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TEOTIHUACAN: CITY OF THE GODS

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British Museum Acquires the Corbridge Lanx

The British Museum has just acquired one of the most important pieces of Roman silver ever found in Britain, if not in the Roman world.

The Corbridge Lanx (a large oblong tray of silver) weighs just over 472 kilos (1044 pounds) and was found in the bank of the river Tyne at Corbridge, Northumberland, in February 1735 by a nine-year-old girl, Isabel Cutter. Eventually the lanx came into the possession of the Seventh Duke of Somerset, subsequently passing to his heirs, the Dukes of Northumberland. It has been on loan and display in the Roman Britain Gallery at the British Museum since 1797 but now, through an arrangement made with the Government, it has become part of the National Collection.

It is a national, indeed international treasure of the highest order and interest. Valued at four million pounds, the Government has accepted part of its value in lieu of taxes which are owed by the Trustees of the Duke of Northumberland. The rest of the cost is being met by a series of grants from eminent bodies that include the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the National Art Collections Fund and the British Museum Society. The Society’s substantial grant marks its 25th anniversary year, and it has been noted for the number of times in those years that it has been able to assist the Museum in acquiring major items.

The Corbridge Lanx is a magnificent work of Late Roman silver plate and is the earliest find of Roman silver from Britain that is still extant in its original context. Stukely, the eminent antiquary, had an engraving of it published at actual size in the year following its discovery, in 1736, and at the same time he also had engraved the six fragments of another large silver lanx that had been found a little earlier, in 1729. The latter piece, known as the Risley Park Lanx, disappeared and its curious story has only emerged in the last two years (see Minerva, November/December 1991, pp. 6-13). It is indeed fortunate that the Corbridge Lanx remained as a treasured possession in the safe care of the Dukes of Northumberland for the last two hundred years.

The scene in low relief that dominates the Corbridge Lanx (it is 48x38cm), represents the great shrine of Apollo on the island of Delos in the Cyclades. This, after Delphi, was Apollo’s greatest shrine. Several deities are represented, including Apollo himself with his lyre at his feet on the right. The seated goddess is probably Leto, who was the mother (by Zeus) of Apollo and his twin sister, Artemis, who enters left, and is greeted by Athena. There is also a younger, standing woman, who is possibly a personification of Ortygia, the island Delos on which Artemis and Apollo were born. Several animals are also featured in the scene and they include a griffin (a mythical beast often associated with Apollo), a hound and a fallen stag (reflecting the hunting goddess Artemis). The whole scene may be a commemoration of the visit of the emperor Julian II, the Apostate (AD 361-363), to the shrine of Apollo on Delos in AD 363 when, in a largely Christian Empire, he turned back to the old gods.

There have been a number of extremely important finds of Late Roman silver from Britain, notably the Mildenhall, Water Newton and Thetford hoards, all of which are in the National Collection in the British Museum. The most recent hoard, found at Hose in November 1992 (see Minerva, 1993, 15-16) is still subject to a Treasure Trove inquest. It is good that the major hoards in the British Museum have now been officially joined by the Corbridge Lanx, and its acquisition by the Museum will now enable it to be made available for detailed academic study.

Peter A. Clayton

Egypt Exploration Society-Leiden Expedition, Saqqara, 1993

A joint expedition of the Egypt Exploration Society (London) and the Leiden Museum (Netherlands) has just completed its nineteenth season of excavations and research at Saqqara, the necropolis of Memphis, Egypt's ancient capital. Over the years the mission has excavated and published the tombs of some of the greatest administrators and others who governed Egypt in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BC. This year the tomb of Inuiu, an official of the time of Tutankhamun, has been uncovered and partly restored. Inuiu functioned as scribe of the treasury of silver and gold, overseer of the cattle of Amun and high steward.

The tomb is a small mudbrick structure, with a forecourt, inner courtyard, cult chapel, and side chapel. A mudbrick pyramid, much of which survives, was positioned over the cult room. The side-chapel, which is vaunted in mudbrick, is particularly interesting because it preserves part of its painted decoration on plaster, a technique not usually associated with tombs in the Saqqara necropolis.

Inuiu is shown worshipping the gods and there are scenes depicting fish and bird life along the Nile. Much of the colour is as fresh as the day it was painted three and a half thousand years ago.

Several fine blocks showing the tomb-owner and his family, and two stelae, were found in the excavations. These, together with some pieces which were found in Saqqara in the last century and are now in museums, will allow the team to recreate the original scheme of decoration.

Two sons of Inuiu are named in their father's tomb. Both were scribes in the treasury of the temple of the Aten, one of a number of major shrines to the sun-god built by the 'heretic' pharaoh Akhenaten, who closed down the ancient cult temples. The expedition hopes that future excavation in the area will throw more light on the fate of the Aten temple in Memphis, which was pulled down in the reign of Tutankhamun.

Other finds this year include a pyramidion from a neighbouring tomb, inscribed for Khay, chief of the garden of Pharaoh in Memphis. His father has the name Hadad, that of a Syrian god also called Baal.

Professor Geoffrey Martin, University College London, Director, EES-Leiden Expedition.

MINERVA 2

Dead Sea Scroll contains first mention of historical Jewish figure

A new reading of a phrase in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls has raised important questions about the history of the period and the residents of Qumran where the scrolls were found.

Known as 4Q238, the small fragment contains only three short columns of Hebrew script. It has been assigned to the brilliant but controversial Harvard scholar, John Strugnell. He interpreted the script as prayers, unexceptional in content.

But two and a half years ago, Ada Yardeni, while studying for her doctorate in paleography, made the discovery that the scroll was, in fact, a prayer to the Lord to protect King Jonathan, also known as Alexander Jannaeus, an ambitious Hasmonaean king who ruled Judea from 103-76 BC. Strugnell, convinced of the correctness of Yardeni's translation, granted her and two other scholars permission to publish the scroll. Work was completed last April, and now the only scroll to mention a historical Jewish figure is on display in the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. According to the historian Josephus, Jonathan fought not only neighbouring states, but with his own people, especially the Pharisees. He once crucified 800 of them and killed their families for daring to seek the help of the king in Damascus in rebellion against him.

Esther Etzel, a linguist, who shared publication of the manuscript with Yardeni, made her own discovery about the other distinct part of the scroll. She identified it as lines from an apocryphal psalm (not belonging to the 150 psalms of the canon). These apocryphal psalms had been considered academic fancy until the discovery of the Psalms Scroll in Cave II at Qumran. She matched the lines to Psalm 154 in the Psalms scroll providing a second version of an apocryphal psalm.
An Abandoned Sculpture from Wroxeter

The sculpture that is the subject of this article was discovered in 1914 by J.P. Bush-Brown and is in the ruins of a grandiose classical temple in insula 8 at Wroxeter that flourished between the late second century and the early fourth century. As far as is known, this is the first published interpretation of this important piece.

This large block of sandstone (measuring – in its ruined state – 51 cm high by 68.5 cm long and 61.5 cm deep) is sculpted on only one face, now long denuded of its gesso and polychrome surface. Here one can discern the lower parts of two nude figures of unequal size. The smallest, to the left, stands with its back half turned towards the viewer and is preserved up to the bottom of its shoulder blades, while the figure to the right exists almost up to its navel. It faces the viewer with its right knee bent, and one can discern the fingers of its left hand at the groin. Between the two figures is a roll of drapery, whilst a heavy vertical border closes the panel on the left. The carving is unusually deep, being almost three-quarters of an inch. The lost stone of approximately the same size would have fitted above it in order to accommodate the larger figure.

The most likely interpretation of this scene is that it depicts the toilet of Venus, a subject often encountered in classical art. The goddess rising from her bath whilst one or more cupids proffer such aids as mirrors, jewel boxes, flowers and necklaces. The goddess shields her groin in the pose known as pudica, and it is likely that her other arm covered her breasts in the style of the famous Venus de Medici in the Uffizi, unless it was raised to hold her hair, cloak, or some other object. The absence of any trace of the cupid’s arms on the existing stone indicates that at least one of them must have been raised to present some offering (as with the cupid of the statue of Venus Felix in the Vatican) and this would appear to limit the space available on the relief for Venus to adopt a raised arm pose herself. The treatment of the edge of the cloak as one big roll can be matched on a mosaic of Venus between two female centaurs from El Djem, now in the Bardo Museum, Tunis. In sculpture the Venus Victrix in the Uffizi provides an example of the pudica pose half draped, and has provided a guide for the reconstruction drawing given here. In the museum at Sousse, Tunisia, is a mosaic from El Djem showing Venus Anadyomene between two large cupids, their hands full of beauty aids. Cupids the size of the Wroxeter example can be found in Britain in the central panel of the mosaic from Low Ham, now in Taunton Museum, where they flank the goddess. Not enough of the Wroxeter cupid’s shoulders remain to preserve his wings which must have been on the lost upper stone.

There is no way of knowing the original location of the sculpture within the temple precinct. Bush-Brown presumed it had come from the pediment, but its thickness and weight together with its panelled composition makes this unlikely. It appears to be part of a frieze with each panel bordered by an un moulded vertical division, much as in a comic strip. Such a deeply carved frieze placed either side of the door to the cela of the temple, behind the Corinthian portico, would have looked magnificent in its original polychrome state, but the block is of suitable dimensions to have fitted quite well on the foundations of the precinct wall which could also have been the original location. Lewis suggested that it might have been part of a supporting wall for the cela steps.

No inscription remained in the temple to identify which deities were worshipped there, although fragments of several stone and bronze statues, together with a vigorously carved horse’s head, were amongst the rich architectural finds. Given the polytheistic nature of classical decoration, this Venus could have come from a frieze honouring the Olympians or even the deities of the week (Fridays being her day) with each panel dedicated to an immortal. Temples dedicated to Venus are so far unknown in Britannia but surely must have existed. It is interesting that part of a relief depicting what appears to be a berried myrtle bush (a shrub sacred to the goddess) was also found, together with a chariot-pulling phallos.

Even in its damaged state the importance of the Wroxeter Venus should be recognised. It is an example of pure classical imagery that would not be out of place in the Mediterranean world, and one of the few sculptural images of the goddess to remain from Roman Britain. This significant but friable relief, now in the care of English Heritage at Wroxeter, when last seen by the author was positioned upside down by the rubbish bins on the veranda behind the on-site museum, its sculptured face obscured by a fencing board and more or less exposed to the elements, in the company of other architectural fragments. Surely this is unworthy treatment for any important sculpture, especially when one considers the amount of vacant floor space in the building which could accommodate it? It is regrettable that English Heritage should have taken so much care in presenting the site to the public and yet ignored the potential vulnerability of such a piece. At least the glazing of part of the veranda to form a sculpture annex for this and other pieces, both on site and in store, should be considered for the benefit of the public and the stones themselves.

Anthony Beeson, Honorary Archivist of the Roman Research Trust, Dresden Manor, Wiltshire

A recent photograph of the relief at Wroxeter Baths Museum, presently displayed upside down behind a heavy wooden batten.

MINERVA 3
Attic red-figure bell krater. Two Athletes with javelins, and female. Ca. 475-450 BC.
Height 13 3/4″ (34.9cm.)
Before publishing his article on ‘The Symmachi Ivory Diptych Panel: A 19th-century interpretation of a lost original?’ in Minerva (March/April 1993, pp. 12-18), Dr Eisenberg sent the manuscript to two well known specialists in Byzantine art. We are pleased to print their responses.

Thank you for sending me your paper on the Symmachi ivory. I find your thesis startling, but it certainly needs to be considered seriously. For one thing, it would account for the discrepancy in size between the V&A and Cluny panels, something that has been troubling me for a long time.

I do have a reservation regarding the methodology underlying your article. Your analysis of the relief concentrates heavily on small errors, distortions and misunderstandings in the rendering of details. Such departures from classical norms are, of course, exactly what one would expect in a Late Antique work and might be considered to be points in favour of the panel’s authenticity rather than the opposite. One might also expect that an object manufactured c. 1860 would by now – 130 years later – reveal a ‘period flavour’ unconsciously introduced at the time. To my mind this is not the case...

Regarding the Fauvel relief, offhand I find it hard to believe that it is a post-medieval forgery. A good deal of subsidiary hypothesizing is needed to support this claim.

Ernst Kitzinger
Oxford, England

[Editor: Dr Kitzinger received an early draft of the article. The ‘period flavour’ and further details on the Fauvel panel were discussed in the final published version. Among the many works by Dr Kitzinger are Byzantine Art in the Making: Main Lines of Stylistic Development in Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century (1977); Early Medieval Art in the British Museum, 3rd edition, 1983.]

I read with great interest the article in Minerva on the Symmachi ivory diptych. Let me say right at the beginning that in my long life in which which I dealt with ivories I have never passed a judgment about an ivory being either a forgery or genuine without having had it in my hands and never on the basis of photos or reproductions only. But since I have no chance to see the original again since I am no longer traveling, I can make only a few general remarks with reservations. A priori I do not exclude the possibility that the ivory in question could be a forgery. The historical situation that one half of the diptych is so badly damaged and the other half absolutely intact is indeed suspicious.

I would like to make only a general remark. Looking at the history of ivory forgeries, the earliest and most frequently forged ivories were indeed Consular Diptychs. I realise that this general remark does not solve the problem of the Symmachi ivory, but enhances to some degree the chance that your piece belongs to the category of the most frequently forged ivories. Actually the history of ivory forgery begins with the Consular Diptychs.

Kurt Weitzmann
Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, Princeton N.J.

Encouraged by the number of responses to the excellent study by Dr Eisenberg on ‘The Aesthetics of the Forger’, I wish to add to it my 31st point.

The forger as a collager/copier – having the dexterity, but lacking the ability to create original works. I am convinced that this additional aspect will throw some light on and will underline several points raised by you relating to the Symmachi panel.

The carver (or forger, if this was his intention) wanted to create a mirrored composition to the Nichomachian panel. To satisfy the letter this self-imposed criterion, not having artistic ability, he resorted to collage, to assemblage.

I suspect that to carve the image of the priestess he copied parts of two different works of art – one for the body and left leg, another for the draped right leg, and he amalgamated them...

An artist familiar with the anatomy and movements of the human body knows that in a full profile erect position, as the priestess is shown on the Symmachi panel, the right leg behind the body cannot act as a support. The body would tumble in a forward right direction, away from the viewer. Only by turning the priestess’s body forty-five degrees to her right could she gain her balance. However, in this case, she should have been depicted in half profile, with her right shoulder visible also.

An artist would have pushed the right leg forward with the left impinging on the frame. Then the priestess would stand in a credible position.

