Eastern promise

From the Celestial Empire of the Han Dynasty to the coins of the Kushans

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The allure of the East

From China to Kyrgyzstan, from Kushan to Yemen, we travel along the Silk Road from the Far East and beyond to the Middle East

The East, whether Middle, Near or Far, has a certain allure and mystery, as several writers in this issue illustrate.

We begin, in 1862, with the Middle East when the Prince of Wales made a tour of Egypt, Lebanon and the Holy Land, as well as various ports, cities and islands around the Mediterranean. He was accompanied by the pioneer photographer, Francis Bedford, whose atmospheric sepia prints show a dusty, exotic world where romantic ruins in the desert provided the perfect spots for royal picnics. You can follow in the Prince's regal footsteps (on pages 8 to 12), or go and see the exhibition, From Cairo to Constantinople, at The Queen's Gallery in London. There, Bedford's photographs and some of the antiquities that the Prince brought home (one or two have not been exhibited before) are on show.

Going further East we move on to look at the art of the Han Dynasty – not for nothing was it known as ‘The Celestial Empire’ – you will understand why when you turn to pages 14 to 19 and catch sight of some of the wonderfully diverse artefacts and sculpture that Han artists and craftsmen produced. They are currently displayed at the Musée Guimet in Paris.

But you will have to wait until 24 January to see Rubens and His Legacy when it opens at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. Although his work is not to everyone's taste today, Rubens was worshipped by many of his contemporaries and he went on to be revered by many of his successors. His work is currently displayed in London. He ran the studio of the Flemish 17th-century painting.

Rubens and His Legacy

Our last feature focuses on the American archaeologist Wendell Phillips, who is the subject of an exhibition at the Sackler Gallery in Washington DC. Known as the ‘American Lawrence of Arabia’, Phillips led the first foreign expedition to explore the ancient kingdom of Saba in modern-day Yemen in 1950. He was in search of Bilqis, the home of the Queen of Sheba. In this he did not succeed, but he and his team did excavate the peristyle hall at Marib, the capital of Saba, and the cemetery at nearby Timna, where they unearthed some alabaster heads dating from the 1st century BC, including one of a beautiful young woman whom he named ‘Miriam’. Wendell Phillips died in 1976, at the comparatively young age of 54, but four years later his sister Merilyn Phillips Hodgson revived the American Foundation for the Study of Man and her brother's excavation work in Yemen. It is a fascinating story, as you will discover on pages 40 to 44.

Lastly have you noticed our Classical Comandrums quiz? If not, turn to page 52 and see if you can answer any of the 12 questions posed by Adam Jacot de Boinod. But be warned: a knowledge of Latin, Ancient Greek and even Homeric Greek is required.

CONTRIBUTORS

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in the news

recent stories from the world of ancient art and archaeology

The museum where two rivers meet

Situated at the meeting-point of two French rivers, the Rhône and the Saône, the aptly named Musée des Confluences has just opened its doors to visitors.

Designed by the Austrian deconstructivist architects CoopHimmelb(l)au, this amazing futuristic building looks like a gleaming white spaceship that has landed in Lyons.

As the name suggests, the museum’s collection draws on objects from many different times and places to tell the story of life and culture on this planet. Spread over 3000 square metres, it is divided into four sections: Origins, Civilisations, Species and Eternities – all of which explore the history of Earth and its inhabitants and their various cultures from diverse angles.

So it is that the 2.2 million objects on show range from ammonites to meteorites, from Samurai armour to Sputnik, from Ancient Egyptian funerary sculpture to African masks. Disciplines such as science and technology rub alongside archaeology and ethnology in an effort to reach the widest public possible.

As its Director Hélène Lafont-Couturier says the Musée des Confluences’ mission is “to describe, to illustrate the world by surprising us, by taking us on a journey into the world of dreams and myth”.

Visit museedesconfluences.fr or, better still, visit the museum itself.

Lindsay Fulcher

Minerva January/February 2015

Origins: Canopic jar, with the head of the protective god Duamutef, from Upper Egypt.

Eternities: Canopic jar, with the head of the protective god Duamutef, from Upper Egypt.

Origins: 180-million-year-old (Jurassic) ammonite found in Isère (phymatoceras narbonense).

Origins: statuette of 2nd King Diamond Guangmu, guardian of the world, circa 1886-1887, from China.
The discovery of a Viking ring fortress dating from the 10th century, which was announced last September, has now been officially confirmed.

Archaeologists from the Danish Castle Centre and Aarhus University found the ring fortress, dubbed Borgring, in a field belonging to Vallø Manor, to the west of Køge on Sealand’s east coast.

It is the first discovery of its kind in over 60 years. But some questions were raised about the veracity of the discovery, online and within the archaeological community.

However, after two months of waiting for results, these doubts have now been dispelled. On 18 November the carbon-14 dating results were presented at a seminar at Aarhus University, proving that the fortress was indeed built in the 10th century.

As Marie Kanstrup, from the AMS 14C Dating Centre at the Department of Physics and Astronomy, Aarhus University, explains: ‘The two samples were both taken from the outermost tree rings of charred logs that were found in the northern gateway of the fortress. The results of the two samples are almost identical: the fortress was constructed during the period between the year 900 and the beginning of the 11th century.’

Nevertheless, there is still work to be done as carbon-14 dating cannot determine a precise year, which would be essential if archaeologists are to discover who built the fortress and to understand its role in Viking history. Archaeologists are currently exploring different dating methods to achieve this.

Without a specific year it is impossible to state with total certainty that this is the fortress of King Harald Bluetooth, who is famed for uniting Denmark and Norway – and who has now lent his second name to the wireless technology that unites computers and mobile phones.

The archaeologists are optimistic however, for as Søren Sindbæk, a professor of medieval archaeology at Aarhus University, says: ‘We can’t say whether or not it’s Harald Bluetooth’s fortress yet, but now that we’ve dated it to the 10th century, the trail is getting hotter. The things we’ve discovered about the fortress during the excavations all point in the same direction. We already know that there’s a good chance that we’ll find conclusive evidence next year.’

There are other Viking ring fortresses, such as Fyrkat near Hobro, Aggersborg near the Limfjord and Trelleborg near Slagelse, which are known to have been built during the reign of Harald Bluetooth, and Borgring shares some similarities with these. They all have circular ramparts, constructed with vertical wooden posts along the inner and outer sides with sloping support posts on the outer wall, gateways aligned with the four points of the compass, and wood-paved streets along the inside of the ramparts.

Moreover, Borgring's rampart is exactly the same width – 10.6 metres – as that of Fyrkat. Trelleborg, Fyrkat and Aggersborg also had longhouses inside their ramparts. This potential feature has yet to be investigated at Borgring.

While some details are still a mystery, it is clear that Borgring was a power symbol designed to impress with its seaside location. ‘The excavation showed that there was a basin of fresh or brackish water right next to one side of the fortress – presumably a quite narrow inlet leading out to Køge Bay. When the fortress was built, hundreds of tonnes of the heavy clay subsoil would have had to have been dug out into the sea basin,’ explains archaeologist Nanna Holm, who is curator of the Danish Castle Centre.

In 2015, not only is there more conclusive news from Borgring to await, but there is also UNESCO’s decision, due in the summer, over whether or not the ring fortresses of Fyrkat, Aggersborg and Trelleborg will be added to the list of World Heritage Sites.

Lucia Marchini

Minerva January/February 2015
Imperial buffalo refuses to budge

A remarkable Chinese jade water buffalo (above right) recently placed, with an estimate of HK$12,000,000-15,000,000, in a single lot auction in Bonhams Hong Kong’s ‘Strength and Diligence’ sale, proved to be a stubborn beast and remained unsold.

Crafted during the 17th or 18th century, the water buffalo is lying down, gazing outwards with a slightly upturned head. It has delicately detailed twisted horns and seems to have a slight benign smile. At 31.8cm long, this is an exceptionally large animal skillfully carved from a single piece of jade with a rich celadon tone.

But it is not just its size that makes this buffalo such a desirable object. While the exact details of its provenance before it came into the collection of Lt Col Maurice Alan Johnson are uncertain, experts believe that it was taken during the sacking of the Summer Palace during the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901).

This is in line with the widely held view that, based on its similarities to other carved creatures that are known to have come from royal enclaves, this buffalo too would have been on show at an imperial palace.

Although jade has long been associated with spirituality, power and immortality, during the Song dynasty (AD 960-1279), it was frequently carved into everyday working animals. The water buffalo is central to rice production and the rural economy and so represents agriculture, as well as tranquillity, prosperity, strength, and hard work. But it is also regarded as a guardian figure; there was an enormous bronze ox at the Summer Palace, commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor in 1755 for its protective properties.

Since it was sold by Lt Col Johnson at Sotheby’s in 1962, this jade water buffalo has also passed through the collections of Somerset de Chair and Jorge de Brito.

Where it will go next remains a mystery.

Lucia Marchini

Lost, found and detected display

Last summer saw the opening of the Wessex Gallery of Archaeology in Salisbury Museum after extensive renovations costing £2.4 million. Now this state-of-the-art gallery has a temporary display of some of the extraordinary finds made by local metal-detectorists.

It features artefacts that have been unearthed over a period of almost 30 years. All of these objects help to tell the story of 2000 years of Wessex history, with the oldest find dating from the Iron Age, and show the area’s importance in the history of the country.

Many of the items on display were found in the Deverill valley, near Warminster, by a metal-detecting married couple. One of their finds is a Roman cast copper alloy bust of a maenad, dating from circa 1st to 2nd century AD. She is a little lopsided, with her left eye lower than the right and with a less developed left shoulder too. The bust, measuring 57.44 x 38.21 x 24.50mm, is in good condition and would have been attached to a vessel or a piece of furniture.

Other highlights include an Early Medieval hooked tag, made from copper alloy inlaid with silver plate and niello. It is notable for its iconography as it shows an eagle with its wings and talons outstretched, which may represent St John the Baptist.

Another beautiful Early Medieval piece is a gilded cloisonné brooch with a delicate trifoliate leaf motif.

Most of the objects have been lent for this display, but four of the finds from South Wiltshire have been donated to the museum.

One of these is an object that, in contrast to the deliberate and painstaking work of detectorists, was found entirely by chance by someone gardening in Laverstock. It is a copper alloy pointed oval seal matrix depicting the Virgin and Child standing at an ornate altar made between AD 1300 and 1400. A second donated piece is a ‘Ewart Park Phase’ sword (from the Late Bronze Age), which bears the marks of makeshift repairs to its broken hilt. Also from the Bronze Age is a fragment of a spear; and the fourth and final donation to the museum is a late Roman bowl.

Established in 1997, the Portable Antiquities Scheme, has been a great help to national archaeology as members of the public have been able voluntarily to record finds on the database. To date the PAS has recorded over one million objects to date, including these displayed at Salisbury Museum. Close collaboration between the PAS, the museum and finders and lenders of the artefacts has brought together an impressive array of items, which showcase not only the rich history of Wessex, but also the tremendous importance played by members of the public in local archaeology.

The ‘detectorists display’ will be on show at Salisbury Museum until 28 February. (For further details visit: www.salisburymuseum.org.uk) Lucia Marchini

1. Roman cast copper bust of a maenad made during 1st or 2nd century AD.
2. Early Medieval copper alloy hooked tag inlaid with silver and niello.
3. Roman cast copper alloy pointed oval seal matrix.
4. Early Medieval copper alloy sword.
5. Copper alloy pointed oval seal matrix.
At a cost of 68 million Swiss francs and after four years of renovation work, the Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève (MEG) has just opened its doors to the public.

Designed by Graber Pulver Architekten AG, the new MEG has a spacious 2000 square metres of exhibition area. The design of the building is strikingly bold and the esplanade in front of the museum has been landscaped by Hager Partner AG and is now a garden that is open to the public. Meanwhile the original museum building has been renovated and now houses staff offices, workshops, and technical facilities, as well as the Ateliers d’Ethnomusicologie (ADEM – Ethnomusicology Workshops). Situated in the city centre in the lively Jonction district, the MEG promises to become a new cultural centre in Geneva as, apart from its permanent exhibition, it has temporary exhibition space as well as facilities for staging concerts, showing films and holding workshops.

Under the soaring roof its new Marie Madeleine Lancoux Library (so named because of a generous bequest to MEG left by Madame Lancoux) is a collection of over 45,000 books and audio-visual documents giving information on the cultures of the five continents. Aptly named The Archives of Human Diversity, the permanent exhibition presents over 1000 objects from the five continents. Two installations by the artist Ange Leccia complete the display that has been designed by Atelier Brückner.

In the temporary exhibition space, The Mohica Kings: Divinity and Power in Ancient Peru shows the treasures of a tomb unearthed on the north coast of Peru in 2008 for the first time.

All in all the MEG offers an increasingly enthusiastic and curious public a window on to the world's many diverse cultures. (For further details visit: www.meg-geneve.ch/)

Lindsay Fulcher


Minerva January/February 2015
In 1861, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert decided that their eldest son, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), would benefit from an educational tour of the Middle East to be organised for the following year. The extended tour was carefully planned to include Egypt, the Holy Land, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Greece. At the time, most of these regions were part of the Ottoman Empire, and the tour, apart from providing the Prince with the opportunity to learn more about ancient cultures, history and religions, also offered him the chance to meet a series of rulers, statesmen and notable figures, so that he could practise his diplomatic skills, seen as an essential part of his training as heir to the throne. The tour would also give him something appropriate to occupy his time between the completion of both his university education and military training, and his marriage to Princess Alexandra of Denmark, planned for the following year, 1863.

The premature death of Prince Albert in December 1861 did not halt the original plans for the journey and, on 6 February 1862, the 20-year-old Prince of Wales (4) left Britain to embark on a four-month tour accompanied by a small entourage that included four members of the Royal Household: Major General the Hon Robert Bruce, the Prince’s Governor, Joseph Julius Kanné, the Queen’s courier, and two Equerries to the Prince, Major Christopher Teesdale and Lt Col Frederick Keppel. Four other gentlemen were also selected to join the party: the Hon Robert Meade and the Revd Dr Arthur Stanley, because of their knowledge of the region, Dr John Moolenburgh Minter, a Royal Navy doctor, and Francis Bedford, the first official photographer to join a royal tour. Bedford’s role in the tour was to document the various places, monuments and anything of interest visited by the Prince’s party. At the same time, the Prince kept a careful account of his experiences in a journal, which might have been written with the intention of letting other members of his family, in particular his mother, read it on his return. It represents a rare and precious document for such an early royal tour and is kept in the Royal Archives.

In the first entry of his journal, the Prince of Wales wrote: ‘We left London, by the 8.30 train in
the evening for Dover... Crossed over to Calais at 11 the same evening in the "Virid", had a good passage, and started immediately by the 1.30 train for Cologne. (Journal, 6 February 1862).

After various stops across Europe, including Darmstadt, where the Prince of Wales met Prince Louis of Hesse, who was to marry Princess Alice (one of Edward's sisters) later in the year, the party reached Trieste on 15 February. There they boarded HMY Osborne, a paddle steamer, which after a brief stop in Venice (from 17 to 19 February) took the party along the Dalmatian coast, calling in at Pula, Spalatro (Split), Ragusa (Dubrovnik), Gravosa (Gruz), Cattaro (Kotor) and Durazzo (Durrës). The royal yacht also stopped in Corfu (from 23 to 25 February), Zante (Zakynthos) and the Ionian Islands, arriving at Alexandria at 9.30am on 1 March. The city, which the Prince describes as 'our first seaport in the East', received the illustrious visitor with a 21-gun salute, despite the private nature of the visit. The party reached Cairo on the evening of the same day, where they were welcomed by the Viceroy of Egypt, Muhammad Sa'id Pasha, who 'received us very kindly', wrote the Prince in his journal. He noted of the Viceroy that he was 'very fat, about 42, and is able to speak French well'.

On 2 March, the Prince of Wales was shown the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, then housed in a building in Boulaq, near Cairo. His guide was Auguste Mariette, the eminent Egyptologist who had played a key role in the museum's establishment shortly before, in 1858. Both the museum visit, which the Prince describes as 'very interesting', and Mariette made an impression on the young Prince. After Mariette's death, the Prince of Wales wrote of him that '[his only fault (if it was one) was to send all the best antiquities fr. Egypt to France'.

