

# MINERVA

The International Review of Ancient Art & Archaeology

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## A stitch in time

Unpicking the story of the Bayeux Tapestry

## In search of the shofar

Sounding the ram's horn of history

## Enchanted landscapes

Seeing Claude's view of the countryside

## Second Life Roma

Visiting a virtual Classical world

# Mighty Aphrodite

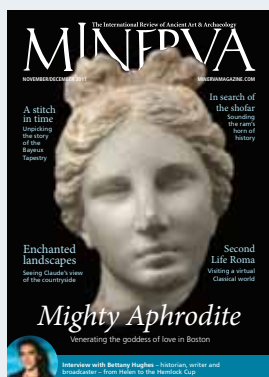
Venerating the goddess of love in Boston



Interview with Bettany Hughes – historian, writer and broadcaster – from Helen to the Hemlock Cup

Volume 22 Number 6





**Cover: Head of Aphrodite (The Bartlett Head).** Greek. Parian marble. Late Classical or Early Hellenistic Period, circa 330-300 BC. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Francis Bartlett Donation of 1900. Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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## Who do we think we are?



In the light of present economic circumstances on an international scale it is topical to write about how financial factors affected the ancient world.

Such is the impact of this on so many people it is appropriate not to do so in the current editorial. One thing is however clear from a recent fossil discovery: 'people' have always adapted, and I have no doubt that a global solution will be found to the present crisis, but this will undoubtedly be a painful process.

The fossil in question is the recently publicised find of a species of hominin in South Africa named by palaeoanthropologists as *Australopithecus sediba*. The remains are the latest in a series of discoveries in the Malapa Fossil Site north-west of Johannesburg. These comprise two partial skeletons of a teenage male and a female aged about 30 years. Considerably less complete and younger (2 million years ago) than the sensational Lucy, an *Australopithecus afarensis* discovered by Donald Johanson at Hadar, east Africa, in 1974 (3.2 MYA), its physical characteristics have reignited the debate over the origins of humanity.

Generally, the most widely accepted argument, is that we as anatomically modern humans (*Homo sapiens*), evolved from *Homo habilis* and its variant species, via *Homo erectus* (and variants). The path from *Australopithecines* to *Homo* is questioned by many and it is often considered that variant species of the former became evolutionary dead-ends – extinct. What is especially interesting about some of these discoveries is that they have pushed back primeval humanity to a span of time where the so-called missing link occurred – around 5.6 to almost 7 MYA.

So what is so significant about the latest discovery? In short, it is younger than other discoveries of the earliest *Homo* (*habilis*) and shows more human characteristics in key areas. This is especially true of the hands, which exhibit a sophisticated grip suitable for tool use. Stone tools are associated with early

*Homo* and *australopithecines* at sites in South and East Africa, but often thought to belong to the former. The feet are also significant: human-like ankles with an ape-like foot arch. Specialists think that this made it likely that it walked upright but still climbed trees. Our ability to adapt to changing circumstances is thus a well-established tradition. The upshot of this is that *australopithecines* rather than *Homo* may be our ancestors, but this will only be resolved by future discoveries and debate.

In any case, we may soon be able to more comfortably envisage a sequence from primates-to-humans of some 65 million years (or more). This gives our most distant ancestors about a 10 million year overlap with dinosaurs. The significance of all of this brings us back to adaptability. Evolution as it is presently understood is a truly extraordinary phenomenon that expresses this. This brief excursus into the roots of humanity will be abhorrent to fundamentalist creationists who believe that the world was created in 4004 BC – at dusk on 22 October to be more exact. We are, of course, all entitled to our opinion based on our frames of reference.

Our journey through time, especially since we, as modern humans, migrated from Africa about 50,000 years ago, has represented a constant challenge to our survival in different habitats. This has been exacerbated by fluctuations in the global temperature, natural disasters – both phenomena are timeless. Above all, perhaps, the biggest single challenge to have afflicted humanity is competition for resources. This is has increased on a global scale over the past three millennia. One could envisage rival groups of *australopithecines* competing over their resources of nuts or fish in a violent manner. The Greeks and Persians fought over oil – olive oil in fact – as did the Romans and Persians. Little has changed. The global integration of our economy is especially a product of this competition and why we are all now affected by the negative aspects of it.

**Dr Mark Merrony**

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## NEW EDITOR

### Lindsay Fulcher



worked in museums for 10 years before becoming a journalist. She has travelled extensively, sometimes recklessly, to visit archaeological sites in Israel, Eastern Turkey, Central Asia, Libya, Iran (2001) and Iraq (2006).

## Gladiator School in Carnuntum

With the ever-increasing costs involved in excavation, ground probing radar is often used to make preliminary surveys of sites. In many cases the resulting information is open to debate, as walls can be difficult to interpret without finds that make the purpose of the structure clear. However, there are some structures where their location and particular features are so clear that little interpretation is required. Such is the case for gladiators' training and living quarters next to the amphitheatre of the ancient Roman city of Carnuntum. In form the structure compares to the Colosseum and the *Ludus Magnus* (linked to the Colosseum by an underground passage) in Rome. To date no excavations have taken place, but using surviving Roman structures as a guide, the general outlines of the site can be reconstructed.

The site of Carnuntum is Austria's largest Roman museum. It was once a city of about 50,000 located 45km east of Vienna. Excavation of the site began in 1870, but only a small fraction has so far been explored. Aerial photographs had revealed the presence of an unexplained feature in the area near the amphitheatre, and a team from the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Archaeological Prospection and Virtual Archaeology (LBI-ArchPro) with the Archaeological Park Carnuntum, investigated the site. What they found was unmistakable, and on 5 September, they gave a press conference to discuss the discovery of a gladiatorial school.

Gladiators were made up of criminals, prisoners, and slaves. They needed to be housed in a secure facility, and in order to increase the enjoyment of the audience, they were also trained. One of the surprising aspects



Modern Roman gladiators fight in the amphitheatre in Carnuntum.

of the site is its sheer size. Walls surround an area of 11,000 square metres, and the structures within the complex take up about 2,800 square metres.

Comfort was sacrificed for efficiency, as there were 40 tiny cells for sleeping that ringed a 19 square-metre space used for training. The remains of a central wooden pillar for practicing cuts

is visible on the radar images, as is a mini-amphitheatre. It may be that gladiators could perform here for prospective investors. The terrace where the chief trainer would have directed exercises is also visible. While life was no doubt difficult, the complex also contained large bathing areas. Outside the walls of the structure was a cemetery that was

apparently used to bury those killed during exercises. This is the first known cemetery on the grounds of a *Iudus*. The *Iudus* and the amphitheatre were probably erected at about the same time, AD 150, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. That emperor was known to have spent time in Carnuntum, and may have seen gladiatorial combat there. Some have even speculated that his son Commodus, may have viewed his first matches there.

Besides the fact that there are few such structures known, the discovery offers more evidence regarding the relationship between centre and periphery in the Roman Empire. Before, no one could have imagined a gladiatorial school of this size in the Roman provinces. There is no doubt that many archaeologists are eager to begin excavations, but there are a number of issues regarding excavation technique as well as conservation, that must be carefully considered.



Remains of the amphitheatre at Carnuntum



# Pompeii comes to Paris

The Musée Maillol in Paris is currently hosting a new exhibition, aimed at recreating the experience of visiting a wealthy home in ancient Pompeii, which will highlight the extraordinarily modern feel of the 2,000-year-old dwellings. In *Pompeii – A Way of Life* the Pompeian house is brought to life through a tour of its traditional rooms and garden. Each room is decorated with frescoes and art works, including 200 original objects excavated from Pompeii and other sites around Vesuvius, on loan from Italy.

Today vulcanologists constantly monitor



any changes in levels of seismic activity from the observatory on the mountain hoping they will be able to predict an eruption months in advance. The activity of Vesuvius is recurrent, and the longer the intervals between eruptions, the greater the eventual explosion will be.

The frequent, but low-level, activity of Vesuvius in recent centuries has relieved the build-up of pressure in the magma chamber. The catastrophic magnitude of the eruption of AD 79 was connected with the extended period of inactivity that preceded it. A long interval, combined with mounting seismic activity, is a sure sign of impending disaster.

But Pompeii is in peril from other natural phenomena: following heavy rain a few months ago a major building on the site collapsed. It is desperate for funds to help preserve the site but UNESCO has threatened to remove its World Heritage status.

While there are many preserved public monuments from the Roman Empire – theatres, amphitheatres, spas, temples – private houses are rare and have never been found complete anywhere else apart from those discovered buried by the eruption of Vesuvius at Pompeii, Herculaneum, Oplontis and Stabiae. Their infrastructure – running water,

**Fresco showing Dionysus (Bacchus in Latin) god of wine and the grape harvest, on his throne, AD 50-90. He sits, crowned with ivy, at his feet are a sacred panther and the tambourine used by his frenzied female devotees, the Maenads. © Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei/Archivio dell'Arte/Luciano Pedicini.**



**Vase in the shape of a woman's head. Such clay and bronze vases continued a tradition that began with the Greeks and Etruscans. The polychrome effect of the hairband in copper and glass eyes underlines its sophistication. © Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei.**

heating systems, sewers, use of green spaces, right down to the design of their everyday objects – seems spectacularly modern.

Visitors to the new exhibition are invited to walk around the Pompeian house as if it were their own, creating the illusion, despite the 2,000 years that separate us from them.

Designed by Hubert Le Gall, who created the hugely successful Monet exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris last year, *Pompeii – A Way of Life* is on show at Musée Maillol ([www.museemaillol.com](http://www.museemaillol.com)) until 12 February, 2012. **Lindsay Fulcher**

# The Witching Hour approaches

Abundant textual evidence in the medieval and post-medieval period attests to the practice of witchcraft. Perhaps the most celebrated case is the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692. Archaeological evidence pertaining to witchcraft is understandably thinner on the ground than historical testimony given its secretive practice. A recent discovery in Tuscany may alter this perspective.

Archaeologists have recently discovered the skeleton of a woman from the early 13th century at Piombino. The bones were associated with 13 nails apparently driven into the jaw of the deceased. Lack of material

evidence indicates that the woman's body had not been interred in a coffin or wrapped in a burial shroud as was customary in the medieval period.

Alfonso Forgione, based at the University of L'Aquila who is directing the excavation, believes that the unfortunate individual was executed for practising witchcraft. Other nails were found surrounding the skeleton that had been nailed into items of clothing and the unorthodox characteristics of the burial lead him to his conclusions: 'This indicates to me that it was an attempt to make sure the woman even though she was dead did not rise from the dead and unnerve

the locals who were no doubt convinced she was a witch with evil powers.'

In 2009 a female skull was found near Venice with a stone driven into its mouth. Contemporary superstition implemented such a technique to prevent vampires rising from the grave. Forgione believes that the nails driven into the skull of the woman in Tuscany had a similar intent. Interestingly, another female skeleton was recovered from the same site in Venice surrounded by 17 dice – an unlucky number that was associated with death in medieval times. It is curious that the number 17 can be arranged to

create the Latin 'VIXI', meaning literally 'I have lived'; in other words, 'I am dead'.

A possible contention against Forgione's hypothesis is that the discoveries outlined above were interred in consecrated ground in churchyards. He refutes this by suggesting 'that perhaps both women came from influential families and were not peasant class and so because of their class and connections were able to secure burial in consecrated Christian ground'. Whatever the truth to this hypothesis it makes a chilling and topical story as we approach the witching hours of Halloween at the end of October. **Mark Merrony**

# More on the Persepolis Tablets

As reported in *Minerva* May/June 2011, the fate of the Persepolis tablets has now been decided in one US state. On 15 September 2011 the case *Rubin v The Islamic Republic of Iran* clarified the issue of what could be seized under the *Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act* and the *Terrorism Risk Insurance Act*. Massachusetts District Judge O'Toole stated that it was not enough to show that the artefacts originated from Iranian sites. The relevant provisions of Iranian law do not vest ownership of antiquities in the government of Iran, and the law clearly envisages private ownership of antiquities. The plaintiffs further suggested that the antiquities had been exported from Iran illegally, as no permit could be found. However, the judge noted: 'As

a general matter, establishing that a particular item was unlawfully exported or removed from Iran is not equivalent to showing that it now should be regarded as the property of Iran subject to levy and execution.' It is also significant that Iran has never made a claim that all antiquities are state property. The ruling does not apply outside of the state of Massachusetts.

The fate of other collections of Iranian antiquities that have been targeted – Illinois, California, and Michigan in particular – are an open question. There is no guarantee that the law in other US states will yield the same outcome as in Massachusetts. While the recent case is good news for cultural institutions in other states, the only way to be sure to

comprehensively protect Iranian antiquities in the entire country is for Congress to fix the loophole. While one can understand the plight of victims damaged by violence, in this case it seems the evidence is clear. States that automatically deem their antiquities the property of the state are in a different position, as in such cases there is no doubt who the asset belongs to. If Congress decides to write a new law protecting cultural property in all public collections in the US, it would have to be carefully written so as not to encourage abuse by governments 'hiding assets'. However, a free for all where antiquities that were found in a particular state could be seized and auctioned off, is clearly not an ideal solution.

**Murray Eiland**

## Ethics and Egyptology

This year's annual meeting of the International Committee for Egyptology (CIPEG), held in September in Poznan, Poland, coincided with the installation of a small, but important, display of Egyptian and Sudanese antiquities at the local Archaeological Museum. Central to the new exhibition is an obelisk of Ramses II, on loan from the Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin, and delegates were treated to an introduction to the obelisk from Dietrich Wildung, former Director of the Ägyptisches Museum.

This year's meeting focussed on 'the ethics of collecting' and attracted a wide range of papers, addressing all aspects of this potentially controversial area, followed by lively discussions.

After welcoming addresses from Michal Brzostowicz, Deputy Director of the Archaeological Museum, Poznan and Claire Derriks, Chairperson of CIPEG, there were reports on CIPEG's work throughout the year. Notable amongst the morning papers was Regine Schultz's report on the *ICOM Red List on Egyptian Heritage at Risk*. Regine continued with a key-note speech on the ethics of collecting and two important workshops for delegates on this subject.

The Friday session began with



a presentation by Ossama Abdel Meguid, the Director of the Aswan Nubian Museum and a member of the ICOM executive council. Entitled 'Who needs the Past? National Values and Egyptology', he set out the ethical implications for Egyptology in collaborating with commercial interest groups and the de-accessioning crisis facing museum collections, leading CIPEG-ICOM to create a code of ethics for ancient Egyptian art collections. Other papers touched on themes of the ethics of international cultural exchange, collecting and conserving human remains and the possibility of museums borrowing from each other, instead of continuing to acquire. I presented a paper on UK antiquities law and museum

acquisitions. Having a background in Egyptology, but currently being engaged in cultural policy and law research, I was grateful for the opportunity to present the current state of UK law governing the international antiquities trade to an Egyptological audience and CIPEG members were highly receptive to this alternative viewpoint.

The afternoon sessions focused on the theme of 'Art Market and Collections' – drawing on a diverse range of subjects, from the inevitable 'Bolton Amarna Princess' forgery trial to the surprising and disturbing Persepolis Tablet Lawsuit in the USA, presented by Emily Teeter of the Oriental Institute with contributions from Larry

Berman of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The Saturday morning session continued where the Friday session ended with further presentations on 'Museums and Collecting', while the afternoon changed direction to address historical aspects of the ethics of collecting. The final morning's session turned to future projects, farewell addresses and proposals for the next meeting of CIPEG.

Monday was set aside for a visit to Berlin to see the exhibition *Königsstadt Naga. Grabungen in der Wüste des Sudan* in the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. This did not leave much time to explore the historical centre of Poznan, itself, which has several museums and cultural delights including the military salute of the goats in the town square at midday.

All the delegates took an open-minded and pragmatic approach to the minefield that is 'the ethics of collecting' and I look forward to next year's meeting which will tackle the equally challenging subject of fakes and forgery. The CIPEG continues to face challenges head on, making Egyptology up to date relevant to current events worldwide.

**Keith R Amery**



# New Ancient Egypt and Nubia Galleries at the Ashmolean Museum

On Saturday 26 November the new Ancient Egypt and Nubia (modern Sudan) will open at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. Building on the success of the museum's new extension, which opened in 2009, this second phase of major redevelopment will re-display its world-renowned Egyptian collections and exhibit objects that have been in storage for decades; more than doubling the number of mummies and painted coffins on display. The new galleries will take visitors on a chronological journey covering more than 5,000 years of human occupation of the Nile Valley.

Designed by Rick Mather Architects, the new galleries are arranged under the broad themes: *Egypt at its Origins*, *Dynastic Egypt and Nubia*, *Life after Death in Ancient Egypt*, *The Amarna 'Revolution'* *Egypt in the Age of Empire*, and *Egypt meets Greece and Rome*. With new lighting, display cases and interpretation, the project will complete the Ashmolean's Ancient World Floor, comprising galleries that span the world's great ancient civilisations: from Egypt and Nubia, Prehistoric Europe, the Ancient Near East, Classical Greece and Rome, to Early India, China and Japan.

The £5million project has received lead support from Lord Sainsbury's Linbury Trust, along



The daughters of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, detail of wall-painting from the 'King's House' at el-Amarna, circa 1345-1335 BC. W 1.65m (whole fragment). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

with the Selz Foundation and other trusts, foundations and individuals. 'We are enormously grateful to Lord Sainsbury and the Linbury Trust for initiating this transformative project for one of the most important and popular areas of the Museum,' said Dr Christopher Brown CBE, Director of the Ashmolean.

Collected over 300 years, the Ashmolean's Egyptian holdings contain iconic pieces such as the wall-painting depicting the

daughters of Akhenaten and Nefertiti; the Shrine of Taharqa from the temple at Kawa, the only complete free-standing

pharaonic building in Britain; and the colossal limestone statues of the fertility god Min which date from 3300 BC. The museum is home to some of the finest ancient Egyptian and Nubian collections in the country, numbering more than 40,000 artefacts, with Predynastic and Protodynastic material which ranks amongst the most significant in the world.

Professor Andrew Hamilton, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, said: 'These remarkable collections are among the most important outside Egypt and one of the Ashmolean's most popular attractions. With an exciting series of new galleries, this significant redevelopment will both transform the opportunities for using the collections for teaching and research at all levels and the way they are enjoyed, cared for and integrated within the wider Museum, well into the future.'



Left: ceremonial slate palate (left) carved on both sides, from the 'Main Deposit' at Hierakonpolis, c. 3000 BC. H 42.5cm. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Right: painted nest of coffins of Djedjehutyuefankh, wood. From Deir el-Bahri, Western Thebes. 25th Dynasty, 770-712 BC. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.





# Horn of *history*

The sound of the *shofar* has echoed through centuries of Jewish history as **Murray Eiland** discovers in a fascinating new exhibition at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem

There are many ancient symbols that have survived to the present, but they may be so pervasive that their lineage may be unappreciated. This is clear for religious symbols which although they abound in many contexts, may not be fully understood. For Christians a cross has a clear meaning, while the lamb, dove, or fish may be more obscure. Without a keen interest, it is likely that the history of the symbols of one's faith remains elusive. For Jews the main symbol is perhaps the star of David, although the candelabrum may be a close second.

The Hanukkah *menorah* is a nine-branched candelabrum lit during the eight-day holiday of Hanukkah, while the seven-branched *menorah* used in the ancient Temple or as a symbol of the state of Israel. This leads us to the *shofar* – a ritual musical instrument made of animal horn – as a less popular symbol.

However, because it is a symbol that can be heard, it is particularly potent. For example, during the period of Ottoman and British rule over Jerusalem, the *shofar* could not be blown at the Western Wall. To do so would clearly been a sign of independent power, and one that could be appreciated by everyone in the area. After the Six Day War, for instance, a rabbi blew his *shofar* at the Wall.

This symbolic act carried with it great religious significance. Sounding a horn suggests command as well as control. Western Classical music horns

are often used to signify the entrance of important people. Indeed, in the book of Exodus the *shofar* features prominently in announcing important events. Many pre-modern cultures throughout the world use loud noises, such as horns, to scare off evil spirits. The sound and its connotations may be universally understood.

Hebrew also has a separate word for trumpet which is a different instrument. Interestingly, the root of the Hebrew word may be found in Mesopotamia. The Akkadian word *sappāru* refers to a bovid, while the similar sounding word *sappartu* refers



2. Synagogue chancel screen fragment with menorah, shofar lulav, and ethrog. Ashkelon, Byzantine period, 4th-7th centuries.

to the tip of an animal's horn. Animal horns were used as wind instruments by many cultures. In Classical literature a similar object is referred to as a wind instrument used by shepherds. Representations of this instrument being used in this context are known. The Roman army also employed horns made from aurochs. In the Bible the *shofar* features prominently in the







battle of Jericho, which according to the Bible was the first battle the Israelites had in their conquest of Canaan. The Israelites were commanded by Joshua, who, in turn, was instructed by God, who gave precise orders. The army was to march once around the city for six days. Seven priests carrying ram's horns preceded the ark. On the seventh day they were to march around

**2. Beth-Shean mosaic with aedicule (small shrine), menorah, shofar and incense shovel. This is a particularly detailed representation that shows there was variation in how these instruments were made in antiquity. Byzantine period, 4th-7th centuries.**

**3. Oil lamp showing menorah, shofar and incense shovel. The representation is schematic – almost hidden. Eastern Mediterranean, Byzantine period, 4th-5th centuries. Aliza and Shlomo Moussaieff Collection.**



the city seven times and were to blow their horns. When they did so the walls of the city collapsed and it was taken. Archaeological evidence – supported by carbon dates – suggest that the city was deserted by the time indicated in the Bible. However, the main point of the narrative is the importance given to the *shofar*.

The Bible also gives

In the Bible the *shofar* features prominently in the battle of Jericho

ample evidence that the *shofar* was used to announce holidays (including the first day of the seventh month), used in processions, and also used as a musical instrument. It is no surprise that it is recorded as being sounded during the coronation of King Solomon.

But the Bible also gives clues as to the deeper symbolic meanings of the *shofar*. In the story of Abraham's unsuccessful sacrifice of his son Isaac, told in Genesis, he is about to sacrifice his son, when his hand is stayed. He is then shown a ram caught in a thicket, which is sacrificed instead. Early Jewish commentators suggest that when the *shofar* is sounded it is a reminder to God that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his own son, and a reminder to lesser mortals of the nature of sacrifice.

According to the Talmud, the *shofar* can be a horn from any member of the bovine family, except the cow or calf. The animal must be kosher, but it does not have to be kosher at the time of death, that is, it does not have to be killed according to rab-

binic laws. Although the cow is kosher to eat, its horns are never used to make *shofars*. The Mishnah suggests this was because of the detested golden





calf as described in the book of *Exodus*. A ram is the preferred animal and its horns can be hollowed out. An antler, in contrast, is made of solid bone and so cannot be used to make a *shofar*. In various Jewish communities today there is considerable variation as to which animal's horns are chosen, how they are prepared, and how they are used.

For example, in a detailed mosaic recovered from the Ashkelon synagogue the *shofar* has a gilded mouth-piece, and is decorated with gold bands. The exact methods of production tend to be kept within a family, often for many generations. In all cases the horn tip will have to be drilled, and for species with curved horns, they must be softened and straightened. A mould can be used to alter the shape, and it may be polished and carved. As long as none of the decoration changes the sound of the *shofar*, it is kosher.

The *shofar* is used mainly on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is also used during the inauguration of the Israeli President and during wedding ceremonies. Interestingly, the Bible only calls for the *shofar* to be sounded every 50 years to proclaim the jubilee year (*Leviticus* 25). Other occasions for its use have appeared in later rabbinical literature.

