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Nature, politics and ideology

Political turmoil and natural upheaval have the potential both to threaten and to protect our ancient heritage.

Nature and politics have proved a potent threat to archaeological material over recent months, with turbulent social unrest across the Middle East, and the calamitous natural disaster that has shaken Japan. Issues of this magnitude bring the question of safeguarding our world heritage to the fore.

The truth is that political unrest and natural disasters have always eroded material remains. The destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in 2001 by the Taliban has antecedents in the Byzantine Iconoclasm of the 8th and 9th centuries. The looting of Cairo’s Egyptian Museum in January is a stark reminder of the challenge facing art and antiquities as the totalitarian world becomes redefined. Archaeological sites can also become the pawns of politicians, as in the case of the beautiful Khmer temple of Preah Vihear, located on the Thai-Cambodian border, when nations seek to identify themselves with the greatness of past civilisations.

The earthquake and tsunami that struck north-east Japan on 11 March caused substantial damage to historic sites such as Zuigan-ji, the famous 9th century AD Buddhist temple in Matsushima. The recent natural disaster in the Pacific is mirrored in the archaeological record. The eruption that blew apart the Aegean island of Santorini in the Bronze Age, along with the loss of Pompeii and Herculaneum in AD 79, are famous examples of natural disasters that had a profound impact on the ancient Mediterranean.

While the forces of nature can rarely be tamed, the environment can also protect, and just as Vesuvian ash preserved the cities on the Bay of Naples, so the legacy of Egyptian art is largely a consequence of the region’s aridity and the protection afforded by wind-blown sand. Dr Mark Merrony
**Multimedia Minerva**

Following the redesign of *Minerva* magazine some 18 months ago, which has been extremely well received by our readers, the team at *Minerva* has turned its attention to the magazine’s website. From summer 2011, you will be able to access a host of new features online at www.minervamagazine.com, including frequently updated content, submission guidelines for contributors, a comprehensive events diary, and online renewal for subscribers.

Many new *Minerva* readers have contacted us to ask for back issues of the magazine – in fact these have been so popular that we have sold out of almost all issues prior to 2009. In order to continue to offer this valuable resource to our readers, we are currently in the process of creating a digital archive of *Minerva* features dating back to the first issue 20 years ago. You will be able to search for articles by keyword and download issues of the magazine as printable PDF files – and best of all, the service will be free to *Minerva* subscribers.

Subscribers will now also be able to benefit from an e-reader version of *Minerva*. The new application can be downloaded from our website (non-subscribers will also be able to purchase the e-reader issue). As well as all the content of the print edition, the app features additional audio and video files.

If your fascination with the past extends to your television viewing, you will notice a series of advertisements for *Minerva* airing on the History Channel and on More 4 in May. New subscribers may be enticed by the exciting free gifts on offer.

This programme of investment, designed to make *Minerva* even more enjoyable for our readers and subscribers, comes with an unavoidable increase in the cover price. You will notice that we are still offering this issue of *Minerva* at the 2010 price in newsagents, and we are also giving our subscribers the chance to renew their subscriptions at the old price, which is being held at 2009 levels for a limited time only. You will be able to take advantage of this special offer and see the changes for yourself at www.minervamagazine.com.

**Looting of the Egyptian Museum**

On 15 March the Egyptian authorities finally released the complete list of 63 antiquities that had been stolen from the Egyptian Museum during the looting that ensued on the night of 28 January (see *Minerva* March/April 2011, pp. 4–5). On 2 February Dr Zahi Hawass, just appointed on 31 January as the first full Minister of State for Antiquities (who resigned on 3 March and was reappointed on 30 March), announced that there had been no losses at the museum.

On 12 February he stated that 18 pieces had been stolen, of which four were recovered just outside the museum. A total of 12 objects were subsequently located. One of the artworks returned to the museum was the limestone statuette of Akhenaten holding an offering table featured in the last issue of *Minerva*. Found by a 16-year-old boy near a trash can in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, the focus of the protests that brought down the regime of Hosni Mubarak, the sculpture was returned to the Ministry of State for Antiquities Affairs by the boy’s uncle, Dr Sabry Abdel Rahman, from the American University in Cairo.

Many of the antiquities looted from the Egyptian Museum in January were created during the 18th dynasty and included a large gilded wooden figure of Tutankhamun on a skiff about to throw a harpoon, broken and looted from the Egyptian Museum. 18th dynasty. H. 75.5 cm. Cat. no. JE 60710.1.

Gilded wooden figure of Tutankhamun on a skiff about to throw a harpoon, broken and looted from the Egyptian Museum. 18th dynasty. H. 75.5 cm. Cat. no. JE 60710.1.

Above: Large wood *shabti* of Yuya, polychrome and gilt, with seven lines of incised inscription. 18th dynasty, Thebes. H. 25.7 cm. Cat. no. JE 68989.

Below: Steatite figure of a seated scribe with Thoth as a baboon on a pedestal, from Amarna, 18th dynasty. H. 14 cm. Cat. no. JE 59291.
At the beginning of March, it was announced that many of the Nimrud Ivories, excavated between 1949–63 from the ruins of the ancient Assyrian city that now lies in northern Iraq, had been acquired by the British Museum.

The vast majority of the ivories were originally carved by artisans working in the Phoenician and Syrian cities on the Mediterranean coast between the 9th–7th centuries BC. Many were probably brought to Nimrud as booty following Assyrian invasions during the 9th century BC.

The ivories were excavated by the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, now the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), with excavations led by the prominent archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan (1904–78) who, aside from being one of the leading experts on the cultures of ancient Iraq, was also in the public eye as the second husband of Agatha Christie. She played an active role in the excavations that unearthed many of the ivories, and also wrote a number of her detective novels while working at Nimrud.

The ivories originally formed the decorative elements on chariots and horse trappings, as well as on furniture. Many are intricately carved to depict both human and zoomorphic figures as well as floral and geometric motifs. Many of the ivories would originally have been covered with gold foil and inlaid with precious and semi-precious stones.

The high level of skilled craftsmanship required to carve the ancient ivories, as well as the historical importance of the artefacts, has been emphasised by Dr John Curtis, Keeper of the Middle East collections at the British Museum: ‘Nimrud is one of the most important sites in the Ancient Near...
Earliest known human skull-cups originated in Somerset

Scientists working at London’s Natural History Museum have dated three human skull-cups found in Somerset to 14,700 years ago, making them the earliest known examples. Two of the skull-cups were excavated from Gough’s Cave in the Cheddar Gorge in the 1920s, and one was discovered in 1987. The team carried out new examinations using state-of-the-art microscopy at the museum. The latest radiocarbon dating techniques also indicated that the skull-cups were the oldest examples in the world.

The practice of making containers from human skulls is well known worldwide, having been documented from the Scythians and Vikings to more recent peoples, but archaeological evidence of this practice is extremely rare. The new research reveals for the first time the intricate process of skull-cup manufacture, and the anatomical knowledge their Cro-Magnon creators must have possessed.

Palaeoanthropologist Dr Silvia Bello, lead author of the paper, explains: ‘We suspected that these early humans were highly skilled at manipulating human bodies once they died, and our research reveals just what great anatomists they were. The cut-marks and dents show how the heads were scrupulously cleaned of any soft tissues shortly after death. The skulls were then modified by removing the bones of the face and the base of the skull. Finally, these cranial vaults were meticulously shaped into cups by retouching the broken edges, possibly to make them more regular. All in all it was a very painstaking process given the tools available.’

The team also found evidence that suggests some of the removed flesh was eaten. There were de-fleshing signs on the crania (skulls) associated with the removal of soft tissue, and extraction of bone marrow for nutritional purposes. However, museum human origins expert Prof Chris Stringer, who was part of this research team and helped excavate one of the skulls, says the amount of work that went into the process of cleaning and finishing the skull-cups suggests that their purpose was ceremonial rather than just nutritional, and they may have been used to hold blood, wine or food during rituals.

The human skulls belonged to two adults and one child. A precise replica of one of the adult skull-cups will be on display at the Natural History Museum until 31 May.

East, and the carved ivories found there are amongst the finest products recovered from an archaeological excavation. These ivories tell us a great deal about the art and history of the Middle East in the early 1st millennium BC, and now they will be available for everyone to see and study.

The entire collection held by the BISI comprises almost 1000 artefacts, with a further 5000 fragmentary items. By raising almost £1.2 million, the British Museum has been able to purchase a third of the collection, while the BISI also agreed to present another third to the Museum as a gift. It is hoped the artefacts that yet remain in the possession of the BISI will be acquired by the British Museum, some of the artefacts will be placed on permanent display in the near future, while others will be available for touring exhibitions. Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund that contributed a substantial grant to the British Museum to allow the acquisition of the artefacts, said: ‘This collection of ancient ivories is truly inspiring. They’re the fruit of many years of painstaking excavation, research and conservation, and it’s only right that they should now be housed in a public collection for everyone to admire and learn from.’
Artefacts found in Texas predate Clovis culture by 2500 years

Researchers in Texas have discovered thousands of human artefacts in a layer of earth directly beneath an assemblage ascribed to the Clovis culture. This find adds weight to the theory that other cultures preceded that of the Clovis in North America. The artefacts appear to be between 13,200 and 15,500 years old and include biface and blade technology that may have later been adapted, and improved upon, by the Clovis people, whose tools were known for their distinctive ‘fluted’ points. The Clovis were thought to be the original North American settlers, having arrived there about 13,000 years ago. Recently, however, scientists have presented evidence hinting at several earlier cultures, although this has been disputed owing to a lack of reliably dated artefacts.

Published in the journal Science, the new research, by Michael Waters of Texas A&M University and colleagues from across the United States, describes various artefacts found at the Buttermilk Creek Complex in Texas appear to be 13,200 to 15,500 years old, predating the Clovis culture in North America by about 2500 years, researchers say.

‘At the Debra L. Friedkin site, Texas, we have found evidence of an early human occupation 2500 years older than Clovis,’ Waters said. ‘This makes the Friedkin site the oldest credible archaeological site in Texas and North America. The site is important to the debate about the timing of the colonisation of the Americas and the origins of Clovis.’

In the past, it was believed that the Clovis people were the oldest human inhabitants of the Americas, having come to the New World from north-east Asia by crossing the Bering Land Bridge, which once connected Asia and North America. However, no Clovis technology has been found in north-east Asia and the fluted points that have been discovered in Alaska are all too recent to be Clovis. The new discovery supports the idea that the Clovis culture, including the use of fluted points, developed in North America.

‘This discovery provides ample time for Clovis to develop,’ said Waters. ‘People could have experimented with stone and invented the weapons and tools that we now recognize as Clovis. In short, it is now time to abandon once and for all the “Clovis First” model and develop a new model for the peopling of the Americas.’

The Persepolis Tablets

On 29 March, 2011 the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals decided that the so-called Persepolis tablets in the University of Chicago and the Chicago Field Museum would not be immediately auctioned off to repay debts owed by the current government of Iran. This reversed a decision from a lower court that did not consider the tablets immune from seizure under the 1976 Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. Under this law, items used by foreign governments are protected from seizure if they are used for non-commercial purposes. In contrast, items of commerce are subject to the law. The main issue is if the Persepolis tablets should be classified as ‘non-commercial’. The matter will now be decided by the lower court. However, the fate of the artefacts is far from settled. Another law, the 2002 Terrorism Risk Insurance Act, may also be used. While cultural heritage was never intended as the target of either law, this has not stopped Iranian antiquities held in the collections of the universities of Chicago and Harvard, and in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, from being considered fair game. At a time of decreasing budgets for culture, American museums are coming under threat from laws that were designed to seize assets from rogue states and terrorists. These laws must be amended as not to impact the holdings of American museums. It is also clear that once a precedent is established, loans of artefacts and cultural property from other nations would also be subject to seizure. This would have an immediate and profoundly detrimental effect on the display of ancient art in America.

Murray Eiland
In the late 1980s, the historical novelist and screenwriter George MacDonald Fraser noted that, ‘If people of the future had to rely solely on historical films for their knowledge of the Ancient World, they might conclude that Rome’s importance was confined to a single century, from the ending of the Republic to the death of Nero in 68 AD’ (The Hollywood History of the World, 1988, pp. 19–20). Over the last decade, however, following the critical and commercial success of Ridley Scott’s Gladiator (2000) set around AD 180, filmmakers have shifted to later periods of Roman history. This recent trend of depicting Roman history beyond that of the Julio-Claudian dynasty has continued with the release of The Eagle, which opened across the US at the end of last year and across Britain and Europe in March. Set in AD 140, the film follows the quest of Roman Centurion Marcus Flavius Aquila (played by Channing Tatum) and his British slave Esca (Jamie Bell), as they seek to regain the eagle standard and discover the fate of a lost legion that vanished 20 years earlier. The Eagle is also the second film in as many years that not only takes as its setting the first half of the 2nd century AD, but also the troublesome northern frontier of Britain. As with Centurion, released in 2010, the central theme of The Eagle is the mysterious disappearance of Legio IX Hispana, lost while attempting to pacify the Iron Age inhabitants of present-day Scotland.

With a proud military record of service under Julius Caesar throughout the Gallic and Civil Wars in the 50s and 40s BC, Legio IX Hispana was probably also part of the Claudian invasion of Britain in AD 43, remaining in the newly established province and later suffering a heavy defeat to Boudica’s rebellious forces in AD 61. With the suppression of the uprising, the legion was moved northwards to York (Eboracum), and building work in the legionary fort indicates that the legion was still in existence in AD 108. However, when a list of active legions was compiled by Marcus Aurelius (AD 161–80), that of Legio IX Hispana was missing. Although there is no firm evidence of the fate of the legion, the Roman author Marcus Cornelius Fronto (c. AD 100–70) does refer to great numbers of Roman legionaries having been killed by the Britons during the reign of Hadrian (r. AD 117–38). Hadrian certainly appears to have been experiencing problems in the north of Britain at the beginning of his reign, and this probably influenced his decision to build his eponymous wall. Construction of the Wall began in AD 122 and, despite stretching 120km from the River Tyne in the east to the shores of the Solway Firth in the west, it was completed within half a dozen years. While in The Eagle, Hadrian’s Wall is portrayed as strictly delineating the civilised Roman world to the south from the barbarian-controlled lands to the north, in reality the Wall probably functioned primarily as a means of controlling trade into and out of the Roman province, with the gates in the wall allowing Roman authorities to oversee the flow of people and exact customs tariffs on the import and export of commodities. The Wall would be difficult to defend against a large invasion from northern tribes, although it would help stop small scale raiding and its very construction would impress the tribal communities with the power and prestige of the Roman Empire. Hadrian’s Wall was largely abandoned at the beginning of the 140s, following the advancement of the Roman frontier more than 150km to the north and the construction of the stone footed turf defensive line of the Antonine Wall. However, by 164 Hadrian’s Wall was reoccupied, and it continued to be garrisoned by auxiliary troops until the end of Roman Britain in the early 5th century.

Although several officers of Legio IX Hispana are attested in the 120s, and there is also evidence that the legion was transferred to the Netherlands, the possibility that it was destroyed by northern British tribes very soon after Hadrian’s accession to the purple has remained popular, primarily due to the success of Rosemary Sutcliff’s best-selling novel The Eagle of the Ninth (1954), upon which the recent film is based. Why the historically uncertain fate of a single legion in an underdeveloped part of the Roman Empire should continue to inspire depictions in popular culture is difficult to understand. Whether because it represents an ancient clash of civilisations, which brought the power of Rome into direct confrontation with the tribes of prehistoric Scotland, or because of the presence of Hadrian’s famous wall, remains unclear. However, what is not in doubt is that Roman history still has the power to capture the imagination of the cinema-going public and, with returns of $28.5 million in the US alone, The Eagle has again demonstrated that stories set in the ancient Roman Empire are commercially viable.
Philippa Collins travels through the ancient land of Nubia, where a rich archaeological heritage has the power to amaze and captivate.

Northern Sudan is a place of immense space, wonderful sunsets, friendly people and fascinating archaeology. Relatively few tourists visit the region and many people are unaware of the contribution of this land to African and Egyptian history.

While the ancient history of northern Sudan is fascinating, piecing it together is painstaking work, and there is a chronic lack of funding for archaeological excavations. Research is further hindered by the legacy of Egypt-centric interpretations, variation on the names of the pharaohs, uncertain chronology, different interpretations of the area covered by ‘Nubia’, and the distinction between Upper and Lower Nubia. Geographical boundaries are now so arbitrary that it is not possible to exactly equate modern regions to those of ancient times, and interpretation is complicated by the use of the name ‘Ethiopia’ by ancient writers when referring to the area south of Egypt. Some modern writers still use ‘Ethiopia’ when discussing the archaeology of this region. To make matters even more confusing, much of Egyptian Nubia was submerged when the Aswan Dam was built, so today Nubia is generally accepted to be approximately the area from south of the Aswan Dam to just south of Khartoum.

During the construction of the Aswan High Dam in the 1960s and 70s, most international attention was focused on the temples rescued in Egypt (see Minerva, May/June, 2010, pp. 44–46). By contrast, many people were unaware that large numbers of Nubian archaeological sites were also drowned by the formation of Lake Nasser (known as the Nubian Lake in Sudan). In the 1960s UNESCO launched a campaign to save Nubian monuments, some of which were moved to new locations near the original sites, while others were transported to Khartoum where they provide a wonderful surprise for visitors wandering through the grounds of the National Museum. Similarly, the Sudanese Ministry of Tourism and National Heritage and National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) appealed for international help for rescuing a piece of Man’s cultural heritage. The Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project (MDASP) was supported by several countries, including Anglo-German and Polish teams. This work is being published by the International Society for Nubian Studies and the Sudan Archaeological Research Society (SARS), based at the British Museum. The mission of SARS is to promote interest in the Sudan’s cultural heritage and raise awareness of its place in the history of mankind. Most significantly, the Society mounts expeditions to excavate and record threatened sites before they are lost to knowledge forever.

Evidence at Kerma indicates settlement from c. 2500 BC, with the sites developing into an exceptional religious complex that is usually interpreted as the earliest kingdom of Kush. The massive Deffufa, possibly the oldest building in Sudan, is found here.
Sudanese archaeology

the Kushites, a succession of pharaohs – Piye (Piankhi), Shabako, Shabitko (Shabataqo), Taharqo and Tanutamani (Tanwetamani) – ruled from c. 747 to 656 BC. Piye is thought to be the king who defeated the Egyptians and imposed his rule over the whole of Egypt. However, it is Taharqo who is probably the best known member of the dynasty. He carried out a substantial building programme in Sudanese Nubia and Egypt, and is mentioned in the Bible (Isaiah 37:8–9, and 2 Kings 19:8–9).

