



Leaching pit no. 1 at the salt production site of Yinjiawopu, Jilin, China. This image features in our February 2015 Project Gallery article 'The first salt production workshop discovered in the Manchurian Plain (Yinjiawopu site, Jilin, China)' by Pauline Sebillaud, Xiaoxi Liu and Lixin Wang, which can be read at <http://journal.antiquity.ac.uk/antplus>



A monumental building of Early Bronze Age III Level 13 at Kültepe, Turkey. This image features in our February 2015 Project Gallery article 'New evidence for international trade in Bronze Age Central Anatolia: recently discovered bullae at Kültepe-Kanesh' by Fikri Kulakoğlu and Güzel Öztürk, which can be read at <http://journal.antiquity.ac.uk/antplus>

EDITORIAL

🏺 The world is changing rapidly, and archaeology with it. Globalisation is rewiring the relationship that connects Europe and North America, with their long histories of archaeological research, to other regions, where archaeologists are throwing new light on prehistories and early histories that have hitherto been less intensively studied. The outcome is a shifting but more balanced picture of the human past at a global scale, and a better appreciation of the interactions that have shaped the modern world.

In this issue of *Antiquity*, we embark on a new series of articles that seeks to tackle some of the consequences of these changes, not only for archaeology but for archaeological practitioners—those working in museums, laboratories, universities or in the field. The theme is ‘archaeological futures’, a deliberately plural concept that we hope will encapsulate a diversity of views about where archaeology stands today and the ways in which it may develop over the coming decades.

To launch this series, Koji Mizoguchi, elected last year as President of the World Archaeological Congress, offers his analysis of the current state of the discipline as it appears to someone writing from outside the Western academic sphere. His paper is intriguing and provocative, presenting an innovative analysis of the geographical divisions within archaeology, and suggesting solutions to some of the existing tensions. His thoughts on the status of archaeological theory within different traditions of research are especially interesting.

We hope to make ‘archaeological futures’ a regular feature of forthcoming issues of *Antiquity*, and to attract contributions from a wide range of backgrounds: from lab work and fieldwork, from established academics and younger scholars, from archaeological science and archaeological theory, and from every part of the world.

Dealing with the dead

🏺 Archaeology could hardly be called a gloomy subject, yet this issue of *Antiquity* once again includes several articles devoted to varying aspects of death. One of the most striking features of the prehistoric past is the diversity of ways in which people processed and disposed of bodies. That goes right back into the Lower Palaeolithic, with the cut-marks on the Bodo cranium from Ethiopia showing that our ancestors 600 000 years ago were defleshing bodies. And lest we dismiss that as remote and distant from the modern world, we should recall that it is not many centuries since saints were being dismembered for relics, and royalty and aristocrats eviscerated as standard practice before interment. There are intriguing parallels between medieval Christian practices and the isolated bones, circulating perhaps as relics among the living, that are found at British Bronze Age settlements. The Maya, too, regularly dismembered their dead.

One of the drivers behind this practice was the purification of the corpse. Cleaning the corruptible flesh from the incorruptible bones evidently has a long ancestry in itself. Human

remains from the Scaloria cave in southern Italy reveal both complete bodies and body parts being cut and scraped with stone tools to remove the flesh. Bones were cleaned, it seems, only then to be thrown away, cast aside on the cave floor. We can only assume that by that point the deceased had completed the transition from this life to the next and, the objective achieved, the skeletal remains were of no further interest.

In highland Bolivia, cleaning of a different kind was practised, employing not only knives but chemicals also to hasten decomposition. In the Titicaca basin, some 30km from the lake itself, blocks of soft, white, chalky quicklime were stacked within circular walled structures around the central patio of Khonkho Wankane in the early centuries AD. Within the same structures were disarticulated remains of some two dozen individuals, all crusted with quicklime. Cooking vessels carry the same tell-tale coating, suggesting that they were used to pour hydrated quicklime over the bodies, speeding their decay. And just like Scaloria Cave in Italy some six millennia earlier, it seems that bodies were brought to this special place from surrounding villages, specifically for the quicklime treatment.

Our customary instinct of respect for the dead make these treatments particularly intriguing to the modern observer. But what may sometimes seem like brutal manipulation of the corpse may in reality have been a mark of particular reverence and care.

Small but perfectly formed

☞ Treatment of the dead, more than almost anything else, brings us face to face with the humanity of the human past. Something similar, perhaps, can be said of images. They confront us with an often startling immediacy, especially those from the more distant past.

Last year, excavators at Vogelherd in southern Germany recovered a tiny fragment of ivory. The project was led by Nicholas Conard of Tübingen University, who was resuming excavations carried out by Gustav Riek in 1931. By sheer good fortune the ivory fragment turned out to be the missing piece of the head of a lion figurine that had been discovered during the earlier excavations. Last summer, head and body were reunited at Tübingen University Museum in the splendid galleries housed in the sixteenth-century Hohentübingen Castle.

