploughing would have scattered the finds to oblivion.

The Elsenham pyxis is the first of its kind to be found in Britain; moreover, it is the most complete and well-preserved of the nine such vessels (some of them surviving in only fragmentary form) so far recorded. Catherine Johns of the British Museum considers the box to be an ‘acquisition of great beauty and archaeological importance’. Above all, it is the only example to have been found in what she describes as an informative archaeological context, and in a manner which offers a basis for further study. Together with the second donor, the finders have presented the other pieces from the grave group to the British Museum.

Peter A. Clayton

MINERVA 28
Stolen Antiquities

Important Bronzes Stolen from the Museum at Palestrina

Jerome M. Eisenberg Ph.D

On 23 November, 1991, a large group of antiquities, principally Etruscan cistae (toilet-boxes) and mirrors, were stolen from the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Palestrina, south-east of Rome. Palestrina, the ancient Roman city of Praeneste, developed bronze workshops in the fourth century BC, due to its long and close contact with Southern Etruria. They specialised in engraved mirrors, usually pear-shaped, and engraved oval and cylindrical toilet-boxes with finely modelled figural handles and lion’s-paw feet, often surmounted by mythological reliefs. They were apparently produced primarily for local use.

Except for two Roman marble heads taken from the storage room, all of the objects stolen were from the middle-Republican necropolis of Columbella, dating from the fourth century BC. Most of them have been published in one or more of the following:


In addition to the pieces illustrated overleaf, the other principal objects stolen were:

• Bronze cylindrical cista: Perseus with the head of Medusa (Inv. no. 1496).
• Bronze cylindrical cista: Achilles receiving arms (Inv. no. 1497).
• Bronze cylindrical cista: Belerophon and Pegasus (Inv. no. 1498).
• Bronze cylindrical cista: with decorated borders (Inv. no. 135932).
• Bronze engraved mirror: Belerophon and Pegasus (Inv. no. 1509).
• Bronze engraved mirror: Two females (Inv. no. 1510).
• Bronze engraved mirror: Penelope and Ulysses (Inv. no. 1512).
• Bronze engraved mirror: Minerva and Fortuna (Inv. no. 1514).
• Bronze engraved mirror: Nude Sirens (Inv. no. 1556).
• Bronze engraved mirror: Helmeted head of Athena (Inv. no. 1558).
• Bronze engraved mirror: Two figures in embrace (Inv. no. 1559).
• Bronze engraved mirror: Seated figure, winged female and swan (Inv. no. 1561).
• Bronze engraved mirror: Two males (Inv. no. 1562).
• Bronze ‘cage’ container (Inv. no. 1515. Another without Inv. no.).
• Five bronze strigilae (Inv. nos. 1516-1518; 2 without Inv. nos.).
• Ivory comb, fragmentary, with relief decoration of two Amorini (Inv. no. 1541).
• Four bone plaques decorated in relief with acanthus leaves (Inv. nos. 1531, 1533, 1536, 1538).
• Four alabaster alabastra (Inv. no. 1522-1525).
• Glass sandcore alabastron lacking rim (Inv. no. 1526).
• String of glass eye beads (Inv. no. 1519).

Again, we wish to thank Pino Bianco of Pavia, Italy, for his assistance in obtaining the list of stolen pieces and copies of the photographs. We hope that the prompt publication of these and other stolen objects will help to deter the illicit trade in cultural property.

ANTIOQUITIES & TRIBAL ART

A geometric Greek bronze horse, 11cm long, 8th century BC. Sold recently at Phillips West Two for £11,220

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MINERVA 29
Stolen Antiquities

1. Bronze cylindrical cista with fretwork decoration; Handle: two warriors holding dead comrade (Inv. no. 1494).

2. Bronze cylindrical cista: Cestauronachy; Handle: two nude youths arm in arm (Inv. no. 1499).

3. Bronze cylindrical cista: Warrior holding spear; Handle: nude acrobat (Inv. no. 1500).

7. Bronze engraved mirror: Dionysus in chariot drawn by three panthers (Inv. no. 1508).

8. Bronze engraved mirror: Judgment of Paris with six figures (Inv. no. 1511).

9. Bronze engraved mirror: Dionysus and Ariadne (Inv. no. 1513).

13. Bronze mirror cover relief: Amazon fighting nude warrior (Inv. no. 1506).

14. Bronze mirror cover relief: Athena fighting Enceladus (Inv. no. 1506).

15. Roman marble male head (Inv. no. 554).
Stolen Antiquities


5. Bronze cylindrical cista: Victory of Pallas over Amynas; Handle: two figures, one with dagger (Inv. no. 1493).

6. Bronze oval cista: Battleground scene with architectural background; Handle: nude acrobat (Inv. no. 1495).

10. Bronze engraved mirror: Bearded figure with arms at side with enthroned female (Inv. no. 1557).

11. Bronze mirror cover relief: Heracles seated on rocks (Inv. no. 1504).


16. Roman marble head of a young female (Inv. no. 373).

17. Three bone plaques: Hermes, Heracles and a third deity with spear (Inv. nos. 1527,1529).

18. Small wooden cosmetic box in the form of a dove; four compartments inside (Inv. no. 1521).
A New International Law for Antiquities?

Jerry Theodorou

A Rome-based offshoot of the defunct League of Nations known as UNIDROIT (the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law) has been attempting since 1986 to formulate an international convention on protecting cultural property. Although there is already an international convention of such a nature in existence, the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the UNESCO code is widely regarded as ineffectual. Among art-importing nations only the United States, Canada, and recently Australia, have become signatories to the UNESCO Convention. The watered-down enabling legislation in the United States, passed in 1983, has only been invoked successfully in a handful of cases involving pre-Columbian artefacts. The conspicuous failure of the art-importing nations of Western Europe and Japan to sign the UNESCO Convention spurred UNIDROIT to come up with a more effective means of controlling the illegal exportation of cultural objects, including antiquities, from the so-called 'art-exporting' nations. These nations include Greece, Italy and numerous countries of the Middle East, Latin America and the Far East that possess rich ancient cultural heritages. After numerous meetings over the last few years attended by UNIDROIT members and observers from around the world, a four and a half page preliminary draft convention containing eleven articles has been tabled for discussion. This preliminary draft seeks to balance the interests of the art-importing nations, museums, dealers and collectors on the one hand, and art-exporting nations, archaeologists and theft victims on the other hand. The UNESCO Convention was viewed as a non-starter by the Europeans and Japan because it was seen as favouring too heavily the interests of the art-exporting nations and aligned constituents.