The Prince then toured Cairo and was impressed by 'the Eastern mode of life & the costumes', the Citadel, Muhammad Ali's tomb in the mosque, and the Pyramids of Giza. At Giza, he writes: 'We had a charming little encampment just below the Pyramids where we slept for the night' – this was so that the party could climb to the top of the Great Pyramid at sunrise.

On 5 March, the Prince boarded the Viceroy's own barge, lent to him to travel along the Nile. The Prince and his equerry Teesdale would travel on the barge, towed by a steamer accommodating the rest of the party and accompanied by a further steamer for the servants, both also provided by the Viceroy. The royal party travelled up the Nile to Aswan, which they reached on 13 March, then turned round to start a slower cruise down the river, calling at various sites of interest following the suggestions included in A Handbook for Travellers in Egypt (1847) by John Gardner Wilkinson, the first British guidebook to Egypt. The stops included Philae, the temple of Horus at Edfu, and the large temple complex at Karnak. At Karnak the party encountered other travellers (5), including the Prince of Wales’ uncle Ernest and his wife Alexandrine, and Jemima Blackburn, a Scottish artist who happened to be visiting the area. While in the Thebes area, where he stayed for four days, the Prince visited the house of Mustapha Agha,
whom he describes as ‘an Arab & an English Agent; he is a shrewd old fellow, and talks English very fairly. He showed us some of his antiquities, and we opened the case of a mummy, which we cut to pieces, but only found one scarabeus.’ (Journal, 16 March 1862)

The Prince was fascinated by these little objects and acquired a number of them on at least three different occasions during his stay in Egypt. On his return to Britain, he decided to have some of them set and made into jewellery, which he then presented to Princess Alexandra as part of his wedding gift (2–3) in March 1863.

Antiquities became a real interest of the young Prince, particularly after his 1859 educational tour to Rome, where he had the chance to acquire a number of archaeological artefacts. His penchant for collecting is likely to have stemmed from his childhood, as collecting objects of interest was an activity encouraged by Queen Victoria and, in particular, by Prince Albert as part of the education of their children.

Aware of his royal guest’s interest in antiquities, Sa’id Pasha gave the Prince special permission to witness some archaeological excavations. In the entry for 18 March, he wrote in his journal: ‘I was looking at some excavations, which were going on behind the Memnonium; the Viceroy had been kind enough to give permission for them, & that everything that was found I might have; only a small mummy & a tablet were however found, which I took with me.’

The moment in which the small mummy is revealed in front of the Prince of Wales and his party is illustrated by a watercolour that Jemima Blackburn produced on the spot (1) and later presented to the Prince. The mummy is no longer in the Royal Collection but the ‘tablet’ can be identified as the funerary stela (6) belonging to Nakhtmontu, a priest of Amun-Re living in Egypt in the 3rd century BC.

The Prince of Wales also acquired other antiquities while in Egypt, including a papyrus from the 3rd century BC inscribed with the Amduat, a funerary text from the early New Kingdom that describes the nocturnal journey of regeneration of Re, the Egyptian sun god, and a granite statue of Queen Senet (7), a beautiful sculpture of a queen from the 12th Dynasty, possibly the consort of Amenemhat II. After returning to Cairo on 23 March, the royal party spent the following five days touring other sites in the city, including its famous bazars. Reunited with HMY Osborne at Alexandria, they left Egypt and reached Jaffa on 29 March.

The tour of the Holy Land, mostly visited by travelling overland on horses and camping in tents, would take the royal party to visit sites that had strong biblical associations, such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilee. The Prince was also given permission to visit two sacred Islamic sites: the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and the Mosque at Hebron – both of which Francis Bedford was allowed to photograph (10).

The visit to the town of Safed, in northern Galilee (22 April), marked the end of the tour of the Holy Land, and the royal party continued their overland journey to Syria and the Holy Land.
Lebanon. There they visited medi-

eval castles and forts that had been
occupied by the Crusaders, such
as Beaufort Castle, before heading
east towards Damascus, which they
reached on 28 April. The Prince was
particularly touched by the plight of
the city’s Christian quarter, which
was still devastated following a
severe conflict between Druze and
Maronites in 1860.

After a few days’ sightseeing, the
party travelled on to see the mag-
nificent Roman ruins at Baalbek in
Lebanon (3 May) before continuing
on to Beirut, where HMY
Osborne was waiting. They explored the
Lebanon coastline on the yacht,
visiting Tyre and Tripoli from where
they continued on horseback until
they reached Ehden, where they
camped for the night. This allowed
them, as the Prince wrote, ‘to see
the celebrated Cedars of Lebanon’
the next morning.

They departed on 13 May, steam-
ing across the Mediterranean to
the island of Rhodes, where they
spent only one day, 15 May 1862.
Despite the short stay, Rhodes was
the other main source of antiqui-
ties acquired by the Prince of Wales
during his Eastern Tour: ‘Sailed for
Kalavarda which is still on the coast
of the island of Rhodes… to see the
excavating of some old Phoenician
tombs. Several old vases & lamps
&c were discovered while we [were]
there, & I carried off a good many
as trophies. I had also purchased
some antiquities [which] were
found near these excavations.’
(Journal, 15 May 1862).

Bedford photographed some of
these antiquities (9) and all but
three are still part of the Royal
Collection (8). They represent only
a portion of the objects acquired on
the island, mostly excavated from
Kamiros, one of the three large
cities established by the Dorians on
the island in the 8th century BC.

The royal party carried on sail-
ing along the coast of Turkey reach-
ing Constantinople (now Istanbul),
capital of the vast Ottoman Empire,
on 20 May. There, the Prince
was received by its ruler, Sultan
Abdülaziz, and spent a week explor-
ing the city.

The party then set sail for Athens
before turning homewards, stop-
ping off at several islands, including
Malta, where the Prince was met
with a rapturous reception. HMY
Osborne left the party at Marseilles
(10 June) to continue their journey
by train through France, eventually
reaching Windsor on the afternoon
of 14 June 1862.

The last words of the Prince of
Wales’s journal read: ‘And so ended
this most agreeable tour, as all good
things, must alas! in this world
come to an end. “Finis coronat
opus”.’ (Journal, 14 June 1862)

Cairo to Constantinople: Early
Photographs of the Middle East is
on show at The Queen’s Gallery
until 22 February. Cairo to
Constantinople: Francis Bedford’s
Photographs of the Middle East by
Sophie Gordon, with contributions
by Badr El Hage and Alessandro
Nasini (Royal Collection Trust),
is available in hardback at £35.

8. Modern photograph
showing antiquities
(East Greek, Attic and
Corinthian ceramic
objects and vessels,
dating from circa
620 BC to circa 375
BC), which were
photographed by
Francis Bedford in
1862. Most are still in
the Royal Collection.

9. Antiquities from
Rhodes, 17 May 1862,
albumen print by
Francis Bedford.
22.6cm x 28.5cm.

10. West Front of
the Mosque of Omar
(Dome of the Rock,
Jerusalem), albumen
print by Francis Bedford.
22.3cm x 28.3cm.

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JOHN HENRY HAYNES
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Nicole Benazeth reports on the peaks of artistic creation reached under the Han Dynasty, as shown in a new exhibition at the Musée Guimet in Paris.

The Han dynasty played such an important role in the forging of China’s identity that it can easily be compared to the influence of Rome on the formation of Western culture. Throughout four centuries, some 28 emperors, using a clever combination of military conquest, diplomacy and trade, extended their domination over an immense territory and opened up China to the Western world all the way to the Roman Empire.

Splendour of the Hans: The Rise of the Celestial Empire, a major exhibition currently on show at the Musée Guimet in Paris, illustrates this period in astonishingly high-quality examples of Han works of art.

2. Terracotta female figurine, Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 9). 34.4cm x 16.1cm. ©Art Exhibitions China/Yangling Han Museum.

3. Wooden ox and plough, Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). Ox: 19.3cm x 28.3cm x 9.2cm. Plough: 16.6cm x 35.6cm x 2.7cm. ©Art Exhibitions China/Gansu Provincial Museum.

4. Terracotta rider, Western Han (206 BC-AD 9). Horse: 58cm x 50cm x 17cm. Rider: 19.5cm x 11cm. ©Art Exhibitions China/Xianyang Museum.
National Museum of Asiatic Art Musée Guimet in Paris presents a sumptuous panorama of artistic creation during the Han Dynasty. Outstanding masterpieces reflect the power and magnificence of a period teeming with innovation in numerous fields.

The Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) followed the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) and was briefly interrupted by the Xin Dynasty (AD 9-23). The first period is known as Western Han (206 BC-AD 9) and the second as Eastern Han (AD 25-220).

The Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) had succeeded in unifying the Chinese Warring States through conquest, and Qin Shi Huangdi became China's first emperor. He established a central administration, unified the script, money and weights and measures, thus paving the way to building a strong empire. But his death in 210 BC was followed by a revolt against these civilising changes. So it was that a rebel leader of humble origin named Liu Bang (later known as Gaozu) defeated his rivals and became the Han Dynasty's first emperor. He chose Chang’an as his capital. Extending central administration over a number of semi-autonomous kingdoms and commanderies was no easy task, but he managed it through family connections and other alliances. At the same time, fighting continued against the raiding Xiongnu tribes on the empire's northern borders, until some accepted vassal status.

The Western Han period was one of military expansion, mainly under Emperor Wu (or Wudi, which means 'warrior'), from 147 to 87 BC. By now the empire extended south as far as present-day Vietnam, to Korea in the north-east, to Xiongnu territory in the north and to the Tarim Basin in the west. To repel further Xiongnu attacks, Wudi extended the existing Great Wall westwards towards the Gobi Desert.

The constant threat of attack from the Xiongnu tribes was also one of the reasons for opening the famous Silk Road. The silk trade was originally a state monopoly, but the Hans wanted to develop trade with their neighbours, especially as they needed access to supplies of horses for their armies. The diplomat Zhang Qian had established trade contacts with Bactria, northern India and the Parthian empire. It was that precious fabric, silk, only manufactured in China, that opened the empire to the rest of the world.

To pay for his campaigns, Emperor Wudi created central government monopolies on salt, iron, liquor and the production of bronze coins. Coinage remained a monopoly throughout the Han Dynasty, but others were repealed under the Reformists, a faction that gained influence in the court over the Modernists.

The regent Wang Mang (45 BC - AD 23) did not relinquish power when Emperor Liu Ying came of age and proclaimed the Xin Dynasty in AD 9. He initiated a series of reforms that met with strong opposition. But his downfall was the result of natural causes: not his own death but disaster in his country. Massive floods in AD 3, and again in AD 11, progressively silted up the Yellow River, which split into two new branches. Thousands of farmers had to flee, many of whom joined groups of bandits and rebels. The imperial army was unable to control these mobs and Wang Mang was killed. Emperor Genshi of Han attempted to restore the Han Dynasty, but it was Guangwu who finally achieved this, by moving the capital eastwards to Luoyang.

So the Eastern Han Dynasty began in AD 25. The Hans went on to consolidate their territorial conquests and, in parallel, their trading and diplomatic contacts with other civilisations.

After the reign of Emperor Zhang (AD 75-88), the eunuchs became...
increasingly involved in court politics and power struggles within imperial clans. While plots were being hatched at court, a number of rebellions exploded in various parts of the empire, which in AD 208 was divided into three spheres of influence, leading to the formal end of the Han Dynasty. The Three Kingdoms period.

Yet all was not sound and fury and plotting in the Han Empire. Economic prosperity favoured the development of a rich cultural and artistic life. Encyclopaedias were compiled, lost classical texts were reconstituted and enriched by commentaries. Emperor Wudi adopted Confucianism, which became the empire's official philosophy in 136 BC. In the first century AD, monks from India introduced Buddhism into China. The first etymological dictionary was compiled between AD 100 and AD 121, and the first chronicles were used as models for the official annals of later dynasties. The Tai Chu calendar, the first in China, was introduced in 104 BC, and cartography became highly sophisticated. There is also evidence of the first use of anaesthesia in surgery in AD 208, and also the first appearance of negative numbers in mathematics.

This was also a key period in the history of technology. A number of inventions can be credited to the Hans, including paper, the wheelbarrow, the seismograph, the odometer, the rudder and the first water-powered armillary sphere. Farming was made easier and more productive by the use of cast-iron ploughshares, the development of animal traction, irrigation systems using waterwheels, and crop rotation. Miniature models found in tombs precisely illustrate a number of Han inventions not mentioned in texts. Once again, the combination of ancient texts and modern archaeology contributes to a more thorough knowledge of a civilisation.

Splendour of the Hans: The Rise of the Celestial Empire has been organised as part of the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the French Republic and the People’s Republic of China. The dual patronage of the French and Chinese presidents has made it possible for the Musée Guimet to produce an outstanding exhibition, as numerous Chinese museums agreed to lend some of their finest masterpieces.

Most of the exhibits – from the most delicate objects to monumental sculptures – belong to the funerary sphere. Between 1950 and 2000, archaeological excavations have revealed a high number of imperial tombs with rich contents, and there is no doubt that more spectacular discoveries can be expected. Grave goods provide a good idea of the elite’s art de vivre and of the Hans’...
concept of the afterlife over four centuries. More recent excavation in urban areas will add information on other social classes.

As Eric Lefebvre, one of the exhibition’s curators, says: ‘Han archaeology offers a complete panorama of all aspects of sentient life (jade, lacquerware, silk, paper), of the emperor’s personality, of the system of government, but also of the ephemeral aspects of everyday life, such as an eyebrow pencil accompanying a mirror.’

Among so many masterpieces, one of the most remarkable in Monsieur Lefebvre’s opinion is a jade ‘funeral suit’. Made up of more than 2000 jade plaques sewn together with gold wire, it was found in the tomb of the King of Chu, in Shizishan (Xuzhou). It not only demonstrates accomplished craftsmanship and the richness of imperial funeral rituals, but also provides valuable information. As a result we now know more about the relationship between mind and body—all the orifices of the body were filled with plugs of jade, which has near-magical properties. We know more, too, about the economy and trade; the burial site is located in the eastern part of China, whereas the jade comes from the west.

The exhibition is set out in three sections. The first sheds light on the main actors in the strengthening of power in the Han period: the emperor, the army, and the sovereign’s entourage of aristocrats and senior state officials. The first important ensemble consists of items found in the tomb of Emperor Jingdi, who ruled from 157 to 141 BC. A multitude of funerary figurines were found in the imperial mausoleum, their placing, costumes and postures indicating the position they held at court. Imperial tombs and those of high army officers contained a great many warrior figures, as well as representations of infantrymen, cavalrymen and war chariots, evidence of the army’s importance. The precious items found in the tombs of the aristocracy reflect the power of this class.

The second section reveals the main aspects of economic prosperity during the Han period, a prosperity based notably on the trade in farm produce. Wooden models of ploughing instruments found in Gansu province illustrate the development of agriculture. As for the development of the Silk Road, which ran across the entire Asian continent, linking the centre of China to the Mediterranean, it was made possible by horses, which played a key role—hence a magnificent cortège of bronze horses and
chariots found in Leitai in Gansu province, and silk items dating to the same period. Items from Xiongnu territory in the north-west and from the kingdom of Dian in the south-west show that relations between the Hans and their close neighbours were not always in conflict, as historical texts tend to suggest. The last part is devoted to various aspects of Chinese civilisation in the Han period. Architecture and the living environment are illustrated by spectacular terracotta models of imposing multi-storey towers, farm courtyards and cattle enclosures. The transmission of thinking and the development of an extremely rich intellectual life are broached through the evolution of writing and the appearance of textiles and paper. A new type of script marks the moment when writing became calligraphy. Religious beliefs are revealed by means of texts, but mainly by grave goods. These give an idea of cosmological concepts that each new discovery helps to refine.

Themes illustrating the everyday life of the elite – clothes, jewellery, food, music and dance – can be seen in the exquisite polychrome funerary figurines, in some extremely rare items such as textiles found in a tomb in Mawangdui (Changsha in Hunan province), and in richly lacquered woodware.

