New light on ancient sites
JMW Turner’s vision of antiquity

Monument to the Dark Ages
Exploring the enigmatic Pillar of Eliseg

Spells for the afterlife
The Book of the Dead at the British Museum

Hunters and the hunted
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Treasures from Kuwait
Priceless Islamic art on display in Milan

Dracula
The evil behind the legend
Yale returns artefacts to Peru

Yale University has reached an agreement with the government of Peru to return, over the next two years, the archaeological materials excavated by Hiram Bingham III at Machu Picchu nearly a century ago. Those pieces suitable for museum display will be sent to Peru in time for the centennial celebration commemorating the scientific discovery of Machu Picchu by the Yale-Peruvian Scientific Expedition of 1911.

The 40,000 artefacts, which include bronze knives, silver jewellery and fragmented pottery, will be kept at the University of Cusco, which will carry out programmes of research, educational exchanges and public exhibitions.

Peru’s president, Alan Garcia, commented: ‘The Peruvian government welcomes this decision and recognises that Yale University preserved the pieces that otherwise would have been scattered around the world in private collections or might have disappeared.’

Chinese cave art in Cardiff

Beginning in the last week of January, ‘From Steep Hillsides’ is a new exhibition at the National Museum in Cardiff, which offers visitors an opportunity to see a selection of nearly 50 rock carvings from the World Heritage Site of Dazu in south-west China. Never before displayed outside China, the sculptures include full-scale Buddhas and exquisite Bodhisattvas, carved monks and lay figures, Daoist deities and scenes of everyday life, while there are also modern replicas of some of the carvings that could not be removed from the site.

Dazu comprises 75 separate sites, which together contain about 50,000 statues. While the construction of rock-cut temples had spread from India into China during the 4th century AD, the earliest of the Dazu sites is that of Beishan, where carving of the rock-face began in AD 892. However, the most extensive and impressive site is that of Baodingshan (‘Summit of Treasures’) where a sequence of three monumental tableau was carved around AD 1174 and 1252, primarily under the direction of Zhao Zhifeng, a local monk, the site was intended as a place of instruction and ritual practice for the various schools of Buddhism active in Sichuan at the time, including the Pure Land, Huayan and Chan traditions. However, the site did give prominence to an indigenous tradition of Esoteric Buddhism based on the teachings of the Tang-dynasty Buddhist layman Liu Benzun (855–907), a movement that emphasised a harshly austere lifestyle, incantations and miracles, secretive rituals, and humanitarian deeds of the sort richly illustrated in the Baodingshan carvings. The rock art at the site also incorporated references to contemporary secular culture, partly to underscore religious themes, and partly to honour the patronage of prominent local figures whose benefactions allowed Baodingshan to be so lavishly decorated. Carvings depicting Confucian and Daoist beliefs are thus present at Baodingshan, as well as some of the other sites of Dazu, while there are many representations of Chinese family and daily life.

The carvings from Dazu constitute a high point in the history of cave temple art in China. The Buddhist cave temples and rock carving traditions that had arrived from India were integrated with the indigenous ideologies of Daoism and Confucianism to produce sculpted devotional complexes that are uniquely and wholly Chinese in character. ‘From Steep Hillsides: Ancient Rock Carvings From Dazu, China’ runs at the National Museum, Cardiff, from 26 January to 3 April. For details, please call 029 2039 7951.

Surfing the Dead Sea Scrolls

A collaboration between the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) and Google will see high-resolution images of the Dead Sea Scrolls published on the internet, it was announced in October.

The IAA, custodian of the scrolls, said it was collaborating with Google’s research and development centre in Israel to upload digital images of the entire collection. The imaging technology is to be installed in IAA’s laboratories, and high-resolution images of each of the scrolls’ 30,000 fragments will be freely accessible online. The budget for the project is said to be £2.15 million ($3.5 million.)

According to an IAA spokesman, ‘The images will be equal in quality to the actual physical viewing of the scrolls, thus eliminating the need for re-exposure of the scrolls and allowing their preservation for future generations.’

The IAA will use multi-spectral imaging technology developed by NASA to produce high-resolution images of the sometimes-faded texts that may reveal new letters and words. It will then partner with Google to place the images online in a searchable database complemented by translation and other tools. The project is set for completion in 2016.
As the exhibition of the iconic artefact in Iran draws to an end, James Beresford examines the circumstances and issues surrounding the British Museum’s loan.

In January 2011, the Cyrus Cylinder is due to be returned to the British Museum from Iran, where, for the past four months, it has been on display in the National Museum in Tehran (Fig 1). The baked clay Cylinder is imprinted with 45 lines of Akkadian cuneiform script and dates to 539–530 BC. It appears to have been ceremonially inserted into the foundations of the Esagila temple in Babylon, dedicated to the worship of Marduk, principal deity of the Babylonians, following the capture of the city in 539 BC by the Persian king Cyrus the Great (r. 559–530 BC).

The Cyrus Cylinder is famously often referred to as ‘the world’s first charter of human rights’ – a claim given added weight by the replica that is on display in the United Nations Headquarters in New York. However, there is actually little in the text on the Cylinder that deals with guarantees of physical well-being, or freedoms to practice religion, let alone more modern concepts such as freedom of speech. Indeed, much of the cuneiform script proclaims the power of Cyrus while denigrating Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king. The Cylinder thus refers to the ungodly ways of Nabonidus, which led Marduk, king of the gods, to seek out a new ruler for Babylon: ‘He took the hand of Cyrus… and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything.’ According to the account on the Cylinder, with the help of the god, Cyrus was able to conquer Babylon: ‘Marduk had him [Cyrus] enter [Babylonia] without fighting or battle… All the people of Tintir [Babylonia], of all Sumer and Akkad, nobles and governors, bowed down before him and kissed his feet, rejoicing over his kingship.’ However, other sources refer to the Battle of Opis, during which the Persian army defeated a force led by Nabonidus. There are also references to a subsequent massacre of the defeated Babylonian troops, followed by a two-week siege of the Esagila temple in the heart of Babylon. Nevertheless, the key passage on the Cylinder states how Cyrus returned the religious idols to their original temples and shrines from where they had been taken by Nabonidus, also repairing many of these places of worship. It is also claimed that Cyrus repatriated communities that had been forcibly removed from their homelands and settled in and around Babylon following earlier wars of conquest. ‘I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements.’

Support for the assertion that Cyrus carried out a policy of repatriation of people and the reconstruction of temples and shrines across his vast empire comes from the Book of Ezra in the Old Testament (1:4–5). The Persian king is said to have allowed Jewish exiles to return to their homeland of Judah half a century after being forcibly relocated to Babylon following the capture of Jerusalem in 597 BC by the army of Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–562). The Babylonian king also destroyed the city and Temple a decade later, following a Jewish uprising. The Cylinder itself makes no mention of this Jewish repatriation, and its text is very much focused on Mesopotamia. However, taken alongside the biblical account, there is a strong indication that Cyrus may have initiated an Empire-wide policy that saw people and their religious relics returned to their ancestral homelands. Many scholars feel there is some support for the view that Cyrus was an unusually tolerant, magnanimous ruler. However, other academics feel his willingness to allow religious freedoms and repatriation of exiled communities was driven by a pragmatic need to rule his large empire by gaining the support of its many different ethnic and religious subject peoples. While the human rights aspect of the Cylinder’s text has triggered heated debate among scholars, there is no doubting that the artefact carries with it great symbolic value; a symbolism that the ruling theocratic regime in Iran has been keen to capitalise upon, deriving great propaganda value from the loan of the Cylinder.

At the unveiling ceremony of the Cyrus Cylinder display on 12 September, President Ahmadinejad was reported as saying: ‘The Cyrus Cylinder represents respect for human beings’ greatness and basic rights. The Cylinder emphasizes that everyone is entitled to freedom of thought and choice and also underscores the necessity to fight oppression.’ However,
such principles do not always sit comfortably with the Ahmadinejad government’s track record in respect to human rights, freedom of speech, or political opposition to the Iranian leadership. Only a month after the Cylinder went on display in Tehran, a joint statement by a number of prominent human rights groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, called on the United Nations to address human rights issues in Iran following the disputed presidential elections of 2009.

Despite these concerns, officials from the British Museum have defended the loan of the Cylinder to Tehran. The museum’s chairman, Niall FitzGerald, noted: ‘The Trustees have reaffirmed their view that exchanges of this sort are an essential part of the Museum’s international role, allowing valuable dialogue to develop independently of political considerations.’ Baroness Helen Kennedy QC, a Trustee of the British Museum and a human rights lawyer, was also quoted as saying: ‘Art and culture can sustain valuable dialogues to develop understanding of those words retains great power [that they were imprinted].’

Loan of the Cylinder was agreed in principle more than five years ago, as part of a deal in which Iran supplied important artefacts which allowed the British Museum to stage the major exhibitions ‘Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia’ (September 2005 – January 2006), and ‘Shah Abbas: The Remaking of Iran’ (February – June 2009). Loan of the Cylinder to Iran had therefore been indicated, if not exactly promised, long before the disputed presidential elections and subsequent crackdown. The Iranian government subsequently threatened to sever all ties with the British Museum, and announced it would be seeking damages of $300,000. There was also the threat that they would make a complaint to UNESCO, and urge other international museums to boycott future loan deals with the British Museum. The pressure to send the Cylinder to Tehran for the four-month loan was therefore immense.

The Cylinder has certainly proved a popular exhibit; Iran’s National Museum has reportedly had to limit the number of visitors to 2000 a day, with no more than 25 people allowed into the room where the Cylinder is on display at any one time. The interest is understandable given that it is almost 2500 years after they were imprinted. For the permanent return of the Cylinder, and such sentiments resurfaced soon after the Cylinder arrived in the Iranian capital last year. According to Kayhan, the most conservative of Iran’s newspapers, ‘Isn’t it correct that the Cyrus Cylinder belongs to Iran? Isn’t it true that the British government stole this valuable and ancient object of ours? If the answer is positive, which it is, why should we return [it]… to the party which stole it?’ Despite such comments, Iran has no legal or historical claim to the Cylinder, which was found in Babylon, modern Iraq, in 1879 by the celebrated Assyro-British archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam (1826–1910), excavating on behalf of the British Museum. Rassam had also been issued with a firman (decree) by the Ottoman government, which allowed for the export of the Cylinder, together with most of the other finds from his excavations in Mesopotamia.

More than just an ancient archaeological treasure, the Cyrus Cylinder has taken on a powerful political meaning. Although the cuneiform script can now be read by only a handful of specialists, the common interpretation of those words retains great power 2500 years after they were imprinted. While many scholars might reject the argument that the Cylinder is ‘the world’s first charter of human rights’, the ancient artefact nevertheless offers hope that even societies with different cultures and religious beliefs can live together in mutual respect.

Minerva January/February 2011

Fig 2. The baked clay Cyrus Cylinder comprises two main fragments that together measure 22.5 cm, with a maximum diameter of 10 cm at the centre. Photo: dynamosquito.

Fig 3. Gold stater from the mint at Sardis, one of the most important cities in the Persian Empire. The obverse (left) depicts a lion confronting a bull. This coinage was the first minted by the Achaemenid kings, and began to be circulated from the time of Cyrus. Weight: 8.06g. Photo: courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group.
Patricia Anderson examines the extraordinary prehistoric rock art of Western Australia

The world’s oldest palimpsest

The Burrup Peninsula in Western Australia, known to the Aboriginal people as Murujuga, is a Stone Age site which, together with the islands of the Dampier Archipelago, contains one of the greatest concentrations of rock carvings found anywhere in the world. It is believed the oldest petroglyphs at the Burrup site date back 30,000 years. If this is correct, then some of the carvings are contemporary with the painted images in the caves of Chauvet (Ardèche, France) and Altamira (Cantabria, Spain), and predate the famous artwork at the Lascaux Cave (Dordogne, France) by about 12,000 years.

However, the 240 square kilometre area has increasingly been the cause of tension between large multinational mining companies seeking to exploit the rich mineral deposits found in the area, and conservation groups attempting to preserve the unique engravings and paintings. In 2003 the World Monuments Fund, a body that draws the public’s attention to culturally irreplaceable sites threatened by neglect, vandalism and other depredations, placed the Burrup Peninsula on its register of ‘100 Most Endangered Sites’ – the first Australian archaeological site to be included. Despite the area’s petroglyphs being nominated for the National Heritage List by Robert Bednarik (President of the International Federation of Rock Art Organizations), many of the prehistoric artworks, which number in the hundreds of thousands, have been damaged or destroyed.

The Burrup petroglyphs are a palimpsest of the spiritual and the ritualised; they can take the form of hopeful talismans for the hunt (Fig 8), or represent prehistoric graffiti. There are carvings of the now extinct thylacine (Tasmanian tiger) (Fig 3), goannas (monitor lizards), ancient species of fat-tailed kangaroo (Fig 1), eagles, emus, marine creatures (Fig 4) and seabirds (Fig 2). Mysterious symbols associated with Aboriginal ceremonies and earth creation stories are also depicted in many of the carvings and paintings. The Burrup Organisation has noted that, ‘Many motifs and some stone features are connected to the beliefs and ceremonial practices of Aboriginal people in the Pilbara region today. The entire Archipelago is a continuous cultural landscape providing a detailed record of both sacred and secular life reaching from the present back into the past, perhaps to the first settlement of Australia.’ Friends of Australian Rock Art (FARA) have also speculated that the site may have the oldest representation of the human face (Fig 6). In addition to the petroglyphs at Burrup, the site has a great layering of archaeologically interesting objects including campsites, standing stones, quarries and shell middens (Fig 5).
The geologist Mike Donaldson, who has explored mineral resources in Australia and elsewhere in the world, recently released *Burrup Rock Art: Ancient Aboriginal rock art of Burrup Peninsula and Dampier Archipelago* (Wildrock Publications, 2010). Donaldson developed a keen interest in those remote areas of northwest Australia, replete with the earliest presence of humans on the continent, and set about documenting the petroglyphs of the Burrup Peninsula and the Kimberley region of Western Australia. He sought the advice and approval of some of the traditional Aboriginal owners of the Burrup Peninsula before publishing his book and, as a result, some of the images were removed because they were considered culturally sensitive. Nonetheless, the volume still includes 600 photographs of the petroglyphs.

Despite its undoubted archaeological importance, the Burrup site has the misfortune to be located near a natural gas field, and the Northwest Shelf liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry has been present in the area for some 50 years (Fig 7). In the essay ‘Culture Clash’, which appeared in *The Australian* newspaper (14 March, 2009), respected journalist Nicholas Rothwell provided an account of the depredations that have taken place on the Burrup Peninsula over the last 50 years. In the late 1960s, a rail line for iron ore was constructed, and a port and town were built on Burrup’s seaward edge. At this time a causeway was also constructed across the narrow strait, connecting Burrup with the rest of Australia for the first time in 8500 years. In the early 1980s Woodside’s North West Shelf Project also commenced and, as Rothwell notes: ‘The fate of Burrup’s rock art was not a big factor in those first chapters of the region’s transformation, even though the extent of the peninsula’s spectacular engravings was known early on.’

The debate therefore currently revolves around what can best be done to preserve the remaining petroglyphs and other archaeological features of the Burrup Peninsula. The large multinational mining group Rio Tinto, which holds leases over part of the peninsula, has become increasingly involved with heritage concerns and has staff and advisers, including archaeologist Ken Mulvaney, President of the Australian Rock Art Research Association, to negotiate with indigenous people. Woodside, a large Australian oil and gas exploration company, has agreed to consult closely with the indigenous communities and work around the archaeology whenever possible. Where this is deemed impractical, Woodside will relocate rocks decorated with petroglyphs. However, it has been argued that moving any of the petroglyphs diminishes their significance, since they were designed to be observed and appreciated within specific parts of the Burrup landscape and the rock art constituted part of a web of stories and ceremonies that was understood and celebrated by the Aboriginal communities over centuries and even millennia.

In July 2008 the World Archaeology Congress, held in Dublin and attended by 1800 archaeologists, called on the Australian Government to protect petroglyphs threatened by a natural gas production facility proposed by Woodside and the West Australian Government. It was argued that the industrial development would diminish the sites against the wishes of its custodians. In addition to destruction arising from industrial enterprises, the Burrup site is also vulnerable to vandals, although it could be argued that those who scratch their own designs and initials into the rock surfaces are merely adding to the oldest palimpsest in the world. Some good news emerged when a short article ‘All clear for rock art’, which appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (26 March, 2009) reported that a four-year monitoring project had found no evidence that industrial emissions were harming the rock art. Perhaps if these carvings survived the climate fluctuations associated with the last Ice Age, they can also survive the multinationals.
Preparing the dead

As the British Museum’s exhibition ‘Journey through the afterlife: ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead’ continues to attract visitors, Murray Eiland examines the text and accompanying art of this remarkable work of ancient literature.