As the *shofar* is organic, ancient examples of the horn do not tend to survive, so reconstructing its earliest history involves searching for depictions of these ritual horns in other forms, such as on coins and in manuscripts.

The current exhibition at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem entitled

**4. Bronze ring with menorah, shofar, and incense shovel. Even when depicted in a schematic fashion the shofar is clear as long as it is in association with other ritual objects. Eastern Mediterranean, 4th-7th century AD. Aiza and Shlomo Moussaieff collection.**

**5. Marble tombstone with menorah, shofar and lulav. The simple representation here is almost an afterthought. The inscription in Greek reads: 'Tomb of Elias son of Entolios from Krunoi'. Caesarea, Byzantine period, 4th-7th centuries.**

**6. Decorative basalt fragment with menorah, shofar and lulav and ethrog. Israel. Byzantine period. 4th-7th century AD. Aliza and Shlomo Moussaieff Collection.**

4

*Sound the Shofar – A Witness to History* relies upon representations preserved drawn together from a number of different public and private collections. One of the earliest examples may be found on Yehud coins minted during the Persian period in the 4th century BC. There is then a gap until images of the *shofar* appear in the 3rd century AD. After this images of the horn are relatively common. Often the *shofar* is not depicted alone, as it is easier to identify when found with other ritual implements. It is often shown with the *menorah* or the incense shovel.

Outside the historical territory of Israel, the *shofar* is also associated with the *lulav* (closed frond of the date palm) and the *ethrog* (citron fruit). During the Medieval period visual

A mould can be used to alter the shape, and it may be polished and carved. As long as none of the decoration changes the sound of the *shofar*, it is kosher

representations decreased. It is likely that the *shofar* was viewed as a symbol of the temple, and may have carried a different meaning with it in Diaspora communities.

But this ancient symbol still has powerful resonance today as, on display for the first time in this new exhibition, is the *shofar* blown by Rabbi Shlomo Goren at the Western Wall on 7 June, 1967. The sound of the *shofar* echoes down the centuries as powerfully today as when Joshua first put it to his lips. ■

***Sound the Shofar – A Witness to History*, an exhibition at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem ([www.blmj.org](http://www.blmj.org)) runs until February 2012.**



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1

# A stitch in time

**Dr David Miles** tries to unpick the tangled knots of interpretation behind the story of the Bayeux Tapestry

A few years ago I was part of a team commissioned to investigate the Chateau of Mayenne. This castle clasps a granite outcrop and dominates an important crossing and route-way between Normandy and Maine. The castle was of strategic importance to Duke William of Normandy who captured it after bombarding the defenders with rotting animal carcasses.

As we excavated, the local mayor of Mayenne was well aware of another, less obnoxious Norman tradition: their fondness for strip cartoons. He commissioned a *bande dessinée* to tell the story in pictures of Mayenne and our spectacular discoveries. The result was entertaining and educational propaganda: Mayenne was placed at the centre of French history, yet demonstrated itself as a model of European co-operation. Those who lived in Mayenne could be proud of their town; those who did not should pay it a visit. The grand-daddy of all strip-cartoons, the

**1. Harold Godwinson, holding his unbuckled sword, is confronted by an enthroned Count Guy of Pontheiu. The distinctive English and Norman hairstyles are clearly depicted.**

**2. Duke William decides to build his invasion fleet and Bishop Odo, shown as his chief advisor, sends off the shipwright.**

Bayeux Tapestry, was made over 900 years earlier. It is a remarkable survival, that was recorded in 1476 in the Inventory of Notre Dame Cathedral in Bayeux as: 'a very long and very narrow strip of linen, embroidered with figures and inscriptions representing the Conquest of England, which is hung round the nave of the church on the Feast of Relias'.

The Tapestry (or, more accurately, embroidery) has been subject to scholarly scrutiny for a couple of hundred years, so one might be excused for believing that the last word had been uttered and that we know all about it. Not so – Bayeux Tapestry scholars seem to reinvent the object of their desire almost every decade. But the answers to their questions remain elusive. Who commissioned the tapestry? Who made it, where and when? Where was the Tapestry first displayed? Was the message of the Tapestry outright Norman propaganda or a more even-handed attempt at Anglo-Norman

reconciliation? Even that great English myth, supposedly familiar to all schoolchildren, King Harold's arrow in the eye, remains a matter of debate.

Actually Martin Foys, in his article *Pulling the Arrow Out: the legend of Harold's Death and the Bayeux Tapestry*, should lay this one to rest. He argues that no early chronicler mentions Harold's death by arrow (Henry of Huntingdon, 1130-40, is the first); the arrow supposedly depicted in the tapestry is an alteration made by 19th-century restorers; the careful composition of the tapestry battle scene clearly forefronts Harold as the figure being cut down by a Norman horseman. His argument is convincing and, of course, has no chance of penetrating the armour of popular culture.

For most tapestry arguments there are no straightforward solutions. This is great fun for historians and anyone who loves historical mysteries and ambiguities. The most recent outbursts of energy are captured in *The Bayeux*





2

*Tapestry: New Approaches* published by Oxbow Books who have transformed archaeological/historical publishing in recent years.

As Neil MacGregor, the Director of the British Museum, explains in the foreword, anybody who is anybody in Tapestry studies gathered in the British Museum in 2008 – largely to contradict each other. This band of brothers and sisters also met at conferences in Kalamazoo, Yale and Leeds, so another book was required to vent their arguments fully: *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Interpretations*. In it, Martin Foy's article, *Pulling the Arrow Out*, is published (see pp. 158–195).

The Bayeux Tapestry – now splendidly resident in its bullet-proof, dust-proof and light-proof gallery in the Musée de La Tapisserie de Bayeux has given birth to both a tourist and an academic industry.

The ambiguity of its message and origins is the secret of its continuing attraction for scholars. Most visitors see a vivid and violent story of conquest. The images are powerful – though perhaps scholars have, in the past, paid too much attention to the Latin captions, privileging the words rather than the images. William the Conqueror, like most of his subjects, was illiterate.

It is possible that the tapestry originally formed the backdrop to a performance by a jongleur, or dramatic

**3. As in a silent film or Picasso's *Guernica* the Tapestry designer conveys the turmoil, anguish and noise of battle through stricken horses.**

3



Even that great English myth, supposedly familiar to all schoolchildren, King Harold's arrow in the eye, remains a matter of debate

commentator, who would have used its images as his 11th-century powerpoint.

And the performance may have seemed quite long. The embroidered strip is made up of nine pieces of linen

carefully stitched together. The frieze, half a metre wide, is over 68 metres long. The opening and closing scenes are missing and would have added a further 10 metres. By any standards this is an impressive and epic work.

One of the masterpieces in the Ashmolean Museum is an Anglo-Saxon jewelled pointer, designed to aid the reader of manuscripts. It announces: 'Aelfred had me made'.

The Bayeux Tapestry is less forthcoming. In 1824 Honoré Delauney first put forward the proposal that Bishop Odo of Bayeux – William's maternal half-brother – was the patron of the tapestry. Delauney made a strong case and it has been accepted by the majority of scholars since for the following reasons: Odo features more prominently in the Tapestry story of the Conquest than in any of the contemporary chronicles.

In addition to the major historical players – William, English royals, princes of the Church – only a few individuals are mentioned by name in the Latin text. Three of these, Turolf, Wadard and Vital, are Odo's retainers and are given significant walk-on parts. Their lives are fleshed





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out, however, in a fascinating article by Hirokazo Tsurushima entitled 'Hic est Miles' (*New Approaches*, pp. 81-91) Odo's episcopal seat of Bayeux is made the setting of one of the dramatic high-points of the story, where Harold swears the oath of loyalty to William, his arms spread between two reliquaries.

Bishop Odo certainly had the means to commission such a major work. He acquired his Episcopal see in 1049 (aged about 19) but, like a rapacious oligarch, he became 'ludicrously rich' in England with an annual income of over £3,000 (a lot!) from vast estates in 23 counties. Commentators describe him variously as 'greedy', 'rapacious', 'a racketeer', 'an extortionist' and 'entirely secular'. As a result of his arrogance and ambition eventually he went too far and William had him placed in custody in 1082.

Dating the Tapestry is intelligent guesswork: most favour an early date, soon after 1066. Others argue that the Tapestry might have been made to hang in Odo's new cathedral at Bayeux, consecrated in 1077. However, Shirley Ann Brown, counter-intuitively perhaps, argues for a post 1082 date, on the grounds that it was then that Odo most needed to suck up to his brother. Odo appears four times in the tapestry and is specifically named twice.

In the scene of the pre-battle meal, which closely resembles the iconography of the Last Supper, he takes centre stage blessing the food. In the pre-battle tactical discussions he sits at William's

**4. The Norman cavalry charge the English spearmen. Criss-crossed spears, tumbling horses and men, and the corpses in the lower margin convey the chaos of battle.**

**5. 'Harold is killed' says the Latin text. But which is Harold? The design leads the eye of the viewer to the figure, felled by the mounted Norman.**

**In one significant respect the Bayeux Tapestry resembles a Hollywood action movie – nearly all the actors are men, over 600 of them**

right hand. During the clamour of battle he urges on 'the boys'. Shirley Ann Brown argues that themes of brotherly love, loyalty and sacrifice run through the tapestry story – for example, the prominent death of Harold's brothers. Is this the devious Odo trying to soften the heart of William? If so it did not work. He remained in genteel incarceration in Rouen until William's death.

In many ways the Bayeux Tapestry is constructed like a film: there are vivid set pieces in which trees and buildings act as frames and gateways are portals into the action.

In one significant respect the Bayeux Tapestry resembles a Hollywood action movie – nearly all the actors are men, over 600 of them, and only a handful of women; and they look alarmed, pathetic or sad. One is naked, in the lower margin, approached by a man with an erection. Another, named AElfgva, stands beneath an elaborate carved gateway and is approached by a priest. She seems to be the subject of Harold's animated conversation with Duke William.

The third woman escapes from her burning house with a child. Finally, we see a weeping female figure sitting at the feet of the dying King Edward. She is presumably a sorrowful and dutiful Queen Edith, warming her husband's

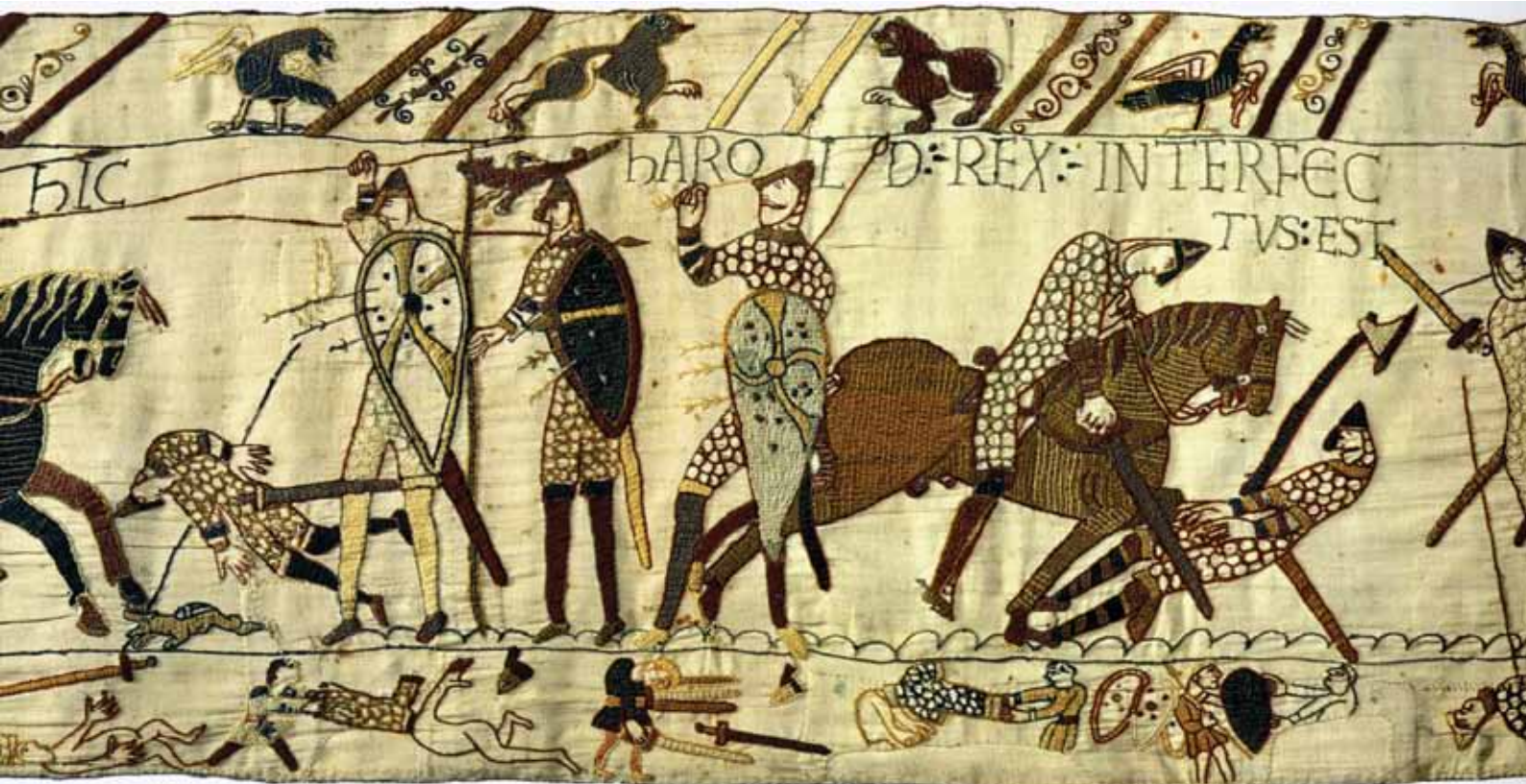
icy feet, according to the chronicles.

We could, then, easily assume that this monument to macho-militarism was designed by the 11th-century equivalent of Sam Peckinpah. So it is fascinating to read the late Carolyn Hick's alternative interpretation in 'The Patronage of Queen Edith' (see *New Approaches*, pp. 5-9), an argument also set out in her fine book *The Bayeux Tapestry: the Life Story of a Masterpiece*. She forefronts the silent women. In this interpretation Queen Edith is no cipher but an ambitious, intelligent, pragmatic and downright devious survivor.

Like her mother-in-law Queen Emma, Edith knew how to live in a world of violent, shifting and treacherous Norse dynasties – and how to make the best of difficult husbands. She also knew how to commission diplomatic propaganda: the Vita AEdwardi Regis presented her not only as its patron, but also as a paragon of virtue. It glorifies the Godwins and re-invented her frosty old husband: the dead Edward is transformed into a saint.

So, could Edith have commissioned the tapestry? She had the means and also her workshop of skilled embroiderers at Wilton Abbey. The makers of the tapestry have often been assumed to be English, though usually based in



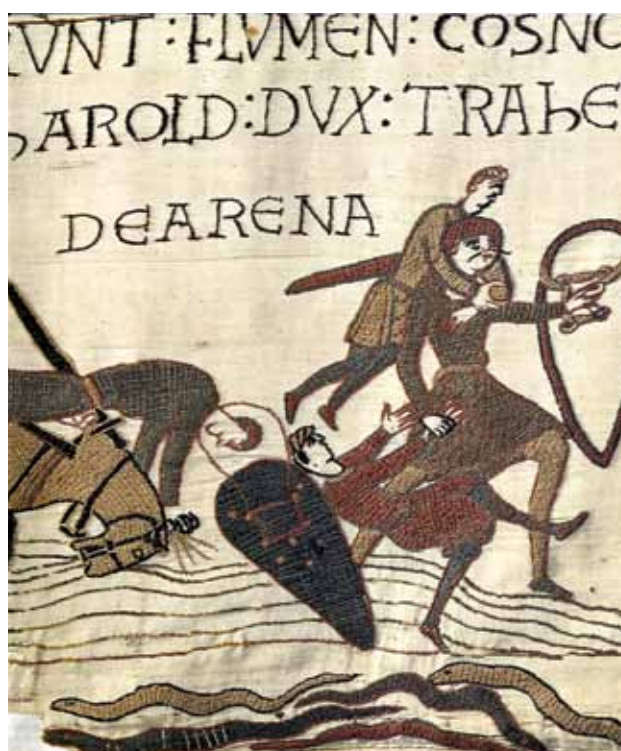


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Canterbury, owing to the similarities of design in Canterbury manuscripts (see Michael J Lewis's contribution to *New Approaches*, pp. 104-111). The Master Designer could, however, have been familiar with Canterbury illustrations and still have had it embroidered elsewhere. Inevitably with tapestry studies there are rivals to the English theory. George T Beech (*New Approaches*, pp. 10-16) proposes that William commissioned the tapestry himself, and put out the work to the Abbey of St Florent of Saumur.

The link here is another William, the abbot of St Florent, who was the son of Rivallon, Lord of Dol, and Duke William's principal ally in the Breton Campaign. Beech's proposal would explain why the Breton events are included and why the local topography – Mont St Michel, the River Cuesnon, Dol, Rennes and Dinan – feature so prominently. But as Beech, himself, says 'reactions to his idea by English scholars have been almost unanimously negative'.

Patricia Stephenson adds weight to the Wilton origin theory (*New Approaches*, pp71-74). She attempts to explain the presence of Aelfgva in the tapestry. This woman was a member of the Godwin family who became Abbess of Wilton between 1065 and 1067. She was said to have been blinded by hot oil from a lamp and, then, miraculously cured. Is this why the cleric points to her eyes? Patricia Stephenson argues that Aelfgva includes herself in the Tapestry to emphasise her role



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**6. A heroic Harold rescues Norman knights from the Cuesnon estuary – are the eels shown swimming past below a commentary on his slippery character?**

as its project manager, in charge of a skilled team of craftsmen and women at Wilton. If Queen Emma, who spent much of her life at Wilton, was the patron then her involvement would explain the sympathetic portrayal of Harold and the Godwin family.

Then the epic shifts its focus to glorify William the Conqueror. Unlike Harold Emma knew which way the wind blew. She survived remarkably well under William, keeping most of her property, trusted, and eventually

given a grand funeral in Westminster Abbey by William himself. William's youngest daughter, Countess Adèle, who was born soon after the Battle of Hastings, supposedly had a tapestry in her bedroom illustrating her father's victories. The poet Baudri de Bourgeuil, eager for patronage, composed a sycophantic work in honour of Adèle about 1100.

The description of the bedroom wall-hanging suggests that Baudri had seen the Bayeux Tapestry somewhere on his travels. He tells us: 'Letters pointed out the events and each of the figures in such a way that whoever sees them can read them, if he knows how'.

But, still, the problem is how to read the Bayeux Tapestry? It remains as slippery as the eels which are shown below heroic Harold slithering in the Cuesnon estuary. ■

Dr David Miles, now retired, was Chief Archaeologist at English Heritage and Director of the Oxford Archaeological Unit.

● *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Approaches*, edited by Michael J. Lewis, Gale R Owen-Crocker and Don Terkla (Oxbow Books, 2011, £25). *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Interpretations*, edited by Martin K Foys, Karen Eileen Overbey and Dan Terkla, Boydell Press, 2009. *The Bayeux Tapestry: the Life Story of a Masterpiece* by Carolyn Hicks (Vintage paperback, 2007)





Bettany Hughes in front of the Parthenon in 2009, when she was in Athens for the opening of the new Acropolis Museum

# From Helen to the Hemlock cup

Historian, writer and broadcaster Bettany Hughes talks to **Lindsay Fulcher** about her mission to bring ancient history to a wider audience

**B**right, beautiful and breathtakingly articulate, Bettany Hughes was the first woman to front a serious ancient history series on BBC television with *Breaking the Seal* in 2000. Inspired by the charismatic presenter Michael Wood, she achieved parity on the screen but this did not, it seems, translate into her salary.

'I found out,' she tells me, 'that one of my male colleagues [not Michael Wood – but she won't say who it is] presenting a series with far smaller viewing figures than mine was being paid 10 times as much as me!'

Yet, despite finding that shockingly unfair, she did not give up there and then, neither did she turn into a furious feminist.

'Calling yourself a feminist can strike terror into the heart of some people so I just try to stay positive, rather than becoming confrontational. Of course, I believe in equal pay and equal opportunities,' she explains, 'but I take a very relaxed long view of all this – 3,000 years ago, in the Bronze Age, there was proper equality. In Minoan society, which was matrilineal, women held crucial positions of political power – such as high priestess – so we have an awful lot of catching up to do. Calling that period 'the Dark Ages' is daft.'

Having said all that, she cannot contain a certain mischievous delight when telling me that *Sisters of Aphrodite*, her new three-part series about women and religion, is scheduled to be broadcast on BBC2 in March of next year, at a time when the Church of England will debate the case for, and against, the appointment of women bishops. This is not to say she is against the Church as, when she is at home, she goes to church every Sunday – the same one in West London that she went to as a child

To date her television series have included: *The Spartans*, *Helen of Troy*, *When the Moors Ruled In Europe*, *Athens*, *The Roman Invasion of Britain* and *Alexandria*. Bettany's first book *Helen of Troy: Goddess, Priestess, Whore*, published in 2005, has been translated into 10 languages and her latest book, *The Hemlock Cup*:



At her book-lined west London home which she shares with her husband and two daughters

*Socrates, Athens and the Search for the Good Life* is on the New York Times' bestseller list.

But what first got Bettany interested in ancient history was being taken to see the blockbuster 'Tutankhamen' exhibition at the British Museum in 1972 when she was only five years old. Shortly after this she watched a television programme on the boy-king, got hooked on the deep past and the seeds of her future were sown. Brought up and educated in West London, where she still lives, she went on to read Ancient and Medieval History at Oxford.

'History is cool now, but when I went to St

Hilda's to study ancient and medieval history it was terribly unfashionable. People tried to put me off: Greek and Latin were dead languages so what was the point? But I was determined – I knew I wanted to do it. This gave me a campaigning passion for my subject. I found it exquisitely exciting but it wasn't getting a fair crack of the whip especially not in mass media. I took a conscious decision to change that but what I said fell on deaf ears and it took me five years to get *The Spartans* off the ground.'

Bettany's series on this subject was finally broadcast in 2002 and it was the work that most



influenced the film-maker Zack Snyder to make his surprise box office hit *300*. Bettany first visited Sparta when she was an undergraduate, and, it is while we are discussing the Spartans that she reveals one of her phantasies – when I ask where would she go, and what would she do, if she could travel back in time she replies:

'I would like to spend one day as a young Spartan girl running around free and naked, taking part in athletic contests. These girls had an unusual degree of freedom. I would also like to go to the island of Lesbos and listen to the great poet Sappho reciting some of her beautiful lines in the moonlight, but the person I would most like to meet is the Byzantine Empress Theodora. Before she was Empress she used to do this racy cabaret act with a goose, acting out the story of Leda and the Swan. Theodora slept her way to the top but, once she was there, she made her mark. You didn't mess with her. She had 35,000 people slaughtered, she introduced strict penalties for rapists and had safe houses set up for prostitutes. I love her boldness!'

Last year to celebrate the centenary of the Roman Society Bettany, herself, appeared as Empress Theodora, dressed in purple and gold, on the steps of the British Museum, alongside its Deputy Director Andrew Burnett as Emperor Vespasian and Professor Mary Beard as Livia.