The ivory garment mentioned (8a) cannot occur in depictions of ancient garments, is not an ancient garment. As the figure of the priestess, I suspect, is copied from a nineteenth-century painting, so is the garment. As for the scarf converging into the main garment (8c), the obvious explanation is, again, the collage. The amalgamation of the draped right leg from one image with another separate standing draped figure from another, forced the unfortunate carver to invent an ‘Eschenhain link’, however awkward.

Not only is, as you pointed out, the attendant far too small in proportion to the priestess, but I guess she also has been borrowed from a painting, probably nineteenth-century. The movement, the double-handed action of the small figure, is totally alien to the scene spirit of the carving.

I completely agree with your reasoning (26) in the case of the altar. Considering it a simple problem, the forger/carver felt it within his capability to depict an altar – without using a prototype. It is here, carving the only non-copied part of the panel, where he proved his total lack of any creative talent and complete lack of knowledge (perspective, etc). I feel that the representation of the altar vindicates my collage theory...


On your article on the Symmachi Ivory Diptych Panel... I enjoyed reading the study and seeing the illustrations that accompanied it... It is interesting that I looked at the pictures and illustrations in your article before I read it.

When I looked at your picture of the Symmachi Ivory, my first impression was that it must be from the Renaissance period or somewhat later. I have seen a lot of ancient, medieval, and renaissance art in various museums throughout the world, and I don’t ever recall seeing anything from ancient times with the particular style of this carving.

It seems that a possible solution could be carbon dating, with a sample taken from the back or edge of the panel so no permanent damage would be done to the appearance of the object. I would imagine that the museum would be very reluctant to do this since it could damage the reputation of the agents who purchased it with the belief that it was from an earlier period. If the museum officials are afraid it could be a later ‘duplicate’ and will not allow testing, that could indicate that they too have their doubts. If they sincerely knew it was ancient they would want this to be verified in order to vindicate the piece.

John M. Lawrence
San Antonio, Texas

MINERVA 5
Teotihuacan: City of the Gods

A little known ancient civilization of Mexico is celebrated in a major exhibition

Kathleen Berrin

Teotihuacan in Mexico was the first urban state in the New World. It consisted of one huge city with a population of 150,000 or more at its height, and between the years AD 1 and 750 it was one of the largest pre-industrial cities in the world. Indeed, the civilization of Teotihuacan wielded such tremendous influence over so much of Central America that no other pre-Columbian tradition can be understood without some reference to it. The Aztecs, who came 600 years later, held the city in such reverence that their rulers went there regularly to worship.

Teotihuacan today is clearly one of the most magnificent sites in the Western Hemisphere, yet the irony is that relatively few people outside Mexico are aware of its importance. Even those that do visit Teotihuacan—perhaps Mexico's most easily accessible and most heavily visited archaeological site—often come away with the misconception that it was Aztec or Toltec. They visit the great Ciudadela with the Temple of the Feathered Serpent, walk down the impressive Street of the Dead (right), and exhaust themselves by climbing the city's colossal pyramids, but they have little realisation of what life might have once been like in the ancient, thriving metropolis, who the people of Teotihuacan were, or what beliefs and cosmologies may have sustained this unique and long-lasting civilization.

In a sense, Teotihuacan is one of the few remaining 'undiscovered' civilizations. And because there have been so many misconceptions about it, because its art traditions and culture are so poorly understood outside Mexico, and because archaeological discoveries at Teotihuacan in the last two decades are causing scholars to radically rethink its character, a major exhibition about Teotihuacan and its civilization is unequivocally needed. Indeed, the story of this particular exhibition and how it originated in the city of San Francisco is a fascinating one. 'Teotihuacan: City of the Gods' is an exhibition that has been over fifteen years in the making.

In 1976, the de Young Museum (one of the two Fine Arts museums of San Francisco) received a surprise bequest from a man named Harald Wagner of over seventy mural fragments that had been looted from the site of Teotihuacan in the early 1960s. The windfall gift, legal in the United States according to the law, set in motion a nine-year co-operative programme of care between The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Mexico's INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia), which included American and Mexican conservators working together, a public conservation exhibition, a plan eventually to provide for the joint disposition of the collection, and an exhibition of all the arts of Teotihuacan. In 1985, after conservation work was complete, over half the collection was voluntarily returned to Mexico and celebrated there in the form of a special exhibition at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico.
Pre-Columbian Art

The mutual goodwill displayed in this unprecedented model for the care and treatment of cultural patrimony laid the foundation for a joint collaboration on a major exhibition on the arts of Teotihuacan.

The exhibition will be shown exclusively in San Francisco. It consists of over 200 works of art, drawn from approximately 35 collections in Mexico, Europe, and the United States, and features stone sculptures, precious stone figures and masks, terracotta censers, luxury ceramics, wall paintings, and ceramic figures and figurines.

Featured works include masterpieces from Mexico’s National Museum of Anthropology and the Teotihuacan site, as well as major objects from Stockholm and Vienna. Pieces from the Folkens Museum in Stockholm were excavated by Sigvald Linné at Teotihuacan in the 1930s and 1940s and have never before been exhibited outside Sweden. From Vienna there are rare stone figures and masks collected as stone specimens in the 1860s by the naturalist Bilimke on the order of the short-lived Emperor Maximilian.

Visitors to the exhibition will be intrigued by Teotihuacan’s unique aesthetic, for the arts of the city have a subtlety, a power and a beauty that has not yet been fully explored or recognized. Aesthetic preferences of the people were often for simple, almost minimal forms (as seen in its powerful stone sculpture) and abstraction, impersonality, distance and mystery are primary characteristics. In ideology and art, Teotihuacan emphasized its gods and the collective structure and interaction of its own community, rather than the personality and conquests of charismatic rulers. The art can also be very complex, as exemplified by the love of ceramic assemblages or the elaborate imagery of the wall paintings. Two-part ceramic censers consisting of many separate symbolic elements are some of the most extraordinary puzzle-like artworks ever created in the Americas.

Many mysteries remain about Teotihuacan and are discussed in the exhibition. What factors explain its long success story as Central America’s pre-eminent urban centre? What are we to make of the mass sacrifice of over 200 young soldiers at the Temple of the Feathered Serpent, in what was previously thought to be a peaceful, theocratic culture? Why did Teotihuacán choose a remote and ambivalent Goddess as its major deity rather than charismatic male rulers or divine kings? What form of writing once existed at Teotihuacan and how are scholars deciphering it? What powerful visions or cosmologies served to unify its diverse ethnic populations for over 700 years? What forces ultimately led to Teotihuacan’s violent destruction by civil war around AD 750?

Teotihuacan: City of the Gods is at M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, 26 May-31 October.

The fully illustrated 256 page catalogue Teotihuacan: Art from the City of the Gods brings together the latest research on this little-known and much misunderstood civilization, and features contributions by twelve specialists in the United States and Mexico. Two-day-long symposia are planned: 12 June – “Mysterious City of the Gods” focussing on latest discoveries and research; 25 September – “Goddesses of the Western Hemisphere: Women and Power” draws on fascinating examples of female deities and power figures through the ages, predominantly from Central America.

Since 1983 Tyne and Wear Museums Archaeology Department has undertaken a continuous, round the year programme of excavation and research at the Roman fort of South Shields (Fig 2), located in north-east England, only four miles away from the eastern end of Hadrian's Wall. At South Shields a military site had existed from the late first century AD in order to guard a port of supply established by the Romans at the mouth of the River Tyne. The fort remained important throughout the Roman period, and a flourishing town grew up outside its walls. A glimpse of the cosmopolitan contacts enjoyed by this port, forming a gateway to the northern frontier, was obtained at the end of the nineteenth century, when building work on the fort led to an excavation campaign. The many finds included, from the fort's cemetery, the tombs of a woman called Regina and a freedman named Victor (Fig 1). Carved by a sculptor from Palmyra in Syria, these stones, now in the fort museum at South Shields, are amongst the finest sculptures from Roman Britain. The present research excavation (directed by Paul Bidwell and Nick Hodgson), perhaps the most extensive of its kind in any Roman fort in the empire, has already produced a remarkably detailed story of prehistoric and Roman occupation on the site. As the excavation celebrates its tenth birthday this summer, the professional museum archaeologists (funded principally by South Tyneside MBC) will, as always, be joined by a team of volunteers from all over the globe, including, for the first time in 1993, a team of volunteers presently being recruited by the international scientific organisation Earthwatch.

The earliest activity at South Shields is now represented by the remains of structures pre-Roman in date: a well-preserved Iron Age round-house (c. 600 BC - AD 100), along with parts of other buildings or enclosures. The Iron Age farmstead had been destroyed by fire. As a result, there was an opportunity to sample rich deposits of carbonized grains and other plant remains, which will provide a remarkable insight into the environment and sources of food supply before the arrival of the
Excavation Report

mid 1980s on the site of its south-west gate, and it is this structure which is reproduced in the spectacular and controversial full-scale reconstruction built in 1986 on the original foundations and now one of the major visitor attractions at South Shields (Fig 4).

This normal Roman fort had a short life. As was first realised by the great archaeologist of Hadrian’s Wall, Sir Ian Richmond, in the 1930s, in about AD 200 the fort was converted into a huge military supply-base, the only stone example known in the Roman Empire (Fig 3). The fort was extended in size and its existing buildings demolished and replaced by granaries. Now the troop accommodation was compressed into the south-east (extended) area. Most Roman forts possessed one or two granaries, but at South Shields the recent excavations have established that the northern two-thirds of the fort was filled with no less than twenty-four of these great buildings.

Since Richmond’s day it has been usual to associate the supply-base with the campaigns of the emperor Septimius Severus in Scotland. Between AD 208 and 211 he embarked on a final attempt to conquer all of Britain north of Hadrian’s Wall, and supplies would certainly have been stockpiled to feed the great army operating in the north. But Severus’ war in Scotland was short-lived; he died in York in AD 211, and his sons, Caracalla and Geta, did not choose to continue the campaigns. Ironically, Caracalla, shown in the guise of Hercules, is the subject of a sardonyx cameo found in the recent excavations (Fig 5).

Until recently it was believed that the supply-base at South Shields became redundant at the end of Severus’ campaigns, and that by about AD 220 the fort had been restored to a normal garrison base for troops. It is quite a different story, however, that the current excavations tell. With the creation of the supply-base, the headquarters in the centre of the fort had been done away with, the

Romans in north Britain. Excavation of the Iron Age settlement will continue in 1993.

To reveal the prehistoric remains, the earliest Roman feature on the site, a formidable clay and cobble foundation covering 1000 square metres, covered with a rammed gravel surface, has been partly excavated. It may be a parade ground belonging to an as yet undiscovered early timber fort. The cobble foundation was divided, with mathematical precision, into four exact quarters, with neat seams marking the junctions: the unmistakable hand of the Roman military surveyor at work.

The first stone fort at South Shields was not built until the middle of the second century AD. Its arrangements were those of a typical stone auxiliary fort to house a cohort, probably part mounted, of about 600 men. Excavation took place in the

Fig. 3. Plan of the third-century supply base. The northern two-thirds of the fort is filled with granaries, recognisable by their distinctive buttressed walls. Barracks and a small headquarters occupy the south-east end of the fort.

Fig. 4. The reconstructed south-west gate, opened in 1988. The design was based on a scholarly assessment of the whole range of archaeological evidence at present available for the appearance of such structures.
space taken up by granaries, and a new, especially compact headquarters building had been provided alongside the barracks in the southern part of the fort. The result of this was that all of the accommodation and administration buildings in the fort were now rigorously segregated from the granaries of the supply-base. Of exceptional importance is the dating evidence from this headquarters and its accompanying barracks. The coins and pottery recovered from them makes it abundantly clear that they remained in use until the very end of the third century. As the southern headquarters remained in use for this long, and there would have been no point in retaining it if the traditional, central headquarters site not still been taken up with granaries (the central area did revert to a headquarters site in the post-supply base period), then this shows that the supply base itself lasted until at least c. AD 300. This is one of the outstanding historical contributions of the present excavations to our understanding of the importance of the site at South Shields, for it shows that, rather than being a short-lived phenomenon associated specifically with Severus’ campaigns in Scotland, the great supply base was in fact a permanent institution, lasting for the whole of the third century. One obvious possibility is that its purpose was to supply much of the permanent garrison of the northern frontier, including forts on Hadrian’s Wall, with imported grain.

Two periods of barracks to house the garrison administering the supply-base have been excavated in the extended part of the fort. We can now fairly confidently associate a unit with these barracks. In 1990 a lead sealing was found in the demolition levels of one of these buildings, marked with the initials COHV VG – the Fifth Cohort of Gauls, known from tile stamps (Fig 6) and inscriptions to have been the permanent third-century garrison of South Shields. The new find suggests that they were present by the time of the fort extension and construction of the supply-base. External walls were of clay bonded stone, a well-preserved wall collapse suggests that they may have stood to full
The emerging plan of the late Roman fort at South Shields is of exceptional interest in the light of our utterly deficient knowledge of the size, structure and status of Late Roman army units. Judging from the number of barracks and the substantial character of the stone buildings employed, the fort was replanned for a unit of considerable size. This contrasts with the situation in the forts of Hadrian’s Wall where existing buildings were simply modified in the late period and the old units seem to have remained in place, at a reduced size. South Shields apparently belongs to a class of sites behind the Wall which acquired a more important military role in the fourth century.

A further indication of the high status of the Late Roman garrison at South Shields is provided by a courtyard house in the eastern quadrant, covering an area of 1000 square metres, almost the whole of the present excavation area (Fig 10). The house was entered through an aisled entrance-hall. This room was reminiscent of an atrium: in its centre was a large stone-lined tank or cistern beneath the contemporary floor level. Beyond the entrance-hall, an ambulatory or portico 3.60 metres wide ran around two sides of a central courtyard. On the north-west side of the building was a range of residential rooms, identified by their elaborate cement floors. The four rooms at the north-east end of the range were connected by an alignment of door-
Excavation Report

ways, and the two furthest from the entrance were provided with underfloor (hypocaust) heating systems.

In the largest room in the house, beyond the eastern ambulatory, lay one of the building’s surprises – a tripartite seating for couches, consisting of flagstones set into the north-east end of its floor. These clearly identify the room as a triclinium, or dining room. The triclinium is familiar in Roman houses in the Mediterranean, but almost unparalleled in Britain. Another large heated room in the south-east range probably represents a second dining room for winter use. The house was also equipped with an elaborate private bath-suite. Much painted wall-plaster has been recovered from the house, including one fragment depicting a face, probably of a cupid (Fig 11).