Every culture has what can be viewed as central texts. These can encompass such themes as religion, epic, or ritual – or be a combination of all these elements. For ancient Greece the works of Homer can be regarded as central. Indeed, who can today contemplate a hero without thinking about the relationship of gifts and weaknesses, a theme so eloquently touched upon so long ago? For ancient Israel, historically significant texts are still revered, and continue to have a significant impact on modern society. With no understanding of such literature, the essence of an ancient culture would be difficult to fathom, and art can only be appreciated out of context. The Egyptians – like many other ancient peoples – were greatly occupied with preparing for life after death, and much of their literature is concerned with the afterlife. The so-called Book of the Dead can easily be appreciated as one of the central texts of Egyptian society. But unlike the writings of Homer, there is no one name to associate with the work. There is no single unified Book of the Dead that straddles the ages, as the name would suggest: it was a changing compilation of spells and hymns that gave the deceased the necessary knowledge to face their transition into the afterlife. The fact that these spells were often interred with the dead emphasises their importance. The deceased could consult the book as need arose, and the tombs of the elite were therefore equipped with what could be seen as elaborate preparations for passing a very important examination. The passages occur – like memory aids for students during exams – in a variety of contexts: rolls of papyrus, mummy wrappings or even the walls of the sarcophagus or tomb could accommodate large pieces of text. Individual spells or smaller passages could adorn small items such as figurines or amulets (Fig 3). Shabti figurines usually bear a spell so that they could help the deceased avoid work in the afterlife. Heart scarabs carried a spell instructing the heart not to testify against the owner during judgement. During the New Kingdom (c. 1550–1070 BC), the Book of the Dead was regarded as an essential text to accompany the deceased, at least in
the burials of more well-to-do individuals. Workshops could make multiple copies of the book by using the work of different scribes and pasting them together. There can be variation in handwriting, column width, drawing and painting (Fig 1). In many of these texts it appears that the illustrations were more important than the text, as the latter was often crammed into spaces left after the illustrations had already been added. Misspelled or omitted words are encountered, while occasionally images do not correspond with the correct place in the text. This indicates a clear division between specialists in drawing the hieroglyphs and those concerned with illustrations. Nevertheless, it is clear from the texts that both the spoken and written words were thought to have great power. For example, in the Memphite theology the god Ptah first conceives things in his mind, and then makes them real by speaking their names. The dead must know the names of gods and demons that may be encountered during their journey. The phrase ‘I know you and I know your names’ is repeated often in the Book of the Dead. In knowing the names of deities it was thought that the spirit of the deceased could acquire some of the power of the god. This is one reason why the text could occur in a variety of contexts.

The Book also changed over time and place. The so-called Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom (c. 2686–2181 BC) were wholly concerned with the preservation of royalty. Dating to the 5th (2494–2345 BC) and 6th (2345–2181 BC) dynasties, the texts were not illustrated. They dealt specifically with re-uniting the king and his father Ra. The texts were carved on the walls of tombs or sarcophagi and are well known from the graves at Saqqara. By the 6th dynasty, the queen was also included in the remit of the texts. Beginning with the First Intermediate Period (2181–2040 BC), spells derived from the Pyramid Texts were used, but they are of a different character. They are termed the Coffin Texts, and they reflect the fact that by this time non-royals could also be buried in coffins and expect an afterlife (Fig 5). It has been suggested that this change was the result of a breakdown of central control. Despite the name ‘Coffin Texts’, the spells could be rendered on a variety of surfaces, often in an abbreviated form. At the same time, the earlier Pyramid Texts continued to be written on coffins throughout the Middle Kingdom. While the Pyramid...
Dead spells seems to be on the coffin of Queen Mentuhotep in the 13th dynasty (1782–1650 BC). In the earliest phases, the book seems to have been inscribed on linen shrouds that wrapped the mummy. Only a few examples on papyrus have been preserved from the 18th dynasty (1570–1293 BC), but several generations after that, papyrus rolls with the Book of the Dead are well attested. One factor that could have influenced the text being written on a papyrus roll is that the beginning of the New Kingdom witnessed a break with earlier burial practices. Rectangular coffins, with their large surface areas, were replaced by form-fitting anthropoid coffins. Starting with the 21st dynasty (1069–945 BC), more texts of the Book of the Dead are also found in women's tombs. These included members of the Theban High Priest's family, and it has been suggested that they may have edited their own texts. A good example are the copies of the Book of the Dead from the tomb of Nodjmet, the wife of the High Priest Herihor. She had two books, one written in hieroglyphic and the other in hieratic, both of which contain peculiar versions of the text that are not attested elsewhere.

(Fig 4).

It was only during the Saite period (26th dynasty, 664–525 BC) that the Book of the Dead became standardised into a text with 165 numbered spells. Again it was apparently the priests in Thebes who formulated the standard texts. However, it should be noted that in most cases copies of the book are found in an abbreviated form. At this time the Book of the Dead also came to be organised into four different sections. The first began when the body entered the tomb and moved into the underworld. The second part was devoted to animating the deceased so that they might be reborn with the sun. The third section outlined the journey of the deceased across the sky, and their appearance in the underworld each evening. In the fourth part of the Book the dead were placed in the eternal realm. This last chapter contained much variation and was apparently tailored to suit individual circumstances, with protective charms and special foods examined in detail. The family was expected to assist in sustaining the physical and spiritual wellbeing of their ancestor and, in return, the dead would help the living. A key part of the text deals with the spiritual essence of the person – the *ka* was a part of the life force that was individual, while at the same time it was passed from parent to child. This part of the person remained in the tomb and required refreshment. Artistically, it would be represented as the person appeared in life. The *ba* was the mobile aspect of the person after death, and would often be represented as a human headed bird that could move away from the body of the deceased during the day (Fig 2). Many spells of the Book of the Dead refer to the *ba* taking different forms, although it was essential for it to be able to return to the body at night (Fig 8).

Mummification was the key to human survival after death. A dead spirit could commune with the living, or even travel the sky with the sun god. Ancient Egyptian religion could be quite complicated, as various deities were fused over time and space as they came to encompass broader realms. As an example Ra and Osiris came to represent opposite and complementary aspects of one divine being (Figs 6a, 6b). During the day Ra was visible, while Osiris was hidden in the underworld. However, at night when the sun journeyed underground, the two deities merged and rejuvenated one another. In a similar fashion the *ba* must return to the mummy of the deceased at night.

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The organisation of the Book of the Dead was relatively straightforward. The titles of the spells, important words or titles, and the postscripts of spells, could be written in red ink. Red would also be used when naming dangerous beings. The colour was also used to correct places in the text where the first scribe had made an error, or to colour supplementary text that would explain difficult passages.

During the late 1st century BC (the late Ptolemaic period), copies of the Book of the Dead made in the city of Akhmim deliberately looked to the past for inspiration. The form of writing is termed ‘retrograde’ because the figures faced right instead of left (which was the beginning of the text). This may have had some magical significance, but it may also be because the texts were copied from hieratic originals where the signs always faced right. Whatever the case, retrograde writing is known from the New Kingdom and the Ptolemaic periods. In later ages, however, the scribes frequently made mistakes, indicating that many of them did not fully understand the text (Fig 9). The language of the Book of the Dead may have been very different from colloquial speech, in keeping with the language of many religions today, which tends to be conservative.

In some cases it appears that the dead may have played an active part in selecting the texts that would accompany them into the afterlife. In other cases it appears that books were produced in a manner resembling an assembly line. In some books it appears that the name of the first patron has been deliberately obscured so that another name could be inserted. In such cases political factors may have played a role, while it is also possible that full payment was not received for the book leading to it being sold to another customer (Fig 7). In rare cases it has even been suggested that the book has been illustrated by the owner (Fig 11).

During the period of Macedonian and Ptolemaic rule (332–30 BC) the Book of the Dead was replaced by other texts, but echoes of the past survived into the Roman period (Fig 10). Considering that the Book of the Dead, in various guises, was in use from the Old Kingdom through to the Roman period (c. 2686 BC–AD 395), it can safely be said that it is one of the most significant religious texts of all time. It was first brought to the attention...
The classical world of Greece and Rome might be said to have had a love/hate relationship with ancient Egypt, especially after it became more accessible following the defeat of Cleopatra and Mark Antony at the battle of Actium in 31 BC. Ancient Egypt had influenced Greek art, especially the standing male kouros figures, and for the Romans there was the intrigue of death, magic and wisdom mixed with revulsion at the ancient therianthropic (animal-headed) gods. With the Arab invasion of Egypt in AD 640, Egypt was essentially lost to the European world – although it continued as a place of mystery, hiding secrets in its indecipherable hieroglyphs. Renaissance scholars, most notably Athanasius Kircher (1602–80), endeavoured to ‘crack the code’ arriving at ridiculous translations. It was left to the short-lived Napoleonic conquest of Egypt, 1798–1801, to open the windows on the ancient Pharaonic civilisation. The publication of the impressive 20 volume Description de l’Egypte, together with the writings of the Baron Vivant Denon, brought the long-lost monuments of Egypt to European eyes. The floodgates truly opened in 1822 with the decipherment of hieroglyphs by Jean-François Champollion. Initial European involvement in Egypt was more a race to collect antiquities, often driven by national pride. It was only later that dedicated scholars began to arrive. Principal amongst these was Edward William Lane, a giant amongst his contemporaries yet, until recently, largely overlooked.

Lane was born in Hereford on 17 September 1801, the fourth son of his clergyman father who was to die when Lane was only 12 years old. After attending grammar schools in Bath and Hereford, Lane began commercial life as an engraver with his brother in London, an occupation that was to stand him in good stead in later years when he would turn his skilled hand to illustrating the monuments of Egypt. Despite his talents bad health forced Lane to leave that career. Meanwhile, the ‘Egyptomania’ that swept Britain during the 1820s, a craze spurred on by published engravings of Egyptian monuments, and especially Giovanni Belzoni’s (1778–1823) exhibition in the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly during 1820–21, captivated the young Lane and led him to develop a fascination with Egypt. He spent all his spare time studying the country and resolved to visit its ancient sites. His interest also turned to contemporary Egypt; he was studying Arabic by the age of 21, and three years later had become conversant with colloquial Arabic. Advised that a warmer and more congenial climate would prove to be more congenial for his poor health,
which had further deteriorated following an attack of typhoid, Lane booked his passage on board the brig Findlay bound for Egypt. How Lane managed to meet the financial costs for the journey is still something of a mystery, but he was nevertheless able to pay his fare of 30 guineas (£31.50), and sailed on 18 July 1825, although a severe storm delayed his arrival at Alexandria, via Malta, and he only reached Egypt on 19 September. He described feeling ‘like an Eastern bridegroom, about to lift the veil of his bride, and to see, for the first time, the features which were to charm, or disappoint…’ He was indeed to ‘lift the veil’ on ancient and modern Egypt in his later works.

The teeming city of Cairo and its many Islamic monuments fascinated Lane. Within six days of his arrival in Cairo, whilst waiting for his house to be made ready, Lane paid a visit to the pyramids of Giza with a small group of Europeans, staying overnight in an empty tomb. Bright moonlight found them climbing the Great Pyramid to watch the sunrise (Fig 1). Lane was also fortunate to meet Osman Effendi, actually a former Scottish soldier William Thomson, who had converted to Islam after being captured by the Mamluk rulers of Egypt during an ill-fated British military campaign in 1807. Thompson had been enslaved and, following an unsuccessful escape attempt, faced execution unless he chose to embrace Islam, a decision that saved his life and changed his name. Osman was a well known figure and acted as Lane’s dragoman (guide), encouraging him to adopt Turkish (Arab) dress, which would generally allow him to pass himself off as an elite Turk rather than a European (Fig
In pursuing his researches Lane immersed himself in the local culture – as some would have it he ‘went native’ – but he was full of admiration for the Egyptian way of life and manners; he even took an Eastern name – Mansur Effendi, extending it at times to al-Fakir Mansur al-Inklisi, which, broken down, meant ‘one who conquers with God’s help – the Englishman’.

Lane’s first journey up the Nile began on 9 March 1826 when, with two servants, he hired a canjiah (a small passenger boat with a crew of seven), for which he paid the equivalent of about £5 in Spanish dollars. It was agreed that the boat would sail as far as the Second Cataract in Nubia (Fig 3), stopping wherever Lane wished. The journey began with a visit to the pyramid and cemetery site of Saqqara (Fig 4) where Lane began his remarkable series of sketches, accompanied by copious notes. He was not only recording the monuments he saw (Figs 5, 6, 9) but also making notes about the people (Fig 7) and the surrounding landscape. This study would form the basis of his book *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, which was first published in 1836, has never since been out of print, and is still a major historical source.

Lane’s eye for detail also made him realise that many of the published records, particularly of tomb paintings, some only discovered within the previous 30 or so years, were not as accurate as they might be. Although Lane was essentially an observer rather than a discoverer of ancient Egyptian monuments, while regarding Seti I’s tomb in the Valley of the Kings (found by Belzoni in 1817) he did remark, ‘How interesting would be the discovery of one such tomb not previously violated’ (*Description of Egypt*, Fig 8). Such a dream would not be realised for almost a century when the almost intact tomb of Tutankhamen was discovered in the Valley of the Kings in 1922.

Lane’s second voyage into Upper Egypt and Nubia (Fig 13) began on 23 June 1827, accompanied by another noted recorder of the monuments, Robert Hay (1799–1863). It was upon his return from Nubia towards the end of the year that he ‘acquired’ a young female slave named Nefeeseh. She was actually a Greek girl, and was apparently bought (rescued) along with another girl, Kalitza, by Robert Hay, who gave her to Lane (she had probably cost around £60, which Lane at that time could ill afford). His health was not good and Hay realised that Lane needed help as he maintained his feverish recording and notetaking. Her name was originally Anastasia, and it was as Anatasoula Georgiou that she and Lane were to be married 13 years later, in Kensington parish church in London on 8 July 1840, by which time Lane was 38 and Anatasoula 20. Robert Hay was delighted that his ‘purchases’ had worked out so well, not only for Lane but also for himself, for in May 1840 Hay had married Kalitza Psaraki. The ceremony took place in Malta, where both Lane and Hay had to endure four weeks of quarantine on their way back to England. Not only did the time ashore allow Lane to attend his friend’s wedding, at which
he acted as one of the witnesses, but it gave him plenty of time to continue working up his notes and sketches.

Back in England, and living with his brother Richard in Regent's Park, Lane (like Belzoni 20 years before) was lionised by society, constantly receiving invitations for dinner parties. Richard, an artist and sculptor, revelled in Edward Lane's exotic Eastern dress and produced the remarkable terracotta statue of his brother now in the National Portrait Gallery, London. However, his health was still troubling him and he found the adjustment back into British society something of a culture shock. Nevertheless, he set about assembling his notes and material for his manuscript, *Description of Egypt*. Lane had begun the first draft for the book in 1829, although by the time it reached its third and final draft, it was four times the original length. Based on his research in Egypt between 1825 and 1828, it ran to more than 300,000 words, with 160 illustrations. While John Murray, the eminent publisher of Albemarle Street who had published Belzoni’s *Narrative of Operations and Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia* in 1820, had agreed to publish Lane's manuscript, the offer was withdrawn and Lane was unable to find another publisher willing to take on so huge a work. Thus it was held in the Bodleian Library in manuscript form for 160 years, until it was finally edited and published in 2000 (Fig 11).

Lane returned to Egypt in 1842 and lived in the country for another seven years, during which time he compiled his great Arabic dictionary, published in eight volumes from 1863 to 1893 (Fig 10). Lane was recognised as the leading Arabic scholar, and came under the patronage of the Duke of Northumberland. Although his primary concern was still the modern Egyptians, Lane nevertheless translated and published *The Thousand and One Nights* (1838–40), and studies focused on other Arabic legends and tales, as well as the Holy Qur'an. Lane was also closely associated with many scholars of the Victorian period, including Hay and Sir John Gardner Wilkinson (1797–1875), the latter having published his *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* in three volumes (1837) and with many editions following.

Lane's collection of Egyptian antiquities was acquired by the British Museum in 1842, and the bulk of his surviving manuscripts are held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. He died at Worthing on 10 August 1876 and was buried in West Norwood Cemetery, south London. His wife Anatasoula died on 16 November 1895, probably 75 years old, and her will stipulated: 'I direct my trustees to pay to the authorities of the Norwood Cemetery such a sum of money as they require for insuring that the grave where I shall be buried with my beloved husband at Norwood Cemetery shall be kept decently and in order.' Unfortunately, the location of their grave is only roughly known as the grave marker was smashed and removed (along with those of many other Victorian notables) in the early 1990s during a clearance carried out by Lambeth Borough Council ‘clearing away forgotten clutter’. But for all that, Lane's name lives on in his work, recalling the ancient Egyptian prayer, 'Speak my name that I may live' (Fig 12).
Impressions of the past

Andrew Wilton casts an expert eye over J.M.W. Turner’s depictions of the ancient world.