Kushite rule in Egypt was brought to an end following the Assyrian invasions, which began in 674 BC. Nevertheless, after their expulsion from Egypt, the dynasty continued to rule in Sudan, moving their capital to Meroe. Even when the Napatan kings were succeeded by the Meroitic kings, the latter still used Egyptian titles and symbols on their inscriptions and statues, and continued to claim authority over Egypt. Psamtik I (r. 664–610 BC), who reunited Upper and Lower Egypt in c. 656 BC, is credited with the obliteration of the names of the Kushite pharaohs. Major caches of broken statues of the Black Pharaohs were found at Jebel Barkal by the American George Reisner between 1916 and 1920, and at Doukki Gel by Charles Bonnet in 2003. These give us a remarkable picture of the appearance of these pharaohs, but details of their history remain fragmentary and the chronology of their rule is still the topic of debate.

Visits to archaeological sites in Sudan are strictly controlled and tourists must pay a licence fee. Jebel Barkal, ‘the Holy Mountain’, at the foot of which lies the ancient city of Napata, is located some 400km north of Khartoum. The best way to appreciate the extent of the archaeological remains of Napata is to climb to the top of Jebel Barkal and look down at the outline of the temples in the sand before the desert gives way to the green strip of cultivated land that runs along the banks of the Nile (Fig 2). The river will sometimes flood right up to the foot of the sandstone mountain, but fortunately most of the archaeology seems to have survived reasonably well over the course of two and a half millennia (Figs 4, 5).

At this sacred site, a temple originally constructed by Thutmose III (r. c. 1504–1450 BC), successor to the famous Egyptian queen Hatshepsut, was dedicated to Amun, a deity worshipped by Egyptians and Kushites. As the Egyptians withdrew from the region, the site became the centre of the Kushite (Napatan) kingdom, which rose in the 8th century BC. Worship of Amun continued at Napata, and religious and burial traditions that had gone out of fashion in Egypt were revived by the Kushites, who also extended many of the buildings. Rising above the temples at Napata is a rock pinnacle that has been interpreted as a natural equivalent to the uraeus of the pharaohs. At the base of the rock a temple was dedicated to the goddess Mut, built by the Kushite king Taharqo (Fig 3). The site is one of the largest archaeological complexes in Sudan complete with temples, chapels and palaces.

Perhaps one of the more surprising facts about Sudan is that with over 200 pyramids, the country is home to far more than are found in Egypt. Although generally small, usually measuring only about 30m in height, the sheer number is an outstanding reminder of the ancient history of Nubia. This pyramid-building practice dates from the beginning of the 7th century BC, and the structures are found at the six royal cemeteries spanning the period 700 BC to AD 350. At the cemetery of El Kurru, where

together with a cemetery containing as many as 30,000 graves, which has yielded numerous skeletons and artefacts, including beautiful pottery. In the 15th century BC the New Kingdom pharaohs conquered Kerma and established their rule, later pushing further south where the remains of temples and fortresses testify to the Egyptian presence, no doubt protecting the trade routes and the gold mines.

In the 8th century BC a new kingdom arose, with Napata as its centre. It was this dynasty that gave rise to the ‘Black Pharaohs’ – the kings of Nubia who ruled over Egypt as the 25th dynasty. Known by the Egyptians as
most of the royal family from the 25th dynasty were buried, there are exceptional wall paintings found in two well preserved tombs. One is attributed to Tanwetamani, while the other depicts the journey of Queen Qalhata, daughter of Piye, into the afterlife (Fig 6). At the Jebel Barkal site there are about 20 pyramids (Fig 1), whilst upstream at Nuri there is another important complex where Taharqo was buried (Fig 8).

The royal pyramids at Meroe, about 200km to the north-east of Khartoum, have become a major tourist attraction (Figs 7, 10). They differ from those at Giza in many ways: they are smaller, were constructed more recently, and while the pyramids of the Old Kingdom have an inclination of up to 52°, the Merotic pyramids can be as much as 81°. The Sudanese pyramids are also usually located on the east bank, rather than on the west bank, of the Nile (with the important exception of Nuri), and are oriented between north-east and south.

It is the construction of the pyramids in Sudan that differs most from their older Egyptian counterparts. Sudanese pyramids have an outer shell of just one or two blocks of stone filled with rubble. The burial chambers were cut into the bedrock at the base of the pyramid, accessed by a staircase leading down to them. The pyramid was built over the chamber after the burial. A chapel was located to the east, and sometimes a pylon and temenos wall (Fig 10).

The Italian Guiseppe Ferlini (1800–70), who discovered the famous ‘Gold of Meroe’ treasure in 1834 in one of the burial chambers, is generally cited as the main destroyer of the Meroe pyramids. However, there is evidence that Ferlini might have deliberately written that he found treasure in the top of the pyramid to deflect future treasure-seekers from excavating the chambers.

In the remote area of Musawwarat es-Sufra, located almost 30km from the Nile, the Great Enclosure is an intriguing site comprising a complex group of buildings, constructed on terraces and approached by ramps (Fig 14). It was the presence of the ramps, together with numerous reliefs and graffiti of elephants (Fig 12), that lead one archaeologist to suggest that elephants were trained at the site for military and ceremonial purposes. However, the ramps are rather narrow and such a possibility has now been largely discounted. It is still unknown if the complex was a royal palace, acted...
There is evidence that Ferlini might have deliberately written that he found treasure in the top of the pyramid to deflect future treasure-seekers from excavating the chambers as a place of pilgrimage, or even functioned as a venue for hunting events. Prof Steffen Wenig of the Musawwarat Mission has written that ‘there is no doubt as to the interpretation of the Great Enclosure as a complex of sacred purpose, complemented with palace, magazine and workshops, and of the central temple as a cultic installation’. In addition to the ramps, there are other unique features including courtyards that contain no right-angled corners. Nearby is the reconstructed Lion Temple of Apedemak (Figs 12, 13). Here again, in addition to depictions of lions, many elephants are carved in relief, both within the temple and on the outer walls (Fig 15).

Accounts of the region have been written mainly from an Egyptian perspective, overlooking independent developments in the area. Amadou-Mahtar M’bow, former Director-General of UNESCO, wrote: ‘African societies were regarded as societies without a history... Furthermore, the African continent was virtually never considered as a historical entity. On the contrary, stress was laid on everything which might give credence to the idea of a division, since time immemorial, between a “white Africa” and a “black Africa”, each ignorant of the other...’

Various ‘revisionist’ books and articles are now being written to redress the balance, both to give weight to an African point of view and to re-examine the interpretation of Egyptian history. Necia Harkless has suggested in Nubian Pharaohs and Meroitic Kings: The Kingdom of Kush (2006), that ‘Egypt was fundamentally African.’ Others, including Bruce Williams in The Lost Pharaohs of Nubia in Egypt (1989), have suggested that Egyptian civilisation ‘may have moved from the south to north, a concept which is contrary to current thinking on the subject.’ There is thus much debate about the extent of Egyptian influence on Nubian culture, and vice versa. Lack of funds for archaeological work seriously hinders progress in Sudan: without adequate funding, it is impossible to investigate the culture, ethnography, trade routes and all the social aspects of the history of the region. David Edwards, in The Nubian Past (2004) suggests ‘we are now looking at archaeological cultures and ancient settlement landscapes’ that were ‘virtually unsuspected’ before the 1960s.

Yet even for tourists visiting northern Sudan without a complete knowledge of the region’s ancient history, the monuments are still breathtaking, and set in a beautiful country with incredibly welcoming and friendly hosts. It is clear that long after they were defeated and driven out of Egypt, the Nubians retained many of the traditions from the north, including burial in pyramids, a practice that had ended in Egypt 800 years earlier.

Many thanks to SARS for giving me permission to use their archives in the British Museum.
Dalu Jones reviews a new exhibition of Etruscan artefacts, on show in Italy for the first time since the middle of the 19th century.

The Etruscan collection in the Louvre, one of the most important in Europe, was assembled in the 19th century through a series of acquisitions of bronzes, terracottas, statuary and other artefacts. Artworks from the collection have now returned to the Etruscan homeland of Tuscany and are on display at the Museo dell’Accademia Etrusca Cortona (MAEC). The museum has recently been refurbished and is at the hub of a large archaeological park containing an Etruscan necropolis still undergoing excavation.

Many of the artefacts featured in the Cortona exhibition were excavated by dilettante archaeologists and dispersed among collectors like Edmé-Antoine Durand (1768–1835), who obtained them from the flourishing antiquities markets in Paris and Tuscany. The French royal collections had contained a small number of Etruscan artefacts, but it was not until Charles X (r. 1824–30) purchased Durand’s collection in 1825 that a significant group of Etruscan objects were brought to Paris. This was to form the core of a new section in the Louvre devoted to the arts of ancient Etruria. Durand went on to gather another collection of Etruscan antiquities before he died in 1835. However, when this second collection was sold, the Louvre only acquired a handful of artefacts.

Like Durand, Alessandro Castellani (1824–1883), a member of an important Roman family of goldsmiths and antique dealers, was devoted to collecting Etruscan art and artefacts. After fleeing to Paris for political reasons, Castellani was befriended by the composer Gioacchino Rossini, who introduced him into the French society of the period. Castellani acquired artefacts such as the rare ivory *pyxis* now on show in Cortona, excavated from the late 7th/early 6th-century BC necropolis at Fonte Rotella near Chiusi (Fig 2). It is decorated with various animals, both fantastic and naturalistic,
and a horseman carved in low relief.

Giovanni Pietro Campana (1808–80) was the most important of the group of gifted amateurs who rediscovered the long-forgotten and mysterious Etruscan civilisation through finds made at Vulci towards the end of the 1820s. A few years later, Etruscan sites began to be discovered at Cerveteri and Chiusi, as well as in other parts of Etruria and Latium. Born into an aristocratic family, Campana began collecting at an early age, adding to the collection of statuary, bronzes, coins, medallions and paintings he had inherited from his father and grand-father. A member of numerous scholarly institutions, Campana organised excavations in and around Rome. Through acquisitions and archaeological finds, he was able to gradually build up a vast and internationally renowned museum of his own. Most of the objects were housed in his villa at the Lateran in Rome, but some were kept in various storerooms and with dealers.

Until the early decades of the 19th century, antique jewellery had been of little interest to collectors, but Campana helped draw attention to the beauty and iconographic importance of these artefacts by acquiring major pieces that he added to his collection. A first inventory of the collection, drawn up in 1838, already features some masterpieces of Etruscan jewellery among the list of 74 artefacts and artworks. One of these was the gold necklace with an amulet pendant depicting the river deity Achelous, son of Ocean and Thetis, who was represented in Etruria in human form but with pointed ears and the horns of a bull (Fig 1). It is likely that it was made in Chiusi in c. 480 BC, and is evidence of a remarkable mastery of sophisticated gold-smithing techniques, granulation in particular. Another example is a pair of gold and glass paste earrings in the shape of a sun chariot and Victories. They come from the region of Bolsena and date to the late 4th/early 3rd century BC (Fig 3).

Campana’s collection grew rapidly. Two unpublished manuscripts cataloguing the collection preserved at the British Museum, one written in 1856 by S. Birch and C. Newton, the other in 1859, contain far more extensive lists of Etruscan jewellery and Greek-type jewellery made in southern Italy, Etruria and Greece itself. Most of this jewellery – which came from excavations directed by Campana in Latium and Etruria – together with artefacts acquired on the antiquities markets, had no indication of provenance. Campana’s collection also included pastiches combining ancient and modern elements, made by various gold-smiths including the great Alessandro Castellani and his family. These pastiches typify the 19th century practice of completely reworking a piece of ancient jewellery as part of the restoration process. Alessandro Castellani personally restored the Campana jewellery to make it ready for sale, and he was the initiator of a fashion craze for jewellery inspired by ancient originals.

In 1833, Campana was made Director of the wealthy Monte di Pietà
in Rome – a public institution that collected donations from wealthy members of society, to be made available as financial loans to people in need. However, his passion for collecting Etruscan art and antiquities bankrupted him in 1854, and he was forced to pawn part of his collection to the Monte di Pietà, funds from which he redirected to secure cash to alleviate his financial troubles. In 1857 he was arrested, tried for embezzlement, and sentenced to 20 years in prison. Thinks to the support of his friends and a section of the press, the Pope commuted the sentence to exile outside the papal state. As a result of Campana’s legal and financial plight, the works of art in his collections were put on sale: on 20 May, 1861, the French government of Napoleon III signed the contract to purchase the majority of the artefacts. The remainder of the collection was acquired by British buyers and Russian Tsar Alexander II.

One of the most fascinating objects acquired by the Louvre in 1863 is a 3rd century BC terracotta head depicting Ariadne (Fig 4). Found in 1829 in the ruins of a small building near a theatre at Falterii Novi, about 50km north of Rome, the head is a fragment of a large statue, fashioned by hand in separate parts. Ariadne is represented covered with jewels and in the process of hiding her face with a veil, a gesture (anaikalyptis) typical of sacred unions (hierogamies). She wears a Bacchic crown of ivy, further proof that this was originally a cult figure, part of a group representing the wedding of Dionysos and Ariadne. It is surprising that this magnificent example of Hellenistic clay sculpture lay all but forgotten in the deposits of the Louvre, even though it had been a centrepiece in Campana museum.

Another beautiful object is the terracotta askos vessel in the shape of a duck, painted with a nude female victory bearing a vase (Fig 6). Discovered at Chiusi, the vessel dates to c. 320 BC and originally contained scented oil. Unfortunately, its provenance is unknown but an attribution to the painter of Montediano and to the group of ceramics with red figures present in Northern Etruria has been advanced. Among the outstanding artworks on view in Cortona, there is also a peculiar 3rd century BC bronze vase, part of a funerary ensemble from Orvieto (Fig 5). In the shape of a woman’s head that originally wore a now lost gold crown, the inscription ‘Suthina’ was incised across the forehead.

A well preserved terracotta anthropomorphic canopic vase, possibly made in Chiusi during the 6th century BC, is a further example of the quality of the objects on display in the exhibition (Fig 7). The base consists of an ovoid container with mobile handles. The lid is shaped like a female head, complete with stylised hair and holes in the ears that once held earrings.

Two small bronze votive statuettes of kouroi, dating to the 5th and 4th centuries, were part of an exceptional hoard found on the shores of the so-called Lake of the Idols on Mount Falterona, located along the road linking northern Etruria with the Po Valley. The site was found by chance in 1838 and more than 600 small bronze statuettes and 2000 fragments of votives were unearthed (Figs 8, 13). The hoard was dispersed among various museums, including the Louvre and the British Museum, following a series of public sales that took place after the artefacts had been placed on show in Rome in 1842 at the Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica. A re-excavation of the site on Mount Falterona in 1972 produced further statuettes and anatomical ex-votos similar to those found the previous century, providing further proof that this remote location was probably home to a special shrine dedicated to healing and the deities of war.

The exhibition runs until 3 July, and was made possible through a three-year collaboration project signed between the MAEC and the Louvre. A catalogue is available: Le collezioni del Louvre a Cortona, Skira, Milan, 2011. For additional details, Tel (39) 0575 637 235; email prenotazioni@cortonamaec.org.
According to the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, Delos was a floating island until it was anchored in position in the central Aegean by Poseidon to allow for the birth of the twins Apollo and Artemis (Fig 1). While the goddess took her epithet 'Cynthia' from Mount Cynthus, which rose from the island (Figs 2, 3), it was with her brother that Delos would forever be most closely associated and, from at least the archaic period, the island was a cult centre dedicated to the worship of Apollo, its sanctuary built with contributions from many Greek states.

Delos was the religious and originally the financial centre of the anti-Persian Delian League in the 5th century BC. It fell under increasingly close Athenian control, and in 426 BC the Athenians purified the island in an attempt to avert the plague, reimposing a traditional rule forbidding births and deaths there. During the island's period of independence, from 314 to 167 BC, a cosmopolitan population of Italians, Syrians, Jews, Samaritans and Egyptians joined its Greek inhabitants. The theatre on Delos has a capacity of 5000–6000, indicating that the island was home to a relatively large population during the Hellenistic period (Fig 4). In 167 BC Rome returned Delos to Athenian control and the island prospered as the commercial centre of the Aegean, benefiting particularly from the slave trade (Fig 5). With the destruction of its trading rival Corinth by Rome in 146 BC, Delos became even more important as a trading city. However, in 88 BC the island was attacked and the port city sacked by Mithridates of Pontus, and in 69 BC Delos was again raided by the Pontic king's pirate allies. Following these attacks, Delos lost its economic importance and the population declined drastically, although it remained inhabited until the 6th century AD. After this time, however, the island was more or less abandoned, used only by hunters and pirates and as an occasional base for states conducting anti-pirate expeditions. (At the last Greek census in 2001, Delos had only 14 inhabitants.)

Western European interest in Delos awakened in the 15th century, with an account in the Liber

David Noy investigates the activities of some of Britain’s earliest sightseers and collectors, who visited Delos between 1620 and 1830.

**Fig 1. The Birth of Apollo and Diana, by Marcantonio Franceschini, 1692–1709. Oil on canvas. H.175, L. 210cm. Liechtenstein Museum, Vienna. The lush landscape and the size of the island do not reflect the real Delos.**

**Fig 2. Mount Cynthus which rises from the centre of Delos. Photo: courtesy of markomni.**

**Fig 3. View looking down from the summit of Mount Cynthus. Photo: courtesy of Chanel Wheeler.**

**Fig 4.**
Greek archaeology

Insularum Archipelagi by Cristoforo Buondelmonti of Florence (1420). The traveller Cyriacus of Ancona arrived in 1445, but his detailed description was not available to later visitors, who had to rely on Callimachus, Strabo and other classical writers. The Venetians who controlled Delos until 1566 were the first to remove some of the works of art they found there. When the island passed to Turkish rule it became more inaccessible to westerners, but British interest was kindled by chance in the early 17th century.