The draft UNIDROIT Convention lays out procedures pertaining to, 'claims for the restitution of stolen cultural objects and for the return of cultural objects removed from the territory of a contracting state contrary to its export legislation'. Among the features of the draft convention which address the interests of the art-importing nations, the requesting state would be required to pay the possessor of stolen or illegally exported objects 'fair and reasonable compensation'. In addition, the country making the claim for the illegally exported object would be required to prove that the piece in question is indeed a significant work because of its context, use or inherent historical value.

The victims of art theft or illegal exportation would benefit from the draft UNIDROIT Convention in being able to make their claims directly in a foreign court, without an intervening national authority as is the case with the UNESCO code. In Western Europe where civil, as opposed to statute law governs cases of theft, good faith purchasers of stolen art enjoy a fair amount of protection from the theft victims. The draft convention would allow the victim three years from the time they learned of the theft to make a claim. At UNIDROIT meetings in May 1991 and January 1992 virtually all of the attending delegations proposed modifications to the draft wording, especially on the subjects of the statute of limitations and the definition of 'cultural object', and what 'fair and reasonable compensation' is. There will be another UNIDROIT meeting in the autumn of 1992, but consensus on a convention is not expected to be reached until about 1996. Both the United States and the United Kingdom are UNIDROIT members. The US delegation consists of Harold Burman and M. Ely Maurer of the State Department's Legal Adviser Office and Linda F. Pinkerton of the J. Paul Getty Trust. The UK delegation consists of Carolyn Morrison of the Office of Arts and Libraries and Isabel Letwin of the Treasury Solicitor's Department.
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Stolen Property!

The Art Loss Register and its Work

Nobody in the art world can afford to ignore the possibility that they may at some point be offered a stolen artwork or have something stolen themselves. Last year the Art Loss Register (ALR) was set up to provide a computerised database of stolen works of art as a service to anyone buying or selling works of art. One year on, Caroline Wakeford of the Register assesses its impact on the world of collecting, dealing and insurance.
Antiquities and Art Theft

ALR aims to achieve depend upon the registration of the maximum number of losses, and on the art world searching every time an item worth over £1000 is bought and sold. Support for the Register has grown strongly as the interested parties have realised the benefits the service has to offer.

For the insurers, the improvement in recovery rates will result in the stabilisation of rising premiums; a significant percentage of fine art owners are uninsured because of cost. Additionally, an improved recovery service will mean that items of great sentimental and cultural worth – a worth which often outstrips financial value – may be returned to the aggrieved owners. A further benefit arises in the detection of fraudulent multiple claims by the tracking of duplicate entries on the system. Finally, the financial commitment of the insurers to the Register will prove to the government and police that they are directly contributing to the prevention of crime.

The art world lives under the constant threat of adverse publicity resulting from the sale of stolen artworks. Reimbursement to the purchaser may avert considerable legal costs and satisfy public concern, but obtaining full compensation from the vendor is virtually impossible.

A further case involving Christie’s demonstrates the simplicity with which the disadvantages of selling stolen works of art can be avoided. A landscape painting by the Biedermeier painter Rudolf von Alt was presented at the courier for sale. A brief telephone call to the Register confirmed that the painting had been stolen during a raid on a West End gallery in 1989. It took staff just two minutes to provide the answer to the search request.

As the art world becomes increasingly aware of the availability of ad-hoc searches, it is expected that this simple and effective system for confirming good title to works of art will become the standard procedure used by dealers and auctioneers worldwide. Therefore as the risk of selling stolen property is reduced through searching it is foreseen that defective title cover which dealers currently pay will become less costly and more widely available. For the police, the Register holds numerous advantages.

Although the Art Squad at Scotland Yard was reformed two years ago, Great Britain still lags behind her European counterparts in terms of resources allocated to the problem of art theft: but few police forces are able to give significant priority to the problem. Criminal intelligence concerning art theft will always remain a police matter. However, the Register can provide support for the police at no cost if they have neither the time nor resources available to resolve cases involving stolen property. For instance, the Register can provide the effort required to search for stolen items on the international market by automatically matching items for sale against the stolen art database.

The police have been quick to realise the potential of the Register; when faced with the problem of ‘Aladdin’s caves’ of stolen property, they can call on the Register to search for and identify the original owners. An example of their cooperation led to the successful recovery during August 1991 of six important seascapes by artists including John Cleveley the Elder, Thomas Wyck and Thomas Luny. The City of London police had confiscated the pictures at the home of a suspect, believing them to be stolen. A police officer on the case contacted the Register, hopeful of finding the rightful owners. It was confirmed that the pictures had been stolen only six weeks previously. The name of the rightful owner was provided and the paintings identified and retrieved the same afternoon.

Art theft is a rapidly expanding international problem. The Art Loss Register receives reports of serious art theft at an alarming rate. Examples include the $18 million haul of antiquities from a storeroom in Herculaneum in February 1990 (Minerva, May 1990, pp. 23-5), and the more recent theft of Roman sculptures from the William Waldorf Astor Collection in Kent between 24th and 25th July 1991; still to be recovered.

For details please contact:
The Art Loss Register, 13 Grosvenor Place, London SW1X 7HH. Tel: (071) 235 3393 Fax: (071) 235 1652

MINERVA 35
December 1991 Recap

Despite the recession, good coins brought high prices—and sometimes record prices—in the traditional December New York auctions. Numismatic Fine Arts featured the fabulous Roberto Russo collection of Roman Republican coins, a comprehensive collection remarkable not so much for its rarities as for the extraordinary quality of the common coins. When Numismatic Fine Arts purchased the collection about two years ago, the general opinion in the trade was that they had paid too much. However, strong bidding from the Italians and the Spanish in the room must have yielded them a healthy profit. NFA president Steve Rubinger was justifiably all smiles after the sale.

Superior Galleries’ sale of the Bromberg collection of Jewish coins was equally electrifying, as fierce competition brought astonishing prices in this rarity-studded sale. The prototype silver shekel of Year One of the First Revolt (66 CE), one of two known and the only one in private hands, set a new world record for a Jewish coin at $220,000.

Classical Numismatic Group had its usual broad selection of good quality but modestly priced coins. Prices again were strong, as floor bidders encountered strong competition from CNG’s commission bids. More than 700 bidders participated in the sale, most of them bidding by post, in a sign of continuing strength in the collector market for affordable coins.