Not just keen to promote ancient history, Bettany also wants to encourage the teaching of Classical languages. She is President of JACT (The Joint Association of Classical Teachers), and a long-standing patron and supporter of the Iris Project, which has been promoting and teaching Latin and Greek in state schools in the UK since 2006. This year she has taken over from Boris Johnson as Patron of Classics for All, whose aim is to reintroduce the study of Classical languages and civilisation in schools.

'I meet Boris about twice a year and, at first, we tried to converse in Latin and Greek, but his Latin is better than mine and my Greek is better than his – so, in the end, we gave up.'

Bettany has two daughters; I ask if they are learning Latin and Greek. 'Not only that but my eldest is studying Mandarin as well,' she says proudly, 'and she's off to China next week.'

This year Bettany chaired the Orange Prize for Fiction. I remark on how the popularity of historical novels, such as *The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller, has grown enormously and ask if she has ever thought of diverting her writing talents into that direction herself?

'Historical novels are not something I usually read but I did read *The Song of Achilles* and I enjoyed it. It's full of rip-roaring tales but, then, you can't really go wrong if it's based on the *Iliad*. One day I might be tempted to try writing fiction myself but, at the moment, I'm too busy.'

This seems true as Bettany is also an advisor to the Foundation for Science Technology and Civilisation that, spurred on by the events that took place on 9/11, fosters large scale projects

'If I could travel back in time, I would like to spend one day as a young Spartan girl running around free and naked, taking part in athletic contests'



**Examining finds with Professor John Camp, Excavation Director, in the Athenian Agora**

between the East and the West. It seems that no challenge to too great for her.

'When I am writing a book,' she tells me, 'I travel to all the places that my subject has been to whether it is Sparta for *Helen of Troy* or the back streets of Athens for Socrates. When I was researching Helen I drove from Mycenae to Sparta, crossed the Aegean to Troy and then travelled up the Hellespont to Istanbul. I try to piece together their lives, on my subjects tracing their

journeys in real time, walking in their footsteps.'

The research and writing of her latest book, *The Hemlock Cup: Socrates, Athens and the Search for the Good Life*, took her 10 years. 'It nearly killed me,' she says, 'but it was worth it. We think the way we do today because of Socrates. He is essentially a man of our times. He speaks the truth and was poisoned by the Athenian state [the parallel with Dr David Kelly comes to mind]. If you follow a Socratic





dialogue then there is no room for bull-shit. He doesn't allow us to become complacent. We could do with much more of this,' she says with some passion.

'People see me on television and think that's what I do – it tends to take over – but really I am a writer who sometimes makes television programmes rather than the other way around. I love doing what I do. When I wake up in the morning I have a smile on my face and when

I walk down the street I have a spring in my step. I want to take ancient history to a wider public and show not only how fascinating it is, but also how relevant it can be even today.

Most people think of a Greek myth just as a story but the word myth has several meanings including 'point of information', 'fact' and 'observed evidence'. These myths show us what it is to be human today as much as 3000 years ago.' ■

● *The Hemlock Cup: Socrates, Athens and the Search for the Good Life* by Bettany Hughes (Jonathan Cape, hardback, £25, paperback, Vintage, £9.99).

● *Sisters of Aphrodite*, Bettany's new three-part series about women and religion, is scheduled to be broadcast on BBC2 in March 2012.



# Lost *property*

**Murray Eiland** looks at the large amount of information yielded by Middle Saxon and Viking small finds

**F**or the Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon period, a long tradition of organised burial has led to a range of small finds in secure contexts. The same is not true of Middle Saxon (AD 650-950) and Viking Age small finds. For early Christian burials, it seems that status was not indicated by grave goods, but in the place the body was interred relative to the church structure.

Assemblages of personal adornment, as one would find in a burial, from the Middle Saxon period are rare. The majority of the evidence is basically the result of chance finds. With the rise of commerce, market sites in or near major towns were established. Lacking any major permanent structures from this period, these sites are not usually explored by archaeologists. However, given the proper tools, they can yield much useful material.

In *British Artefacts Volume II: Middle Saxon and Viking* Brett Hammond gives excellent examples of what can be done given proper recording. The questions that can be teased out of the material culture could not be more important historically. How did the early British state develop?

The Middle Saxon period witnessed the amalgamation of smaller political units into a larger whole. The interesting questions revolve around what were the pressures driving unity. Certain British kingdoms were Scandinavian client states, this state of affairs did not

**1. Scandinavian silver end. Continental Europe. L. 32mm.**

**2. Anglo-Saxon strap end. Copper with traces of silvering. Kennis collection. L. 43mm.**

**3. Lozenge shaped plate brooch, copper, with traces of gilt. This is distinctly different from the animal style. Gloucestershire. Kennis collection. H. 65mm; W. 38mm.**

**4. Silver amulet, Mjölir, or the hammer of Thor (the loop at the top has been broken). L. 24mm.**

**5. Copper page-marker decorated with geometric motifs. With the spread of literacy these objects were found in wealthy households as well as in religious establishments. W. 41mm.**

**6. Viking D-shaped strap end modelled on an eastern Baltic type. The animal style may reflect the animistic traditions of the north. L. 41mm.**

last. When they arrived, Anglo-Saxons were not Christian (2, 9). In a generation of two, this same culture became Christian, and they looked to Francia and ultimately Rome as their cultural centre. This shift is evidenced in material culture, but history is needed to fill in the gaps as to why this occurred. While a war band could owe allegiance to an individual, as time progressed the state took on a different shape. The rise of Denmark in the 8th century shows that the Church was not needed to form a central state, but it seems that early on rulers appreciated that the Christianity could assist them in nation building. In Britain the Viking incursions were soon appreciated to be a religious rather than ethnic struggle. This observation leads naturally into a discussion of the line between 'Middle Saxon' and 'Viking', as it is clear that Middle Saxon artefacts could be made at the same time Viking small finds were produced.

As Brett Hammond says 'English (Anglian) origins were in Jutland, and it was probably the removal of Anglian power from that territory that paved the way for the Danish expansion from their home on the island of Zealand. The Angles were already familiar with the Danes and their ways. When Danes began settling in England in the 9th century a hybrid Anglo-Scandinavian culture quickly sprang up ...' (p. 11).

The Middle Saxon period also saw the rise of elites, who clearly benefited from increased command and

control. For example, the state relied upon record keeping for taxation. Access the literacy was the prerogative of the Church, which would have trained administrators who did not desire employment by the Church.

There are literary sources from this period, and some small finds attest to the culture that was lost. An interesting example is an Anglo-Saxon disc headed pin (8) with a central cross and a runic text. The last seven letters of the inscription are the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet. Because it cannot be understood, it is assumed that it was a charm. However, the inscription is neatly arranged and suggests it was executed by someone familiar with manuscripts. While remains

of books, as hinges or the decorative elements used on covers, are sometimes recovered from the earth, page markers may also indicate what was lost (5). The Church offered an alternate route of advancement. While the nobility could offer land in reward for military service, the church could offer a life free from military constraint. The Church also provided an international network that promoted long distance trade. The Anglo-Saxon Church was heavily influenced by Ireland, at least at first. Many ecclesiastics were either Irish or had trained in Ireland. A group of finds that are Irish in style show this. Some of the most obvious are crosses in the so-called 'Irish' style.

The 'tau cross' was reputedly used by



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followers of St Anthony. In form it depicts a man with his arms outstretched in supplication (10). The head on top of the cross is in typical 7th-8th century form. It has also been suggested that the relatively scarce type of plate brooch in the form of a lozenge is of Irish derivation (3). Figures in the Book of Kells (of the 8th century) are seen wearing similar brooches. By the 10th century connections with the Carolingians would replace those in Ireland, but English ecclesiastics would continue to have friendly relations with Ireland.

While the Church would become the single most powerful entity at the time, it could not replace the State, particularly during times of stress. Vikings in the 8th century found the churches and monasteries easy prey and drove many smaller Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to collapse or to seek assistance from their more powerful neighbours. The Scandinavians dominated Britain from York and likely also in East Anglia. By the 9th century only Wessex and Mercia remained. The centralisation of Alfred the Great was instrumental in forming communities that could withstand attack and be mobilised for war. It is no surprise then that the Middle Saxon period is associated with fixed production sites in towns, but it is also clear that itinerant craft-workers led to continuity over hundreds of miles.

The rise of Christianity had a profound impact on Anglo-Saxon art. The fantastic intertwining animals that are presented in full colour in the earliest manuscripts are clear adaptations from a pre-Christian past. However, these creatures become progressively less threatening, perhaps more floral, as time progresses. Instead of esoteric forms, Christian art, particularly when commissioned by the elite, tended to be representational, and carry a clear religious message. Interestingly, animal forms continued to be rendered in Christian books, such as the Lind-

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Viking art, however, followed a different trajectory. For the Viking incursions in particular it seems that the picture is not one of a simple change of leadership, or simply the migration of Viking men into Britain. Instead, the finds suggest that women from northern countries settled in Britain along with their locally made metallic handicrafts. While the raids may have captured the attention of contemporary chroniclers, a more general migration of people took place.

To start with the weapons, clearly pride of place must go to swords, which could be made using folded steel and lavishly decorated in gold. Sword fit-

**7. Viking copper pendant. 9th-10th century. Scandinavian type. Odin is flanked by two birds, who obscure the body of the god, D. 22mm.**

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The spear is often depicted in the arts of the period, but is often overlooked. In form the English and Scandinavians used a similar type of weapon, of a leaf shape with a midrib for strength. While a blunt tip would be more robust (14), a pointed tip could be used to split chain mail, but it could be easily damaged (13).

Some of the easiest small finds to interpret have images that can be identified as religious. A good example is a pendant of the 9th-10th century of a Scandinavian type that shows an image of Odin flanked by two birds (7). The figure has his arms around the animals and is grasping their necks. The body of the birds obscures the body of the god. While the exact myth that this scene relates to if it is designed to be appreciated in that way is lost, the pendant clearly seems to show how pagan and Christian beliefs interacted. Similar representations of Christ are common, although here the birds are likely ravens, which are often associated with war. Hammer amulets, designed to represent Mjölnir, the well-known weapon of Thor, are also easy to interpret (4). These would have quickly identified the bearer as non-Christian, and may have been worn particularly in mixed faith communities. Less easy to categorise objects are figures of birds, such as one recovered from the Yorkshire woods (11). The details were carefully chip carved and filed, and although there are similar birds with crosses added, this one appears to be naturalistic. Does this represent a dove or a bird of prey? Is it vague in order to appeal to a wide audience, from Christian to pagan?

There are still many interpretative aspects of small finds that are left to debate, but as in so many other areas of scholarship, the sources are becoming more detailed and easily available with every passing year. ■

*British Artefacts Volume 2* by Brett Hammond. (Greenlight publishing, Witham, Essex, 2010, £15)



# Lost *property*

**Murray Eiland** looks at the large amount of information yielded by Middle Saxon and Viking small finds

**F**or the Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon period, a long tradition of organised burial has led to a range of small finds in secure contexts. The same is not true of Middle Saxon (AD 650-950) and Viking Age small finds. For early Christian burials, it seems that status was not indicated by grave goods, but in the place the body was interred relative to the church structure.

Assemblages of personal adornment, as one would find in a burial, from the Middle Saxon period are rare. The majority of the evidence is basically the result of chance finds. With the rise of commerce, market sites in or near major towns were established. Lacking any major permanent structures from this period, these sites are not usually explored by archaeologists. However, given the proper tools, they can yield much useful material.

In *British Artefacts Volume II: Middle Saxon and Viking* Brett Hammond gives excellent examples of what can be done given proper recording. The questions that can be teased out of the material culture could not be more important historically. How did the early British state develop?

The Middle Saxon period witnessed the amalgamation of smaller political units into a larger whole. The interesting questions revolve around what were the pressures driving unity. Certain British kingdoms were Scandinavian client states, this state of affairs did not

**1. Scandinavian silver end. Continental Europe. L. 32mm.**

**2. Anglo-Saxon strap end. Copper with traces of silvering. Kennis collection. L. 43mm.**

**3. Lozenge shaped plate brooch, copper, with traces of gilt. This is distinctly different from the animal style. Gloucestershire. Kennis collection. H. 65mm; W. 38mm.**

**4. Silver amulet, Mjölir, or the hammer of Thor (the loop at the top has been broken). L. 24mm.**

**5. Copper page-marker decorated with geometric motifs. With the spread of literacy these objects were found in wealthy households as well as in religious establishments. W. 41mm.**

**6. Viking D-shaped strap end modelled on an eastern Baltic type. The animal style may reflect the animistic traditions of the north. L. 41mm.**

last. When they arrived, Anglo-Saxons were not Christian (2, 9). In a generation of two, this same culture became Christian, and they looked to Francia and ultimately Rome as their cultural centre. This shift is evidenced in material culture, but history is needed to fill in the gaps as to why this occurred. While a war band could owe allegiance to an individual, as time progressed the state took on a different shape. The rise of Denmark in the 8th century shows that the Church was not needed to form a central state, but it seems that early on rulers appreciated that the Christianity could assist them in nation building. In Britain the Viking incursions were soon appreciated to be a religious rather than ethnic struggle. This observation leads naturally into a discussion of the line between 'Middle Saxon' and 'Viking', as it is clear that Middle Saxon artefacts could be made at the same time Viking small finds were produced.

As Brett Hammond says 'English (Anglian) origins were in Jutland, and it was probably the removal of Anglian power from that territory that paved the way for the Danish expansion from their home on the island of Zealand. The Angles were already familiar with the Danes and their ways. When Danes began settling in England in the 9th century a hybrid Anglo-Scandinavian culture quickly sprang up ...' (p. 11).

The Middle Saxon period also saw the rise of elites, who clearly benefited from increased command and

control. For example, the state relied upon record keeping for taxation. Access the literacy was the prerogative of the Church, which would have trained administrators who did not desire employment by the Church.

There are literary sources from this period, and some small finds attest to the culture that was lost. An interesting example is an Anglo-Saxon disc headed pin (8) with a central cross and a runic text. The last seven letters of the inscription are the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet. Because it cannot be understood, it is assumed that it was a charm. However, the inscription is neatly arranged and suggests it was executed by someone familiar with manuscripts. While remains

of books, as hinges or the decorative elements used on covers, are sometimes recovered from the earth, page markers may also indicate what was lost (5). The Church offered an alternate route of advancement. While the nobility could offer land in reward for military service, the church could offer a life free from military constraint. The Church also provided an international network that promoted long distance trade. The Anglo-Saxon Church was heavily influenced by Ireland, at least at first. Many ecclesiastics were either Irish or had trained in Ireland. A group of finds that are Irish in style show this. Some of the most obvious are crosses in the so-called 'Irish' style.

The 'tau cross' was reputedly used by







followers of St Anthony. In form it depicts a man with his arms outstretched in supplication (10). The head on top of the cross is in typical 7th-8th century form. It has also been suggested that the relatively scarce type of plate brooch in the form of a lozenge is of Irish derivation (3). Figures in the Book of Kells (of the 8th century) are seen wearing similar brooches. By the 10th century connections with the Carolingians would replace those in Ireland, but English ecclesiastics would continue to have friendly relations with Ireland.

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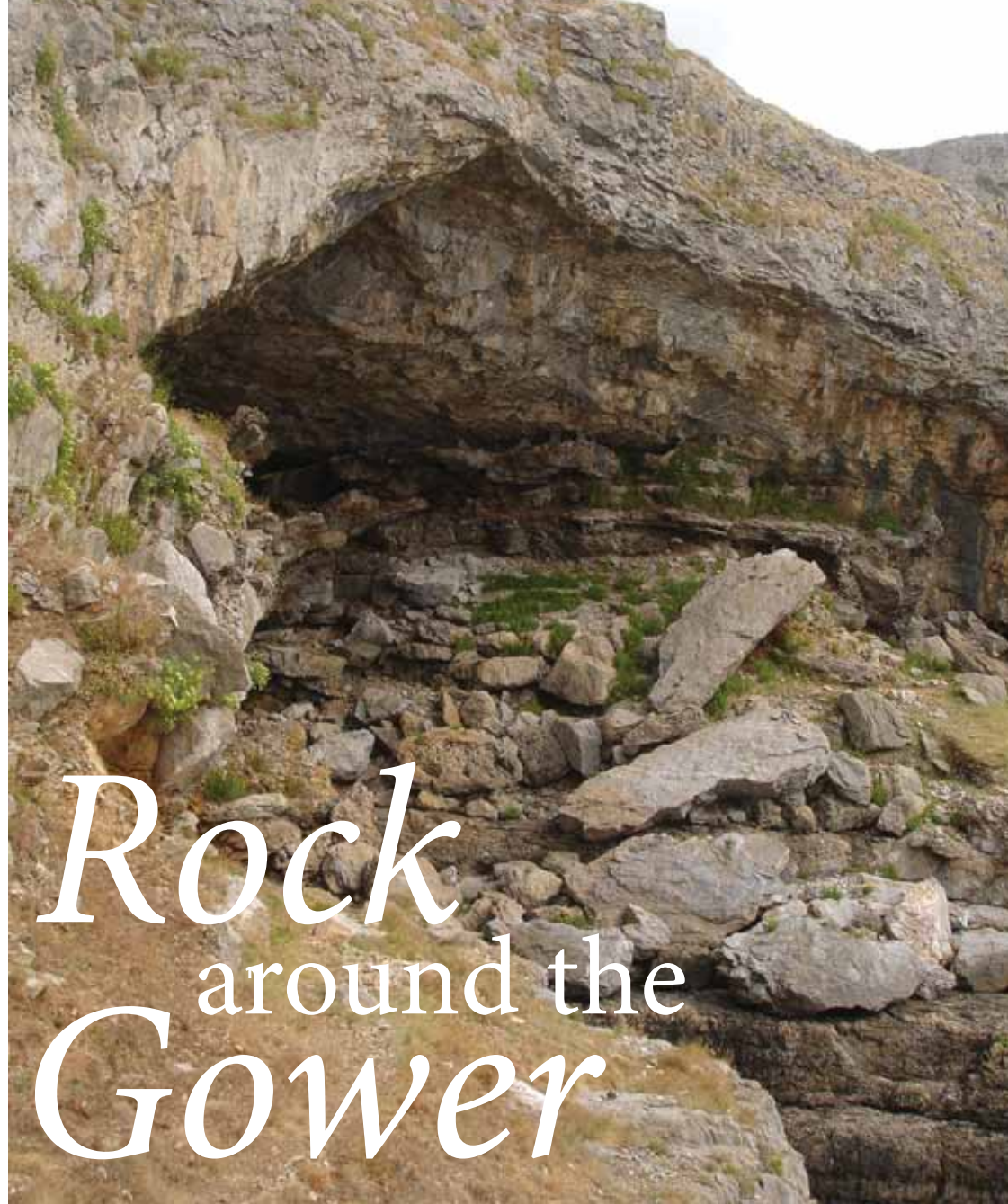


**George Nash,  
Peter van Calsteren,  
Louise Thomas, and  
Michael J. Simms**

report on the exciting rock art discovery on the Gower Peninsula and what it means for the prehistory of the British Isles

Prior to 2003 and the discovery of engraved and bas-relief Upper Palaeolithic rock art in Church Hole Cave within Creswell Crags Gorge in Nottinghamshire, it was thought that the human groups at that time did not produce art on cave walls in the British Isles. The discovery of the Church Hole Cave rock art and, more recently, the carving of a cervid, probably a reindeer, in a cave in South Wales has changed all that. Bands of hunter/fisher/gatherer communities clearly used the caves in this harsh environment, probably during the summer months, and while doing so exercised their artistic skills to produce imagery that played an important role in their all-encompassing ritualised world.

During the Upper Palaeolithic, much of Britain and Ireland was covered by a thick blanket of ice, in places up to 2km thick and there was little in the way of a human presence south of the ice margin. The Church Hole discovery changed our ideas on the peopling of the British Isles during this harsh climatic period. True, there had been a number of false dawns where Upper Palaeolithic rock-art had been found and then rejected. One of these



**1. An unlikely bison, Pleistocene in date, located on a vertical panel from Cave 5615, near Symond's Yat in the Wye Valley Gorge, South Herefordshire.**

so-called discoveries occurred in 1912 at Bacon Hole Cave on the Gower Coast when experts of the day found red streaks of haematite within one of the recesses of the cave (2). This turned out to be either natural haematite secretions or paint – possibly from a sailor merely cleaning his brushes!

A second discovery in the Wye Valley of South Herefordshire in 1982 claimed to be Britain's first representative rock-art – the outline of a bison and a red deer amongst other animals from Cave 5615 (1). This was duly reported in the popular press but lacked any academic validation and, following a series of personal attacks, rebuttals and a confession or two, this was also rejected.

Associated with the Creswell discovery and, strangely, from nearby caves within the gorge were a series of Upper Palaeolithic mobile artefacts which were discovered during early 20th-century excavations. These included Creswell's infamous horse, that had been carved on a piece of rib

bone (3), and a bird-like head on a human torso which had been carved on a piece of bone from a woolly rhinoceros (*Coelodonta antiquitatis*), a species which was considered to have been extinct in Britain by 15,000 BC. The presence of these rather exotic artefacts, along with a handful of other portable valuables including perforated shell and stone, made for garment decoration, necklaces and pendants, occur against a backdrop of sometimes rapid climatic fluctuation when average summer temperatures at 12,000–13,000 BP were around between 0 and -5 degrees Centigrade.

In September 2011, one of the team (George Nash) was exploring the rear section of a limestone cave that stands within the eastern part of an inland valley on the Gower Peninsula, a region that contains a number of caves that have revealed vital clues to Britain's distant past.

Due to the sensitivity of the find the location of this cave has to be kept secret suffice it to say it is approximately







2km north of the present coast line and has been the focus of a number of investigations over the past 150 years. The first excavation was undertaken during the mid to late 19th century when a large section of the cave floor was excavated. An array of flint tools, metal implements and pottery dating from the Upper Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age were recovered from the excavation, plus a significant Pleistocene faunal assemblage that included (extinct) elephant, giant deer, hyena, reindeer, woolly rhinoceros and wolf. Probably found within the upper stratigraphy was a small collection of domesticated bone including that of goat, pig and sheep that dated to the Neolithic or Bronze Age periods. Unfortunately, and typical of this time, no stratigraphic records were made. Accompanying these later prehistoric deposits was evidence of human burial, but again no archaeological clear records survive.

The majority of the lithic assemblage appeared to have originated from the Late Upper Palaeolithic and was similar to those found within trenching from a well-recorded excavation made, during the latter half of the 20th century, outside the entrance of the cave. Recovered from this excavation were more than 300 lithics, many of which were diagnostically similar to flint blades and points at

**2. The mouth of the Bacon Hole sea cave, now overlooking the Bristol Channel.**

**3. The infamous Creswell rib with an engraved horse**  
Photograph: Jill Cook, British Museum.

**4. Creswellian-type points from Cheddar Gorge in Somerset.**

**5. One of three bear claw scratches with the northern section of the cave.**

**6. Central section of the engraving showing the torso and upper section of the legs.**



other cave sites at Creswell Crags and within Cheddar Gorge (4). In addition to this Late Upper Palaeolithic assemblage were two tanged points that were identified as dating to circa 28,000 BP suggesting that the cave had been subjected to a much earlier occupation at a time when the British Isles and most of north-western Europe were firmly gripped in an ice age (known as the Devensian).

At this time, and until the glacial retreat around 14,000 BP, the Bristol Channel was then a seasonally lush landmass that extended to the present day north Devon and Cornwall coastline. Following the retreat of the Welsh ice sheets, groups of advanced hunter/fisher/gatherers would have utilised this sometimes hostile landscape, seasonally occupying many of the caves that are cut and shaped into the limestone. Accompanying these small self-contained communities were herds of large migratory herbivores that included bison, elk, horse, mammoth and reindeer.