Sir Thomas Roe (1581–1644), British Ambassador to the Ottoman court in Constantinople, found his services required by the two leading enthusiasts for the new fashion of collecting antiquities: Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel (1585–1646) and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (1592–1628) (Fig 6). Roe wrote to Arundel in 1622: 'Concerning antiquities in marbles, there are many in divers parts, but especially at Delphos [Delos], unesteemed here; and, I doubt not, easy to be procured for the charge of digging and fetching, which must be purposely undertaken.' This is the first reference to the fact that anyone who visited Delos with a suitable ship could remove whatever they liked without opposition from the Turkish authorities or local Greeks, which usually impeded collectors seeking to acquire artefacts on the mainland. It was not necessarily an easy journey, however, since hostile encounters with pirates, Turkish warships or rival collectors were frequent.

Roe did not travel to Delos himself but acquired information from the Greek Orthodox clergy. He wrote to Arundel in 1624: 'Besides, he [the Patriarch] hath told mee of a little island, the sacred place of the burial of all the ancient Greeks, utterly uninhabited and as yet unsearch'd.' This is a reference to Rheneia, the adjacent and larger island where Delians were buried. Roe wrote somewhat disingenuously to Buckingham two days later in exactly the same terms. He evidently interested the two men, since by 1628 both Arundel and Buckingham had received consignments of antiquities.
that included objects from Delos. However, Buckingham’s assassination in August of that year meant his collection attracted little attention and was quickly broken up, whereas Arundel’s soon became well known among scholars, and some of it was eventually bequeathed to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

There was a third participant in the treasure hunt. Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–1665) captained a naval expedition in the eastern Mediterranean on behalf of Charles I, and visited Delos in August 1628, recording: ‘With half my ships [sic] went to Delphos [sic], which is a verie good port, and there I spent my time taking in some marble stones and statues….’ He noted the difference between Delos itself and Rheneia, or Little and Great Delos as they were often called: ‘In the little Delphos there are brave marble stones heaped up in the great ruins of Apollo’s temple.’ Some of the Delian ‘stones and statues’ which he took were recorded as being in the king’s collection in 1634, but it is unclear what happened to them after Charles I’s execution in January 1649.

Interest in collecting Greek antiquities largely disappeared after the English Civil War (1642–51), and the next recorded British visitors to Delos were more concerned with sightseeing than with the wholesale removal of what they found. George Wheler (1651–1724), an early Grand Tourist, travelled to Greece in 1675–6 with Jacques Spon, a French doctor. Wheler’s main interest was in botany, but he and Spon both recorded the antiquities they found. They took a small boat to Delos, accompanied by an Italian from Tinos, who acted as their guide. They first investigated 11 columns, which they identified with the help of an inscription as the gymnasium. They soon found themselves in the ‘Temple of Apollo,’ where they found the trunk of a colossal statue lying on the ground. This was the Apollo of the Naxians of c. 580 BC, originally nine or ten metres high, which was gradually hacked to pieces by collectors and entrepreneurs. The face was removed either by a Venetian official or an English captain before Wheler arrived, and one foot reached the British Museum in 1819.

After touring the island (whose area is only 3.5 square kilometres) and discovering the theatre along with much else, Wheler and Spon found that their boat could not leave in the evening because of an unfavourable wind. They had few provisions and no water, and could not find the River Inopus that ancient geographers had described as flowing across the island. Eventually, one of their sailors climbed down into an ancient cistern to find enough water for the two nights they had to spend on the island before the wind relented and they could sail for Mykonos (Fig 9). A ‘Flemish gentleman’ who accompanied them had brought his dog and gun, presumably being more interested in the island’s rabbit population than its antiquities, so they did not go hungry.

The accounts published by Wheler and Spon, along with that of Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, who visited in 1700 on the orders of the French King Louis XIV, became set reading for 18th-century visitors, but many lamented that they could make little sense of the desolation of marble fragments in front of them. Most visitors landed at the ancient port (although the coastline had changed somewhat), and came immediately to the area of densest buildings. The remains of the statue of Apollo were an easily identifiable landmark close to the shore, and enabled the surrounding buildings to be identified as Apollo’s sanctuary. The adjacent portico bore an inscription crediting construction to Philip, King of Macedon, who was generally assumed to be Philip II (r. 359–336 BC), the father of Alexander the Great, but was in fact Philip V (221–179 BC) (Fig 7). Two other locations that could easily be recognised were the theatre to the south (Fig 4) and the so-called Naumachia to the north (Fig 10).
There was much discussion about the function of the latter: it was originally supposed that the small lake was used to stage mock sea-battles, until it was observed that it was too small (it is now known as the Sacred Lake, although it was drained in 1925 to prevent the spread of water-born bacteria). The other geographical feature all visitors looked for, Mount Cythnos, was also something of a disappointment, as at 113m in height, it scarcely deserved the title of mountain (Fig 2).

Lord Charlemont (1728–99) visited Delos and Rheneia in August 1749, accompanied by his tutor and two friends, as well as a retinue of servants. Greek sailors manned the ship he had chartered, which carried cannons ready for use should they be attacked by any of the numerous pirate ships that cruised the Aegean during the 18th century. They spent three nights camping out under canvas: ‘Our beds were of dry seaweed and our dreams were inspired by Phoebus in reward for the pains we had taken to investigate his sacred island.’ Charlemont treated it as a romantic adventure and did not record much of what he saw, but the oval basin used for the sham sea fights is the best preserved monument of the island, called the Greater Delos. Many of them are in a state of great preservation, ornamented with festoons of flowers and bulls’ heads, and all of them formed of Parian marble (Fig 13). The despoilation of the islands had evidently not been as bad as most earlier visitors claimed, despite the further activities of the Russian fleet in 1789 and a French expedition in 1791.

One celebrated visitor was Lord Elgin in 1802 who, together with his pregnant wife, sailed from Athens to Constantinople aboard HMS Narcissus, commanded by Captain Donnelly. The voyage turned into something of a sightseeing cruise, as the party stopped at classical sites to search for antiquities. They reached Delos on 11 July after firing on a pirate ship whose crew also landed on the island. Lady Elgin saw exactly what all travellers saw: ‘The base of the Statue of Apollo and part of the body, of colossal proportions, still remain; the theatre is in ruins, but the oval basin used for the sham sea fights is the best preserved monument. The island of Delos is quite a desert, not even a shepherd on it.’ They also stopped at Rheneia, where Elgin acquired a cylindrical altar, now in the British Museum. Donnelly removed another from Delos, decorated with a procession of female figures and dedicated to Hestia, which he offered to the 2nd Earl Spencer along with various other souvenirs of his travels in Greece and Egypt. This altar went to Spencer’s residence at Wimbledon Park, and was later given to the British Museum.

The activities of the Narcissus were typical of British operations on Delos in the early 19th century, when aristocratic tourists and enterprising naval officers collected objects that could be removed without too much difficulty. Those who, like Legh, did not want to do this themselves could purchase Delian antiquities on nearby Mykonos. These found their way into private collections (often as ornaments for gardens and conservatories: see Minerva, May/June 2010, pp. 20–22) and museums, and now periodically reach the antiquities market: in October 2010, Christie’s auction house in South Kensington, London, sold for £23,750 a Delian altar that had been the property of the Earl of Shrewsbury at Ingestre Hall. With independence, the Greek government banned private excavations on Delos in 1830, and the École Française d’Athènes began official excavations in 1873. The stream of finds and publications since then shows that, despite the damage they did, British visitors from the 1620s to the 1820s only scratched the archaeological surface of Delos and Rheneia.
Descendants of Heracles


Ancient Macedonia is often regarded as peripheral to the affairs taking place in the Greek states to the south. The kingdom is traditionally envisaged as bursting into history during the second half of the 4th century BC to become, within the space of just two generations, the most powerful state in the known world. The rise of Macedonia is therefore often seen as beginning with the accession of Philip II (r. 359–336) and his subjugation of Greece, followed by his son Alexander’s conquest of the Persian Empire, which began in 334 BC and continued until his early death in 323 BC aged only 32. However, as this new exhibition is at pains to emphasise, the history and archaeology of Macedonia is ripe for reassessment. Drawing on art and artefacts, the vast majority of which have never before been on display outside of Greece, the artistic and archaeological heritage of this northerly Greek kingdom is explored.

As early as the Bronze Age, Macedonia was greatly influenced by contacts with the Mycenaean world lying to the south. Imported Mycenaean pottery dating to the 17th–15th centuries BC has been found at Torone in Chalkidike while wheel-made Mycenaean alabastra – containers of aromatic oils – made between 1350–1200 BC emphasise the enduring links between Macedonia and the Greek lands further south, as well as the adoption of Mycenaean lifestyles and fashions among sections of Macedonian society. It is perhaps weaponry that most clearly indicates the hierarchical nature of Late Bronze Age Macedonian society. Only powerful and influential individuals could have possessed the two bronze swords that have been found in the Sphekia region of Macedonia, one of which is believed to have been fashioned by a highly skilled swordsman working in the palace workshops of Knossos on northern Crete in about 1400–1375 BC. Though not such high-status weaponry, two spearheads found in the same region of Macedonia and dating to 1350–1200 BC were also typical of those used by Mycenaean warriors and may indicate either the presence of mercenaries from the south, or possibly networks of trade through which Mycenaean military equipment found its way to Macedonia.

The heart of the exhibition is, however, an exploration of the Temenids, the dynasty that came to the throne of Macedonia in the middle of the 7th century BC and ruled the kingdom during the Archaic and Classical periods of ancient history. Though this remarkable dynasty was brought to an end at the close of the 4th century BC, it was the political, military and cultural achievements of the Temenid kings that created the foundations for the subsequent Hellenistic era.

According to the founding myths of the Temenids (who are also frequently referred to as the Argeads), their dynasty was established in Macedonia by Perdiccas, a man of royal blood from Argos in the Peloponnese. While few scholars today accept the
historicity of this foundation story, it was nevertheless widely disseminated in the ancient Greek world. Writing in the 5th century BC, Herodotus refers to the Argolid antecedents of the Macedonian kings (Histories 8.137–8), while the poet Euripides (c. 480–406) composed the tragedy Archelaos in which the eponymous hero, son of king Temenos of Argos, was praised as the founder of the city of Aegae. Even the historian Thucydides (c. 460–395 BC) refers to the connection of the Macedonian royal house with the city of Argos (History of the Peloponnesian War 2.10), while at the start of the 5th century BC the judges at the Olympic Games also approved the legend of the Temenid royal house, allowing the Macedonian kings to participate in the Games.

This legendary connection to the rulers of Argos was crucial to the Macedonian kings, imbuing them with political and religious authority. According to divine genealogy, descendants of Temenos could also claim Heracles, greatest of Greek heroes, as their illustrious ancestor (Fig 1). Through the demi-god the Temenids also had familial ties to Zeus, most powerful of the gods. With such an ancestry, Macedonian kings could claim to possess the blood of the strongest and most courageous of men, reinforcing their right to lead their people in both peace and war. As blood descendents of Zeus, their kingship was also divinely sanctioned. As blood descendents of Zeus, their people in both peace and war.

A Macedonian could not claim Heracles, greatest of Greek heroes and gods was invaluable in a society saturated with a culture of machismo. A Macedonian could not recline at dinner if he had never killed a wild boar, and a belt could only be worn once an enemy had been killed in battle. An entire chapter of the exhibition catalogue is devoted to the importance of war and hunting within Macedonian society – martial skill was required of every male, from the time of the ephebeia (the rite of passage to adulthood) and throughout their adult life (Fig 2).

Macedonian women, like those elsewhere in the Greek world, were excluded from martial activities and played virtually no part in public life. Notable exceptions were, however, the religious ceremonies – women had a prominent role at festivals in honour of Dionysus, or female deities such as Demeter and her daughter Persephone. A collection of 26 lifelike terracotta heads, discovered in the tomb of an unknown Macedonian queen buried about 480 BC, possibly emphasise this relationship of royal women with the world of gods and spirits. Originally placed on wooden poles or statues (xoana), these astonishingly life-like and expressive busts were deliberately smashed and thrown into the tomb (Figs 3a, 3b). Olympias, the wife of Philip II and mother of Alexander the Great, was a devout follower of Bacchus and an initiate into the mysteries of the Great Gods of Samothrace, as well as serving as a high-priestess of the enigmatic ‘agadic’ rituals. The famous legend of Olympias sleeping with snakes is also ‘agadic’ rituals. The famous legend of Olympias sleeping with snakes is also
Eurydice I, wife of king Amyntas III (r. 393–470 BC), made public dedications to the gods (Fig 6).

Situated far to the north of the rest of the Greek world, Macedonia remained a traditional kingdom and did not participate in the great social, political and artistic upheavals that affected many of the more southerly states during the Archaic and Classical periods. Macedonian culture instead tended to reflect the principles of the Bronze Age preserved in Homeric poetry. The most obvious manifestation of this was in the political institutions of Macedon; while states such as Athens experimented with democracy, Macedonians stuck firmly to their system of monarchy. Even after the passing of the Temenids, the institution would persist until 167 BC, when the position of Macedonian king was finally dissolved by the Romans.

The practice of polygamy also survived in Macedonia when it had become rare elsewhere in Greece. Although designed to increase the chances of producing a male heir, the presence of multiple wives generated incessant matrimonial intrigue in the Temenid court, and succession struggles were frequent. On the death of Alexander I (r. 498–454 BC) the kingdom was riven by succession struggles, and the same happened at the start of the 4th century following the murder of Archeon I (r. 413–399 BC). The assassination of Philip II in 336 BC has also frequently been attributed to a plot hatched by one or other of his seven wives.

Macedonian funerary traditions also followed Bronze Age precedents. Although the most common burial practice at Aegae was that of inhumation, the emergence of the Temenid dynasty saw cremation adopted as the favoured funerary practice for Macedonian royalty and was even confined to the king and his male relations. According to Dr Angeliki Kottaridi (Director of excavations and of the Museum of the Royal Tombs at Aegae) cremation reflects not only the continuation of heroic burial as described in Homeric literature, but also the Temenid mythological relationship with Heracles, who committed self-immolation in order that he might ascend to join the gods on Olympus. By the later 4th century BC, however, cremation had percolated down the levels of Macedonian society, eventually becoming the dominant practice in the years following the death of Alexander the Great.

The burial ground of the Macedonian kings, the necropolis of Aegae, was located to the north of the city and spread over two square kilometres. The site was used from about 1100 BC through until the Roman period and the coming of Christianity. The tombs are covered by earthen mounds (tumuli) and their boundaries outlined by circular stone enclosures (periboloi). The size of these burial mounds varies according to the social status of the deceased. More than 2500 burials have been investigated at the necropolis, although most were looted in antiquity and the pock-marked nature of the site bears witness to the activities of the Gallic mercenaries of Pyrrhos, who, according to the writer Plutarch (c. AD 46–120), carried out extensive looting of the site in 276 BC (Pyrrhos 26.11–13).

Despite the pillaging of the necropolis, there have been hugely important finds unearthed from the tombs of Aegae, and many of the excavated artefacts are on display in the exhibition. In October 1977 Manolis Andronikos discovered the royal tombs at Aegae within which many of the most spectacular archaeological treasures have been found. Three distinct clusters of royal tombs have been identified. The largest and earliest of these is a group of 12 tombs, dating from c. 570 until the end of the 4th century BC, that housed the majority of the Temenid kings. A second cluster of nine tombs, located near the north-west gate of the ancient city, belonged to the Macedonian queens (Fig 4), among which was discovered the intact grave of the so-called ‘Lady of Aegae’. Excavated in 1988, the remains in the tomb probably belonged to an
unknown queen of Amyntas I (c. 540–498 BC), who was also mother of his successor, Alexander I (498–454 BC). The Archaic period burial was richly adorned with finely crafted gold jewellery that included a diadem, necklaces, pendants, brooches, rings, and gold strips that were attached to the burial shroud (Fig 11). A range of silver, bronze, glass and terracotta vessels were also placed alongside the body. Also discovered nearby was the tomb of Queen Eurydice (c. 407–344/3 BC), mother of Alexander II (r. 370–368 BC), Perdiccas III (r. 368–359 BC), and Philip II (r. 359–336 BC) – all of whom would ascend to the Macedonian throne, and all of whom died violent deaths. Visitors to the exhibition are treated to a reconstruction of some of these richly adorned Macedonian queens, as Dr Susan Walker, Keeper of Antiquities at the Ashmolean, notes: ‘The burials are being reconstructed and are shown vertically on mannequins which will give visitors the sense of actually meeting these queens of Aegae.’

The third cluster of royal tombs at Aegae is dominated by that of Eurydice’s youngest son, while the surrounding burials were those of Philip II’s immediate family. Spanning the final three generations of the Temenid dynasty, this small group of burials began about 350 BC with a cist tomb which was probably constructed for Philip’s wife Nikesipolis. The cluster was concluded some 40 years later with the tomb housing Philip’s grandson, Alexander IV (323–309 BC), the 13-year-old posthumous child of Alexander the Great who, in 309 BC, was poisoned along with his mother, the Bactrian princess Roxana. With their assassination the Temenid dynasty was brought to an end.

In Macedonian society, the funeral provided the greatest status at which a family could emphasise their wealth, power and social position. Burials were accompanied by lavish displays of conspicuous consumption, as treasures were offered as grave goods to accompany the dead into the afterlife. As the most powerful of the Macedonian monarchs buried at Aegae, it is therefore unsurprising that Philip II’s tomb is the largest and most lavishly appointed in the necropolis.

Following his assassination, Philip’s body was placed inside a monumental wooden building. The entire structure was then set alight, forming the most magnificent funeral pyre ever lit in Greece, the flames a flickering reflection of those that consumed the mortal remains of Heracles, Hector, Achilles, and the other great heroes of the Homeric past. Following cremation the bones of the king were placed in a gold larnax decorated with the rayed sun, symbol of the Temenid dynasty. This rectangular container, holding almost the entire skeleton of Philip, was then placed in the main chamber of Aegae’s royal ‘Tomb II’ – a large underground, barrel-vaulted structure. Around the larnax were placed a vast array of prized possessions that demonstrated the wealth and power of the dead king and his family.

Many of Philip’s grave goods are on display in the exhibition, including an iron helmet, a large shield, and an exquisite suit of armour that would have rivalled even that of Achilles (Fig 8). The importance of feasting to Macedonian society is also emphasised in the finds from Philip’s tomb where beautifully crafted silver wine vessels and wine strainers were set near the king’s body (Figs 7, 12). Also found in Philip’s tomb was a diadem made from two separate pieces of gilt-silver, the larger of which was decorated with incised lozenges (Fig 10). It is thought the unique artefact represents the two primary roles of a Macedonian king – those of political-military leader, and of high priest.