Elegant figures of acrobats, musicians and dancers with characteristic long sleeves conclude this journey across four centuries of a civilisation that experienced its first golden age under the Han Dynasty.

- Splendours of the Han: The Rise of the Celestial Empire is on show at the Musée Guimet in Paris (www.guimet.fr) until 1 March.

15. Jade pendant, Western Han (206 BC-AD 9). 17.5cm x 10.2cm x 0.6cm. © Art Exhibitions China/ Xuzhou Museum.
16. Terracotta model of a five-storey granary, Eastern Han (AD 25-220). 129cm x 56cm x 53.5cm. © Art Exhibitions China/ Jiaozuo Municipal Museum.
17. Terracotta female musician, Western Han (206 BC-AD 9). 34cm x 18cm x 17cm. © Art Exhibitions China/ Xuzhou Museum.
18. Funerary suit, jade, gold wire, Western Han (206 BC-AD 9). 176cm x 68cm. © Art Exhibitions China/ Xuzhou Museum.
Seated regally beneath a portico in front of his easel, Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) is shown painting an allegory of peace ‘from life’ (above). He portrays Venus, the goddess of love, enthroned at the right, who turns and raises her hand to prevent her lover, Mars, from waging war. She endeavours to safeguard political power, whose attributes (the sceptre and globe) lie in the left foreground. There we also see symbols of commerce and science (an astrolabe) and of the arts (a rolled-up manuscript, a mask, a score and a musical instrument), which can flourish only in times of peace. A putto releases the dove of peace as Minerva and Abundantia, carrying a cornucopia filled with fruit and grain, descend on the scene.

In this picture the Italian painter Luca Giordano pays tribute to the talent of Rubens, his artistic hero, who had died 20 years earlier, and does so on a suitably monumental scale that would have met with Rubens’ approval. Giordano refers in the painting to the famous allegories of peace that Rubens had painted for the King of England and the Grand Duke of Tuscany. That is no coincidence either; Roger de Piles, Rubens’ biographer, also believed that no one else had
ever treated allegorical subjects in such a clear and well-considered way: 'Because allegory is a kind of language and must therefore be justified by usage and understood by many, he [Rubens] introduced only those symbols that medals and other monuments of antiquity have made familiar to us, at least to the learned.'

The aristocratic image and success of Rubens—who had aspired to the mythic status of Titian—meant that he, in turn, became a role model for Van Dyck and the young Rembrandt. Rubens also made an impression on Velázquez, who met him in Madrid in 1628 and visited Italy on his advice. And later on, both Sir Thomas Lawrence and the Austrian artist Hans Makart attempted to equal the success of the court painter-cum-entrepreneur. In 1879 Makart even dressed as Rubens to march in a triumphal procession through Vienna.

Rubens’ fame drove some artists mad. The Belgian painter Antoine Wiertz considered himself to be a reincarnation of the master, but his creations, as gigantic as they are hilarious, are among the most caricatural expressions of Rubenism.

Rubens became known not only as 'the prince of painters' but also as 'the Homer of painting', notions that are firmly rooted in art-historical literature. Johann Joachim Winckelmann said that Rubens, like Homer, 'composed in accordance with the inexhaustible fertility of his mind... he is rich to the point of prodigality. He sought the miraculous, just as Homer did, in fact just as any poetic and all-embracing painter does, particularly with regard to composition and chiaroscuro'. This German Classicist was mainly attracted by Rubens’ pictorial idiom of allegory, which he equated with the poetic and the sublime.

One of the most important characteristics of the painter is his universality. Charles Baudelaire wrote in his Salon de 1845: 'Just as the epic poet, Homer or Dante, knows how to produce equally well an idyll, a narrative, a speech, a descriptive passage, an ode, etc., so it is with Rubens, who, when painting fruit, paints fruit better than any specialist'.

The master’s almost limitless range of subject matter and boundless creativity also struck the French critic and historian Hippolyte Taine, who wrote in 1869: ‘...the whole of human nature is in his grasp, save the loftiest heights. Hence it is that his creativeness is the vastest we have seen, comprehending as it does all types, Italian cardinals, Roman emperors, contemporary seigneurs, burgbers, peasants and cowherding lasses, along with the innumerable diversities stamped on humanity by the play of natural forces and which more than 1500 pictures did not suffice to exhaust'.

This image of the painter and diplomat has persisted in exhibitions up to the present day. The show staged in Lille in 2004 told the story of Rubens’ royal, ecclesiastical and bourgeois patrons, while those in Wuppertal in 2012 and Lens in 2013 analysed the complex European politics of Rubens’ day. These exhibitions affirmed the image of the artist as a servant of the Catholic Establishment, a defender of absolutism and an architect of peace. Rubens was certainly all of those things, but that is only part of the story. If he were merely an outstanding painter of propaganda, he would have been quickly forgotten, but alongside the eloquent history painter there exists another Rubens: the creator of family portraits, landscapes and pastoral scenes, of peasant dances and gardens of love, a
poetic Rubens who was present at the inception of Rococo and Romanticism, a painter of sensuality as well as sensation. Most exhibitions, however, feature the Homer of painting and his astonishing craftsmanship. The show in Brunswick in 2004 presented Rubens as a painter of human emotions; in London, in 2005, visitors were introduced to his sources of inspiration; and in Brussels in 2007 the genesis of a group of his works was reconstructed. Rubens and His Legacy fits into this last category. The selection of works examines the relevance of Rubens’ artistic legacy to other artists and invites visitors to look at the paintings before reading the labels, because, just like Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt and Picasso, Rubens reshaped art history. That the face of the Baroque also belongs in this illustrious roll call of masters is not in doubt, for the after-effect of the Flemish master extends across four centuries.

Rubens and His Legacy aims to continue in the vein of the London exhibition of 2005, which presented Rubens as the heir to antiquity and the Italian Renaissance. Six sections explore specific facets of Rubens’ oeuvre: violence, power, lust, compassion, elegance and poetry. This division is only natural, for it was mainly in the portrayal of these themes that artists had recourse to Rubens.

Court painters took an interest in his virtuoso engagement with allegory. For Spanish artists, it was his religious paintings that were important, for the British it was his landscapes and portraits, whereas French painters drew inspiration from his bucolic scenes. In fact, their interest was largely fuelled by the specific taste of Spanish, British and French art lovers, who appreciated not only the Flemish master’s subject matter, but also his sumptuous palette, which Baudelaire compared with many-coloured fireworks launched from the same place. Or, as Hippolyte Taine said, ‘Like an Indian deity at leisure, Rubens assuages his fecundity by creating worlds, and from the incomparable creased and refolded crimson of his robes to the snowy whites of his flesh or the pale silkiness of his blonde tresses, there is no tone in any of his canvases that does not appear there purposely to afford him delight.’

The artistic influence of Rubens on other artists occurs on various levels. At its most basic, the copy is an exercise in painterly technique. The next step up is the recycling of borrowed motifs in a new work. Resourceful artists, of course, would rather rework other artists’
original ideas than make copies, so they subtly forge influences into a style of their own, and in the end their sources of inspiration are detectable merely as echoes, in the same way that a reaction between chemicals gives rise to a new substance. Manet used a composition by Rubens as the point of departure for several artistic experiments, the results of which cannot unreservedly be called Rubenesque.

But Rubens was not universally admired; on the contrary, he became a target of criticism as early as the 17th century. The Italian biographer Giovanni Pietro Bellori reproached him for his unnatural and distorted forms, banal and insufficiently individualised faces, and a historically incorrect use of costume. Both his palette and his reputed sloppiness in drawing were the subjects of an art-historical debate among French Académiciens during the late 17th century. In the 19th century Rubens’ reputation suffered at the hands of a Protestant and bourgeois public in whom modesty and prudishness had been instilled. They showed little understanding of Catholic, erotic and exuberant subjects, which were considered offensive or immoral.

Criticism also came from an unexpected quarter: Delacroix, who thought that Rubens could not distinguish the main subject from matters of secondary importance, compared his paintings to an assembly at which everyone talks at the same time. Compared to Titian, Rubens was ‘exterior… all surface’, in the view of Renoir, who is nevertheless the painter who learned the most from the Flemish master.

Bridget Riley rightly describes Rubens as a pragmatist, ‘an artist whose aim it was to master the best of the past’; in other words, an artist who sought to tell the stories of the past in a better way, as Horace tried to do.

This conclusion makes one wonder if it wouldn’t be more correct to view Rubens as the last great master of the Renaissance, rather than the first painter of the Baroque. Admittedly, Rubens was no innovator, as Caravaggio and Rembrandt were, but he possessed an enviable talent for combining the most complex subjects and seemingly contradictory movements into a coherent and convincing composition.

Today, viewers who are unfamiliar with antiquity or Christian iconography look at Rubens’ creations as Westerners look at Kabuki theatre: they are fascinated by the form, but
the meaning escapes them. Rubens succeeded in orchestrating a rich pal-
ette with astounding ease, and his virtuoso brushstrokes betray a level of self-confidence undreamt of by most artists. This was also observed by Velázquez, whose encounter with Rubens prompted him to work more efficiently and on a lighter ground.

It was for this reason, perhaps, that, after the French Revolution, painters and art lovers came to think of Rubens as an Old Master, who was, admittedly, difficult to understand, though much could be learned from his brilliant oeuvre. This is how he became a 'painter's painter'. Even though Van Gogh thought Rubens 'superfi-
cial, hollow, bombastic', he was at the same time stunned by his unparalleled manner of painting, 'precisely because he is, or rather seems, so supremely simple in his technique. Does it with so little, and paints -- and above all draws, too -- with such a swift hand and without any hesitation. [...] And how fresh his paintings have remained precisely because of the simplicity of the technique'.

Yet artists do not always admit

that they, too, stand on the shoul-
ders of giants. ‘Well, regarding the influences in painting, I shall tell you about a personal experi-
ence,’ Renoir confided to the art dealer Vollard: ‘In the beginning I applied thick layers of green and yellow, thinking to achieve in this way more tonal values. One day in the Louvre I noticed that Rubens had achieved more sense of val-
ues with a simple scumble than I had been able to with all my thick layers of paint, on another occasion I discovered that Rubens used black to make silver. It goes without saying that both times I profited from the lesson, but does this mean that I am under the influ-
ence of Rubens?’

At any rate, visitors to this exhibi-
tion will form their own opin-
ions about Rubens and his impact on art history. It is important that they let themselves be led by their eyes and not by prejudices, pre-
conceptions or reputations.

The selection of works has been kept to a manageable size so that the viewer’s gaze can roam undisturbed over the surface of the paintings. The image of his talent is invariably distorted by the many inferior studio pieces that bear his name. For the sake of more honest viewing, therefore, we have tried to select autograph works: in this case, less is more.

In conclusion, it is worthwhile to reflect for a moment on a com-
ment made by the great Victorian art critic John Ruskin, who had no natural affinity with the Baroque: ‘I have never spoken, and I will never speak of Rubens but with the most reverential feeling; and whatever imperfections in his art may have resulted from his unfortunate want of seriousness and incapability of true passion, his calibre of mind was origi-
nally such that I believe the world may see another Titan and another Raffaello, before it sees another Rubens.’

Rubens and His Legacy: Van Dyck to Cézanne will be on show at the Royal Academy of Arts (www.royalacademy.org.uk) from 24 January until 10 April. The exhibition catalogue costs £48 (hardback), £28 (softback).
Is there anything in your family background that drew you to the Far East, rather than, say, to Ancient Egypt, Greece or Rome?

As a child I lived in Japan, and as a very young adult, aside from America and Europe, I lived in Turkey and Indonesia, so I always had a good comfort level with Asian cultures. But I would say the strongest impetus for my future direction in life was provided by the realisation of my ability to discover unknown yet exceptional works of art, combined with a greater ability to discover and solve new mysteries in the Far East. Although ancient Europe and Egypt were not my main focus, that did not remove their obvious influence on Far Eastern culture, so I am also required to study their civilisations. In China, Southeast Asia and Central Asia I’ve actually been able to go into nearly a thousand tombs at various stages of discovery. I have even been able to be present during the opening of an important sarcophagus. These are some of the major reasons for my considered life choices. In my time spent in China over the last 30-plus years, you may remember that whole new cultures have been discovered within its borders. The excitement is consistent and compelling.

You are Michael Teller IV – did your parents and grandparents work in the art world?

My parents’ involvement in the art world was not within the normal academic or commercial avenues. My father was a child prodigy, an oil painter who sold paintings to calendar companies and collectors when he was only eight years old. He retired from painting around age 13, then started again after another 50 years. He went to West Point Military Academy and became a career officer and that allowed us to travel abroad extensively. He and my mother, both collected Japanese, Korean and Central Asian artworks from the areas where they travelled. My grandparents collected American Indian artefacts and Americana, along with a few Chinese ceramics. I guess one can say that my early environment contributed to my future interest but was not a major factor in selecting my life’s work.

When did you first go to China, and how do you think the country has changed since then?

I first went around 1979. The visible changes have been so vast that to explain them all is as easy as explaining the difference between night and day. However, I was fortunate to be allowed to buy antiques, even in the beginning. At that time purchases could only be made from the government. As time went on I travelled all over China and studied and purchased on both municipal and provincial levels. Aside from purchasing, however, my company was initially, and still is, heavily involved in teaching and sharing technological advances related to the conservation and restoration of antiquities in China. In the context of the antique aficionado’s world, the most obvious changes in the first years after the extensive turmoil of the 20th century were that the Chinese in general were not enamoured of their history either in any obvious or focused way. They were more interested in their future. China then was exclusively a source of antiques. Now it has become the market.
Do you speak Chinese?
No, I understand some very basic Mandarin and Cantonese, and even those words relate mostly to the antique business. There are two main reasons that I did not pursue the language avenue. One is that there are many areas where only the most basic or even no Mandarin is spoken. Even where it is spoken it can have strong distinctive accents that make it sound like a different language. Because of this phenomena we always try to hire local translators who can communicate subtleties, as well as introduce us to relevant local people. The second reason is that the field of Chinese history is so vast, that I need all the time I have just to learn about its many facets.

Can you recall the first ancient objects that really caught your attention?
There was a small collection of Chinese Neolithic jars that had what I felt were particularly fascinating decorations and forms. My interest in antiquities grew from there. Initially I tried to collect objects from many Asian cultures, primarily Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Thai. This was partially because of accessibility. Additionally, I wanted just to see what truly spoke to me the most. From my 20s, I really didn’t believe that I would ever try to do anything else with my life except be involved in ancient Asian art and history. Even the technical aspects were fascinating to me. However, the normal avenues in this profession did not hold great appeal for me. You could say that I took ‘the path less travelled’.

Of all the periods and civilisations you deal with – Parthian, Scythian, Sarmatian, Sassanian, Sogdian, Graeco-Roman and Bactrian, as well as the great Chinese empires – which is your favourite and why?
I would definitely say that China’s early cultures are my favourites. I believe that is partially due to the continuity of its cultures, along with its influences on others and the ways it was influenced by them. Secondly, at various times in their history they seem to have developed unrivalled mastery of different media. Therefore, over the millennia, you can generally find their work to be among the best of any culture. One must realise, however, that to ignore or downplay the importance of the Central Asian and European cultural influence on China is to ignore the reality of China’s art and development.

Gold is universally fascinating. Apart from its monetary value, why do you think that is?
Gold’s rarity, and hence value, has, of course, always been a factor in its desirability, but I would say its ability to resist nature’s persistent influences has fascinated man for thousands of years. All ancient cultures could see that their bronze and iron objects corroded, their textiles and organic material disintegrated, and their ceramics easily shattered. Gold was visibly not subject to these obvious hazards. Gold could also be adapted to new uses. This meant that a change of iconography or design as items passed from one culture to the next was not particularly difficult. The purity of gold has also had spiritual connotations at various times in various cultures.

When was TK Asian Antiquities founded?
TK Asian Antiquities was founded in the early 1970s and, fortunately, since then it has continued to grow in virtually all areas of the antiquities profession. Analytical work on the elemental and atomic level as well as other aspects of scientific inquiry that relate to authentication, conservation and restoration, combined with historical research, have been a constant focus. Those goals simply add to our persistent attempts to discover the best and/or the most unique treasures of the ancient world to complete what we believe to be our mission.