In July 2010 a sensational auction-room sale hit the headlines: a view of the Roman Forum by J.M.W. Turner (1775–1851) fetched £29 million at Sotheby’s in London. Its full title was *Modern Rome – Campo Vaccino*, and it depicted a panoramic view of the Forum from the heights of the Capitoline Hill (Fig 1). The eye sweeps deep into the picture, the length of the Via Sacra, past the Arch of Septimius Severus, the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, and on to the campanile of the church of S. Francesca Romana. Beyond looms the Colosseum, dissolving into a silvery haze through which we glimpse the bulky mass of the Baths of Caracalla and a long line of cloud over the distant range of the Abruzzi. It is the evocation of a glowing memory of a city of fierce history, of legend and dreams.

Framing the view for us, on the right, are the Corinthian columns of the Temple of Vespasian – though not placed exactly as we would see them if we were standing on that Capitoline terrace overlooking the Forum. Turner has taken the kind of liberties with the scene that a baroque painter might have taken: he must have recalled the mid 18th-century capriccios – architectural fantasies – of Giovanni Paolo Panini, who would arrange an assortment of Roman ruins into a pleasing and evocative composition without regard for the topography of the place. Yet even while composing his own ‘capriccio’ on the Roman Forum, Turner was intensely aware of the topography of the view. He was a topographical artist by training, having made views of antiquarian and Picturesque subjects since his boyhood, and his intention in painting ‘Modern Rome’ was to present the Eternal City not simply as a collection of famous buildings but as a place, palpable in its atmosphere and historical resonance.

Turner exhibited the picture in London, at the Royal Academy’s annual show, in the summer of 1839. And to make his complex intentions better understood he also exhibited a picture of *Ancient Rome – Agrippina landing with the ashes of Germanicus* (Fig 2). This might more accurately be called a ‘capriccio’ since it does not pretend to describe what we can see today of Rome’s Imperial structures; it is a...
the continuity not only of history, but of art itself in the land that he called, simply, 'Terra Pictura'.

The sketchbooks that preserve Turner’s activities during his 1819 tour are the working records of a dedicated professional topographer, an artist whose first priority is to understand what he is looking at, both in its architectural actuality and in its historical context. A telling demonstration of his sensitivity to these contending requirements is the very large picture he painted for his friend and fellow-academician the architect Sir John Soane (Fig 3), who, he hoped, would hang the work in his remarkable house in Lincoln’s Inn Fields (Fig 4). Soane was one of the most imaginative and original neo-classical architects in Europe, and his house is dominated by a favourite motif, the concave tent ceiling or segmental arch – a shape perpetuated to our own day in the curved roofs of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott’s familiar red telephone boxes. The house is full of antique reliefs, casts and fragments, a rambling grotto of objets trouvés from the ancient (and also the Gothic and Renaissance) world. For this unusual space Turner conceived a large picture that would seem to extend as

by a trompe-l’oeil the interior that Soane had created into the vastness of the Roman Forum, with its clutter of antique relics, broken capitals, ruined arches, and straggling heaps of masonry. And he closed in this vista with a segmental arch, echoing the leit-motif of the house itself. In the event, Soane refused to buy the picture, perhaps because it was too large.

The first picture Turner painted as result of his experience of Rome in 1819 is, in many ways, a paean to the architectural legacy of the city. Rome from the Vatican. Raffaelle, accompanied by La Fornarina, preparing his pictures for the decoration of the Loggia, 1820. Oil on canvas. H. 177.2cm, W. 335.3cm. Tate.

Fig 2. Ancient Rome – Agrippina landing with the ashes of Germanicus, 1839. Oil on canvas. H. 91.4cm, W. 121.9cm. Tate.

Fig 3. Forum Romanum, for Mr Soane’s Museum, 1826. Oil on canvas. H. 145.7cm, W. 236.3cm. Tate.

Fig 4. Sir John Soane’s House. The Sepulchral Chamber and the Dome Area above. The sarcophagus of Seti I is in the foreground. Watercolour by J.M. Gandy, 8 September, 1825. Image: courtesy of Geremy Butler.

Fig 5. Rome from the Vatican. Raffaelle, accompanied by La Fornarina, preparing his pictures for the decoration of the Loggia appeared at the Academy in 1820 (Fig 5). It is a vast canvas, making use of a remarkable effect of perspective, which bends space so as to encompass as wide a panorama of the city as possible. We are looking out from an upper floor of the palace (again from under an arch), and can see immediately below us the piazza of St Peter’s, with Bernini’s great colonnade – for although Raphael is the ostensible protagonist, it is really Turner himself who celebrates his relationship as an artist with the city and its monuments. A painting by Turner anachronistically figures among the items Raphael is contemplating in the

...
foreground, and the city we survey is the Rome that Turner knew.

These two large canvases, *Rome from the Vatican and Forum Romanum*, for Mr Soane’s Museum (exhibited in 1826) announced a preoccupation that was to endure for most of Turner’s lifetime. The two pictures of *Ancient and Modern Rome* that we have already looked at testify to the excitement he felt as late as 1839, when they were shown at the Academy; and they do not by any means constitute the only evidence of his concern with the city and its history.

In 1836 he had shown *Rome from Mount Aventine*, and in 1838 another pair, *Ancient Italy – Ovid banished from Rome* (Fig 9), and *Modern Italy – the Pifferari*. The latter is a rural scene, set against the backdrop of an imaginary Tivoli; the former a grand harbour with serried terraces of grand classical buildings – it might be the same setting as Agrippina – from which Ovid is hurried away surreptitiously at sunset. The great poet who in his *Metamorphoses* collected the legends and folklore of a rural population is contrasted with the rustic music of the modern pifferari, the peasant pipers who haunt the countryside – and at certain times of the year the cities too.

Turner’s interest in the literary and musical content of the landscapes that he painted began early in his career. He was quoting from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Thomson’s *Seasons*, as well as several modern poets – Akenside, Gray or Mallet, for instance – as soon as the Academy’s rules allowed him to cite them in his catalogue entries. He later quoted extensively from Scott, Byron and Rogers, and composed his own verses to accompany many of his pictures. As a young man he acquired a compendium of the *Works of the British Poets*, published by Robert Anderson in 1795, and this included a large amount of classical poetry in translation, including Hesiod, Theocritus, Sappho, Musaeus and Lucretius. We therefore need not be surprised that he cites the *Hymn of Callimachus* when exhibiting his *Apollo and Python* in 1811, or the *Iliad* when illustrating Chryses praying to the sun in a water-colour of the same year: he of course possessed Pope’s famous translation of Homer, and Dryden’s of Virgil.

His landscapes are indeed complete expressions of the cultural life of the places they depict – they are, in an important sense, always topographical; the imaginary scenes from antiquity are as vividly circumstantial as the views of modern Rome, Tyneside or London. For his painting of *Palestrina* (shown in 1830) he composed verses that specifically elaborate on the town’s heroic past, and association with Hannibal:
Or from yon mural rock, high-crowned Praeneste,
Where, misdeeming of his strength,
the Carthaginian stood,
And marked with eagle-eye, Rome as his victim.

Turner returned again and again to the subject of Hannibal and the great North African city of Carthage. In the course of his life he painted a long series of subjects dealing with the history of Carthage, from its inception to its collapse, investigating both the myths and the historical reality. Among these are Regulus, painted in Rome in 1828, Snow storm: Hannibal and his army crossing the Alps (Fig 7), which caused a sensation in 1812, and The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire, of 1817, all dealing with different moments in the true history of Carthage. By contrast, the last pictures he ever exhibited, at the Academy in 1850, were four scenes illustrating the story of Dido and Aeneas from Book IV of the Aeneid.

A picture to which he attached special importance (insisting in his Will that it should always hang in the National Gallery) was Dido building Carthage (Fig 6); and if he could present Palestrina in its historical reality, so he could conceive ancient Carthage as a real place, populated by all the trades and professions needed to design, build and organise it.

His view of Cicero at his Villa (Fig 8), exhibited in 1839, likewise imagines a fully realised actuality. The house is based on the Villa Mondragone at Frascati, but the complex and infinitely intriguing gardens, with their avenues and fountains, theatres, statues and lakes, have sprung from Turner’s fecund mind, inspired no doubt by his reading of Cicero and other authors of the Roman Republic. He owned a copy of North’s Plutarch: the Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, in an edition of 1657; and Bohun’s translation of Livy’s Roman History (1686).

Fig 8. Cicero at his Villa, 1839. Oil on canvas. H. 92cm, W. 123cm. Evelyn de Rothschild Esq., Ascott, Bucks.

Fig 9. Ancient Italy – Ovid banished from Rome, 1838. Oil on canvas. H. 94.6cm, W. 125cm. Richard Feigen, New York.

Behind Turner’s numerous evocations of the classical world lies the potent idea that London is the modern Rome, that the Thames valley is the abode of the Muses, that great and heroic deeds might be performed in those landscapes just as they had been accomplished in Greece and Italy long ago. Indeed, the fact that Alexander Pope had lived at Twickenham, and that James Thomson had lived on Richmond Hill – as indeed had his great hero, the first President of the Royal Academy Sir Joshua Reynolds – must have been demonstration enough to Turner that the parallel held good. Hence his fascination with pairs of pictures pointing up the contrasts and similarities, and most particularly, the continuity, between past and present.
Since its formation in 1972, the Ermine Street Guard has become firmly established as the leading society dedicated to reconstructive research into the Roman Army as it existed around the time of the conquest of Britain in AD 43. A registered charity, with members drawn from a wide social and professional base, and an age range running from 18 to 74, the Guard is financed through public events, educational visits and donations. It is best known for staging displays at major Roman sites throughout Britain and Europe, in which the audience is given an explanation of the roles of the officers, legionaries, auxiliaries and cavalry who made up the Roman Army, as well as demonstrating the construction and use of military equipment from 2000 years ago. The Guard's highly accurate interpretation of the Roman military has proved extremely popular with the general public, as well as with academics, who value the insights into lifestyle and equipment that it provides. Remarkably, some 90 percent of the equipment is made by Guard members themselves, to high standards of workmanship and accuracy, and is continually being added to and upgraded as new information and funds become available. In fact, the only major piece of equipment which has to be farmed out to a skilled armorer (and that to an associate member of the Guard) is the basic unfinished helmet bowl, the beating out of which is highly specialised work (Fig 1).

The highly detailed and precise reconstructions of armour and equipment used by the Guard are primarily based on those in use during the latter half of the 1st century AD, the period when the legions steadily expanded the province of Britannia in a series of campaigns against the Iron Age tribes that inhabited the island. However, equipment and weaponry dating to other Roman periods is reproduced by the Guard for both experimental and display purposes. The reconstructed equipment is primarily based on the accounts and treatises provided by ancient writers which relate to Roman military matters. Authors such as Julius Caesar, Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio Cassius and Vegetius all provide information concerning the weaponry and equipment utilised by Roman soldiers, and also how the soldiers were trained and expected to organise and function in battle. Unfortunately no original Roman army drill manual exists, so the Guard has adapted commands from drill manuals of early English armies, although all orders are given in Latin. The Guard attempts to maintain high levels of accuracy when reproducing the kit of the imperial Roman Army. This is achieved through study of artefacts and depictions of Roman soldiers which survive from antiquity, finds recently unearthed during archaeological excavations, and through maintaining excellent relationships with museums and the academic community. The high level of accuracy demanded of the Guard's equipment also allows the society to carry out experimental archaeology.

## Fig 1. Bronze or brass helmet of the Weisenau/Nijmegen Type, with a widely flaring neck-guard and long, heavily embossed eyebrows. 1st century BC – 1st century AD. H. 19cm (+21cm for cheekpieces). Weight 1.3kg. Artefacts such as this form the basis for the exacting replicas produced by the Ermine Street Guard. Photo: courtesy of the Mougins Museum of Classical Art.

## Fig 3. On the move. Members of The Ermine Street Guard demonstrate Roman marching procedure.

## Fig 4. The Ermine Street Guard demonstrate the famous tortoise (testudo) formation in the Roman amphitheatre at Caerleon, south Wales.
The origins of the Ermine Street Guard stretch back to 1971, when the combined parishes of Witcombe and Bentham in Gloucestershire held a pageant to reflect the history of the village, which lies alongside the Roman road from Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum) to Gloucester (Glevum), known as Ermin Street. The rector convened a small group to re-enact a contubernium – the smallest unit of soldiers in the Roman Army, consisting of eight men – to represent the Roman period of the village’s history. The armour and equipment was intended to be above ‘theatrical’ level, and work began on eight sets of lorica segmentata (segmented plates), based on drawings by H. Russell Robinson, Keeper of Armouries at The Tower of London, and one of the foremost scholars of Roman armour. On 2–3 July 1972, the contubernium marched out in galvanised steel armour and fibreglass helmets, carrying hardboard shields, watched by 2500 members of the public during the two-day event. Requests soon followed for appearances at local venues and, without too much thought, the name chosen for the small re-enactment group was ‘The Ermine Street Guard’. (The addition of the final ‘e’ has led to subsequent confusion; unlike the similarly named Roman road that ran through Witcombe and Bentham, Ermine Street runs from London (Londinium) to York (Eboracum).

In 1973 this kit was taken for display at an archaeological conference in Cardiff, attended by H. Russell Robinson. He remarked that it was a pity so much effort had gone into creating something so inaccurate, likening the helmets to those of coal miners and the crests to Hitler’s moustache! These major inaccuracies prompted a programme of research, and the armour and equipment was steadily replaced as funds became available and knowledge of the weaponry and other tools and garments utilised by Roman soldiers increased through evidence from archaeology and the support and advice of Russell Robinson.

A legion of the mid to later 1st century AD consisted of about 5400 men divided into cohorts, then centuries of 80 men, each divided into ten contubernia of eight men. Although unable to field a full century, the Guard nevertheless parades with a Centurion (Centurio), his Second-in-Command (Optio), Standard Bearer (Signifer), Colour Bearer (Vexillarius), Horn Player (Cornicen), Legionaries and Auxiliaries (Fig 2). Two fully equipped Roman cavalrymen are also displayed at selected venues, their saddles recreated as a result of research carried out by Peter Connolly, a specialist in ancient military equipment, who also consented to become President (Praefectus) of the Ermine Street Guard.

At public displays the Guard not only demonstrates Roman marching, drill and training procedures (Figs 3, 11), but also performs battle tactics such as the wedge charge (cuneum), tortoise (testudo) (Fig 4), and the shooting of artillery pieces (Figs 5, 6). Roman battle tactics at this time were to advance in line, each soldier throwing his two heavy javelins (pila). As the late Roman author Vegetius would note in his Epitome of Military Science, ‘As to the missile weapons of the infantry, they were javelins headed with a triangular
sharp iron, eleven inches (279mm) or a foot long, and were called piles. When once fixed in the shield it was impossible to draw them out, and when thrown with force and skill, they penetrated the cuirass without difficulty. The Legionary would then advance with his shield up and short swords (gladii) pointed forwards. Instead of being used as rather inefficient slashing weapons, which would expose the soldier’s side to the enemy, the Roman gladius was primarily intended for use as a stabbing weapon, rather like a bayonet (Fig 8).

Artillery weapons used in Britain and other parts of the Empire were initially derived from Greek designs, which the Romans adapted and improved upon. Despite dating back some two millennia, these machines are still impressive: using experimental archaeology, the Guard has recreated some, and it regularly shoots these during displays, where they prove extremely popular to the watching public. The power for these weapons was obtained by using sinew, rope or hair in torsion, which, when released, could hurl projectiles over considerable distances.

The onager (named after the wild ass, which kicks up stones to defend itself) could throw a large rock in a parabola hundreds of metres (Fig 6). Writing in the 4th century AD, Ammianus Marcellinus provides a useful description of the siege engine: ‘The onager’s frame is constructed from two beams of oak, which curve into humps. In the middle they have large holes bored through them, in which strong sinew ropes are stretched and twisted. A long arm is inserted between the bundle of rope, with a pin and a pouch at the end. It strikes on a huge buffer with a sack stuffed with fine chaff and secured by tight binding. When it comes to combat, a round stone is placed in the pouch and the arm is winched down. The master artilleryman then strikes the pin with a hammer, launching the stone towards its target.’

Other artillery pieces used by the Roman military included the balista, which hurled stones with a flatter trajectory than the onager, whilst the catapulta, similar to a crossbow, was capable of firing iron-tipped bolts with sufficient force to penetrate armour at long distances (Figs 6, 9). A bolt fired from a catapulta can be seen in Dorchester Museum, where it remains embedded in the spine of one of the defenders of the great hill fort of Maiden Castle, captured by soldiers of Legio II Augusta, commanded by the future emperor Vespasian during the Claudian conquest of Britain. Last summer, large numbers of heavy iron bolts were also unearthed by archaeologists working near the town of Oldenrode in Saxony, at the site of a 3rd century battle fought against hostile German tribes (See Minerva, November/December, 2010, p. 4).