In size and character, the house conforms closely to the pattern set by commanding officer’s houses – the praetoria – in auxiliary forts of the second and third centuries in Britain. In general, these houses are the closest approximation in Britain to the peristyle house building tradition of the Mediterranean. The South Shields house, with its distinctively marked dining rooms, bipartite ambulatory around the central court and clear central axis along entrance hall, verandah and dining room, finds its closest parallels in Late Roman peristyle houses in the Middle East and North Africa. What is surprising is that the house should be of such a late date. On the northern frontier of Britain, apparently, contact with Mediterranean fashion was still strong in the fourth century. This, along with the apparent size and status of the fourth-century unit at South Shields, rather goes against the prevailing view of the late-Roman frontier army as a force of declining numbers and efficiency, increasingly like a peasant-militia and no longer commanded by individuals of high social caste. On the evidence of the South Shields house fourth-century commanders were still used to receiving guests and clients of varied status, and capable of drawing upon the wider architectural traditions of the Mediterranean.

This period of building represents the last major Roman reconstruction of the site. It was to last, with only minor alterations, until the end of the fourth century. Occupation levels in the courtyard house have produced coins of the house of Theodosius, as late as any from Roman Britain, showing that occupation continued on the site until the very end. But what of beyond? Substantial struc-

tural evidence for sub-Roman occupation is still lacking, though this may be due to the removal of much of the higher stratigraphy by our predecessors, the excavators of the nineteenth century.

The courtyard building held one last surprise: two dismembered bodies had been buried in the centre of the courtyard. They had died violently, probably executed with sword blows and then hacked to pieces. The deliberate location of the grave in the open courtyard suggests that this occurred at a time when the courtyard house was still standing, although probably in ruins; the date suggested by radiocarbon is the beginning of the fifth century. Barring evidence for the medieval cultivation of the site, this is effectively the end of the archaeological sequence that we have traced through from the late pre-Roman Iron Age.

Forgotten for centuries under ploughed fields, and buried for much of our century under Victorian buildings, the Roman fort at South Shields is now permanently opened up for research and public display, and is very much a living site. Visitors and volunteers have the opportunity to see and even participate in the new archaeological discoveries. The remarkably long sequence of activity on the site, and the new insights it provides into the roles of the great supply base and the Late Roman fort, could not have been obtained without the decision to apply a technique of total excavation over a very large area. With the help of Earthwatch volunteers and other sponsors, it is hoped that the excavations in the fort can continue indefinitely and that more reconstructions can be carried out. There can be little doubt that South Shields will produce many more surprises in the years to come.

Volunteers wishing to participate in the South Shields project should contact Earthwatch at 680 Mount Auburn Street, Box 403, Watertown, MA 02272, USA. Tel: (617) 926 8200; or Earthwatch Europe at Belsyre Court, 57 Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6HJ, UK. Tel: (0865) 311600.

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A Theban 'Battle Axe'
Queen Aahotpe and the Minoans
Vronwy Hankey

Wall-paintings of a type never before found in Pharaonic Egypt are being recovered during excavations directed by Professor Manfred Bietak of the University of Vienna, at Tell el-Dab'a near the Pelusiac channel of the Nile in the eastern Delta. The site is recognised as ancient Avaris, the capital of the Fifteenth (Hyksos) Dynasty, who for about 100 years between about 1650 and 1550 BC controlled much of the Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt. The wall-paintings come from a palace built towards the end of the dynasty, and were destroyed in the sequel to the Hyksos defeat by Ahmose (first Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty) in about 1535 or 1524 BC. Fragments from the destroyed paintings were scattered widely over a garden in an area not yet fully excavated.

The paintings were the prime subject of an international colloquium, 'Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant' held at the British Museum on 9 July 1992. It was generally accepted that the paintings were Minoan in inspiration and execution, but no reasoned explanation for their presence emerged from the discussion of papers by the excavator, by Professor Peter Warren (Bristol University), or by Dr Livia Morgan (Manchester University). The most intriguing suggestion, not followed up, was that one of the last Hyksos rulers married a Minoan and built a palace and shrine for her, and had it decorated in Minoan style by Minoan artists.

Background to a possible Minoan connection
In Aegan terms the palace was built and decorated during LM IA (c. 1600 - c. 1480 BC), a period of Minoan prosperity. It was destroyed before the end of that phase.

Its paintings do not fit into the known life-style of the latest Hyksos rulers, nor do they seem to match Aegean contemporary practice. They are too grandiloquent for Aegean concepts, but they were painted in the Aegean fresco technique, in which pigments were applied with water to clamp lime plaster, with additions of secco (a technique also used in the Near East). The tempera technique, using pigments applied with a medium to dry gypsum plaster, is the only process identified in Egypt for the decoration of tombs and palaces until the time of the Ptolemies. The execution of the paintings seems inferior to Aegean work (hard to assess from fragments), but the inspiration and scenes are foreign to late Hyksos attitudes. To an outsider's eye the last Hyksos are scarcely to be distinguished from real Egyptians, among whom there is no evidence for Minoan or Cycladic cults.

Aahotpe and the Hyksos
The place of Queen Aahotpe in the struggle for Theban victory is well documented. The phenomenon of the paintings at Tell el-Dab'a and the suggestion of a dynastic marriage between a Hyksos king (Apophis or Khamudi?) and a Minoan princess (a great-aunt of the delightful fresco from Knossos known as La Parisienne?) stimulate further speculation, and a return to the story of a remarkable woman.

On 5 February 1859, at Dra 'Abul Naga, western Thebes, in a tomb near the entrance to the Valley of the Kings, a richly caparisoned royal mummy, subsequently identified as Aahotpe, was found in a large coffin (Cairo Museum 3888). In the absence of Auguste Mariette, the recently appointed Conservator of Monuments, and against his express instructions, the coffin was seized by the Mudir of Qena, who opened it in his barem before shipping it to Cairo as a personal gift to the Viceroy Sayyid.

Mariette intercepted the Mudir's boat, and after a fierce struggle removed the coffin and its contents. These were presented to the Khedive, with an urgent plea for the establishment of a museum to preserve the treasures of ancient Egypt. 'Convincu désormais de la richesse de sa collection, il donna des ordres pour qu'un édifice digne d'elle fût bâti à Boulak.'

Aahotpe's funerary offerings were a prominent feature of the International Exhibition in Paris, 1857, at which the Empress Eugenie graciously expressed the wish that the jewels should be presented to her. Fortunately Mariette intervened and the jewels were returned to Egypt. Howard Carter illustrated some of these treasures for Von Bissing's publication Ein Thebäischer Grabfund aus dem Anfang des Neuen Reiches (1906). After temporary homes at Boulak and Giza they arrived in the present Egyptian Museum, officially opened in 1902.

Aahotpe and her Family
Aahotpe was the daughter of the Pharaoh Seqenenre Tao I and Queen Tutisher, an Egyptian commoner. Following Pharaonic practice of keeping power within the family she married her brother, the Pharaoh Seqenenre Tao II, a contemporary of the Hyksos ruler Apophis (Khamudi, or Auserre). The mummy of Seqenenre Tao II was found in 1881 in the royal mummy cache of Queen Inhapy near Deir el-Bahri, where it had been placed with others to escape the depredations of tomb-robbes in the reign of Siamun (Twenty-first Dynasty, after c. 1070 BC). The terrible wounds on the head suggested that he had died in battle, apparently against the Hyksos led by Apophis.

Kamose, elder son of Aahotpe and Seqenenre, and last ruler of the Seventeenth Dynasty, also confronted the Hyksos in the reign of Apophis. Details of his exploits have been pieced together from a hieratic tablet found by Carnarvon in 1908, and a stele discovered by Labib Habichi at Karnak in 1954. Kamose died after a reign of perhaps two years, and was succeeded by his brother Ahmose (first Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1567 BC). Aahotpe's initiative and active participation in government until at least Ahmose's regnal year 15, the approximate year of victory over the Hyksos, were recorded on a stela set up at Karnak by Ahmose, and
found in 1900 by Georges Legrain. The gist of her citation is as follows:

Praise the Mistress of the land,
Lady of the shores of the Northern Islands, whose name is exalted in foreign lands, who rules her people, wife of the King, Sister of a King (Life, Health, Strength to Him), Daughter of a King, gracious Mother of the King, the wise one who looks after Egypt, who cared for its army, and guarded it, who brought together the deserts, who pacified the south and put down the rebels, the Wife of the King, Aahotpe, may She live.'

Her services to the state were further confirmed at her death. Aahotpe honoured her with precious emblems of distinction. Those of particular relevance here are:

- The Order of the Golden Fly, and its gold chain (Fig. 1). Length of chain 59 cm, of fly 0.9 cm, weight 249 gr (Cairo Catalogue 52671). This was the highest Pharaonic award for valor on the field of battle. The three flies, the largest and most perfect example of this order, can be described as the Victoria Cross with two bars (only three V.C.s with a bar, never two bars, have been awarded since the introduction of the decoration by Queen Victoria in 1856). Perhaps Aahotpe was the first queen to be decorated for notional valor on the field of battle.

- The Ceremonial Axe (Figs 283). Length of head 16.3 cm, of blade 6.7 cm (Cairo Catalogue 526-45). It has a copper head and cedar-wood handle, both plated with gold and lavishly decorated with electrum and jewels. Both sides of the inlaid head have three panels showing motifs to celebrate victory over the Hyksos. One side has the royal cartouches with Aahotpe killing an Asiatic; near the cutting edge is 'Beloved of Montu' above a griffin. The griffin has been interpreted as a symbol of Minoan Crete. In this context the 'Victor Beloved of Montu', the god of war, parades the symbol of the conquered, as in a Roman triumph. The other side shows the plant symbols for millions of years, the Two Ladies of Upper and Lower Egypt, and near the edge a sphinx representing Egypt brandishes the head of a defeated enemy.

- The Dagger of Aahotpe. Length of dagger 28.5 cm, width of scabbard 3.4 cm (Cairo Catalogue 52658, 52659). Both faces of the gold blade have lengthwise panels in niello technique (gold thread embedded in an alloy of silver and copper blackened by sulphur compounds). One face shows a lion chasing a falcon against a rocky background, and a row of four grasshoppers. The other has a column of flowers crowned with a jackal's head. The wooden handle, covered with gold leaf, has a bull's head in relief on both sides of the join with the blade; four female heads decorate the pommel. The name and titles of Aahotpe are inscribed on both faces of the handle.

The niello technique was used at Byblos in the Middle Kingdom, but is also closely associated with Aegean metalwork early on the Late Bronze Age, and the decoration reflects Minoan motifs. These symbolise the victory of the Egyptian lion over the Aegean bull. Could the griffin be locusts, representing the enemies eaten up by Hyksos domination?

- The Gold Falcon Collar or Necklace (Fig. 4). (Cairo Catalogue 52672). This was originally sewn on to the wrappings of the mummy, and had to be re-assembled from loose elements, but about 134 pieces are not included (Cairo Catalogue 52733). Many of the motifs are Egyptian, but the spirals and the animals in the flying gallop pose are Aegean features, and the mixture of different elements seems un-Aegean. This could be a Hyksos piece, combining Egyptian and foreign motifs, and so part of the booty taken from the Hyksos. If made after the victory, it demonstrates, as do the axe and dagger, that craftsmen and jewellers of Lower Egypt who had worked for the Hyksos applied their expanded expertise to the symbols of victory required by the Thebans.

The Mistress of the land,
Lady of the shores of northern lands.

'Lady of the shores of the Northern Islands, whose name is exalted in foreign lands.' This title and the Aegean elements in the tomb offerings have taxed the ingenuity of scholars. A suggestion that Aahotpe might herself have been a Minoan, and that Minoans had assisted the Thebans in the war against the Hyksos must be ruled out by Aahotpe's stele and the wall-paintings at Avaris.

Suppose, however, that the queen of one of the last Hyksos rulers (Apophis or Khamudy) was a Minoan (a relative of La Parisienne?). Even making allowances for Egyptian hyperbole in the documents relating to Seqenenre, Kamose and the Hyksos, it is obvious that the Thebans were well informed about Avaris, its palace, its occupants and cult. They were incensed at the usurpation and dese- cration of part of the Two Lands, and the abuse of the true Egyptian language and culture. If the word 'Lady' in Aahotpe's stele is given a more aggressively possessive meaning, if lb nuw has nfrw meant the Aegian in the time of Aahotpe, as it did in a later period, then the axe, the dagger and the falcon necklace with their Aegean overtones become even more appropriate symbols of conquest. They and the ruthless destruction of the palace and its Minoan-style paintings were part of the display of celebration over the enemies who had brought foreigners and a foreign cult to the Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt.

The discovery of her coffin in 1859, and its influence in the foundation of the Egyptian Museum extend Aahotpe's achievements. Over 5,000 years after her death, and for the second time, this heroic wife and mother of heroes, came to the rescue of Pharaonic Egypt.
The Coins from the Hoxne Roman Treasure

Roger Bland

Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3

Fig 4

Fig 5

Fig 5. Silver milliarense of Constantine II (AD 337-340) from the mint of Trier. This coin is some 20 years older than any other coin in the hoard and is distinctly worn; in addition it appears to have been clipped around the edge.

In the last issue Catherine Johns gave an account of the gold and silver jewellery and other objects in the great hoard of Roman treasure discovered in Hoxne, Suffolk, last November (Minerva, January/February 1993, pp. 15-16; March/April 1993, p. 3). In this issue I discuss the coins in the hoard. Cleaning, identifying and cataloguing nearly fifteen thousand coins is a very large task, and it will be several years before we have studied every aspect of this hoard. Many coins have not yet been attributed to emperors and so the figures given in the table below are only intended as an approximate guide. The account that follows would not have been possible without the work of Richard Hobbs and Peter Guest who have carried out the initial identification of the coins.

In all there are over 14,500 coins in the hoard of which 563 are gold, 19 bronze and the remainder silver. The gold coins are all of the denomination known as the solidus, which was the standard Roman gold denomination from the early fourth century AD until the middle of the eleventh century. Between 365 and 383 Valentinian I improved the fineness of the solidus, which had become slightly debased, adding the letters OB (for obvizerium aureum, 'pure gold') to the coins. All the gold solidi in the hoard were made after Valentinian's reform, most of them in the reigns of Arcadius and Honorius, between AD 383 and 432; eight different Roman emperors are represented in all. The coins are in an excellent state of preservation (Figs 1-4: gold coins of Theodosius I, Magnus Maximus, Arcadius and Honorius), and because none of them was more than forty years old at the time when the hoard was buried, they have seen very little wear.

The base metal coins include 19 small bronze coins of the fourth century AD, but unfortunately most of these are so poorly preserved that precise identification is impossible.

The great bulk of the coins are made of silver. There are some 58 large silver coins of the denomination known as the milliarense, over 13,900 smaller silver coins of the siliqua denomination and two half-siliquae of Arcadius and Honorius. Fifteen different emperors are represented in all on the silver coins (see Table). Apart from one very worn milliarense of Constantine II (AD 337-40; Fig 5) none of the silver coins was made before 358, when Constantius II reduced the weight of the siliqua from around 3.1 grams to 2.3 grams.