Mystery marked the Christie’s sale, as a single unidentified telephone bidder purchased almost all of the better ancient coins in the fine collection which was offered. Either Christie’s has a new client of considerable financial means and keen interest, or—as some speculated after the sale—the owner of the collection in the sale decided in the end that he could not part with his coins and bought them back.

The annual Spink’s/Kolbe sale of numismatic literature reflected the continuing strong demand for books, with good prices throughout.

Early 1992 Action in Basel

After the usual holiday and post-holiday respite, the new year opened with the annual Basel coin fair (1-2 February) and the accompanying auction by Swiss Bank Corporation (28-30 January). The sale, featuring a fine old collection of Greek coins, lured eager buyers with absurdly low estimates, but, as expected, coins sold for solid market prices, in many cases several times the estimate. For example, an attractive drachm of Tarentum (lot 6), estimated at £300, sold for £2100; a scarce early nomos of Metapontum (lot 15), estimated at £400, sold for £2400; and a rare early stater of Lette (lot 89), estimated at £800, went for £5400. The use of obviously low estimates is a common device in Switzerland, reflecting more the lack of reserves than any expectation of likely hammer prices. Once bidders are lured to the sale, of course, they will not want to leave empty handed. When bidding in a sale where the estimates are meaningless, however, collectors must either know the market themselves or rely on their dealers for advice in order to avoid disappointment. Bids of even three or four times estimate often had no chance of success, and no doubt many collectors who relied on the house estimates to make their bids found that they were misinformed.

The Basel fair itself was disappointing. There is a shortage of fresh material on the market, and there were very few exciting coins on offer. Most dealers and collectors found little to buy.

The one-day London Coin Fair, held at the Cumberland Hotel on 8 February, was bustling as usual. A single day fair, rather than the traditional longer fairs, seems to compress activity into a shorter period rather than reducing the amount of business that is done. For dealers, this is an improvement over the lengthier and more relaxed fairs, at which they must sometimes sit for days at their booths, transacting only occasional business.

As in Basel, however, the amount of fresh material at the London fair was limited. Very few new finds are coming onto the market as the routes of supply have been interrupted for a variety of reasons. The wars in Afghanistan and Yugoslavia have limited exports: from those areas, authorities in Bulgaria are keeping a close watch on potential illegal exports, and little has come from Turkey in recent months. In this situation, the supply of coins from old collections is inadequate to supply demand.

Coming Events

The Spring season promises some exciting sales. The Numismatica Ars Classica auction in Zürich, 25-26 February, features its usual sale of high quality Roman Republican coins and exceptional Roman bronzes, many quite beautifully patinated, as well as additional high quality Greek and Roman coins in all metals.

The Sotheby’s London sale on 9 April will include about 300 lots of Greek and Roman coins, many from old Continental collections. Highlights among the Roman gold are an aureus of Pertinax, formerly in the Vicomte Ponton d’Amécourt sale of 1887 (estimate £7,000-£10,000) and an extremely rare solidus of St Helen, mother of Constantine the Great (estimate £20,000-£25,000).

The Leu Numismatics sale in Zürich on 28-29 April will be the firm’s first auction since becoming independent from Bank Leu. The firm’s independence is hardly noticeable, however, as the same highly respected staff continues to operate in their established location. The auction, likewise, maintains the firm’s high standards. The sale features, amongst other properties, a splendid collection of Greek gold and silver octodrachms and decadrachms assembled over a period of many years by American coin dealer Ed Milas.

For collectors of more modest budget and those seeking to improve their libraries, Classical Numismatic Group will hold a particularly large mail bid sale closing 25 March, consisting of approximately 1200 lots of coins and 500 lots of numismatic books.

One of the largest fairs in America for ancient coins, the Chicago coin fair, will be held 20-22 March in its usual location at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

MINERVA 36
The Risley Park Lanx – a scientific update

Following the two articles in Minerva about the ‘rediscovery’ of the Risley Park Roman silver lanx, various questions have been raised concerning the surrounding circumstances and the scientific tests which were carried out on it. Dr Anna Bennett, of Conservation and Technical Services, who carried out the scientific analysis, gives her response to some of the scientific queries raised.

The experts decided that the plate could not possibly be the original lanx found in 1920 and written about by Stukeley was based on the fact that no corrosive products could be traced, even in the deep casting pits. These would be expected even if, like the finds from the Great Bath at Bath, it had been found in anaerobic conditions (i.e. sealed and oxygen free).

The theory put forward in Kenneth Painter’s and Catherine Johns’ article (Minerva November/December 1991, p. 6) was that a cast was made of all the original pieces and then the original silver melted down to produce the pieces in the present tray. It may seem strange that the original pieces were not simply soldered together. However, the strength of a corroded silver object lies not in the remaining metal, but in the corrosion surrounding and within the metal. Heating the object to allow soldering would disrupt this corrosion, and during the soldering the solder would run into the porous metal matrix and would not form a bond.

The solder used on the central section was of a type only available after 1850. This may mean that the 26 pieces of the lanx were forgotten for over 100 years until someone had the idea of recasting the pieces and soldering them together. Would it have been possible to create a plate after this date based only on Stukeley’s article and engraving published in 1736? In theory perhaps, but in practice it would have been virtually impossible as the iconography would have been unknown. The designs on the plate are not copied from any known piece of Roman silver plate, so designs that made iconographical sense for a fourth-century AD date would have had to be created for 22 new pieces, since the design of six only was illustrated. Most importantly, the composition of late Roman silver would not have been known.

Metal analyses of all the fragments indicate that, with one exception, all the fragments were cast in high purity silver, falling within the normal range for later Roman silver.

Another suggestion, that the plate could have been created after the publication of the scholarly article by Catherine Johns in the Antiquaries Journal of 1981, using old Roman silver and two different types of solder, in theory is also possible, but the scientific evidence that the plate has been polished regularly over a long period of time suggests it is unlikely. The silver metal is very soft and the high spots of relief appear smooth, bright and shiny, indicating that they have been cleaned and burnished repeatedly. Black deposits in the recesses on the plate’s surface were found to be discoloured polish.