Roman tent leather found at Vindolanda and Carlisle provided the impetus for the Guard to reconstruct an authentic tent intended for the eight soldiers of the contubernium. In 1993, with information provided by Prof Carol van Driel-Murray of the University of Amsterdam, two society members completed the mammoth task of hand-sewing 70 goatskins together following the original waterproof stitching pattern found on the preserved fragments of Roman tent leather, a process that took about 800 hours to complete. A second goatskin tent was made some four years later, using a larger team of workers. As far as is known, these remain the only accurately hand stitched contubernia.
tents anywhere in the world, and they are an important part of the static display for the Ermine Street Guard, forming the centrepiece of the Roman army campaign camp (Fig 7). Here food is cooked over an open fire, and the public can learn more about the diet and type of rations consumed by Roman soldiers. Other replicated tools and artefacts help to explain the soldier’s daily life, with a surgeon’s set of field medical instruments of particular interest (Fig 9). A ‘touch table’ gives the public – especially enthusiastic children – the chance to handle armour and equipment (Fig 12).

Over the past 38 years The Ermine Street Guard has displayed at all the major Roman sites in Britain, including all those on Hadrian’s Wall, Richborough, Portchester, Fishbourne, Wroxeter and Caerleon, often working closely with institutions such as the English Heritage Events Unit, which usually requests the Guard appear at three or four of its Roman sites each year. The Guard also makes frequent visits to leading museums and has also marched down the hallowed steps of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, although, rather surprisingly, it has yet to display in Italy.

Members of the Guard have also appeared in many television documentaries, and have taken part in five of the highly popular Time Team archaeological programmes. During one of these, filmed at Cirencester, the newly constructed Roman crane (trispastos) lifted a half-tonne stone column on its first trial. The Guard has also been used by documentary film-makers for programmes requiring Roman military, depicting events such as the Boudiccan revolt of AD 60, the toughest challenge the Roman Army had to face in Britain during the 1st century AD. While filming a battle scene at Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire, southern England, despite the careful battle choreography, blunted weapons and lack of aggressive intent, three Celtic warriors were nevertheless accidentally injured, two receiving puncture wounds and the other suffering a concussion. One particularly striking scene involved a legionary dragging a Celtic woman by her hair through the mud, aptly illustrating the brutal discipline required of Roman soldiers and also emphasising quite clearly the superior grip of Roman hob-nailed sandals (caligae) over the footwear favoured by the women of the Iceni tribe, and indeed most of their British opponents. However, far from being glamorous, filming is highly repetitive and can cause great discomfort while filming in the rain leads to the drudgery of cleaning rusty equipment. In fact, the equipment rusts very easily, with sweaty finger marks the worst to remove. To completely deep clean and furnish a set of Legionary armour and equipment usually takes about six hours. To prevent corrosion on campaign the metals would have been smeared with olive oil or beeswax. However, the Guard is primarily dedicated to display and we can be fairly certain that the Roman field army would not have felt the need to maintain such a high standard of polish and gloss.

Now in its 40th year, The Ermine Street Guard is able to parade nearly 50 Roman legionaries, auxiliaries and cavalry, all fitted out in armour and carrying equipment and weaponry constructed to exacting standards. The Guard also publishes its own occasional periodical, Exercitus, which contains contributions from academics and society members featuring diverse articles about topics relating to Roman life, the army, military equipment and specialist reconstruction methods used.

To anyone interested in reconstructive archaeology the Guard offers a unique and absorbing opportunity to relive the life of a Roman soldier in a critical period in the development of our way of life. New members who share an interest in the aims of the society are always welcome. Full members are supplied with armour at no cost to them and are encouraged to assist in the production of Guard equipment. Associate membership is available to those who are unable to play an active role but wish to keep updated on the Roman army and support the work of the Society. Further information can be found online at www.erminestreetguard.co.uk

Mike Knowles
Cornicularius, Ermine Street Guard

The author would like to thank Chris Haines, Chairman and Centurion of The Ermine Street Guard, whose editorial in Exercitus vol. 3 no. 6 provided information for this article.
Discovered in 1996 in the city of Lod in central Israel, 15km south-east of Tel Aviv, the Lod Mosaic has already attracted considerable interest as an exceptional find (see Minerva September/October 2009 p. 5). The three most attractive and best preserved panels have recently been put on display in the John A. and Carole O. Moran Gallery for Roman art of the late imperial period (c. AD 196–312) at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where they will remain until 3 April (Fig 1). The panels are shown in the context of other contemporary works of art, both large scale sculpture (portraits and sarcophagi) and minor arts such as silverware, pottery and glass, with the intention of providing a better understanding of the Lod Mosaic from the perspective of the Roman Empire.

The mosaic comprises several panels that decorated the floor of a large room measuring some 17 x 9m. A room of such size is unlikely to have been a triclinium (dining room) but rather may be seen as an assembly hall or reception room. The ongoing excavations at the site have revealed more mosaic floors, confirming that the building was an extensive complex. It has been suggested that this was not a public building but the private house of a wealthy local, although no smaller living rooms have yet been found. Little is known about the Roman city of Lod archaeologically, and so the discovery of such a large and well appointed building came as a surprise and is helping shed new light on the economic and social history of the area during antiquity.

Much of the published discussion by various Israeli scholars has focused on the mosaic’s date and its place in the history of the medium. Analysis of the finds recovered in the fill above the mosaic led the director of the rescue excavations, Miriam Avissar, to conclude that the floor was laid in c. AD 300, and most art historians have concurred with this dating. The latter have been quick to point out that the Lod Mosaic has many similarities to Roman mosaics found in North Africa, especially those in modern Tunisia, raising the possibility that the mosaics were laid by craftsmen who trained there or who used pattern books that came from this region of North Africa. Alternatively, the patron who owned the house and commissioned the mosaics may have had close connections, business or personal, with Roman Africa.
One peculiar and distinguishing feature of the Lod Mosaic is that it contains no human figures. It abounds in scenes of hunting, and one end panel is devoted entirely to a large marine scene, but there are no images of hunters or fishermen. The two Roman merchant ships depicted on the marine panel are also devoid of any crew, although in other ways they are quite fascinating – not just because one (sadly damaged, perhaps deliberately, in antiquity) is shown with its mast broken, but also because they both have square pennants attached to their prows instead of the usual oculus (eye) or figurehead (Fig. 2). This unique feature, taken as an attempt to avoid figurative representation on the ships, has led to the suggestion that the patron may have been a well-to-do Jewish ship owner.

Preparations for the installation at The Metropolitan Museum of Art have allowed for detailed study of the mosaic and a reassessment of its meaning and significance. The Lod Mosaic’s depictions of the animal kingdom include a variety of fish, birds, and beasts. Many of these are typical scenes, commonly found in the repertoire of Roman art. Some, such as the panel with a peacock (Fig. 3), may appear simply as charming vignettes, but in the context of the whole mosaic a case can be made for seeing most, if not all, of them as relating to the exploitation of the natural world: predators are depicted alongside other creatures that can be defined as prey, game, or catch. Animals such as lions, tigers and leopards appear to be having a grand time while their prey is depicted as being hauled to the ground, wounds pouring with blood (Fig. 4). Fish are also shown not only in a basket ready for market (Fig. 5), but also swelling one another (Fig. 6). Such scenes are common in ancient art, not only on mosaics but in a variety of other media and in the display cases near the mosaic visitors to the exhibition will be able to see examples of hunting scenes on Roman silverware, gems, pottery, and glass.

These, however, are not the only images and messages the mosaic conveys to us and, presumably, was meant to impart to the people living in and visiting the Roman house. For example, between the lion and lioness sitting on table-top mountains at the back of the main scene in the central panel of the mosaic is a stretch of water containing a mythical ketos or sea monster (Fig. 7). This part of the mosaic has been interpreted as representing the mountains of Ethiopia and the headwaters of the river Nile. Although the ketos is a creature commonly depicted in ancient art, it is an unexpected addition here, amongst all the very real animals. The most famous example, perhaps, is the one on the cameo glass Portland Vase in the British Museum, but there are several representations of the creature on works in the collections at the Metropolitan Museum itself. As well as the ketos in the fresco showing the mythological scene of Perseus and Andromeda from the Roman villa at Boscotrecase, Italy, there is an example on the Eros and Psyche marble sarcophagus displayed opposite the Lod Mosaic. Below the medallion with the portrait bust of the deceased are depicted Tellus (Earth) and Oceanus (Ocean/Sea), the latter accompanied by a ketos at his feet (Fig. 8).

The other animals in the central octagonal medallion deserve special attention (Fig. 10). An attempt has been made to place them in a setting, not only by adding the mountains and the expanse of sea – perhaps meant to represent the far-distant ocean that surrounded the known world – but also ground lines or shadows below their feet. Indeed, these animals are not chasing each other, but appear to be living contentedly together in their natural surroundings. The creatures are also not those commonly found in the civilised Roman world, but are instead exotic animals from wild and remote regions. They include an
of the panther’s frequent association with Dionysus, which is illustrated by several objects in the Metropolitan Museum’s permanent on-view collection. Indeed, the famous Badminton Sarcophagus, which features Dionysus riding in triumph on the back of a female panther, is displayed in the Shelby White and Leon Levy Court, immediately in front of the Lod Mosaic (Fig 9). The inclusion of the scene with the large krater can therefore be seen as a reference to the world of Dionysiac beliefs and to the prosperity and well-being that it engendered.

Finally, each corner of the main square panel is decorated with two dolphins, facing each other to either side of a trident (Fig 12). They may simply be generic motifs, but they do seem to underline the connection with the sea, along with the ketos and the cargo ships. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to suggest that the wealthy owner of the Lod Mosaic may have made his money as a ship owner. His trade: transporting valuable wild animals from Africa and elsewhere for the spectacular animal hunting shows the Roman public enjoyed so much as part of the gladiatorial games. Why such a man should reside in a place like Lod, however, remains a mystery. As to the question of whether he was Jewish, this too cannot be answered conclusively, but it seems unlikely. If he had been, it would seem natural for him to have wished to include some overtly Jewish symbols on his expensive floor mosaics. If, however, he was a pagan, he may have decided to exclude representations of human figures in deference to his Jewish neighbours, friends, and visitors. After all, he probably had to conduct business with many local Jews.

The Lod Mosaic clearly provides the impression that the patron who commissioned the floor had bought into, prospered, and benefited from the Roman way of life. The very Roman nature of the various motifs that adorn the mosaic is best illustrated by parallels found on terracotta oil lamps. These ubiquitous and utilitarian objects were mass-produced in reusable moulds and often had figures and other designs on the central discus. A cursory survey of any corpus of Roman lamps will turn up examples decorated with scallop shells, dolphins, birds perched on branches, peacocks displaying their tail feathers, hares eating grapes, bulls, lions attacking stags or mules, leopards and panthers, elephants, and even rhinoceroses. The last is highly unusual but an example exists in the Metropolitan Museum’s own Cesnola Collection from Cyprus, and depicts a rhinoceros attacking or, perhaps, even tossing a lion or another type of large cat (Fig 13). The reason for this aggressive behaviour is explained by the small creature perched up in the tree behind the rhinoceros. This may be taken, with artistic licence, to represent a...

Fig. 6. A large predator about to eat a smaller fish on the marine panel, Lod Mosaic.

Fig. 7. The ketos flanked by a pair of lions on the octagonal medallion in the central panel, Lod Mosaic.

Roman art

After the Metropolitan Museum, the Lod Mosaic exhibition will travel to the Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (April 23–July 24, 2011), the Field Museum, Chicago, and the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio (dates to be announced) before returning to Israel. There it will be housed in the Shelby White and Leon Levy Lod Mosaic Center, which will open to the public in 2012/13. For additional information, including a video about the discovery and conservation of the mosaic, see the Metropolitan Museum’s website (www.metmuseum.org/special/index.asp) and a dedicated website created by the Israel Antiquities Authority (www.lodmosaic.org).

Photographs courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The author would like to especially thank Miriam Avissar and Jacques Neguer.

Dr Chris Lightfoot is Curator, Department of Greek and Roman Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

baby rhino that has fled there to escape the lion. The appearance of such motifs on objects as cheap and mundane as mould-made lamps demonstrates that there was a repertoire of popular subjects shared throughout the empire, at almost every level of society. The fortuitous survival of the Lod Mosaic, its careful excavation and skilful conservation, and its present display to the public, allow us a new insight into the pervasiveness of Roman art.
In a prominent location near the ruins of the medieval abbey of Valle Crucis, near Llangollen in north-east Wales, on a mound of unknown date, stands a fragment of a 9th-century AD cross-shaft (Figs 1, 3). This unique monument is one of the most important sites for the history of early medieval Wales and the Borders, for two reasons. First, it is a rare example of part of an early medieval stone sculpture that is still situated at, or very close to, its original place of erection. Second, although now barely visible, until the 17th century it bore a long Latin inscription explaining who erected it and why. Although fragmentary, the Latin inscription was transcribed accurately by the famous Welsh antiquary Edward Lhwyd (1660–1709). It says that the cross was erected by Concenn (otherwise known as Cyngen), the last king of early medieval Powys, who died in AD 854. The text also states that the cross commemorates Concenn’s great grandfather Eliseg, who it claims had driven out the English from the area ‘with his sword by fire’. Eliseg may have been a contemporary of the great Mercian king Offa (r. 757–796) whose famous linear earthwork (Offa’s Dyke) runs only 9.5km to the east of the Pillar. Hostile relations between Powys and Mercia may have prompted the Dyke’s construction. The inscription also traces back the origins of the kingdom to Eliseg’s ancestors, who (according to the text) included the Roman emperor Magnus Maximus (r. c. AD 383–388) and the legendary Dark Age ruler Vortigern. Concenn was therefore not only associating his kingship with the military successes of his great-grandfather; through this text he was portraying himself as heir to the kingdom of Britain (including all those lands lost to the English) and to the imperial purple. The cross had fallen in the 17th century, although it was re-erected in 1779 by a local squire, who also dug the mound and reputedly found a stone cist with a skeleton interred with a silver coin (Fig 2). However, the report is unreliable and the bones and artefacts have not survived, and the monument has subsequently received no further archaeological research. Today, the site is a tourist attraction, yet little is known about the archaeological context of the Latin inscription. It has been speculated that the mound was a prehistoric monument, or perhaps even the tomb of Eliseg himself.

Recently, as part of her research into the early medieval inscribed stones and stone sculpture from Wales, Prof Nancy Edwards has reinterpreted the text and the monument as political propaganda by the kings of Powys, at a time when their rule was under threat by their Anglo-Saxon and Welsh neighbours. She even suggests that the text, reading like a legal document and using an antiquated script and phraseology, and with its focus on the myths, legends and genealogy of Powys’ ruler, was concerned with legitimising landclaims and territory. She suggests that the cross and mound may have been the focal point of an early medieval assembly site, and, drawing on analogies with Scottish and Irish sites, tentatively speculates that it could have been the royal inauguration site for the kings of Powys. If so, the monument never fulfilled this role, owing to the death of Concenn, the rise to power of the rival kingdom of Gwynedd, and
the chaos that ensued with the arrival of the Vikings in the 9th century. Project Eliseg aims to test this hypothesis through new fieldwork, focusing on revealing more about the mound and its immediate context. To this end, the Universities of Chester and Durham carried out geophysical and ground survey work in 2008, and this hinted at extensive features in the area round the mound. The 2010 sea-
son of Project Eliseg aimed to inves-
tigate the mound and the immediate area as well as to prepare for conserva-
tion work to the mound to consolidate areas damaged by visitors and livestock (Fig 4).
So what was found? Most of the mound is formed by a stone cairn sur-
rounded by a fine kerb of large slate slabs and rounded boulders (Figs 5, 6, 7). In the virtual absence of finds, and without proof from digging the mound itself, this looks like a well preserved Early Bronze Age monument. The area of the 18th-century trench has been tentatively identified, and it is hoped that next year we can re-excavate it so as to look at the make-up of the mound and date its construction.
The advantage of research excavation of this type is that the work can proceed slowly and Cadw, the historic environment service of the Welsh Assembly Government, has been very support-
ive, granting the project permission to excavate this scheduled ancient monu-
ment and reveal the mound, but not to dig into it. More answers might emerge from next year’s work, but the first sea-
son of Project Eliseg suggests that the cross was located to mirror the lengthy genealogy of its Latin text. Eliseg’s memory was enshrined with the aura of hallowed antiquity by placing the cross on a prominent mound already thousands of years old.
The 2010 field season was success-
ful in offering field experience to archaeology students from Bangor and Chester and the open day at the end of the dig attracted over 300 visi-
tors (Figs 8, 9). The aim is to return to the Pillar for further excavations in 2011.

Project Eliseg is co-directed by Prof Nancy Edwards and Dr Gary Robinson of Bangor University, together with Professors Dai Morgan Evans and Howard Williams of the University of Chester. More information about the project and the 2010 excavations can be found at www.projecteliseg.org and on the excavation blog on Llangollen Museum’s Facebook page. Project Eliseg is grateful to Cadw, the University of Wales, the University of Chester and Bangor University for financial assistance and to Cadw and Abbey Farm for permission to excavate on the site.
Visitors to Milan’s Palazzo Reale have the opportunity to admire masterpieces of Islamic art that have not been on display for 16 years. ‘Al-Fann: Arte della Civiltà Islamica’ (‘Al-Fann: The Arts of Islam’) includes a selection of magnificent objects from the al-Sabah collection of Islamic art, part of which was last displayed in 1994 in Florence, at Palazzo Vecchio.