Following the king to his eternal rest were his hunting dogs, horses and one of Philip’s younger wives, most probably the Thracian princess Meda who, following the traditions of her people, accompanied her husband into the afterlife. Her remains were also interred in a gold larnax, discovered in the antechamber of the tomb. A gold myrtle wreath just one of the many precious objects that were placed alongside the burial casket to indicate her royal status (Fig 9).

There has been much debate about whether the bones of the king and queen interred in Tomb II were indeed those of Philip II and one of his younger wives. There is certainly no text or inscription that labels the tomb as that of Philip II, and although the bones are those of a king in his mid-40s, it has been argued that they could be the remains of his son Philip III, murdered at Aegae in October 317 BC. However, the paintings on the walls of the tomb depict a one-eyed man, and also show Philip’s eldest son and successor, Alexander the Great, who paid for the tomb. The state of the bones also argues in favour of belonging to Philip II who, unlike his son, was cremated soon after death. Furthermore, the female bones in the antechamber are those of a women in her middle or late 20s, making the queen the right age for Philip II’s younger wives, but too old for Eurydice, the wife of Philip III, who was only in her late teens when she was forced to commit suicide.

‘From Heracles to Alexander the Great’ is a collaborative exhibition by the Ashmolean Museum and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and provides an unparalleled insight into this oft overlooked yet hugely influential kingdom on the northern periphery of the Greek world. With more than 500 artefacts on display, the vast majority of which have never before been outside Greece, the exhibition offers an unparalleled opportunity for visitors to gain a glimpse of the society and culture of ancient Macedonia in the generations leading up to the point at which Philip II and Alexander catapulted the kingdom onto the world stage.

‘Heracles to Alexander the Great: Treasures from the Royal Capital of Macedonia, A Hellenic Kingdom in the Age of Democracy’ runs at the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, until 29 August. The museum is open 10am–6pm Tuesday to Sunday. Admission £8, concessions available. A catalogue of the same name is available, edited by Yannis Galanakis. 2011, 271pp, colour photos throughout. For further information go to www.ashmolean.org/or Tel +44 (0)1865 278002.

**Fig 10. Silver-gilt adjustable diadem found in the tomb of Philip II, 336 BC. Diam. 25cm. BM 2632.**

**Fig 11. Gold-strap earrings from the tomb of the ‘Lady of Aegae’, of exquisite craftsmanship. Decorated with filigree and granulation they take the form of two buds and a blossoming flower, c. 500 BC Diam. 3.4 cm. BM 2018-2019.**

**Fig 12. Silver-gilt wine strainer decorated with guilloche and floral motifs. The elaborate handles terminate with goose heads, 336 BC. H. 2.2cm, W. 21cm. BM 2553.**

**PHOTO CREDITS**

Fig 1. Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum and Art Gallery, University of Oxford.

Figs 2–11 © The Hellenic Ministry Culture and Tourism – Archaeological Receipts Fund.

**Minerva May/June 2011**
Surviving a war-torn land

Murray Eiland reviews ‘Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul’, currently on display at the British Museum

In the weeks leading up to the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in early 2001, the events are etched onto the minds of many who have a passion for history. Scholars from around the world were mobilised, and the public gaze was on Afghanistan. The regime in power saw them as a religious symbol of a past they wanted to erase. The years preceding the event made it clear that Afghanistan was in a state of cultural anarchy with a steady stream of reports of destruction and looting of the Kabul Museum. When appreciated in this light, the fate of the huge sculptures was not secure. All the same, scenes of the destruction of the Buddhas came as a shock to the international community, not least to archaeologists. When viewed through the lens of history, however, it is not a unique event. Iconoclasts were awakened during the French Revolution. Great destruction of religious monuments had taken place during the English Civil War. The Italian priest Savonarola, who ruled Florence from 1494 until his execution in 1498, was infamous for burning art he found immoral. The painter Botticelli was even reputed to have thrown some of his own works into the bonfire of the vanities.

Some Western commentators a decade ago – spiritual heirs to Savonarola – went so far as to suggest that it is intolerable that some people should value statues and artefacts over people. It was even suggested that no one should criticise the actions of a government, as it represents the will of a nation. Leaving aside the obvious observation that a government can rule by force, the assumption here is that archaeologists and their values are the problem. Perhaps somewhat unhappily for some extreme commentators, the popularity of the exhibition of the treasures that were saved from Afghanistan clearly highlights that many people value the past.

Looking beyond the country’s troubled recent history, the artworks and artefacts on display in the Hidden Treasures exhibition completely live up to expectations. It is hard not to revel in the glories of the ancient material world when faced with a range of such beautiful objects.

Archaeology tells a story of ancient Afghanistan as a hub of trade, a consumer of the most sumptuous luxury goods, and an innovator in the arts. Art can tell us a great deal about ancient cultures, even without written texts. Some objects, such as the treasures from Tepe Fullol, indicate a rich mythology that is now lost. Fragments of gold (Fig 1) and silver bowls were broken by the farmers who uncovered them, but enough remains to demonstrate a connection with Mesopotamia. The date of the vessels remains speculative; some experts suggest they were from a cache or graveyard dating to 2800 BC at the earliest, while other vessels may be as late as 2000 BC. However, it is clear that they were made for an elite and were produced by expert artisans. There are many theories – but little archaeological evidence – to give life to the ‘Bactrian Bronze Age’. The motifs on the bowls show animals such as boars and bulls presented in a similar way to Mesopotamian and Iranian finds of the same date.

This suggests that there was a degree of cultural connection between these regions. It is unlikely that the distinctive way of depicting these animals was simply artistic convention and it is likely these animals had a special significance. Mesopotamia had to import the luxury stone lapis lazuli, and it has been pointed out that Tepe Fullol is only about 200km away from the lapis lazuli mines in Sar-i Sang in north-eastern Afghanistan. No doubt this region had traders, if not
Begram, Room 10, crocodile, and fish. made up of parts composite creature, on makara – a Fig 6. Woman standing 05.A2.55. Afghanistan Museum of before 145 BC. Gymnasium, dating to sundial, Aï Khanum, Fig 5. Cylindrical polar National Museum, H. 37.3cm; W.52cm. ancient Greek world. This example is in a gymnasium. One Fig 4. Hemispherical sundial, Al Khanum,晏assium, dating to before 145 BC. This example is in a typical style for the ancient Greek world. H. 37.3cm; W.52cm. National Museum, Afghanistan 05.A2.54.

Fig 5. Cylindrical polar sundial, Al Khanum, Gymnasium, dating to before 145 BC. H. 44.5 cm. National Museum of Afghanistan 05.A2.55.

Fig 6. Woman standing on makara – a composite creature, made up of parts from an elephant, crocodile, and fish. Begram, Room 10, 1st century AD. In pose and clothing the figure is clearly derived from Indian prototypes, although it is uncertain if they were made in India or Afghanistan. It is likely that the figure represents the Indian river goddess Ganga. H. 45.6 cm. National Museum of Afghanistan 04.1.15.

Fig 7. The poster for the first Afghan Exhibition at the Musée Guimet, 1938. The female carvings are here interpreted in light of the prevailing style of the age.

Fig 8. Ceramic jug from Begram, room 13, 1st century AD. A kinnari is known from Indian mythology as a creature with the head, arms, and bust of a woman, with the remaining features that of a bird and fish. They function as celestial musicians or singers. L. 20.2cm; H.21.8 cm. National Museum of Afghanistan 04.1.84.

colonies, of people from a wide area. The exact context of the bowls, perhaps the palace workshops that made them, can only be appreciated after scientific excavation of Afghan sites. There is still plenty of work left undone.

The main focus of the exhibition are the finds from Al Khanum near the border with Tajikistan. Excavated by the French, who dug there from 1965 until the Soviet invasion of 1979, the city lay at the confluence of two rivers, the Oxus and Kokcha. It provides ample evidence that the Greeks, who came in the wake of Alexander’s conquests, were not simply conquerors and bandits. The material culture shows how Greek and native traditions melded together (Figs 2, 3). Like other Greek cities of any size, Al Khanum boasted a theatre, the easternmost of its kind. Scientific instruments are also represented, and two sundials were recovered from the gymnasium. One is in the form of a throne supported by the legs of a lion (Fig 4) with the seat forming the face of the sundial, inscribed with seven horizontal month lines and eleven vertical hour lines. This was a common type of sundial in the ancient world, said to have been invented by Berossus, a Babylonian priest, in about the 3rd century BC. This particular example was designed for use in latitudes of between 38° 28’ and 35° 51’ north. These values are very close to the modern determination of Al Khanum at 37° 10’. Another sundial was recovered from the gymnasium and is of a unique shape: an equatorial sundial cut from a block of limestone with a cylindrical hole in the middle (Fig 5). The hour lines placed on this example were about 20 minutes later than they should be for this latitude. However, this was likely not a mistake. The latitude of 23° north would correspond with ancient Syene, modern Aswan in Egypt. The city was well known in the ancient world for astronomers and Eratosthenes (c. 276–195 BC) used Syene as a benchmark when he calculated its distance from Alexandria to estimate the circumference of the earth. This sundial may then have been employed as a teaching tool rather than used to tell time. It also acted as a powerful symbol of connectedness with the wider Greek world of science.

There was a great amount of innovation in Hellenistic religious architecture. Structures tended not to follow a rigid Greek model, but the deities were from the Olympian pantheon. Greek motifs, if not mythology, were to play a significant role even hundreds of years after the eclipse of Greek power. Al Khanum was sacked by nomads from the north-east in about 145 BC. The Greek population abandoned the city, and local people moved in. A short time later they too were driven out of the ruins by another nomadic group, the Yuezi from Chinese Turkestan. It was these people who founded the Kushan Empire. The ancient city of Begram, which lies near the modern city of the same name, lies south of the Hindu Kush Mountains and has yielded some of the most spectacular finds from the Kushan period.

Geography suggests that what was at first termed by archaeologists the ‘New Royal City’ lay on an important trade route. But no palace was found at the site, despite the rich finds from two sealed rooms of an otherwise ordinary building. The question remains: was the hoard in the two rooms for trade, or was it a royal cache? Almost all of the hoard can be broadly dated to the 1st century AD. Three main regions of production are evident: the Roman world, India and China. Roman glass has been extensively studied and was the focus of an earlier review of the exhibition by Dr
Archeology tells a story of ancient Afghanistan as a hub of trade, a consumer of the most sumptuous luxury goods, and an innovator in the arts.

In sum, this exhibition wonderfully presents some great treasures from Afghanistan. But the range of materials touches upon a far wider region and with trade routes and cultural contacts ranging from Greece through to India, the materials could best be described as a Eurasian treasure. The accompanying exhibition catalogue details the context of the finds in a number of specialist essays that are best read before seeing the show. The saga of the survival of the objects is perhaps the best story: the keepers of these treasures could easily have sold them so as to live in comfort in a country free of civil war. They deserve a huge amount of gratitude and remind us that human nature can be something to be proud of. For the rest of us, the exhibition demonstrates that what was saved is no less important than what was lost. Humans have a long history of destruction, but thankfully, there are exceptions to every rule.

'AFGHANISTAN: CROSSROADS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD' runs at the British Museum until 3 July. Adults £10, concessions available. A catalogue, of the same name, edited by Fredrik Hiebert and Pierre Cambon, is available, British Museum Press, 2011, 303pp. Softcover, £25.00. For further information: Tel: +44 (0)20 7323 8181; www.britishmuseum.org

Chris Lightfoot in Minerva (January-February, 2010, pp. 46-9). Chinese art was largely represented by perishable objects, such as lacquers. Carved ivory and bone artefacts of an ‘Indian’ type are particularly striking (Figs 6, 7, 8). It has been assumed that because they depict women and so few men, they were designed for women’s quarters. No easily comparable pieces are known. Stylistically they appear to be from India, but it is known that artisans sometimes travelled considerable distances to practice their craft, and three uncarved pieces of ivory suggest that the furniture may have been of local manufacture. The glass vessels recovered from the site all appear to come from the Mediterranean. Perhaps the most striking objects from the Roman portion of the treasure consist of circular plaster medallions (Figs 9, 10). Many of the scenes are easily identified from classical mythology. While similar depictions are known from other parts of the Roman world, it is rare to find what would appear to be models used in a workshop. However, as these plaster medallions were made with suspension holes, they were obviously admired for their own artistic merits.

To return to the original problem, the excavators originally assumed the site was the summer capital of the Kushan emperors. Recent scholarship suggests that while some objects may
The awakening of the east

With the publication of his most recent book Asia: A Concise History, Arthur Cotterell takes Minerva on a whirlwind tour of some of the great civilisations of Asia.

Appreciation of Asia’s antiquity by Western scholars is relatively recent. Apart from China, whose continuous civilisation kept a record of its own ancient origin, the rest of Asia had to wait for modern archaeology to reveal the cultural achievements of the earliest city-dwellers. Excavations over the past century and a half have uncovered lost civilisations in West Asia as well as India. Near Mosul, in northern Iraq, exploration of a mound at the site of ancient Nineveh resulted in the recovery of a library belonging to the Assyrian kings, a treasure trove for understanding the Sumerians, a treasure trove for understanding the Sumerians, who established the world’s first cities in the 4th millennium BC. Hardly surprising then was the keen interest shown in the translation of texts preserved in the royal library. No one could have anticipated, however, the sensation caused in 1872 by the Babylonian story of the Flood, an event that originally appears in Atrahasis, the name of the Noah-like hero of this oldest Sumerian epic. There is no mention of sinfulness as in the later biblical account. Instead, the gods inundated the world to stop the noise made by humans. The sky god Enlil found sleep impossible, so plague, famine and flood were employed to reduce the numbers then overcrowding the Earth. Warning of the final disaster was given to Atrahasis by Enki, the Sumerian god with water as well as intelligence within his remit.

Here was one of the oldest ideas surviving anywhere on the planet, a consequence of the early civilisation in Sumer. This entailed settlements as well as a writing system. About 3000 BC, the Sumerians in the city of Uruk hit upon the notion of creating hundreds of pictograms, in addition to signs for numbers and measures. These were pressed into clay tablets with a reed stylus to compose the cuneiform system of writing (Fig 1). Some scholars suggest that ancient writing spread from Sumer to India and then to China. However, these diffusionist theories are not supported by the evidence. For instance, the inhabitants of Banpo, a fortified village close to present-day Xian, in Shannxi province, inscribed their pottery with the antecedents of Chinese characters at about the same time the Sumerians began writing with clay tablets (Fig 2). Although fully developed words are not in evidence until the Shang kings recorded queries to their exulted ancestors on oracle bones in the late 2nd millennium BC, the extreme antiquity of the Banpo signs argues against diffusion to Asia’s third oldest cradle of civilisation.

In the 1920s discoveries of mounds in the Indus Valley had led to the excavation of two ruined cities at Mohenjo-daro in Sindh (Figs 5, 6) and Harappa in the western Punjab, both in modern Pakistan. In the process scholars have redrawn the world map of ancient civilisations. The finds in Asia were less dramatic than the earlier Mesopotamian ones, in part because of our inability to decipher the Indus script. In spite of this problem, the material remains
of the Indus valley cities bear witness to an influence on the subcontinent’s chief concern: religion. The Indus civilisation was profoundly impacted by migrations and invasions from the north who brought with them the Indo-European language. However, many of the religious and ceremonial traditions of the Indus Valley people may well have been adopted by later communities.

One of these traditions was yoga, which was to become so widespread that the Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta (AD 1304–69) was amazed to encounter during the 1340s a large number of Moslems studying under yogis at Khajuraho, a prominent centre of Hindu and Jain worship on the Deccan (Fig 7). The subsequent convergence of beliefs under the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. AD 1556–1605) provided a rare moment of religious equipoise in India (Fig 12). The geographical remoteness of China always made it seem a world apart, although troublesome neighbours in Central Asia periodically involved it with wider Asian politics. The Turks, Mongols and the Manchus revealed in turn the defensive inadequacies of the Great Wall (Fig 9). While there were many early walls built to defend various regions, history states that the Great Wall was built by Qin Shi Huangdi (r. 246–221 BC) as protection from the nomadic peoples living on the steppes. This determined ruler not only unified China in an empire that lasted until 1911, but introduced reforms of the written script that would ensure a cultural longevity unmatched elsewhere. For this reason the difference between the Germanic invasion of the western provinces of Rome and the Central Asian occupation of north China could not have been more marked since, unlike Latin, Chinese survived intact and finally replaced the invaders’ tongues as the official language. Only the Persian language achieved a similar success in its struggle with Arabic, even though it was greatly transformed as a result. The Chinese and Persians also withstood Mongol rule, and in their subsequent revival produced two of the most splendid medieval Asian dynasties. Their architectural monuments, which have been restored and rebuilt over time, are visible in the ‘Forbidden City’, the Ming palace city at Beijing built between AD 1406–1420 (Fig 14) and the Great Mosque of Safavid Isfahan, Iran (Fig 3).

The Arab conquest changed the continent forever. In AD 711, the year they invaded Spain, an Arab expeditionary force reached the Indus delta and captured Daybul, a port close to the site of the modern city of Karachi. The action was intended to rid the area of pirates, and was inspired by marauders from Daybul capturing an Arab ship which, in addition to the Muslim passengers on board, was also carrying precious gifts from the ruler of the Maldives.
to the Umayyad caliph in Damascus. Conversion to Islam does not seem to have been a priority. Pragmatism clearly shaped the approach of the conquerors. Given the size of the indigenous population, the small number of incoming Arabs had little choice but to tolerate existing Indian beliefs.

Islam in south-east Asia generally spread peacefully through international commerce. The settlement of Indian converts in trading ports, where they married local women, led to the foundation of mosques and schools to the extent that the Republic of Indonesia is today the most populous Muslim country in the world. Earlier Indian imports are still apparent, however, and not just on Bali, an island that has stayed faithful to Hinduism. The elaborate ceremonies involved in Malaysian and Indonesian weddings patently recall ancient Indian traditions. While on mainland south-east Asia military expeditions by the Thai kingdom caused the abandonment of the monumental city of Angkor (Fig 8) in AD 1441, and the removal of the Cambodian court to a safer location at Phnom Penh, the glories of the former Khmer capital continue to enchant modern visitors. A shadow of its earlier self, Cambodia still preserves much of

While there were many early walls built to defend various regions, history states that the Great Wall was built by Qin Shi Huangdi (r. 246–221 BC) as protection from the nomadic peoples living on the steppe.
Fig 10. Ismael Samani’s tomb at Bukhara, constructed around AD 890. It is the oldest building in Uzbekistan.