Against this backdrop, one of the team, along with members of the Clifton Antiquarian Club from Bristol began to explore the cave in 2007 specifically to look for rock-art. The first visit resulted in the discovery of several cave bear (possibly *Ursus arctos*)

claw scratches that were made following a probable hibernation episode (5). Possible engraved geometric patterns were also found within an antechamber, located north of the main gallery. However, the limestone throughout the cave is traversed by innumerable small-scale natural fractures and, despite optimism within the Clifton team, the general consensus was that the patterning would be difficult to authenticate and ultimately it was considered to be a natural phenomenon.

A further visit to the cave on 18 September 2010 resulted in the discovery of a cervid, interpreted by one of the authors (GN) as a reindeer. This was engraved on a vertical panel inside a discrete niche, located north-east of the main gallery. This near-hidden engraving is the first clear evidence of Pleistocene rock-art in Wales and only the second discovery of Pleistocene rock art in Britain.

The stylised side-on view figure, measuring approximately 15 x 11cm, was carved using a sharp pointed tool, probably flint, and has a number of characteristics that resemble carved reindeer found elsewhere in north-western Europe. The niche was so tight that conventional cameras could not be used and therefore a series of overlapping images were made (Figure 6). The







elongated torso has been infilled with irregular-spaced vertical and diagonal lines. A single vertical line appears to extend outside the area, between the torso and the antler set, representing a possible spear. Several internal diagonal lines extend below the lower section of the torso, merging three of the four legs; the longest measuring 4.5cm. Incorporated into the left side of the torso and continuing beyond is the head (or muzzle) of the reindeer comprising a semi-circular snout, chin and mouth. Above the muzzle is a thin rectangular block on which three lines extend to the right forming a stylised antler-set (7). These various straight lines are cut into a weakly botryoidal calcite flowstone surface which has effectively sealed and covered any fractures in the limestone surface beneath. Any fractures developing subsequently on this flowstone would be influenced by its botryoidal form and hence show at least some degree of curvature. This is not the case and it is this contrast, between the straightness of the engraved lines and the curved nature of the relief on the flowstone that eliminates any possibility that the figure might be a chance configuration of natural fractures.

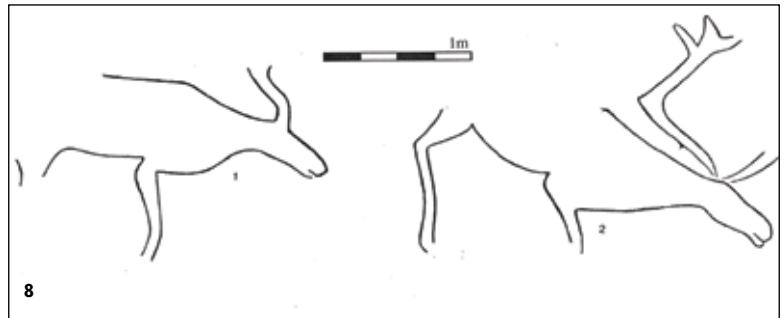
By around 10,000 BP this tundra-loving beast appears to have migrated northwards, beyond the current shore-line of the British Isles seeking cooler climbs. The stylistic characteristics, such as the shape of the muzzle, the antler set and the infilling of the torso are not uncommon with pecked reindeer engravings found along the fjords of central, southern and western Norway (8). However, we stress that we are not making any direct associations between the discovery and Norwegian hunter/fisher/gatherer rock art. Its

**7. Upper section of the engraving showing the antler-set and torso.**

**8. A tracing showing the simple lines of an engraved reindeer from Sagelva in Nordland, Norway.**

**9. Peter van Calsteren taking a sample for the flowstone.**

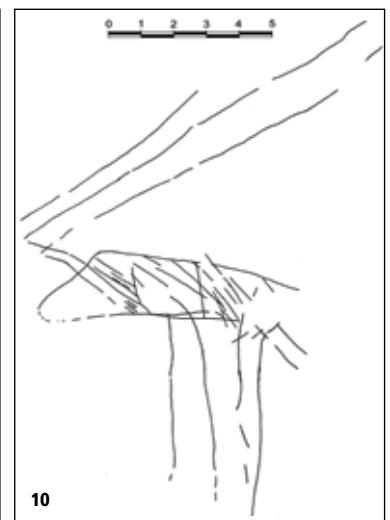
**10. A tracing of the engraving using non-contact methods.**



location, hidden within a tight niche in the inner section of the cave is again not uncommon for Pleistocene rock art that is found in south-western Europe; its discreteness suggesting a sacred place and a personalized shrine.

In April 2011 members of the NERC-Open University Uranium-series Facility extracted samples from the surface on which the engraving was engraved for Uranium Series dating, along with a sample from a section of flowstone that covers part of the reindeer's muzzle (9). A single date has revealed that this engraving was executed prior to a flowstone deposit which dates to around  $12,572 \pm 600$  years BP. A further sample of the flowstone was taken left of the muzzle in July 2011. We hope that this sample will provide corroborative evidence of the age and confirm the absolute youngest age when the flowstone initially developed over the reindeer. The samples of the calcite underlying the engraving showed open system behaviour and an age could not be calculated.

An assessment of the cave and its wealth of discoveries made so far are at an early stage of research. An accurate



plan of the cave using 3D laser scanning technology is on-going; this technique may tease out more rock art and will give the first acute plan of the cave. As part of next phase of the project, the reindeer will be recorded in greater detail and the hunt for more rock art will continue, but for now a tracing from the many images digitally taken will suffice (10).

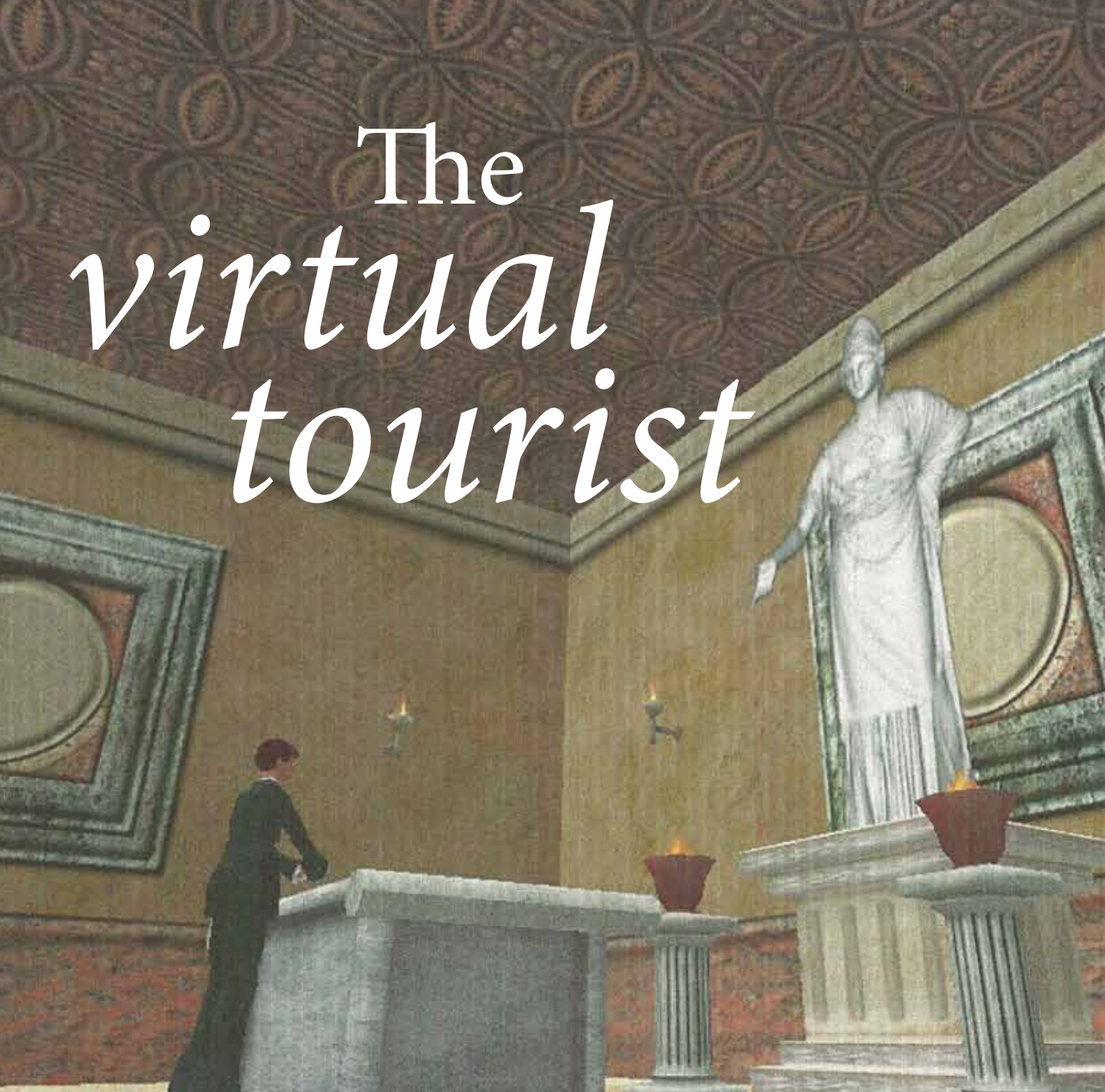
Following this phase a management plan will be produced in order to assess the archaeological potential and secure the cave's long-term future. As part of the logistical support, Elizabeth Walker, Curator of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Archaeology from the National Museum of Wales has been gathering data from previous excavations and it is hoped that this information will form the basis of a much wider project that will reveal more than just a moment in time when a hunter/fisher/gatherer scratched with his or her right hand an image of a reindeer. ■



**The Research Team includes**  
Project leader and prehistoric rock art specialist Dr George Nash (University of Bristol).  
Dating team: Dr Peter van Calsteren (Open University), Dr Louise Thomas (Open University) and Geologist and Cave Geomorphologist Dr Michael Simms (National Museums Northern Ireland).



# The *virtual* tourist



On-line traveller **Joseph M Isenberg** takes us on a guided tour of Roma, Second Life's virtual representation of the Classical World

**T**he glory that was Rome may have passed away but, today, users of the virtual reality programme Second Life can visit a graphic representation of the Classical world on the internet. The creative efforts of a number of artists, educators and gifted amateurs have combined to provide an insight into what life was like in the early Empire. What follows in this article is, essentially, the travelogue of a virtual tourist in an on-line simulation of Rome.

In Second Life, the user, represented by an animated character called an avatar, interacts with other users and objects in a virtual world

created collaboratively by the whole community. Second Life differs from traditional computer games in that there is no particular objective, or fixed story line, no winning or losing. Instead, the virtual tourist socialises with other account holders, or uses the graphic elements of the program to develop artistic renderings of the world, like buildings, landscapes, or objects. The programme lends itself to artistic and educational endeavours and so it was natural that great periods of cultural and artistic flowering should attract attention from users. So an interest in the Classical period gave birth to Virtual Classicism. Second Life as an on-line

virtual world was inaugurated by its owner, Linden Research, Incorporated, also known as Linden Labs, a San Francisco firm, in 2003.

The brain-child of company founder Philip Rosedale, Second Life was designed to take advantage of the observation that many on-line computer game players, and others, were interested in more creative and collaborative activities than could be found in traditional computer games. Growth of the virtual world was rapid, reaching one million users with accounts by 2011. Users quickly formed different interest groups, and an on-line economy also developed, in which account-holders could exchange





1. The author's avatar stands reverently before the altar in Second Life's virtual Temple of Minerva.

2. The Roma region on Second Life has a variety of Roman buildings and typical activities in which users can engage. Here, the avatar of the author finds himself somewhat overdressed on a trip to the baths.

3. Close-up shot of the interior of the Roman baths.

4. The Ars Avete lot in Second Life is one center for the purchase of virtual Classical architecture. Each of the rectangular posters in the lower left corner represents a virtual building that can be purchased and erected on a virtual lot. Furniture, decorative objects, and clothing can be purchased in the building just visible on the left side of the picture.

5. The avatar of the author browses in the Ars Avete clothing section. As in real life, there is a bewildering array of possible purchases for women and many fewer choices for men. Some things never change – even in virtual alternative reality.

6. A Roman centurion is kitted out for action. Objects can be made which include small computer programmes, 'scripts,' which affect the avatar using them. Combat can be simulated using so-called 'scripted' weapons, the other weapons and objects are just for show.

7. Aerial view of the Roman amphitheatre, one of the replicas of real Classical or Classically inspired buildings recreated in the Roma region by Popea Heron.







**6. The interior of one of the Ars Avete buildings, designed by Popea Heron. The Ars Avete site advertises 60 different Roman buildings available for Second Life users to purchase. Buildings are constructed out of basic geometric shapes, known as 'prims,' which can be decorated with images known as 'textures.' So, the columns in the foreground could be constructed out of three prims each, the top and bottom being squares modified to suit, and the shafts, cylinders. More complex sculpted shapes, known as 'sculpties,' allow for irregular objects to be created. Computer programmes allow doors to be manipulated by users to open, close, make a creaking noise, and send a message saying: 'So and So is at the porta'.**

**8. A close-up of the amphitheatre.**

**9. If you happen to meet a lion in the arena, as in real life it can be a problem.**

**10. Luckily this lion has his lunch. Animals can be programmed to behave like their real-life counterparts. He can walk, lie down, crouch, roar, sit, prowl about randomly, and even attack.**

**11. Popea Heron's virtual representation of the Getty Villa.**

virtual goods, services, and 'real estate,' in the world built by the computer programme.

One of the interest groups that formed dedicated itself to recreating, on-line, both a representation of the physical environment of the Roman Empire, and a role-playing experience dedicated to presenting Roman society. So it was that the Roma regions of Second Life came into existence.

The existence of a virtual economy allowed artistic expression to be commercialised, so that those able and inclined to create virtual objects could receive some reward for their efforts. Money, as a medium of exchange, was introduced by Linden Labs in the form of Linden Dollars, which can be purchased, or sold, for

a fixed exchange rate with the company. This internal currency can be exchanged among the residents, or, by conversion to a real-world money, can be used to pay the firm for subscription fees or other costs. Virtual items for sale include buildings, decorative objects, clothing, and objects useful for interacting with the on-line world, essentially game-playing devices – such as armour and weapons.

One of the artists bringing classical items to the Second Life community is the avatar (or character) known as Popea Heron. Since Second Life allows its account-holders as much or as little anonymity as they wish, this article will note only that the user behind Popea is a school teacher in Switzerland, who

is interested in Classical art, architecture, and antiquities, and who is also interested in Pompeii and Herculaneum.

One of her motivations in creating the buildings found in her Ars Avete shop in Second Life was to recreate virtually the buildings excavated at those sites, as well as buildings inspired by Classical architecture.

Popea Heron developed recreations of the Getty Villa, a Roman amphitheatre, a variety of temples, and a labyrinth designed to entertain and teach others about the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur.

Since Second Life can be programmed by its users to allow others to interact with objects, you can examine the pictures in the





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**12. Popea Heron has designed the Labyrinth to be both entertaining and educational although, as yet, it lacks a Minotaur.**

**13. Inside the Labyrinth, the walls are decorated with Minoan wall paintings with which the visitor can interact. If you are following the correct path, you will be sent a note containing a fragment of the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. If you are going in the wrong direction, you will receive a picture of something else.**

**14. The voluptuous avatar Popea Heron, who is responsible for the Labyrinth and much of Second Life's virtual Classical architecture, is dressed in thoroughly modern garb including ripped jeans.**

**15. At the virtual Roman fort, using the mouse, a visitor can manipulate the dial on the sign which reads 'Praetorium through the ages'. At first it appears as it did in the 3rd century, but further on it is reduced to ruins.**

**16. The temple of Minerva with its cult statue of the goddess of wisdom.**

labyrinth, and determine whether you are on the right path to the exit. You will receive either a note outlining some aspect of the legend, or a Classical picture. Sadly, a functioning Minotaur does not seem to be lurking in the centre of the maze yet.

However, there are plenty of programmed representations of animals which behave like their real counterparts. Dogs are a popular choice, but you may well find a lion prowling around in the amphitheatre.

Educational institutions have experimented with Second Life as a potential means of delivering instruction or showcasing the work of the school, college or university.

In 2009 and 2010, Stanford and Durham

Universities teamed up with the owner of the 'Roma' region in Second Life, Torin Golding, to create virtual Vinovium, a representation of the Roman fort being excavated at Binchester in County Durham. A user can walk through the buildings of the fort, and see how they would have looked at different points in history. More about the excavation and its work on Second Life can be found at [www.vinovium.org](http://www.vinovium.org).

Second Life site is not only used as a medium for artistic expression, and educational purposes, it is used by account-holders for social interaction, and role play. A group has sprung up around the 'Roma' region dedicated to recreating, virtually, Roman society. It holds occasional meetings, and reproduces on line the

principal Roman festivals. This is enhanced by computer programmes which animate avatars. By running these programmes, their avatars can be made to dance, sing, or, even, enter the temples and pray at the altar.

Because of the dedicated efforts of computer programmers, scholars, and artists, now it is possible to walk down the streets of an ancient Roman city. An observant virtual tourist can hear the roar of the crowd – and of the lion – and the ring of steel as weapons clash in the Colosseum. He or she can participate in ancient festivals and pay his respects at ancient tombs.

Other travellers wishing to explore this exotic ancient location can follow in the footsteps of this virtual tourist at [www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com) ■



# Games people play

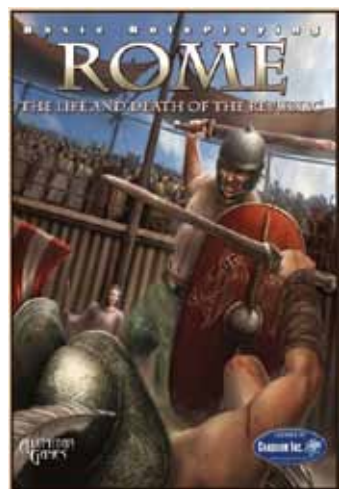
As the long dark nights approach **Joseph M Isenberg** rolls the dice over 10 board games with historical themes, perfect gifts for those who have a passion for the past

At this time of year shopping for friends and loved ones who do not share the same passions as you do can be difficult. Themed games are often a useful way of bridging that gap and can also teach the players something about your pet subject. Fortunately for me and perhaps other readers of *Minerva*, there are many games with Classical themes which depict historical events or phenomenon. Here are a few of them:

1. **Ancient Conquests** (*Decision Games*, \$44.95; [www.decision-games.com](http://www.decision-games.com)). Four players follow the destinies of competing civilisations in the ancient Near East. Each civilisation has a list of objectives, for which it scores points. In the next turn, new civilisations may emerge, according to their historical order, and attempt to score points. A player does not play merely one civilisation, but rather plays several over time. The player who scores the most points at the end of play wins.

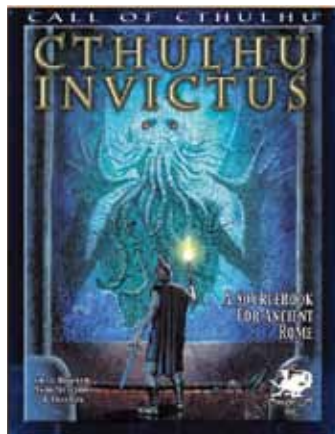
2. **In Republic of Rome** ([www.valleygames.ca](http://www.valleygames.ca), \$69.95), two to six players attempt to guide the development of the Roman Republic from the First Punic War down to the creation of the Principate. Each player tries to create a faction of senatorial families, some of which also give rise to individual historical figures, and to manoeuvre that faction into the offices of the Roman Republic; with their senators becoming consuls, censors, pontifexes, and dictators, each of which confers privileges on the holder. Holding office allows the family to gain prestige and when one family reaches a certain amount of prestige, the faction wins the game. At the same time, wars and crises threaten to engulf the Republic and

must be dealt with by office-holders. Success garners more prestige; however, allowing too many problems to build up can lead to the collapse of the system, and defeat for all players. So, the game involves a fine balancing act between individual greed and forced cooperation. Confounding matters further, a player with a string of military successes may feel emboldened to overthrow the Republic by force and, towards the end of the game, the temptation to do so is almost overwhelming. Timing such an effort, as both Julius Caesar, and Mark Antony found to their chagrin, requires a particularly fine sense of the politically possible.



3. Role-playing games have been a favourite of literary-minded teenagers and young adults since the release of *Dungeons and Dragons* in the late 1970s. They differ from other games in that they are not necessarily competitive, nor do they have a clear winner, rather, one player, the referee, takes on the role of a storyteller, and creates a mystery for other players to solve. They must take on roles of the characters in the story, and solve the mystery presented. There is no particular penalty for failure, except in so far as it

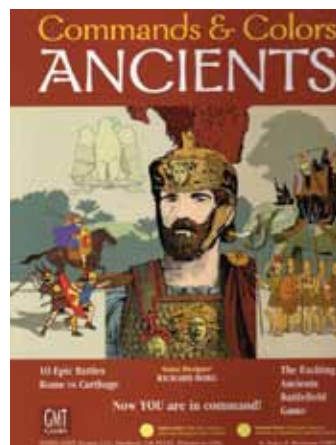
affects the future direction of the story. Two recent releases allow creative referees to explore classical historical and mythical subjects. Chaosium Publishing's **Basic Role Playing** set ([www.chaosium.com](http://www.chaosium.com), \$44.95, hardcover) has, as one of its settings, the ancient Roman Republic, using the BRP Roma rules created by licensee, Alephhtar Games, ([www.alephthargames.com](http://www.alephthargames.com), \$44.95.) Enough information is provided so that a player can craft stories based upon Roman history during the period of the Kings, the Republic, or the Empire. A few ready-to-play stories (modules) are also available.



4. For those with a taste for horror, Chaosium ([www.chaosium.com](http://www.chaosium.com)) also publishes **Call of Cthulhu**, (6th edition, \$34.95) a series of rules inspired by the macabre tables of HP Lovecraft, Robert Howard, and others. One of the settings, **Cthulhu Invictus** (\$26.95) allows for role play in the Roman Empire.

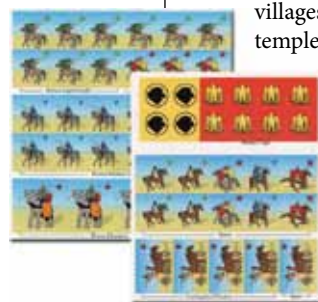
5. **Hannibal: Rome vs. Carthage** ([www.valleygames.ca](http://www.valleygames.ca), \$64.95) allows two players to stage and participate in the Second Punic War on the table top. Maps cover all the major theatres of the war, including Spain, Gaul, Africa, and

Italy. Neglect of any one of these areas can prove fatal; at the same time, trying to cover all equally will lead to resources being spread too thinly, and will, eventually, lead to disaster as well. An expansion set, soon to be released, will allow players to engage in the First Punic War instead.



6. GMT Game's **Command and Colors, Ancients Series** ([www.gmtgames.com](http://www.gmtgames.com), \$65), allows players to refight individual battles from the Second Punic War. Card play determines which units are able to move and hidden units create further uncertainty and confusion for the players. Terrain overlays can be placed on the map board allowing players to create historical battlefields using a single board as a base.