The original al-Sabah collection was first unveiled to the public on 23 February 1983 (Kuwait’s National Day), with a lavish opening ceremony attended by more than 300 leading scholars, collectors and dealers in the fields of Islamic art. The consensus of opinion was that Kuwait had acquired a collection of Islamic art comparable to – and in some respects even surpassing – older collections such as those of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Louvre in Paris, the Metropolitan in New York, the Islamic Museum in Cairo and the David Collection in Copenhagen. Florence was one of the venues for ‘Islamic Art and Patronage. Treasures from Kuwait’ , a travelling exhibition that opened in 1990 at the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg two days after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The exhibition included treasures from the original al-Sabah collection, on permanent loan to the Kuwait National Museum, and 107 of the collection’s most important objects were thus saved from the looting that accompanied the Iraqi invasion. Over the next 13 years the exhibition was staged at more than 23 museums around the world, during which time a number of the stolen objects were recovered and returned to their lawful Kuwaiti owners. Others were identified when they were offered on auction and also returned. However, 57 objects, mainly gems – one a large and precious Mughal carved emerald regarded as one of the most important in the world for its scale, scope and quality – are still missing. ‘Al Fann: The arts of Islam’ allows the general public to see some 350 outstanding objects, and provides a foretaste of the core of the collection of the new museum in Kuwait City, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI; ‘House of Islamic antiquities’), scheduled to be completed in 2012. The collection will rival those currently on display in the museums of Islamic art inaugurated in recent years in the Qatari capital of Doha, and in Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization in the United Arab Emirates.

Collecting begun in the 1960s, when Sheikh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah was a student in Jerusalem. There he developed an appreciation for the work of Muslim craftsmen over the centuries, and what began as a private hobby with a first important piece – a splendid Mamluk enamelled glass bottle of the 14th century AD, acquired in...
1975 in London – grew to encompass all aspects of the arts of the Islamic world. The collection now includes pieces in all media, from wood to ceramics, from manuscripts to metalwork and numismatics, covering all periods and geographical areas. The collection comprises more than 20,000 objects, and additions are continually made with the help of Sheikh Nasser's wife Sheikha Hussah Sabah Salem al-Sabah, a scholar in Islamic art in her own right and Director of the DAI from its inception.

The collection was built up during visits to the historic cities of the world of Islam, with She discarding: ‘...we travelled the world together with this passion, sometimes finding Mamluk cooking pots in the suq, as we did in Yemen, or Syrian candlesticks in Delhi that turned out to be invaluable once we wiped away the grime and saw their special stamps and inscriptions. The items talked to us. There was a constant dialogue between me and the objects. And you should see my husband – he talks to them, too. He even gives them names!' Sheikh Nasser’s enthusiasm is not limited to Islamic art – he collects ancient artefacts which provide artistic antecedents for the development of the arts in the countries of the Muslim world, and has a keen interest in the archaeology of his country, particularly that of Failaka island (ancient Ikaros, referred to in the Geography of Strabo written at the beginning of the 1st century AD). The island lies 26km to the east of Kuwait City and has a history that stretches back to the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC. Excavations have been carried out here almost every year since the mid 1950s and have revealed Dilmun, Hellenistic, Nestorian and Islamic sites. Another line of research Sheikh Nasser shares with his wife is the charting of ancient maritime routes from Kuwait, which led down the Arabian Gulf and out into the Indian Ocean, with ancient and medieval sailors able to traverse the Indian ocean on the monsoon winds, reaching the east coast of Africa, as well as trading cities on the shores of India and as far as Indonesia.

The exhibition in Milan is arranged chronologically and thematically, and sections are devoted to calligraphy, geometry, a spectacular display of jewellery (Fig 2), and arabesque artwork with its intricate patterns. Also on show are wonderful examples of figurative art, exemplified by manuscript illustrations of the very highest quality, as well as paintings on glass and ceramics, clearly demonstrating that non-religious figurative art has existed in Islam throughout its history. This exhibition is focused not only on the general public, but also aims to provide a complete overview of Islamic art as a whole. It includes artefacts of many types, originating from all over the
Islamic world, from Spain to China, produced over a period of 1500 years, from the early Umayyad dynasty in the Near East and in Spain (Fig 1), to the great Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal empires in Turkey, Persia and India. Alongside the striking artefacts on display, others are included to illustrate the lesser-known aspects of a multi-faceted culture, particularly aspects of scientific knowledge and technical skills which, for many centuries, were well in advance of the understanding of the contemporary West. An astrolabe, made in Baghdad by Muhammad ibn Abdallah (known in the West as Master Nastalus), is the oldest dated such instrument (AD 927–8). There are also related treatises on the making and use of astrolabes of the 11–13th centuries, from Turkey and Iran, as well as pages of manuscripts concerning astrology and medicine, for example a page from De Materia Medica, the medical treatise originally written in Greek by Dioscorides during the 1st century AD. The text is translated into Arabic and provided with lavish illustrations (Baghdad, 13th century AD).

Further proof of the technical mastery of Muslim craftsmen are the beautifully decorated ceramics, enamelled glass and inlaid metalwork before the conquests of Alexander the Great. The extraordinary quality of the objects produced in this geographical area is evidenced by many objects on view, among them a metal ewer 50cm high, pierced, engraved and signed (Fig. 12). It is unfortunate that the Italian excavations at the Islamic site of Ghazni, eastern Afghanistan, carried out more than 50 years ago, have not as yet been properly published. The Museum of Oriental art in Rome also has only a handful of the large collection of 10th-century marbles excavated at the site on display.

In the introduction to the museum catalogue, it is stressed by the curator, Prof Giovanni Curatola, that an important aspect of this exhibition was to attempt to kindle interest and a respect for Islamic culture among the Italian public at a time of increasing tension between local and immigrant communities within the country. The influence of Islamic culture was also felt in medieval Sicily, flourishing during almost three centuries of Muslim rule, while under Norman control (which began to be exerted in 1060 and lasted through until 1194) unique works of art were produced in a cosmopolitan environment that meshed Western and Eastern influences. Furthermore, it has an extraordinary number of neglected Islamic objects with impeccable pedigrees in its museums and church treasuries which warrant closer study and proper conservation and display. Prof Curatola is also the author of the essays in the catalogue, which weave discussions of the objects on display into the framework of a detailed history of Islamic art and the culture that produced it. Thus the catalogue serves as an accurate and readable introduction to the diversity and unity of the arts of Islam, both for specialists and the general public. 

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Only around 3200 tigers currently survive in the wild, and conservationists have asked: when the next Chinese Year of the Tiger comes around in 2022, will there be any tigers left? In November 2010, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin hosted the International Tiger Conservation Forum in St Petersburg, which was attended by representatives from the 13 tiger range countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam) and high-level representatives from other nations. The summit capped a year-long process led by the tiger range countries to agree on how to double the number of wild tigers by 2022. As part of this global drive to save the highly endangered species, Asia House is hosting a major new exhibition, ‘The Tiger in Asian Art’, which runs until 12 February.

Through the exhibition, factual displays and a series of informative events, Asia House aims to galvanise public support and motivate people to take action to save the tiger. Featuring stunning interpretations of this endangered species through the ages, ‘The Tiger in Asian Art’ connects fine and contemporary art spanning the last 3000 years with an urgent environmental issue. The exhibition includes loans from The British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig 2), as well as several private collections, and includes rare Asian paintings, sculptures, textiles and photographs, many previously unseen.

The exhibition’s curators, Katriana Hazell and Zara Fleming, have assembled works dating from the 1st century BC to the modern and contemporary periods, with exhibits originating from China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Burma and the Mongolian steppes. Focusing on the cultural and spiritual significance of the tiger to these diverse cultures, ‘The Tiger in Asian Art’ highlights the important role this creature has played, and continues to play, in the human psyche.

The tiger is important as a symbol of power and protection throughout Asia. The exhibition reveals the way in
which the tiger is feared, revered and used as a vital and enduring symbol. The tiger’s significance is explored in five themes: as a protector, a spiritual power, a material power, a hunted animal and a species in decline.

For the people of Asia, the tiger is an enduring and powerful symbol of cultural identity. During the Han Dynasty (206 BC – AD 220), the Chinese believed the tiger to be the king of beasts. According to legend, the tiger’s tail would turn white when it reached the age of 500 years. The white tiger would only appear when the emperor ruled with absolute virtue, or if there was peace throughout the world. In Chinese belief, the colour white also represented the west; the White Tiger therefore became a mythological guardian of the West, corresponding with the Green Dragon of the East, the Vermilion Bird of the South, and the Black Warrior ‘Tortoise and Snake’ of the North. The exhibition includes an exquisite silver appliqué tiger (Fig 2), part of a set comprising the animals of the four compass points and a Taoist figure. These were probably originally pinned to the sides and lid of a box. The appliqué, which was made during the Liao dynasty (AD 907–1125), founded by the semi-nomadic Khitan tribe who originated from the area north of China, would have been an object of high status, possibly playing a protective role in a tomb.

Several other ancient artefacts included in the exhibition relate to the tiger’s role as a protector. During the first millennium BC, nomadic craftsmen in the Ordos area of northwestern China made decorative plaques to adorn garments and horse harnesses that invariably featured animal decoration. A bronze example depicting a tiger with elegant incised wings (Fig 3) would have served to protect the wearer and his flocks from danger. Belt hooks have been found in Chinese tombs dating to as early as the Eastern Zhou period (770–221 BC). Belts would have been needed to hold up trousers or long robes when on horseback, and a bronze belt hook in the form of a spirited tiger (Fig 4) would have had an additional symbolic function: to protect the wearer from harm. The incised features of the tiger’s fur are typical of the 1st century Han dynasty, when chased ornamentation replaced the richly inlaid and gilded bronzes of the Western Han.

In ancient China, a tally (fu) was a practical and ceremonial object made of two matching parts. It was assigned to an important person as a representation of authority or identification. One part was held in a certain location and the other was matched against it when verification was necessary. Tiger tallies (hufu) made of bronze, like the example included here (Fig 5), which dates to 206 BC – 220 AD, were used by the highest ranking military officers and had the added benefit of protection. During the Han Dynasty, protective tigers adorned weapons, funerary jars and numerous everyday objects such as bronze boxes (Fig 7), which would have contained trinkets, sweetmeats or precious possessions, and would have been used both during the life of the owner and in the tomb. Other objects used during life accompanied their owner after death, where they would continue to provide protection from evil spirits, and it is difficult not to form the opinion that ceramic pillows used as neck supports, such as the Cizhou stoneware example in the shape of a tiger (Fig 6), would have granted more comfortable rest to the dead than to the living.

The Chinese character wang (wáng), which means ‘king’, resembles the markings on the forehead of a tiger, and many cartoon depictions of tigers in China and Korea are drawn with wang on their forehead. In Buddhism, the tiger is also one of the Three Senseless Creatures, symbolising anger; the monkey represents greed, and the deer lovesickness. As one of the spirits that

Fig 3. Bronze tiger plaque, Ordos area, 1st century BC – 2nd century AD. Courtesy of The British Museum.


Fig 5. Tiger tally, bronze, China, Han Dynasty (206 BC – AD 220). Courtesy of The British Museum, bequeathed by Brenda Zara Seligman.

Fig 6. Tiger pillow, stoneware, China, Song dynasty (AD 960–1279). Courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Fig 7. Tiger box, gilt bronze, China, Eastern Han Dynasty (1st – 2nd century AD). Courtesy of Carson Kohle.
Asian art

presided over the four ‘quadrants’ of the universe to ward off evil, the tiger also corresponded with a season – autumn, and a specific ‘element’ – metal. Under the system of geomancy or feng shui, which translates as ‘wind water’, the universe is controlled by the two complementary yet opposing forces of wind and water, also known as yin and yang. The tiger represents the dark, feminine yin, whilst its counterpart the dragon symbolises the light, masculine yang (see Minerva, November/December 2010, pp. 42–45). Various artworks depict a dragon and tiger fighting an epic battle, whilst some depictions fuse the two creatures into a beast of unparalleled power (Fig 9).

A common Chinese idiom, often used to describe rivals in sporting contests, is ‘Dragon versus Tiger’, whilst in martial arts, ‘dragon style’ is used to describe styles of fighting based more on understanding movement, while ‘tiger style’ is based on brute strength and memorisation of techniques.

Tigers were revered and mythologised elsewhere in Asia. The Tungusic people considered the Siberian tiger a near-deity and often referred to it as ‘Grandfather’ or ‘Old man’. The Udege and Nanai called it ‘Amba’. The Sanskrit for tiger is *vyaghra* – a word that has been irretrievably adopted by the marketeers of the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer. The widely worshiped Hindu goddess Durga, an aspect of Devi-Parvati, is a ten-armed warrior who rides the tigress (or lioness) Damon into battle. In southern India the god Ayyappan was associated with a tiger. The weretiger replaces the werewolf in shapeshifting folklore in Asia; in India they were often depicted as evil sorcerers, while in Indonesia and Malaysia they were somewhat more benign.

In ancient India, the sealing was an essential tool of state administration, acting as a mark of authentication, like a signature, whilst also serving as a passport, talisman, amulet and votive offering. A seal impression on a clay disc (Fig 11), dating from the Gupta dynasty, 4th – 6th century AD, depicts an armed warrior with a tiger or lion. It is inscribed Bharatasya, meaning ‘from India’, in the Gupta Brahmi script.

Dating from the modern period, a highlight of the exhibition is Tiger in a Snowstorm (Fig 8), a stunning work by the celebrated Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), which was painted in his 90th and final year. Showing an aged tiger battling through deep snow, in the midst of a blizzard, the painting is reminiscent of Hokusai’s own situation in the winter of his life. Although physically weak, the artist was said to be spiritually strong and imbued with the inner strength of a charging tiger. Other key works include a striking Bengali pata (scroll painting) showing a pregnant woman being guarded by tigers whilst she sleeps (Fig 10).

‘The Tiger in Asian Art’ runs at Asia House, 63 New Cavendish Street, London, W1G 7LP, until 12 February. Asia House is the leading pan-Asian organisation in the UK, and exists to build dynamic links with Asia, providing insights into culture, policy, business and education. Asia House is a non-profit, non-political organisation. For more information, please call 020 7307 5454 or visit www.asiahouse.org.
Only around 3200 tigers currently survive in the wild, and conservationists have asked: when the next Chinese Year of the Tiger comes around in 2022, will there be any tigers left? In November 2010, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin hosted the International Tiger Conservation Forum in St Petersburg, which was attended by representatives from the 13 tiger range countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam) and high-level representatives from other nations. The summit capped a year-long process led by the tiger range countries to agree on how to double the number of wild tigers by 2022. As part of this global drive to save the highly endangered species, Asia House is hosting a major new exhibition, ‘The Tiger in Asian Art’, which runs until 12 February.

Through the exhibition, factual displays and a series of informative events, Asia House aims to galvanise public support and motivate people to take action to save the tiger. Featuring stunning interpretations of this endangered species through the ages, ‘The Tiger in Asian Art’ connects fine and contemporary art spanning the last 3000 years with an urgent environmental issue. The exhibition includes loans from The British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig 2), as well as several private collections, and includes rare Asian paintings, sculptures, textiles and photographs, many previously unseen.

The exhibition’s curators, Katriana Hazell and Zara Fleming, have assembled works dating from the 1st century BC to the modern and contemporary periods, with exhibits originating from China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Burma and the Mongolian steppes. Focusing on the cultural and spiritual significance of the tiger to these diverse cultures, ‘The Tiger in Asian Art’ highlights the important role this creature has played, and continues to play, in the human psyche.

The tiger is important as a symbol of power and protection throughout Asia. The exhibition reveals the way in which the tiger has been celebrated through depictions from 3000 years of Asian art. By Sophie Mackenzie
which the tiger is feared, revered and used as a vital and enduring symbol. The tiger’s significance is explored in five themes: as a protector, a spiritual power, a material power, a hunted animal and a species in decline.

For the people of Asia, the tiger is an enduring and powerful symbol of cultural identity. During the Han Dynasty (206 BC – AD 220), the Chinese believed the tiger to be the king of beasts. According to legend, the tiger’s tail would turn white when it reached the age of 500 years. The white tiger would only appear when the emperor ruled with absolute virtue, or if there was peace throughout the world. In Chinese belief, the colour white also represented the west; the White Tiger therefore became a mythological guardian of the West, corresponding with the Green Dragon of the East, the Vermilion Bird of the South, and the Black Warrior ‘Tortoise and Snake’ of the North. The exhibition includes an exquisite silver appliqué tiger (Fig 2), part of a set comprising the animals of the four compass points and a Taoist figure. These were probably originally pinned to the sides and lid of a box. The appliqué, which was made during the Liao dynasty (AD 907–1125), founded by the semi-nomadic Khitan tribe who originated from the area north of China, would have been an object of high status, possibly playing a protective role in a tomb.