Fig 11. The towering Emin Minaret at Turpan dates to AD 1777–78. Turpan was one of the Central Asian cities incorporated into the Chinese empire.

Fig 12. The Taj Mahal built at Agra, India, by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan between AD 1632–53 in memory of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Clad in white marble from Makrana, Rajasthan.

Fig 13. Umayyad milestone in the kufic script, the earliest form of written Arabic. It says Damascus is 120km away.

Fig 14. Forbidden city, Beijing. Constructed during the reign of the Yongle Emperor (r. AD 1402–24), the complex functioned as the imperial palace for the Ming and Qing dynasties. Photo: Sarah Depper.

So firmly rooted in the events of the past are Asia’s three main traditions – the Islamic west, the Hindu south and the Confucian east – that without an appreciation of how they have evolved, and indeed how they interacted, there is little chance of grasping the direction of any current dynamic.

Arthur Cotterell has lived and travelled widely in Asia and has been writing about Asian affairs for more than three decades. This article draws on his most recent book, Asia: A Concise History, published by John Wiley 2011, paperback, 416pp; 245 b/w illus; 15 maps. £19.99.

Other recent works by Arthur Cotterell include Imperial Capitals of China (2007), and Western Power in Asia (2010).
Helaine Silverman analyses the ongoing dispute between Thailand and Cambodia over a beautiful Khmer temple located on the unresolved border between the two countries.

The ancient Khmer capital of Angkor, Cambodia, is one of the world’s most recognisable ancient sites, with iconographically rich, exquisitely constructed architecture (Figs 3, 5, 7). From the 9th century AD Angkor’s cultural influence and political control extended over much of Cambodia, the Khorat Plateau of north-east Thailand, and southern Laos. When the Khmer Empire collapsed in the 15th century, it left behind a landscape covered with temples, some 300 of which are in the Isan region of north-east Thailand (Fig 6). The temple at Preah Vihear, located right on the intensely disputed border between Thailand and Cambodia, has constantly changed hands over the last century, and the site now lies 700m within the Cambodian side of the frontier. The Preah Vihear temple also embodies the contested cultural heritage of the Khmer Empire, and the close relationship of archaeology to nationalism (Fig 1).

The Khmer and Thai people have been deeply entwined over time. Sukhothai, in central Thailand, had been a Khmer garrison which, upon its capture by Thai forces between 1219 and 1243, developed into the capital of the first Thai Empire in Thailand. Even once liberated from Angkor, Sukhothai and the Thai court absorbed a great deal of Classical Khmer culture, including architecture and art, while assimilating the Hindu-Brahmanic religious tradition, royal institutions, and the Khmer script. Similarly, the capital of the second Thai Empire at Ayutthaya had also been a former Khmer outpost. When the Thai royal court was founded there in 1351, the royal bureaucrats used the Khmer script for both religious purposes and official documents well into the 15th century.

From the close of the 18th until the mid-19th century, Siam was in possession of several Cambodian provinces, including Siem Reap, where Angkor is located. But Siam was little interested in Siem Reap until French explorer Henri Mouhot effectively discovered Angkor Wat in 1860 (Figs 3, 5, 7). France’s passion for Angkor and the establishment of the French protectorate in 1863 pushed Siam out of its Cambodian territory, which had been in a vassal relationship to Bangkok. A series of Franco-Siamese treaties beginning in 1867 and continuing into the early 20th century established most of the current border between Thailand and Cambodia. The Franco-Siamese treaty of 1904 specifically placed the temple at Preah Vihear in Cambodia, while another agreement signed by the two nations in 1907 officially transferred the Cambodian provinces of Siem Reap, Siisophon and Battambang to France.

During World War II, Thai forces occupied Preah Vihear and also recaptured Siem Reap, in whose heart was Angkor. Thailand lost its Cambodian territory following the war, but when the French withdrew from Cambodia in 1953, Thai forces re-occupied Preah Vihear, prompting Cambodia to bring a suit against Thailand in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) six years later. In 1962 the ICJ ruled in Cambodia’s favour, but although Thailand lost the temple of Preah Vihear, the ICJ ruling left ownership...
of 4.6 square kilometres of land around the site unresolved, resulting in a continuing dispute over the international boundary line in this area (Figs 9, 10). Soon after the ICJ decision, political turmoil overwhelmed Cambodia, culminating in the horrific Khmer Rouge regime. Even after the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge by Vietnam in 1979, Cambodia endured a final episode of guerrilla warfare until, in 1990, the UN established a Transitional Authority as the Cambodian government, and in 1993 elections were held. It is in this context that Cambodia’s nomination of Angkor to the World Heritage List was approved in 1992. UNESCO’s action reflected international recognition of the post-Khmer Rouge government with Angkor a unifying project for the injured nation, while it also had the potential to generate significant tourism revenue for the country. The relics of the Khmer Empire are seen as symbolic of Cambodia’s great historical heritage. However, it is important to understand that this is a recent appropriation of the past. Indeed, it has been noted that, ‘Between the days of Angkor and the twentieth century [there] were generations of Khmers for whom Angkor, if not unknown, was nonetheless without the significance now attached to it’ (Keith Taylor in The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, 1999, p. 163).

Preah Vihear is part of the network of Khmer sites on the Khorat Plateau, Isan. Several other temple sites on the Thai side of the current border have comparable architectural layout, construction, iconography and size. However, Preah Vihear can only be described by superlatives because of its magnificent setting – perched on a 525m-high promontory in the Dangrek mountain chain, overlooking the lush Cambodian plain below (Figs 2, 4). In 2002 Cambodia nominated Preah Vihear for the World Heritage List, though this owed more to cultural politics than to a genuine concern about the protection and conservation of the site. Preah Vihear had been the last Khmer Rouge stronghold and was only liberated in 1998. In nominating Preah Vihear to the World Heritage List the Cambodian government was demonstrating its definitive victory over the Khmer Rouge, while also envisioning economic development through tourism at Preah Vihear. The nomination
was also an assertion of Cambodian territorial sovereignty over the site vis-à-vis Thailand, and a reaffirmation of Cambodian ‘nationess’ for possession of Preah Vihear was, and is, a national project wrapped up in modern Cambodia’s identification with the ancient Khmer Empire.

Whereas Angkor’s inscription was uncontested by Thailand, the nomination of Preah Vihear was complicated by Thailand’s internal politics. In 2003 Thailand and Cambodia agreed to ‘jointly develop the Temple of Preah Vihear’, and on 5 March 2008, as inscription of Preah Vihear loomed, newly elected Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej expressed Thailand’s support for the nomination with an understanding that, in exchange, Cambodia would not assert control over the disputed area surrounding the temple. However, the Thai government was thrown into disarray as the Central Administrative Court ruled that the entire cabinet had violated the charter by not seeking parliamentary approval for a deal with Cambodia over [the] disputed temple (Bangkok Post, 30 December 2009). Thailand’s Foreign Minister had to resign and there were street protests in Bangkok. On 15 July 2008, Thai and Cambodian soldiers began to exchange fire at Preah Vihear. The next day Thailand sent more troops to the border while Cambodia also reinforced its presence. Through October 2008 there were repeated incidents of fighting in Bangkok. In April 2009, and again in January 2010, came more border clashes, each time resulting in the loss of life.

While Cambodia submitted its required management plan for Preah Vihear to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, in February 2010 Thailand announced that it would formally object to the plan, arguing that the border dispute must be resolved bilaterally and not in the International Court of Justice in the Hague, where Thailand lost control of Preah Vihear in 1962.

Thailand continues to claim the nearby territory as its own, while Cambodia remains insistent that Thailand illegally occupies the land adjacent to the temple. At the 34th session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2010 it was therefore decided to make no decision on Preah Vihear, postponing the issue until the meeting scheduled to take place in Bahrain in July 2011. This continuing dispute over the site is unique in the annals of the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The tourism potential of Preah Vihear for Cambodia, and the site’s uncontestable relationship to Angkor, make it obvious why the Cambodians wish to retain the site. Also, one could suggest that the current and recurring tension with Thailand distracts Cambodians from the internal political and economic problems of their country and unifies them around nationalism. Similarly, for Thailand, Preah Vihear is an expression of and distraction from Thailand’s domestic political disputes. But Thailand’s conflict with Cambodia over the site goes much deeper. The dispute is the manifestation of Thailand’s longstanding existential challenge of Cambodia’s very legitimacy as a nation and entitlement to lost territories. There is a strong belief in Thailand that it has a strong historical claim not just to Preah Vihear, but to much of Cambodia. Not only have the two countries close cultural affinities, but Thailand had repeated possession of Cambodian territory over the course of several centuries, with Cambodian royal chronicles accepting that their country had been a vassal of the Thai kings. As recently as the 19th century Thailand claimed control over several regions of Cambodia, including the ruins of Angkor itself.

Historical documents, including inscriptions from the dynastic period, leave no doubt that Khmer kings ruled Isan when the great Khmer temples were built there. But during the early 20th century, some Thai nationalists and archaeologists argued that the Khmer phenomenon actually began in Isan and spread south into Cambodia, making Thailand (Isan) the source of the Khmer civilisation. Thai interest in appropriating Khmer heritage increased again in the late 1950s, with the Thai government working the Angkorean legacy into the Thai national heritage and accounting for Thailand’s renewed claim to Preah Vihear and Thailand’s investment in the restoration of its major Khmer sites at that time.

Political acts lie at the heart of some of the intriguing twists in the struggle for Preah Vihear in recent years. In 2006, the Prime Minister of Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra, was forced out of office following months of street protests. Fleeing the country, Thaksin eventually arrived in Cambodia where, in November 2009, he was appointed as Cambodia’s economic advisor. Once it was announced that Cambodia would not extradite Thaksin, Thailand recalled its ambassador to Cambodia in protest, and Cambodia responded by recalling its own ambassador. Although Thaksin lost favour with the Cambodian government early the following year, the situation between the two countries remains tense.
Understandably, tourism at Preah Vihear has been slow to develop on the Cambodian side, where the country’s recent history has been one of civil war and genocide. Post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia is still building necessary infrastructure, including construction of good roads and creation of tourist facilities close to the site. But even in the best of physical circumstances it may be very difficult to make Preah Vihear a frequented attraction in Cambodia. For after visiting Angkor – the greatest of all Southeast Asian sites – would many tourists travel 140km to see a provincial site, notwithstanding its stunning view? Nevertheless, Cambodia is gearing up to develop Preah Vihear with the help of the Chinese government, which is donating US $290 million for the construction of the road from Angkor to Preah Vihear. However, Angkor will remain the centre of tourism within the country.

For Thailand, however, Preah Vihear would be the proverbial jewel in the crown for tourism in the north-east of that country, providing a dramatic climax to a four-day excursion from Bangkok through Isan’s extensive ancient Khmer landscape. (This would be analogous to Peru, where Machu Picchu is the culmination of a typical four-day visit to Cuzco and its outlying landscape of glorious Inca ruins.) When the border dispute is brought to a definitive end, commercial investment in tourism on the Thai side can be expected to increase. It could be accomplished in such a way that the fact Preah Vihear is technically inside Cambodia will be obscured by easy access to the site from the Thai side – if Cambodia will permit a trouble-free border crossing (right now the Thai side of the site has been sealed off by Cambodia with impenetrable gates and massively coiled barbed wire). Indeed, crossing the border from Thailand for a few hours and getting a Cambodian stamp in one’s passport could impart an aspect of adventure tourism to this worthwhile cultural outing.

The recent bloodshed and political turmoil unleashed by Cambodia’s successful nomination of Preah Vihear to the World Heritage List is the most recent manifestation of Thai-Cambodian tension. UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre appears alarmingly naïve or disingenuous in its procession stance of political neutrality. It has exhibited a significant failure to recognise that countries differ in their motives for seeking the inclusion of sites onto the World Heritage List, and UNESCO’s goal of site preservation may not be foremost in the strategy of nominating countries. It seems obvious that it ought to be difficult to gain inscription on the World Heritage List for a site being claimed by two countries, even without a larger boundary conflict.

In the case of Preah Vihear, given the history of conflict between Thailand and Cambodia over the site, UNESCO should have anticipated that the listing of the temple as a Cambodian World Heritage Site would have led immediately to more violence and make bilateral resolution of the surrounding border dispute more difficult, which time has proven to be the case. The recent violence that damaged the site was a direct result of the UNESCO decision to list Preah Vihear, in contravention of the explicit goal of the World Heritage List and World Heritage Convention to promote site protection. A better solution in July 2008 would have been for UNESCO to have worked with Cambodia and Thailand to create a transborder World Heritage Site. Rather than awarding the World Heritage designation to a single country UNESCO could have conferred a borderless status on Preah Vihear, assisting the two countries to prepare dual access routes to the site with appropriate passport control. The site could have been jointly managed and tourist income equally shared by both states.

The World Heritage List decision to inscribe a site cannot be divorced from political and other realities. A recent article in The Economist criticised the secrecy of the World Heritage Committee’s decision-making as well as [that] inscribing sites in the first place [is] getting infected by politics’ (28 August 2010, p. 50). The Economist’s call for public openness and de-politicisation of the World Heritage List process is merited. The World Heritage Committee is susceptible to pressure and has its own agenda. If the World Heritage Committee meetings were open to the public, then important factual opinions could also be brought into the deliberations, presented by NGOs, professionals and scholars from relevant academic fields with broader contextual knowledge than the World Heritage Committee. UNESCO must consider more seriously the many and sometimes unanticipated or unintended consequences of its actions.

Although the Isan region lags behind the rest of Thailand in economic development, the situation is remediable and the Khmer tourist route through Isan is one means of generating financial income and employment in an area that has seen residents resorting to massive protests to call attention to their grievances. As for Cambodia, for obvious reasons the country is grindingly poor and underdeveloped save at the tourist enclave of Siem Reap, which, since Angkor was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992, has witnessed extraordinary economic growth based around tourism. Preah Vihear offers Cambodia the opportunity to extend that bubble to another region of the country. The potentially big money involved in opening up Preah Vihear to mass tourism contributes to Cambodia’s ardent defence of its temple territory.

Notwithstanding the ‘ruined’ appearance of Preah Vihear (Figs 8, 9) and the other various Khmer temples in Thailand, they are not ‘dead’ sites. The Thai-Cambodian border dispute over a single beautiful Khmer temple is an important and fascinating window into the complex issues surrounding sites of cultural heritage and how they can have a huge impact on issues such as domestic and international politics; nationalism and national identity; and the inexorable linkage between cultural heritage, tourism, politics and globalisation.

Fig 11. Ta Muan Thom, on the Thai side of the border from Preah Vihear. Photo: H. Silverman.
Murray Eiland reviews the monumental sculptures of the Olmec, one of the earliest and most enigmatic civilisations of the pre-Columbian Americas.

Massive stone heads – to date 17 are known – from the Olmec culture (1800–400 BC) of south-central Mexico are iconic artworks of antiquity (Figs 2, 4). Colossal heads are known only from the heartland of this culture, although the Olmec style has a much broader distribution – for example, ceramics in the Olmec style were made in a wide area throughout Mexico (Fig 6), and regions outside of the heartland had their own elites. Art historians have been more successful in defining the style than archaeologists have in delineating the culture. The monumental heads, which were made of hard stone such as basalt and andesite, without the use of metal tools, are not realistic portraits in the ‘Roman’ sense, but no two are exactly alike. Symbols used on the heads may have served to identify different rulers via their name-insignia or lineage. The largest heads may weigh up to 50,000kg, and in most cases they were moved from the natural source of stone a great distance away. Olmec sculpture represents a tradition that had a wide impact on the ancient Mesoamerican cultures that came afterwards, as well as making a profound impression upon Western art of the 20th century, particularly sculpture. With clean simple lines, somewhat disorienting otherworldly expressions, and a range of strange looking adornments, Olmec art has even inspired some to suggest an extra-terrestrial connection. The beginnings of an art style that fuses animal and human characteristics – as is prevalent in later Mesoamerican art – is clear (Fig 9). It is a style of art that is comprehensible on its own terms. Some scholars, basing their theories upon the facial characteristics of some sculptures, suggest an early connection with Africa. There is of course no evidence, either genetic or of ancient maritime connections, to suggest such a relationship. A more detailed understanding of the past shows that this culture had similarities with later New World civilisations that made contact with the first European expeditions. For instance, it has been suggested that the Olmec jaguar might have become the Aztec rain god Tlaloc.

The Olmec left no histories, although archaeology offers a glimpse of what was lost (Figs 4). Their culture flourished some two millennia before the Aztec Empire (c. AD 1427–1519). This makes interpretation of their culture uncertain. The name ‘Olmec’ is not the name they gave themselves. It was instead the Aztec (Nahuatl) term for the people who lived in the area during the 15th–16th centuries. It refers to the extraction of latex from the rubber tree (Castilla elastica). The sap would be mixed with other substances and treated to create rubber.

The emergence of Olmec culture is roughly contemporary with the Middle Kingdom of ancient Egypt. The majority of Olmec lived in small villages, many located near water, the larger of which supported a temple. In about 1400 BC, in the area around San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán on the southeast coast of the modern Mexican state of Veracruz, the Olmec had what could be considered a cultural capital. The origins of Olmec civilisation was similar in some respects to complex cultures in other regions, such as the...
With clean simple lines, otherworldly expressions, and a range of strange looking adornments, Olmec art has even inspired suggestions of an extra-terrestrial connection.
Ancient Mexico

significance. Scientific expeditions to the region took place only relatively recently, and many of these were devoted to uncovering impressive statuary (Figs 2, 4). Frans Blom and Oliver La Farge of Tulane University made detailed descriptions of monuments in La Venta and San Martin during their expedition of 1925. Like most other scholars of the time, they assumed what they found was a chronologically equivalent variant of the Maya culture (the Classic Period c. AD 250–900). Following systematic excavations of Olmec sites, Matthew Stirling (1896–1975) and Miguel Covarrubias (1904–57) suggested that the Olmec preceded most other Mesoamerican civilisations. The debate only ended with the use of radiocarbon dating from the 1950s onwards.

The Olmec have been credited with many ‘firsts’. There is good evidence that they played the ball game that was known to later Mesoamerican cultures, and it is assumed that the enormous helmeted heads are representations of rulers dressed as ball-players. Archaeological evidence in the form of spikes and thorns suggests they were also involved with bloodletting. They may also be credited with the earliest writing system in the New World, and are believed to have developed a calendar, although Olmec civilisation had ended by the 4th century BC, several centuries before the earliest known artefact with a Long Count calendar favoured by later Mesoamerican peoples such as the Maya.