7. In **Parthenon** (Z-Man Games, [www.zmangames.com](http://www.zmangames.com), \$44.95), three to six players develop islands in the Aegean in the dawn of the Classical Age. Players must trade and use their profits to build structures, including workshops, more villages, academies, and temples. The first player to complete all the structures, including two 'wonders', wins the game but unforeseen disasters can thwart the best laid plans of the players. ■





# Sea rams from Sicily

**Dario Calomino** reports that the discovery of bronze rostra in the waters of Messina and Levanzo provides new evidence of naval warfare at the time of the Punic Wars

**I**n the north-eastern corner of Sicily, along the Tyrrhenian coast of Messina (the ancient Greek city of Zankles, founded by colonists from Chalcis in the 8th century BC), is a small seaside village Acqualadroni, which means 'the water of thieves' (1). Its name recalls the time when these waters were infested by Saracen pirates in the 17th-19th centuries but, even well before this in Greek and Roman times, pirate galleys used to sail across the Strait of Messina (the 3.2km channel dividing Sicily from Reggio Calabria, the most southern tip of the Italian 'boot') and board merchant ships.

Between Acqualadroni and Capo Rasocolmo (a few kilometres west), a thousand-year-old passage of strategic importance, one of the naval battles that decided the fate of the Roman Republic is supposed to have taken place on 3 September 36 BC. The site, known as Naulochus (in ancient Greek: 'shelter for boats') is where Agrippa,

**1. Map of Sicily showing Messina (north-eastern corner) and the Egadi Islands (off the north-western corner).**

**2. 'Ram fishing': recovering the rostrum from the sea.**

**3. The Acqualadroni ram, partially submerged in water, on show at Palazzo Zanca in Messina in February 2009.**



general of Octavian's army, gained a crucial victory over Sextus Pompey, the son of Pompey Magnus, rival of Caesar during the first Civil War. Sextus is also remembered by ancient authors for his acts of piracy off Sicily against Rome.

On 8 September 2008 an extraordinary discovery was made by a group of scuba-divers of the Messina Coastguard off Acqualadroni, about 350m from the coast at a depth of 7.20m: a bronze naval rostrum in perfect condition, about 2m long and weighing 300kg (2), was found on the seabed. It was recovered by the Maritime State Antiquity Service, the Soprintendenza Archeologica del Mare, guided by Professor Sebastiano Tusa, in cooperation with the Guardia Costiera.

After cleaning and desalinisation, it was displayed in a temporary

exhibition in Messina (3), before being shipped to Palermo for conservation and analysis. This is the most sensational of an impressive series of rostra finds that have enhanced the maritime archaeological heritage of Sicily in the last few years.

A rostrum was a heavy naval ram positioned on the galley prow (covering the intersection between the keel and the stem) and designed to crash into the hull of another ship at high speed in order to sink it. The structure is normally composed of a vertical part, fixed to the lower side of the stem, and of a horizontal underwater prolongation, the ramming head itself. The name recalls the Latin motto 'unguis et rostro' ('with claws and beak'; or 'by any means').

It was known as a 'beak' because of its function as offensive weapon in







**4. Officers of the Guardia Costiera recovering the rostrum on the seabed of Acqualadroni.**

**5. The rostrum found on the seabed of Levanzo in September 2010.**

**6-7. Rostra depicted on Roman coins.**  
**6. Silver *denarius* of Octavian representing a Naulochus commemorative monument (Victory standing with wreath and palm branch on a military trophy decorated with a rostrum) – Italian mint, 30-29 BC (Photo courtesy of CNG Coins, Sale 76/2007, Lot 1318;**  
**7. Silver *denarius* of Octavian representing the rostral column celebrating the victory of Naulochus – Italian mint, 30-29 BC (Photo courtesy of CNG Coins, n. 873008).**

**8. Rear view of the Messina ram with wooden fragments of the prow.**

naval warfare. Such 'armoured beaks' became popular after the Roman victory over the Latin League in the 338 BC Battle of Anctium, that cleared the way for the conquest of central Italy. Bronze rams captured from enemies' fleets were used to decorate the base of the platform on the north-western side of the Roman Forum, where orators used to speak; from that time on the platform was called a 'rostra'.

The rostrum also became an element of decoration for military monuments. It was adopted as a popular image of naval victory and maritime supremacy in Roman political propaganda and as one of the most powerful symbols of Augustan rule after the end of the Civil Wars. From the time of the Punic Wars we read about the dedication of rostral columns (monumental pilasters decorated with naval rams topped by a statue) to glorify generals of the Roman Republic.

The most famous one is still linked to the history of Roman Sicily. Erected in honour of Caius Duilius for defeating the Carthaginian fleet at Mylae (Milazzo, 30km west to Messina) in 260 BC, at the beginning of the First Punic War, it was placed in the Roman Forum. Over 200 years later, it was used as the model for the rostral



column erected not far from it in the name of Octavian, after the victory of Naulochus (6 and 7).

Octavian, himself, displayed enemies' rostra for immortalising his most emblematic naval victory at Actium in Epirus, where he inflicted a crushing defeat upon the fleet of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC. In the nearby city of Nicopolis a monumental open-air sanctuary was built to commemorate the battle; the lower terrace retaining wall still preserves an impressive series of hollows depicting the anchor-shaped cuttings to hold the bronze rams of Antony's ships.

Unfortunately, almost nothing remains of the bronze rams, themselves, since they were melted down and recycled, but a virtual reconstruction based on the size of the cuttings has allowed archaeologists to calculate the dimensions of the Actium rostra. Of this and many other monuments, nothing has survived other than the

words of ancient authors and depictions on marble reliefs and on coins, so it is exceptional to find an original bronze rostrum in its entirety. The best chance of recovering one, although extremely rare, can only come from the sea.

This explains the importance of the Acqualadroni find. In fact only nine examples are known to have been recovered in total: besides one from Pireo (Athens), one from Athlit (Israel) and one in Germany, as many as six were found in Italy and no fewer than five in Sicily between 2004 and 2011, four







in the Egadi islands, near Trapani (on the north-western coast of the region) (1) and this one in Messina. This data shows how all the recent Sicilian discoveries shed new light on an almost completely unknown feature of naval warfare in Greek and Roman times. I must also stress that, before 2008, the most remarkable bronze rostrum found was the Athlit ram, weighing in excess of 450kg and measuring over 2m in length.

This piece was probably a Cypriot production and was intended for a vessel of the Ptolemaic fleet between the end of the 3rd and the first half of the 2nd century BC. The Acqualadroni ram is the closest to the Israeli example, both in size and in state of conservation, but two peculiar features probably make it the most precious ever found.

Firstly, the bronze structure, resulting from a unitary casting, still preserves original relief decorations on both lateral sides; each one presents a tri-form head decorated with three ornamental blades (probably daggers) ending at the opposite extremity with an elegant hilt (3); whereas the Athlit

**9. Front view of the rostrum found near Levanzo in June 2008.**

**10. 'Shadow of the rams'; the impressive series of anchor-shaped cuttings of the Antony's ships on the Octavian memorial at Nicopolis. Photograph from the author's collection.**

**11. The rostrum seized in Trapani by the Carabinieri in 2004.**



ram reliefs represent a trident, a cap, an eagle's head and a *caduceus*.

Even more exceptional is the presence of large wooden fragments, belonging to the galley prow itself (a considerable part of the bow, still fastened to the back of the ram by fixing hinges), and to the enemy's ship rammed during the battle (which got jammed into the head of the rostrum after the crash) (8).

All the Sicilian rams (apart from the seized one) have another aspect in common with the Israeli example, as they can still be referred to a certain maritime archaeological site. This initially led the archaeologists to assume that the Acqualadroni ram was likely to have belonged to a ship involved in the battle of Naulochus, in confirmation that the conflict took place exactly where it had been supposed before.

Such an assumption could have solved a long-debated issue, but no further remains of a wreck (apart from fragments of lead ingots and sheets of the boat coating) have been found at the site, so the ram was probably out of context. Moreover, the latest radio-carbon dates of the wooden fragments definitely contradict the first supposed chronology; the rostrum is now dated over two centuries before, 360-190 BC.

This does not clash with the possibility that Pompey's fleet was defeated not far from Acqualadroni, as other evidence can still support this argument - a shipwreck found at Capo Rasocolmo has revealed coins dated 43-36 BC and glandes missiles (bronze or lead bullets hurled by slings, used both in land and in sea battles); but the ram had nothing to do with all this.

The new chronology means that the rostrum was lost in another earlier naval battle, probably during the First or the Second Punic War (264-241 BC and 218-201 BC); therefore it could add further evidence to the 3rd century naval bronze rams found in the waters of Trapani in recent years. The first one, still in optimal conditions

(the head is 85cm long with rosette reliefs on each side and a Latin inscription) was sized in Trapani in 2004 by the Carabinieri of Nucleo di Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale (11); many clues suggest it had emerged from the seabed around the island of Levanzo (Egadi).

Three more examples were later found in the waters of Levanzo between 2008 and 2011, thanks to the joint project of the Sicilian Soprintendenza del Mare and the USA RPM Nautical Foundation. The rostrum (9) found in June 2008 was only partially preserved and is 65cm long, but the latest two are in excellent condition. The first was found, in September 2010, lying on one side at a depth of around 80m (5), also bears a Punic inscription; the second, a Latin inscription.

A methodical survey of the seabed among the islands of Levanzo, Favignana and Marettimo has led to the identification of the site of the 10 March 241 BC battle of the Egadi, at the end of the First Punic War. Such concentrations of the same rare typology of finds in a localised area may definitely prove that the engagement location has been identified. It can now be assumed that the battle which assigned the final victory to the Roman consul Caius Lutatius Catulus over the Carthaginian fleet took place about 5km north-west at Capo Grosso in Levanzo.

Continuing studies of the exceptional finds and discoveries made in the Sicilian waters are expected to further expand our knowledge of ancient warfare in the Mediterranean Sea. ■

**Dario Calomino, an independent researcher, is grateful to the Guardia Costiera of Messina, Marcello Mento (*Gazzetta del Sud*) and Dr Roberto Motta for the photographs of the Acqualadroni rostrum and to the Regione Siciliana - Soprintendenza del Mare for the photographs of the Egadi rostra.**





She was one of the most powerful and popular of the ancient divinities, the goddess of love and beauty – Aphrodite to the Greeks and Venus to the Romans. Now the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston has organised *Aphrodite and the Gods of Love*, an exhibition of about 160 objects comprising, strangely, the first-ever survey of this beautiful, but dangerous, goddess who inspired the first female nude sculpture in Western art history. Aphrodite was an adulterous seductress, the instigator of sexual desire, and mother to the mischievous Eros, as well as to Hermaphrodite and Priapos. She was worshipped as the patroness of brides, seafarers and warriors; she was also considered to be an agent of political harmony in her capacity as promoter of unions, physical, political and social.

Yet, although she was widely adored by the Greeks and Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, and Sappho all wrote of her, she was not of Greek origin. Aphrodite was one of many female goddesses that crisscrossed the ancient Mediterranean with its extensive trading activities. It is most likely that she was brought in from the Levant (Syria, Lebanon and Israel), but her Bronze Age ancestors are the revered mother goddesses, the Sumerian Inanna and the Akkadian Astarte/Ishtar. The overlap between the Greek and Near Eastern cults of these goddesses is striking; they were all believed to control sex, fertility, procreation, and beauty.

The earliest mentions of Aphrodite in Greek literature link her to the islands of Cyprus and Kythera, the two key sites in the myth of her birth. By the 8th century BC, both Hesiod and Homer invoke Aphrodite as Kyprios (of Cyprus) and Kythereia (of Kythera).

The archaeological record provides evidence of a Phoenician presence on both islands attests to their role as mediators between Near East and Greece. Aphrodite (also called Paphia) is first connected to Cyprus at the end of the Bronze Age, around the 12th century BC when her temple at Paphos (in south-western Cyprus) centred on the unusual worship of a large conical stone, one imported on to the island.

In the late 8th century BC Hesiod

offers us the earliest account of her birth in his *Theogony* (lines 176-206). Aphrodite is born before all the other Greek gods, including Zeus. She is created from the foam, the white sperm, that collected around the severed genitals of Ouranos – treacherously cut off by his son Kronos. This violent start in life foreshadows her ambivalent nature. She is never simply the goddess of love and beauty, but rather a formidable force in the affairs of gods and men – when

**2. Drinking cup (skyphos) showing the departure and the recovery of Helen, Greek, made in Athens by Hieron (signed) and painted by Makron (signed); Late Archaic period, circa 490 BC, red-figure technique, H. 21.5cm, D. 27.8cm; Francis Bartlett Donation of 1912**

unleashed her powers can sometimes be dangerous, threatening, or protective.

The worship of Aphrodite and her cults are recorded throughout the Mediterranean from the 8th century BC until the 5th century AD. Her devotees included men and women, children, brides, warriors, merchants, sailors and magistrates.

One of the key stories for understanding Aphrodite's power is the Judgment of Paris. It all starts with the wedding of Peleus and Thetis,



# Mighty Aphrodite

Christine Kondoleon pays homage to Venus and the other gods and goddesses of love currently being venerated in a new exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston







3

where Eris (Strife), upset because she was the only Olympian divinity not invited, stormed out and left behind a golden apple inscribed 'to the most beautiful'. Soon after, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite quarrel, each believing that they deserved the title. To settle the dispute, Zeus selects an impartial judge, the Trojan prince, Paris. As we all know, Aphrodite's bribe of Helen, the most beautiful woman in Greece, was the most appealing. The unfolding drama of the abduction of Helen by Paris and her return ten years later to Menelaus caused endless trouble and conflict. Aphrodite plays a key role in

manipulating the will and actions for both Helen's abandonment of husband and son and for her safe return home to Sparta. While hardly the perfect wife herself, Aphrodite's cult was instrumental in helping brides to make the transition from maidenhood to adulthood. Our knowledge of Greek nuptial practices derives largely from scenes painted on Greek vases. The goddess offered brides guidance and safe passage at this unsure time of their lives.

Aphrodite offered a model of femininity to which all women of the ancient world aspired. Greek women used the arts of beautification to seduce their husbands and this, too, was guided by Aphrodite. One of the earliest sources describing this is in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* of the 7th century BC, in which we learn that the goddess travelled to her shrine on Paphos where the Three Graces bathed and anointed her with perfume, and draped her with fine transparent garments, thus ensuring her power to seduce her mortal lover Anchises (father of Aeneas).

The world of female beauty is revealed by everyday objects, jewellery, mirrors, and perfume bottles,



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**2. Head of Aphrodite, (The Bartlett Head), Greek, 330–300 BC; marble from Paros; H. 28.8cm, W. 18.1cm, D. 24.8cm. Francis Bartlett Donation of 1900.**

**3. Statue of Aphrodite of the Capitoline type, Roman, made in Lazio, Italy; Imperial period, 2nd century AD Marble; H. 112.4cm, W. 45.4cm. Henry Lillie Pierce Fund.**

**4. Bronze mirror with bathing women, Imperial period, AD 110–117, silvered and gilt bronze; D. 13cm. Museum purchase with funds donated by Dr Ernest and Virginia Lewisohn Kahn.**

**5. Sleeping Hermaphrodite, Roman Imperial period, 2nd century AD (Antonine) copy of a 2nd century BC. original, Marble; H. 25cm, L. 148cm. Rome, Museo Nazionale (Palazzo Massimo).**

**6. Model shrine with nude goddess, Eastern Mediterranean; 6th–3rd century BC; Terracotta; H. 26cm, W. 14.3cm. Gift of Alan M. and Marcia May.**

**7. Cameo with the Wedding of Cupid and Psyche, or an initiation rite, Roman, signed by Tryphon, Late Republican or Early Imperial period, mid- to late 1st century BC. Layered onyx cameo; L. 4.5cm, H. 3.7cm. Henry Lillie Pierce Fund.**



Aphrodite's cult was instrumental in helping brides to make the transition from maidenhood to adulthood

often found in women's graves. When Aphrodite appears to her lovers she is always anointed in perfumed oils and her sanctuaries exude fragrance as her devotees offered precious scents in her honour. Greek and Roman women indulged in wearing perfume – it was deemed to arouse desire in their husbands and lovers and also paid tribute to their patron goddess, Aphrodite. The perfume industry was big business throughout Mediterranean. The cultivation of roses was critical to the production of scents and for the making of garlands which were used for



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decorative and ceremonial purposes. In terms of Western art history, the revelation of the exhibition is the depiction of Aphrodite as a nude female. In the mid-4th century Praxiteles created a cult statue for the sanctuary of Aphrodite in Knidos, Turkey, which represented the goddess nude emerging from the sea. Previous to his daring innovation, all female deities, indeed all women, were represented as draped figures. The concept caught on immediately yielding many variations, which are included in this exhibition, and influenced artists until this day in their representations of the female nude.

Aphrodite had many children and none was more than potent than her son Eros. In the ancient texts Eros has many fathers, one ancient epigram wittily declares: 'Eros is such an exhausting child, nobody wants to be his father.' Yet ancient tradition quickly makes him first Aphrodite's companion and then her son. Because he is often caught making trouble and requiring discipline he was deployed as a subject of much humor by ancient artists. Probably his most impish act was to rob Herakles of his lion-skin and club, as depicted on a large terracotta from Myrina.

It is thought that this Eros once held the golden apples of the Hesperides behind his back. The

message would have been clear to the ancient viewer: Eros, the divinity of love, could overpower even the mightiest of the Greek heroes.

Priapos, the son of Aphrodite and Dionysos, is always shown with a gigantic phallus, alluding to his role as a fertility god. The god Priapos was the protector of crops and many statues of him were placed in gardens, where they were believed to encourage procreation and to ward off disease and evil spirits.

The sensuality of the female nude received a dramatic twist in the Hellenistic period with the creation of the Hermaphrodite, Aphrodite's most unusual offspring. According to Homer's *Odyssey*, Hermes bragged to his brother Apollo that he was willing to suffer the same humiliation as Hephaistos if he could share the bed of Aphrodite. His wish was fulfilled and their union produced a hybrid born both with male and female sexual features.

For the Romans, Venus was the mother of Aeneas, legendary founder of the Roman race, who played a key role in religion and politics of the Roman state. Emperor Augustus traced his lineage through Aeneas to Venus and his own family made many associations with the goddess. His wife Livia, for example, was presented as Venus Genetrix, the symbolic mother of Rome and divine



**8. Mosaic panel (emblemata) with cupids gathering roses in a garden, said to have been found in Sousse, Tunisia, Imperial Period, 2nd-3rd century AD; limestone and glass tesserae on terracotta tray. H. 48.5cm, W. 61.1cm, D. 12.3cm. Museum purchased with funds donated by Jeffrey and Pamela Choney.**

**9. Statue of Priapos holding fruits in his drapery, Roman Imperial period, AD 170-240, marble; H. 159cm, W. 53cm, D. 32cm. Gift of Fiske Warren and Edward Perry Warren.**

**10. Fresco of The Judgement of Paris, Roman, from Pompeii, Imperial period, 45-79 BC; H. 60.5cm, W. 58.5, D. 6.5cm. Naples Archaeological Museum.**

**11. Head of a female goddess or priestess wearing a high polos Cypriot; Cypriot-Achaic period, late 6th century/early 5th century BC; limestone; H. 50.8cm, W. 34.9cm, D. 41.2cm. Worcester Museum of Art.**



ancestor of the Julio-Claudian family.

*Aphrodite and the Gods of Love* venerates and brings to life an all-pervasive deity who inspired the passions of men and women for many hundreds of years and who is still irresistible today. ■

*Aphrodite and the Gods of Love* is on show on at the Museum of Fine Art in Boston ([www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org)) until 20 February 2012; at J Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California, from 28 March to 9 July 2012; at San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas, from 15 September 2012 to 17 February 2013; at Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma, from 10 March to 26 May, 2013. The catalogue *Aphrodite and the Gods of Love* (MFA Publications, 2011) costs \$50, hardback; \$35, paperback ([www.mfa.org/publications](http://www.mfa.org/publications)). *Aphrodite and the Gods of Love, A Symposium* will be held on 5 November at the MFA. Admission is free.







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1. Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BC) bronze small *prutahs* with crude designs of anchors and stars, and mostly illegible legends. These may have been struck late in the reign of Jannaeus or even by his wife and successor Salome Alexandra, or his brother Hyrcanus II, who reigned until 40 BC. These small coins circulated for hundreds of years and are probably the same as the 'widow's mite' mentioned in Mark 12: 41-44. Private collection.

2. Mattatayah Antigonus (40–37 BC) bronze *prutah*. Showbread table, crude Hebrew 'Mattatayah the Priest'. On the reverse is a seven-branched *menorah*, in Greek 'of King Antigonus'. Abraham D. Sofaer Collection on loan at the ANS.

3 Bronze amulet depicting a *menorah*, with a *lulav* (palm branch) left and a *shofar* right; a rosette motif appears on the other side, circa 3rd–5th century AD, Israel. Private collection.

# Cultural change

Curator **David Hendin** reports on his most exciting exhibition to date, showing Jewish, Christian and Islamic coins from the Abraham D. and Marian Scheuer Sofaer Collection, at the Museum of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York

My most exciting curatorial experience to date has been to create the exhibition *Cultural Change: Coins of the Holy Land*, featuring coins from the Abraham D and Marian Scheuer Sofaer Collection. This is currently on show at the Museum of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, where it will remain until the end of February 2012. Happily a few other museums have enquired about the exhibition and, later, it may travel.

With seven large display cases containing more than 300 coins, it is possibly the largest exhibition of ancient coins from the Holy Land that has so far been displayed. Sofaer spent more than 30 years building one of the best private collections of coins of the ancient Holy Land ever assembled. He and his wife Marian last year donated to the ANS his remarkable

collection of coins of Samaria (more than 260 coins), the Jewish War (55 coins), and the Bar Kokhba Revolt (171 coins). These additions to the ANS cabinet place the ANS holdings in these areas among the best in the world, alongside the British Museum; the Israel Museum; the Hermitage; and the Bibliotheque Nationale.

The Sofaers have also donated another portion of the collection to the Israel Museum, and plan to donate more of the collection in the coming years.

This collector had strived to include coins of the Holy Land of significance to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. One important display focuses on the early use of religious symbols such as the *menorah* and the cross. The exhibition points out that both of those symbols are generally linked directly to their respective religions from earliest times. But the reality is

that both the *menorah* and the cross came into use much later than most people believe. This exhibition shows that when Jesus was crucified he was one of many thousands of non-Romans who were dispatched by this ghastly form of capital punishment.

The cross did not become widely used as a symbol of Christianity until the late 4th century. The earliest Christian symbol used on coins was the superimposed Greek letters chi and rho, the first two letters of 'Christ' in Greek. The seven-branched *menorah* was central to the Jewish faith from earlier times; it is described in *Exodus* 25:31-40: 'And you must make a lampstand of pure gold ... and you must make seven lamps for it; and the lamps must be lit.'

Jewish priests in the Temple took care of the golden *menorah*. But the depiction of the





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4. Terracotta oil lamp with a cross for handle and a menorah for fill hole and spout, found in Jerusalem area, 4th–6th century AD. Private collection.

5. Herod I (40–4 BC) bronze half prutah. Obverse: cornucopia with Greek 'of King Herod'. Reverse: an Eagle. This coin represents the first use of a graven image on a Royal Jewish issue, it may represent the golden eagle Herod had placed above the Temple entrance. Abraham D Sofaer Collection on loan at the ANS.

6. Herod Antipas (4 BC–AD 37) bronze half-denomination struck AD 19–20 at Tiberias. Obverse; 'Tiberias' in Greek in a wreath. Reverse; upright reed and Greek 'of Herod the Tetrarch, year 24'

= AD 19/20). Jesus referred to Antipas as 'that fox' (Luke 13:32). Abraham D. Sofaer Collection on loan at the ANS.