You have two galleries in the United States, do you have any plans to open in London? At least three of the biggest antiquity dealers have recently opened galleries here.
Our two galleries are in the Fuller Building, on the corner of Madison Avenue and 57th Street in New York City, and in Williamsburg, Virginia, the colonial capital of America and a town highly populated by people interested in the arts and history. Even the Emperor of Japan and the President of China came to Williamsburg before going on to Washington, DC. Currently we are expanding in the scientific areas of study related to antiquities – archeometrics, conservation and restoration, all of which occupy large amounts of room, making Williamsburg an excellent location. A large part of our mission deals with authentication, to make both the private and the museum collector more comfortable with their objects and with possible future purchases. But this pursuit has also led to amazing discoveries about the influences and relationships various cultures had on one another. In many instances historical hypotheses that are currently held will be changed because of this work.

How has the art market for the sort of artefacts you deal in changed over the years?
Many of the main market changes are actually quite dependent on the expansion of China’s new museum policies, both private and public, and of course the wealth devoted to this pursuit. Certain Middle Eastern areas, such as Qatar, are also opening major museums which will display objects from many cultures, not just the local civilisations.

Recent restrictions and changes in import/export laws have also caused the exchange of artefacts from country to country to be more cumbersome, so there are some mildly adverse effects in certain markets. But there is a desire to acquire has grown considerably overall as more and more about ancient history is discovered.

Are the more wealthy Chinese now buying back the antiquities they sold during past decades?
Yes, this is most easily recognised in the auction circuit. Even the specific types of Asian art on offer are much more inclined to the ‘Chinese taste’ than ever before.

Chinese collectors seem to be the hottest new customers on the scene. What are they particularly drawn to?
Ancient bronze, Ming and Ching Dynasty ceramics and jade are traditional fields of Asian art that are still relatively dominant. But gold, scholars’ art and furniture seem to be quite desirable at the moment, too, and the growth in interest has become very noticeable.

What is the most splendid object that has ever come to TK Asian Antiquities?
The most splendid object is one we currently have. It is the finest ancient Chinese en-suite gold set of vessels known. It was made for imperial use in AD 49. Because of its extensive inscriptions, breathtaking workmanship and design, plus the size of the set, it should be considered the finest and most historically important gold set not only of ancient Chinese culture, but of any ancient culture of that era.

• TK Asian Antiquities maintains one of the world’s finest collections of ancient Eurasian gold artefacts. With a reputation as ‘the World’s Premier Dealer in Scientifically Documented Asian Antiquities’, TK offers the most historically important – and visually stunning – examples of gold artefacts from Eurasia’s ancient empires to be found anywhere in the world. The collection is distinguished by its craftsmanship, extent and diversity, as well as its historical relevance and sheer beauty. Artefacts of consequence are presented with complete advanced scientific analyses, most of them conducted in four countries by specialist scientists using state-of-the-art equipment. TK Asian Antiquities’ collection includes gold and silver artefacts from ancient civilisations, such as the Parthian, Scythian, Sarmatian, Sassanian, Sogdian, Graeco-Roman and Bactrian, as well as from the great ancient Chinese empires. All these cultures produced gold artefacts of world significance. (For further information, visit www.tkasian.com).

Minerva January/February 2015
In a smart new museum in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang province in China, a collection of mummies is displayed. Some of these mummies have recently been carbon-dated to 2000 BC, making them the contemporaries of Old or Middle Kingdom Egyptian mummies. Surprisingly, though, they are not thought to be Chinese or Mongolian in origin but probably Caucasian – tall, large-nosed and in some cases blond, with round, possibly blue, eyes.

The fact that few artefacts were placed with them in their graves makes it difficult for archaeologists and other researchers to identify any cultural connections that might have been revealed by buried pottery, tools or personal possessions such as jewellery. One possible clue lies in their clothing, which, thanks to the extreme dryness of the desert environment, had been well preserved – in some cases with hues still as bright as the day that they were buried.

The earliest discovery of these mummies was made by members of the teams that accompanied the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin and the Hungarian-British archaeologist Aurel Stein on their expeditions, from the turn of the 20th century until the 1930s.

In 1914, when Stein first explored and excavated the site of Lou Lan, a major city on an abandoned section of the Silk Road, he came across ruined forts and cemeteries along a stretch of about 15 miles and then discovered, ‘near a small ruined fort… in a truly remarkable state of conservation, the bodies of men and women found in graves outside what was evidently a look-out post occupied by indigenous Lou-lan people’.

Stein remarks that the edge of one shroud had been made into a pouch holding twigs of ephedra, a plant that grows on the fringes of the desert, prized as a stimulant and an important compound in the relief of asthma. Taken in large quantities, it can also cause hallucinations. When Stein realised that as ephedra was both a stimulant and an hallucinatory drug, he concluded that it could, in the embalmer’s mind, have ensured the comfort and well-being of the deceased. Some 20 years later,

The curious case of the Caucasian mummies

Explorer, conservationist and author John Hare unwraps the origin of shrouded bodies discovered in Xinjiang province that are more likely to be Celtic than Chinese
in 1934, at 1pm on 16 May, Sven Hedin paddled into the Lake of Lop Nur and entered a canal, where he spotted some strange-looking tree-trunks near the shore. He landed and there discovered the remains of an ancient house that was at least 1600 years old.

There was a fireplace in one corner with traces of coal in it. In one room, which may have served as an outhouse, there was a quantity of sheep's dung. In it he found fragments of clay utensils, cattle horns, fish bones, a wooden card, a knife blade, the base of a cooking pot, scraps of close-woven cloth, and the bottom of a wicker basket and other things. These items were all similar to artefacts that we unearthed at Tu-ying, near Lop Nur, in 1996, when our team discovered an abandoned grave near the lake that these early explorers had missed.

However, in addition to their discoveries, we found nuggets of jade (the nearest jade mines are found at Khotan, 150 miles away) and a quantity of beads, amulets and arrowheads.

After Hedin’s discovery of the ancient house, some of his boatmen began to excavate a shallow grave. This turned out to be a mass grave, and by the time Hedin arrived his men had laid out skulls and numerous other parts of skeletons and pieces of clothing. By mid-afternoon they had arrayed 15 skulls, four little food tables with legs, two bows, three wooden combs, eight round or oval wooden bowls, hairpins, slippers and some beautiful pieces of silk. He noted that a few little silk purses with delicate chain-stitch embroidery were especially pretty.

Two of Hedin’s hawk-eyed boatmen then discovered another grave. Further digging was started and after reaching a depth of two feet three inches, they struck a wooden lid. This consisted of two very well-preserved boards just under six feet long.

When the lid was raised they were confronted by a shroud that covered the corpse completely from head to toe. It was so brittle, however, that it crumbled into dust at the slightest touch. Hedin’s men removed the part that concealed the head of the corpse and then they saw, in all her beauty and wealth, the mummified girl that Hedin movingly describes as the mistress of the desert, ‘Queen of Lou Lan and Lop Nur’.

Recent carbon-testing of the Lou Lan mummies and other mummies found to the east in the Taklamakan Desert has established that the oldest could be dated to 2000 BC, and that their ages vary between that date and the time when there was a Chinese presence in the area – around 100 BC. This is a very long period of time, and it appears that their nomadic way of life hardly changed during those 1900 years. For example, ephedra was buried with every mummified figure that was discovered.

The question is: who were these people who pre-dated the arrival of the Chinese in the Lou Lan Basin by almost 2000 years?

Elizabeth Barber, a noted expert on textiles, has attempted to trace the origins of these nomads by identifying the weave of their cloth garments. Curiously, the weave showed a distinct resemblance,

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both in pattern and construction, to
cloth found among Celts who had
been buried in salt near Salzburg
in Austria.

In the first millennium BC, Celtic
communities grew rich exporting
salt and salted meat to the growing
civilisations of Greece and Rome,
importing wine and other luxu-
ries in return. In an investigation
of cloth remnants from the area
in Austria where these Celtic salt-
mines were so productive, Elizabeth
Barber comes to the conclusion that
the striking similarities between the
plaid twills of Lou Lan and the cloth
of the Salzburg mummies strengthen
the case for both the Celtic and Lou
Lan weavings coming from the same
tradition. Though lying some 4000
miles apart, they parallel each other,
according to Barber, too closely for
it to be by mere chance.

The people of Lou Lan spoke a lan-
guage called Tokharian, as deduced
from tablets and manuscripts
unearthed by the early explorers. It
has been discovered that there are
language similarities linking Celtic
and Tokharian speakers.

So cloth and language both
suggest that the inhabitants of Lou
Lan and the Taklamakan may be
there partly on account of succes-
svie waves of Celtic migration. In
other words, the people of Lou Lan
originated from the west, not from
the east.

One of the most striking mum-
mies discovered near Cherchen in
the perimeter area to the south of
the Taklamakan is the mummy
known as Cherchen Man. Easily
the most impressive of the mum-
mies on view in Urumqi, Cherchen
Man is six feet six inches tall, a veri-
table giant to his compatriots, and
he died at the comparatively old age
of 55. His face is at rest, eyes closed
and sunken, lips slightly parted; his
hands lie in his lap, while his knees
are tilted upwards. A two-inch
beard covers his face. But what is so
remarkable about Cherchen Man is
his brown/red hair, his aquiline nose
and round eyes. He bears no resem-
bance at all to a Chinese person. His
clothes, too, are of great interest.
His legging wraps are highly coloured
blue-yellow and red-brown. On one
leg there is a deerskin boot which
reaches to his calf.

In 2005, a team of Chinese and
American researchers working
in Sweden DNA-tested 52 sepa-
rate Xinjiang mummies, including
the mummy found by Sven Hedin
which he called the ‘Beauty of Lou
Lan’. By genetically mapping the
mummies’ origins, the researchers
confirmed the theory that they were
of West Asian descent.

In an interview with Al Jazeera,
the Arabic-language television news
channel, Professor Victor Mair,
from the University of Pennsylvania,
who is project leader for the team
that did the genetic mapping, com-
mented that these studies were
‘… extremely important because
they link up eastern and western
Eurasia at a formative stage of civi-
lization (Bronze Age and early Iron
Age) in a much closer way than has
ever been done before’.

This evidence corroborated the
earlier link made by Barber between
the textiles found with the mum-
mies and early European textile and
weave types from Salzburg. There
is also the superficial observation
that the mummies seemed to have blond and red hair. In trying to trace the origins of these peoples Victor Mair’s team suggested that they may have arrived in the region by way of the forbidding Pamir Mountains about 5000 years ago.

Needless to say, this evidence is considered controversial, since it refutes the contemporary nationalist claims of the Uighur people that they, rather than the Chinese, were the indigenous people of Xinjiang. In comparing the ancient DNA of the mummies to that of the modern-day Uighur people, they found some genetic similarities with the mummies, but no direct links.

‘The new finds are also forcing a re-examination of old Chinese books that describe historical or legendary figures of great height, with deep-set blue or green eyes, long noses, full beards, and red or blond hair. Scholars have traditionally scoffed at these accounts, but it now seems that they may be accurate,’ says Professor Mair. Chinese scientists have been reluctant to release the mummies for DNA sampling, because they are sensitive about nationalist Uighur claims on Xinjiang and the Chinese government appears to have delayed making public results of the new research for fear of fuelling Uighur Muslim separatism.

‘It is unfortunate that the issue has been so politicised because it has created a lot of difficulties,’ says Mair. ‘It would be better for everyone to approach this from a purely scientific and historical perspective.’ China has undertaken its own genetic studies on the mummies only in the last few years. One study carried out in 2004 by Jilin University found that the mummies’ DNA had European genes, further evidence that the earliest settlers of Western China were not East Asians.

China’s concern over its rule in restive Xinjiang, where some of the Uighur people are agitating for independence from Chinese rule, has widely been perceived as impeding faster research into the origin of these mummies and greater publicity of the findings.

However, the fact that the mummies are now more prominently displayed in the new museum in Urumqi means that the Chinese have clearly become more relaxed in the face of mounting evidence that people who lived at Lou Lan and in the surrounding area, dating back to 2000 BC, could be of Celtic stock.

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* John Hare (www.johnhare.org.uk) is founder of the Wild Camel Protection Foundation (www.wildcamels.com).
David Jongeward describes the beautiful numismatic depiction of kings and gods from an empire that once rivalled that of the Chinese, the Romans and the Persians.

**The coins of the Kushans**

During the first centuries of the Christian era, a vast inland empire stretched across Central and South Asia. The Kushan empire was a superpower of its time alongside the Chinese, Persian and Roman empires. Just how and when the Kushan dynasty formed continues to be debated, and precise dates, especially for the late Kushan kings, are still elusive, but the coinage alone reveals this dynasty as a major force in the cultural and political history of the ancient Silk Road.

Evidence for the reigns of a handful of Kushan kings has been gleaned from cryptic references in Chinese and Kashmiri annals, supported by evidence from a handful of inscriptions on stone and metal, but primarily from their extensive coinage. Some Kushan kings are known only because their names appear on coins. Determining chronologies of kings in Central Asia has depended on numismatics and epigraphy to a greater extent than on written histories and archaeology.

In addition to information derived from widely dispersed finds of coin hoards, coin finds have also provided crucial evidence in most Kushan-era archaeological sites. This is especially true for Kushan cities, sites in Bagram in Afghanistan and Taxila in Pakistan, together with smaller sites in Pakistan, northern Afghanistan, southern Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and India. In all these sites, spread over an area nearly the size of modern day India, the dating of artefacts has largely relied on coin finds in their related archaeological contexts.

The discovery in 1993 of the Rabatak inscription added another piece of firm evidence for understanding the history of the Kushan Empire. The rock inscription was found in northern Afghanistan associated with ruins of a sanctuary site built on the orders of the fourth Kushan king Kanishka I (AD 127-151). The inscription describes his achievements, lists the gods whose images were to be presented in the sanctuary, and also provides the names of his predecessors: his great-grandfather Kujula Kadphises, his grandfather Wima Takto and his father Wima Kadphises, confirming evidence of a royal succession previously only provided by the coinage.

Kanishka I has generated the widest attention across the spectrum of cultural, political and religious history, as well as in numismatics. He is a figure of primary importance in Asian history, his reign rightly considered a pivotal era that saw major contributions in architecture, sculpture, and Buddhist texts and art. Kanishka's importance in written records is largely because of the part he played as a patron of Buddhism. Monastery construction and expansion thrived during his reign in both urban and rural hillside settings, built around stupas, Buddhist monuments that often contained relics. Kanishka was the first king to issue coins showing images of the Buddha.

He has also become crucial to modern historical research because of a Kanishka era established in his first year as a dating system for the next century and a half in Kushan territory. Many contemporary inscriptions and sculptures carry dates in this era, which are of immense importance to epigraphists and historians of religion and art. There has been a long-running controversy over the start date of the Kanishka era. This has been largely resolved by a growing consensus that places this era in the early second century, *circa* AD 127.

Kushan gold coinage was first issued by Kanishka's father, Wima Kadphises (*circa* AD 113-127). His short reign does not distract from radical developments Wima Kadphises brought to Kushan coinage. His gold coinage was the first in Central Asia and India since the issues of Bactrian Greek and Indo-Greek kings. In addition to three denominations of a copper coinage, the gold coinage was produced in four denominations that established a standardised pattern for Kushan coinage by placing a full or half figure image of the king on the obverse, with a deity on the reverse.

A Wima Kadphises gold double dinar (1) features a bust portrait of the bearded king emerging from a mountain top represented by a pile of boulders. He wears a diadem with flying ribbons, and a tall round cap with a small sphere-and-crescent feature on top and a loop motif on the side. His overcoat is double-clasped at the chest and worn over a tunic. In his right hand he holds a knobbed club that rests on his shoulder. A royal dynastic symbol, or *tamga*, appears to the left of the king's head, and with minor variations on all coins issued by subsequent Kushan kings. The Greek inscription reads: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΟΗ – ΜΟ ΚΑΜΠΗΣ (‘of king Wima Kadphises’).