The large silver milliarense, all of which are very rare, are perhaps the most handsome coins in the hoard and contain some fine examples of portraiture (Figs 6-8, milliarense of Valens, Gratian and Eugenius). There are also a number of unpublished varieties among these milliarense.

The coins were made at some sixteen different mints, from Trier in Germany in the west through to Antioch in present-day Turkey in the east. Most of the coins, however, come from Trier, Lyons and Arles in Germany and France, and Milan, Ravenna and Rome in Italy. There was no imperial mint in Britain at this time, except perhaps for a few very rare coins of the usurper Magnus Maximus which might have been minted in London: unfortunately the hoard did not contain any of these issues.

At present it seems that the latest coins are two siliquae of the usurper Constantine III (AD 407-11) (Fig 9-10), Roman governor of Britain who removed the troops from Britain in order to challenge the authority of Honorius, emperor in Ravenna. We know, therefore, that the hoard was buried some time after AD 407, the time when the Romans finally withdrew from Britain. However, it is difficult to be certain as to the precise date since no more coins entered Britain after the reign of Constantine III and numismatists still disagree as to how long the inhabitants of Britain continued to use coins after the Roman withdrawal.

Silver siliquae found in Britain are commonly clipped around the edges with sometimes as much as half of the coin being removed (Fig 11 shows an unclipped coin of Honorius and Fig 12 a clipped coin of the same ruler). We do not know exactly when clipping took place – it seems to be a phenomenon unique to Britain – but it is likely that it could only have occurred after the breakdown of Roman authority in Britain from about AD 411 onwards. It is difficult to understand why it should have been done, unless it was to try to make the pool of coins that were in circulation go further. Certainly silver siliquae were forged in Britain at this time and they could have been made from the metal obtained by clipping: a recent hoard of 870 siliquae from Whitwell, Leicestershire, contained 42 such forgeries. We have not yet identified all the contemporary forgeries in the Hoxne find, but there are likely to be several hundred of them, thus immediately doubling the total number of such coins that are known (two examples, forgeries of coins of Julian and Arcadius, are shown in Figs 13-14). The study of these imitations will undoubtedly produce important results.

The most impressive feature of the coin element of the hoard is its sheer size. Hoards of Roman coins of this period are relatively common from Britain: a survey published in 1979 listed sixty-seven, and some twenty more have come to light since, but
Roman Coins

Figs 6-8. Silver miliareses of Valens (AD 364-378) from the mint of Trier (Fig 6); Gratian (AD 367-383) from the mint of Trier (Fig 7); Eugenius (AD 392-394) from the mint of Trier (Fig 8). Silver miliareses were first made in the reign of Constantine I (AD 307-337) and continued to be struck into the 5th century AD. However, they were only issued in small quantities and the present find contains some very well-preserved examples.

Figs 9-10. Silver siliqua of Constantine III (AD 407-411) from the mint of Lyons. These are probably the latest coins in the hoard, since after Constantine’s death the supply of official coins to Britain seems to have come to an end.

These other finds are all much smaller than Hoxne and generally contain no more than a few hundred coins. The previous largest hoard of Roman gold coins found in Britain whose contents can definitely be confirmed was the Corbridge, Northumberland, hoard of 160 gold staters of the first and second centuries AD, although there is a record of a hoard of 650 gold coins of the same period as the Hoxne Treasure found at the neighbouring village of Eye in about 1780. Unfortunately, the coins from the Eye hoard cannot be identified today and the account that has come down to us is so vague that we cannot be sure whether there is any connection between the Eye and the Hoxne finds.

It is a curious feature of coin circulation at this time that, with a very few exceptions, silver miliareses and siliquae are only found in two parts of the Roman empire: Britain and Romania. This is particularly surprising since these coins were struck at mints all over the empire, and hoards of gold coins of this period have been discovered throughout the empire. Before the discovery at Hoxne, the largest number of silver coins of this period found anywhere was about 3,000 in a hoard found at Cleve Prior in Worcestershire in 1811; this find was also said to have contained around 500 gold coins. However, like the hoard from Eye, the Cleve Prior was not properly recorded at the time.

Although we do not know who originally owned this hoard, it is likely that it represented the accumulated wealth of a very affluent private family, possibly one which owned land in many parts of the Roman empire. No traces of Roman occupation are otherwise known from the area where the hoard was found.

A great deal of work remains to be done before all the secrets of this treasure have been unlocked. It is clear, however, that it will provide important new insights into the latest period of Roman currency in Britain.

Dr Roger Bland is Curator of Roman coins in the Department of Coins and Medals, the British Museum.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Gold solidi</th>
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<td>Arcadius (AD 383-408)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

| Silver miliareses    | Constantine II (AD 337-340) | 1   |                    |     |
| Constantius II (AD 337-361) | 3  |     |                    |     |
| Valentinian I (AD 364-375) | 4  |     |                    |     |
| Valens (AD 364-378)     | 15  |     |                    |     |
| Gratian (AD 367-383)     | 13  |     |                    |     |
| Valentinian II (AD 375-392) | 7  |     |                    |     |
| Theodosius I (AD 379-395) | 7  |     |                    |     |
| Magnus Maximus (AD 383-388) | 5  |     |                    |     |
| Eugenius (AD 392-394)     | 5   |     |                    |     |
| Arcadius (AD 383-408)     | 1   |     |                    |     |
| Total                   | 61  |     |                    |     |

| Silver reduced siliquae | Bronze |       | AE3 and AE4 of the fourth century | 19  |
| Constantius II (AD 337-361) | 299    |     |                                  |     |
A Royal Burial at Verulamium

Rosalind Niblett

'Considering the resources of the Gauls their funerals are impressive and extravagant. Everything which is thought to have been dear to the men when they were alive is placed on their funeral pyres...'
(Caesar, de Bello Gallico vi. 19).

It is only rarely that archaeological discoveries can be matched with practices described in the few classical texts relating to late Iron Age Britain that came down to us. Such, however, was the case when early in 1992 an excavation took place on a prominent hill within the Catuvellaunian oppidum at Verulamium.

Today the site lies off Folly Lane on the western edge of the city of St Albans, Hertfordshire. In the mid-first century AD it faced directly across the river Ver towards the focus of the late Iron Age settlement beneath the present day village of St Michaels.

In about AD 50 the site was chosen for the resting place of a Celtic ruler. After funeral rituals which would have fully justified the description 'impressive and extravagant', a magnificent collection of grave goods was burnt alongside the body on the funeral pyre, very much in the manner described by Caesar a century before. The heat of the fire, estimated at over 900 degrees centigrade, reduced most of the grave goods to a mass of molten copper alloy and silver, while organic remains were almost totally consumed; only minute fragments of worked bone, horn and ivory survived as testimony to the splendour of the dead chieftain's possessions.

Cremation and burial, however, were only the climax in a complex, and no doubt prolonged funeral ritual, much of which we can only guess at. The rites commenced with the cutting of a large shaft, dug nearly three metres into the ground and revetted with an exceptionally strong double wall of ash or oak. On the floor of the shaft, a small chamber was built, where, it is suggested, the dead person 'lay in state'. How long this would have continued is unknown; possibly for a ritually prescribed length of time, more probably simply for whatever time was needed to assemble the tribe and prepare the burial site.

The burial itself occupied the top of the hill, a short distance away from the mortuary chamber. Surrounding it a large rectangular enclosure was laid out, covering nearly five acres and defined by a massive ditch, three metres deep and fifteen metres wide, with a corresponding bank on the inner edge.

When the time came for the funeral rites to be completed, the grave goods were broken up. Large quantities of pottery, much of it imported from Gaul but including several Italian wine amphorae, were smashed and scattered over the floor of the chamber, together with fragments of furniture fittings in iron, bronze and silver. Most of the broken pieces were then gathered up and put on the massive funeral pyre, traces of which were found a few metres to the north of the chamber.

In spite of the great heat of the pyre a few objects survived more or less intact, either because they had been placed in a part of the fire where the heat was less intense, or because they had been included late in the ceremony, when the pyre was beginning to die down. A splendid copper alloy snaffle bit (Fig 4), inlaid with millefiori glass and enamel, must have been thrown on very late in the rite, possibly even as an 'afterthought', as it shows no heat damage; similarly, an enamelled martingale was only very slightly affected.

Other objects did not fare so well. Burnt fragments of ivory and silver, probably fittings from an ornate chair or couch, provide tantalising glimpses of luxury imports. Tiny pieces of copper alloy sheets are all that survive of metal bowls, flagnons or cups, while partially melted fragments of inlaid bronze, decorated with elaborate curvilinear designs are the only remnants of a large quantity of splendid horse equipment. Iron survived the heat of the fire much better, and perhaps the most remarkable object found was a complete tunic of iron chain mail which had been folded up and placed at one end of the grave (Fig 9).

The destruction was not confined to the grave goods. The mortuary chamber and shaft were also systematically destroyed. The shaft revetment was undermined and pushed in, while dozens of boulders of Hertfordshire pudding stone were thrown down onto the chamber, smashing the timbers and flattening the entire structure.

The final actions were to gather up the cremated human remains, together with all that survived of the grave goods, and to bury them all in a large grave pit on the eastern side of the shaft. Both shaft and burial pit were then filled with a massive deposit of laid turf, probably representing all the turf stripped from the entire five acre enclosure. Additional turf was almost certainly stacked above ground level to form a rectangular mound revetted with timber posts and covering the grave and the remains of the shaft.

Fig 1. The grave pit during excavation.
Although cremation was a common practice among the contemporary Iron Age communities in southern Britain, the particular rite practised at Folly Lane was very rare, and one that was reserved for the aristocracy. The closest British parallels come from Stanway, just outside Colchester. Here Philip Crummy has excavated two funerary chambers, both set in pits within rectangular or square enclosures and dating from the middle decades of the first century AD. Although considerably smaller than the Folly Lane example, the Stanway sites obviously reflect a very similar funerary rite. Nevertheless, the scale of the Folly Lane site, so much greater than that of any other, surely indicates a royal rather than an aristocratic burial.

As a royal burial site, the Folly Lane enclosure also acquired religious significance. As soon as the ditch surrounding the enclosure had been dug, the bodies of three women were laid on the ditch floor on one side of the entrance, and a deposit of horse and cattle remains placed in the base of the ditch on the opposite side. These burials almost certainly had a ritual significance, and are reminiscent of sacrificial deposits of human and animal remains that have been found in ditches surrounding late Iron Age ritual sites in northern France (for instance Ribemont and Gournay, both in Picardy).

Conclusive evidence for the continuing religious importance of the Folly Lane site is provided by the construction later in the first century of a Romano-Celtic temple on the site of the funeral pyre. The temple faced towards the turf mound over the burial and the inescapable conclusion is that it was built in honour of the person buried there. The continued use of the temple into the third century poses the question as to the identity of the figure whose grave merited such prolonged veneration.

The grave is almost certainly that of a local ruler of this section of the Catuvellauni at the beginning of the Roman period. Whether the ruler was a member of the original Catuvellaunian/Trinovantian dynasty of Tasciovanus and Cunobelinus, is unknown; what is certain is that it was someone who was able to retain both wealth and status after the Roman conquest of AD 43.

In the early years of Roman rule, the immediate concern of the Roman authorities would have been not so much to establish 'Roman' towns and 'civilisation' as to organise a system whereby taxes could be collected efficiently and local unrest minimised. In order to achieve this two main options were open to Rome. One was to garrison the area through a network of forts, each a day's march apart. The other was to set up a client kingdom in which a native ruler retained his wealth, status, and some measure of self government, and in return was responsible for the maintenance of peace and the collection of tribute. It seems likely that the person buried with such splendour at Folly Lane, was just such a client king, maintaining his power under Roman auspices.

Obviously a client kingdom would only be appropriate in areas where opposition to Rome was not particularly strong. As part of the Catuvellaunian/Trinovantian confederacy, whose leaders Togidumnus and Caratacus led native resistance to Rome, it has generally been thought that the local Catuvellauni were not particularly well disposed towards the Roman invaders. Consequently, it has been assumed that in the years immediately after AD 43 the local area was garrisoned and directly controlled by Rome.

However, if, as now appears likely, the area around Verulamium formed part of a client kingdom, some of the uncertainties surrounding the early history of Verulamium may begin to be resolved. In an area which it was not thought necessary to garrison, the absence of a conquest period Roman fort is immediately explicable. The very fact that Verulamium was destroyed by Boudicca during the revolt of AD 60 suggests that the rebels regarded its inhabitants as Roman sympathisers. Occasional finds of Roman military equipment, notably a helmet from the river Ver and a cuirass from a rubbish pit on the south side of the town, could well derive from a post-Boudiccan fort, established here in the early 60s to reassure the survivors of destruction. Finally, by the late first century AD Verulamium had already acquired the status of a municipium (Tacitus, Annales, civ.33), suggesting that the town was considered to be particularly suitable for Romanisation.

Perhaps it is not over fanciful to see the local ruler buried at Folly Lane as the originator of a policy of collaboration with the Roman invaders, a policy which led to favourable treatment for this branch of the Catuvellauni by Rome. In this case we can understand why succeeding generations continued to venerate the shrine of the ruler who had secured these advantages. It was only in the late Roman period, possibly due to the growth of the Christian cult of St Alban on the neighbouring hill, that the memory of the Celtic chieftain was finally eclipsed.
As it continues to prepare its galleries for the eventual reinstallation of its permanent collections of Ancient Near Eastern art, the Musée du Louvre, Paris, temporarily loaned a great many of its Elamite masterpieces to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York for a special exhibition, 'The Royal City of Susa', which ended in March. In conjunction with that show, these two institutions organized an international symposium which took place in New York on 29 January.

In her opening remarks, Prudence O. Harper, the Curator of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art in New York, dedicated the proceedings to the memory of Helen Cantor, the recently deceased emerita from the University of Chicago whose prolific career as teacher and scholar has left an indelible mark on this academic field. Harper thanked the many private benefactors responsible for funding both the exhibition and the symposium, and later indicated her intentions to secure additional funding for the publication of the papers presented at the symposium, five of which are here presented in synoptic form.