7. Aristobulus, King of Armenia (AD 54–92) bronze, struck AD 56–57. Obverse: Diademed bust of Aristobulus to left, in Greek, 'of King Aristobulus, year 3' = AD 56/57 AD. Reverse: Bust of Salome to left, in Greek, 'of Queen Salome.' When Salome, daughter of Herodias, danced for Herod Antipas, it pleased him and 'the king said unto the damsel, ask me whatsoever thou wilt ... And she ... asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist ...' (Mark 6: 22–25). Abraham D. Sofaer Collection on loan at the ANS.



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As Sofaer also notes, one of the interesting features of many of the coins of the ancient Holy Land is their lack of graven images

menorah elsewhere was a violation of Jewish law, as later codified in the Babylonian Talmud. Because of this prohibition there were few known images of the menorah that were made while the Second Temple existed.

Wide use of both the cross as a symbol of Christianity and the menorah as a symbol of Judaism began only in the 3rd and 4th centuries. The coins that first display these images are small and difficult to display. So we supplemented them with other objects, including large menorahs engraved on bronze, Byzantine crosses, oil lamps with cross and menorah motifs, as well as some photographs.

Sofaer's passion for these coins stems from his interest in the Holy Land, both ancient and modern. He was US State Department Legal Adviser who served as principal negotiator of the agreement between Egypt and Israel that

settled their boundary at Taba. Reflecting on his collection, he notes that:

'These coins represent a geographic area that is unique in the totality of its cultural and ideological variety and significance. The Holy Land has been fought over by various empires for some 3,000 years. It has almost always been a province of one of the area's major empires, since about the 6th century BC, when coins were first minted there, until the State of Israel was declared. But it has been a province rich in human drama, social and political upheaval, cultural and religious diversity, commerce, and creativity. Consequently, while lacking the military, political, artistic, and economic dominance of the empires which controlled it, Holy Land numismatics is intellectually and artistically rewarding.'

As Sofaer also notes, one of the interesting

features of many of the coins of the ancient Holy Land is their lack of graven images, which is especially relevant for the local Jewish issues as well as the Islamic coins. This similarity in coins provides an interesting parallel between Judaism and Islam. In contrast to the coins of the Greeks and Romans, which commonly use portraits and other graven images of creatures or gods, most of the coins struck under Jewish and Islamic rulers in ancient times follow the Biblical code prohibiting graven images as stated in Exodus 20:4: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.'

Jewish rulers of the Maccabean and Herodian Dynasties in Judaea issued coins that served their nation's economy, but also made bold



**8. Jewish War (AD 66–70) silver *shekel* year 1 (AD 66–67), struck at Jerusalem. Obverse: ritual chalice, in Hebrew, 'shekel of Israel'. Reverse: staff with three pomegranate buds with Hebrew 'Jerusalem [the] Holy'. ANS Collection: 2010.69.1. Gift of Abraham and Marion Sofaer.**

**9. Bar Kokhba Revolt (AD 132–135) silver *sela* year 1 (AD 132–133). Obverse: tetrastyle façade of the Temple, ark or showbread table, in Hebrew 'Jerusalem.' Reverse: *lulav* bunch with *ethrog*, left, in Hebrew 'year one of the redemption of Israel.' ANS**

**Collection: 2010.76.1. Gift of Abraham and Marion Sofaer.**

**10. Tyre, Phoenicia silver *shekel* struck AD 14–15. Obverse: laureate head of Melqarth wearing lion-skin knotted around neck. Reverse: eagle standing with right foot on prow of ship, date PM (year 140 = AD 14/15) and Greek legend 'of Tyre the holy and inviolable'. The half-*shekel* annual tax on adult male Jews was payable only in the shekels and half-*shekels* of Tyre because of the consistency and purity of the coinage. The Abraham D. Sofaer Collection on loan at the ANS.**

**11. Vetrano (AD 350) bronze struck under Constantius II (AD 337–361) at Siscia. Bust of Vetrano. HOC SIGNO VICTOR ERIS ('In this sign, you will conquer'). Victory crowns Vetrano with a wreath. The scene and legend on this coin provide the only numismatic re-enactment of Constantine the Great's victory at the Milvian Bridge. ANS Collection: 2010.33.1. Gift of Harlan J. Berk.**

**12. Heraclius (AD 610–641) Jerusalem bronze follis. Obverse: crowned bust of Heraclius, Heraclius' royal name in Greek. Reverse: M above cross-dated to**

**AD 613/614 and 'Jerusalem', in Greek, below. This is the only ear that Byzantine coins were struck in Jerusalem. Another version of the same coin type of Heraclius carries the Greek for 'Victory of God (Jesus)' in place of Jerusalem. Possibly these coins were minted to encourage the Christian defenders of the city during a siege by pagans. Abraham D. Sofaer Collection on loan at the ANS.**

**13. First Jesus Portrait: Justinian II (First Reign AD 685–695) gold solidus, Constantinople mint struck AD 692–695. Obverse: facing**



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statements regarding their sovereignty while maintaining the understanding of Jewish religious law at the time.

So, instead of showing the image of a king or a god, the first coins struck by the Maccabean rulers beginning around 130 BC carried a Hebrew inscription in a laurel wreath. The wreath was associated with leadership and royalty in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds.

The first graven image to appear on a coin struck by a Jewish king was the eagle on a coin of Herod I (40–4 BC). His son Herod Philip (AD 4–34), who did not rule in territories with a large Jewish population, was the first Jewish king to have his own portrait on coins. Jewish coinage during the revolts against Rome resumed using religious symbols and avoided graven images.

The Islamic coins minted in the Holy Land also avoided using graven images when they were minted beginning in the 7th century. For the most part they used only holy inscriptions and very few images of any kind.

'While I started out primarily interested

in Jewish coins, I soon realized that the Holy Land presented an opportunity to collect coins minted in a single small area, by no fewer than ten civilizations: Persians; Greeks; Hebrews; Samaritans; Nabataeans, Romans; Byzantines; Arabs; Crusaders; and Israelis,' explains Sofaer.

'Vast differences exist, moreover, even among the Jewish coins minted in the area; some are very Hebrew, with no images of people or gods, while others bear the portraits of emperors and pagan gods.

'The coins minted in the area reflect the long history of Jews in the Holy land, but also the long, multi-cultural, historical parade of other peoples. The Holy Land is important to many peoples, in addition to the Jews; and every effort by one cultural group to dominate the area to the exclusion of others eventually failed. A stable future for the Holy Land requires a commitment by all groups in the area to maintaining multi-cultural and tolerant regimes.'

Sofaer collected coins on a personal level, becoming close friends with key numismatists

in Israel such as Professor Ya'akov Meshorer, principal author of the book on Sofaer's collection, and Shraga Qedar, co-author with Meshorer of two volumes on Samaritan coinage.

The donations of Sofaer's collections to both the ANS and the Israel Museum were made in Meshorer's memory. Meshorer, who died in 2004, was recipient of the ANS Huntington Medal in 2001. In addition to academics and curators, Sofaer befriended many of Israel's licensed coin-dealers, as well as many important collectors.

In his introduction to the corpus of his collection (which will be published next year by the ANS), Sofaer talks about some of these colourful individuals such as Meir Rosenberger, 'a tailor who, with very little money, painstakingly put together a huge collection of city coins, which he published in four volumes. He was an avid and knowledgeable collector, and a gentle and intelligent man, whom everyone liked and admired.'

I had the pleasure of introducing him to



bust of Christ holding book of Gospels, cross behind, in Greek, 'Jesus Christ King of Kings'. Reverse: Justinian standing facing, in Greek 'Justinian Servant of Christ'. This is the first depiction of Jesus on a coin and it may have been struck in AD 692 in response to the publication of Canon 82 of the Quinisext Council in Trullo, which decreed that all depictions of either God or Christ should be in human form, rather than that of the Paschal Lamb as previously required. ANS Collection: 1980.109.279.

14. Jerusalem Re-named: Hadrian (AD 117–138) bronze coin of *Aelia Capitolina*. Obverse: draped bust of Hadrian and his royal name in Latin. Reverse: the emperor as founder, ploughing with an ox and cow; in background, vexillum, Latin inscription, 'Colony of *Aelia Capitolina*, foundations'. This coin commemorates Hadrian's renaming of Jerusalem as *Aelia Capitolina*; he was the first of 16 different emperors whose names appear on coins of Jerusalem during the Roman period. Abraham D. Sofaer Collection on loan at the ANS.

15. Abbasid al Quds (Jerusalem), bronze fals, struck AD 832. Obverse: inscription in three lines with two crescents below, Arabic legend, 'there is no god, but God alone, He has no associate'. Reverse: Arabic inscription in three lines, 'Muhammad is the Messenger of God', marginal inscription, 'in the name of God'. This fals was struck at al-Quds in the year 217 = AD 832. Abraham D. Sofaer Collection on loan at the ANS.

The coins minted in the area reflect the long history of Jews in the Holy land, but also the long, multi-cultural, historical parade of other peoples



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the late Professor Ya'akov Meshorer, Curator of Numismatics and, later, Chief Curator of Archaeology at The Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Our close personal friendships spanned three decades and Sofaer recalls one of our most memorable rituals with Meshorer:

'For many years [we] would meet early on Saturday mornings and go to Bethlehem to buy food in the soukh, and to meet with Samir Kando and other members of his distinguished family. (Samir's father was the dealer [and former shoemaker] who sold the Dead Sea scrolls, now at the Israel Museum.) Kando would greet us warmly (often along with his brothers), and then serve coffee and cookies while we talked about everything but coins.

'After a proper interlude for socializing, 'material' would emerge, and the more interesting the material he was able to present us, the happier Samir was as he presented it. One of the saddest days of my life occurred when, in the midst of drinking coffee at Kando's shop, some young children marched by with sticks,

banging on cars and shouting in anger. It was 12 December, 1987, the first day of the intifada, and the end of our visits to Bethlehem. I only hope all the pain suffered by Arabs and Jews in the Holy Land eventually leads to mutual respect and peace.'

He also remembers a dealer named George Momjian, who had a shop near the Muristan in Jerusalem's Old City:

'No one took the rituals of civility more seriously than this Armenian gentleman. Anyone who lacked the patience and good taste to appreciate Momjian's company might never see any of his coins, and certainly not his best. I spent hours with him, playing backgammon, drinking coffee, and eating meals delivered from a local restaurant. During these visits, he would suddenly get up and rummage through drawers and packages to find some interesting coins to show me.

'Unlike other dealers, Momjian never charged inflated prices, and virtually never reduced them. One bargained with him during the

verbal sparring that preceded any offer to buy or sell, by making comments aimed at pushing up or down the item's value.'

Sofaer, the professional State Department negotiator, further wryly observes: 'This is a subtle form of negotiation, in which the most knowledgeable do best, which gave Momjian the advantage.'

Whoever had the advantage then – buyer or seller – now, we have the advantage of seeing all the wonderful purchases which Sofaer made. ■

● **Cultural Change: Coins of the Holy Land** is on show at the New York Federal Reserve Bank, 33 Liberty Street, New York ([www.newyorkfed.org](http://www.newyorkfed.org)) until 28 February 2012.

● **Cultural Change: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Coins of the Holy Land**, a 128-page paperback, with full colour images, is available for \$40, plus shipping directly from the American Numismatic Society ([www.numismatics.org](http://www.numismatics.org)).



**Murray Eiland**  
looks at the diverse  
array of bronze  
objects in the  
National Museum  
of Cambodia

# Buddhas, bulls and burners

**T**he archaeology of Cambodia is world famous, but because of internal strife, few people have visited that country to experience it for themselves. Many of Cambodia's national treasures are housed in the National Museum in Phnom Penh (1, 5). The Museum was begun under French rule in 1920, and was run by the Cambodians from 1966. A few years later it served as a treasure house for regional artefacts, but it was shut down in 1975 under the Khmer Rouge. Fortunately, the collection was put into storage and the museum was re-opened in 1979. It quickly regained its former reputation as one of the top attractions of South east Asia, and has recently boasted attendance of some 90,000 visitors a year.

However, the collection was in dire need of conservation. This led to the Smithsonian Institution and, later, the Getty to develop a conservation and training program with the Cambodians that has resulted in a small collection travelling abroad. Twenty-six small bronzes were on display in the

**1. The National Museum of Cambodia has benefited from extensive renovation to the structure and the grounds, which are laid out like a palace garden. SJ Staniski.**

**2. Bronze Ganesha, 13th century. Siem Reap province, Siem Reap, former airfield. 26cm x 23cm x 16cm. National Museum of Cambodia.**



Sackler Gallery in Washington (2010) and the J Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (2011). The real issue is, considering that this art was off limit for years, when will a major show (perhaps covering monumental stonework as well) will be mounted? The National Gallery of Australia hosted *The Age of Angkor: Treasures from the National Museum of Cambodia* back in 1992 and if this had toured, it would have attracted more visitors to a country with a long and distinguished artistic tradition. Cambodia is, of course, the home of the temple complex of Angkor Wat, which is billed as the world's largest religious structure. Although first dedicated to Vishnu, it later became a Buddhist shrine. Images from the site have appeared on the national flag. The temple was adorned with many reliefs – the





**3. Vajra-Bearing Guardian, late 6th early 7th century (Sui or Tang Dynasty). Kampung Cham province, Cheung Prey district, Sdaeung Chey village. 15 x 6 x 3cm. Credit National Museum of Cambodia.**

**4. Buddha from the second half of the 7th century. Kampung Cham province, Cheung Prey district, Sdaeung Chey village. This example, made in Cambodia, perhaps follows foreign models. 39 x 11.5 x 10.5cm. National Museum of Cambodia.**

whole site was sumptuously decorated for Suryavarman II (1113–*circa* 1150) to be his state temple and capital city, it was built with the highest standards in mind. As is the case with many ancient civilisations, while stone monuments may survive, metal tends to disappear. The result is that an appreciation of the arts of ancient cultures tends to be biased. No where is this more the case than with ancient Khmer art, where there are a profusion of stone sculptures to study. Fortunately, bronzes from this culture have been preserved, and they present a slightly different picture than the sculptures.

Firstly, there are a number of designs that cannot – or cannot easily – be rendered in stone. This includes figures with long projections, such as arms, that would be easily broken in stone. At this time is inherently more valuable, so that metal statues would tend to be smaller than stone. Also some metal sculptures may have travelled, or been copied from figures that did travel, rendering the issue of where they were

made an open question. Interestingly, there are some early bronzes from China, such as a *vajra*-bearing guardian figure (3). The *vajra* is a weapon which can be represented as a cudgel or a thunderbolt. Originally there may have been two such sculptures flanking a central Buddha (4), although it is possible it was displayed alone. Perhaps similar bronzes from abroad acted as the models for Cambodian bronzes. Religions do not travel via text alone.

Religion and high art certainly go hand in hand, nowhere is this better illustrated than in the bronze of the bodhisattva Maitreya, a future Buddha (7). Dating to the 10th century, hardly any Buddhist images survive from this period, probably because Buddhism did not occupy pride of place as it would in later ages. King Yashovarman (889–915) established Angkor as his capital at this time and he favoured Shiva, but had sanctuaries built for what he considered to be lesser deities, including the Buddha.

The images of Maitreya represent a traditional way of showing male deities that was to last several centuries. He wears a long rectangular piece of cloth wrapped around his waist with the end folded, then, placed between the legs, to anchor in the back. This particular figure also wears a supplemental piece of cloth tucked into his belt at the front. This follows the Indian form of dress.

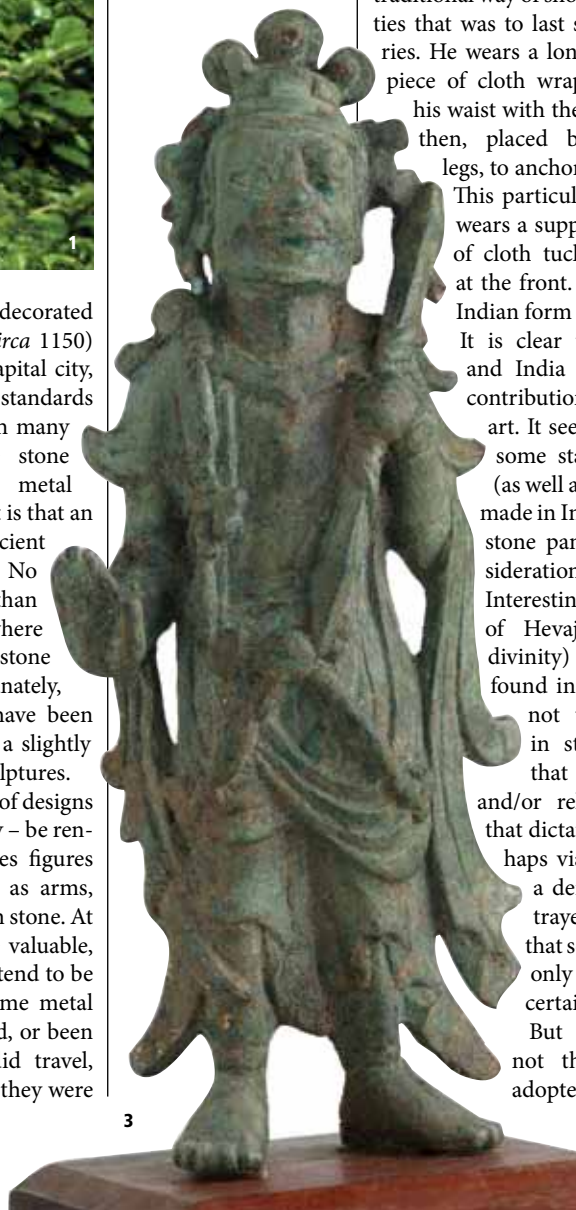
It is clear that both China and India made significant contributions to Cambodian art. It seems that there are some statuettes in metal (as well as stone) that were made in India. In the case of stone panels, similar considerations do not arise. Interestingly, while figures of Hevajra (a Buddhist divinity) or Maitreya are found in bronze, they are not usually rendered in stone. It is likely that there were social and/or religious strictures that dictated how, and perhaps via what materials, a deity could be portrayed. It may also be that some figures could only be produced in certain localities.

But Buddhism was not the only religion adopted in Cambodia;



Hinduism was also popular as a statue of Vishnu-Vasudeva-Nārāyaṇa (7) shows. At Angkor the god Shiva is usually credited with being the supreme god, while during the reign of Suryavarman II this changed to include other deities. Shiva was not forgotten, as for instance on the statue of Vishnu the syllable *OM* is represented on the headdress of the figure. This sacred syllable is frequently associated with Shiva.

During the 12th century the Buddha also appears represented in bronze, and almost never in stone. The western territories at that time, now modern Thailand, are particularly known for the standing and crowned Buddha that represents the triumph over death (9). Modern scholars suggest it was a Theravada (or related) school. Although Theravada Buddhism







dominated in the latter part of the 13th and 14th centuries, it was a form of Mahayana Buddhism that became that state religion in the latter 12th century. Yet throughout this time Hindu gods were placed within the Buddhist system and continued to be venerated, and various schools of Buddhism flourished. Some of the bronzes produced during this period could serve any religion.

For example, when Jayavarman VII (1181-1218) came to power in 1181 the main way of depicting the Buddha was with serpents. Although this follows a story from his life, when serpents protected the Buddha for a week during a storm, there are many more philosophical ways of interpreting the event. Other esoteric artworks exist from the reign of Jayavarman VII, such as a miniature shrine with the Buddhist deity Hevajra in a circle of *yoginis* (11). While Hevajra stands for benevolent magical protection, the *yoginis* represent correct understanding. With the death of Jayavarman VII in 1218, however, the issue of religion becomes complicated as there appears to be a return to Hindu gods and the displacement of Buddhist statues (8). Barring a visit to Cambodia, reading the catalogue *Gods of Angkor*:

*Bronzes from the National Museum of Cambodia* is the next best thing. This catalogue represents one of the few times this art has been discussed for a popular audience in the West. However, given that Australia had an exhibition of Cambodian art in 1992, and the US has recently had a show on bronzes, it might be opportune to suggest that the UK should host an exhibition that would go a long way to present art from a country emerging from a period of isolation. ■

***Gods of Angkor: Bronzes from the National Museum of Cambodia.*** Ed LA Cort and P Jett (Smithsonian/AM Sackler Gallery; available at: [www.shop.getty.edu/product891.html](http://www.shop.getty.edu/product891.html)). National Museum of Cambodia: ([www.cambodiamuseum.info](http://www.cambodiamuseum.info)).



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**5. The façade of the National Museum of Cambodia combines French colonial style architecture with traditional Cambodian elements. SJ Staniski.**

**6. Incense-burner or lamp, 12th century, Banteay Meanchey province, Mongkol Borei district, Dang Run village. 30.5cm x 25cm x 13cm. National Museum of Cambodia.**

**7. Vishnu-Vasudeva-Nārāyana, late 11th-first half of 12th century. Siem Reap province, Angkor, Prasat Kapilapura. The symbol on the headdress represents OM, the sacred syllable. 40cm x 18cm x 11cm. National Museum of Cambodia.**

**8. Maitreya, early 10th century. According to tradition this future Buddha will be born more than a few thousand years in the future. There are few Buddhist images dating to this period in Cambodia. 75.5 x 50 x 23cm. National Museum of Cambodia.**



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**9 Crowned Buddha, 12th century.** This figure was probably made in the western part of Cambodia, as the elongated face and distinctive hair-line and crown indicates. Siem Reap province, Angkor Wat. 79.5 x 25 x 16.5cm. National Museum of Cambodia.

**10. Shiva's bull, Nandin, 12th-13th century.** Bronze with mercury gilding. Siem Reap province, west of Angkor Wat. 36 x 64 x 32cm. National Museum of Cambodia.