The reverse of the same coin (2) depicts the Kushan god Oesho, standing with flames emanating from the top of his head and leaning against a bull. The deity is naked except for a diaphanous garment that falls in symmetrical folds around his legs. He wears an amulet string across his chest, holds a trident with a raised right hand and an animal skin in his left. A *nandipada* symbol is to the left. The bilingual coin has a reverse inscription in the Prakrit dialect of Sanskrit, written in Kharoshthi, an ancient script known from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan in about the 4th century BC to 3rd century AD. It reads: maharajasa rajadva- jasa sarvaloka’isvarasa mahisvarasa v’ima kathpi asa tradaras (‘of great king, king of kings, lord of the world, great lord, Wima Kadphises, saviour’).

Wima Kadphises was equally innovative in his copper coinage. On the obverse of his copper tetradrachms, the king is represented in an act of reverence, making an offering at a small fire altar (3). He is flanked on the left by a trident-axe, a knobly club to the right. He wears a diadem with tie and ribbons, a tall bonnet, and an open, knee-length skirted tunic over baggy trousers and padded boots. He clasps the hilt of a sword in his left hand. The *tamga* is at shoulder height to his right. The deity is not named on Wima Kadphises’ coins, but represents Oesho, a prominent deity throughout Kushan coinage. Oesho is not known in the history of religions before his appearance on Kushan coins. From his name, however, he is believed to be a mountain and sky god derived from the Kushans’
Iranian and Central Asian heritage. The deity lacked an iconography, and for purposes of representing their god, the Kushans borrowed attributes from the Hindu god Shiva and the Greek god Herakles.

Oesho is just one of a highly unusual and diverse assemblage of nearly 25 deities that appear on Kushan coins, most notably found in the coinage of Kanishka (circa AD 127-151) and his successor Huvishka (AD 151-190). The pantheon expresses a uniquely Kushan response to the multi-cultural nature of the vast region occupied at the height of empire. Iconography derived from Rome, the Hellenised Orient, Zoroastrian Iran and both Hindu and Buddhist India all appear in Kushan coin imagery.

Drawing images from these multiple sources, Kushan coinage established iconography for many Central Asian deities for whom there was no pre-Kushan visual representation. Although the sourcing of coin iconography is multi-cultural, the pantheon is drawn primarily from religious traditions of Iranian Bactria, largely reflecting the religious values of Kushan kings rather than those of the area’s highly diverse population.

Within this Kushan proliferation of deities, relationships are clearly expressed in the coin iconography between kings and deities. Beginning in the copper coinage of Wima Kadphises and continuing throughout most of the Kushan period, the king is portrayed in an expression of reverence by making an offering at a small fire altar. The deity in turn is often portrayed with gestures bestowing kingship, such as the proffering of a royal diadem, or making a gesture of blessing. The two sides of the coin can thus be seen as a united image. The king honours the gods who in turn bestow kingship. This fundamental idea of kings in relationship with gods is especially notable in the coin designs of Kanishka and Huvishka.

The Kushan pantheon emphasises nature-centred deities, especially the sun, moon, fire, and wind. In the first year of Kanishka’s reign, the coins display Greek language inscriptions for five deities: sun god ΗΦΑΙΣΤΟΣ (Hephaistos) and wind god ΑΝΕΜΟΣ (Anemos). After the first year of his reign, Kanishka changed the coin language from Greek to Bactrian, but retained the Greek script. The same deities appear with Bactrian names, Miero (Mioiro), Mao, Nana (Nanashao), Athsho and Oado. The iconography for deities in early stages of Kushan coin design clearly reveals Greek and Hellenised Iranian influence.

On a coin of Kanishka (4), the bearded king stands making an offering at a small fire altar. Flames emanate from his right shoulder. He wears a diadem, a round Iranian cap, a cloak double-clasped at the chest with pointed corner folds over a belted tunic, trousers and boots. He holds a spear with his left hand and is armed with a sword. The Bactrian language inscription in Greek letters reads ΑΡΑΟΝΑΡΑΟ ΚΑΝΗΡΙΚΗ ΚΟΡΑΝΟ (king of kings, Kushan Kushan). The deity on the reverse of the same coin is the moon god Mao (5) who is shown standing, head to left, with a crescent emerging from his shoulders. He wears a diadem. A cloak around the shoulders is clasped at the chest and worn over a belted tunic. With the left hand, he clasps the hilt of a sword and cradles a ribboned sceptre with elliptical finial. The deity makes a gesture of blessing with an extended right hand. There is a tapa in the left.

A coin issued by Kanishka’s successor, Huvishka (6) portrays a haloed half-figure bust of the king emerging from a mountain-top, with flames coming from both shoulders. Following a precedent set by former Kushan coin portraits, Huvishka is shown with a sizeable wart on his left cheek as a sign of royalty. He wears a triangular jewelled helmet with a twin-pronged forehead medallion, crest jewel, circular side ornament and a pointed jewelled ear flap. The ornamented tunic has a jewelled collar, arm bands, and a chest panel with a double-helix pattern. He holds a club in his right hand and a spear in his left. The Bactrian inscription reads ‘ΡΑΟΝΑΡΟΡΑΟ ΟΟ/ ΗΡΚΙ ΚΟΡΑΝΟ’ (‘king of kings, Huvishka Kushan’). The deity on this coin is Pharro (7), Kushan god of royal good fortune. He stands with his head turned to the left and wears a winged or flaming cap. Flames rise up from his shoulders. He wears a cloak clasped at the chest over a calf length tunic, and boots. He offers a bowl of fire with an extended right hand and clasps a sword in his left hand. Huvishka’s tamga is to his left. Pharro is sometimes paired with Ardoshcho, the Kushan goddess of royal good fortune and abundance. Like other deities in the pantheon, Ardoshcho’s name is known from no other historical source other than Kushan coinage, where she is one of the most frequently depicted gods. Her iconography is derived from that of the Greek goddess Tyche, and like her and the Roman goddess Fortuna, Ardoshcho is normally identified by the cornucopia she holds.

On a coin issued by Kanishka II (circa AD 230-247) (8) she is seated on a wide, high-backed throne with ornate legs, her body surrounded by a halo. Her feet placed on a small rug with a scattering of coins. She wears a double crescent crown ornament, her hair in ringlets extending to her shoulders. She wears an ankle-length robe with shoulder brooches, and a long scarf draped from her right arm. She cradles a cornucopia in her left arm, the contents are shown as small spheres, and proffers a diadem with ribbons in her extended right hand.

Other deities that appear on the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka include the Greek god Herakles, Iranian god of good mind, Manaobago (9), and god of truth, Ashaeixsho (10). Kanishka’s pantheon also includes representations of the Buddha in an exceptional rare gold issue, and in more commonly issued copper coins, generally found in very worn condition (11).
There is a particular sweetness in the air in Central Asia in September. The sun’s heat is not scorching but gentle, even in the heart of the Xinjiang deserts and over the high mountain passes that lead from China to Kyrgyzstan. Its light, though, is strong and defines everything sharply. It makes the silvery leaves of poplar trees in the oases shimmer with a metallic brightness, in contrast to the stark jagged mountains capped by snow and the dun-coloured desert sands. The mountain air soothes the weary traveller who has suffered from the heavy pollution that clouds Chinese skies even in the remotest regions.

We are passing along the northern section of the Silk Road westwards, from Lanzhou to Kashgar and Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, with stopovers en route at major archaeological sites now open to foreign tourists. Our itinerary involves several flights, a night journey by train and long tiring hours on buses over uneven roads through clouds of dust raised by trundling tracks. As we travel along this 1000-year-old trade route, where different...
civilisations have mingled and merged over the centuries, we have seen enticing signs pointing to Lhasa, Xi’an and Ulan Bator.

Xinjiang, the Uighur Autonomous Region of China, as it is officially called, occupies one sixth of the country’s total landmass, with a boundary that stretches for more than 5000 kilometres, bordering Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Today the Silk Road is still fully operational, with trucks, lorries and yet more trucks moving goods along the motorway – still under construction – that links the eastern and western ends of Northern China. Only at the Sunday
market in Kashgar do we see the traditional pack animals, yaks and camels, formerly used for transport.

Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu province on the upper reaches of the Yellow River, is where the Silk Road truly begins and ends. Upon arrival it is evident that this is a tense frontier town controlled by armed soldiers in full combat gear – a harbinger of things to come perhaps? The Chinese army and police force keep a close watch on the local Uighur Moslem population, descendants of nomadic Turkic tribes, who are now swamped by waves of Han Chinese colonialists. Even hotel entrances are closely guarded and, when we enter, our luggage is scanned by metal detectors. The Uighurs converted to Islam after a Chinese army, sent to oppose the Moslem army of the Abbasid Caliphate, was defeated in AD 751 at the battle of Talas River (north of Tashkent), thereby halting the westward expansion of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907).

Immediately outside Lanzhou airport, visitors are welcomed by a large statue of the famous ‘Flying Horse’, which has come to symbolise Gansu and, in some ways, the Silk Road itself. This is a reproduction of the small galloping bronze horse, which was one of the highlights of The Genius of China, a groundbreaking exhibition, held at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1973, which introduced a Western audience to the stunning new archaeological discoveries made in China under Mao. The horse had been found in 1969 in the tomb of a local general of the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25-220) in Wuwei. It was under this dynasty that the Silk Road began to thrive and that horses, together with silk, became one of its more precious commodities.

The presence of petrochemical industries and considerable construction works mean that moving around in Lanzhou is now a slow process through endless traffic jams under a sombre cloud of pollution. But we have a glimpse of the old way of life in this once-peaceful provincial river town when we arrive at a flea market set up in an ancient temple, where the pace changes to a more traditional and liveable tempo. Despite the pollution, the profusion of flowers (cosmos and hollyhocks especially) growing by the roadside offer proof of the green campaign that China now sponsors.

An arduous two-hour drive from Lanzhou is followed by a pleasant boat trip across an artificial lake edged by jagged peaks to visit the Buddhist caves of Binglingsi (Temple of the Bright Spirit). As we round a bend in a steep gorge, a huge (27 metres high) statue of a seated Buddha from the Tang period comes into view. Then a short flight from Lanzhou takes us to the large oasis of Dunhuang and the tasteful comfort of the new, luxurious Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel. Overlooking a dramatic landscape of sand dunes, it provides a stunning view, especially at night by the full moon, which we enjoy while dining by candlelight.

A library of 60,000 manuscripts, walled up in 1036, was found here
by a Taoist monk who, in 1907, revealed his discovery to Aurel Stein (1862-1943), one of the main characters in the Great Game ‘played’ here in the late 19th and 20th centuries by treasure hunters, explorers, archaeologists and spies (often one and the same) who competed with one another in the wilds of the Taklamakan desert, known ominously as ‘the desert of no return’.

Back in England, Stein was knighted for his efforts, but Chinese nationalists considered him a thief, and the acquisition of the treasures of Dunhuang and related sites along the Silk Route by European museums is still a subject of controversy in China. Whether these priceless artefacts would have survived the region’s natural disasters and man-made interventions if they had been left in situ is a moot question. Nevertheless, it was no surprise that the 4th International Conference of Experts on the Return of Cultural Property, organised by China’s State Administration of Cultural Relics, was held at Dunhuang in September. This annual event explores the methods needed to repatriate cultural artefacts and to crack down on looting and related crimes. This year it attracted about 100 delegates from around 20 countries.

A case in point is the decorated caves of Kyzil, from which many unique and magnificent Indo-Iranian-style murals were removed by German explorers and taken to Berlin, where they were destroyed by Allied bombing during the Second World War. The little-visited oasis of Kyzil is still, however, an enchanting place, a sort of Shangri-La, where the Buddhist grottoes overlook a pristine landscape with a flowing river bordered by poplars, untouched by the Chinese frenzy for modernisation and quick profit.

A night train journey crossing the featureless Taklamakan Desert in comfortable couchettes allows us to reach Turfan early in the morning. Little remains of the rural charm of this oasis now – cars have replaced horse-drawn carriages and the magnificent ikat silk fabric that was still worn here some years ago is made of nylon. Today the women wear headscarves and trousers under dresses and men square black cotton skullcaps embroidered with paisley motifs. Wayside stalls, though, are still piled high with melons and grapes, while vendors sell flat round loaves of bread filled with sizzling lamb kebabs and there are bright red carpets of peppers left to dry in the sun. A severe, but elegant, 18th-century mosque and minaret, decorated with bands of burnt brick, towers in isolation among mud houses on the outskirts of Turfan.

An easy drive takes us to the Buddhist caves of Bezeklik and to the haunting ruins of the once-flourishing cities of Gaochang (Karakhja) and Jiaohe (Yarkhoto). It was at Astana, Gaochang’s cemetery, and the important Buddhist centre of Subashi that the mysterious mummies of Caucasian-looking people were found (see pages 28 to 31).

Their origin is still the subject of academic debate. Like the mummies now in the Turfan Museum, the so-called Witch of Subashi, a woman wearing a huge pointed hat, is thought to be a member of an early Caucasian population that lived in the region. Altogether more than 100 of these astonishingly well-preserved mummies, dating from 2000 BC onwards and buried in the Taklamakan Desert, have been excavated by Chinese archaeologists over the past 16 years.

Kashgar (Kashi) is situated where the southern and northern Silk Routes joined and branched towards Afghanistan, India and Russia, and the famous Karakorum highway links China to Pakistan. It is now crumbling under the assault of bulldozers that are making room for a modern, almost entirely Chinese city. A huge statue of Chairman Mao, the only one that remains standing in China, points to the future.

Kashgar was Britain’s main listening post in the time of the Great Game, when European nations vied for political and economic supremacy in Asia. George Macartney represented Britain in Kashgar from 1890 to 1918. His wife wrote a delightful book, entitled An English Lady in Chinese Turkestan (1931), about her experiences here after she arrived in deepest ‘Turkestan’ as a young bride of 21 in 1898.

Lady Macartney was a gracious hostess to the many famous travellers and explorers who came to travel...
the region, regardless of nationality. She had a garden known as the Chini Bagh (Chinese Garden) built in front of the consulate, although it was planted with flowers and shrubs brought in from India and England; and also a tennis court.

The Macartneys’ successors continued with the tradition of providing hospitality to travellers of all sorts. Clarmont Skrine, British Consul General from 1922 to 1928, wrote home to his mother: ‘To collectors... the place is a Paradise.... This is a great centre for the activities of the “TaklaMakanchies”... the men... who spend all their lives searching for treasure from the lost cities under the sand... The people here realise that objects other than gold ornaments... have a value for mad Europeans...’

The British adventurer and travel writer Peter Fleming (1907-1971) called the town ‘Kashgar-les-Bains’ and, in News from Tartary (1936), wrote that the Chini Bagh was ‘a heavenly experience... where I could rest... after the rigours of the trip, sitting in comfortable armchairs with long drinks and illustrated papers with a gramophone playing’.

A long drive, made longer by the many checkpoints dotted along the mountain passes at more than 4000 metres, takes us to the tawny, treeless grasslands of the western section of the Tian Shan mountain range and into Kyrgyzstan. Only a few yurts and herds of horses roaming free are to be seen.

The little-known archaeological site of Burana in the Chuy Valley, not far from Issyk-Kul lake, where Russians used to practise underwater torpedo launches and where uranium sites are now abandoned, is well worth a stopover after the long haul over the snow-capped mountains. Here are the ruins of the ancient city of Balasagun, the capital of the Karakhanid state (AD 955-1130), of which only a fortress, the city walls and the Burana Tower, an 11th-century minaret decorated with fired brick patterns in separate broad bands, survive. Nearby is a group of upstanding stones, erected between the 5th and 11th centuries by the Turkic-speaking nomads in most regions of Central Asia. Known as bal-bals, they are carved with schematic representations of men, often bearded and with moustaches, holding a cup in the right hand and with the left hand resting on a sword.

More bal-bals and important Buddhist artefacts are displayed in Bishkek in the Museum of State History, an overpowering Bolshevik marble building lined with murals showing the achievements of the Communist Revolution, including Yuri Gagarin (1934-1968), the first man in space, orbiting the earth. The proto-cosmonaut trained here when he was learning how to acclimatise to high altitude.

Everyday life in Central Asia is still shaped by its Mongol, Bolshevik and Maoist past, although it somehow still manages to retain a whiff of the far-off exotic Eastern appeal of Marco Polo’s fabled Cathay.