It seemed only fitting that Dr John Curtis, Keeper of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities in the British Museum, should present the first paper dealing with the career of the Englishman William Kennet Loftus, the initial excavator of Susa who excavated the site between 1850 and 1853, because the objects he recovered as well as his notes are now in the collections of that museum. Loftus had originally been dispatched to the region as a geologist attached to an international mission charged with establishing the frontier between the Ottoman and Persian Empires. In May 1850 Loftus, because of a recommendation by Colonel Williams based on the former's work at Warka, arrived at Susa to begin digging. Local hostility to his efforts was so strong that he was initially unable to secure labourers for this excavation and a year later, due to an unfortunate misunderstanding regarding the theft of some horses, Loftus and his camp were engaged in a pitched gun battle with local tribesmen whom they beat back with great difficulty. Despite these vicissitudes, Loftus and his consummate draughtsman, Henry A. Churchill, recorded the site to great advantage. As Curtis pointed out, their plan of the Audience Hall, or Apadana, is accurate and may still be used profitably to this day. In the intervening years, only the location of the walls between the colonnades have been added to the otherwise unaltered plan.

Churchill's copies of the trilingual inscriptions which he found on columns were so accurate that they were of value to Rawlinson in his early efforts to decipher the language. Moreover, these inscriptions mention a palace of Artaxeres II (404-359 BC), and inscribed columns from another location seem to mention a second built for the same king. Loftus was of the opinion that the columns from both locations were reused suggesting that Artaxerxes II did not have a palace at Susa.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Curtis's presentation was his observation that the enamelled bricks recovered from Susa are inscribed on their upper surfaces with three different types of inscriptions which he interprets, on analogy with a similar phenomenon on glazed bricks excavated at Nimrud in 1989, as builders' guides, indicating the horizontal and vertical positions of each brick as it was set into the wall.

The second paper, by Pierre de Moroschedji, Directeur de Recherche au Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, on 'Susa and the Highlands: Major Trends in the History of Elamite Civilization' was a penetrating survey of how the highlands with their predominantly pastoral-nomadic societies interacted with the agricultural lowland centres to produce a cycle whereby Susa might rise and decline over the course of its history. His thesis reaffirmed the development of Elamite civilization as the produce of the conjunction of these two major cultural systems. Intertwined into this complex cultural tapestry were issues of Transcaucasan trade and how control of the peripheral areas and their subsequent disintegration affected events at Susa proper. Within this model, de Moroschedji regards the city of Choga Zanbil which rose to prominence between the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BC as the capital of a federation, as he terms it, representing an alliance between the highlanders and the lowlanders. Within this framework, Susa nevertheless retained her central position as a cultural centre.

The political fragmentation which followed the collapse of Susa in the twelfth century BC may be ascribed to tribal allegiances which were too frail to maintain an homogeneity throughout a territory of such huge geographic extent. The political fragmentation of Elam in the early first millennium BC is reflected by the almost complete absence of written records. The eventual re-emergence of the highlanders and lowlanders in the eighth century BC resulted in a decentralized Elamite realm with three dis-
After the break, Ezat O. Negahban, Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, presented a summary of his excavations at Haft Tepe and Chogha Zanbil. He asserted that Haft Tepe was but one of an estimated 32 archaeological sites within an eight mile radius. He then rehearsed the often-repeated litany in which the needs of modern civilization in the form of agricultural development often take precedence over archaeological prospection with the result that sites are irretrievably lost.

Nevertheless the site of Haft Tepe, which he dated to the end of the second millennium BC, produced some unusual results. Negahban unearthed over 2,500 moulded terracotta funerary figures, many of which were represented playing musical instruments. He also uncovered a workshop area in which dry pigments were found in association with pottery vases.

In another sector over 500 bronze implements – chisels, needles, and the like – were recovered which presumably were being manufactured on site for local craftsmen. Nearby was found an entire skeleton of an elephant, some of its bones still bearing traces of saw marks left by craftsmen working on bone and ivory carvings. Kilns with remains of bronze slag were also unearthed. The group of clay tablets, many of which were broken, may have been found in a scribal school.

The final communication was delivered by Peter Calmeyer, Professor and Direktor des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts, Abteilung Teheran, about ‘Representations of the Persepolis Tells of the Achaemenid Period.’ Beginning with the assumption that the costumes worn by the Persepolis Royal Guardsmen the enameled tiles from Susa represent textiles, Calmeyer then examined several details and concluded that cities were indeed represented by the designs. He was then able to distinguish between two types of city, one in a hill setting with three towers and a second with a gate between twin towers.

These designs were then compared to those on actual textiles from the Altal, which are generally dated to the Achaemenid Period. By comparing these representations with Classical sources, Calmeyer suggested that the designs on the textiles of the Guardsmen might represent the Persian cities of Susa and Persepolis.

The sessions ended with a round-table discussion. One wishes Harper success in her effort to secure the necessary funding for the publication of these worthwhile communications.
Bronze eight-lobed mirror with parcel gilt silver back showing a goat, a deer and two phoenix amongst scrolling vines. Tang period, late 7th-8th century. Diameter: 18.9cm
The mosaics of Jordan provide some of the richest evidence for the classical renaissance that flowered in the Byzantine Empire during the long reign of the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century AD. Archaeological research has revealed that mosaic art developed in a period of prosperity, for which historians have suggested a number of possible reasons: the active encouragement by Justinian of the caravan trade along the ancient routes which crossed Jordan and Palestine, the political security assured by the confederate Christian Arab tribes of the desert, and the state of peace which resulted from the pax aeterna with the Persian Empire. All this led, in Jordanian territory south of Syria, to a period of increasing settlement in the steppe, and an intensification of the urban and agricultural settlement policy, which enabled the region to reach a high level of material development. The highest expression of this is to be found in the mosaic floors discovered in the region.

The main centre of mosaic-making in Jordan was at Madaba, although mosaics have been found all over the region. They have been excavated in the city of Madaba and in its territory, on Mount Nebo, in the village of Ma'in and, more recently, from the summer of 1986, among the ruins of Umm al-Rasas in the steppe, 30 km south-east of Madaba.

One of the main results of the excavations since that first season is the historical identification of the ruins of Umm al-Rasas with Kastron Mefaa, a place name known to the Roman and Arabic sources and in the Bible. Eusebius mentioned a Roman army unit stationed on the edge of the desert at Mephaat (Onomasticon 128, 21), a location which he identified with the Levitical city of refuge of Mepha'at in the territory of the tribe of Reuben on the mishor Moab (Joshua 13, 21; 21, 37; Jeremiah 48, 21). The Notitia Dignitatum records that the equites promoti indigene, auxiliary troops of the Roman army, were stationed in the camp of Mefaa under the command of the Dux Arabiae. The Arab historian al-Bakrī knew Maypha'sh as a village of the Belqa' of Syria where the young Muhammad, travelling to the Byzantine province of Arabia with his uncle, encountered the monk Ilyha'ah who foretold his future as the Messenger of God.

Moreover, the inscriptions found in the extraordinary mosaic floor which decorates the Church of St Stephen (Fig 1), one of the most important and exciting discoveries of this century in Jordan from the Byzantine-Umayyad periods, provide evidence for a flourishing organised urban Christian community at the end of the eighth century in the Jordanian steppe.

One of the main historical questions raised by this astonishing discovery is, when was Umm al-Rasas abandoned by its inhabitants and why? It is to answer this question, important not only for Umm al-Rasas but also for the urban life of the region, that work continues at the site.

Aerial photographs show that the ruins of Umm al-Rasas consist of a walled area forming a fortified camp (Fig 2), and an open quarter of roughly the same size to the north, covering an area of about three hectares (100 dunums). The name of the ruins was recorded in 1807 by Ulrich Seetzen, the first modern explorer of Jordan, and first visited in 1816 by Buckingham. The explorers who followed - Palmer, Tristram and Brunnow-Domaszewski - all realised the Christian nature of the settlement. In 1948, Father Bagatti of the Franciscan Institute tried to establish an outline plan of the ruins, focussing on the buildings with apses which he identified as churches, four inside the fort and six outside the walls.

For practical reasons, specifically
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to facilitate the removal of a considerable amount of debris, the two buildings with apses on the northern edge of the ruins were chosen for excavation. The area revealed a large and interconnected liturgical complex with four churches (Fig 3): the two mosaiced churches, the Bishop Sergius church on the north and the Saint Stephen church on the east, with a paved courtyard between them which was later converted into a church by the addition of an apse on its western wall, and a fourth paved church on the west.

The northern church of Bishop Sergius (Fig 4) had been built and decorated in the 6th century, as recorded in the dedicatory inscription in the medallion between two lambs in front of the altar (Fig 5). In contrast to the two intact lambs, the iconoclasts had destroyed all the other rich figurative motifs of the main nave, except a Sacrifice of Isaac, the stone base of the pulpit added later to the church. Originally the rich decoration consisted of a frame featuring acanthus scrolls with scenes of hunting, fishing and vintage. Within the frame, the central carpet included two clasps and personifications: the Abyss (or Sea) and the Earth. Between these were portraits and daily life scenes of the benefactors of the church with their names. Two unusual images in the central carpet were a phoenix with rays coming from its head and a man carrying a bed on his shoulders (? Lazaurus).

Through the main entrance of the church one entered a mosaiced room with the baptistry, on the north side, and a funeral chapel, to the south. The cruciform basin, covered with a waterproof reddish plaster, had been badly damaged in the secondary use of the room. In the ashes of an oven were found Ummayyad painted sherds.

Two barrel vaulted tombs of the funeral chapel in the south of the baptistry which continued towards the east under the presbytery of the Courtyard Church, in front of the Church of St Stephen, explain the liturgical purpose of this new church with its apse orientated to the west. Two multiple tombs were found below the slabs, in which were buried several women, some of them wearing bracelets, rings and necklaces with bronze crosses. In the corner, between the opening of the barrel vaulted tomb and the polygonal apse of the Church of the Aedicule, on a plaster wall that still stood two metres high, we found a painted Greek inscription with a quotation from Psalm 34, 5,2, "Look towards Him and shine with joy; no longer hang your heads in shame.'

The eastern Church of St Stephen lies one metre higher than the Church of Bishop Sergius. The dedicatory inscription along the presbytery step supplied the ancient name of Umm er-Rasas: Meafa or Kastron Meafa. The church was built in honour of St Stephen by the people of Kastron Meafa and the deacon John, archon-chief of the Mefaonites. It was built at the time of Bishop Sergius of Madaba in the eighth century, although the date in the inscription which reads AD 785 is not certain. The dedicatory inscription near the altar in the presbytery confirms the dating of the church in the eighth century. It states that the mosaic of the bema (presbytery) was renewed at the time of Bishop Job of Madaba in AD 756. It also identifies the mosaicist as Staurachios of Hesban, the first mosaicist in the region whose place of origin is known.

Unfortunately, in the mosaic in the nave the portraits of the benefactors and the scenes of hunting, agriculture and pastoral life have been carefully disfigured by the iconoclasts and are often unintelligible. Thus the major interest of the mosaic floor in the Church of St Stephen focuses on the double geographical frame depicting cities of Palestine, Jordan and Egypt (Fig 6).

In the intercolumnar spaces of the nave a series of eight Palestinian cities are depicted: The Holy City of Jerusalem, in which it is possible to identify the aedicule of the Holy Sepulchre according to the iconography attributed to it in the Byzantine period (Fig 7); Neapolis (Nabius) with the possible facade of the Church of Theotokos on Mount Garizim; Sebastis (Sebaste); Caesarea on the sea; Diospolis (Li'ida); Eleutheropolis (Beit Gibrin); Askalon and Gaza.

In the inter-columnar spaces of the south row a series of seven Jordanian cities are shown, starting with the double plan of Kastron Meafa-Umm er-Rasas (Fig 8), followed by Philadelphia (Amman); Madaba; Esbouna (Hesban); Bele-mounta (Ma'in); Areopolis (Rabba) and Charach Mouba (el-Kerak). Two additional Jordanian cities, Limbon and Diblaton are represented, one at the head of the aisle, associated with portraits of benefactors and inscriptions. Another toponym without illustration mentions Mount Nebopolis with the superior of the monastery of the Memorial of Moses who gave an offering for the church. The inner frame, which depicts a river with fish, birds, and water flowers, as well as boats and boys fishing or hunting, also portrays a series of ten cities in the Nile Delta: Alexandria, Kasin, Thenesos, Tamiathis,
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Panau, Pilousin, Antinau, Eraklon, Kynopolis and Pseudostomos.

The lack of the mosaic floors in the two side chapels of the church indicated that the Church of Saint Stephen had been built in the eighth century AD above earlier ruins. After excavation, the northern room revealed a small apsed shrine with its own altar built in front of a polygonal niche which opened inside the wall of the apse. The nature of this shrine was emphasised by a moulded arch at the entrance and by several inscriptions written in front of the door. The church on this particular spot had covered the left corner of the room with white plastered walls. In the filling, late Byzantine-Umayyad sherds were collected, as was to be expected by the late dating of the mosaic floor of the church.

A metre below the floor of the southern room, with its well built barrel vault, were two built and plastered tombs. Each contained two skeletons covered with a shroud. The skeletons in the northern tomb were still wearing copper rings and bracelets. Side walls were decorated with a cross in a circle and a geometrical design.

The cleaning of the walls of the two mosaiced churches resulted in the discovery of some Thamudic and Nabatean graffiti with names of people scratched on isolated stones reused in the building.

The church with a polygonal apse in the western sector of the complex was on a higher level than the other churches. It was called the Church of the Aedicule, because of a small niche on the southern wall. The church had a double door in the facade, a third door in the southern wall and a slab-paved floor. The main discovery came from a probe trench opened in the nave to check the absolute dating of the building which seemed more ancient that the others in the complex. A round built shaft led to a tomb, one metre below, covered with slabs. Inside the tomb (Fig 10), with the skeleton of the deceased, there was, on the south side, a straw basket still filled with glass vessels and a cylindrical bone object covered with two strips of metal on the edges with an inserted metal object like the small spoon used by women for applying kohl to their eyes. One of the round vessels was still full of a black liquid, possibly the remains of the unguent. Among the bones, on the east side of the tomb, two elongated glass bottles and a wooden box completed the woman's equipment. The round box, the most exciting of the cache, was covered by a thin layer of some material which was later painted with geometrical motifs and a series of winged animals on the cover.

In the north-eastern sector of the area, between the two mosaiced churches, a courtyard with a water cistern was exposed, closed off to the north and to the east by a fence wall. The beaten earth floor of the courtyard had been replaced at least three times in the Umayyad-Abbasid period producing some well stratified sherds, as well as a painted tall jar and an open bowl decorated with snakes.

The ecclesiastical complex of Saint Stephen with its four churches and courtyards was enclosed by a continuous wall. The main entrances to the complex were from the south where we unearthed a road with a beaten earth floor which stretched in an east-west direction along the southern wall of the complex. The main entrance remained the double door of the southern paved courtyard of the Church of Saint Stephen. Through a door on the western wall of the courtyard one could enter a paved room and descend to the Courtyard Church and enter the two mosaiced churches. Here, too, in a second phase, the double gate of the Courtyard Church had been blocked and the room changed into a poor chapel found under the two collapsed arches of the roof supported...
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by a re-used column. After removing
the stone slabs of the floor, it was
realised that the level of the chapel
had been made up with filling from
the remains of the marble furniture
of the earlier church. Below the origi-
nal floor of this room, some thirty
sherd of the Iron Age were found.