While the public imagination of the pre-Columbian New World is largely focused on the Maya, Aztecs and Incas, there is every reason to appreciate the importance of the Olmec. This has recently been emphasised in the exhibition ‘Olmec: Colossal Masterworks of Ancient Mexico’, that has been running at de Young Museum in San Francisco, and which was accompanied by a well illustrated catalogue that conveys the power of Olmec art. Excellent introductory essays in the catalogue also cover the golden age of exploration, which will come within the living memory of some. A slight drawback of the exhibition and catalogue is that there has been no mention of the issue of forgery. There are some masterpieces of art, ascribed to the Olmecs, that have arrived in museum collections with no provenance, and some of these are included in the exhibition. It is therefore appropriate to suggest that in such cases scholarly debate is noted, as well as the results of any scientific testing.

As a rule, men of this period were portrayed with intentional cranial deformation, with heads of a pear shape, a down-turned mouth and slit eyes

Fig 6. Ceramic figurine of a baby holding a ball, probably from Las Bocas, 1200–800 BC. H. 28.6cm. FAMSF collection. Photo: Joseph McDonald.

Fig 7. Zoomorphic earthenware vessel of an opossum, Central Highlands, 1200–600 BC. Museo Nacional de Antropologia, Mexico City. H. 12cm.

Fig 8. Seated female figure with polished hematite disk from an elite burial, La Venta, Mound A-2, Tomb A, 900–500 BC.

Fig 9. Basalt head of a supernatural being, Laguna de los Cerros, 1200–900 BC. Museo de Antropologia de Xalapa, Universidad Veracruzana. H. 79cm.

Fig 10. Greenstone plaque from the Gulf Coast Olmec, c 800 BC. The head attached to the main head wears a trefoil motif associated with maize. Museo Nacional de Antropologia, Mexico City. H. 15.4, W.16.3cm.


Figs 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 courtesy of Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/ Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia Mexico/ Javier Hinojosa.
A comprehensive exhibition on the Aesthetic Movement in Britain is being staged at the V&A this spring. Curator Stephen Calloway told Minerva more about the inspiration the movement drew from Classical art.

The cult of beauty

The Cult of Beauty: The Aesthetic Movement 1860–1900 includes many of the best known paintings of the 19th century, together with sculpture, design, furniture and architecture, as well as fashion and literature of the era. The movement drew much of its inspiration from the art, history, myths and legends of ancient Egypt and the Graeco-Roman world, and also absorbed influences from medieval Europe and contemporary Japan. The exhibition at the V&A traces the evolution of the movement through more than 250 objects, set out in four broadly chronological sections spanning the four decades: 'The Search for a New Beauty', 'Art for Art’s Sake', 'Beautiful People and Aesthetic Houses', and 'Late Flowering Beauty'. The exhibition traces the development of Aestheticism from the romantic bohemianism of a small avant-garde circle in the 1860s to a cultural phenomenon, concluding with the Decadent phase at the end of the 19th century.

In the 1860s a novel and exciting ‘cult of beauty’ united, for a while at least, artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his ‘second-generation’ pre-Raphaelite followers – including William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones – maverick figures such as James McNeill Whistler, and the ‘Olympians’, the painters of grand classical subjects who belonged to the circle of Frederic Leighton and G.F. Watts. These painters created entirely new types of female beauty, portraying their models with an unconcealed and often frank sensuality. The aesthetes aimed in their various ways to write ‘pure’ poetry; to paint beautiful pictures that had no need to tell stories, preach sermons or rely upon sentimental cliché; and to create sculptures that simply offered visual and tactile delight and dared to hint at sensuous pleasures. The art of the aesthetes was self-consciously absorbed in itself, aware of the past but created for the present, and existing only in order to be beautiful. The style permeated all areas of life, and many leading manufacturers of furniture, ceramics, metalwork, wallpaper and textiles, such as Liberty’s of London, capitalised on public interest by commissioning prominent designers. Coinciding with the growth in domestic markets in industrial Britain, the resulting products were among the first that were widely accessible to the middle class.

The term ‘aesthetics’, coined from the Greek aesthesis, denoting simply perception of things by the senses,
first entered philosophical discourse in 1735 in the writings of the German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, and gradually became the accepted term for all discussion concerning the nature of beauty in both its theoretical and concrete aspects. Notions of ideal beauty and consideration of its importance in life and art were developed in differing ways in the writings of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Schiller and other late 18th and early 19th-century German thinkers such as Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who elaborated quasi-scientific systems of analysis to arrive at general principles of beauty discoverable through the examination of paintings or the sculpture of the ancient world. In England in the 1830s the word was adopted by intellectuals such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and, whilst remaining something of a specialist term for the study of beauty in the visual arts, by the 1850s ‘aestheticism’ had come to signify a more general appreciation of beauty in works of art, and soon came to embrace the connotation of a devotion to that pursuit for its own sake. The ‘decadence’ of the 1890s can be seen as the final flowering of aestheticism. Dante Gabriel Rossetti debuted in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a short-lived alliance that venerated the simplicity of early Italian painting above later embellishments typified by Raphael, whom they considered the high priest of idealised beauty. It is in paintings that the British cult of beauty came to its earliest and most sumptuous fruition. Never stylistically cohesive as a group, individual aesthetic artists drew thematic and stylistic inspiration from a variety of cultures and periods, often composing uniquely anachronistic combinations. They found beauty in Renaissance painting, Classical Greek sculpture and art forms of the Orient, most especially those from Japan. Some of the most fruitful of their friendships were made in 1857, when Algernon Charles Swinburne first entered the circle of Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. At this time the three older friends were engaged in a collaborative project to decorate the walls and ceiling of the Oxford Union debating chamber with...
Museum exhibitions

frescoes of subjects from Sir Thomas Malory’s cycle of Arthurian legends, the Morte D’Arthur. Three densely detailed watercolours with medieval subjects painted by Rossetti around 1857 – The Tune of Seven Towers, The Blue Closet (Fig 1) and A Christmas Carol – directly inspired poems by Morris and Swinburne. One passionate enthusiasm common to all at this time was Edward FitzGerald’s translation, published in 1859, of the selection of 12th-century poetry attributed to the Persian polymath Omar Khayyam (AD 1048–1131). Rossetti first heard about The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám in January 1861 after it had been remaindered and was on sale for a penny outside a London bookshop, at which point he and Swinburne bought numerous copies, one of which Swinburne presented to Burne-Jones when he and his wife had just bought their first house, at which point he and Swinburne bought numerous copies, one of which Swinburne presented to Burne-Jones who produced an illuminated manuscript of the poems (Fig 4).

As the term implies, the Olympians were hugely successful artists, dominant at the time. The work of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Edward Poynter, G.F Watts and Frederic Leighton – who became president of the Royal Academy in 1879, was created a baronet in 1886 and became Lord Leighton just before his death in 1896 – emphasised the classical in both style and subject matter. Leighton’s The Syracusan Bride Leading Wild Beasts in Procession to the Temple of Diana (Fig 3) is a monumental canvas inspired by a passage in the second Idyll of Theocritus, ‘And for her then many other wild beasts were going in procession. It depicts some two dozen figures, each a tribute to the art of the past.

A crucial source of inspiration for the Olympians and many of their contemporaries were the Parthenon Marbles, which had been housed in the British Museum from 1816 (See Minerva, March/April 2011, p. 9). In Albert Moore’s A Musician (Fig 2), the listeners are reminiscent of the reclining figures depicted on the pediments of the Parthenon; in Edward Burne-Jones’ 1880 work The Golden Stairs (Fig 7), the maidens move in concert, like figures circling a Greek vase. In the 1870s, the leading Aesthetic artists, Whistler, Leighton, Watts, Moore and Burne-Jones, evolved a new kind of self-consciously exquisite painting in which mood, colour, harmony and beauty of form were paramount while subject played little or no part. In Leighton’s Greek Girls Picking up Pebbles by the Sea (Fig 5), there is a discrepancy between the complexity of the figures’ classical drapery and the triviality of their activity, while the painting compels the viewer to trace the rhythms of the compositional lines, to follow them, zigzag-fashion, from one figure to the next into the depth of the scene. Similarly, the garden rakes and the baby juxtaposed with the classical-cum-Regency gowns in Thomas Armstrong’s The Hay Field (Fig 6) provide the reader with intentionally confusing, anachronistic clues.

The opening of the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877 gave the aesthetic painters a glamorous showcase for their art. One of the most ambitious paintings at the first Grosvenor exhibition, John Roddam Spencer Stanhope’s Love and the Maiden (Fig 9), shows a reclining female figure who starts, as if waking from sleep, to encounter a winged youth with a bow. This might easily represent the myth of Cupid and Psyche, when Cupid awakens Psyche from the deathlike slumber into which she has been cast, having disobeyed the divine order not to open the casket she was tasked with retrieving from the underworld – an aesthetic subject par excellence, for the casket contained the secret of beauty. Yet Stanhope does not include a casket in his scene, the work generalises the story, which could depict any girl’s romantic or sexual awakening, and the classical associations are further complicated by unmistakable allusions to the paintings of Botticelli. Blake Richmond’s Electra at the Tomb of Agamemnon (Fig 11) draws upon classical tragedy but displays a stylised vision of death and mourning, avoiding passion and instead aiming for a compositional balance and refined colour harmonies.

The rise of aestheticism in painting was paralleled in the decorative arts by a new and increasingly widespread interest in the interior design of houses (Fig 13). Many of the key avant-garde architects and designers worked not only for wealthy clients...
Archaeological discoveries of the 19th century provided a welcome new resource for jewellery design.

but also in the reform of design for the middle-class home, as the notion of ‘The House Beautiful’ became a touchstone of cultured life. Attracted by the growing popularity of aesthetic taste, many of the leading firms manufacturing ceramics, domestic metalwork and textiles courted artists such as Walter Crane and a growing band of professional designers, most notably Christopher Dresser. Even the mighty Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema designed an armchair in the Grecian style (Fig 8) to form part of a luxurious suite of furniture, costing £25,000, for the ‘Greek Parlour’ in the New York mansion of Henry Gurdon Marquand, a highly successful American entrepreneur, art collector and benefactor.

Archaeological discoveries of the 19th century provided a welcome new resource for jewellery design. Connecting with an idealised classical past, such jewels had a historical fascination and were exemplars of fine metalworking rather than vehicles for the display of massed gemstones (Fig 14). The Helen of Troy necklace (Fig 10) designed by Poynter to be worn by the model for his 1881 painting was a reference to the remarkable treasure discovered in 1873 by Heinrich Schleimann during his excavations at Troy, although its style owes more to Gujarati design.

In the last decade of Queen Victoria’s reign the Aesthetic Movement entered its final, fascinating Decadent phase, characterised by the extraordinary black-and-white drawings of Aubrey Beardsley in *The Yellow Book*. The V&A exhibition ends with a superb group of the greatest late Aesthetic paintings, including masterpieces such as Leighton’s *Bath of Psyche* (Fig 12), Moore’s *Midsummer and Rossetti’s final picture The Daydream*, shown alongside the sensuous nude figures sculpted in bronze and precious materials. Classical prototypes were abandoned by innovative young sculptors such as Alfred Gilbert, Edward Onslow Ford, Harry Bates and other brilliant younger exponents of what was termed ‘The New Sculpture’. These artists used both explicit symbols and subtle suggestion to express intangible themes of love, death or the eternal. A profound stillness and sense of introspective self-absorption is a recurrent leitmotif in much of the New Sculpture. There is little movement or drama, but instead a pervasive melancholy, suggesting the psychological dimensions of the self that dictate fate or future action. Where classical subjects are depicted, as in Bates’s *Pandora* (Fig 15), the figures are frozen at the moment before they fulfil their destiny, becoming archetypes for human frailty and the complexities of the psyche that dictate behaviour. Frederic Leighton commissioned a bronze statue, leaving the choice of subject to Gilbert. *Icarus* was, at the same time, both a tribute to Leighton’s well known painting *Daedalies and Icarus*, and a chapter in his series of bronzes (Fig 16).

Attempting a definition of this period, the poet and critic Arthur Symons, a central figure of the Beardsley period and the principal apostle of the decadence of the 1890s, wrote: ‘After a fashion it is no doubt a decadence; it has all the qualities that mark the end of great periods, the qualities that we find in the Greek, the Latin decadence; an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over-subtilising refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral perversity.’ Walter Pater’s philosophical novel *Marius the Epicurean*, published in 1885, is set in the decaying years of the Roman Empire, reworking in symbolic, philosophical fictional terms the aesthetic ideals that he had first adumbrated in his Renaissance essays. ‘That old pagan world,’ he wrote, ‘had reached its perfection in the things of poetry and art – a perfection which indicated only too surely the eve of decline.’
In December 1938 a small expedition struggled slowly northwards along the steep and treacherous mountain paths that led them ever higher into the biting cold winds howling down from the snow covered peaks of the Himalayas (Fig 1). The party consisted of five young German scientists and more than a dozen Indian porters. They had already suffered considerable hardships in the summer while travelling through the northern Indian state of Sikkim when heavy monsoon rains had caused flooding and landslides, while large tropical leeches had made travel a misery, and diseases such as black plague and anthrax were rife among the local communities through which they journeyed. The party had, however, had chance to recuperate in Sikkim and, despite the difficulties in journeying through Himalayan mountain passes in winter, their mood was good and they travelled with a purpose, knowing that at the head of the Natu La Pass they would finally enter Tibet, the remote and little-known country that was their destination. Better yet, the expedition had come this far without damage to the scientific instruments, film-making equipment, diplomatic gifts and weapons that were packed on the backs of almost 50 mules. Even the expedition’s flag bearing the Nazi swastika was still flying proudly in the icy air. The twin lightening flashes of the SS were also visible on the pith helmet of the expedition leader, clearly marking him and the rest of the Germans as members of the Schutzstaffel.

The leader of the small expedition was Ernst Schäfer (Fig 3). Only 28 years of age, short but powerfully built, Schäfer was already famous as an explorer who had twice travelled to remote and dangerous parts of China and Tibet. In addition to being a respected scientist who had studied zoology and geology at Gottingen University, Schäfer was an expert hunter, taking pride in being only the second European to shoot a giant panda, and, only a few weeks earlier, had become the first Westerner to track and kill a shapi – highly elusive antelope-like creatures worshipped by some Himalayan tribes as gods.
However, the joys of the hunt had been tempered when, only a year earlier, he had shot and killed his wife in a hunting accident. A British political officer who encountered the German expedition while it was in Sikkim described Schäfer as ‘interesting, forceful, volatile, scholarly, vain to the point of childishness, disregardless of social convention or the feelings of others, and first and foremost always a Nazi and a politician.’ It was Schäfer who had handpicked the four other SS scientists who made up the party and who, like himself, were all members of the Ahnenerbe, the Nazi ‘Ancestral Heritage Organisation’.

Founded by leading Nazi Heinrich Himmler in the summer of 1935 as ‘Studienkreis für Geschichte’, the organisation was primarily intended to provide scientific credibility for Nazi racial theories and to strengthen German nationalism through investigation of the country’s history and mythology (Fig 5). To achieve these ends, the principal weapons in the armoury of the Ahnenerbe were to be archaeology and anthropology, and at the heart of its studies was the investigation of the origins and spread of the Aryan race.

Fig 6. Helena Blavatsky (1831–91) photographed in 1884. It was her pseudo-scientific theories linking migratory Atlanteans to India and Tibet that laid the foundations which eventually led to the Nazi expedition of 1938–39.

Fig 7. Heinrich Himmler (1900–45). SS-Reichsführer, Chief of the German Police, including the Gestapo, and founder of the Ahnenerbe. Architect of the Holocaust, Himmler was named ‘greatest mass murder of all time’ by German magazine Der Spiegel in 2008. Photo: courtesy of the German Federal Archive, Bild 183-572707.


The two-volume work combined legendary folklore with Darwinian theories of natural selection, producing a pseudo-scientific version of human evolution that claimed humanity was derived from seven root races, one of which had first appeared on a long lost island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. This was, of course, the legendary island of Atlantis, first described by the philosopher Plato (c. 427–347 BC) in his dialogues Timaeus and Critias (Fig 8). In these works Plato has the great Athenian politician Solon visiting Egypt, where priests inform him that 9000 years earlier, the militarily powerful and technologically advanced Atlanteans had dwelt on a large island beyond the Straits of Gibraltar. According to the tale set down by Plato, the Atlanteans succeeded in conquering all the lands of the western Mediterranean and were only stopped from subjugating the entire known world by a military alliance led by the Athenians. It was during this war that Atlantis met its famous fate when, according to the records Plato claimed were held by the Egyptian priesthood, ‘there occurred portentous earthquakes and floods, and one grievous day and night befell them, when the whole body of your warriors was swallowed up by the earth, and the island of Atlantis in like manner was swallowed up by the sea and vanished’ (Timaeus 25c).

Blavatsky took Plato at face value and wove into the Greek narrative threads of folklore and legend drawn from other regions of the world, creating a post-catastrophe migration myth for survivors from Atlantis, who took refuge in the natural fastness of the Himalayas and established a new kingdom called Shangri-La. According to Blavatsky, from this fabled hidden land the Atlanteans had passed on their ancient knowledge and wisdom to the emerging Aryan race.

This Atlantean-Aryan migration myth gained a wide following in Germany during the early 20th century. The German archaeologist and populist author, Edmund Kiss, for example, published Die Letzte Königin von Atlantis (The Last Queen of Atlantis) in 1931, claiming that survivors from Atlantis had migrated around the world, establishing many of the great civilisations, a theory first put forward by Ignatius Donnelly in his best-selling book of 1882, Atlantis: The Antediluvian World (Fig 4). This pseudo-science also came with a darker side when men like Alfred Rosenberg, a prominent Nazi Party ideologist and founder of the organisation ‘Amt Rosenberg’
proposed that the Aryans, most prominently the Germanic people, were survivors from Atlantis whose attempts to spread culture around the world had constantly being thwarted by the Jewish people.

Heinrich Himmler was also a member of The German Theosophical Society, an organisation inspired by the theories of Helena Blavatsky, which frequently published papers relating to the origins of the Aryan race. During interrogation after the war, Ernst Schäfer would claim that Himmler had expressed the belief that the Aryan race had emerged from a Tibetan Eden, created by divine beings and entombed in Himalayan ice until released by lightning bolts cast by the gods. The SS-Reichsführer’s interest in mysticism and the occult, and the conjectures linking Atlantis and the Aryans, or Tibet and Shangri-La, help explain why he despatched Schäfer’s expedition to the Himalayas in 1938.