Several other ancient artefacts included in the exhibition relate to the tiger’s role as a protector. During the first millennium BC, nomadic craftsmen in the Ordos area of north western China made decorative plaques to adorn garments and horse harness that invariably featured animal decoration. A bronze example depicting a tiger with elegant incised wings (Fig 3) would have served to protect the wearer and his flocks from danger. Belt hooks have been found in Chinese tombs dating to as early as the Eastern Zhou period (770–221 BC). Belts would have been needed to hold up trousers or long robes when on horseback, and a bronze belt hook in the form of a spirited tiger (Fig 4) would have had an additional symbolic function: to protect the wearer from harm. The incised features of the tiger’s fur are typical of the 1st century Han dynasty, when chased ornamentation replaced the richly inlaid and gilded bronzes of the Western Han.

In ancient China, a tally (fu) was a practical and ceremonial object made of two matching parts. It was assigned to an important person as a representation of authority or identification. One part was held in a certain location and the other was matched against it when verification was necessary. Tiger tallies (hufu) made of bronze, like the example included here (Fig 5), which dates to 206 BC – 220 AD, were used by the highest ranking military officers and had the added benefit of protection. During the Han Dynasty, protective tigers adorned weapons, funerary jars and numerous everyday objects such as bronze boxes (Fig 7), which would have contained trinkets, sweetmeats or precious possessions, and would have been used both during the life of the owner and in the tomb. Other objects used during life accompanied their owner after death, where they would continue to provide protection from evil spirits, and it is difficult not to form the opinion that ceramic pillows used as neck supports, such as the Cizhou stoneware example in the shape of a tiger (Fig 6), would have granted more comfortable rest to the dead than to the living.

The Chinese character 王 (wáng), which means ‘king’, resembles the markings on the forehead of a tiger, and many cartoon depictions of tigers in China and Korea are drawn with 王 on their forehead. In Buddhism, the tiger is also one of the Three Senseless Creatures, symbolising anger; the monkey represents greed, and the deer lovesickness. As one of the spirits that
presided over the four ‘quadrants’ of the universe to ward off evil, the tiger also corresponded with a season – autumn, and a specific ‘element’ – metal. Under the system of geomancy or feng shui, which translates as ‘wind water’, the universe is controlled by the two complementary yet opposing forces of wind and water, also known as yin and yang. The tiger represents the dark, feminine yin, whilst its counterpart the dragon symbolises the light, masculine yang (see *Minerva*, November/December 2010, pp. 42–45). Various artworks depict a dragon and tiger fighting an epic battle, whilst some depictions fuse the two creatures into a beast of unparalleled power (Fig 9).

A common Chinese idiom, often used to describe rivals in sporting contests, is ‘Dragon versus Tiger’, whilst in martial arts, ‘dragon style’ is used to describe styles of fighting based more on understanding movement, while ‘tiger style’ is based on brute strength and memorisation of techniques.

Tigers were revered and mythologised elsewhere in Asia. The Tungusic people considered the Siberian tiger a near-deity and often referred to it as ‘Grandfather’ or ‘Old man’. The Udege and Nanai called it ‘Amba’. The Sanskrit for tiger is *vyaghra* – a word that has been irretrievably adopted by the marketers of the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer. The widely worshiped Hindu goddess Durga, an aspect of Devi-Parvati, is a ten-armed warrior who rides the tigress (or lioness) Damon into battle. In southern India the god Ayyappan was associated with a tiger. The weretiger replaces the werewolf in shapeshifting folklore in Asia; in India they were often depicted as evil sorcerers, while in Indonesia and Malaysia they were somewhat more benign.

In ancient India, the sealing was an essential tool of state administration, acting as a mark of authentication, like a signature, whilst also serving as a passport, talisman, amulet and votive offering. A seal impression on a clay disc (Fig 11), dating from the Gupta dynasty, 4th – 6th century AD, depicts an armed warrior with a tiger or lion. It is inscribed Bharatasya, meaning ‘from India’, in the Gupta Brahmi script.

Dating from the modern period, a highlight of the exhibition is Tiger in a Snow Storm (Fig 8), a stunning work by the celebrated Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), which was painted in his 90th and final year. Showing an aged tiger battling through deep snow, in the midst of a blizzard, the painting is reminiscent of Hokusai’s own situation in the winter of his life. Although physically weak, the artist was said to be spiritually strong and imbued with the inner strength of a charging tiger. Other key works include a striking Bengali pata (scroll painting) showing a pregnant woman being guarded by tigers whilst she sleeps (Fig 10).

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Life, Death, Resurrection

Mark Merrony looks at the reality that lies beneath the enduring and chilling legend of Count Dracula

Michel Beheim's poem is evocative of the legendary character created by Bram Stoker (Fig 4) in his masterpiece of Victorian Gothic literature, *Dracula*, in 1897. It portrays a man who is bloodthirsty, evil, and satanic. The extraordinary truth is that it describes a real character whose reign of terror was enacted in the same region as the legendary vampire Count 450 years before the publication of Stoker's novel. The fascinating link between the Dracula of fact and fiction has naturally attracted a great deal of curiosity, and scholars of medieval history have argued about the extent to which Dracula was based on a real character (Figs 1, 3).

This interesting topic is certainly worth revisiting, but the focus of this article is to paint a picture of the historical Dracula. Documents, oral tradition and archaeology combine to form a picture of the evil that characterised his life, and the curious events surrounding his death, burial and ‘resurrection’.

Dracula reigned as Voivod (Prince) of Wallachia in modern Romania in 1448, 1456–62 and 1476. Three documents record that the Voivod signed his name as ‘Dracula’ or ‘Draculea’, and a rare painting has a Latin caption: ‘Dracula, voevod of Transapline Wallachia, the most fearsome foe of the Turks’. Also known by the sobriquet ‘The Impaler’ by the Turks, Romanian writers later called him ‘Tepes’ – ‘The Impaler’. His father, Vlad II Dracul, was known as such after his investiture into the Order of the Dragon in 1431, founded in 1408 by Sigismund, King of Hungary (r. 1387–1437) and later Holy Roman Emperor, to crusade against the Ottoman Turks. It is curious that ‘Dracul’ deriving from Latin ‘Draco’ for ‘dragon’, in its shorter Romanian form, ‘Drac’ also means devil. The association between the dragon and the devil is referred to in the New Testament Book of Revelation, ‘The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the devil or Satan, who had led all the world astray’ (12:9) and ‘the dragon, that primeval serpent which is the devil and Satan’ (20:2). The synonymy between devil and dragon is at the root of the Triumph of Good over Evil in medieval literature, notably the tale of George and the Dragon (see Minerva, November/December 2010, pp. 42–44). Adding suffix ‘a’ to ‘Dracul’ – ‘Dracula’ – means ‘son of the dragon’ or ‘son of the devil’ in Wallachian.

To return to the association between the historical Dracula and Count Dracula, M.J. Trow (2003) has suggested a similarity between the description of the facial attributes of both: in Chapter II of *Dracula* and the eyewitness account of the papal legate to the king of Hungary, Niccolò Modrussa, c. 1470. A breakthrough occurred in 1972 when R.T. McNally discovered Bram Stoker’s working papers for *Dracula* in the Rosenbach Museum, Philadelphia. The documents attest to Stoker’s knowledge of Vlad Dracula, which came from a book by W. Wilkinson, *Account of the Principalities*.
Medieval history

of Wallachia and Moldavia (1820). One passage reads: ‘Dracula in Wallachian language means Devil. Wallachians were accustomed to give it as a surname to any person who rendered himself conspicuous by courage, cruel actions, or cunning.’ A second passage refers to the Wallachian-Turkish conflict of 1448: ‘…Their Voivode [Dracula] crossed the Danube and attacked Turkish troops…’ (18–19). Thus in Dracula Professor Van Helsing described the Count as ‘that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk… if it be so, then was he no common man; for in that time, and for centuries after, he was spoken of as the cleverest and the most cunning…’ (291). E. Miller (1998) published an article that refuted a comprehensive link between the two characters. However, she does concede that the Rosenbach papers ‘prove conclusively that he did know about the existence of the Voivode Dracula. While this is certainly the case, nothing in Dracula appears to indicate that the author was party to any of the late medieval manuscripts detailing the cruel and bloodthirsty activities of the 15th century Prince.

It is ironic that the success of Dracula after its publication, and the posthumous short story Dracula’s Guest (1914), inspired productions on the stage and screen that project Dracula as a bloodthirsty, cruel, and often satanic aristocrat. Bram Stoker’s widow Florence permitted the first adaptation, produced in 1924 by Hamilton Deane, starring Raymond Huntley as Count Dracula. The play toured Britain before performances in London and Broadway in 1927 (Fig 3). In 1922 Max Schreck played the eerie Count Orlock (Dracula) in the silent classic Nosferatu, directed by Felix Murnau. Less than a decade later came the first talkie, Dracula (1931) portrayed by Bela Lugosi (Fig 5) – for many the archetypal Count – directed and produced by Tod Browning. Francis Ford Coppola’s Dracula (1992) was a sensual adaptation of the original novel, albeit with a stronger link to the historical Prince. Sir Christopher Lee’s portrayals of Count Dracula as a blood/woman-lusting vampire in a series of seven enigmatic Hammer productions (1958–73), present the Count as bloodthirsty, satanic, and resurrected – aspects that take us full circle to the real Dracula.

Vlad Dracula has been back in vogue over the past few decades, notably in The Historian (2005) by E. Kostova. This drew on a fluid interplay between Vlad and Count Dracula, perhaps inspired in part by primary information in the excellent publications by R.T. McNally and R.R. Florescu (1972, 1989) and K.W. Treptow (2000). These provide a crucial insight into the character and deeds of a man we may consider the most evil since Nero.

In a political sense Dracula was born in the wrong place at the wrong time: Transylvania and Wallachia were sandwiched between the westward expanding Ottoman Empire, and the Kingdom of Hungary – spearhead of the Holy Roman Empire. Both powers would influence his life and shape his morality. In 1442, his father was forced to cut a deal with Sultan Murad II after being tricked into captivity by the Sultan in Gallipoli and later released, Dracula and his younger brother Radu were taken as hostages. Mircea, the eldest son, fortuitously remained at home. Dracula swore on oath not to take up arms against the Ottomans, an annual tribute of 10,000 gold ducats, and the devsirme – the provision of male youths to be trained as janissaries, the crack troops of the Ottoman army. Dracula and Radu were taken to the fortress of the ‘crooked eyes’ in Egrigoz, Tokat (probably the Byzantine castle), then to the palace of Murad in Edirne, where they received an academic and martial education. Greek chronicler Laonic Chalkondyles provided subtle speculation that Radu succumbed to the sexual advances of the future Sultan Mehmed during this time. Opinions suggest that the impact of this on Vlad, together with paternal
betrayal, forged his later cruelty.

In 1447 Dracula’s father, Vlad II Dracul, was overthrown by the talented military strategist John Hunyadi – regent of Hungary and Voivod of Transylvania – and decapitated by Vladislav II of the rival Danesti clan, supported by Wallachian Boyars (aristocrats). Mircea was blinded and buried alive in the Wallachian capital of Targoviste – another possible explanation for Dracula’s harsh character.

Obligations of tribute and devsirme made it expedient for Dracula to be made Voivod of Wallachia in 1448, to counter the aspirations of Hunyadi, who had deposed Dracula after a short reign and reinstalled Vladislav. The key to understanding unfolding events is the complex political and religious situation in the region. Dracula, as an Orthodox Christian under the patronage of Constantinople, was placed in a difficult position after the fall of the Byzantine capital in 1453. This heralded the infusion of Catholicism under the influence of Hunyadi and his son Matthias Corvinus. Thus, the well-documented punishments meted out by Dracula were essentially anti-Catholic and anti-Boyar – vengeance in response to the collusion of Wallachian aristocrats against his father and himself. By extension, he was also anti-Saxon. To complicate matters, a feud in Hungary ensured a bitter division between the Hunyadis and the Habsburg King. Ladislas Posthumous supported by the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick III – an ally of the Transylvanian Saxons. In a further twist, Dracula seized the Wallachian throne through an alliance with Hunyadi and the Ottomans in 1456. He must have taken delight in hacking Vladislav to death in hand-to-hand combat.

Dracula’s second reign as Voivod may best described as a reign of terror. Primary and oral accounts of events enacted against Boyars, Catholics, Saxons, Turks, and others, are so numerous that it is necessary to treat them selectively. The principal sources include the Russian manuscript, MS 11/1088 (The Tale of Warlord Dracula) in the Saltykov-Schredin Public Library, St Petersburg; German stories, MS 806 at the Monastery of St Gall, Switzerland (both late 15th century); and the poem of Michele Beheim, Story of a Bloodthirsty Madman Called Dracula of Wallachia (1463). This, and other material, was circulated in pamphlets in the late 15th century, especially in Germanic Europe, illustrated with gory woodcuts (Fig 6). A series of Romanian folk tales handed down by word of mouth have been diligently recorded and translated by McNally and Floreşcu. There is a broad area of agreement between all sources but a difference in the political perspectives of each: folk hero in Romanian accounts, strong leader in Russian narratives, anti-Saxon in German stories. The concordance of violence that binds them together is sobering. Impalement was mentioned in the 5th century BC by Herodotus in his chronicle of the reign of Achaemenid king Darius: Herodotus: ‘Thus Babylon was taken a second time, and when Darius was master of the Babylonians... he impaled about three thousand men that were prominent among them...’ (The Histories, 3.159.1). Impalement is depicted on the great Assyrian reliefs in the British Museum (Fig 8). Crucifixion aside, death by impalement is perhaps the cruelest of all deaths, as L. Worley (1995) describes: ‘...the thrusting of a long stake or shaft through the anus... through the intestines to the diaphragm muscle. The naked victim was then hoisted upward and the pole fixed in the ground. Subsequent writhing eventually forced the stake upward to pierce the heart, causing death... Even after death, the impaling process continued, with gravity often causing the stake to exit through the mouth.’ A woodcut depicts variants of this technique and illustrated a pamphlet published by Matthias Hupnuff in Strasbourg (1500). This describes the impalement of Saxons in Brasov, Transylvania: ‘...and under them he proceeded to eat at the table and get his joy that way’ (Fig 6).

In 1459 the Ottoman threat prompted Pope Pius II to request a crusade at the Congress of Mantua. Dracula proved his zeal by taking the fight to the Turks with no regional support. First, he withheld tribute payments to the Sultan. In response, his chief falconer Hamsa Bey and the Byzantine renegade Thomas Catavolinos embarked on a mission to capture Dracula in the winter of 1461. The Voivod was calculatingly lured to a fortress in Giurgiu on the Romanian Danube but sprang a surprise attack, routing the Turkish contingent. Hamsa Bey and Catavolinos were taken back to Targoviste and impaled, together with many others. Dracula then attacked Ottoman territory along the
In a letter addressed to Corvinus he described the number of those killed as being 23,884 Turks and Bulgarians… In the same letter Dracula added, ‘Your Majesty [Mehmed] should know that we have broken our peace with [the Turks]…’ Mehmed responded by invading Wallachia in the spring of 1462 with a massive force. One of several skirmishes was the famous Night Attack on the Sultan’s camp on 17 June – essentially a failed assassination attempt but an engagement that still inflicted as many as 15,000 casualties. This did not prevent the Sultan advancing further, but something more ominous did. Chalkondyles recounts that:

‘The [sultan’s] army came across a field with stakes, on about three miles long and one mile wide. And there were large stakes on which they could see the impaled bodies of men, women and children, about twenty thousand of them… The [sultan] himself in wonder, kept saying that he could not conquer the country of a man who could do such terrible and unnatural things and put his power and his subjects to such use…’ (Book IX).

Mehmed apparently marched home but appointed Radu to take up the fight on his behalf, and proclaimed him Bey of Wallachia.Besieged in Poenari Castle – the real Castle Dracula – Vlad managed to escape. To pacify the Turks, Corvinus arrested Dracula in Wallachia and imprisoned him first in Alba Iulia in Transylvania, and thereafter at the castle of Visegrad near Buda in Hungary, where he was held until 1475. A pragmatic alliance between Corvinus and Voivod Stephen of Moldavia favoured the reinstatement of Dracula to the Wallachian throne.

His third reign began in October 1476 but lasted just two months. In a Turkish alliance with Wallachian Basarab Laïota, the forces of Dracula were on the defence once more. In a letter of 1477, the Duke of Milan wrote to his ambassador to Buda, Leonardo Botta: ‘the Turks entered Wallachia and again conquered the country and cut to pieces Dracula, the captain of the king of Hungary, with approximately 4000 of his men’. C. Rezachevici (2001) has reasoned that this took place south of Bucharest. Dracula was decapitated and his head sent to the Sultan in Constantinople where, in a cruel twist, it was impaled on a stake. Kazikludu Bey – the Impaler Prince – was dead.