It has been questioned whether it would have been possible to break the tray into 26 almost equal pieces if it was bent and twisted when originally found at Risley. Ancient silver objects are often found in an extremely brittle state after they have been excavated. The brittleness can be observed on objects which are corroded as well as on those which show little or no signs of external corrosion. This is rather surprising in the case of uncorroded material since the silver must have been ductile at the time when the object was bent and implies a rather drastic change in the metallurgical structure at some stage in antiquity. Embrittlement has three main causes – i. Intercrystalline corrosion in which the microstructure is weakened by the corrosion which proceeds from the sur-

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MINERVA 37
The Cycadic Spirit: Masterpieces from the Nicholas P. Goulandris Collection

Athens is a city of museums, but there is none with greater charm, indeed none with higher standards of display and labelling, than the Museum of Cycadic Art of the Nicholas P. Goulandris Foundation. The size, range and quality of the collection, assembled with a true connoisseur's eye by Dolly Goulandris, will be known to anyone who saw it on display at the British Museum in 1983. To see the collection now, displayed in an intimate but appropriately austere setting, is an experience that no visitor to Athens should miss.

This book by Colin Renfrew, a long-standing friend of the collector, is not a catalogue: for that the reader must turn to Cycadic Art, Ancient Sculpture and Pottery from the N.P. Goulandris Collection by Christos Doumas, who here contributes an introductory chapter on the discovery of Early Cycadic civilisation. Rather, this is an overall assessment of Cycadic art and culture in its own context and as it may be perceived through modern eyes. No one could be better qualified to undertake such an appraisal than the Disney Professor of Archaeology and Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, since he brings to it a combination of formidable archaeological knowledge and a wide experience of fieldwork in the Aegean and elsewhere on the one hand, and on the other a taste for modern art and a grasp of its aesthetic nurtured by years of collecting.

The chapters are grouped into three sections, of which the first, 'The Cycadic World', sets the scene. Renfrew begins with the geographical background of Cycadic civilisation and an account of life and society on the Cycadic islands from Neolithic times to the Early Bronze Age. Many of the surviving artefacts have acquired the status of collector's items through their appeal to modern taste. The high prices realised in the international art market have encouraged wholesale looting of sites by the local population, and in consequence much of the known material, including many items in the Goulandris collection, lacks any archaeological context. (It is not for that reason devoid, as some purists would have us believe, of archaeological significance and interest. This book alone would expose the fallacy of that argument.) Excavated material comes mainly from cemeteries, with none at all from settlements.

In the second section, 'From Society to Sculpture', Renfrew surveys the characteristic products of different Early Cycadic cultures, noting that the number of types is limited, with a strong tendency to standard or canonical forms. Sculpture in particular is concentrated on the 'canonical figure' with folded arms. Renfrew's classification into 'varieties', first presented in an important article in the 1969 American Journal of Archaeology, has been widely accepted by other scholars. The relative chronology proposed for the various 'varieties' is based, as Renfrew admits, more on stylistic analysis than on archaeological evidence. Although the figures are mainly female, Renfrew points out that there is no actual evidence for a cult of a mother-goddess, fashionable though that concept is in some circles.

The third section, 'Aspects of Cycadic Art', is more varied in content and perhaps more controversial. In two chapters Renfrew examines the ideas of an American scholar, Pat Getz-Preziosi, on the design of canonical figures and their attribution to individual hands or 'Masters'. The stylistic distinctions observed by Getz-Preziosi within Renfrew's 'varieties' are largely self-justifying: that certain figures closely resemble one another is obvious when they are juxtaposed. Where Renfrew parts company with Getz-Preziosi (and I am inclined to follow him) is in interpreting these stylistic similarities as indicative of individual hands rather than a series of carvers working in an established tradition: we are perhaps dealing with what Beazley would, in the context of Greek vase-painting, have called a 'Group'. Renfrew is also sceptical of Getz-Preziosi's analysis of the proportions of the figures and of her compass-drawn layouts. Again, I share his view that the ratios are over-simplified. While admitting that the use of a hard material (marble rather than clay) contributed to the development of a rigid canon, Renfrew argues from the existence of harpists and other figures with an implied movement that the immobility of the canonical figures is deliberate.

Towards the end of the book Renfrew embarks on more subjective topics: an appraisal of the aesthetic significance of the Cycadic style and of certain trends in modern art that are, superficially at least, similar. There are useful warnings here for the unsophisticated: the relatively modern genesis of the concept of a 'work of art'; the contrasts between the acclaim accorded to artists since the Renaissance and their unaccounted status in antiquity, when the modern distinction between 'artist' and 'artisan' simply did not exist; the difference between the speculations of modern art historians and what may actually have been in the mind of the ancient craftsman; and the danger of attributing the modern concept of 'abstract' art to the ancient Cycadic sculptors.

The whole book is distinguished for its lucid style, unencumbered by the 'impressive' jargon that infects so much of the 'new' archaeology. An added pleasure comes from John Bigelow Taylor's splendid photographs of Cycadic objects in the Goulandris Collection and elsewhere (including one figure back-lit to bring out the translucency of the marble), supplemented by views of Cycadic sites and general topography. Many of the latter lack captions and numbers, and are therefore excluded from the overall count, but they create a vivid impression of the Cycadic Islands that Nico Goulandris loved so well.

Brian Cook, Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities, The British Museum.
Prehistoric Perambulations

Three new titles in the paperback Shire Archaeology series, excellent value at only £3.95 each, are useful and concise introductions to three different aspects of prehistoric art and technology. Andrew J. Lawson's Cave Art (64pp., 48 illus.), 'written as a brief introduction to an important and intriguing subject,' amply fulfils his aims. It gives a background to cave art, discusses its discovery and eventual acceptance, and examines the subject matter and interpretation of the art. Line drawings of the characteristic flint implements of the period (the Magdalenian) are included and also a few illustrations of the three-dimensional art mobilier.

In Prehistoric Flint Mines (56pp., 28 illus.), Dr Robin Holgate looks at one of the oldest of human industries, represented in Britain by some 20 flint-mining sites. The largest and best known, and also most easily visited, is Graves Graves in Norfolk, with some of its deep shafts reaching 40 feet. The technological knowledge prehistoric man displayed in first discovering and then working this desirable material, and its subsequent marketing over quite long distances, is remarkable. Techniques of mining and manufacture are discussed, as well as the interesting history of research into and final acceptance of the dating of the mines. The book also addresses the questions of the flint axe, the miners, output and scale of production and why the sites were eventually abandoned.