The Church of the Aedicule was
somewhat isolated from the other
three churches and had its own
entrance on the south-west corner of
the complex with a curious stairway
connecting an outer road with the
paved narthex of the church. The
central courtyard north of the
church was reached from the interior
of the town through a tunnel which
passed below the presbytery of the
church.

It is too early to summarise the
chronological sequence of this com-
plicated ecclesiastical building. The
first conclusion is that this complex
does not fit the plan of a monastery.
It was more probably a sanctuary in
which people could meet on differ-
et occasions in large numbers. The
only few rooms suitable for living in
are in the eastern courtyard. On the
contrary, the three eastern churches
with their courtyards form a large
and interconnected liturgical com-
plex unique in the region.

Until now there has been no
absolute evidence to fix the date of
the final abandonment of the ecclie-
siastical complex of Saint Stephen.
However, we are probably not far
from the truth if the ninth century
AD is suggested for such an event.

A second conclusion can be
derived from one of the main fea-
tures of the complex — the blocked
doors. It means that there was a
gradual reduction of circulation
inside the building. Some doors, like
the northern and southern doors in
the facade of the Bishop Sergius
church, had been blocked during the
changes connected with the building
of the baptistry and of the funeral
chapel. The same happened to the
southern door of the Church of Saint
Stephen, when the Courtyard
Church was built. It is possible that
at this stage the eastern wing of the
complex with its rooms had been
divided into two separated houses by
blocking some entrances.

To try to solve the intriguing
nature of the tower (Fig 11), the
outstanding monument of Umm er-
Rasas, which still stands 1.5km north
of the ruins, it was decided to pro-
ceed in two directions. First, we
started mapping the buildings in the
area of the tower. Secondly, we exca-
vated the ruins at the eastern side of
the tower and examined the tower
itself by means of a crane lent by the
Director of the Department of Antiq-
uites.

The tower stands in the middle of
a square courtyard with a cistern to
the north and a church in its south-
east corner. It has no direct relation
with the cisterns, only with the
church at its base. The tower, 14
metres high, has no stairs and had a
domed room on its top rising from a
height of 10 metres. The room had a
door on its southern side facing the
church and three windows facing the
other directions. A channel ran from
the top to the bottom on the inside
of the western wall of the tower.
Such peculiarities can be explained if
we accept the hypothesis put for-
ward by Wilson in the last century
that it is where a monk lived in iso-
lation like the Stylist monks of
northern Syria.

In the church, which had a plas-
tered floor and three doors in the
northern wall which opened towards
the interior of the courtyard, the
eastern end of the northern aisle had
been changed into a small shrine by
the addition of a small arch. The

arch covered a stone reliquary fixed
into the floor which was paved only
in this sector. Strangely, the cover of
the box and its sides were covered
with burnt seeds of various kinds:
lentils, chick peas, corn etc. Inside
were the disarticulated bones of an
adult.

The bones had been poured with
oil, a Christian practice of venera-
tion for the bones of the martyrs.
Who was the holy man venerated in
this small church near the tower?
We do not know, but we can suggest
that he was the holy man who first
used the domed room in the tower.
Two coins of the emperor Justinian,
one from inside the reliquary, the
second found outside among the
seeds, give a terminus ante quem date
for the building of the church and the
tower of the beginning of the sixth
century AD.

During the recent campaigns we
have tried to answer the historical
question: when and why was Umm er-
Rasas abandoned? We therefore
investigated a wide area of ruins be-
 tween the complex of Saint
Stephen to the north, and the road
used by the Salayta tribe to cross the
ruins in an east-west direction along
the northern wall of the walled ca-
teran, an area of approximately ten
dunums (one hectare).

While one team surveyed the

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columns of an offering table in situ. The main discovery from the liturgical point of view was the pulpit on the southern side, which is the best preserved pulpit found so far in the churches of Jordan. The priest or deacon had to climb five steps protected by a side chancel to reach a polygonal platform supported on four columns and closed by five small pilet with sophisticated carvings which are among the best of their kind found so far.

The floor of the church, built at the time of Bishop Sergius in 586, was paved with finely crafted and detailed mosaics. In the double frame of the rectangular panel decorating the area in front of the altar, birds alternate with fruits in white medallions on a black background. Of the same high quality are the animals and the trees loaded with fruits. In this mosaic are two gazelles and two lions confronted by a tiger, a motif normally used in synagogues. The main peculiarity of this mosaic floor is the way in which the iconoclasts have attacked the figures. They destroyed the two bulls on the side of the altar, one of the two gazelles, the bodies of the two lions, some birds of the border frame and the two eagles in the southern apse of the church, yet they left the heads of the two lions, the gazelle on the right side and some birds (Fig 9): a strange peculiarity in the history of the iconoclastic movement in Jordan. The iconoclasts did not spare the human figures of the benefactors in front of the altar and the other figures in the acanthus scrolls of the main nave of the church. Only the names of some figures were left: John the Egyptian, Salaminis son of Sobanu, John son of Saolos, Teamos, and Paul son of Kassianus. Birds and eagles were defaced in the panels decorating the two side apses, where there are other names of benefactors of the church, Pafanons son of Talitha and John son of Soeios.

The city plan of Kastron Mebaa which decorated the northern intercolumnar space is of historical and artistic importance. Thanks to this discovery, we can compare two plans of the same city done within two centuries of each other. The plan of Kastron Mebaa in the Church of Saint Stephen is more schematic compared with the new plan, where the mosaicists depict it in its urban identity with the walled castrum and the northern quarter outside the walls (Fig 12). A church and a smaller building of an unidentified nature are shown inside the castrum.
The outer quarter is also walled like the town, and united to it by a wall of lesser dimension. Four churches are represented within the perimeter of the quarter. Once again, as in the first plan, there is an open space with a column raised on a stepped platform. A cross is added to the capital on the top of the column but this may represent a real votive column standing in the middle of the ruins, the nature of which is still unknown.

The continuation of the excavation outside the church revealed a funerary chapel with two tombs in the north corner of the facade, and a mosaiced diakonikon (service room) in the south corner (Fig 14). The rooms on the north and south sides of the church were re-used as private dwellings in the late Umayyad period when the church had been already abandoned and the mosaic floor partly destroyed. The central building collapsed in two stages: first the south row of arches fell on the bare floor and then, centuries later, the north row collapsed on the two-metre filling inside the church.

The evidence collected during seven seasons of excavation indicates that some kind of occupation of the outer quarter of Kastron Mefaa started in the Nabatean-Roman period, confirmed in a trench opened south of the Saint Stephen complex. In the Late Roman period, third to fourth century, there may have been some kind of official building, as recorded by a Latin inscription found in the eastern courtyard of Saint Stephen, and by re-used architectural elements of the same periods.

These archaeological conclusions fit well with the historical data we have in the written sources of the Roman-Byzantine period. The military nature of the locality at the time is underlined by the name Kastron Mefaa, which is recorded four times in Greek inscriptions from the Church of Saint Stephen and the Church of the Lions. S. Vallee in 1896 had already realised that the large square city enclosed by the thick walls was a Roman camp at the edge of the desert. In 1897 J. Germer-Durand proposed its identification with the Mepha'at of the Onomasticon, and thus with the biblical city of Mepha'at. This identification was rejected by Ch. Clermont-Ganneau, because the ruins lacked an ancient name. Instead, he proposed to identify the Roman-Byzantine and Arabic Mephaat with Khirbet Nefaa, a ruin visited by A. Musil 10 kilometres south of Amman. This identification was then accepted by all biblical scholars and only recently challenged by contemporary German and American scholars, who realised that Khirbet Nefaa was in Ammonite territory, at least in the Iron Age II period. Our discovery shows that the Roman-Byzantine and Arabic Kastron Mefaa is Umm er-Rasas and that the identification of it with Khirbet Nefaa is wrong.

Moreover, the historical identification of Umm er-Rasas with biblical Mefaa has been rejected by modern scholars on the basis that Nelson Glueck, the first modern surveyor of Jordan, did not find any Iron Age sherds at the site. We challenged this evidence since in the first campaign, near the opening of a water cistern in the Church of Bishop Sergius, we found a re-used basalt pillar base with decoration of calyx leaves (Fig 13) which can be dated to the Iron
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Age as part of a monumental building of the city. A stratigraphic probe inside the small chapel built on the southern wall of the Courtyard Church clarified an intriguing historical-geographical problem. Below the chapel were found Iron Age sherds of the seventh/sixth centuries BC. That means the locality of Umm er-Rasas was inhabited at least from the seventh century onwards until the Umayyad-Abbasid periods.

The Iron Age sherds found below the chapel leave open the possibility of accepting the identification of Kastron Mefaa/Umm er Rasas with the biblical Mepha‘at as proposed by Eusebius. This identification, in our opinion, fits better with the biblical texts which relate Mepha‘at to Yahsa, Qedemot and Beser, three cities of the south-eastern territory of the tribe of Reuben and with the Stele of Mesha, which records the conquest of Yahsa and Beser in the Moabite high plateau in the territory of Dhiban and Madaba.

![Fig 13 (above). The ornamental basalt base of an Iron Age column re-used in the Church of Bishop Sergius.](image)

![Fig 14 (right). Mosaiced diakonikon (service room) in the Church of the Lions.](image)

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MINERVA 29
Mitsotakis Collection Goes on Display in Athens

The Prime Minister of Greece is displaying his own impressive collection of Minoan and Greek artefacts in Athens. 
Jerry Theodorou reports.

For our hundred and eight artefacts of the Minoan and ancient Greek civilisations from the collection of Constantine and Marike Mitsotakis are currently on display in the N.P. Goulandris Foundation Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens, Greece.

Mr Mitsotakis is well known to the world community as the Prime Minister of Greece (elected 1990). What is less well known is that since the 1970s Mr Mitsotakis and his wife have been active collectors of antiquities, particularly those from the Prime Minister’s native Crete. Many of the important pieces in the Mitsotakis collection, including the rare golden double axe heads, have been published in Greek and Italian journals. The exhibition, entitled ‘Minoan and Greek Civilization from the Mitsotakis Collection’, opened on 12 November 1992, and is scheduled to remain on view at the Goulandris Foundation Museum until the end of September. At the conclusion of the exhibition the entire Mitsotakis collection will be donated to the Archaeological Museum of Chania, the Cretan town where Mr Mitsotakis was born.

At first sight the Mitsotakis assemblage of Minoan and classical Greek material strikes one as a study collection, with case upon case of seemingly unexceptional pottery and stone vessels. Taken together the material has the hallmarks of an accumulation rather than a carefully selected collection. For example, there are six classical terracottas, all of them interesting but none of them exceptional.

There are, however, a number of rarities that do stand out, particularly in the Bronze Age Cretan material, where the collection is strongest. Of the 114 Cretan Bronze Age figurines in bronze known in the world, the Mitsotakis collection has twelve, and of the 26 gold double axes from the Arkalochori cave the Mitsotakis collection has four. Among the 200-plus seals in the collection there are a few spectacular examples, and many of the more ordinary seals have been published in Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel.

The earliest objects in the exhibition are nine Neolithic stone axes and adze heads and stone weights, which date to the fifth millennium BC. Nearly one hundred pottery vessels document the Early and Middle Neolithic Periods, which span the years 3600–1900 BC. The bird-shaped vase (left) from the Early Minoan II period in the third millennium is rare and unusual work. The legs of this vase have no parallel in contemporary works, and the stylization of the vessel in a bird shape is particularly bold and successful. The late Dendra fragment of a female figurine (opposite), dating to the seventh century BC, is evocative of early Archaic art from the Greek mainland, as evidenced by the hairstyle and the depiction of the facial features of this fragmentary clay figurine.

The exhibition of the Mitsotakis collection should be a welcome event to antiquities collectors in Greece, who are faced with numerous obstacles. The legal market in antiquities in Greece is virtually non-existent, as only a handful of dealers are licensed by the government, and the material they handle is decisively third-rate. The majority of the material acquired by collectors in Greece comes from chance finds, illicit excavations or from outside Greece.

The catalogue accompanying the exhibition states that ‘as is usually the case with private collections, the provenance of the objects is rarely known precisely’, implying that the route by which objects come into collectors’ hands is clandestine. The barriers to collecting in Greece render the objects in the Mitsotakis collection mute, particularly since they are primarily of the Bronze Age. The objects are, as described in the catalogue, like illustrations in a book with
no explanatory text. So little do we know about the life and customs of the Bronze Age that scholars, including one of the cataloguers, are reduced to empty generalizations such as: 'this was a people without much imagination but with organised and disciplined thought and a geometric view'.

However, the 334-page catalogue, which is printed in limited edition hardback versions in English and Greek, is still a valuable addition to the literature on Bronze Age Crete. The photographs are consistently outstanding and the English translations are excellent. What the collection lacks in focus and quality is more than compensated for in the catalogue, with its comprehensive essays and catalogue entries on Minoan archaeology, art and artefacts.
The Joseph E. Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum

Robert Knox

In May 1914, only three months before the outbreak of the First World War, the newly constructed King Edward VII Gallery at the north perimeter of the British Museum was opened. Their Majesties, King George V and Queen Mary were the principal guests at this great event. In the area now occupied by the Senate House of the University of London were rows of uniformed soldiers, and endless dignitaries graced the grand new gallery and the North Library where the ceremony of opening the building took place. The King and Queen stood on the little balcony which is the focus of the facade of the King Edward Building and reviewed the gathering before them.

In the gallery at that time were assembled objects and paintings from the newly acquired Central Asian collections of Sir Aurel Stein and at the centre of the east end of the gallery was the famous Liao dynasty seated Lohan statue, more than four feet high, then newly acquired by the Museum.

On 9 November last year, three generations after her grandfather inaugurated the new building, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II opened the new Oriental Gallery of the British Museum, now named in honour of Mr Joseph E. Hotung of Hong Kong. This great display is situated in the long exhibition gallery of the King Edward VII Building and contains, as it did in 1914, along with endless other great treasures, parts of Stein’s collections from Central Asia and the famous Lohan figure once again in the position it was given when first on display in Bloomsbury (Fig 1).

History is repeating itself in this gallery in certain ways. The original construction of the building was partly financed by a generous bequest in the 1890s of a large sum of money from a Mr Vincent Stuckey Lean, but mostly funded by public money. In the 1990s, the position is reversed. The Hon. Sir John Hope, the Japanese businessman, has paid for the new display of the Amaravati sculptures at the west end of the gallery (Minerva, Jan/Feb 1993, pp. 34-5). The remainder of the finance comes from the Wolfson Family Charitable Trust and public money.