**FACT FILE**
- The writer’s itinerary: Beijing-Lanzhou (plane); Lanzhou-Dunhuang (plane); Dunhuang-Turfan (train); Turfan-Korla (bus); Korla-Kucha (bus); Kucha-Aksu (bus); Aksu-Kashgar (bus); Kashgar-Naryn (bus, crossing the China-Kyrgyzstan border), Naryn-Bishkek (bus), Bishkek-Istanbul (plane).
- For help in planning your own journey along the Silk Road through Kyrgyzstan/Chinese Turkestan, contact Ak-Sai Travel in Kyrgyzstan (www.ak-sai.com or email info@ak-sai.com).

To book a room at The Silk Road Dunhuang Hotel, the official Culture Hotel, email (srdhtl@163.com).

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8. 11th-century minaret at the site of Balasagun (now Burana), the capital of the Karakhanid state (AD 955-1130). Photograph: Studio Livingstone, Milan.


With Explorers Club flag No 143 flying from the first of a line of 13 Dodge Power Wagons weighing nearly three tons each, the newly formed American Foundation for the Study of Man (AFSM) rolled out one of the earliest expeditions intent on unearthing hidden Arabia. The calendar said April 1950, but the landscape all around the explorers spoke of places that disappeared thousands of years ago. The expedition team went not only back in time but also straight down into the sands, where layer upon layer of abandoned cities lay buried. One civilisation began where an earlier one left off, their histories preserved in sand.

This was the home of the ancient incense road, where the vehicle of choice was the camel. Magical fragrances of their precious cargoes of frankincense and myrrh wafted through the air as caravan after caravan ambled its way to market. Perhaps they would find evidence, too, of the fabled Sabean queen – the Queen of Sheba – whose legendary encounters with King Solomon are noted in the Bible, the Qur’an, and the Ethiopian holy book, the Kebra Nagast.

The sound of gunshots in the distance – a customary desert greeting in southern Arabia – frequently jolted the team of explorers back to the present.

At the helm of the expedition was Wendell Phillips (1922–76). Three years earlier, Phillips – young, handsome, brilliant, and armed with degrees in paleontology and geology from the University of California at Berkeley – had been the leader of ‘From Cairo to Cape Town’, the largest expedition ever to leave from the United States. It lasted 26 months and included
The adventures of Wendell Phillips

‘Time fell asleep here, and the husks of ancient civilizations were buried deep in sand, preserved like flowers between the leaves of a book. The land... was rich with the spoils of time, and I wanted to unearth some of those riches, digging down through sand and centuries to a glorious past.’

Wendell Phillips

Exhibition

4. Head of a woman (‘Miriam’), alabaster, plaster, lapis lazuli or glass, 1st century BC - first half of 1st century AD, Timna, Yemen. 36.5cm x 18cm.

5. One of a pair of bronze lions ridden by Eros, 75 BC–AD 50, Timna, Yemen. 62cm x 70.5cm x 20cm.


Wendell Phillips’ team arrives at the Peristyle Hall in Marib, present-day Yemen. Courtesy of American Foundation for the Study of Man.

Minerva January/February 2015
Phillips chose the South Gate of the cemetery of Timna, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Qataban located in the Wadi Beihan, as the site of the expedition’s first dig. It took the removal of only a few feet of sand before Timna began to reveal itself. Each object was a story waiting to be told. The team of archaeologists found sherds, inscriptions on stone, and exquisite ibex heads carved in alabaster, plus layers of ash that proved Timna itself was destroyed by fire nearly 2000 years ago.

Further along in their dig they were startled by a frantic call: ‘Ya sabih!’ One of the local workmen wanted them to come and see what looked like a human ear sticking out of the ground. Phillips and his team were overjoyed as they watched
the workmen clear away the sand. Slowly, the piece revealed itself to be what the AFSM team named ‘Miriam’, the startlingly beautiful alabaster head of a young woman dating from around the 1st century BC. Remarkably, still evident was some of the blue lapis lazuli frequently used in ancient statues to define the eyes.

After 2000 years of being buried in sand, ‘Miriam’ was brought to AFSM headquarters to be numbered, catalogued, described, and photographed. As with all objects he discovered, Phillips and his team took detailed notes in their field books. When the team came across inscriptions carved into stones too large to move, Professor Father Albert Jamme, an epigrapher, made latex squeezes by spreading rubbery goop directly onto the stone. When it dried, he peeled it away like a bandage, and the three-dimensional inscription was captured.

One wall inscription revealed the word ‘WBLQS’. Could this be a reference to Bilqis, the traditional name of the Queen of Sheba, whose kingdom was located about 40 miles away in Marib? Although this area was off limits to foreigners, it was always on Phillips’ mind, and he wanted to dig there the following year. He hoped to find evidence not only of the ancient kingdom of Saba and the legendary queen but also of one of the wonders of the ancient world: the Marib dam, which helped the desert to flower when the water flowed. With youth and pluck on his side – he was barely 30 – Phillips decided to write a letter to HRH Prince Abdullah, foreign minister of Yemen, at his palace in Sanaa.

‘No American explorer’, Phillips reminded himself, ‘no English explorer, had ever visited the city of the Queen of Sheba. No real excavation had ever taken place. Marib was a closed area within a forbidden land. So far as I knew, no one had ever been able to talk to the present king about Marib’.

When he received a reply in the mail, it contained an invitation for an audience with the king of Yemen. ‘My dream had come true’, he later wrote. For the first time in history, the king granted a foreign team permission to dig in Marib.

‘Here we were on our way to the Queen of Sheba’s city! We were going to see it with our own eyes, plan the work of excavation we would do there. Unless you have had a deep dream of several years come true you cannot possibly imagine my feelings,’ wrote Wendell Phillips.

As they approached Marib for the first time, riding over the dunes, the eight giant columns sticking out of the landscape in the distance must have seemed like a mirage. Phillips and the team, including Dr Frank Albright, field director and chief archaeologist, and Professor Jamme, jumped out of their vehicles for a closer look. Could this be the remains of the Temple of Bilqis? When they arrived in town, their enthusiasm soon turned to fear as they were greeted by angry tribesmen and soldiers, some with their faces painted indigo. Despite reassurances that the king himself had given permission for the excavation, Phillips and his colleagues were kept under guard for the night. In the morning they were set free.

Within a few days the team was able to get to work. Local workmen, boys and dozens of teams of oxen cleared the sand that had blown over the ancient city for more than two millennia. The sand soon gave way to what appeared to be a grand hall lined with tall pillars, stairways that led to now-vanished upper storeys, as well as bronze and alabaster sculptures.

Inscriptions found on an exterior masonry wall and ‘squeezed’ by Professor Jamme revealed that a series of kings and priests had constructed various parts of the sanctuary and that this pre-Islamic culture worshipped the ancient Sabaean moon god Almaqah. The entry hall, known also as the Peristyle Hall, yielded hundreds of fragmentary bronze statues, the largest and most complete of which depicted Madakarib, the 7th-century BC ruler. Phillips and his team dug down into the sands and found...
an archaeologist’s version of heaven: they were ecstatic. Unfortunately, the political climate worsened in Yemen to the point that the team abandoned its work, equipment, and recovered artefacts and was forced to flee to neighbouring Oman. The last 24 hours of their stay was a harrowing experience. Phillips even sent a telegraph to President Harry Truman back in the United States to alert him of the team’s dire situation.

Once out of Yemen, Phillips and the team worked in Oman for 10 more years. Phillips was given the name of Mustashar Sultan of Muscat and Oman by Sultan Said bin Taimur, the sultan of Muscat and Oman.

Sadly, though, Phillips was never able to return to the city of Marib to complete the work he loved best. So, while the shifting sands reburied everything they had unearthed, including all but the tops of the columns of the Peristyle Hall, he set out to write about his experiences – the good, the bad, and the unexpected – and, in 1955, published the book *Qataban and Sheba*, which hit the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Two decades later, on 12 November, 1974, Phillips received a gold medal from the Explorers Club in recognition of his ‘outstanding contributions to exploration’. Lowell Thomas, celebrated explorer and family friend, delivered the plaque to him in hospital. Phillips had long been ill and died shortly thereafter. With his death in 1976, the American Foundation for the Study of Man lost its founder, leader, and direction. The hourglass seemed to have run out of sand. Then, in 1980, Phillips’ sister Merilyn revived AFSM, with Professor Jamme serving as Vice-President. During the next decade, in 1997, the government of Yemen contacted her and asked her to continue the work her brother was forced to abandon.

The following year she signed a formal concession agreement in the ancient city of Sanaa and set foot on the site of the Moon Temple near Marib, the capital of Saba, just as her brother had. It did not look much different from the way it had appeared to him nearly 50 years earlier. The sands had done their job of covering the archaeologists’ work. Eight giant pillars sticking out of the sand greeted the new members of the American Foundation for the Study of Man, the same greeting the original members received.

When excavation work began again, Professor Jamme’s inscriptions revealed themselves once more. In 2004, the team uncovered most of the Peristyle Hall and added many new inscriptions to the squeezes made by Jamme in the 1950s. They were still on the lookout for signs of Bilqis but political unrest in the area forced them to stop their work in 2006 and so the legendary Queen of Sheba remains as elusive as ever.

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‘I’m proud to continue my brother’s work. Wendell was like a guardian angel to me. It wasn’t my life plan, but after my first excavation at Marib, it became my passion.’

Merilyn Phillips Hodgson

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• *Unearthing Arabia: The Archaeological Adventures of Wendell Phillips* is on show at the Arthur M Sackler Gallery (www.asia.si.edu/unearthingarabia/) in Washington DC until 7 June.

• *Uncovering Yemen* by Howard Kaplan is reprinted from *Asiatica* magazine. Copyright 2005, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. All rights reserved.
Surprisingly, an Assyrian gypsum cuneiform dedicatory panel (1) was the object that received the highest bid at the antiquities auction held on 1 October at Christie’s London. This large (77cm x 38.5cm), significant record of a building in the palace complex of Tukulti-Ninurta I (circa 1243–1207 BC), bears an inscription of 280 lines on both sides listing this ruler’s military campaigns and bestowing blessings on future kings. Several authorities have suggested that this king was Nimrod, who features in the Old Testament. Apparently the most detailed of all Assyrian royal inscriptions found to date, it was acquired by a German private collector during the 1960s. The estimate of only £100,000-£150,000 did not deter several determined telephone-bidders from running up the winning bid to an unexpected £626,500 ($1,014,304). It finally went to a private European collector.

Another Roman marble portrait head (2), circa late 1st century BC-early 1st century AD (H. 28cm), probably had its beard and moustache added during the 3rd to 4th century AD, this did not prevent it from bringing in £338,500, just above its optimistic estimate of £200,000-£300,000. Another Roman marble portrait head (H. 30.5cm), this time of Emperor Gallienus (3) who ruled from AD 218-268, had come from the collection of Michelle Baranowski in Milan, circa 1925. It was estimated at £70,000-£100,000 and attracted a final bid of £80,500 from an anonymous buyer.

Next up was a large (46.4cm) and rare Cycladic marble reclining female figure attributed to the Bastis Sculptor (4), Late Spedos variety, Early Cycladic II, circa 2600–2500 BC. H. 46.4cm. (Lot 58: £104,500).

Costing an arm and a leg?

Dr Jerome M Eisenberg reports on London antiquities sales at Christie’s and Bonhams

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Although a fine Roman marble male portrait head (2), circa late 1st century BC-early 1st century AD (H. 28cm), probably had its beard and moustache added during the 3rd to 4th century AD, this did not prevent it from bringing in £338,500, just above its optimistic estimate of £200,000-£300,000. Another Roman marble portrait head (H. 30.5cm), this time of Emperor Gallienus (3) who ruled from AD 218-268, had come from the collection of Michelle Baranowski in Milan, circa 1925. It was estimated at £70,000-£100,000 and attracted a final bid of £80,500 from an anonymous buyer.

Next up was a large (46.4cm) and rare Cycladic marble reclining female figure attributed to the Bastis Sculptor (4), Late Spedos variety, Early Cycladic II, circa 2600–2500 BC, lacking its head and right foot. It was first offered to the American art market during the late 1980s and published by Pat Getz-Gentle in Personal Styles in Early Cycladic Sculpture (2001). Only seven figures have been attributed to this sculptor and an English private collector snapped it up for £104,500, well within the estimate of £80,000-£120,000.

A life-size Greek marble arm (5), circa 5th-4th century BC (L. 50cm), from the collection of Professor Wilhelm Kreutzberg, Munich, acquired in 1980, was very conservatively estimated at £20,000-£30,000, but it sold for £80,500 to the buyer of the Gallienus head.

The fourth Labour of Herakles, delivering...
the Erymanthean boar to Eurystheus, who has taken refuge in a giant pithos, is depicted on an Attic black-figure neck amphora (H. 40.6cm) by the Antimenes Painter (6), circa 525–500 BC. The reverse shows a Scythian archer, a hoplite, and two other figures. Published by I Love in 1989, it was from the Opiuchus collection, Geneva. With an estimate of £50,000–£70,000, it went to a European private collector for £80,500.

An unusual Attic red-figure pelike (7), (H. 20.3cm), circa 430 BC depicting three naked bearded satyrs at play, one balancing on the back of another lying on his stomach with arms supporting him, was originally sold by Sotheby’s London in May 1970 to an English collector. With an estimate of £20,000–£30,000, it brought in an unexpected £68,500 from the buyer of the Antimenes Painter amphora.

The first part of this auction was devoted to an extensive collection of Egyptian stone vases formed by the Swiss collector Rudolf Schmidt (1900-1970), purchased in the 1950s. It is especially rich in those from the Early Dynastic Period (1st-3rd Dynasties, circa 3100-2647 BC), such as this large (H. 39.4cm) crystalline limestone jar (8) from the 2nd-3rd Dynasty. Estimated at £30,000–£50,000, it was finally hammered down at £110,500 and went to a dealer in the United States.

A rare and large (H. 29.2cm) bronze Canaanite deity, or may be a worshipper (9), Late Bronze Age, circa 1550–1200 BC, was in the collection of H Palivoda, Geneva, during the 1950s. It brought in £134,500 from an American collector, well within the estimated £120,000–£180,000.

Next an unusual, apparently unique, Sasanian bronze furniture leg (H. 35.6cm), with the protome in the form of a bust of a Sasanian king (lacking his headdress) and terminating in a lion paw foot (10), circa 3rd–4th century AD, originally came from the Singer Family Collection, Geneva, and was acquired circa 1962. With an estimate of £50,000–£70,000, it sold for £74,500 to an English private collector.

The auction of 187 lots totalled £3,473,188, with 88% sold by number of lots and 89% by value. Nine of the top 10 lots went to private buyers and only one to a dealer. The cover piece, a fine Roman mar-
The object that sold for the highest price in Bonham’s antiquities sale in London on 2 October was an Egyptian finely carved dark green stone Osiriphoros statue depicting Padiaset (1), high priest of Set and scribe of the temple, holding a large figure of Osiris before him, (H. 28.6cm). Dating from the late 26th Dynasty, circa 600–525 BC, it has hieroglyphic inscriptions on the front, back and sides. It came from a Dutch private collection, acquired between the 1930s and the early 1970s. Estimated at £60,000-£80,000, it brought in £136,900 from an American private collector.

A very large (79cm) South Arabian gesso-painted marble female votive figure holding a rectangular votive bowl (2), circa 1st century BC, belonged to the Brussels’ collectors Lucien and Irene Deloyers. Lucien Deloyers (1901–1982), a well-known surgeon, had purchased it in the 1950s. With an estimate of £80,000-£120,000, it was hammered down to an English dealer for £98,500.