Thus expired Dracula in the annals of history, but different stages of his life may be plotted archaeologically. The house of his birth is preserved on three levels in Sighisoara, Transylvania. A plaque on the wall commemorates that his father Vlad Dracul lived there in 1431. Dracula selected the strategic location of Poenari for the construction of an impregnable castle on the slopes of the Arges near the frontier with Transylvania. According to an unnamed Wallachian chronicler:

‘So when Easter came, while all the citizens were feasting and the young ones were dancing, he surrounded and captured them. All those who were old he impaled, and strung them all around the city; as for the young ones together with their wives and children, he had them taken just as they were, dressed up for Easter, to Poenari, where they were put to work until their clothes were all torn and they were left naked.’ The castle may be reached by a bridge above a sheer precipice. It was moulded to its lofty heights in brick and stone in the form of a polygon 33m (E–W) by 36m (N–S). The remains of five towers are visible: the central tower was prism-shaped, the others cylindrical.

It was in the palace at Targoviste, constructed in the early 15th century by Dracula’s grandfather Mircea, that Dracula committed many of his most notorious atrocities. The Boyars who built Poenari were summoned here and innumerable people were impaled in the courtyard. In the throne room on the ground floor, ambassadors to the Sultan reportedly had their hats cut to pieces, dressed up for Easter, to Poenari, where they were put to work until their clothes were all torn and they were left naked.’ The castle may be reached by a bridge above a sheer precipice. It was moulded to its lofty heights in brick and stone in the form of a polygon 33m (E–W) by 36m (N–S). The remains of five towers are visible: the central tower was prism-shaped, the others cylindrical.

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According to Romanian tradition Dracula’s decapitated body was removed from the battlefield and he was interred in the lake island monastery at Snagov north of Bucharest (Fig 7). This has been refuted by Rezachevici on the basis that the mid-17th century Cantacuzeno Chronicle did not state that Dracula built Snagov as commonly thought. However, this does not take into account that documents of Voivod Mircea cel Bătrân (1355–1418) record that Dracula and his father were patrons of the first monastery church. Rezachevici also contends that the second church was constructed in the 16th century but does not present any archaeological evidence to date the grave under the floor of the nave near the west door – the alleged resting place of Dracula. At near foundation level this could logically predate the second church.

This grave was excavated by Romanian archaeologists G. Florescu and D. Rosetti in 1933. They discovered a rotten coffin with bones, fragments of a purple veil, pieces of a yellow-brown velvet coat, silver buttons, buttons of gold thread, and a gold thread with three facine buttons of garnet and gold. These finds were romanticised for the 500th anniversary of Dracula’s death, but they are of sufficient status to indicate the late medieval burial of a prince. The remains and artefacts were deposited in the History Museum of Bucharest and later disappeared, so the skeletal remains cannot now be analysed, nor can Dracula be ‘resurrected’. Or can he?

It is highly probable that a proportion of bone residue remains in the Snagov grave, so a re-excavation could allow some DNA to be extracted, an established technique in Evolutionary Anthropology. The analysis of the infamous Count’s DNA could be seen as the latest in a series of ‘resurrections’, from Stoker’s fictional account, through depictions on stage and screen, that developed the concepts of bloodthirstiness, evil, and resurrection; research carried out by scholars of medieval history; and his establishment as a folk hero in Romanian culture, not least by Nicolae Ceausescu, whose regime had similar trappings of evil. It is ironic that before his execution in 1989 he boasted ‘that a man like me comes along once every 500 years’. n
Politics and the past

Minerva meets Ed Vaizey, Conservative MP for Wantage and Didcot and Minister in the Coalition Government with responsibilities for communication, culture and the creative industries

Following the publication of the Comprehensive Spending Review on 21 October, the corridors of power echoed with the sound of axes falling on budgets. About 330,000 public sector jobs are likely to be lost; in order to eliminate the structural deficit by 2015, departments will experience an average of 19 percent cuts over the next four years; £7 billion needs to be found in welfare budget cuts; even police funding has been hit by a 4 percent annual cut. So it is inevitable that Britain's heritage and museum sector, under the charge of culture minister Ed Vaizey (Fig 1), will have to endure a share of the pain.

'It was quite a tough settlement, but we wanted to protect what we call the front line, and to represent organisations that deliver art to audiences, whether they're national museums or what are known as the regularly funded organisations of the arts council,' explains the Minister, who shadowed the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for the Conservatives for four years before May's General Election (Fig 2). 'We managed to achieve just a 15 percent reduction for them, which we were delighted by. That meant that overall the Arts Council settlement was slightly tougher, although offset by the increase in the lottery funding, which we're putting through at the moment. Obviously our national museums are very much part of the fabric of the cultural life of the nation. We want to keep free entry to museums, and I personally think our national museums do a very good job on very small resources' (Fig 4).

Funding cuts do, however, mean that some 20 museums across the country, including Manchester's Museum of Science and Industry, Wakefield's National Coal Mining Museum, the People's History Museum in Manchester, and the London's Geffrye, Horniman and Design Museums, will need to secure alternative sponsors for much of their funding after 2014. Institutions like these will clearly be forced to cut costs, and to be innovative, if they are to survive.

'I think there will be constant debate about how much of their back-office costs museums can share, how much of their collections they can display, how easy it is to get collections out to other organisations and get more on show, what to do about deaccessioning – should they be freer to sell more of their collections; should we be less precious about deaccessioning and see collections as living things, refreshed with new acquisitions and disposals? Those debates will continue for the next couple of years,' says the Minister. 'Overall I'd like to see much greater focus on innovation and technology. I would like to see many more arts organisations embracing the opportunity to engage with audiences through technology – through Facebook and Twitter; theatres and opera houses using 3D technology, simulcasting their plays and operas using video to provide backdrops and scenery. I hope there will be an explosion of technology in terms of how shows are put on and how audiences are engaged with.'

Funding gaps and budget cuts will also see Britain's cultural institutions turning to the private sector, and to philanthropic individuals, for support. This is to be encouraged and rewarded by government, says the Minister. 'Over the past few years, museums have become much more open to philanthropy, much more willing to reward benefactors by naming galleries and rooms after them. I think government should be seen, from the very top downwards, to show gratitude to people who are prepared to support the cultural life of this country. Even throwing a party for philanthropists – it might sound slightly trite, but people who give should be recognised. We also need to look at how we make the tax system easier for people to give, both in terms of being able to say thank you, which is where the tax system becomes quite complex, and also whether we can look at any reforms in tax that would encourage people to give more.'

Government could also play a role, the Minister believes, in ensuring that Britain is able to retain its cultural treasures. At the time of our interview, it was unclear whether the purchaser of the Crosby Garrett Helmet (Fig 6), see Minerva, November/December 2010,
intended to take the artefact out of the country, but government might intervene should that be their intention. ‘I would seek independent advice on whether to impose an export ban, and I would follow that advice. It’s important to make clear that when export bans are put in place it’s on the basis of independent advice, not on the whim of a minister. I’d follow the advice I was given on whether it was appropriate to put a stay on its export and see whether money would be raised to keep it in the country. It’s a fantastically romantic story. I was up in Cumbria a couple of months ago, and it’s clearly captured the imagination of that part of the UK. There were hopes that it could become the centrepiece of the local museum, but because of the spectacular nature of the find and the interest it generated, they couldn’t compete in the end. I think one’s got to be realistic about this. The helmet was sold legitimately, and one can’t stop private buyers buying private property. I wouldn’t like to see the sector become over-regulated and nothing ever be able to leave the country, and private purchasers be unable to collect.’

Ed Vaizey’s mother is the well known art historian, writer and curator Marina Vaizey, formerly art critic for The Sunday Times and the Financial Times. Although she inherited a piece of Roman glass and a small statue, which remain in the family, the Minister has no ambitions to start his own collection of antiquities. ‘I almost bought a plastic Sutton Hoo helmet for my four-year-old but I don’t have the budget for antiquities and I didn’t attempt to pilfer anything from the Staffordshire Hoard!’ he says. ‘In terms of the trade in antiquities, what concerns me is the role of some of the major websites in policing these kind of trades. Ebay is trying to put in place more sophisticated measures to stop people trading antiquities online, and I think it’s important, returning to the theme of technology, to realise the impact technology will have on the antiquities trade, and for government to keep pace with those developments and work with websites to ensure that proper checks and balances are put in place. I’m not talking about heavy-handed regulation; I’m talking about self-regulatory systems that ensure proper account is taken of the illicit trade in antiquities.’

The Minister believes that cultural treasures can help to transcend geographical and political barriers between countries, and supports...
Interview

exchanges like the British Museum’s loan of the Cyrus Cylinder to Iran (see pp. 8–10). ‘I have every confidence in Neil MacGregor, and I think he takes the view, with which I agree, that the sharing of cultural objects between nations is a very important part of the relationship between them. The fact that the BM was prepared to lend it was a very good thing, and shows that the BM’s collection is effectively the world’s collection. It’s unique, apart from perhaps the Met, in having a collection that spans every corner of the globe and almost every age of man. Given the stewardship of this incredible collection, it’s incumbent upon the Museum to share objects from that collection where and when it can, and in return we benefit from unique exhibitions like the Terracotta Warriors. That was a recognition that the BM sits at the centre of this extraordinary ecosystem, whereby people share objects of immense cultural importance.

‘Political arguments take place at the political level. We should treasure the fact that nations can continue to speak to each other through the medium of cultural exchange. The idea of putting political pressure on the British Museum to follow a political agenda would be anathema to me (Fig 4). We make it very clear to other governments, such as in the case of the Parthenon Marbles, that this is a matter for the trustees of the British Museum, and that they are independent. As such, even if a future government did ever want to return them, it couldn’t.’

At the time of our interview, the increase in university tuition fees was making waves in Westminster and across the country. Does the Minister believe that lack of funding for further education will lead to a shortage of young talent entering the fields of history and archaeology?

‘One of our education ministers, Tim Loughton, has a degree in archaeology, and he would take exception to the idea that it doesn’t give you a grounding! A lot of employers appreciate anyone with a degree, who’s learned how to think and marshal arguments. That’s what an arts and humanities degree gives you. I think universities have to adapt very quickly, and provide a better service for their customers, their students. They have to provide alternative courses – is a three-year course necessary for an archaeology degree? Could more distance learning be offered? In any event, the government is putting in place a lot of measures to protect people on lower incomes, and I know archaeology isn’t necessarily a lucrative degree, so the quid pro quo of that is that you’re less likely to have to repay your student loan! People who want to go on to do PhDs require passion and dedication, and there may be funding sources such as charitable foundations that would encourage people to carry on studying those subjects,’ he says.

Leading figures in the Conservative Party, including Mayor of London Boris Johnson, feel passionately that Britain’s education system would benefit from a fresh focus on the Classics. It is a view the Minister supports. ‘Boris is fighting a one-man campaign to ensure the Classics are taken seriously – he wants to see Latin taught in primary schools. I think personally that would be a wonderful thing. Latin is the foundation of our language, and I also think it’s a fantastic discipline in teaching one how to think and construct arguments, and it’s at the root of so much of what we take for granted in our civilisation today. My children are about to go to primary school, and I’d love to walk into a primary school where they said, “By the way, we also teach Latin.” I hope there will be a resurgence of the Classics.’

The Minister himself was educated at St Paul’s School and Merton College, Oxford, where he rose to the rank of Librarian of the Oxford Union and took a BA in history. His interest in the subject has taken him to sites around the world, including Pompeii, which he had longed to visit for years (Fig 3). ‘It’s a wonderful place – you expect it to be disappointing, rather too touristy, but I thought it was superb. I love the sense you get of the rush of the cartwheel in the street and that kind of atmosphere – although I gather it’s started to fall down. Leptis Magna was a great privilege to visit (Fig 7), and I’ve been to some of the sites in Syria as well. I’ve visited some very special places.’

The Minister’s knowledge of archaeology is not extensive, he says, but his enthusiasm for the subject is clear. ‘I love it for the connection it gives one with the past, the ability to see objects that have been hidden for hundreds or thousands of years, and to be among the first people to see them after such a long time. It gives a very strange feeling of direct connection with the past. The Staffordshire Hoard is probably the best-known recent world-class archaeological discovery, and one feels its ability to touch the Anglo-Saxon past – one can almost hear the battle-poems being recited at your shoulder as you hold the objects and wonder how they came to be hoarded in this way (Figs 5, 8). I also remember seeing a Roman leather shoe brought out of the water in a city archaeological dig and being transported back to that moment; picking up musket balls in Wallingford from the Civil War when there was an archaeological dig at West Hanney in my constituency; seeing a Saxon burial site, and wondering about the female skeleton that the archaeologists were excavating; who she was and how she got there – it’s extraordinarily romantic.’

However, the Minister’s relationship with the Anglo-Saxon world is a troubled one. ‘They cost me my first-class degree,’ he explains. ‘My general history paper was on Sutton Hoo and what it can teach us about history, so I rolled three questions into one, and got a Gamma – so in spite of getting first-class marks in all my other papers I ended up with a 2:1, thanks to the Anglo-Saxons!’

Fig 7. The Basilica of Pompeii, buried during the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79.

Fig 8. Gold collar from a seax (a long single edged knife). The stylised animal decoration can clearly be seen. L. 7.3cm. Photo: courtesy of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.
Bonhams

The Bonhams autumn antiquities sale, held in London on 6 October, saw 267 of the 436 lots sold, realising a total of £1,233,276 inclusive of buyer’s premium. **Dr James Beresford**

From the estate of Jay Ward came an Egyptian goose with a body of cedar wood, while the feet, neck and head were of cast bronze (Fig 1). Dating to the Late Period (c. 664–32 BC), the delightful figure, which stands 23cm in height, has a sinuous neck and ovoid-shaped eyes with an incised outline. Its scale-like skin and webbed feet are finely detailed down to the small pointed claws. Folded wings and upturned tail are carved on to the wooden body. Provided with an estimate of £30,000–50,000, the goose sold for £86,400.

Pottery at the Bonhams auction tended to sell on or around the estimate. Reflective of the sale was an Attic black-figure olpe dating to c. 500 BC (Fig 2). A bearded Dionysus is depicted standing to the left while offering a cup to Ariadne, who stands to the right, while a dog is at their feet. The scene reflects the myth most famously recounted in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, of the return of Theseus to Athens after slaying the Minotaur. While Ariadne slept on Naxos, the hero abandoned his lover, and it was on the island that Dionysus found the daughter of King Minos and married her. The vase sold for £4800 after being provided with an estimate of £4000–6000. The most striking pottery artefact at the auction was Lot 93, a splendid Attic black-figure neck amphora dating to c. 510–500 BC, featuring Apollo playing the *kithara* with a goddess clad in a long *chiton* to the right. It carried an estimate of £200–300,000 but did not sell.

As so often tends to be the case, sculpture depicting historical figures sold well. While there are no true likenesses of Homer, a marble head from the early Roman Empire presents an idealised portrait of the great poet that was relatively common during antiquity (Fig 3), showing him with eyebrows locked in a stern frown, and with hair thinning on top, though with long curls from the sides of his head falling over his ears and, together with a full beard, framing his face. Bought for £31,200, the head made more than twice its top estimate of £10–15,000. However, following on from the Homer sculpture, the next Lot (130), a marble from the 1st century BC thought to be a depiction of the great Roman poet Virgil, and provided with an estimate of £60–80,000, failed to sell.

Another sculpture of a historical figure that sold well was a small marble head of Alexander the Great (Fig 5). Dating to the Hellenistic period, it portrayed the Macedonian king looking slightly upwards, head tilted to the left, with thick wavy hair. Selling for £10,200, it considerably exceeded its estimate of £3000–4000. A bust of the emperor Tiberius (r. AD 14–37), thought to have been carved between AD 10–30, was one of the most impressive artefacts at the Bonhams auction (Fig 6). The finely carved bust portrays the stepson of Augustus, and his successor to the purple, with his head turned to the left. Though with damage to the

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Fig 1. Wood and bronze goose from Egypt, c. 664–32 BC. Sold for £86,400. H. 28cm. Lot 49.
Fig 2. Attic black-figure olpe depicting Dionysus and Ariadne, c. 500 BC. Sold for £4800. H. 22.6cm. Lot 92.
Fig 3. Marble head of Homer, c. 1st–2nd century AD. Sold for £31,200. H. 47cm. Lot 129.
nose and ear, this fine portrait carried an estimate of £250-350,000 and sold for £300,000.

Following strong sales of ancient weaponry at the Hermann Historica militaria auction in Munich on 12 April (see Minerva September/October 2010, pp. 52–53), military artefacts also sold well in London. A Roman *gladius* of the Pompeii-type, probably dating to the late 1st century AD, sold for more than three times its estimate (Fig 4). With a flat, double-edged iron blade, with a bone hilt consisting of a domed pommel, an oval-shaped guard decorated with four symmetrical grooves, and a spiral-ribbed grip, the sword carried an estimate of £3000–4000, but fetched £12,600. A Phoenician ceremonial silver and gold axe-head, decorated with a design of a snake or wave-line (Fig 7), dating to c. 1700 BC, had an estimate of £4000–6000 and sold for £5040.