The gallery is divided into two main parts, the pivot of the room being a circular oculus, a great hole in the floor leading to the Montague Place entrance of the building (Fig 2). The Hotung Gallery is 110 metres long and the area of the entire room is some 2,000 square metres making it the largest exhibition gallery in the country. The east side of the gallery is devoted to the art and culture of China and the west side the history, religion and sculptural art of South and South-east Asia.

More than half the world’s popu-
records extended only about a metre above the mahogany wall-to-pillar cases left intact in the 1992 redecoration. Just below the top of this old gold paper was a wide, broken dark blue line copying a beading motif on the cases. It was decided to dispense with this complex arrangement and to cover the large square areas of wall above the cases and all available empty wall space with gold leaf. Further, the decorative details on the ceiling, beading, bundles of reeds and a royal crest were similarly gilded. This scheme gives a light, glowing richness to the gallery which contrasts totally with the dingy and dreary atmosphere of the old oriental exhibition in this room. With the grills off the north windows and the windows on the south side now frosted to block the view of a most depressing interior roofscape of the museum and the whole room and the cases brilliantly lit, the Hotung Gallery is genuinely a ray of light in a dark world.

The two halves of the gallery contrast greatly one from the other. The Chinese collections consist mainly of smaller objects, often brightly coloured. Stone sculpture was not an important art in ancient China in contrast to the way that it dominated the three-dimensional world of the Indians. Calligraphy and calligraphic painting were the main arts of the Chinese and these feature to a limited extent in the Hotung Gallery as materials such as paper and cloth, and the ink and colours of which the paintings are made, will not stand prolonged exposure to light. By contrast, the South Asian section contains massive quantities of religious sculpture in all media ab initio. Although stone and bronze are the main materials.

The ancient Indians devoted vast resources to the construction and adornment of great stone temples. Religion is one of the dominant themes in the culture and civilization of India and it is a constant in every aspect of Indian life. For the devout Hindu, life and ritual are equivalent. It is easy to see, therefore, how a powerful ruler or dynasty could devote huge economic resources to the pious service of religion, at the same time expressing political and economic authority.

For the Chinese, dominated by a literate and powerful bureaucracy, the manufacture and possession of quality goods of all kinds and all media, made to the highest possible technical skill, was a matter of extreme importance. Goods were made by processes of mass production, just as they are today, and to qualities appropriate to the social status of the owners. The Hotung

Fig 3. Urn from north-west China, Yangshao Ban-shan type, c. 4000 BC. Red eathenware with black and purple painted decoration. The gold linear decoration is executed with a soft brush. Wave and net design are typical of painted decoration in the Neolithic period in north-west China, when most communities settled near and were dependent on rivers and fish. Height 34 cm.

Fig 4. Chinese bronze ritual vessel, 'ding'. Shang dynasty, 12th century BC. Height: 20.3 cm.
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Fig 5 (left). Chinese wooden guardian figure with a long protruding tongue and crowned by antlers, made of dry lacquer. Eastern Zhou period, possibly from the Chu state, 4th century BC. Wooden figures with monstrous faces, long tongues and antlers were placed as guardians in Chu tombs in southern Henan and northern Hubei. Height: 43.7 cm.

Fig 6 (right). Chinese porcelain Guan jar, with underglaze cobalt blue decoration of a peacock and a peahen. 14th century AD. The jar is thick and heavy, which is typical of early large pieces from Jingdezhen, before the strength of the ceramic material had been fully discovered. Height: 31.5 cm.

with its ritual are depicted.

The Buddhism display begins with the life of the Buddha as shown in the sculpture of ancient Gandhara, now in north-west Pakistan. The doctrines of this great religion, founded in India but alive there now only through the efforts of recent missionary activity, are depicted in the displays as far as sculpture and ritual objects will allow. Jainism follows with a bay in the gallery of its own and is exhibited in the British Museum as a separate entity for the first time since the old displays exhibiting the world’s religions were dismantled in the 1920s in favour of a newer scheme. The Indian temple is explained and illustrated with a group of architectural objects and the sandstone model of a Hindu temple.

The rest of the gallery is regional in character exhibiting the strengths of the British Museum Indian collection, sculpture from Orissa, Bihar and Bengal, the North West, Deccan, and South India. From the eastern Deccan comes the matchless sculpture of Buddhist Amaravati behind a glass wall at the far western end of the gallery. All this material, from all periods, is religious in character and although it represents a series of schools of art well known to scholars of art history it was essentially not as art objects that these sculptures were made. They were sculpted as devotional images and as parts of sacred building, functioning as parts of a greater package of religious objects and not at any point in the history of the subcontinent as objects of art alone. That is a modern and a foreign concept and one with which most museum displays of Indian sculptures are infused.

The countries of South-east Asia to which the civilization and religion of India were taken over many centuries adopted the Indian practice of depicting their many deities in human form. The great Buddhist temple of Borobudur in central Java is represented in the Hotung Gallery with examples of sculpture from it as well as the Buddhist sculptural art of ancient Burma and Thailand. Sri Lanka is part of the South Asian world proper but anciently acted as a conduit to the mainland and island world of the south-east. The greatest single antiquity in the collection forming the western part of the Hotung Gallery is the famous gilded bronze, nearly life-size statue of a female with her hand raised in an offering of reassurance (Fig 7). The statue is a representation of Tara, the female counterpart of the Buddhist god of compassion, and dates to the tenth century AD. She combines a touching naturalism with a dignified spirituality and the stunning technical skill of the great master who made her. She represents in one object the true perfection of the art of the ancient Indian world.

The Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities serves many purposes. The ordinary visitor to the British Museum will be amazed by the great treasures it contains. That is only the basic level of function of such an arrangement of objects. The world is now a smaller place and people can move about it in ways that were unthinkable even a few years ago. It is essential that the west and other regions of the non-Asian world come to understand at least some of the basic ideas informing the cultures of areas which may become the most populous in the world and which certainly contain some of the most effective and growing economies of the present day. The new Oriental Gallery at the British Museum can be the point at which this understanding can begin.

Robert Knox is Deputy Keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities, The British Museum, and author of several books on the collections.
Roman Military Equipment

'Roman military artefact studies have traditionally been subordinated to narrow art-historical discussions, or marginalized as "typology fodder". With this provocative statement in their introduction Messrs Bishop and Coulston set out to redress the balance: Roman military equipment is a subject worthy of study in its own right and can, moreover, serve as a sort of paradigm for the Roman empire as a whole. If this is perhaps a rather grandiose claim, at least students of the Roman army will need no persuading of the intrinsic value of the study of arms and armour. Roman army buffs have long had cause to be grateful for the army in an international forum for those interested in this aspect of the Roman army, a forum to which they have themselves vigorously contributed. The synthesis then, that is now presented, is both authoritative and timely.'

The authors begin with three chapters devoted to the evidence, respectively archaeological, documentary and representational (and here pride of place must go to the reliefs on Trajan's Column and the magnificent series of funerary reliefs from the Bishopland) and conclude with two chapters on 'production and technology' and 'the study of Roman military equipment'. Here, true to their original premise, they set their subject in its wider context, but the heart (in every sense of the word) of the book lies in the central chapters, which deal with the material in five chronological chunks, starting with the Republican period and finishing with the fourth century. In each section they deal with the whole range of arms and equipment, so that to follow the development of one particular item it is necessary to consult all five chapters.

The decision to order the material in this way is surely the right one: the relationship between defensive armour and offensive weaponry was (and is) a close one, so that the two together can, as one post graduate has recently pointed out to me, be regarded as a 'weapons system', and to treat the material in another way would be to obscure this fact.

There might, however, have been a case for excluding torsion artillery (ballistae) from these chronological survey chapters since this arm played a relatively small part in Roman warfare and the separate section would have revealed more clearly the truly remarkable developments over time in the form and method of operation of these machines, especially with the introduction of the wide metal frame ballistae in the early years of the second century. The revolutionary implications of this (in the way the machines were actually intended to work), the authors have, in this reviewer's opinion, not truly appreciated.

This, however, is not the case with the Roman military saddle where work by Peter Connolly and Carol van Driel-Murray has completely transformed our estimate of the capabilities of cavalry as a military asset. The invention of the stirrup: it had previously often been assumed that the use of heavy armed cavalry as shock troops would have been impossible due to the inability of the riders to maintain their seat on 'impact' with the enemy line, an assumption that we now realize to have been false.

Turning to body armour, this reviewer feels compelled to note a certain uneasiness on points of detail in the reconstructions of the unique finds of suits, or partial suits, of so-called tarta totum from Corbridge, but this is not the place to enter into minutiae of the subject, nor to raise carping doubts on points of detail in what is a very fine book indeed.

The string that has emerged from Batsford's archaeological stable in recent years has not always been consistent in quality: one feels that some are basically compilations which have drawn almost exclusively on the works of others and, in consequence, do not always get to grips with their subject.

This is certainly not the case with the present book: its authors are two of the foremost workers in the field. With so much research on military equipment taking place, its appearance is timely and co-workers owe them a considerable debt. But more than that: this is truly a work of which it can be said the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, so that if in its scope it is primarily aimed at students of the Roman army, it will also have a wider appeal.

Mark Hassall, Institute of Archaeology, University College London.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The inclusion of a book in this section does not preclude its review in a subsequent issue.

Roman Britain (Exploring the Roman World), by T.W. Potter and Catherine Johns. British Museum Press, London, 1992. 230pp. 12 col. plates, 90 illus. Hardback, £19.95. The most recent of many books on Roman Britain, but one with a difference in the amount of new material that is cited and illustrated. Here the authors, both members of the Department of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities in the British Museum, have a definite advantage in being able to work on and examine the material at first hand. Many splendid recent finds are included: the Thetford Treasure; the Brough Celtic-Roman mounted warrior god, the unique Pakenham Priapus, the Snettisham jeweller's hoard and even the copy of the Ridley Park lances (Minerva, Nov/Dec 1991, 6-13), and there are also many excellent new photographs of 'old friends'. The approach is by topic, first examining Britain before the Roman Conquest of AD 43, then the occupation and Romanisation, followed by the architecture and art, personal possessions, pagan gods and goddesses, and ending with the fourth century and beyond. There is also a useful gazetteer of sites to visit. The text is refreshingly written and ably supported by full references for those who might wish to pursue individual aspects further.

The Achaemenid Persian Army, by Duncan Head, with colour plates by Richard Scollins. Monvert Publications, Stockport, 1992. 80pp. incl 8 col. pls, 46 figs. Paperback, £8.75. The Achaemenid Persian empire dominated the ancient Near East and the eastern Mediterranean for two hundred years from about 550 to 350 BC. It was immense, and so was the army and its many divisions that upheld that sway. Most commentaries on the Persian army come from an obviously biased source, the Greek enemy, and until recently most of the evidence was either Greek literary comment or illustrations from vase paintings. This very succinct book begins with a historical outline and then surveys its subject under a series of headings, making good use of both Greek and Persian sources and most ably supported by detailed line drawings extracted from larger scenes (mainly on rock and ceramic vases) that illustrate aspects of military dress, arms and armour. The colour plates are a particularly fine feature of the book. Iranian and foreign troops are discussed, the army on campaign and in battle, and the orders of battle examined with especially reference to those that concerned Alexander the Great and the Persians. It is a detailed book, and inexpensive, that will appeal to the historian, the military buff and, not least, wargamers.

The Gods of the Celts, by Miranda Green. Alan Sutton, Stroud. Glos. 1993. x + 257pp. 103 illus. Paperback, £9.99. Dr Green is a well known authority for her work on the Celts and their religion. Originally-published in 1986, it is good to see this wide ranging survey available in a very reasonably priced paperback edition. It brings together much of the scattered evidence on Celtic religion and the gods - archaeological (a prime source), epigraphic and literary, although it must be remembered that the Celts have left us no literature and in the named areas we are dependent on other, often heavily biased, sources. From a variety of indirect, virtually secondhand, sources, Dr Green has produced, described and illustrated the evidence covering all aspects of the gods, ritual customs, cult-objects and sacred sites of the Celts.

Peter Claydon
Akhenaten: Son of Egypt's 'Dazzling Sun'

Almost anything to do with the pharaoh Akhenaten (c. 1350-1334 BC) has a tendency to become rather emotive. The American Egyptologist Georges Reisner said that more ink had been spilt on Akhenaten's short reign towards the end of the 18th Dynasty than the whole of the rest of Egyptian history. Looking at the bibliography of the Amarna Period (Martin, in Minerva, May/June 1991, p. 39) one can well believe it.

Akhenaten has been called many things in print (let alone what he must have been called in antiquity): reformer, first monotheist, the heretic of Akhetaten (his newly founded capital), even Moses in some of the more misguided recent publications. He is an enigma and, as such, a constant object of reassessment, as is the so-called 'naturalistic' art of the period (although that great scholar of the period, the late Cyril Aldred, held that it was more truly 'mannerism').

In the fifth year of his reign, Akhenaten, having proclaimed his 'new' religion of the worship of the Aten (the sun's disk) as the sole begetter, moved away from the religious capital of Thebes (until then the territory of the supreme god Amun) to a new, virgin site in Middle Egypt. Now known as el Amarna, he dubbed it Akhetaten - the Horizon of the Aten. Akhenaten had changed his name from Amenophis IV to accommodate his 'new' god. The splendours of his father Amenophis III's reign have recently been seen in the exhibitions in Cleveland and Paris (Minerva, July/August 1992, pp. 21-8).

There has been much argument on the subject of a possible co-regency between Amenophis III and his son. Certainly there are representations in Amarna art style of the old king on a stela from a private house at Amarna, and his mother, the redoubtable Queen Tiyi, seems to have resided at Amarna in her widowhood. No matter how much the elderly royal couple may have conformed, even encouraged, their son's alternative religious views, the worship of the Aten could not continue alongside Amun at Thebes - hence the great move in year 5.

However, before then, Akhenaten had built a huge temple to his god immediately outside the east gate of the precinct of Amun at Karnak (discovered and under excavation by Professor Donald Redford of Toronto for the last several years). In the aftermath of Akhenaten's reign, this was destroyed and its blocks incorporated into later structures, especially the pylons of Horemhab, successor but one to Tutankhamun. From this enormous jigsaw puzzle, as blocks were retrieved from the filling of Horemhab's pylon, the late Leslie Greener, chief architect at Chicago House, the Oriental Institute, at Luxor, produced an imaginative and astounding reconstruction. One of the main revelations was the high prominence of Akhenaten's queen, Nefertiti, in the ceremonies depicted in the reliefs.