Dr Aubrey Burl is one of our foremost scholars and researchers on the early societies and prehistoric monuments of Britain, with several fine volumes to his credit. In his Prehistoric Henges (64pp., 35 illus.) he shows how henges, a peculiarly British phenomenon not found elsewhere in European prehistory, have been largely overlooked and ignored in favour of the more grandiose, later, stone circles. Many, of course, like the best known Stonehenge, had stone settings added to them, obscuring their earlier, simple henge status from the eyes of the general visitor. Here Dr Burl puts the record straight and shows how these often vast circular earthworks acted as focal points, gathering places, over 4000 years ago. Careful excavation at a number have revealed grim evidence of forgotten rituals which included human sacrifice to appease the gods. The power and impact of these structures on the community, the sheer planning and construction problems involved and surmounted, are evidence of their supreme importance to prehistoric man. All these factors combine to make henges one of the most intriguing of the many types of ancient monument in the British Isles.

Romans in Northern Campania: Settlement and Land-Use around the Massico and the Garigliano Basin


1991 was a year of extraordinary publishing achievement for the British School at Rome. It issued no less than four monographs, all of which are results of fieldwork by members of the School itself. The volume reviewed here is concerned with Campania, a typical small-scale region of the Mediterranean world, on the west coast of central Italy. Archaeological interest and exploration has long concentrated on the better known and spectacular southern half of the region, with its preserved towns at Pompeii and Herculanenum. The fame of the area of the Bay of Naples, however, has in turn contributed to the almost total neglect of the archaeology of the north of Campania. Systematic archaeological research there is mainly confined to the last fifteen years or so, with abundant and published controlled excavation except for the two Roman villas at Francolise. But to the British School at Rome's publication of these excavations in 1985 must now be added the valuable publication of Paul Arthur's field survey of 100 square kilometres, centred on Monte Massico.

Arthur's survey was carried out single-handed, mainly between 1979 and 1981. At its most basic level the survey made a record of the ancient features of an area under threat; but the volume is much more than this. It tells a dramatic story of an area crucial to the development of Roman Italy.

The sites in the survey range from the first millennium BC to the Middle Ages; but of over three hundred sites examined 181 were datable to the Roman period, and so it is natural that the bulk of the discussion is concerned with the Roman period, from the fourth century BC to the sixth century AD. What emerges is an area which was vital first, from the fourth century BC, to Rome's domination of Italy (towns founded at Sinuessa, Suessa Aurunca and Minturnae), and then, from the second century BC, as a major economic base for Roman Italy's conquest of its empire. The local economy boomed, with shipbuilding at Minturnae and production of specialised agricultural implements at Minturnae and Suessa Aurunca, while the remains of millions of amphorae from the villas and farms attest the agricultural surplus which assured the food supply of the capital and left the Roman state free to dominate the Mediterranean world and impose a homogeneous monetary system.

In the late first century BC and the early empire northern Campania maintained its prosperity, though perhaps with new tenants on some of the farms and with sumptuous maritime villas being built by political magnates such as Pompey and Cicero from central Italy, who acquired land from the local aristocracy. By the second century AD Campania, however, huge estates, often linked to the court, had taken over much of the land, with the result that 71 per cent of the rural sites inhabited under the early empire were gradually abandoned, the towns were in recession and public and private building expenditure were severely curtailed. The erosion of the economic base was compounded by the general collapse in Italy of part of the economy's infrastructures in the later third and fourth centuries. By the fourth to fifth centuries 45 per cent of the rural sites that had survived to the mid empire were abandoned, and it is possible that the land was now being worked by labour from the towns, as it had been at the time of their founding. In the fifth to sixth centuries BC, by the later fifth and sixth centuries AD rural settlement had all but ceased, and maccchia gradually overwhelmed the classical cultivated landscape. The maccchia was only to be cleared when deforestation, the recreation of fields and the appearance of the buffalo began a new, medieval, régime.

This dramatic story, of an area which previously was almost undocumented archaeologically, has been created by Arthur's enthusiastic and energetic survey of an unexplored and difficult terrain in the heart of a major European country. Yet behind his lone achievement at every stage, from the conception of the project to publication, lay the British School at Rome. It can scarcely be imagined what more might be achieved if the British Government had an adequate appreciation of the cultural and diplomatic value of such work and provided adequate financial support for its archaeological mission in Italy, as do, say, the French and German governments for theirs.

K. S. Painter, formerly Deputy Keeper, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, the British Museum.
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Greek Vases in Etruria

Why have so many Greek vases been found in Etruscan tombs in Italy? How far were Athenian painters catering for an Etruscan market? Did the Etruscan customers have more money than sense? In this extract from the new book ‘Looking at Greek Vases’, Nigel Spivey sets out to answer these and other questions.

A case of mistaken identity

Search any good atlas or gazetteer and you find ‘Etruria’. Not the land of the ancient Etruscans, this, but a small pocket of Staffordshire in England: a factory site at a junction of canals, not far from Stoke-on-Trent. English Etruria dates from AD 1769. It was created by Josiah Wedgwood (1730-95), who himself occupied a stately home christened ‘Etruria Hall’. Properly landscaped according to the superior standards of the eighteenth century, Wedgwood’s Etruria is still a pleasant place to visit. But the name enshrines a fallacy: the fallacy of assuming that many vases recovered from the tombs of ancient Etruria were Etruscan vases. When (again in 1769) Wedgwood and his partner Bentley produced a clutch of black vases decorated with red enamel figures, the legend was ‘ARTES ETRURIÆ RENASCUNT’ – and there lay the mistake, for these were not the arts of Etruria reborn but the arts of Athens, transplanted in antiquity to the tombs of Etruria.

Wedgwood was not conspicuously foolish in baptising his pottery as born-again Etruscan. Italian, particularly Tuscan, ‘Etruscomania’ in the eighteenth century had persuaded the early collectors of Classical vases that the Etruscans were responsible for not only all the vases found in Etruscan tombs, but also those recovered from South Italian cemeteries. This hypothesis, however, was beginning to crumble in Wedgwood’s time. Sir William Hamilton, British envoy to the court of Naples, tolerant husband of Lady Emma and proto-benefactor of the British Museum, had been amassing a collection of vases from the graves of Campania, Lucania and Apulia and publishing his finds. The first publication, done for Hamilton by P. d’Hancarville, comprised four volumes: Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities... (1766-7); the second publication – again in several volumes, beginning in 1791, this time done by W. Tischbein – was entitled Collection of Engravings from Ancient Vases mostly of Pure Greek Workmanship... In his introduction, Hamilton confesses that he once believed such vases to be Etruscan, but had since changed his mind: ‘there now seems to be little doubt of such monuments of Antiquity being truly Grecian’. Hence the title, emphasising the ‘pure Greek workmanship’.