From the extensive collection of ancient militaria acquired by the late Axel Guttmann came a Roman marble grave stele depicting a gladiator, probably dating to the 2nd century AD (Fig 9). The *Murmillo* gladiator, wearing a distinctive *galea* crested helmet and a protective greave on the left leg, is depicted with a knife or dagger in his right hand and a large oblong shield (*scutum*) in his left. It had an estimated price of £20,000–30,000, and sold for £24,000. Another Roman funerary stele from the same period also appears to have a military theme: the lower of the two registers depicts a mounted figure, his cloak billowing behind him, while a soldier armed with two spears and a shield stands to the left (Fig 8). While this lower register may indicate that the stele commemorated a soldier, the upper section contains a domestic scene with a man reclining on a couch, holding a cup in his left hand and a wreath in his right. To the left sits his veiled wife holding a baby, while a table piled with food stands before them. Running across the top of the stele is a Greek inscription with the poignant line ‘farewell daddy Chareas’. With an estimate of £8000–10,000, the stele sold for £9000.

Two European funerary urns, sold together with four other related Bronze Age artefacts, including an impasto-ware dipper, a terracotta spindle whorl, and two bronze fibulae, highlighted the importance that is now attached to secure provenance (Fig 10). The collection was accompanied by a photograph of the amateur German archaeologist Hermann Rogatz and his daughters, in the trench from which the artefacts were excavated in 1907 where Rogatz was digging in the Niederlausitz area, to the south-west of Berlin. The Bronze Age artefacts were part of a large collection donated to a museum in Bremen that was largely destroyed by allied bombing during World War II. The small collection sold for £3360, just above the estimate of £2000–3000. Also from northern Europe came a Celtic openwork harness mount in bronze, probably dating to the 1st century BC/AD (Fig 11). The graceful curves of the mount has curled tendrils of the ‘trumpet’ design, and provide an impression of a bird’s head with an eye and a curled beak. With an estimate of £800–1200, the harness mount sold for £1440.

Many of the intaglios and cameos in the Bonhams sale either did not sell, or went for the estimated price. One of the few that achieved rather more than expected was a Sasanian carnelian intaglio, c. 5th–7th century AD (Fig 12). Profiles of two male busts are engraved on the semi-precious stone, a clean shaven youth to the left, and an older bearded man facing him from the right. An inscription runs around the oval border. With an estimate of £400–600, the intaglio sold for £1020.
At the Christie’s antiquities sale, which took place on 7 October, 366 lots were offered and 302 were sold, for a total of £3,030,750

One of the earliest artefacts in the Christie’s auction was a stone Mesopotamian ‘spectacle idol’, dating to c. 3000 BC (Fig 13). Spectacle idols appear to share a common symbolism with the more common ‘eye idols’, and both are probably intended to represent deities during a period when divinities were not usually represented in human guise. The ‘eyes’ of the idol protrude from the top of the long conical neck, which sits on a rectangular base with rounded edges. Idols such as this are generally found in temple sites or sanctuaries and are believed to have played a role in cultic or religious practice. With an estimate of £150,000–250,000, the idol sold for £169,250.

From the 22nd dynasty, during the Third Intermediate Period of Egyptian history (c. 945–715 BC), came a silver sistrum in the form of the janiform head of Hathor (Fig 17). The rattle was commonly used in rituals related to the goddess and was usually shaken by priests and priestesses during temple rituals, to pacify the violent nature of Hathor. In this example, the deity is depicted with finely contoured eyebrows and cosmetic lines, while her cow ears can be clearly seen against the background of her wig. The sistrum sold for £73,250, well above its estimate of £30,000-50,000.

One of the most interesting artefacts at the Christie’s auction was a recumbent lion carved from wood, possibly from the lid of a box (Fig 14). Dating to the Persian period of Egyptian history (27th dynasty, c. 525–404 BC), the lion’s head is turned to the right, with a short striated mane framing the lower part of the face. The Persian artistic influence is clearly visible in the open snarling mouth, rather than the more typical closed mouth of Egyptian lions. As with the Bronze Age burial urns in the Bonhams auction the day before (Fig 10), the lion had a wonderfully documented provenance consisting of ink-inscribed labels from the collection of Henry Oppenheimer, which was Lot 23 in the Christie’s London sale of 22–23 July 1936 (where it was acquired by Hindamian for £42.10s), and the E.L. Paget collection, sold at Sotheby’s London as Lot 295, on 17–18 October 1949. Handwritten notes relating to the M.T. Schiff collection sale held in the Hotel Drouot on 16-17 March 1905, when the lion was entered as Lot 11, further add to the impressive provenance of the wooden artefact, and together with the wonderful carving itself, explain how it realised a price of £46,850, far outstripping the estimate of £12,000-18,000.

Glassware generally sold well above estimate in the Bonhams sale, but this was not generally the case at Christie’s. There was, however, a beautiful exception in the form of a core-formed amphoriskos from the Eastern Mediterranean of the 6th–5th century BC (Fig 16). The opaque white body of the vessel features aubergine marvered threads in a zigzag pattern. With an estimate of £2,500–3,500, the amphoriskos sold for £7,500.

Another amphoriskos, dating to the 3rd–2nd century BC, fashioned from rock crystal and with a gold suspension loop and wire terminals, achieved a far higher price (Fig 15). The vessel, with its elongated thin-walled body and twin scrolling handles joining the shoulder to the neck, easily surpassed its estimate of £30,000-50,000 to sell for £82,850.

Seals generally sold well at Christie’s, and considerably better than at Bonhams a day earlier. A white stone Elamite cylinder seal dating to c. 3000–2800 (Lot 70) decorated with running ibex, estimated at £2000–2500, realised £8125, while a green stone Elamite cylinder seal from c. 3000 BC (Lot 72), featuring a bull and a flowering tree, estimated at £6000–8000, sold for £11,250.

Later seals and stamps also sold well at Christie’s; a dark green stone Achaemenid cylinder seal of the 5th–4th century BC (Lot 82), decorated with two felines with a Persian king on either side, estimated at £5000–8000, realised £12,500, while a blue chalcedony conoid stamp seal from Syria, dating to c. 700–500 BC (Lot 84), carved with a worshipper standing in front of the spade of the god Marduk and the stylus of Nabu, and estimated at £3000–3500 sold for £6875. However, the highest price generated
was that of a Kassite seal carved into an agate of red, green and grey, c. 14th–13th century BC (Fig 18). A seated deity is depicted holding a rod and wearing a horned headress and long fringed robe, while a man stands worshiping before him. The seal includes a seven-line royal inscription in Sumerian cuneiform: ‘Enlil, mighty lord, who determines the decrees about heaven and earth, Kadashman-Enlil, the noble you created, be his pleasant trust, may you return to its proper place the spirit of the throne’. Provided with an estimate of £30,000–50,000, the seal realised £37,250.

As was the case in the Bonhams auction, portraits of famous historical figures sold well at Christie’s, the most prominent being a marbled bust believed to be that of Mark Antony, carved in the 1st century BC (Fig 19). The sculpture is depicted with an Attic-type helmet carved with crest and ear volutes that covers his hair, making it difficult to positively identify the figure. Nevertheless, the head has the wide face and heavy features often associated with the politician and general of the Late Roman Republic on coins. The portrait sold for £145,250, close to the top of its estimate of £100,000–150,000. The highest price realised for a sculpture in the auction was for a bust of a young male athlete. Although carved in the early 1st century AD, the Roman marble bust was very much modelled on the sculpting traditions of Classical Greece (Fig 21). The young man has slightly parted lips, an aquiline nose, and lidded almond-shaped eyes. With an estimate of £250,000–350,000, the bust sold for £277,250.

Achieving a strong sale was a statuette of an Etruscan warrior (Fig 22). Dating to the later half of the 5th century BC, the bronze figure also wears a cuirass decorated with spiralling circles and tongues. With an estimate of £10,000–15,000, the warrior achieved £23,750. An outstanding military artefact was an exception-ally rare, high-status Sasanian sword of the 6th–7th century AD (Fig 20). With a double-edged iron blade, the sword also featured grip mounts and a scabbard constructed from gold. The weapon is fitted with curving asymmetrical grips that would be most appropriate for a single- rather than a double-edged blade. Only military leaders of high rank would have been permitted to own such a weapon and would probably have required permission from the king to wear the sword. It sold for £157,250, just above the estimate of £100,000–150,000.

Pottery at the Christie’s auction generally sold on or around the estimate. One of the more interesting lots on offer was an Attic red-figured alabastron c. 520–500 BC, featuring a negoti-ating scene between a hetaira (courtesan) and her customer, a youth depicted leaning on a staff and offering her a flower (Fig 23). The titillating nature of the scene probably means the alabastron was used at symposia, and possibly also explains modern interest that led to the alabastron achieving £15,000, well above the estimate of £6000–8000.

Also attaining a price well above in advance of its estimate was an Apulian red-figured fish plate, c. late 4th century BC (Fig 24), decorated with a dogfish, flatfish, bream, two clams and a shrimp, around a central recess intended for garum (fish sauce). Despite realising £15,000 from an estimate of £8000–10,000, the plate did not come close to matching the £75,650 (from an estimate of £4,500–5,000) paid for a South Italian fish plate in Christie’s spring antiquities sale (see Minerva, September/October 2010, p. 49).

Finally, the highlight of the Christie’s auction was, of course, the remarkable Crosby Garrett Helmet (see Minerva November/December, 2010 pp. 52–53 for details). With an estimate of £200,000–300,000, the parade ground helm sold for a staggering £2,281,250, though the identity of the buyer remains undisclosed. While it is currently unknown if the helmet will be placed on public display, when interviewed by Minerva, the British government’s Minister of Culture, Ed Vaizey, confirmed that he would seek independent advice about whether to impose an export ban should the buyer seek to remove the unique artefact from the country (see Minerva, this issue, p.49).
The Romans on the Bay of Naples: An archaeological guide
Lawrence Keppie
The History Press, 2009
192pp, 81 diagrams and b&w illus, 24 colour plates
Paperback, £17.99

The Roman cities and villas that cluster around the Bay of Naples are among the most famous and frequently visited archaeological sites in the world. Ongoing excavations in the region also continue to turn up new and fascinating discoveries that help us to better understand patterns of Roman settlement and agriculture, as well as the architectural and artistic splendour of the inhabitants of the area. This new book by Lawrence Keppie, former Professor of Roman History and Archaeology at the University of Glasgow, offers an up-to-date description of many of all the most important archaeological remains in the area, and provides a guide for visiting them. The motivation for this new volume is stated in the introduction: ‘The present guidebook grew out of a realisation that, while modern tourists are familiar with Pompeii and Herculaneum, they often remain unaware of other, much less crowded attractions’ (p. 13).

The first section of the book provides a useful historical and topographical background to the region, beginning with the volcanically active landscape as it did that of antiquity. In the considerably longer second section of the volume, Prof Keppie provides useful itineraries for those visiting the internationally famous (and consequently very crowded) archaeological sites such as Pompeii and Herculaneum. However, he also provides easy-to-follow directions for those making excursions to see the interesting, though less visited, remains of ancient settlements such as the Greek foundation of Cupea, just beyond the northern sweep of the Bay, or the streets of Sorrento in the south, where the remains of the Roman architectural splendour are largely overlooked by tourists. Also included is a short itinerary detailing an ascent up the slopes of Vesuvius to see the crater from which the noxious gases and superheated ash cloud raced down the southern slopes of the volcano in AD 79, killing the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum that had stayed in the cities, while preserving the 1st century settlements under a thick layer of ash, pumice and mud.

As Prof Keppie admits, ‘There is no shortage of books about Pompeii and Herculaneum’. However, as he goes on to point out in the introduction: ‘The following pages do not seek to emulate their scholarship, but rather to provide an accessible handbook to understanding the Roman material culture that can still be seen in the landscape that follows the graceful crescent curve of the Bay of Naples.

Dr James Beresford

McGilchrist’s Greek Islands: 1. Santorini & Therasia with Anaphi
Nigel McGilchrist
Genius Loci Publications, 2010
124pp, 4 b&w illus
Paperback, £9.95

James Bryce once wrote that: ‘The worth of a book is to be measured by what you can carry away from it.’ This is certainly relevant to McGilchrist’s Greek Islands series, since they provide the reader-traveller with a rich seam of information to explore every nuance of the Aegean cultural and natural world. It is fair to say that ‘Romans’ in this period; there is substantial debate as to when the Roman period ended and the Byzantine period began; it was essentially a shrinking empire in the face of migrations by a host of Avars, Slavs, the imperialist tendencies of the Sasaniand, and an expanding Islamic world, thus its cultural interaction with its former territories were accordingly redefined. Against this tapestry of complexity Thomas Mathews has done an excellent job in shaping coherence from a turbulent world. This has been achieved by a topical-thematic approach: ‘adopted in the hope that long lines of continuity will emerge better than if objects were parcelled out, museum style, into decades by rulers’ (p. 12). Sensibly, this philosophy provides the best configuration in an attempt to understand this complex subject.

Visitors to modern Istanbul tend – understandably – to visit the Byzantine hub that is the magnificent St Sophia and the splendid Basilica Cistern a little to the south-west, and
McGILCHRIST’S
GREEK ISLANDS

1. SANTORINI
WITH ANAPHI

BY NIGEL McGILCHRIST

to say that the Blue Guides have set the standard for this genre of publication and it should be stressed that these books do not attempt to compete, but that they share a symbiotic relationship. Nigel McGilchrist in fact authored the Blue Guide Greece, the Aegean Islands (2010) and much of the textual material in his series of 20 books is shared with this publication, but this in no way detracts from the quality of this detailed compilation of literature.

Essentially, McGilchrist’s guides are textual rather than visual, since they contain few illustrations, but that is their charm. The first book in this series, on Santorini and its associated islands of Therasia and Anaphi, exemplify this: simple yet appropriately detailed maps of Santorini (p. 9) and Anaphi (p. 91), and the rear section of the book contains simple but lucid plans of ancient Thera and the archaeological site of Akrotiri (pp. 118-119), all in black and white. However, this is totally compensated for in the informative detail of the text. Anyone who likes to explore the environment, history, and culture of the planet will instantly recognize the value of these books, not least since they have been compiled in a painstaking fashion by the author in person, who seems to have covered every inch of the Aegean in the process—a monumental feat in itself. Th is passion is endearing, and the accessible style in which the series is written makes them addictive. Another appealing aspect of the books is their compactness—a mere 170 by 120mm—thus an ideal friend of the intrepid explorer.

Its natural beauty aside, Santorini is interesting for most because of its geological history, relating specifically to the cataclysmic volcanic eruption which tore the core out of the island in the 2nd millennium BC—the author is probably correct in writing that this was ‘one of the greatest, if not the greatest in human history’ (p. 8). If the desire of the reader is to know more about this astonishing event then this guide provides an excellent potted history: from the layout of the volcanic caldera, the extraordinary depth of its water (200–400m), and the geological process of the eruption, its date, how this shaped the islands, and continues to change them through to the modern era. Also included are some interesting accounts of volcanic activity by Roman writers, Strabo: ‘Flames burst out from the sea for a period of four days, causing the water to seethe and flare up’ as the island (Hiera-Palaia Kameni) emerged.

Excellent descriptions of the collections in the Museum of Prehistoric Thera in Fira, and its famous paintings, along with the Old Archaeological Museum (pp. 24–34), the prehistoric site at Akrotiri, and a wealth of other information relating to every aspect of each island are included in this highly recommended series, which is also modestly priced.

Dr Mark Merrony

neglect other secular and ecclesiastical sites. Th is book redresses this, from an armchair per- spective with a series of excellent, high quality colour photographs that include the Land Walls of Constantinople, the Monastery of Christ Panctorator, the Column of Constantine, the surviving Boukoleon wing of the Great Palace, the Late Byzantine extension of the Blachernai Palace, and so on.

A chapter (pp. 43–72) on icons features a series of lavish images of the subject and recounts the splendour that many people experienced in 'Byzantium 330–1453' at the Royal Academy in London (2008/9). Th e complicated theology relating to icons is circumvented in a lucid manner; a change from some art-historical books which make the subject sound more complicated than perhaps it should be.

In the secular realm, an equally good chapter deals with the Palaces of Constantinople, palace fashion, and aspects of country life—a welcome aspect of this book. An acknowledged problem with the Great Palace is the relative lack of remains, with the exception of the monument mentioned above, the floor mosaics in the Great Palace Museum, a sizeable chunk of the original building is submerged beneath the Blue Mosque and the surrounding area. Mathews draws on a combination of textual and artistic depictions to paint an interesting picture of the palatial domain.

Returning to the religious sphere, the author presents a lucid insight into the integration of Byzantine architecture with its art (pp. 97–136). Th is is an interesting achievement that used the architecture of a building to express a three-dimensional effect rather than the two-dimensional illusion of the classical period. Th e exportation of these concepts to Greece, Russia and Italy is equally interesting (pp. 137–163). A timeline rounds off a highly recommended publication that is a must for anyone with an interest in the Byzantine Empire.

Dr Mark Merrony