Completely overlooked were other blocks which, Dr Gohary realised, recorded a great Sed-festival celebrated by Akhenaten at Karnak. The Sed-, or heb-sed, festival was of great antiquity in Egypt, and can be traced back to the earliest dynasties, the Archaic Period, in the reign of Ka-a of the 2nd Dynasty, c. 2890 BC. Essentially it was a festival of renewal, of the king's virility and thereby his benefice to Egypt, the land and its fertility. In art it was beautifully illustrated being carried out by Zoser, builder of the Ste pyramid at Saqqara, as early as c. 2660 BC.

Akhenaten's representation of his celebration of the festival was carved on small blocks, talatat (literally: two-hands-width), that were part of the decoration of his temple to the Aten at Karnak. In Dr Gohary's book we at last have the result of her researches. The book is new, but she carried out the research for it many years ago as the basis for her doctoral thesis, presented in 1977. We must therefore be glad that it is now available in its present, albeit rather expensive, form. Such was the size and complexity of the jigsaw puzzle involved in sorting out the hundreds of blocks of stone, that computers were called in to aid what became the Akhenaten Temple project with which Dr Gohary was closely connected.

The yardstick in evaluating Dr Gohary's book, with the publication of the material worked on 15 years previously, is that it has stood the test of time and the many changes in attitude regarding the Amarna Period during those years. What is gratifying is to see that, from her examination of the sequence and content of the scenes, she had suggested that perhaps, after all, Akhenaten was not so radical as some would make out, this is certainly true of the early years of his reign. Here, in his Aten Temple he is shown participating to the full in a religious ceremony that was even then over 1500 years old.

By comparing Akhenaten's Sed-festival with those of earlier pharaohs, Dr Gohary is able to demonstrate and draw conclusions from the talatat representations. They reveal an early transitional stage in the development of the cult of the Aten, as well as elements of those innovative artistic styles that were to become synonymous with the Amarna Period.

The reconstructions in line drawings on the long fold-out plates (I and III) give a splendid idea of the great ceremony associated with the festival (perhaps the closest thing to it in modern times would have been the Delhi Durbar of George V in 1912). The subsequent plates (several of which are also long fold-outs) thereby explaining the high cost of the book) illustrate the sporadic blocks as well as possible in their presumed original relationship. The very nature of the material means that there will never be a complete answer to all the gaps - so many of the blocks were destroyed in antiquity whilst others disappeared into museum and private collections over the centuries (as the previously unpublished block above).

Dr Gohary describes each scene in detail, linking each to the series of 110 plates of the book, to draw conclusions about the techniques involved as well as the iconography of this early evidence and forerunner to the great explosion that was to come. Despite, in theory, all memory of Akhenaten and his heretical reign being erased from the ancient Egyptian record, aspects of Amarna art, its delicacy of line and freedom, were to continue and add much to the high water mark of Egyptian art in the 19th Dynasty, seen especially in the Memphite tomb of Horemhab, excavated by Professor Geoffrey Martin for the Egypt Exploration Society, and Horemhab's royal tomb as pharaoh in the Valley of the Kings.

Dr Gohary's study is in itself a talatat, an important representative block, in our record of the Amarna Period, and should be welcomed by students of the period.

Peter A. Clayton

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After the lull early in the year, late spring will have several important sales. In Munich, Peus will hold an auction on 5-7 May, with Hirsch following on 14-15 May. Leu Numismatics have a sale in Zurich on 25 May, including an important collection of early Roman Imperial coins. The following day, Leu Numismatics and Numismatic Ars Classica will hold a joint sale of Byzantine coins in Zurich.

The New York Spring International will be held at the Sheraton Centre Hotel in New York City on 11-13 June. Numismatic Fine Arts will hold an auction on 10 June in conjunction with the fair, and Classical Numismatic Group will follow the next day, 11 June. Classical Numismatic Group’s sale will feature an important collection of approximately 150 Greek gold and electrum coins, a representative collection covering the entire Greek world. This collection includes many extremely rare coins, with some types that have never been offered publicly, and is the most comprehensive general collection of Greek gold to be auctioned for many decades.

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A travelling museum exhibition of Greek art in the United States explores the close relationship between the ancient city of Athens and the goddess Athena. ‘Goddess and Polis: The Panathenaic Festival in Ancient Athens’ includes 71 objects of ancient Greek art and will be shown at four museums. The central theme of the exhibition is the quadrennial festival, the Panathenaia, that was celebrated in ancient Athens from 566 BC to Hellenistic times and culminated in the presentation of the sacred peplos to a statue of Athena.

Among the most important works of classical art in Dartmouth College’s Hood Museum of Art, the exhibition’s opening venue, is a panathenaic prize amphora (Figs 4, 5). Such prize amphorae, filled with oil from the olive groves sacred to Athena, were given to winners in the athletic events of the Panathenaic festival. When the Hood Museum asked Jennifer Nells, classical scholar at Case Western Reserve University, to be the guest curator of an exhibition of ancient art, she was inspired by the Hood’s panathenaic amphora to focus the show exclusively on the festival.

The exhibition has already had successful runs at the Hood Museum from September to December 1992, and at the Tampa Museum of Art from January to April 1993. In both locations the exhibition was supplemented by educational programmes that drew wide audiences. The two-day symposium ‘Athens and Beyond’ at Dartmouth College in October, about which Brumfield Ridgway, Bryan Mawer Professor of Classics, remarked, ‘never have I been to a symposium where so many new ideas were passed around’, attracted over 400 participants and produced numerous challenging papers and discussions on aspects of the Panathenaia that had seldom been explored in such depth. Among the areas examined was the nature of the Panathenaic contest known as the ekstastria, which may have been a kind of male beauty contest.

‘Goddess and Polis’ explores the theme of the Panathenaic festival with images of Athena and representations of the competitions that took place during the festival. One of the exiting aspects of the exhibition is that the majority of the works shown are drawn not from American museums with the largest holdings of ancient art, but from a number of the lesser-known regional and university museums. The exhibition also includes a rich assortment of pieces from U.S. private collections. Among the lenders are George Ortiz, Leon Levy, Lawrence Fleischman and Nicholas Zoulas. The show’s organiser Jennifer Nells decided to draw only from American collections, and to avoid a ‘line up the masterpieces’ show, which would have had to include loans from the British Museum, the Louvre and Athens, which are home to the Parthenon’s Panathenaic procession frieze.

The exhibition explores the close relationship between Athens and Athena using the Panathenaic festival as a point of reference. The mythological daughter of Zeus and Metis, Athena was born by emerging, fully armed, from the head of Zeus. The black-figure amphora from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (Fig 1) has a handsome depiction of this unusual parturition. The newly born Athena, standing on her father’s head, wears a crested helmet and holds a long spear and a shield in either hand. The woman on the right, who may be Zeus’ wife Hera, her face rendered in white, looks on at the unusual scene.

In the bronze statuette of Athena from the Walter’s Art Gallery in Baltimore (Fig 2), we see the goddess wearing an Attic helmet surmounted by a sphinx. In her right hand sits an owl, Athena’s attribute, and in her left there was a spear, now missing. Another fine bronze statuette of Athena in a warlike pose from ‘Goddess and Polis’ is the 1 1/4-inch Athena from the George Ortiz collection. The owl which Athena holds in the Walter’s statuette was for Athenians a sign of good luck, in keeping with the Greek belief in birds as vehicles of the gods’ will. There is also a superb bronze owl in the exhibition from the George Ortiz collection, illustrated on the front cover of Minerva, March/April 1993 issue.

Athenians devoted fully one third of their calendar year, or 120 days, to festivals. As the Panathenaic was the state festival honouring Athena, protector of Athens, it was the most important. It was an affirmation of Athens’ pre-eminent role as a capital, politically as well as culturally, which was underlined by the fact that Athens allowed non-Athenians to par-
Greek Amphorae

Although the Panathenaia was celebrated annually, every fourth year it took on special significance and was called the ‘greater’ Panathenaia. The festival spanned eight days in the ancient Greek month of Hekatombaion, corresponding roughly to July, and over the course of the eight days there were musical contests, athletic events for boys and men, and ritual sacrifices and feasting.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s black-figure neck pelleke (Fig 3) recalls the ancient music contest that was held on the first day of the Panathenaia. This unattributed vase depicts two musicians standing on a rectangular stand. The young singer, draped in a tight mantle, gives an vividly animated performance, his head thrown back, while an older, bearded man accompanies him on the flute. A catalogue essay by Alan Shapiro on music and poetry at the Panathenaia explains that flute music was an important part of daily life in ancient Greece. It was played in athletic training and accompanied soldiers into battle.

On the second day of the festival there were athletic events for boys, followed on the third day by contests for men, one of which was wrestling. The Panathenaic prize amphora from the Hood Museum (Fig 4) depicts a wrestling scene, showing the two opponents and a judge, who stands to the left. This prize amphora, which dates to 480-470 BC, is especially important because it was drawn by the Berlin Painter, one of the finest Archaic artists. While the Berlin Painter worked primarily in red-figure, all Panathenaic prize amphorae are drawn in the black-figure style.

Indeed, centuries after black-figure had given way to red-figure, Panathenaic prize amphorae were canonically produced with the black-figure technique. They were produced in known quantities, so the number of extant examples gives us an idea of the appallingly low survival rate of ancient vases to modern times. There were approximately 1,000 Panathenaic prize amphorae distributed at each festival. Only 150 prize vases of the sixth and fifth centuries are known, so we may estimate that one tenth of one percent of the vases produced in antiquity have survived.

The obverse of the Hood Panathenaic prize amphora (Fig 5) depicts Athena, with her shield and spear raised, striking forward. This canonical representation of Athena may be linked to a cult statue of the goddess installed in the Akropolis. Athena is bordered by columns topped by cocks, to the right of one of which are the Greek letters meaning ‘one of the prizes from Athens’.

The Hood Panathenaic amphora by the Berlin Painter is one of only eight known by this artist, another of which, depicting three runners on the reverse, is included in ‘Goddess and Polis’, on loan from a private New York collector. Beazley called the Berlin Painter ‘the painter of grace’ to distinguish him from the Kleophrades Painter, whom he dubbed, ‘the painter of power’.

Fully twenty of the Kleophrades Painter’s Panathenaic prize amphorae are known in museum and private collections in the world, and two are included in the exhibition. One is from the Art Museum at Princeton University, and depicts a chariot race on the reverse (lig 6). The other is a controversial vase, lent by Nicholas Zoulias, which was formerly in the Nelson Bunker Hunt collection and shows an advancing warrior holding two shields, which Jenifer Nels interprets the scene as one from the hoplitodromos, the armed footrace. However, Dietrich von Bothmer, who catalogued the vases for Wealth of the Ancient World, believes the shield-bearer is a contestant in the armed, or pyrrhic dance.

The equestrian races, which included the chariot race (Fig 6), were held on the fourth day of the festival. On the fifth day the tribal events, which were limited to Athenian citizens, were conducted. These included the pyrrhic dance, the euyndria and the torch race. A Panathenaic torch race is brilliantly represented on the red-figure bell krater lent to ‘Goddess and Polis’ by the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Harvard University. It depicts two torch-runners approaching an altar where an archon basileus stands. The prize for the winning torch bearer was a hydria and thirty drachmae, and the winning tribe was given 100 drachmae and a bull. While the prizes for the tribal contests consisted largely of money, in the athletic events vases with olive oil were awarded. In many of the events there were prizes given to those finishing second, but in the musical contests those finishing third and even fifth in the case of the men’s kithara singing won some kind of prize.

A number of vases in ‘Goddess and Polis’ illustrate processional scenes of bulls being led to the altar. After the seventh day of contests the prizes were awarded and there was feasting.

Fig 4 (above left). Reverse of Attic black-figure Panathenaic prize amphora with wrestlers, by the Berlin Painter, c. 480-470 BC Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover. Fig 5 (above right), obverse of the same vase showing Athena.

Fig 6. Attic Black-figure Panathenaic amphora with chariot race, by the Painter of Würzburg 173, c. 500 BC. The Art Museum, Princeton University.
Detail from an Egyptian limestone relief of Nikaue, Old Kingdom, Dynasty V, circa 2465-2323 B.C., 78 x 25¼ in. (198 x 65 cm.). Estimate: $250,000-350,000

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and celebration, at which a hundred cattle were slaughtered and eaten.

The other important event which took place toward the end of the Panathenaea was the presentation of the peplos to the life-sized cult statue of Athena Pollas on the Akropolis. The peplos was a rectangular woollen fabric, woven especially for presentation to Athena by designated women of Athens, and was decorated with a scene of the battle between the gods and the giants. A catalogue essay explores the technical and social aspects of how and by whom a peplos was made.

The objects at the end of ‘Goddess and Polis’ include a number of representations of Athena in statuary and coins. The sculptures include the marble Lanckoronski relief, (Fig 7) from the Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, which is a Roman adaptation of a Greek original and probably dates to the first century AD. The numismatic representations of Athena include her profile on new style tetradrachms and a superb miniature standing Athena Parthenos on a stater of Cilician Aphrodisias. Many of the coins in the exhibition were lent by the American Numismatic Society, with the remainder coming from the Hood Museum’s own collection.

The catalogue accompanying ‘Goddess and Polis’, with its lengthy, erudite essays on various aspects of the Panathenial festival, contains more than one might want to know about the festival. It does a stellar job of compiling not only virtually everything known about the festival, but also serves as a valuable source of information on more general topics, such as music and athletics in ancient Athens. It is ably written and amply illustrated, assuring its position as a reference volume for scholars and collectors alike.

\[ \text{‘Goddess and Polis’ is at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia from 11 May-1 August, and travels to the Art Museum, Princeton University, where it runs from 31 August to 28 November. A catalogue accompanies the exhibition (226 pages; $19.95, $49.95 hardback).} \]

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3. May. ANTIQUITIES. Sotheby's, London (071) 408-5111.

JUNE

JUNE 1. HISTORIC AND VIKING DENMARK. 19-30 June. Run by the Department of Continuing Education, University of Warwick. Contact: Pamela Handley, Study Tours, Continuing Education, University of Warwick, Coventry, C4/BAT, UK. (0203) 524178/528381.

JULY

ROMANS IN NORTHERN BRITAIN. 22-28 July. E630. Contact: British Museum Tours, 46 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QG. (071) 322-8895/1234.

SEPTEMBER

ARCHAEOLOGY, FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE ORKNEYS. 8-10 September. Run by the Department of Continuing Education, University of Warwick. Contact: Pamela Handley, Study Tours, Continuing Education, University of Warwick, Coventry, C4/BAT, UK. (0203) 524178/528381.

ANATOLIAN TURKEY. 18 September-2 October. E1,410. A tour of the early civilizations of the Anatolian heartland. Contact: British Museum Tours, 46 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QG. (071) 322-8895/1234.
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