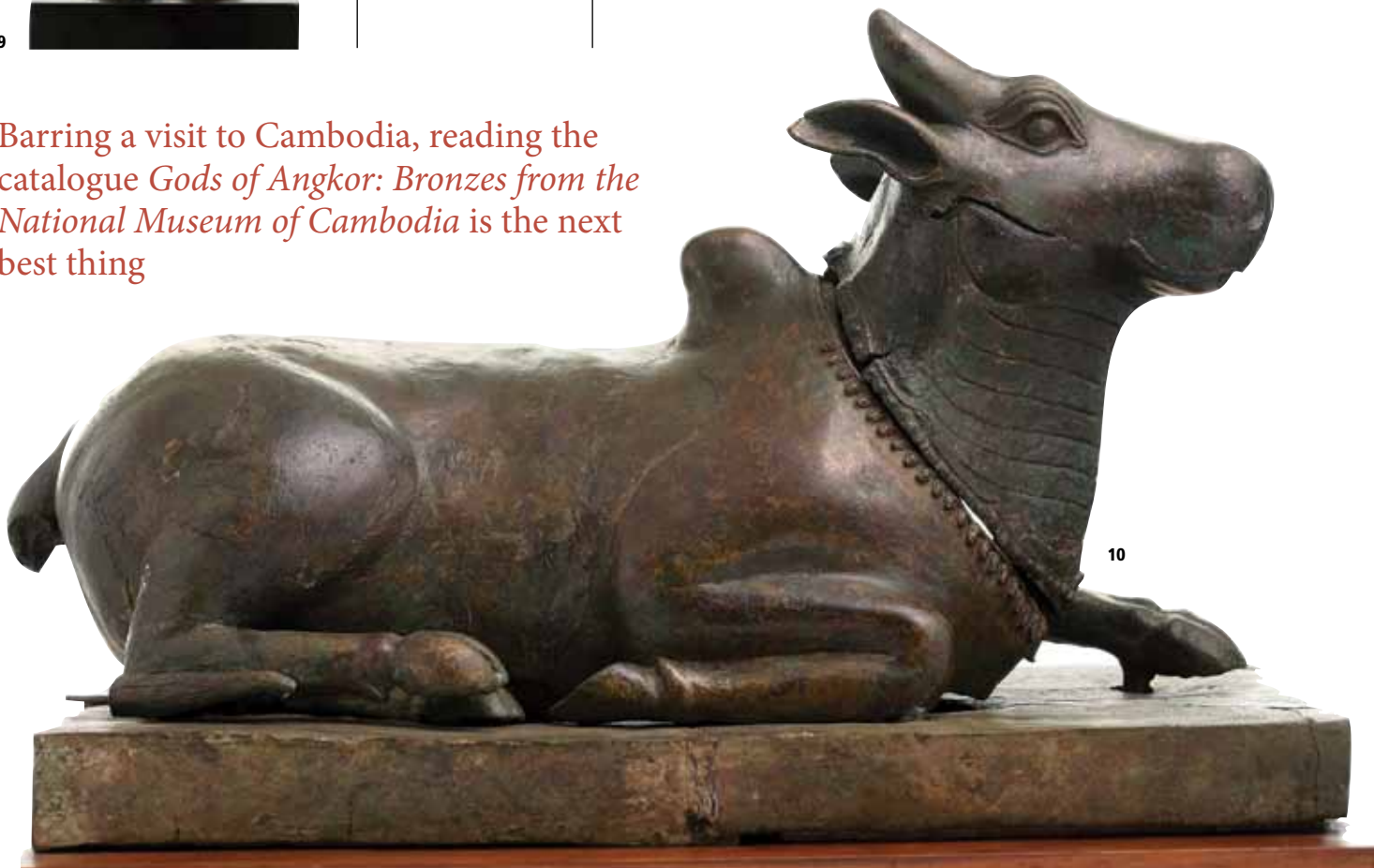
**11. Miniature shrine with Hevajra in a circle of yoginis, late 12th-early 13th century.** Gilded bronze. Siem Reap province, Angkor Thom, Royal palace. 20 x 16 x 16cm. National Museum of Cambodia.

All images have been kindly supplied by the J Paul Getty Trust Communications Department.

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Barring a visit to Cambodia, reading the catalogue *Gods of Angkor: Bronzes from the National Museum of Cambodia* is the next best thing



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# A terrible weapon

**Dr David Sim** carries out some experiments to find out if the Dacian *falx* deserves its fearsome reputation

**T**he Romans described the Dacian *falx* as 'a terrible weapon' because of the dreadful wounds it inflicted. When the Roman army first encountered the *falx* (1) during its invasion of Dacia (now Romania) in AD 101-106, it was unlike any weapon they had ever encountered. Its power was devastating. It could amputate limbs with ease and its curved point could penetrate a helmet. The losses to the Roman army were so great that they were forced to withdraw from the field. This was a humiliation and a major set back to the campaign but it did not cause them to abandon their plans. They determined to find a way to overcome the *falx* – and this is exactly what they did.

Study of the wounds received by soldiers would have shown that there were three areas of the body most vulnerable to attack from the *falx*. These were the sword arm, the head and the lower leg.

The Roman army was unique in the ancient world in that it used the sword (*gladius*) as its principal form of attack. Against the *falx* this tactic had a major disadvantage. In combat the sword arm is the closest part of the body to an

**1. Armoured gladiators fighting shown on a mosaic at Bignor Roman villa in West Sussex.**

**2. Replicas of two types of falx made by David Sim.**

**3. Sketches from the metope from Adamklissi monument.**

**4. Damage to a helmet from a falx showing how the curved blade could penetrate the skull with terminal effectiveness.**

opponent. The length of the legionary's *gladius* was approximately two-thirds the length of a long *falx*. This meant that a *falx*-man could hit a legionary's arm before the legionary could reach his opponent with his sword. The *falx* could amputate a sword arm with a single blow.

The next vulnerable area was the head. The shield protected the body but the neck and head are exposed above it. The lower part of the head can be protected by raising the shield to just below eye level but any higher and the line of sight would be covered. This leaves the area from the eyes to the crown of the helmet exposed above the shield. Because of its curved point the *falx* could reach over the top of the shield and punch a hole in the helmet. Such penetrative head wounds are usually fatal.

The third vulnerable area was the lower leg. The shield gave protection as far as the knee but the shin and foot were unprotected. A blow to the shin from a *falx*, even if it does not amputate the leg would cripple a legionary badly enough to put him out of action.

All of this would have been taken into consideration when deciding how to protect soldiers from the effects of the *falx*. It is likely that the changes to the legionaries' armour was influenced by the type of armour that was worn by gladiators.

Gladiatorial armour gives protection to the same areas that are vulnerable to the *falx*, namely the head, sword arm and lower leg, and every soldier in the army would be familiar with this type of armour.

Once the changes were agreed, the task of making the armour would have fallen to the blacksmiths and weapon makers who were part of the Roman



army. These men were soldier-craftsmen, who were known as *immunes*. As such they were excused some of the more unpleasant duties of the legionaries, such as digging out the latrines. These skilled men would have overseen the work which would have been carried out by the legionaries, who were used to hard physical work as a part of every day life.

My experiments have shown that much of the work to manufacture the replacement armour can be classed as semi-skilled and skills and can be taught in a matter of hours. There was a plentiful supply of labour from the army and the raw materials such as iron could have been obtained locally (by force if necessary). Dacia was a heavily forested region, so charcoal for heating the iron could have easily been made by the army. The time scale





A blow to the shin from a *falx*, even if it does not amputate the leg would cripple a legionary badly enough to put him out of action



effect of this weapon, a copy was made. The dimensions were determined by a detailed study of Trajan's column and the monument at Adamklissi (3). From these monuments it can be seen that the *falx* comes in a variety of sizes from a small single-handed weapon, about the size of a modern bill hook, to a large double-handed *falx*.

The word *falx* means 'scythe'. A scythe is a curved cutting instrument with a sharp edge on the inside of the curve as is the *falx*. After considering *falx* of different sizes, the most likely candidate for inflicting the kind

of injuries described, is the large *falx* shown in (3).

It has not been possible to make copies of all sizes of *falx*. So far two different sizes have been made and tested (2). It was important to determine if this large *falx* was a difficult and expensive weapon to make. If it was, then it may only have been used by an elite fighting force. More importantly, did such a weapon do the damage attributed to it?

The copy of the *falx* was made using only copies of tools, equipment, materials and fuel known to have existed at that time. By making the *falx* I showed that it was a piece of straight-forward forge work that any blacksmith could have performed.

The times taken for the various processes are given below.

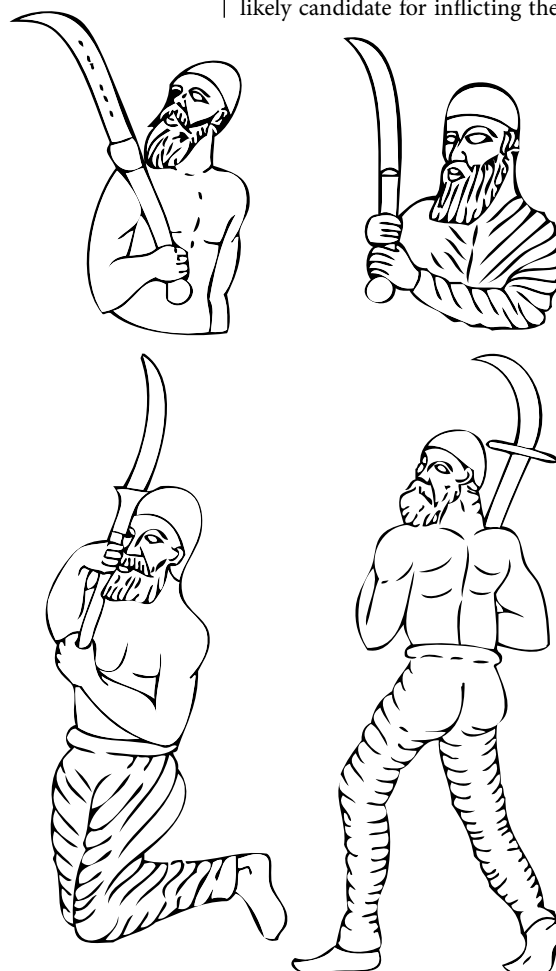
#### Manufacturing times:

Forging: 2 hours 30 minutes  
Filing the blade clean: 14 hours 43 minutes  
Making and fitting the handle: 42 minutes  
Total time taken: 17 hours 59 minutes

involved to effect the re-equipping is unknown but given Roman efficiency it would have been minimal. Now, re-equipped, the army returned to the field and was victorious.

This is a very neat story, the Roman army encounters a set-back and uses its ingenuity to solve the problem and, as a result, is victorious. It may all be true but as history is written by the victor and the Romans were always conscious of their image as winners, this story could also be a very good piece of propaganda, based on facts that have been selected to show Rome in its best light. This raises the question, if this is just propaganda, what was the real effect of the *falx*?

To answer this three areas have to be addressed: the *falx*, itself, its effects on unarmoured flesh, and its effects on flesh protected by armour. To test the



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3a



tests were conducted by several men of different sizes and body types. It was thought that these differences might affect the size of the wounds produced.

Results showed that the type of wounds produced were similar regardless of body size. In a cross-section, this wound is 165mm long, 113mm deep and 9mm wide. Such a wound (to the head or torso) would have been fatal and, even if it was not instantaneous, the haemorrhaging would result in a swift demise.

In the next test a head was made from plastilena and downward blows were struck. In some respects this is not a true representation of a head as there were no bones, but the results (5) show that a head would be cleaved in half when struck with the edge of the *falx*. This confirms the theory that against unarmoured flesh the *falx* is a devastating weapon.

As mentioned earlier, the Roman army re-equipped its legionaries with armour to protect them from the *falx*. So my next set of experiments set out to test it. Helmets with iron reinforcing straps were made for testing head injuries. Strips of low carbon steel were made to simulate *lorica segmentata* for testing blows to the body.

Another copy of the *falx* was made and linked to instruments that would give readings of its velocity and impact energy. The experiments were filmed using a high speed camera which showed exactly how the target distorted at the point of impact. To date only tests on copies of helmets and *lorica segmentata* have been conducted.

Helmets are worn with a lining to act as a buffer between the helmet and the skull. In this case it was a cap made of wool. The helmet was put on to a polystyrene head mounted on a pole and set at two metres high.

The blows were delivered as before, using both hands and swinging the *falx* in a downwards arc. When the point of



Such a wound was fatal and even if it was not instantaneous, the haemorrhaging would result in a swift demise

**5. Damage made to a plastilena head by a falx shows just how devastating a blow to a real head would have been.**

**6. The red area shows the extent of another wound made by a falx.**

the *falx* missed the straps, the damage sustained by the helmet was considerable with the *falx* point penetrating the helmet (4).

If either the point or the edge of the blade hit the straps then the damage was considerably reduced. The straps on the helmet are only fixed by rivets at the ends of each strap, which mean the straps are firm but not rigidly fixed in one position – they can move.

The effect of this is that when a strap is hit, it moves sideways and this movement directs the energy away from the point of impact, thus, reducing its effect. In the field damaged helmets can be easily repaired if they have not been penetrated.

The *falx* linked to instruments was also used on a simulation of *lorica segmentata*. A series of blows were delivered with a horizontal swing and the point of the *falx* struck in the centre of the strip. No penetration of the armour occurred but it was distorted to a considerable depth.

The data collected from the instruments and the high speed camera gave the following results: the velocity of the *falx* was 20 to 25 metres per second and its impact energy was 140 to 150 joules.

This means that a blow to the head at any angle would have resulted in a broken neck. Blows received to the body would cause a blunt force trauma that would probably rupture internal organs and result in death.

In summary, the *falx* will deliver fatal wounds to an unarmoured body. It is possible that some legionaries recovered from wounds to the arms and legs but wounds to the head and body would in most cases be fatal.

The armour issued to the Roman

legionaries would give some protection to the arms and legs and preliminary trials have shown the armour would prevent amputation of the limbs but blunt force trauma would probably cause breakage of the bones. This would put the legionary out of action but such injuries could be repaired.

This piece of experimental archaeology has shown that the *falx* is a terrible weapon when used against both unarmoured flesh and a body protected by armour. The data collected in this set of experiments is restricted to one particular size and shape of *falx*. There were many different forms of this weapon and how they performed can only be determined by repeating the work with *falx* of different sizes.

However, this research has raised more questions. It is known that the Roman army triumphed over the Dacians and their *falx*. If, as has been shown, the modifications to the Roman armour was not solely responsible, then the question arises, what were the other factors that contributed to the victory? This question is now under investigation and I hope to publish the findings soon.

The role of experimental archaeology is not to say 'this is the way it was done', but rather 'this is a way it could have been done'.

Nevertheless the answer to the question 'Does the *falx* deserve its reputation as a terrible weapon?' is, quite certainly, 'yes'. ■

**Dr David Sim FSA is an experimental archaeologist whose main area of interest is Roman arms and armour ([www.wix.com/nelli2008/ancient-arms-and-armoury222](http://www.wix.com/nelli2008/ancient-arms-and-armoury222)).**







# The enchanted *landscape*

In his paintings Claude portrays a romantic vision, idyllic scenes of a countryside lost in time, whereas in his drawings, made in and around Rome and Tivoli, and his etchings, we see what he saw in the 17th century, as **Lindsay Fulcher** discovers at a new exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum

‘He had an extremely romantic view of the world,’ says Jon Whiteley, curator of *Claude Lorrain: The Enchanted Landscape*, the Ashmolean Museum’s latest exhibition, speaking of his paintings. ‘Whereas the drawings he made out of doors in the real world are quite distinct.’

Like his fellow Frenchman Poussin, Claude Gellée (as he was named when born, later became known as Lorrain) came to live in Rome as a young man. There, the two artists became friends and would go out sketching together but, whereas for Poussin the figures were the focus of his paintings, for Claude it was the landscape, and the figures little more than players on that natural stage. ‘Claude made drawings





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of ancient buildings, like the Temple of the Sybil in Tivoli, then played around with them. In his paintings, they appear slightly transformed and nearly always in a different setting from where they really were. He used them as decorative devices in imaginary landscapes.

In *Coast View* of 1633 (2) the first of his many coastal or harbour scenes, the architectural debris, the broken column and a carved relief, in the foreground might well have been seen and sketched by Claude on the banks of the River Tiber. Even so, Claude's drawings and etchings are not always truly topographical works. There are a few exceptions, such as *The Pyramid of Caius Cestius* (1630) and *The Temple of Vesta* (5) of 1635 and *The Roman Forum* (4), an etching made in 1636.

The drawing of the Cestius Pyramid



2

**1. *Ascanius Shooting the Stag of Silvia*, 1682. Oil on canvas, 120cm x 150cm. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.**

**2. *Coast View*, 1633. Oil on canvas, 97cm x 122cm. © Trustees of the ninth Duke of Buccleuch's Chattels Fund.**

**3. *Dido and Aeneas at Carthage*, 1676. Oil on canvas, 120cm x 149cm. © Kunsthalle Hamburg.**

is not quite accurate and the Temple of Vesta has clearly been walled in and by Claude's time was being used as a church. The Roman Forum (*Le Campo Vaccino*) is shown being used to graze cattle and also a cattle market which it had been since the Middle Ages. From left to right, we can see columns of the Temple of Saturn and the three columns of the Temple of Castor and Pollux. At the back in the centre is the Arch of Titus and to its right the church of Santa Maria Nova in front of the Colosseum. Then, we have the colonnaded façade of San Lorenzo in Miranda (formerly the temple of Antoninus and Faustina) and in the foreground on the far right is the Arch of Septimius Severus.

Unlike Poussin, Claude was not an

intellectual as Jon explains: 'He was not a very well educated man, not a very literate man – Claude could not read Latin and, although a Frenchman, he wrote atrocious French.'

This means that the artist could not have read Virgil's *Aeneid*, *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius or Ovid's *Metamorphosis* in the original Latin and yet a number of his paintings are inspired by stories taken from these books. Of course, there were 16th-century Italian translations that he would have seen, but Jon Whiteley has another theory. 'There is,' he says, 'a strong possibility that he chose themes that would appeal to his patrons, or that he relied on them to suggest themes to him.'

'This is especially true of his last



3





patron, Prince Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna, whose family were widely believed to be descended from Ascanius through the Julian clan. Claude painted *Ascanius Shooting the Stag of Silvia* for him – it was his last painting – but Ascanius also features as a young boy in *Dido and Aeneas in Carthage* painted six years earlier.

*Dido and Aeneas in Carthage* shows a scene Virgil describes in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*. In it Dido points to the Temple of Juno reminding Aeneas where they first met. It is likely that *Ascanius Shooting the Stag of Silvia* (which, as is carefully noted on the canvas, depicts a scene related by Virgil in Book VII of the *Aeneid*) was still standing on his easel when Claude died on 23 November 1682.

These references to Ascanius would

clearly have flattered Claude's last important patron but this does not explain why, in 1633, he painted his first work inspired by Classical literature, *Landscape with the Judgement of Paris*. We do not know who his patron was then but we do know that, after this, many of Claude's paintings have mythological and Classical themes. In it, the shepherd Paris is asked to judge which of the three goddesses, Minerva, Juno and Venus, is the most beautiful. By awarding the golden apple to Venus, he sets in train a string of events that will eventually lead to the abduction and rape of Helen and the Trojan War. But all this is yet to come, as here, beneath voluptuous trees all is peace and beauty as the goddesses, bathed in a golden light, stand before Paris and Mercury. The temple in this picture is

**4. *The Roman Forum*, 1636 (*Le Campo Vaccino*). Etching and drypoint, 1st or 2nd state (of 9), 18.6cm x 26cm. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford**

**5. *The Temple of Vesta*, about 1635. Black chalk and brown wash on beige paper, 13.4cm x 19.8cm. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford**



based on the real Temple of the Sibyl in Tivoli. Whereas the darkly bewitching building and the countryside around it in *Landscape with Psyche Outside the Palace of Cupid*, painted circa 1664 and also known as *The Enchanted Castle* and *Psyche By The Seashore*, is Jon assures me, 'entirely invented'. The story of Cupid and Psyche was first told by Apuleius in *The Golden Ass*.

In his later mythological and Biblical paintings Claude elongates figures to an exaggerated extent. 'This is an earlier mannerism that he learnt in his youth that became fashionable again. He used it to lend majesty to his figures, to make them seem more grandiose,' explains Jon. 'He does the same to buildings and even to trees, but in his pastoral scenes and drawings the





human figure is of normal proportions.

He didn't like painting nude figures and he seems to have been rather prudish, in fact, in *Landscape with Narcissus and Echo* he painted Echo with her clothes on – it was only later that someone over-painted her as a nude.'

What else do we know about Claude the man, what was he like?

'He was quiet, reticent,' says Jon, 'he spoke little yet he had great charm and his friends were all fond of him. He never married but he adopted two children – a boy early on but they fell out later – and, then, a little girl called Agnese who stayed with him until he died.' Jon believes that a little girl who appears more than once in drawings he made in the 1660s is probably Agnese. It seems these adoptions were

acts of charity and, as one account of Claude's life has him orphaned at the age of 12 this would make him especially sympathetic to young children who had lost their parents.

According to one contemporary source, early on in his career when he was poor Claude 'led a very frugal life' but this does not seem to have changed when he achieved success later on. This would accord with his humble beginnings – he liked the quiet life.

Claude became the painter of choice for many 18th-century Grand Tourists buying up works of art while touring the Continent. As a result of this most of his paintings ended up in collections in Britain and these, in turn, inspired our great landscape gardeners, such as William Kent. The garden he designed

**6. *Landscape with the Judgement of Paris, 1633. Oil on canvas, 97cm x 122cm. © Trustees of the ninth Duke of Buccleuch's Chattels Fund.***

at Rousham is a good example of this.

Other landscape painters, such as Gainsborough, Turner and Constable, also greatly admired Claude and were influenced by him.

John Constable said Claude 'was the most perfect landscape painter the world ever saw' and, if you pay a visit to the Ashmolean Museum and see the 140 works on show, you may well find yourself agreeing with him. ■

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***Claude Lorrain: The Enchanted Landscape* is on show at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford ([www.ashmolean.org](http://www.ashmolean.org)) until 8 January 2013. The catalogue is available at £25 (£20 with an exhibition ticket in the museum shop only).**

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# IN THE SALEROOM



**Lot 1: Antinoos-balsamarium.** Bronze hollow casting, Roman, 2nd century AD. H 21cm (€97,750).



**Lot 50: Cycladic idol.** Marble, circa 2200-2100 BC. H 21cm (€50,600).

**Lot 12: Traianus Decius (?).** Marble, mid 3rd century AD. H 26cm (€63,250).

**Lot 8: Mummy portrait.** Egypt, 3rd century AD. Portrait of a young man with curly hair and beard. H 34.5cm x W 21cm (€69,000).

**Lot 519: Iznik tile.** Ottoman Empire, c. 1580. L 25cm x W 12cm (€34,500).



We report on Gorny & Mosch's Antiquities Auction 198 held in Munich on 29 June



## High quality and *hot* bidding

On offer were numerous rarities and historically important pieces that reached impressive prices. Many collectors who attended witnessed hot bidding for high-quality objects that made it a memorable day.

Who would have guessed that the first lot would exceed all expectations? It was a bronze *balsamarium* in the shape of an *Antinoos* bust with a gorgeous green patina that rose from its estimate of €35,000 to €97,750 (Lot 1). But, then, this was the Special Objects section containing only the best and most beautiful items, so one highlight followed another.

After the return of the standards that had fallen into the hands of the Parthians in the ill-fated campaign of Crassus, Augustus consecrated a temple to Mars Ultor, the avenging war god of the Romans. A bronze statuette (Lot 3) sculpted after the original cult statue brought in €41,400, double its estimate of €20,000.

Travelling back in time from the Roman Empire to the early High Civilizations of the Eastern Mediterranean, we arrive at when this Cycladic idol (no. 8) was made, more than 4,000 years ago. Impressive in its clean simplicity, its modest estimate was €7,500 but it was sold for six times that at €50,600.

Miltiades – that was how famous archaeologist Gisela M A Richter identified this replica of the marble portrait head of an elderly man with strong facial features (Lot 11), a finely sculpted work with great attention to detail. Its new

owner had to pay €48,300, which exceed the estimate of €15,000 more than three times over.

Equally spectacular, but from an entirely different stylistic era was a Roman portrait head of marble reminiscent of Emperor Traianus Decius from the middle of the 3rd century AD (Lot 12). In the end, the price realised was no less than €63,250.

Antonia minor, daughter of Mark Antony and Octavia, Augustus' sister, was one of the most colourful figures of the early Roman Empire. A marble head of her likeness (Lot 13) achieved €55,200. Two centuries later, a noble lady was immortalised in a marble bust whose fashionable coiffure recalled that of Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus (Lot 14). It soon left its estimate of €25,000 behind and, eventually, changed hands for €41,400.

But it was not only ancient sculpture that attained such spectacular prices. A Phrygian bronze helmet (Lot 40), rarely so well preserved, found a new home for an impressive €57,500 (with an estimate of only €35,000).

While an Egyptian mummy portrait of a bearded man, dating from the 3rd century AD (Lot 50), climbed from its estimate of €18,000 to €69,000, three and a half times the estimate. €46,000 was the price paid by one collector for a royal gem, a gold fibula with nicely sculpted ornaments and a garnet showing the likeness of a Hellenistic ruler (no. 52).