For Wedgwood, an entrepreneur, this was all academic. And it was not entirely settled. In the years 1828-9 the cemeteries of Vulci came to light, and thousands of the painted vases were disgorged from the tombs of that hermetic Etruscan site. The Vulci vases outnumbered so impressively the quantity of similar pieces so far in Athens that scholars were forced to reconsider. Were the old Etruscomaniacs right after all?
In the years of the *rapporto volcane*, as the Rome-based German antiquarian Eduard Gerhard and his colleagues struggled with the deluge of vases from Vulci, the problem of provenance bulked large amidst the excitement caused by all the new scenes and subjects. Most of the vases were demonstrably the work of Greek craftsmen, and plenty could be related specifically to the Athenian ambience—by their *kalos* inscriptions, for example. But how was it that so many of these were yielded by the tombs of Vulci? Gerhard and others found it hard to believe that the vases had travelled all the way from Athens, and so postulated workshops of Attic vase-painters in Etruria, or else intermediate establishments in South Italy.

It is not impossible that new evidence will surface; but there is now a general consensus amongst ancient historians, archaeologists and even Etruscologists that most of the vases in Etruscan tombs were produced in the Athenian Kerameikos. Etruscan vases do exist: but they are not the Classical models of Wedgwood, any more than the 'Etruscan rooms' created by Robert Adam at Osterley Park and Audley End and other eighteenth-century mansions are based on Etruscan wall-painting. The case of mistaken identity has been resolved. But the problem of provenance deserves fresh attention. The briefest of browses through J.D. Beazley's catalogue of Athenian vase-painters will reveal that Vulci is still our main source of pots. After Vulci, other Etruscan sites: Tarquinia, Cerveteri, Orvieto and Chiusi. As long as studies of vases were concerned with the individuality of painters, the significance of the legend 'from Vulci' was minimal. But as work on the iconography of Athenian vases becomes increasingly sophisticated, it seems as well to reconsider the ancient owners of these vases. An Etruscan at Vulci may have heard of the Athenian autocrat Peisistratos, but is unlikely to have known that Peisistratos encouraged fountain construction, surprised the Athenians with a coup when they were at their dice-boards, or launched an attack on Megara. Such localised and precisely historical factors in the iconography of Athenian vases will present obvious difficulties for a vicarious Etruscan 'reading' of Greek images; and broader cultural issues may be no less difficult. If vases were painted for an Athenian aristocracy, how were they understood by an Etruscan aristocracy? Should we suppose (as Herbert Hoffmann has suggested) that there was a common pool of myth and ideology to which both Athenian and Etruscan aristocrats were drawn—or that the Athenians 'exported' such aristocratic codes as 'beautiful death' (*thanatos kalos*—to quote Hoffman’s example) to their Etruscan neighbours? Etruria was a profoundly Hellenised country, but the Etruscans were nevertheless barbari: they did not speak Greek. We can make no easy assumptions about their reception of Greek images. An Etruscan at Vulci customarily dined with his wife: what might he make of the image of the all-male symposium, or the symposium attended by professional hostesses (*hetairai*)? Again: Athenian vases have been used as a primary source for historical information about Greek homosexuality, and the definition of a 'homosexual ethos' at Athens. But homosexual practices were not equally fashionable or acceptable throughout the Greek world, and there is no evidence for a predilection for them in Etruria: so what did our viewer in Vulci make of the many scenes of pederasty, and sometimes mass sodomy, that came his—or her—way?

These are questions that are easier to ask than to answer. But it is time that some attempt was made to define the significance of Greek vases in an Etruscan context, and the aim of this article is to do so. It will be tentative, as most enterprises of iconology are: the 'old commonsense view that a work means what its author intended it to mean', which E.H. Gombrich applauds, has somehow to be reconciled with the precept that 'we cannot write the history of art without taking account of the changing functions assigned to the visual image in different societies and different cultures' (Gombrich again). The immediate problems appear to be firstly, how far were Athenian painters catering for a market for their vases in Etruria?—and secondly, can we estimate just how extraordinary is the survival rate of Athenian vases in Etruscan tombs? But these are problems for those who begin with Athens. We shall try beginning with Etruria—with the fact that vases are found in Etruria, and then the significance of vases being found in *tombs* in Etruria.
The Etruscan Value of Greek Vases

We overvalue Greek vases: consequently we overvalue Greek vases in Etruria. The first (and so far the only) Greek vase to fetch a million dollars was the krater by Euphronios now in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is probable that it was illegally excavated from a tomb at Cerveteri. The price is absurd, as the art market is absurd, but such absurdities do influence proper studies and aesthetics. Once we stake a million dollars upon a 'masterpiece' by Euphronios, we encourage a fetishism for pottery that inflates its ancient importance. Gasping over the skill of the New York krater, we want to believe that an Etruscan in Cerveteri at the end of the sixth century BC would, if offered the vase, have sold his own grandmother to buy it.

The case against a high premium for Athenian vases in Etruria has been made by Michael Vickers, as an extension of his argument for generally downgrading the status of painted pottery in ancient society and in ancient trade. Much of his case is based upon common sense, and few would dispute the claim that the ancient value of Greek vases has been exaggerated. It is not entirely due to the grotesque manoeuvres of the art world, but also to the fact that in the archaeological record, pottery we have always with us, whilst oil, grain, timber, metals and slaves pass away. But Vickers has over-stated the case. He wants us to see antiquity as a commodity of wealth, enlisting from Athens to Etruria as 'saleable ballast': saleable in Etruria because it offered 'smart tableware' for the Etruscan poor (the extent of their poverty is not delineated by Vickers), and substitute silver for the rich, who could then keep their precious metal services above ground, and leave the painted pottery for the use of the dead.