There is no evidence that Ernst Schäfer shared the racial theories of his SS leader or the other leading Nazis. The young explorer and his team were, however, intent on bringing fame and glory to themselves and the Fatherland by reaching the remote land of Tibet, which they finally entered at the turn of the year. Only a couple of weeks later, on 19 January 1939, the expedition arrived at the Tibetan capital of Lhasa (Fig 9). Although the traditional seat of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of the Tibetan people, the last holder of the office had died in 1933 and the three-year-old child identified as his reincarnation (and who still holds the title of 14th Dalai Lama), had only been located in 1937 and had yet to be brought to the city for his enthronement. Tibet was therefore ruled by a council of ministers and a regent, Reting Rimpoche, with whom Schäfer quickly began to cultivate friendly relations, helped by the liberal distribution of diplomatic gifts such as portable gramophones and radio sets, brought into Tibet by the Germans on their mule train. Schäfer also made great use of the swastika, a traditional Buddhist symbol of good fortune, which had also been adopted by the Nazis because of its perceived origins with the ancient Aryan people (Fig 10).

While the principal scholarly interest for Schäfer was zoology, research that dovetailed well with his great passion for hunting, racial theories and Aryan migration myths were of prominent importance to the expedition’s 26 year-old anthropologist, Bruno Beger. Beger’s interest in tracing human migrations through careful analysis of human physiology had been kindled while studying under the Nazi academic Prof Hans Günther. Instead of envisioning the Aryans as originating in the Himalayan region, Günther argued the Aryans were a northern European people who had migrated eastwards, eventually entering India from the north. It was in Tibet that Günther and Beger therefore assumed they had the best chance of discovering physical characteristics that betrayed Nordic traits in the population.

Throughout the expedition’s travels Beger made detailed records of the local populations, taking fingerprints and carefully checking hair and eye colour against special charts. He also used callipers to compare facial characteristics such as the size and shape of noses, ears, chins and eyes (Fig 11), even using plaster to produce facial casts. The results gleaned from careful study of nearly 400 Tibetans led Beger to conclude that migratory Aryans coming from northern Europe had indeed profoundly shaped the history and human anatomy in this part of Asia.
Scientists had discovered the origins of the mythical Atlanteans. Less than a month after the expedition returned home, Germany launched its invasion of Poland, precipitating World War II. Throughout hostilities the Ahnenerbe continued its work, with scientists sent to Poland, Ukraine, Italy and the Crimea in an effort to acquire artefacts thought to be of Aryan manufacture.

Schäfer remained in the SS throughout the war, continuing as a favourite of the SS-Reichsführer, although the explorer appears to have been a rebellious spirit and a letter written by Himmler berates Schäfer for ‘the unruly will that lies within you’. At the end of the war Schäfer was arrested by the Allies but was exonerated of any war crimes at a de-nazification tribunal. In 1949 he moved to Venezuela to run a wildlife preserve, eventually becoming Curator at Hanover Museum. Schäfer died in 1992 at the age of 82.

During the war, the ‘scientific’ analysis of racial characteristics was much in demand by the SS and the death squads (Einsatzgruppe) tasked with the extermination of the Jews and ethnic groups regarded as undesirable by the Nazis. As a physical anthropologist, Bruno Beger had academic training that was utilised during the Holocaust, and he was to become the only member of the expedition to Tibet who undoubtedly played a role in Nazi sanctioned mass murder. In early June 1943, Beger spent eight days at Auschwitz where he carried out measurements on 115 inmates specially chosen for their ‘Asian’ physical characteristics (Fig 14). Soon after Beger left, the prisoners were transferred to Natzweiler concentration camp where they were gassed and their skulls found in Mittersill Castle in the Salzach Valley, Austria, which had housed Ahnenerbe officers during the war, inspired Ian Fleming when writing of an Alpine lair for Ernst Stavro Blofeld, archenemy of James Bond.

of Asia. The proof, as he saw it, lay in the supposed Nordic characteristics of Tibetan nobles – ‘tall stature paired with long head; ‘narrow face’, receding cheekbones’ ‘strongly protruding, straight or slightly bent noses’, smooth hair’, and a ‘sense of themselves as dominant’ (quoted in Heather Pringle’s The Master Plan: Himmler’s Scholars and the Holocaust, 2006, p. 175).

During the two months of their stay in and around Lhasa, the Germans also collected specimens of Tibetan fauna and flora, while they carried out research into Tibetan traditions, and it was noted with interest that, according the rigid Tibetan social system, the first caste was believed to be descended from gods. The expedition also took 20,000 black and white photographs, and a further 2000 colour pictures. Schäfer also seems to have carried out spying activities to gauge the feelings of the Tibetan government and population towards the British and accessing the viability of using various Himalayan passes as military routes.

By the middle of March 1939, the expedition had to look towards leaving Tibet, aware that back in Europe the likelihood of war was rapidly increasing. If hostilities were to break out, then the German team would find their route back home through British India closed to them; even were they to remain in Tibet, they would probably be handed over for internment in a British prisoner of war camp. Heading back through Sikkim and south through India, Schäfer and his team finally reached Calcutta by late May/June 1943, also took 20,000 black and white photographs. Schäfer also seems to have carried out spying activities to gauge the feelings of the Tibetan government and population towards the British and accessing the viability of using various Himalayan passes as military routes.

Fig 12. Yumbulagang Palace in the Yarlung Valley. A 2000-year-old stronghold of the Tibetan monarchy, according to legend it also marks the site where the first king, Nyatri Tsenpo, made landfall after descending from heaven.

Fig 13. Schäfer’s diplomatic skill is evidenced in his ability to persuade the Tibetan authorities to allow the expedition access to the Yarlung Valley. British officials, according to the rigid Tibetan social system, the first caste was believed to be descended from gods. The expedition also took 20,000 black and white photographs, and a further 2000 colour pictures. Schäfer also seems to have carried out spying activities to gauge the feelings of the Tibetan government and population towards the British and accessing the viability of using various Himalayan passes as military routes. By the middle of March 1939, the expedition had to look towards leaving Tibet, aware that back in Europe the likelihood of war was rapidly increasing. If hostilities were to break out, then the German team would find their route back home through British India closed to them; even were they to remain in Tibet, they would probably be handed over for internment in a British prisoner of war camp. Heading back through Sikkim and south through India, Schäfer and his team finally reached Calcutta by late May/June 1943.

Fig 14. Main gate into Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, Poland. An estimated 1.1 million Jewish people and others classed as ‘undesirables’ by the Nazis were murdered at the camp between 1940–45. The Tibetan expedition’s racial expert, Bruno Beger, conducted racial tests at Auschwitz in June 1943.

Himalayas has been emphasised by Joseph Cummins: Although Beger was the only one of the German expedition to Tibet who was directly connected with Nazi war crimes, all of its members were, in a sense, guilty of supporting, with their “science”, an ideology that led to the mass murder of so many millions. And therein lies the cautionary tale. For by bringing a veneer of respectability and an air of scientific authority to otherwise unsubstantiated theories, scientists can help turn outlandish notions into destructive reality (History’s Great Untold Stories, 2006, p. 333).

The racial theories promoted by Hitler, Himmler and other Nazis were quickly discredited after the war following the realisation that such ideas had led directly to the Holocaust. Nevertheless, some of the archaeological conjectures of the Ahnenerbe have carried through to the present. For example, the theories of Edmund Kiss, who speculated that the Bolivian city of Tiwanaku was built by Atlanteans in the deep past, were adapted by Graham Hancock in his 1995 best-selling work of pseudo-archaeology, Fingerprints of the Gods, which has sold more than three million copies in 27 languages. However, perhaps the most enduring legacy of the Ahnenerbe and expeditions such as that to Tibet has been in the realm of popular fiction. It was the Ahnenerbe that provided the basis for the Nazi antagonists in Raiders of the Lost Ark, and in the Hellboy comics and films. The 2009 video game, Uncharted 2: Among Thieves, also featured an Ahnenerbe expedition to Tibet led by a Karl (rather than Ernst) Schäfer. Stories of thousands of human skulls found in Mittersill Castle in the Salzach Valley, Austria, which had housed Ahnenerbe officers during the war, inspired Ian Fleming when writing of an Alpine lair for Ernst Stavro Blofeld, archenemy of James Bond.

Minerva May/June 2011
You have assembled an extensive private collection of antiquities that will soon be on public display in a new museum in the picturesque town of Mougins, in southern France. Have you always been a collector of antiquities?

I always had a fascination with history as a child and was always somewhat compulsive. I combined both of these attributes when, around seven years old, I started visiting a local coins and medals shop. I found the shop absolutely fascinating and touching the items just seemed to bring the history behind them life. This led to the start of my collecting mania and the first things that I started purchasing were First World War campaign medals and Victorian coins, largely because they were generally very inexpensive. I collected them for...
years, but then stopped in my early teens as sports, school and eventually work occupied my time. However, work took me to Paris for 18 months aged 25, and my interest in historical items was rekindled when I used to visit either the Louvre or the Musée d’Orsay every Sunday morning, to walk off my weekend hangovers. The collecting addiction resurrected itself shortly after this when I started collecting Georgian and Regency furniture and various forms of artwork to furnish an apartment in Monaco and then a house in London. I also became fascinated with 18th and 19th-century hand-painted natural history books after a visit to a book store on the Fulham Road and very quickly began to assemble a collection. Then, following a visit to the British Museum, I wandered into one of the coin shops opposite the front gates and was amazed at the quantity and quality of early English and Roman coins that they had. So coin collection number two started and I quickly built-up a collection of Greek, Roman and English medieval silver and gold coins.

I’d been financially very successful from a young age and, by my early thirties, had established several homes, accumulating art and collectibles for fun as well as decoration. Then I discovered the antiquities market, which hit me like a bolt from the blue. I’d been unaware of this area of collecting in the past, and I got so excited that I immediately started taking advice and embarked on building a large collection. Once I started, I couldn’t stop and eventually accumulated several hundred items.

You came relatively late to collecting antiquities. What was it that got you into this area?

I’d always overlooked ‘antiquities’ when ordering auction catalogues, not even really knowing what the term covered. However, I decided to have a look through the Christie’s and Bonhams catalogues, and my head nearly fell off when I discovered one could buy Graeco-Roman and Egyptian antiquities. This just seemed like ‘the ultimate’ in collecting to me. These were items so interesting and so ancient that I’d always thought they really were ‘priceless’. I had also previously assumed that they were only to be found in places like the British Museum and the Louvre, where I had so regularly gone to visit them in the past.

What is the single most interesting antiquity you have purchased?

The two areas of the collection that I am most passionate about are Roman marbles and ancient militaria: the entire top floor of the Mougins Museum is dedicated to ancient armour and military equipment. I think that all ancient armour provokes the imagination, raising such questions as who wore the items? Did the swords and helmets ever see action? What did the warriors wearing them experience when preparing for battle in the middle of a Greek phalanx, or as a legionary in one of Rome’s conquering armies? Of the several ancient Greek cuirasses that will be on display in Mougins, one large fragmented piece has an inscription on the front that reads ‘To Athena loot from the enemy’. What’s interesting about this piece, apart from being extremely rare, is that it’s clear from the inscription that it has a highly intriguing and provocative history (Fig 8).

Fig 1. Monumental Roman marble double herm known as ‘The Beth Shean Bust’, c. 2nd–3rd century AD. H. 47.5cm. MMoCA.20.

Fig 2. Roman marble over life-size statue of emperor Hadrian (r. AD 117-138). H. 216cm. MMoCA.214.

Fig 3. Aerial view of the Old Village of Mougins, looking south towards the Mediterranean.

Fig 4. Marble head of Odysseus, carved in the 1st – 2nd century AD. H. 34.3cm. MMoCA.176.

Which artefacts have you succeeded in buying in recent years that you were most eager to acquire?

I’ve been desperate to acquire so many pieces in the collection that it’s hard to say, but given my passion for Roman marbles, I was very keen to buy the Beth Shean bust which I acquired at Bonhams in May 2008 (Fig 1), and the Cobham Hall Hadrian from Christie’s New York sale in December 2008 (Fig 2). Both have great overpowering scale, incorporate eminently classical subjects, and have excellent provenances. The Hadrian also demonstrates the spectacularly beautiful carving and artistic abilities of the craftsman of the period.
Which artefacts have you not succeeded in buying that you were desperate to purchase?

I always have a fixed idea of the value of a piece when I try to buy it. Despite my passion and compulsive nature, one has to take a measured view of what the item is actually worth. There are times at auction when I really want a piece, but self-discipline allows me to let it go if the price rises above my limit. Many insatiable collectors have led themselves into financial problems by losing sight of this balance.

With regard to specific items which have been the hardest to let pass, I would say the 7th century BC, decorated bronze Cretan helmet that sold at Christie's in New York early last year, and the Crosby Garrett helmet auctioned last October. In the case of the first piece, I met the eventual buyer, who is a very passionate collector himself, and he may well be interested in loaning the helmet for exhibitions, so all is not lost where that is concerned. Unfortunately, the Crosby Garrett helmet situation seems more final. I'd felt that any collector who bought the helmet would need to do so with the recognition of its rarity and national importance, and must be prepared to put it on public display. Perhaps counter-intuitively, this limited the value of the helmet in my opinion, I never felt it was a piece that could ever sit comfortably on a shelf at home; instead there was a responsibility to ensure that it was available for public display. I bid up to double the helmet's estimate before the price went into the stratosphere. The great shame is that I've heard on the grapevine that the owner seems to have little intention of allowing the helmet to be loaned.

As a result of the sale of the Crosby Garrett helmet, it has been argued that antiquities should only be held by museums rather than allowed to disappear into private collections. Well, the Crosby Garrett helmet hasn't disappeared. Christie's knows exactly where it is and will be in constant contact with the owner as time moves on in the hope that either he, or one of his children, may sell it again one day, at which point it may well end up in a museum. Given the high sale price, it is clear that the buyer fell in love with the helmet and is presumably now enjoying it, and looking after it with great care. Aside from a passion for history, the fact that the antiquities market exists may well have been what inspired the metal detectorist to spend years out in the elements, scouring farmers' fields for finds. Then, having found this helmet in fragments, it was only a matter of weeks before many thousands of pounds were spent on its reconstruction and the whole world made aware of its existence.

It's true that it will be a great shame if it's many years before such an important item as the Crosby Garrett helmet is seen again, but normally collectors are ecstatic to donate their pieces to exhibitions and museums, often on a permanent basis. It's an honour to be able to do that and also adds greatly to the provenance of the piece. Also, countless museums around the world have been started by private collectors: The Ashmolean, The Frick, The Soane, no less than eight Guggenheim museums, The Wallace Collection and of course the Mougins Museum, to name but a few. Corporations have also built and conserved many important art collections, often for public display and academic reference.

What are you most careful about when buying antiquities?

The two main things are provenance, and whether the item is actually real or not. Without both of these being proven the item really isn't
worth very much and could be more of a liability than an asset. Once these are established, then the next question is whether or not it’s been renovated and to what extent, and whether or not that’s reflected in the price. Once one is comfortable with that, it comes down to the quality and workmanship incorporated in the piece, and its natural beauty. Rarity will then start to dictate the price. Once everything else is in place it’s a case of affordability and desire.

What was your motivation for creating a museum collection?
Antiquities were the first area where my collecting habits had become so extreme that I’d purchased a large number of items with no particular place to put them. Once the collection got so large, some of the larger items had to be placed in storage, which was obviously a great shame. I had bought a number of items that were clearly of public interest and I was always happy to loan them, as was the case with a Roman bust of Odysseus which recently went on a tour of US museums in the ‘Heroes: Mortals and Myths in Ancient Greece’ exhibition. I was always happy to loan them, as was the case with a Roman bust of Odysseus which recently went on a tour of US museums in the ‘Heroes: Mortals and Myths in Ancient Greece’ exhibition. Importantly, Pablo Picasso spent the last 12 years of his life in Mougins and died in the village (Fig 3).

Do you really feel there is an artistic tradition running from antiquity through to recent generations of artists, such as Picasso?
Absolutely, and more than one would ever imagine. For example, we have artworks in the museum with directly classical subjects by masters such as Picasso (Fig 6), Degas, Chagall (Fig 5), De Chirico, Yves Klein, Matisse, Dali and Modigliani. We also have classically-inspired artworks by more contemporary artists such as Andy Warhol, Arman, Michael Ayrton and even Keith Haring! The museum also has a small number of paintings dating from the 15th through to the 19th centuries to demonstrate how classicism in art has existed now for nearly 500 years. These include two portraits of the Emperors Vespasian and Vitellius by Rubens. In addition, several modern artists such as Marc Quinn and Cy Twombly are active collectors of antiquities. There was also a recent exhibition of modern art at the British Museum that had pieces by Marc Quinn and Damien Hirst on display. In recognition of this, we have works by both these artists in the museum.

What kinds of antiquities do you think will interest the public when they visit?
I think different people will be fascinated by different things depending on their own personal tastes. The armoury will clearly be the high point for any fans of the films Gladiator or Troy, which probably includes most men and virtually all boys (Figs 7). Many of the marbles on display clearly demonstrate the skill of ancient sculptors and allow us to catch a glimpse of the appearance and beauty of figures from the ancient and mythological past. The coins, glasswork, Greek vases, and the bronze sculptures on display all demonstrate the levels of craftsmanship incorporated in these items, and which always inspire me to think of the people who made and used them so many centuries ago.

What role do you see the Mougins Museum playing in the future?
Aside from giving the public pleasure and the ability to see a large array of interesting objects in one place, we’d really like it to be a resource for education and research. The armoury in particular will lend itself well to the latter as I believe that it will contain the largest private collection of ancient armour in the world with around one hundred helmets alone on display.

For information on the Mougins Museum of Classical Art, see: www.mouginsmusee.com
Coin sales

The world’s foremost dealers, auctioneers and collectors attended the 39th New York International Numismatic Convention held in January, Max Tursi reports on some of the notable coins sold during a frenetic series of auctions

The Convention, held as usual in the prestigious premises of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, included a four-day trade fair and a number of collateral auctions held before, during and after the bourse. It proved to be a very busy week for dealers and collectors alike. Every event was a success, confirming the healthy and vibrant state of the numismatic market. The sales were very well attended and almost every lot was fiercely contested. The high-end material, which is now almost exclusively sold at auction, performed exceptionally well. The bidding has produced some incredible – and on occasion bizarre – results, and many records were crushed over the course of the week. Heritage opened the auction on 2–3 January with a strong catalogue consisting of ancient and world coins. Top sellers in the ancient section were a beautiful Gela tetradrachm (415–405 BC) a Carthage shekel (213–210 BC) and a Ptolemy VI (r. 180–145 BC) oktodrachm, all three of which sold for the same price of $46,000. The sale, which featured many world coin rarities, realised $9.3 million (including a 15 percent buyer’s premium).