The Special Objects are followed by the so-called Ordinary Objects, but many of these are

far from ordinary. Take, for example, the blue glass bowl (Lot 94), whose simple elegance made the estimated €20,000 rise to €43,700; or the early Classical juvenile head (Lot 236) with its stylistic resemblance those seen on the pediment sculptures of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, that reached more than five times its estimate of €4,000 and rose to €23,000.

A bronze statuette of the Roman goddess Virtus (Lot 255) cast a spell on several collectors, so that it exceeded its estimate of €1,700 more than six times over and reached €11,000.

A surprise was caused by a stunning Iznik tile (Lot 519) – a mass produced item to the layman, but a special object for the connoisseur since another tile in London, similar in size and decoration, had been identified as coming from the Topkapi Palace. Its estimate was a mere €1,000, but this rare piece sold for €34,500.

Seven Islamic glass tiles (Lot 520), dating from 8th to 10th century, achieved a similarly dazzling result: making €36,800 against an estimate of €3,500.

Lastly the high price paid for a throne with Byzantine architectural elements (Lot 568) caused great excitement when it reached its €52,900, its estimate had only been €30,000. ■

A list of prices realised and catalogues can be viewed at [www.gmcoinart.de](http://www.gmcoinart.de). The next auction of antiquities is scheduled for December. All prices include a 15% buyer's premium.



## Mougins Museum of Classical Art

edited by Mark Merrony

Mougins Museum of Classical Art,  
France, 2011

360pp, over 700 colour illustrations

Hardback €47, paperback, €29

This book is so much more than a catalogue or guidebook to an exceptional museum with a stunning collection. The brand new Mougins Museum of Classical Art was inaugurated, complete with authentic Roman gladiatorial combat and a spectacular firework display, in Mougins, a charming village perched on a hill above Cannes, on 10 June of this year. With its array of fascinating essays, this book gives the seal of academic approval to the collections of Christian Levett, the British financier and philanthropist who founded Mougins Museum.

The book is divided into 16 chapters written by international scholars, stretching from Ancient Egypt to Modern Classical Art. The extensive range of artefacts from the Levett collection – Egyptian statuary and sarcophagi, Greek pottery and jewellery, Roman marble sculpture, mosaics, bronze, silverware and jewellery, Greek and Roman militaria, Greek and Roman coins, Neo-Classical Art and Modern Art – are all covered. Every item exhibited is illustrated and each has an extensive, descriptive and explanatory caption. The illustrations are excellent, in particular, the coins.

The three central chapters, Murray Eiland's *Materials and Manufacture*, Mike Burns' *Graeco-Italic Militaria*, and Roman Militaria, by Marcus Junkelmann are all unexpectedly gripping. The crafts that shaped the objects of daily life, warfare and death (pottery, faience, glass, gold, silver, iron and steel) are all brought vividly to life. In *Roman Coins: Classical Tradition*, Christopher Howgego considers Roman coins as small monuments that encapsulate the symbols of Roman civilisation.

Mougins Museum houses the best private collection of Greek and Roman militaria, in the world, and here there are details of the manufacture and decoration of shields, armour, weaponry and helmets. Particularly fascinating

are the bronze Latin military diplomas which were fixed to a wall behind the temple of the deified Augustus in Rome.

The uniqueness of Mougins Museum lies in the decision taken by Mr Levett, and his collaborator, Dr Mark Merrony, to emphasise the influence of ancient and Classical art on paintings and sculpture from the Renaissance to the present day, and to exhibit together fine works of art that mirror one another across the centuries. The Mayor of Mougins, who wrote the preface to this lavish volume, is also keen to underline the historic links of the village with modern art; for example, Picabia settled in the house adjacent to the museum in 1924.

So, as well as offering a detailed description of the high-quality exhibits, this book also leads the reader on a journey through the Graeco-Roman era of the Côte d'Azur and Provence (Mark Merrony, *From House to Museum*) via Mougins, to the local 12th-century commanderies of the Knights Templars, the 1876 phylloxera pest epidemic, which devastated European vineyards, and the take-over of Chad in 1900 by the French colonialist forces in Africa, led by Commandant Lamy, a son of Mougins (see Julianne Coutts' *A History of Mougins*).

With its wealth of information encompassing a wide chronological span, useful glossary, bibliography and index, and a swathe of local history thrown in for good measure, this book reads more like an encyclopedia of art than a museum catalogue.

Professor Claudine Dauphin, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris

## Iron Age Myth and Materiality: An Archaeology of Scandinavia AD 400-1000.

Lotte Hedeager

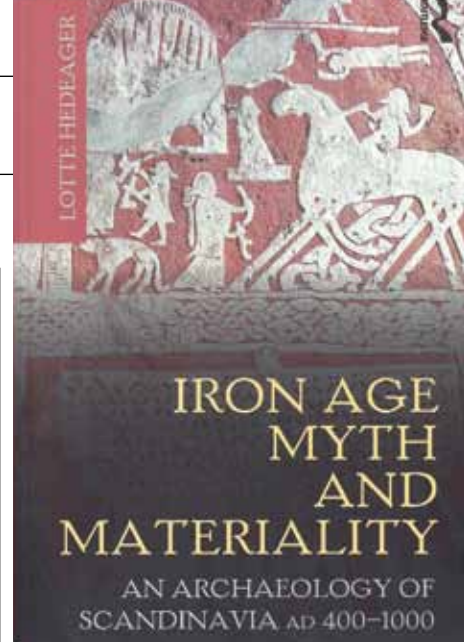
Routledge, 2011

320pp, black and white illustrations

Paperback, £24.99

The mythology of the northern countries from AD 400-1000 is a vast subject. In fact, no one can be sure how an ancient representation of a deity or event was interpreted at the time. Yet in order to make an object speak some liberties have to be taken. Most Old Norse texts were written in the 13th century or later, at a time when oral traditions were being forgotten. Material evidence (mostly small finds) can date from 300 to 900 years earlier. Certainly the details have been lost, but a compare and contrast method, using texts and material evidence, should be able to yield the mentality or world view of the Iron Age.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the head of northern Pantheon was not a warrior, but a sorcerer. Odin acquired the knowledge of runes. In one version of the story, he speared himself and hanging on the World Tree for nine days and nights. In other versions he acquired the mead of wisdom by shape-changing, seduction, rape,

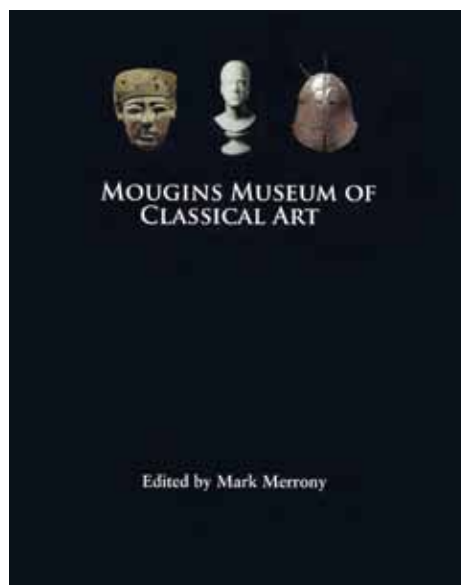


or by offering his eye to the giant Mimir. Odin was also known for his emblematic animals, his two ravens named 'thought' and 'memory'. These animals can travel great distances and return with news from distant lands. Two wolves represent cruelty. A giant eight-legged horse allows Odin to travel to other realms. His spear Gungnir ('swaying one') is also a powerful symbol. He uses it to point out the warriors he wants for an army that he is assembling for the last battle. Interestingly, he claims the best warriors by killing them, and the afterlife that awaits them is a battle every day with resurrection and feasting in the evening. All this is training for the last battle, Ragnarok. Odin's ring, Draupnir, produces nine gold rings every ninth night. This he can distribute as largesse to his war band.

Interestingly, textual evidence does give insight into the so called 'animal style' of the north. In 747, St Boniface noted that the Saxons (recently the subject of missions) dressed so that: 'those ornaments shaped like worms, teeming on the borders of ecclesiastical vestments; they announce the Antichrist and are introduced by his guile'. Such ornament was not simply a matter of taste, but was full of meaning. Old Norse texts suggest that a person can have several souls, and that these can be represented as animals. An 'alter ego' can attach to a person after birth, and be transmitted through families. They can be seen in dreams, or can act alone in times of crisis. They were not just representations, they were thought to be real. Given that a snake can cast off its skin and be renewed, and emerges in spring after a long sleep, it is no surprise that they were venerated. In northern mythology the great World Serpent emerges at the last battle when both humans and gods perish. To early Christian writers the snake was evil, and would have been further proof that the pagans were in the clutches of the devil.

Most interestingly, at the end of the book, the author goes on to suggest the impact that the Huns, particularly the story of Atilla and his family, may have had on northern mythology. These theories can breathe new life into ancient myths and this book should appeal to anyone either with an interest in northern mythology and in material culture – or both.

Murray Eiland





## UNITED KINGDOM.

### LONDON

#### *Cost of Living in Roman and Modern Britain.*

This small exhibition displays a collection of Roman finds including gaming counters, dice, coins and high value traded goods, alongside their modern equivalents comparing how wealth and living standards were linked 2000 years ago and now. **The British Museum** +44 (0) 20 73 23 8181 ([www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)). Until 15 April 2012.

### MANCHESTER

#### *Grave Secrets: Tales of the Ancient Nubians.*

From 1907 to 1911 the Archaeological Survey of Nubia excavated a range of bone specimens and artefacts that were used by Sir Grafton Eliot Smith in his development of palaeopathology, the study of ancient diseases. The same specimens are on show here and shed light on Nubian mummification techniques, health and disease. **The Manchester Museum** +44 (0) 161 275 2634 ([www.manchester.museum.ac.uk](http://www.manchester.museum.ac.uk)). Until 4 March 2012.

## UNITED STATES

### ATLANTA, Georgia

#### *Life and Death in the Pyramid Age: The Emory Old Kingdom Mummy.*

For the first time in over a generation that the mummy from Abydos (right), acquired by Emory Theology Professor, Rev. William A Shelton in 1920, has been put on show at the Carlos Museum. Examinations currently underway in conjunction with the Emory Hospital will shed light on mummification techniques used on this, the oldest Egyptian mummy in the Western Hemisphere. **Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University** +1 (0) 40 47 27 42 82 ([www.carlos.emory.edu/Old-Kingdom-Mummy](http://www.carlos.emory.edu/Old-Kingdom-Mummy)). Until 11 December.

### BOSTON, Massachusetts

#### *Jewels, Gems, and Treasures: Ancient to Modern.*

This is the first exhibition in the museum's new Rita J. and Stanley H. Kaplan Family Foundation Gallery, which examines the various roles and meanings associated with a wide range of gem materials. These range from an early Nubian conch shell amulet to Mary Todd Lincoln's 19<sup>th</sup>-century diamond and gold suite, and a 20<sup>th</sup>-century platinum, diamond, ruby, and sapphire Flag Brooch honouring the sacrifices of the Doughboys in World War I. **Boston Museum of Fine Arts** +1 (0) 61 72 67 93 00 (<http://www.mfa.org/visit>). Until 25 November 2012.



### NEW YORK, New York

#### *Edge of Empires: Pagans, Jews and Christians at Roman Dura-Europos.*

This exhibition focuses on artefacts (below) from the final phase of Dura-Europos in the third century AD, when the city was an international garrison as well as home to many different languages and religions, from polytheistic cults to Judaism and early Christianity. **Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University** +001 (0) 21 29 92 78 00 (<http://isaw.nyu.edu/exhibitions/edge-of-empires>). Until 8 January 2012.



### LOS ANGELES, California

#### *In the Beginning Was the Word: Medieval Gospel Illumination.*

Bringing together examples from Western Europe, Ethiopia, Byzantium, and Armenia this exhibition shows the geographical and chronological breadth of this religious art form, with its regional and cultural nuances, but also highlights the essential elements that these illuminated gospels (above) have in common.

**The Getty Center** +1 (0) 31 04 40 73 00 ([www.getty.edu](http://www.getty.edu)). Until 27 November.

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

#### *Eternal Life in Ancient Egypt.*

Ancient Egyptian burial rituals and cosmology are illustrated here through a collection of grave goods spanning 3500 years. A typology of mummy masks shows the development of social and cultural trends, as shown through the art, down to the late Ptolemaic period. With a special focus on what insights science can offer on the mummy in the Smithsonian's collection.

**The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History** +1 (0) 20 26 33 52 85 ([www.mnh.si.edu/exhibits/eternal-life/](http://www.mnh.si.edu/exhibits/eternal-life/)). From 17 November.

## CANADA

### ONTARIO

#### *Maya: Secrets of Their Ancient World*

This collaboration between the ROM, the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the National Institute of Anthropology and History brings together a range of artefacts, many of which have never been exhibited before, to give a holistic insight into Maya culture, from the increasingly relevant 2012 end of days myth, to their

architecture, cosmology and writing system. This is accompanied by a series of lectures taking place in November. **Royal Ontario Museum** + 416 (0) 586 8000 ([www.rom.on.ca](http://www.rom.on.ca)). From 19 November.

## FRANCE

### ARLES, Bouches-du-Rhône

#### *J. C. Golvin Exhibition*

Archaeologist and architect JC Golvin has made over 800 watercolours showing ancient classical buildings restored to their original state. A selection of 100 are on view here show the genius of the architects of the ancient world. **The Musée départemental Arles antique** +33 (0) 4 90 18 88 88 (<http://www.arles-antique.cg13.fr/>). Until 6 May 2012.

### MOUGINS, Alpes Maritime

#### *Mougins Museum of Classical Art*

This spectacular private museum in the heart of the old village of Mougins shows how the beauty and power of the ancient world has influenced neoclassical, modern and contemporary art.

**Musée d'Art Classique de Mougins** + 33 (0)4 93 75 18 65 ([www.mouginsmusee.com](http://www.mouginsmusee.com)). Ongoing.

### SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, Île-de-France

#### *Bronze and Gold: France in the Bronze Age*

A collection of 300 objects bring almost 2,000 years of prehistory into focus. The exhibition begins with the reconstruction of various death rites and aspects of daily life such as food, dress, trade and tool-making, finishing with the religious beliefs of the people as shown in the material remains.

**Musée d'Archéologie Nationale** + 33 (0)1 39 10 13 00 ([www.musee-archeologienationale.fr](http://www.musee-archeologienationale.fr)). Until 30 January 2012

### STRASBOURG, Alsace

#### *Strasbourg Argentorate:*

#### *A Legionary Camp on the Rhine*

To coincide with *Recent Excavations*, the eighth edition of papers, various objects from the Roman Legionary camp at Strasbourg are on show at the museum, alongside recent research, which together build up a picture of legionnaires' daily life. **Musée Archéologique de Strasbourg** + 33 (0)3 88 52 50 00 ([www.musees.strasbourg.eu](http://www.musees.strasbourg.eu)). Until 31 December.

### TOULOUSE, Midi-Pyrénées

#### *Image and Power: The Age of the Antonines*

Many European museums have

colloaborated in this exhibition that brings together and compares portraits of emperors and other members of the royal household from the Antonine Dynasty. There is an emphasis on the symbols of power and attributes that conveyed this to the masses.

**Musée Saint-Raymond, Musée des Antiques de Toulouse**  
+ 33 (0)5 61 22 31 44 ([www.saintraymond.toulouse.fr](http://www.saintraymond.toulouse.fr)).  
From 19 November.

## GERMANY

### BERLIN

**50th Anniversary of German Archaeology in Tehran**

Looking at the work done in Iran by German archaeologists since 1961, this balanced exhibition explores this subject from both a German and an Iranian perspective.

**Pergamon Museum** +49 (0) 30 20 90 55 77 ([www.smb.museum/pm](http://www.smb.museum/pm)).  
From 2 December until 4 March 2012.

### BLAUBEUREN, Baw

**First Mother Versus Pin-Up Girl: Sex and Fertility in the Ice Age**

Highlights of this show include the Venus and the phallus from the Hohle Fels near Schalklingen as well as depictions of men and women during the Iron Age.

**Urgeschichtliches Museum**  
+ 49 (0) 73 44 92 ([www.urmu.de](http://www.urmu.de)).  
Until 29 January 2012.

### FRANKFURT, Hesse

**The Age of Sagas: Stories and Discoveries from Ancient Iceland**

A series of events exploring Iceland's archaeological past including readings, music, lectures and an exhibition at the archaeological museum. Highlights include the original manuscript of the Eyrbyggja Saga and objects dating from the Viking Age to the Late Middle Ages. (Lecture details are listed in the Lectures column below right).

**Archäologisches Museum**  
+ 49 (0) 69 21 23 58 96 ([www.archaeologisches-museum-frankfurt.de](http://www.archaeologisches-museum-frankfurt.de)).  
Until 30 November.

### HAMBURG

**Body and Soul. Images of Human Beings from Four Millennia**

A holistic exploration of human existence as expressed through art works, from antiquity to today, from China, Japan, Islam and Europe, as well as graphic art, photography, fashion and furniture design.

**Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg** +49 (0) 40 42 81 34 80 0 ([www.mkg-hamburg.de](http://www.mkg-hamburg.de)).  
Until 30 December.

### HERNE, North Rhine-Westphalia

**Discovery Histories. Latest Discoveries by Archaeologists in NRW**

The Museum of Archaeology in Herne presents around 10,000 finds from 250,000 years of history in Westphalia, and is designed on the model of an archaeological site.  
**LWL Museum for Archaeology**  
+49 (0) 2323-946280 ([www.lwl-landesmuseum-herne.de/](http://www.lwl-landesmuseum-herne.de/)).  
Until 20 November.

### MUNICH, Bavaria

**Magic in Precious Stones: The Collection of Helmut Hansmann.**

The collection contains about 800 antique and modern gems, and this show highlights sparkling examples dating from 7th century BC to 5th century AD.

**Munich Staatliche Antike Collections and Glyptothek**  
+49 (0) 8 59 98 88 30 ([www.antike-amkoenigsplatz.mwn.de](http://www.antike-amkoenigsplatz.mwn.de)).  
Until 31 January 2012.

## GREECE

### ATHENS

**Myths and Coinage**

The National Archaeological Museum, the Numismatic Museum and the Alpha Bank Numismatic Collection join forces for the first time in a temporary exhibition, highlighting the relationship between Greek mythology and the coinage of antiquity.

**Numismatic Museum**  
+30 (0) 21 08 21 77 24 ([www.namuseum.gr](http://www.namuseum.gr)).  
Until 27 November.

## ITALY

### FLORENCE

**Villa Corsini Di Castello Transformed into the Antiquarium of the Archaeological Museum of Florence.**

Following a campaign of renovation since 2000, the Villa Corsini is now open. On view in the magnificent villa is important classical statuary and a collection of Latin inscriptions once part of the Medici holdings.

**Villa Corsini Di Castello**  
+39 (0) 05 52 94 88 3 ([www.uffizi.firenze.it/musei/villacorsini/](http://www.uffizi.firenze.it/musei/villacorsini/)). Ongoing.

### RAVENNA

**Tamo: The Adventure of Mosaics.**

The Museum of Ancient Mosaics has opened with a special exhibition featuring facilities for workshops and other didactic activities concerning the making of mosaics.

**Complesso Di San Nicolo** +39 (0) 05 44 21 33 71 ([www.tamoravenna.it](http://www.tamoravenna.it)). Until 31 December.

## ROME

### Nero

The exhibition features a vast array of archaeological artefacts, including fragments of painted walls, spread across some of the city's most iconic locations with displays in the Colosseum, on the Palatine and in the Forum.

+ 39 (0) 06 39967700 ([www.archeoroma.beniculturali.it/mostre/nerone](http://www.archeoroma.beniculturali.it/mostre/nerone)) Until 15 January 2012.

### SOUTH-TYROL, Bozen

**20 Years of Ötzi.**

The display summarises the past 20 years of research on the so-called 'ice man'. A particular focus is given to new reconstructions of how the man would have appeared in life.

**South-Tyrol Museum**

+39 (0) 04 71 32 01 00 ([www.oetzi20.it](http://www.oetzi20.it)).  
Until 15 January 2012.

## TIVOLI

**The Site of the Temple of Hercules Victor**

One of the most important sites in Latium is now open to visitors. In addition to the temple – with a portico half a kilometre long built to shelter pilgrims – there is a theatre and a large building complex.  
**Temple of Hercules Victor**  
+ 39 (0) 06 39 96 79 00/07 74 38 27 33 ([www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it)).  
Ongoing.

## NETHERLANDS

### AMSTERDAM and LEIDEN

**Etruscans: Eminent Women, Powerful Men**

A joint exhibition between the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden and the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam. With more than 700 pieces from both museums and further donor institutes, the story of wealth, religion and power will be told from two different perspectives. With the Allard Pierson Museum looking at Etruscan men and the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Etruscan women.

**Allard Pierson Museum**  
+ 31 (0) 20 52 52 556 ([www.allardpiersonmuseum.nl](http://www.allardpiersonmuseum.nl)).  
**Rijksmuseum van Oudheden**  
+ 31 (0) 71 51 63 163 ([www.rmo.nl](http://www.rmo.nl)). Until 18 March 2012.

### HEERLEN

**There was once a Roman road...**

An exhibition dedicated to Roman travel; bringing together items from 19 museums. Visitors may learn about road construction, users of the roads, gods of travel and the significance roads played in spirituality and the rituals of the dead. With an accompanying

lecture series. Details are listed in the Lectures column below.

**Thermenmuseum** + 31 (0) 45 56 05 100 ([www.thermenmuseum.nl](http://www.thermenmuseum.nl)).  
Until 1 April 2012.

## RUSSIA

### ST PETERSBURG

**Antony Gormley. Still standing. A Contemporary intervention in the Classical collections**

For the first time in its history an artist has been given the license to reinterpret the Hermitage's collection. Celebrated sculptor Antony Gormley has selected nine pieces from antiquity to be placed in a gallery adjacent to one containing 17 of his own works. A false floor brings visitors up to the same height as the Classical sculpture, inviting them to view and engage with it in an entirely new way.

**Hermitage Museum**  
+7 (0) 812 710 90 79 ([www.hermitagemuseum.org](http://www.hermitagemuseum.org)).  
Until 15 January 2012.

**In the Shade of the Cross. Western-European Crosses and Crucifixes of the 8th - 18th Centuries. From a private collection, Milan.**

**Hermitage Museum**  
+7 (0) 812 710 90 79 ([www.hermitagemuseum.org](http://www.hermitagemuseum.org)).  
Until 29 January 2012.

## LECTURES

**Archäologisches Museum**

**Frankfurt, Germany**

**The Age of Sagas lecture series**  
Every Wednesday in November at 6pm. Free entry.  
For further details please contact: + 49 (0) 69 21 23 58 96 ([www.archaeologisches-museum-frankfurt.de](http://www.archaeologisches-museum-frankfurt.de))

**The British Museum, London, Knossos: from labyrinth to laboratory Study Day**

12 November. A full day of lectures from international speakers, talking in depth about the royal palace made famous by Sir Arthur Evans' excavations.  
For further details please contact: +44 (0)20 7323 8181 ([www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)).

**Thermenmuseum, Heerlen, Netherlands**

**There was once a Roman road...**  
17 November: Dr Maarten Dolmans on the possible Roman road and bridge over the Maas at Venlo.  
15 December: Dr Fik Meijer on travel within the Roman Empire.  
For further details please contact: + 31 (0) 45 56 05 100 ([www.thermenmuseum.nl](http://www.thermenmuseum.nl)).