Vickers gives us a picture of the Etruscan aristocracy from the first-century BC sources, Diodorus Siculus. It is a well-known passage (5.40), mentioning the twice-daily banquets and excess of everything — including silver drinking vessels. Vickers does not consider the passage as a historical cliché (topos), the usual condemnation of love of luxury (hyperai) in an enervated rival (Diodorus is, after all, 'Siculus', writing with the built-in bias of Sicilian historical tradition, and the tyrants of Sicily were audacious enemies of Etruria). But even allowing some credibility to Diodorus, it remains impossible to demonstrate that painted vases were imported by the Etruscans as a cheaper alternative to vessels of precious metal. No one can say what quantity of gold and silver was deposited with the Etruscan dead: there are very few perfectly intact Etruscan tombs, and most were raised many centuries ago with the intent of clearing out metal objects and jewellery (while ceramic vases became worth snatching only when they became collectable items, i.e. around the time of Hamilton et al.).

One of the rare intact tombs is the Regolini-Galassi burial at Cerveteri: when it was discovered in 1836 it yielded a mass of gold and silverwork — over two hundred items — now on display in the Gregorian Museum in the Vatican. This dates to the mid-seventh century BC; it might be argued that anti-sumptuary legislation, or other socio-political pressure, later made the deposition of silver and gold with the dead less feasible. But equally one might allow vessels of precious metal a greater availability in the 'Orientalizing' period than in the sixth/fifth centuries — i.e. when the most conspicuous importation of painted pottery takes place.

One type of evidence is not considered by Vickers, but it is important. Etruscan tomb-paintings often depict symposia, and as such they sometimes show kylikes, i.e. the cabinets of vases required for making merry. Reviewing the depictions of Etruscan kylikes, one is bound to ascribe some justification to Vickers — metal vases do feature at an Etruscan banquet — but at the same time recognise that Vickers is wrong to relegate pottery as low as he does. Iconographical excesses may be partly complicated by the notion that black-glazed pottery sets out to imitate tarnished silver: so it is difficult to say whether the symposiasts in the Tomba della Fustigazione, for example, are proffering metal or ceramic cups. But in certain representations, ceramic and metal vases are juxtaposed in such a way as to suggest virtual parity of value. In the Tomba dei Vasi Depinti (Fig 1), c. 500 BC, the artist wants us to see two black-figure amphorae either side of a metal volute krater; and underneath, a pair of upturned ceramic kylikes. And the paintings of the Tomba dell Nave (datable to around the mid-fifth century BC) may make a more explicit link between the importation of Attic vases and the conduct of a banquet. As one enters the tomb, the iconography seems more or less conventional: on the far wall, the participants at the banquet recline on couches (klinai); on the right-hand wall, servers busy with supplying the feast, and then dancers. But it is the left-hand wall (Fig 2) which gives the denomination of the tomb: depicting a merchant vessel (or which a number of mariners are just visible), and a figure (whose scale relates him to the banquet scenario) seeming to wave off or salute the reduced-scale (intended as far-off?) ship. Another figure stands by a kylkeion, which has a variety of vases on and around it, but mainly featuring a large red-figure column krater decorated with a centauromachy of some plausible mid-fifth century sort. Beyond the kylkeion is a lyre-player, so if the frieze were laid out and read sequentially, it would begin with the arrival of the ship, proceed to the vases, then the musician, then the banqueters and their servants, then the dancers. I think we are supposed to take the dancing as happening after the meal: should we then presume the ship to be part of the sequence: it brings the vases, which supply the feast, and the feast yields to dancing?

Whether that sequence is intended by the artist, it remains the case that ceramic vases are prominent. If such items were merely ballast, their prominence seems odd. It is also odd that their owners went to such trouble to repair them when they broke, with fidelity (and to our eyes, unsightly) rivets; and odd that the wells and hidden areas of Etruscan settlements, which generally contain masses of the coarse 'imposto' pottery used in domestic situations, rarely include any fragments of painted Attic vases — odd, that is, if (following Vickers) hoi polloi had such vases on their tables.

The Etruscans had no dollars to pay for their vases: they were not operating a monetary economy before the fourth century BC. But we do not need money to estimate value. Value
is 'worth, desirability, utility'. The actual economic value of pottery was probably low – it may be readily perceived as a 'non-essential item', whose trade might continue in time of war (as it did between Athens and Corinth throughout the late fifth century BC). The scratched or painted trademarks that are found on Attic vases bound for the Etruscan market give no substantial indication of what those vases were worth in Etruria. Indirect evidence, however, can be mustered by registering what effect the Etruscan demand for vases had upon the potters and painters based in Athens.

There is a distinctive shape in late sixth-century BC Attic black figure known as the 'Nikosthenic' amphora, which features flat handles (like curved bands of metal?), a conical mouth, and a body with horizontal ridges (Fig 3). The angular design of this type immediately puts one in mind of metal; and metal prototypes may well have been in circulation, but there are surviving ceramic models – not in Attic but in Etruscan pottery, i.e. the metal-imitating ‘bucchero’ fabric taken to be native to Etruria. The amphora produced by the Athenian potter Nikosthenes appears to reproduce a shape established within the repertoire of Etruscan bucchero, and in particular a shape popular at Cerveteri: so it is not surprising to find that Nikosthenic amphorae turn up almost exclusively in Etruria, and that the provenance in Etruria is usually Cerveteri. Nor is the Nikosthenic amphora the only borrowing from Etruscan bucchero (or metallic) vase-shapes: the carinated kantharos, the small or squat kyathos, and the high-footed kyathos (or, as it might be called, the one-handed kantharos), are further types whose creation in bucchero preceeds their appearance in Athens – and, of course, their export, as Attic vases, to Etruria. Some considerable pains were being taken to satisfy Etruscan taste: e.g. the two hemicylindrical red-figure 'stands', perhaps by the Euergetes Painter, which ought to be singled out as the most extraordinary Attic imitations of Etruscan shapes; and it is hard to see why Attic potters should have pondered to Etruscan tastes (and localised Etruscan tastes at that) if their wares were being loaded as ballast. Whatever the pecuniary value of Athenian vases in Etruria was, it was evidently sufficiently high to make special marketing strategies for Etruscan demand worthwhile.

If Nikosthenes and others were accommodating Etruscan morphological predilections at their workshops (and it should be incidentally mentioned that Nikosthenes borrowed other shapes from abroad – not only Etruscan), might some concessions have also been made regarding iconographical content?