A sensitive Hellenistic male marble head (3) probably of a hero or a god (H. 24.7cm), circa 3rd-2nd century BC, was once thought to be Ptolemy I, but is more likely to be Herakles or Zeus Serapis. As with many Alexandrian sculptures of the period, the hair was probably added in stucco to maximise the use of marble. It sold to a private collector from the Middle East for £50,000, within its estimate of £40,000-£60,000.
An important Middle Kingdom tomb group probably from the reign of Sesostris II (circa 1897-1878 BC). The Treasure of Harageh was consigned to the sale by the St Louis Society of the Archaeological Institute of America. They had acquired it in about 1914 in return for partially funding the excavation of the tomb of an unknown princess, Tomb 124, at Harageh in the Fayum near Lahun, in 1913-14. This was carried out by the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, under the direction of the legendary Flinders Petrie. The Treasure of Harageh consists of four banded travertine vessels and an alabaster spoon with the handle in the form of an ankh (4), seven silver cowrie shells, 14 silver mounted shell pendants, 10 silver and hardstone inlaid jewellery elements and a unique three-dimensional inlaid silver jewel in the form of a bee (5 and 6). Estimated at between £80,000 and £120,000, it was withdrawn on the day of the sale and sold by private treaty to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for an undisclosed amount.

The sale of 192 lots totalled a low £1,230,963, with just 58.3% sold by number of lots and only 44.1% by value in spite of a well-produced catalogue with an extensive selection of Classical marbles and several fine Attic vases. The cover piece, a Byzantine silver plate depicting Odysseus, estimated at £220,000 to £250,000, and a Roman marble bust of a philosopher, probably Socrates, with an estimate of £200,000-£250,000, were among the unsold lots. (All prices noted include the buyer’s premium.)

An important Egyptian tomb group from Harageh, Middle Kingdom, 12th Dynasty, probably the reign of Sesostris II, *circa* 1897-1878 BC, consisting of five banded travertine objects (4), seven silver cowrie shells, 14 silver mounted shell pendants, 10 silver and hardstone inlaid jewellery elements (not shown) and a unique silver jewel in the form of a bee (5 and 6). (Lot 160: withdrawn from sale and sold by private treaty to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for an undisclosed sum).
This hefty volume, lavishly produced and illustrated, details the results of the excavations carried out by Professor John Carswell – leading an international team of archaeologists and students – between 1980 and 1984 at the ancient port-city of Mantai in Sri Lanka. The excavation at the Mantai site, located at the north-western tip of the island, was unexpectedly terminated in 1984 by the sudden outbreak of a civil war that was to escalate over the ensuing years.

Mercifully, the material unearthed was rescued in 1985 and is now presented in a definitive form through a series of articles by distinguished scholars, edited by John Carswell, Siran Deraniyagala and Alan Graham. The actual findings, pottery and other artefacts, have been deposited in the headquarters of the Archaeological Commission at Anuradhapura where they rest next to those found during earlier excavations. Anuradhapura was the capital city for which Mantai was the port, serving as an entrepôt for long-distance shipping with a flourishing community of merchants – including a colony of Roman traders – where goods were exchanged from as far as China, the Gulf and the Red Sea, the Mediterranean and East Africa, Sri Lanka and the Indian subcontinent, for more than 1500 years, from the middle of the first millennium BC to the 11th century AD when it was invaded by the Chola rulers of Southern India.

Mantai was also a manufacturing site exporting pearls, glass, chank shell bangles and crystal beads cut, polished and pierced in situ, testifying to the first recorded use of industrial diamonds. Literary sources record that perishable materials, such as silk, textiles, wood and spices, were also traded.

The importance of the site lies in the opportunity it provides to link the great Sri Lankan inland sites at Anuradhapura, Polonnaruva and Sigiriya with the outside world. Thus besides establishing stratigraphical sequences for Mantai, one of the main objectives of the excavations was to find out the nature of trade with China and the Islamic world from the 9th century AD onwards, by examining the many different ceramics imported from the Near and Far East and correlating them with local artefacts.

An equally pivotal excavation was undertaken in the late 1960s at Siraf, a major port on the Persian Gulf and a vital hub at the crossroad of the trading routes linking the Far East, India and the Mediterranean by the archaeologist David Whitehouse (who is now the director of the Corning Museum in the United States). He says: ‘Mantai is potentially one of the most important projects in historical archaeology today’.

This long awaited publication provides a springboard for future excavations not only in Sri Lanka but in related sites throughout the Indian Ocean and is yet another landmark in the long list of brilliant books and articles that John Carswell has written over the years in his relentless quest for evidence provided by ceramics – blue and white porcelain especially of which he is the world’s leading expert – and trade goods that travelled in all directions, East and West, North and South.

This is a quest that started during the 1950s in a tiled church in Jerusalem where John Carswell worked as an archaeologica draughtsman for Kathleen Kenyon at Jericho, and other sites in Greece and Turkey, and which continued from the Middle East to the Maldives Islands, the coasts of Southern India, Sri Lanka and even Inner Mongolia and the Gobi desert.

Dalit Jones
the perils of drinking are in the final chapter, on medicine. It would perhaps have made more sense to keep these together to allow easier contrast of differing points of view on the same subject.

At the conclusion of each chapter there is a list of secondary literature and, at the end of the book, a convenient list of works cited, with a brief description of each writer, which is particularly helpful in the case of the more obscure authors.

Sourcebooks remain wonderful resources for students and any inquisitive reader wanting convenient access to ancient thoughts on a particular topic; this recent instalment in the Bloomsbury Sources in Ancient History series is no exception. It is not intended as a substitute for reading a whole text, but it is certainly a good starting point for further research.

Lucia Marchini

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Darius in the Shadow of Alexander
Pierre Briant, translated by Jane Marie Todd
Harvard University Press
608pp, 64 halftones
Hardback, £25

Alexander the Great has long been a favourite figure from antiquity, a hero who has inspired many and captures our imagination even today. The widespread media coverage of the ongoing excavations at Amphipolis seems to be spurred on more by its Alexandrian connection than by the beauty of its sphinxes, caryatids and mosaics. In recent reports on the analysis of the remains found at Tomb II at Vergina, there is a tendency to describe the tomb as belonging to ‘Alexander the Great’s father’.

So despite his own military successes, Philip II’s greatest legacy is Alexander. But he is by no means the only figure to be defined in relation to his ambitious son; in the minds of many Darius III, the most powerful king of his time with a vast empire stretching from the Mediterranean to the Indus River, exists only as Alexander’s legendary Persian enemy. Pierre Briant tackles this issue head on in his book Darius in the Shadow of Alexander, now expertly translated from the 2003 French original Darius dans l’ombre d’Alexandre by Jane Marie Todd. As Briant puts it, Darius and the Persians in general, have been subjected to a ‘Hellenocentric and Alexandro-manical view’. He remarks that there is also a general undervaluation of the Achaemenids within the history of the ancient Middle East, which has led to a lack of scholarly interest in the Persian kings apart from Cyrus and Darius I.

‘No book has ever been dedicated to the history of Darius’, states Briant in his introduction. Yet this book, as he says, is a book on Alexander, too. This is because many of the sources that discuss Darius are first and foremost about Alexander. Indeed, the Graeco-Roman sources on Alexander which mention Darius III refer to him as ‘Darius, the one who was defeated by Alexander’, to avoid any confusion with Darius I. As we well know, history is written by the victors, and this plays an important part in the paucity of reliable sources on Darius. There can only be one hero, and that is Alexander.

This, Briant relates, is true not just of ancient sources, but also of medieval and modern theatrical and historiographical portrayals of Darius’ death, which are crafted to highlight Alexander’s chivalry towards his enemy. The situation is similar when Darius’ wife, mother and daughters are included in the narrative; they are devices not to evoke any sort of understanding or sympathy for Darius, but rather to again underline Alexander’s generosity. One important example of this is the anonymous painting after Charles Le Brun’s The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander, in which, owing to the painting’s context, Louis XIV is endowed with the kindness we see Alexander exhibiting. This also demonstrates the longevity of the ‘Alexandro-manical’ view; for centuries rulers have wanted to be Alexander, never Darius.

Briant provides excellent analysis of the sources, as scarce and biased as they may be in some cases. The study is not restricted to the problematic literature; Briant also discusses material sources, such as coins, mosaics, and even later paintings. Despite his open declaration that ‘this book is not a biography’, it does provide valuable information on Darius’ public and private lives, as well as on the perils of an ‘Alexandro-manical’ viewpoint and the persistence of images in general. However, it is rather elaborate and exceptionally detailed book, perhaps best suited to a reader already in possession of some knowledge of the subject.

Lucia Marchini
bookreviews

at Le Vieil Evreux, whose lay-out has been clarified by the work of France’s best-known archaeological aerial photographer, Roger Agache. As for the bath-house at the centre of l’Affaire Evreux, Bromwich regrets that it was covered over and the maternity wing built on top of it. You may or may not agree with Mr Bromwich, but like all good guides he is not afraid to air his opinions.

Another place I may have to rethink thanks to this guide is Orléans: a city with a disappointing cathedral, the worst restaurant in France (in my biased opinion) and where I managed to get my car stuck in the new tramway. But now I know that I have failed to explore Cenabum, the emporium of the Carnutes. Caesar, considerate as ever, sacked the place. So 12,000 Carnutes went off to Alésia to join Vercingétorix’s resistance movement. Following the Roman conquest the city was resurrected as the southern capital of the Carnutes. Bromwich provides a vivid history and, best of all, reminds us that the City Museum contains the Neuvy-en-Sullias treasure, a superb collection of Gallo-Roman bronze statuettes. I might go back to Orléans if I can find a decent restaurant.

I have also failed to appreciate Le Mans, famous for its 24-hour car race, Renault factor, and for me its TGV railway station. Yet it deserves 24 pages in the guide, notably for its incredible decorated Roman city walls and a ‘sparkling contemporary museum’. Beyond the city lies the magnificent Allones La Forétière religious sanctuary, which was based on the Templum Pacis of Titus in Rome. These are examples of the often unappreciated richness of northern Gaul. The section on Brittany could persuade you to redesign your vacation. Most people cling to the coast with its rugged cliffs, beautiful bays and in the south, one of the world’s great concentrations of megalithic monuments around Carnac.

Yet bang in the middle of Brittany is Carhaix-Plouger, the tribal capital of Vorgium, sited to have easy access to everywhere. Since the 1990s large-scale excavations and preservation of remains have put Vorgium and its surrounding villas and complex aqueduct system on the map of Roman Gaul.

Brittany is strewn with interesting Roman sites, Gallic promontory forts and oppida, and for real aficionados Roman fish factories. For these head west to the battered granite rocks of Douarnez. The adjacent sheltered bay attracted sardines in the millions. And the fish factories were probably the smelliest place in Gaul. Bromwich is very good on fish and salt production.

All in all this is an excellent guide for all Francophiles and Romanists who are looking for new provinces to explore.

David Miles

CLASSICAL CONUNDRUMS

Adam Jacot de Boinod poses a vocabulary quiz from Latin and Ancient Greek

Can you guess the correct definition for each word from the following three options?

1) loxobates (Ancient Greek)
   A) shifting and evasive in argument
   B) walking sideways, in the manner of a crab
   C) travelling by moonlight

2) analecta (Latin)
   A) the pendulous skin under the throat of cattle, dogs etc.
   B) a woman without energy
   C) one who picks up the crumbs after a meal

3) panaphelika (Homeric Greek)
   A) deprived of all playmates
   B) indistinct pronunciation, such as that produced by a lisp or by stammering
   C) spiritual torpor, world weariness

4) impolite (Latin)
   A) uncomfortable, bothered, uneasy
   B) without ornament
   C) verbally belittling

5) apocheironosis (Ancient Greek)
   A) the sensation of bugs crawling over one’s body
   B) a rejection by a show of hands
   C) civility outwardly expressed, but without sincerity

6) iris (Latin)
   A) the sting of a bee
   B) secret, shady
   C) a rainbow

7) atimageles (Ancient Greek)
   A) despising or forsaking the herd, feeding alone
   B) a soldier without military skill or knowledge
   C) eminently embraceable

8) nemotrephes (Homeric Greek)
   A) of a man: handsome, good looking
   B) contributing nothing
   C) toughened by exposure to wind and sadness where one feels no desire or strength to act

9) accidia (Latin)
   A) a terrible state of spiritual torpor and sadness where one feels no desire or strength to act
   B) a rhetorical device of damning by faint praise
   C) delusion that one is of divine descent

10) charmolipi (Ancient Greek)
   A) something unprofitable
   B) a whirring or grating sound, as that produced by a lisp or by stammering
   C) delusion that one is of divine descent

11) pavo (Latin)
   A) a peacock
   B) a hangman’s noose
   C) anything badly formed, out of shape

12) apeirodakrus (Ancient Greek)
   A) shouting with the mouth wide open
   B) weeping to excess
   C) feeling happy and sad at once

Adam Jacot de Boinod has worked as a researcher on the BBC television quiz programme QI. He is the author of The Meaning of Tingo and creator of the iPhone App Tingo.

ANSWERS

- 1B) walking sideways, in the manner of a crab
- 2A) the pendulous skin under the throat of cattle, dogs etc.
- 3A) deprived of all playmates
- 4B) without ornament
- 5A) the sensation of bugs crawling over one’s body
- 6A) the sting of a bee
- 7A) despising or forsaking the herd, feeding alone
- 8B) contributing nothing
- 9A) a terrible state of spiritual torpor and sadness where one feels no desire or strength to act
- 10A) something unprofitable
- 11A) a peacock
- 12A) shouting with the mouth wide open

Minerva January/February 2015
UNITED KINGDOM

BATH

The Beau Street Hoard

Found by archaeologists while excavating the site of the new Gainsborough Hotel in Beau Street, Bath, in 2007, the Beau Street Hoard is one of the most remarkable discoveries to have been made in the city in recent times. It comprises 17,577 silver Roman coins, spanning the period 32 BC–AD 274, which were found in eight separate money bags that were fused together. In 2014 the Bath & Northeast Somerset Council was awarded a grant that meant they were able to purchase the hoard, which in turn has facilitated a new interactive exhibition that has gone on permanent public display at the Roman Baths. To coincide with the exhibition the museum will be holding a two-day symposium allowing visitors the chance to study the hoard in detail. The symposium will take place between 22 and 24 April.

The Assembly Rooms and Roman Baths
(www.romanbaths.co.uk)
+44 (0) 20 7766 7300
Until 22 February.

OXFORD

William Blake: Apprentice and Master

This survey of the life and work of the visionary, William Blake (1757–1827), examines his early life, including his apprenticeship as an engraver, and his maturity, when he was at the height of his powers both as an artist and a revolutionary poet, in the 1790s. Nebuchadnezzar (above) was one of the so-called Large Colour Prints that he began in 1795. The show also highlights his influence on the young artist-printmakers, including Samuel Palmer, who gathered around him in the last years of his life. Blake’s studio, where he created most of his illuminated books and developed his method of colour printing, was based at No. 13 Hercules Building, Hercules Road in Lambeth. The discovery of the 19th-century blueprint for his studio, which shows its exact dimensions, means that a detailed recreation of No. 13 could be made – and this is at the heart of the exhibition.

Ashmolean Museum
+44 (0) 1865 278000
Until 1 March.

OXFORD

Grayson Perry: Who Are You?
The Turner Prize-winning artist and BAFTA award-winning journalist Grayson Perry presents a new series of work addressing the theme of identity. Perry’s contemporary approach to the traditional medium of portraiture includes tapestry, sculpture and pots – all depicting individuals, families and groups trying to define themselves in the multicultural mix of modern Britain. Among those featured are the disgraced MP Chris Huhne, a female-to-male transsexual, a couple suffering from Alzheimer’s, a young Muslim convert and X-Factor and Celebrity Big Brother contestant Rylan Clark. The Huhne Vase (above) was deliberately shattered (like the politician’s career) by Perry and then repaired by him.

The National Portrait Gallery
+44 (0) 20 7306 0055
Until 15 March.

LONDON

Gold

Some 50 objects drawn from across the entire breadth of the Royal Collection and dating from the Early Bronze Age to the 20th century, have been brought together to show the splendour and symbolism of gold. This exhibition invites visitors to learn about the distinctive qualities that make this rare and precious metal an enduring expression of the highest status, both earthly and divine. Highlights include a gold tiger’s head from the throne of South London. The discovery of the 19th-century blueprint for his studio, which shows its exact dimensions, means that a detailed recreation of No. 13 could be made – and this is at the heart of the exhibition.

Ashmolean Museum
+44 (0) 1865 278000
Until 1 March.