Impressive though they were, the Heritage results were to be eclipsed during the following two days by the staggering Triton XIV sale of the Classical Numismatic Group. The auction, which consisted of 1844 lots, had a pre-sale estimate of $4.6 million but realised over $12 million (including a 15 percent buyer’s premium). The number of lots sold was a remarkable 98 percent. The cover coin of the sale was lot 60, an extremely rare tetradrachm issued in 357/6 BC by the city of Amphipolis, in Macedon, which realised $700,000 and more than trebled its $200,000 estimate. A true masterpiece of classical numismatic art, this coin is part of a series called the ‘Parthenon Group’, so named because the obverse head was inspired by the seated Apollo of the east frieze of the Parthenon (Fig 1). The reference reflected pro-Athenian feelings during a dire moment for Amphipolis in 357 BC, when the city was placed under siege by Philip II (r. 359–336 BC) and was desperately seeking military assistance from Athens.

One of five known staters of the Macedonian king Demetrios Poliorketes (r. 294–88 BC), issued at Pella during the first two years of his reign, created a feverish bidding battle bringing $180,000 from an estimate of $10,000 (Fig 2). Lot 124 was an imposing Athenian dekadrachm (469–460 BC), in very fine condition (Fig 3). It almost doubled the estimate of $200,000, with a final hammer price of $375,000. Lot 328 was one of the earliest issues of the city of Rhodes, formed by the synoecism of the cities of Ialysos, Icosia and Massalia, and issued by Rhicos in 408/7 BC (Fig 4). Lot 331 was a King Eukratides gold stater (c. 275–265 BC), in very fine condition, creating a feverish bidding battle bringing $480,000 from an estimate of $25,000 (Fig 5). Lot 96 was a rare and beautiful Roman aureus of Titus (79–81 AD), in very fine condition, creating a feverish bidding battle bringing $275,000 from an estimate of $15,000 (Fig 6). Lot 160 was a Roman aureus of Vespasian (69–79 AD), in very fine condition, creating a feverish bidding battle bringing $275,000 from an estimate of $15,000 (Fig 7). Lot 160 was a Roman aureus of Titus (79–81 AD), in very fine condition, creating a feverish bidding battle bringing $275,000 from an estimate of $15,000 (Fig 8). Lot 160 was a Roman aureus of Vespasian (69–79 AD), in very fine condition, creating a feverish bidding battle bringing $275,000 from an estimate of $15,000 (Fig 9).
The New York International Numismatic Convention proved to be a very busy week for dealers and collectors alike. Every event was a success, confirming the healthy and vibrant state of the numismatic market.

Kamiros and Lindos in 408 BC, and reached $90,000 from an estimate of $40,000 (Fig 4). The silver tetradrachm, of very fine style, features the head of Helios, the patron deity of the new polis, on the obverse, and a rose bud – in Greek ρόδον, rhodion – a punning allusion to the city's name, on the reverse. Another coin to crush its estimate was lot 428, a gold stater of the Bactrian King Eukratides (r. 171–45 BC), Extremely rare and in superb condition, it went from an estimate of $50,000 to attain $160,000 (Fig 5).

Among the coins dating from the Roman Republic and Imperial periods, an exceptional portrait of Julius Caesar on a silver denarius attracted a number of bidders, with the hammer finally coming down at $90,000, far exceeding the estimate of $20,000 (Fig 6). Two 'architectural' aurei of the emperor Claudius (r. AD 41–54), lots 645 and 646, brought $70,000 and $20,000 from estimates of $15,000 and $7,500. The reverse of the first coin featured a view of the Praetorian Camp, located in north-eastern Rome between the Porta Viminalis and the Porta Collina (Fig 7). The depiction commemorated the Praetorian Guard, which had famously elevated Claudius to the purple following the assassination of his nephew Caligula on 24 January, AD 41. The second aureus depicted a triumphal arch surmounted by an equestrian statue of the emperor flanked by two trophies (Fig 8). On the architrave, the inscription DE BRITANN commemorates the invasion of Britain in AD 43, and celebrated Claudius' Triumph following the capture of the native capital of Camulodunum (modern Colchester). Almost concluding an ample section dedicated to Roman coinage, lot 846 featured a unique gold medallion of Constantius II (r. AD 324–37), which more than trebled its estimate of $150,000 (Fig 11). The price reflected the style and condition of the coin, one of the finest of the Euaïnetos type. Lot 56, a silver tetradrachm of Pyrrhus, King of Epirus (c. 319–272 BC), doubled its estimate and sold with a hammer price of $120,000 (Fig 12). The coin's obverse depicts Zeus of Dodona, and is a true masterpiece of Hellenistic art. The coin is also remarkable in that, unlike so many coins minted by contemporaries of King Pyrrhus, it carries no obvious propaganda message.

One of the most important innovations in the coinage of the Hellenistic period is the development of royal portraiture. Before the death of Alexander the Great in June 323 BC, very few Greek coins had borne portraits of individuals, whether living or dead. However, the kings and emperors of the Hellenistic successor states began to regularly portray either themselves or the founder of their dynasty on coins. These series give us an extraordinary portrait gallery of kings and queens, often of incredibly fine style and artistry. On occasion the coins also provide the only surviving evidence of the existence of some of these ancient kings. Lot 70 is part of this magnificent gallery (Fig 13). A great rarity of the Hellenistic coinage, the silver tetradrachm features the superb portrait of Achaëus (d. 213 BC), a general of Seleucus Keraunos (r. 225–23 BC) and Antiochus III (r. 223–187 BC), who later revolted, assuming royal power over much of western and central Anatolia. On the obverse he is proclaimed king, while also depicted at the feet of Athena is a horse's head, a reference to Seleucus I (r. 305–281 BC), founder of the Seleucid dynasty against which Achaëus had rebelled. Lot 66 of the auction presented a gold stater from Rhodes (125–88 BC). Adopting the same types as the silver denominations, the gold production of Rhodes is extremely rare, and it is still not fully understood by scholars why this extraordinary issue was produced. This particular coin had an illustrious pedigree, having previously been part of the Nelson Bunker collection, and it sold for $220,000, far outstripping the estimate of $100,000.

The total realised in the Freeman & Sear auction was $3.2 million (not including buyer's premium) on a pre-sale estimate of almost $2.4 million. As with the Triton sale, the number of lots sold was extremely high, with 97 percent exchanging hands during the auction.
Gemini auctions, the joint effort of Harlan J. Berk, H. Kreindler and Amphora Coins, produced an imposing catalogue featuring 1252 lots consisting mainly of ancient coins, with many of the finest included in the Greek section. The total realised price was more than $4.2 million.

A lovely silver tetradrachm from Kamarina, signed by the engraver Exakestidas, and dated to 450–440 BC, sold for $60,000 on an estimate of $40,000 (Fig 17). Lot 295 was a beautiful tetradrachm issued by the city of Ainos in Thrace (359/356 BC). Well centred on a very broad flan, the obverse portrayed a young Hermes, wearing a petasos, the flat brimmed hat typical of travellers (Fig 18). Another extraordinary head, in this case that of Zeus Ammon, was portrayed in profile on the reverse of a Cyrene silver tetradrachm (Fig 19). Perhaps the exceptional quality of the reverse, or the important pedigree of the coin, which dated back to a 1906 sale, excited bidders and raised the estimate of $2500 to a staggering $32,500. A mint state aureus, issued jointly by Mark Antony and Octavian, doubled its estimate, selling at $85,000 (Fig 20).

The cover coin of the first catalogue, an extremely rare electrum stater of Phokaia (c. 580 BC) a masterpiece of early Greek numismatic art, sold for $70,000 from an estimate of $40,000 (Fig 14). Lot 123 was a dynastic gold tetradrachm of the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy II (r. 285–46 BC), featuring his portrait alongside that of Arsinoe on the obverse, while on the reverse was depicted Ptolemy I with Berenike, sold for $16,000, far outstripping the estimate of $3500 (Fig 15). Although the coin sales in New York saw extraordinary prices across the various auctions, it was probably lot 172 that caused most surprise. A bronze sestertius issued by Vespasian (r. AD 69–79) with the IVDAEA CAPTA type, although neither particularly rare nor preserved in exceptional condition, generated furious bidding, and saw the estimate of $2500 left far behind when the hammer price soared to an incredible $100,000 (Fig 16).
Contesting Human Remains in Museum Collections: The Crisis of Cultural Authority
Tiffany Jenkins
Routledge, 2011, 174pp
Hardback, £70

Ethics and Burial Archaeology
Duncan Sayer
Duckworth 2010. 156pp, 9 b/w illus
Paperback, £12.99

In the UK, human remains are currently a matter of contention and debate. On 4 February 2011, 40 archaeology professors wrote an open letter to Kenneth Clarke published in The Guardian, objecting to the current license conditions for excavating human remains that had been imposed on archaeologists by the Ministry of Justice since 2008. These conditions stipulate that UK archaeologists must rebury all human remains within two years of their exhumation.

The two books under review, individually and in combination, provide the context that led to this letter being composed, and together constitute a new voice for mortuary archaeology in the UK. Jenkins and Sayer both achieve their aims of writing fluent and well argued accounts of how the study and display of human remains from mortuary contexts constitute a long-standing aspect of British research culture and popular science.

Jenkins is a sociologist and her book derives from her doctoral thesis. Based on first-hand interviews with museum professionals and those making claims over human remains, Jenkins argues that the willingness of museums to consent to take human remains off display and even to facilitate their repatriation and reburying constitutes a crisis of authority in museums rather than a response to overwhelming external pressures. The museum profession has accepted postcolonial guilt concerning the era in which museums were created and the contexts by which human remains were originally acquired. In essence, facilitating repatriation has become a strategy to expunge this guilt and reinvent the role of the museum in UK society. Jenkins links this to, among other things, the growing power of dead bodies as symbols and emotive materials in recent decades, together with a more general concern for the body as a vehicle for identity in Western society. Moreover, she analyses the ‘discourse on respect’ and human dignity that surrounds museum displays of bodies. (See Minerva March/April, 2011 pp. 44–5.)

Complementing this detailed sociological appraisal of why human remains have become a focus of concern and contestation is Ethics and Burial Archaeology by Duncan Sayer. Sayer is a burial archaeologist with experience of dealing with mortuary contexts in both the academic and commercial sectors. This short book adopts a wider archaeological scope and sacrifices detailed engagement. Sayer begins by using examples of the recent fate of Sheffield’s historic cemeteries to illustrate how the disturbance and exhumation of the dead is an integral part of modern life in which archaeologists play an important part. He considers whether the dead have rights over the living, suggesting that while exhumation might be inevitable in modern UK cities, planners and archaeologists must do this ethically and with respect, emphasising the need for public inclusion over secret screening. Then, Sayer provides an invaluable first: a summary and critical appraisal of recent changes in the interpretation of British burial law. Crucially, the book appraises the current situation, namely the 2008 reinterpretation of burial law requiring reburying after two years. He identifies the unclear legal position concerning the treatment of human remains in the UK and is now the key lobbyist for policy change in this area, leading to the letter written to The Guardian.

Sayer then challenges the well-worn cliché that death is taboo in contemporary society and popular culture. Archaeologists have been variously cast as hero or villain. Sayer advocates the inclusion of the public in all project designs involving mortuary remains to mitigate fickle public opinion. Then, overlapping somewhat with Jenkins’ study, Sayer provides a synthesis of the debates surrounding the display, repatriation and reburying of human remains geared to the situation in the UK. Focusing on the ‘Body Worlds’ exhibition which has been touring since 1995, the Wellcome Trust’s ‘Skeletons: London’s Buried Bodies’ of 2008, and the Manchester Museum’s display of Lindow Man, he regards human remains as popular and socially accepted in museum displays, a means by which the British celebrate and commemorate their ancient dead. Despite the huge difference in retail prices between these two books, they are comparable in length and best read in combination. They provide different, yet complementary, appraisals of the current context of mortuary archaeology in the UK. Yet while both books assess the recent history and present-day context adeptly, they are each frustrating in their limited and vague suggestions for future directions for research and public engagement. Where the studies overlap in considering the display of human remains in museums, neither book conducts a detailed exploration of how human remains are displayed and the manner in which there is variation across the UK. I suggest that their case studies might not be fully representative, and lack a wider European context.

Jenkins and Sayer, together with the results of the recent English Heritage and National Trust joint
The ancient Indus: urbanism, economy, and society

Rita P. Wright

Cambridge University Press, 2010

xix + 396pp, 78 b&w illus

Paperback, £15.99 / US $27.99

ISBN: 9780521176529

The cities of the Indus civilisation appeared about 2600 BC and flourished for the following 800 years, making the societies that dwelt in and around the valley of the Indus River contemporary with the other great Bronze Age civilisations of Pharaonic Egypt and Mesopotamia. Yet, unlike research into those ancient cultures, scholarship on the societies of the Indus was not immediately embraced – partly because the land played no part in biblical accounts, and also because the writing system used by the societies that dwelt along the banks of the Indus remains undeciphered.

In The Ancient Indus: Urbanism, Economy, and Society, Rita P. Wright, Professor at New York University, provides a comprehensive study of the fascinating civilisation that is still too often neglected in favour of Pharaonic Egypt or the societies of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean.

 Chapters 3–5 focus on settlement development, starting with the small villages scattered along the banks of the river in c. 7000 BC, through to the emergence of large cities in c. 2600 BC. Positioned inside walled enclosures, and with carefully laid-out street plans, urban centres such as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were the first cities in South Asia. With populations of 20,000–50,000, these cities provided the heartbeat that generated the political, religious and economic lifeblood of the Indus civilisation, providing a central market where craft specialisation developed to cater for the inhabitants of the cities and surrounding hinterland.

There are no structures in Indus cities that were obviously used as palaces or temples. This has traditionally led many scholars to regard the civilisation as one that was homogeneous, with perhaps just a two-tiered social system with a Priest-King – such as the one represented in the statue found at Mohenjo-daro in 1927 – dominating each city. However, in Chapter 9 Prof Wright discusses how figurines representing shamans, together with the burial of older males with grave goods, and the iconography of seals and tablets featuring heroes and deities, may point towards some degree of stratification within Indus society. The following chapter provides an interesting analysis of the religious ideologies, using the imagery portrayed on seals, tablets as well as the terracotta masks and figurines produced by Indus societies to better understand the Indus pantheon, rituals, and religious performances.

In Chapter 11 Prof Wright analyses the much-debated question as to what factor(s) caused the decline of the Indus civilisation that, by c. 1700 BC, saw once great cities like Harappa abandoned. For Mortimer Wheeler in The Indus Civilization (1953), work at Mohenjo-daro led him to regard the city as undergoing a drawn-out period of decline, the poor quality of construction in later buildings reflecting a weakening of political authority. Deforestation, together with overgrazing and overcultivation of the surrounding land, also depleted the natural resources, leading to scarcity.

Although the illustrations in The Ancient Indus are all black and white, and the text is clearly aimed at an academic readership, the book makes for fascinating reading and will prove interesting to general readers.

James Beresford

The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries

Anna Gannon

Oxford University Press, 2010

240 pp, b&w illus

Paperback, £25.00

This book covers Anglo-Saxon coinage from the late 6th century through Offa of Mercia’s (r. 757–96) second reform of the penny in c. 792. Not simply a typological presentation, its categories are based on iconography, busts, human figures, animals and geometric designs. The focus is evidence from the coins of neighbouring polities, as well as from contemporary arts, to elucidate the often bewildering array of coin types from this period. At first, the Anglo-Saxons used foreign coins as jewellery (late 6th/early 7th centuries). Both before and after the introduction of native coinage, coins carried with them a special prestige, much like a medallion or bracteate. Perhaps not surprisingly, the native coinage of the early periods (here defined as c. 630–700) is conservative. Local production seems to have occurred quickly, as the Sutton Hoo purse (c. 625) contains Merovingian coins, while 70 percent of the Crondall Hoard (c. 640) is of Anglo-Saxon coinage. Coins of this era were modelled upon Merovingian issues, with busts on the obverse and crosses on the reverse.

The secondary production of coins (c. 710–750) is thought by the author to represent the pinnacle of artistic production. It was during this time that a range of animals were depicted including birds, snakes and lions. Many of these creatures featured in compositions that would have been understood at the time to pertain to salvation. The so-called ‘porcupine’ coinage highlights how varied interpretations can be. It is likely this type was inspired by originals from Frisia, there is considerable debate as to what they represent. As trade in the North Sea was booming, and the number of new trading ports, or wics, increasing, an easy-to-produce coin, with a range of quills on the obverse, was struck. The prototype of this coin is a hotly debated issue. Some scholars suggest it was a degenerate wolf and twins design from Roman coins, others see it as deriving from a head with a spiky hairstyle imitating Celtic coinage.

Perhaps the biggest question still to be resolved is who minted the coins. While some suggest minting coins was the prerogative of royalty, others note that during the 7th and 8th centuries, as in Merovingian France, coins were not struck under direct royal control. Instead, on the basis of a range of religious symbols on the coins, the ministers and other ecclesiastical communities may well have served as the nucleus of economic life. There have been many coin finds in sites associated with ministers, while the heavy ecclesiastical symbolism on many coins suggests they were minted there, perhaps under a royal concession. By the middle of the 8th century, many ministers seem to have stopped minting coins while debasement was also rampant. By the time of Offa, inscriptions had become an essential part of the issue, and the coins bore his name and title. Coin designs became more geometrical, and the images on the coins steered away from overtly religious themes. After his second reforms, Offa struck coins on a larger, heavier flan and with more standardised designs. The broad flan penny, introduced at this time, remained the day-to-day denomination until the 14th century.

Anglo-Saxon coins are often unfavourably compared to their Greek and Roman counterparts where their very different styles and imagery are often unfamiliar to those with a Classical background. However, as this book so aptly shows, a considerable amount of history can be teased out of a careful analysis. Sadly, the book is only illustrated in black and white, and some images are too small to appreciate fully. However, it may point the way to others as a way to produce a book on coins that can be enjoyably read cover to cover.

Murray Eiland