This is a fair question, but has rarely been given a fair answer. Scholars of Greek art are understandably reluctant to allow an Etruscan appreciation of the images on Athenian vases, yet they have in the past allowed some iconographical gratification of the market by Attic painters. There is a class of black-figure amphorae known as 'Tyrrhenian', because nearly all of them (87 per cent of the 250 that survive) have been found at Etruscan sites along the Tyrrhenian coast. In fact, they were once thought to have been made in Etruria: a surmise recently revived, but unlikely to hold, for the Tyrrhenians belong to a sequence in the development of Attic black figure. As a sub-group, however, they have been re-dated – to c. 560-530 BC, as compared with a previous range of c. 565-550 BC. If the dating is correct, it makes the Tyrrhenians a more cynical commercially orientated enterprise than formerly supposed. As mid-sixth century BC Attic production, they stand out as sedulously sensational, specialising in gaudy violence and sexual excess. Fig 4 is typical: above the heads of a Corinthianising menagerie we find a gruesome sacrifice of Polyxena. The girl is held over a pyre by three warriors: Neoptolemos grabs her by the hair and plunges his sword into her throat. Blood gushes out generously, as it does on some scenes of Etruscan tomb-painting. The viewer of this vase is supposed to be impressed by the explicitness of the scene, and presumably also by the names labelling the protagonists.

Not all Tyrrhenian amphorae produce such convention, however. Some are notorious for their 'nonsense' inscriptions. Several reasons may be given for the nonsense on Tyrrhenian vases. The painter may have been pretty well illiterate (unlikely, since he was not unlettered); the inscriptions are jokes at the expense of a barbarian customer – who in the Etruscan case would recognise the letters, but not the language – rather perverse jokes, these; or the inscriptions add a veneer of extra value to the vase, whatever they mean (or do not mean) – i.e. they make part of the picture, part of the overall effect, like splashes of colour. They might appear to heroise a perfectly ordinary scene. Athenians of the well-educated class would have sneered at the superficiality of this device; but it is more readily understood if considered as a trading dodge, a means of enhancing value – not for the home market, but for those customers in the West who had, so it seemed, more money than sense.
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REDISCOVERING POMPEII. An exhibition of some 200 objects excavated from the ruins of Pompeii, many of which have not been excavated before, offering a fascinating insight into daily life in the 1st century AD and illustrating how computer technology has revolutionized the analysis of archaeological evidence. Visitors to the exhibition will be able to take an electronic tour of Pompeii under the guidance of an interactive computer system. ACCADEMIA ITALIANA (071) 225 3474. 1 April 21 June.


OXFORD
THE ANCIENT WORLD ON DISPLAY: THE CURATOR’S EGG. An exhibition which questions conventional certainties about the classical world. It explores the possibility of a much wider range of stories and presents familiar objects from the world in a new way. OXFORD MUSEUM OF ART. Until 27/8/92. Catalogue.

STOKE-ON-TRENT
FIREDE EARTH: 1000 YEARS OF TILES IN EUROPE. A major touring exhibition of tiles and other ceramic art objects. STOKE-ON-TRENT AND ART GALLERY. March-May (then Liverpool). Catalogue £18.

UNITED STATES

NEW YORK, New York
ARTEFACTS FROM ANCIENT IBERIA. Stone implements and terracotta figures from the Upper Paleolithic to the Roman period, including Iberian bronze ex-votos and Roman medical instruments. THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART (212) 927-2234.

THE COSMIC DANCER: SHIVA NATARAJA. A magnificent 10th-century Hindu sculpture of the Lord of the Dance will be the centrepiece of 50 sculptures from India and Southeast Asia, exploring the symbolic power of dance and dance in the development of the iconography of Shiva and other gods of Hinduism and its art, drama, music, and public American collections. THE ASIA SOCIETY (212) 688-6400. 11 March-28 June.

THE SAMUEL EILEENBERG COLLECTION OF INDIAN AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN SCULPTURE. A major exhibition of stone and metal sculptures from a leading private collector. THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART (212) 879-7500. Until 28 June.

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania

THE GIFT OF BIRDS: FEATHERWORK OF NATIVE SOUTH AMERICAN PEOPLES. More than 300 spectacular South American feathered objects, includingaddresses, clothing, ornaments and ceremonial items from the museum’s collections, with special emphasis on the Wanka, the Cahunas, the Bororo, and the Pre-Columbian peoples of the Highland Andean region. THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY (215) 898-4000. Until 15 January 1994.

SAN DIEGO, California
MUSIC OF THE MAYA. Pre-Columbian musical instruments, mannequins dressed as traditional Mayan musicians, dioramas and a video as the music is still being played. SAN DIEGO MUSEUM OF MAN (619) 239-2001. Until 1 May 1994.

THIS LAND WAS OUR LAND. The thoughts and feelings of local Indians about their heritage and relationship to the land, with a display of local Indian art and artifacts from the museum’s collection. SAN DIEGO MUSEUM OF MAN (619) 239-2001. Until October.

ST LOUIS, Missouri

WASHINGTON, DC
WASHINGTON, DC. 228 masterworks of Chinese art dating from the 4th millennium BC to recent times, largely drawn from the permanent collection, features 108 jades from c.5000 to c.1700 BC and 56 bronze vessels from the 16th to 2nd centuries BC ARTHUR M. SACKEK GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION (202) 357-3520. Continuing indefinitely.

CIRCA 1492: ART IN THE AGE OF EXPLO- RATION. An examination of the art of various world cultures at the time of Columbus, including the Aztec civilization. THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART (202) 737-4215. Until 12 January. Catalogue.

MUSEUMS OF MESPOTAMIAN ART FROM THE LOUVRE. 32 selected objects from the world’s finest collection of Sume- rian and Akadian art, c. 3500-2000 BC, including works by the Louvre. ARTHUR M. SACKEK GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION (202) 378-2700. 8 March-9 August.

BELGIUM
BRUSSELS
SPORT IN ANCIENT GREECE: FROM PLAY TO COMPE- TITION. A special exhibition held for the Olympic Games. PALAIS DES BEAUX-ARTS (32) 02 512 04. Until 19 April (then to Barcelona).

GERMANY
HAMBOURG
ARAB: A 5,000-YEAR-OLD CITY IN THE NEGEV DESERT. ISRAEL. HAMBURGER MUSEUM FUR ARCHAEOLOGIE (71) 70 609. 30 April-5 July.

MUNICH

ISRAEL
JERUSALEM
THE ROMAN SCULPTURE OF GREATER BEIT SHEAN. A group of sculptures recently excavated at the major archaeological site of Syphoupolis (Beit Shean) by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Antiqui- ties Authority. THE ISRAEL MUSEUM OF JERUSALEM (02) 208811. Until autumn.

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