SOUTHEND

Alan Sorrell (1904-1974)

Alan Sorrell’s family moved to Southend when he was two. He grew up there and became a fine artist. He is largely remembered for his portrayal of ancient sites both in the UK and worldwide, such as Interior of Queen’s Temple at Abu Simbel (below), but he also painted murals and local scenes. Held in association with Liss Fine Art, this show brings together works from the Beecroft Gallery’s own collection as well as loans from private owners.

Beecroft Gallery
+44 (0) 1702 212511
Until 4 April.

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Beecroft Gallery
+44 (0) 1702 212511
Until 4 April.
KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM, VIENNA

Techniques employed by one expert portray the afterlife. It also reveals myths to comprehend death and to how its inhabitants used Greek techniques employed by one expert to understand the afterlife. It also reveals myths to comprehend death and to how its inhabitants used Greek ancient Southern Italy, specifically, to explore the funerary customs of indigenous tribes. This exhibition explores the funerary customs of ancient Southern Italy, specifically, how its inhabitants used Greek myths to comprehend death and to portray the afterlife. It also reveals techniques employed by one expert to understand the afterlife.

NEW YORK, New York

El Greco in New York

Few Old Master painters have exercised such a profound influence on modern artists as has El Greco (1541-1614), and this year marks the 400th anniversary of his death. The Met has the finest collection of works outside the Museo del Prado in Madrid (who staged El Greco et Modern Painting earlier in the year). The entirety of the Met's collection will be on display alongside many significant loans from the Hispanic Society of America. The works presented span the artist's career: from his arrival in Venice in 1567, through his move to Rome in 1570 and, finally, his long residence in Toledo from 1577 until his death. As such, this concise exhibition acts as a mini-retrospective featuring numerous key works. Also worth noting is that New York's Frick Collection, which holds works by this artist that cannot be lent, will exhibit its three El Greco pictures together for the first time during the same period.

Bartholomew Spranger: Splendor and Eroticism in Imperial Prague

This exciting exhibition examines the remarkable career of an artist who served a cardinal, a pope and two Holy Roman Emperors. Bartholomew Spranger (1546-1611) rose to prominence at the court of Rudolf II in Prague and is now considered the most significant Northern Mannerist artist of his generation. Spranger was the leader and founder of the Prague School and composed works imbued with eroticism and erudition. He is also known for his immense aptitude for composing allegories featuring amorous couples entwined in complicated and seemingly impossible poses – such as in Jupiter and Antiope (left). Rare paintings, drawings and etchings are set against works by other artists who helped shape Spranger's artistic horizon as well as a kunstkammer (chamber of wonders) featuring exotic objets de vertu.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
+1 212 535 7710 (www.metmuseum.org)
Until 1 February.

Treasures from India: Jewels from the Al-Thani Collection

Covering several centuries of tradition and craftsmanship this exhibition provides a glimpse into the evolving styles of the jewelled arts of India from the Mughal period until the early 20th century. Over 60 glittering objects, all from the private collection of Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Thani, demonstrate that India has been at the epicentre of the jewelled arts for many centuries, with its own mines yielding gold, diamonds, and many other precious and semi-precious stones. A group of fabulous late 19th- and 20th-century jewels made for India's Maharajas by Cartier and other Western firms provide an interesting glimpse of Colonial India. Another highlight is a gem-set tiger head finial (above) originally from the throne of Tipu Sultan (1750-1799), which incorporates numerous cabochon diamonds, rubies, and emeralds in a kundan setting. The main exhibits are displayed alongside archival photographs and portraits of Indian royalty wearing works similar to those on view.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
+1 212 535 7710 (www.metmuseum.org)
Until 25 January.

CROATIA

ZAGREB

Guercino: The Light of Baroque

Guercino's work – such as Sibilla (below) – by that Italian master of Baroque painting, Guercino (1591-1666), are characterised by a distinctive style that is greatly influenced by the work of both Caravaggio and

Minerva January/February 2015
Carracci. This exhibition offers the rare opportunity of seeing over 35 of his works together, including his altarpieces and frescoes transferred to canvas, which were originally created for churches and palaces in Cento, Guercino’s home-town, or other towns in the surrounding area, between Bologna and Ferrara, where he created most of his art. Displayed chronologically and spanning a long period – from his first commission for the decoration of the Spirito Santo church, through to his later works in Bologna – this exhibition provides an insight into Guercino’s decision to gravitate from traditional Baroque practices, such as the dramatic play of light and dynamic settings, to the classic equilibrium of his later work.

The Benedictines in the Heart of Europe 800-1300
Through a selection of objects – from sacred and decorative art, sculpture and book illumination to architecture, the uniquely rich spiritual and artistic culture of the Benedictine Order in Central Europe during the Early Middle Ages is explored. The cover of a Carolingian Franco-Saxon Evangelarium (above) made of ivory and gilded copper set with diamonds, crystals and other gems illustrates this. The emphasis is on the history of Central European states during the Early Modern Era, and the irreplaceable role that the Benedictine Order played in that era.

Of Beasts and Pharaohs: The Reign of Animals in Ancient Egypt
This show gives an insight into the extraordinary and harmonious relationship between Man and the animal world in Ancient Egypt. Some 430 works reveal every facet of their exceptional bond and also details a number of species that have now disappeared. Visitors will learn that animals embodied, in their technical and visual characteristics, relationships between humans, and between humans and non-human entities. For the first time, visitors will be able to see a virtual simulation of a mummification, and placed under the protection of four male deities, Neith and Selkit, Neith and Selkit. Neith and Selkit.

Empire of Colour
The devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79 brought life in the cities and surrounding areas of the Gulf of Naples to a standstill. Yet, strangely the murals painted on the walls of hundreds of houses there remained intact. From the beginning of the 19th century towards archaeologists identified four major types of design. This exhibition presents an outstanding collection of wall paintings from the Gulf of Naples as well frescoes discovered in the south of France. It examines the French decorative modes of Campania and those of the ancient Roman provinces of Narbonne and Aquitaine.

Minerva
January/February 2015
HISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF THE POTIFICAL GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY (INV. APUG 775), ROME

Clavius Collection. Among the digitisation undertaken by the project of enhancement and before; the prestigious documents of the documents are testimonies astronomer Angelo Secchi come Cristopher Clavius and Jesuit Galilei, Jesuit mathematician by scientist and astronomer Galileo and astronomical instruments used Working documents, signed letters the First Explorers of the Stars Galileo and Clavius: The Works of

ITALY

ROME

Galileo and Clavius: The Works of the First Explorers of the Stars

Working documents, signed letters and astronomical instruments used by scientist and astronomer Galileo Galilei, Jesuit mathematician Cristopher Clavius and Jesuit astronomer Angelo Secchi come together for the first time. Many of the documents are testimonies that have never been published before; the prestigious documents have been recovered thanks to a project of enhancement and digitisation undertaken by the Clavius Collection. Among the manuscripts on display will be the work of Clavius (below left) that explains the introduction in 1582 of the Gregorian calendar, still in use today in the Western world. Another highlight is an extraordinary letter dating from 1609 in which Galileo discusses his observations of the moon through a telescope and makes several drawings revealing the discontinuity of the lunar surface, later opposed by the Church.

Spazio Espositivo Tritore
+39 06 90 21 90 51
(www.fondazionesorgentegroup.com)
Until 13 February.

Secession and Vanguard: Art in Italy before the Great War, 1905-1915

The short period from 1905 to 1914 in Italy’s history was one characterised by artistic fervour and innovation. The political and social friction and growing nationalism in the run up to the First World War created a vacuum in which artists and critics were able to address the notion of modernity and forge an Italian avant-garde. As had already happened in places such as Munich, Berlin and Vienna, a group of young Italian artists rose up against the conservative art industry that had dominated ‘the long 19th century’. These artists were bold, antagonistic and preached modernist concepts – although they were soon penetrated by even more avant-garde elements. Divided into eight thematic areas featuring over 170 works, the exhibition begins in 1905 in the context of the humanitarian socialism pioneered by Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo and championed in Rome by Giovanni Cena, Duccio Cambellotti and Giacomo Balla, whose monochromie portrait of Tolstoy is on show. 1905 was also the year when Gino Severini and Umberto Boccioni organised a ‘Show of Rejctes’ in the foyer of the Teatro Costantini in Rome. The exhibition closes with the Great War and its absorption of all avant-garde impetus and aspirations to leave a tabula rasa or a blank slate.

Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna
+39 06 32 29 81
(www.gnam.beniculturali.it)
Until 15 February.

SPAIN

BARCELONA

Stories in Metal: Art and Power in European Medals

This exhibition is an exploration of the emergence of the 17th-19th century European phenomenon of the so-called ‘metal stories’. Rulers throughout this period could establish the landmarks they felt glorified the history of their reign by commissioning engraved medal series (above). Prominent leaders such as Louis XIV of France, Frederic the Great of Prussia and Napoleon all employed scholars, artists and expert silversmiths to create medal series that commemorated important events. Each series would depict a sequence, such as a succession of family events, diplomatic triumphs, military victories and constructions of public buildings. In rare cases illustrated volumes were also published with engravings of the pieces accompanied by the relevant explanation. The success of this formula stirred up rivalry between monarchs and, in this sense, the emergence of genuine wars on metal, such as the one that pitted William of Orange and the Archduke Charles against the Sun King.

Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya
+34 93 62 20 36 0
(www.mnac.es)
Until 18 October.

NETHERLANDS

THE HAGUE

Gold of the Gods

The Wereldmuseum is the first museum in the world to exhibit a collection of Javanese gold dating from the 7th to the 11th centuries. The display is mainly comprised of jewellery that was worn on special occasions by Javanese royalty, who would adorn themselves with items originally intended for the gods, honouring Vishnu, Shiva, and Parvati by embodying them. The jewellery itself was crafted by the most highly renowned goldsmiths, requiring not only superior craftsmanship but also spiritual knowledge as illustrated by the sasas and legends adorning the individual pieces that portray the active role played by the gods in Javanese society.

Wereldmuseum
+31 10 27 07 172
(www.wereldmuseum.nl)
Until 6 April.

EVENTS

LONDON, UK

London Roman Art Seminar 2015

Lecture Programme
The University of London, with support from the Institute of Classical Studies, King’s College London and Royal Holloway University of London, presents a series of lectures on Roman history:

12 January
Unravelling the myth of Inanem fecit: How long did it take to make a toga?
Led by Mary Harlow
(University of Leicester)

26 January
Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) and the documentation of Egyptian hard-stone carving in Rome
Led by Anna Serotta
(Metropolitan Museum of Art & American Academy in Rome)

9 February
Early Emperors at Gebel el Silsila (Upper Egypt): quarry activity and workers’ graffiti
Led by Maria Nilsson
(Lund University)

23 February
New insights into the Mildenhall treasure
Led by Richard Hobbs
(British Museum)

9 March
Depicting the dead, reflecting the living: the funerary portraiture of Roman Palmrya
Led by Rubina Raja
(University of Aarhus)

23 March
Wall painting in Roman Britain: the state of the art
Led by Roger Ling
(University of Manchester)

27 April
Site seeing: exploring the imagined city of Pompeii through visitor photography from the 19th century to the present day
Led by Zena Kamash
(Royal Holloway)

11 May
Charles Townley’s Etruscan collection
Led by Dirk Booms
(British Museum)
All lectures begin at 17.30 in Room 264 on the second floor of Senate House (South Block). There is no need to register and admittance is free.

University of London, Malet Street, London
+44 (0) 20 7848 1015.

Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society 2015 Lecture Programme

19 January, 18.00
Ahab’s Ivory House: When was it destroyed?
(The Richard Barnett Memorial Lecture)
Led by Dr. Rupert Chapman
IoA, University College, 31-34 Gordon Square, London

12 March, 16.00
Led by Dr. Jeffrey Blakely
(Jointly with the Palestine Exploration Fund)
The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London

20 April, 18.00
Revealing ‘Invisible’ Greek Magical Texts from the Levant
Led by Dr. Kathryn Piquette
IoA, University College, 31-34 Gordon Square, London

11 May, 18.00
Title tbc
Led by Dr Carly Crouch
Room K2.31, King’s College, Strand, London

1 June, 18.00
Title tbc
Lead by Professor Estee Dvorjetski
(Plus: Annual General Meeting commencing 17.00)
IoA, University College, 31-34 Gordon Square, London

Various locations across London
+44 (0) 20 8349 5754
(aias.org.uk).

ABU DHABI, UAE

Talking Art Series: Early 2015 Programme: The museum’s Talking Art Series, which began in 2011, has proved a great success. As usual the panels in this year’s series will examine critical questions of art history through works in the Louvre Abu Dhabi’s growing permanent collection, as well as key works on loan from partner institutions. Once again it will bring together artists, eminent specialists, curators, academicians, architects, collectors, philosophers and writers – and this year it also includes a famous film director:

James Ivory talks: Miniature Paintings and Films
28 January
18:30-19:30 talk
19:30-21:00 film
A lecture by the renowned filmmaker and art collector James Ivory whose outstanding collection of Indian miniatures is now part of the Louvre Abu Dhabi permanent collection. The talk will be followed by a special screening of Hulalabali: Over Georgie and Bonnie’s Pictures (1978), directed by James Ivory. Duration 85 minutes.

Light and Religion
25 March
18:30-19:30
Taking a mid-14th-century mosque lamp as its starting-point this talk examines the importance of light as a symbol in universal religions and philosophies, represented and enhanced through choices of material, technique and innovative architectural design.
Led by Martin Kemp, Emeritus Research Professor in the History of Art, University of Oxford and Sabiha Al Khemir, Senior Advisor of Islamic Art, the Dallas Museum of Art.

Art as Witness of Globalization
27 May
18:30-19:30
In order to approach the phenomenon of the ‘global museum’ the talk will revolve around the theme of Louvre Abu Dhabi’s universal view and will examine the meaning of the creation of such a museum in Abu Dhabi. Led by Curator Jean-Hubert Martin and Saied Binkrad, Professor of Semiology of Art in the Department of Fine Arts, Rabat University.

Prior registration for talks is required call +971 2 657 5800 or email manaratalsaadiyat@tcabudhabi.ae

Louvre Abu Dhabi
+971 2 657 5800
(louvreabudhabi.ae/en).

RESEARCH AWARD
HALI & CORNUCOPIA announce Ancient & Modern: A Prize for Original Research
Magazines Hali and Cornucopia have launched the ninth (2014/15) grant of £1,000 for a research project which will be awarded to a candidate under 26 or over 60 years old. The project should relate to any of the subject areas covered by the sponsoring journals.

Application deadline: 30 April.

BRUSSELS, Belgium: BRAFA
This year Brussels Antiques and Fine Art Fair celebrates its 60th anniversary – with 126 exhibitors from over a dozen countries. Fine examples of antiques, tribal art, drawings, paintings, sculpture, furniture, jewellery and objets d’art will all be on display.
There will also be a series of daily lectures on various aspects of art and heritage and how it is being conserved and protected. To mark this 60th anniversary the King Baudouin Foundation has created a special exhibition entitled The Belgian Collector and one of the greatest Belgian art collectors is Axel Vervoordt, who will be exhibiting this stunning four-sided Preleamic sandstone Hathor capital (left).
From Classical art to pre-Columbian archaeology, from Old Masters to vintage comic strips, there is something for everyone from every age and every region at this highly eclectic cultural event.
An added bonus is that anyone whose birthday falls between the dates of BRAFA will gain free admission.
Brussels (www.brafa.be)
+32 2 513 48 31
From 24 January to 1 February.

LONDON, UK: Works on Paper Fair
including themed loan exhibition, Alan Sorrell (1904-1974): The Man who Created Roman Britain
Each year, the Works on Paper Fair hosts a themed loan exhibition, with the aim of bringing original works of art that are for the most part unseen, and often little known, to the public’s attention. This year the fair presents a focused exhibition of works by Alan Sorrell. Sorrell’s atmospheric drawings, such as Ur of the Chaldees (above) reimagined ancient sites as they once were. His depictions of ancient and Roman Britain were used extensively by the Ministry of Works, the Illustrated London News and many museums.
Science Museum London
(www.worksonpaperfair.com)
+44 (0) 01798 215 007
From 5 to 8 February.

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