Alongside the restored lion, the prehistoric galleries hold several more Upper Palaeolithic artworks (if we may call them that) from the caves of Vogelherd, Geissenklösterle and Hohle Fels, all clustered within the Ach and Lone valleys of the Swabian Alb. Others again are on display an hour's drive away at Blaubeuren, in another excellent archaeology museum, this time housed within a former monastery. At Blaubeuren, there are animal figurines and bone and ivory flutes, but pride of place goes to a 'Venus' figurine from Hohle Fels, from Aurignacian levels at the cave and older by several millennia than most of the famous Gravettian Venus figurines.

Both the objects and the displays raise interesting questions. For the objects, the most remarkable feature is their miniaturisation. Most of the pieces measure only a few centimetres across, a dimension that must have held some special importance. It must have made them incredibly difficult to carve, and for today's visitors the detail is so fine that it is often very difficult to see. How they were made is hard to divine, although sharp eyesight must have been at a premium. The two museums take divergent approaches in the display of



The lion figurine from Vogelherd, Germany. Photo: Hilde Jensen. ©Tübingen University, Germany.

this material: at Hohentübingen, several pieces, each in its own case, are arranged in an arc within a single gallery against a black backdrop. At Blaubeuren, each object occupies a central position within its own gallery. In both cases the excellent lighting and the ability to get close to the pieces and to view them closely from all sides counteracts the problem of their tiny dimensions. It also, in a very real sense, reinstates them as ‘ritual’ objects. Is the quality of the museum displays a help or a hindrance to their better understanding? Their Palaeolithic makers will never have had the opportunity of seeing them in such optimal conditions.

These same caves—Hohle Fels and Geissenklösterle in particular—have also yielded the oldest known musical instruments, in the form of bone and ivory flutes (see Conard *et al.* 2009¹). They come from the basal Aurignacian levels at Hohle Fels and are dated to at least 35 000 and possibly as much as 40 000 years old. That makes them equivalent in age to the oldest cave images in Western Europe. However, rock art wasn’t just a European phenomenon, but part of something much more widespread, as the recent article in our December issue made clear (Taçon *et al.* 2014²). If these are testimony to a ‘human revolution’, it was a much longer and more gradual process than was once believed, and involved the entire geography of anatomically modern humans, from ancestral Africa to recently settled Australia.

Crossing the continent

U Art of a different epoch is the subject of another paper in this February issue. Glacially smoothed rock surfaces in the Bohuslän region of southern Sweden have long been

¹ Conard, N.J., M. Malina & S.C. Münzel. 2009. New flutes document the earliest musical tradition in southwestern Germany. *Nature* 460: 737–40. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/nature08169>

² Taçon, P.S.C., N.H. Tan, S. O’Connor, X. Ji, G. Li, D. Curnoe, S. Chia, K.-N. Khuon & S. Kong. 2014. The global implications of the early surviving rock art of greater Southeast Asia. *Antiquity* 88: 1050–64.

famous for their abundant carvings. Dated to the Nordic Bronze Age, they include many representations of ships, along with bulls and other animals, and humans engaged in warfare or ritual combat. At Torsbo, near Kville, one panel depicts an unusual object that may have significant implications for our understanding of the nature of the Bronze Age world. Johan Ling and Zofia Stos-Gale interpret this motif as an oxhide ingot, a type made famous by discoveries from Mediterranean shipwrecks of the period. The most famous is the Uluburun shipwreck, off the southern coast of Turkey, which carried a cargo of more than 350 oxhide ingots weighing a total of 10 tonnes. Tree rings show that the Uluburun ship struck the rocks and sank in 1305 BC or shortly afterwards (Pulak 1998³). Oxhide ingots also appear in Egyptian tomb paintings, and they were clearly the means by which copper was shipped around the eastern Mediterranean.

But what are they doing in Scandinavian rock art? Ling and Stos-Gale argue that they are just one among several strands of evidence to show that Bronze Age Europe was interconnected on a scale that is only slowly coming to be recognised. It isn't just images in rock art that tell the tale: on one reading of the evidence, metals themselves were moving from south to north, in counterflow to the Baltic amber that was carried southwards to appear in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae. That implies a connected world, focused perhaps around warrior elites and long-distance voyagers. This, however, rests on a particular interpretation of the rock art motif and on the isotopic analysis of the metal used in Bronze Age Scandinavia. An alternative approach is less certain about the motifs from Torsbo and the other rock art sites, or that the isotopes indicate a Mediterranean origin for the metal. We return, therefore, to the all-too-common problem in rock art: of deciding what exactly is being depicted. The arguments are set out in the comments following the paper.

Routes and roots


🔗 Johan Ling and Zofia Stos-Gale present a well-argued case that chimes with growing evidence for people and animals moving around in prehistory. Not since the heady days of twentieth-century diffusionism has human mobility become such a prominent feature of archaeological narratives. That arises in part from the application of new scientific techniques, but also underlines the ever-present fascination—not restricted to archaeology—with tracing things back to their source. The resurgence of family genealogies, aided by the internet, is a good illustration. Why are we—and not only archaeologists—so keen to search for links, and the earliest links in particular? The recurrent speculations about the ‘discovery’ of the Americas are a good example. In the news recently was a speech by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Turkey, repeating twenty-year-old claims that Muslim sailors reached the Americas several centuries before Columbus. The rare proponents of this rather fantastical view hold that Columbus described seeing a mosque on Cuba (which he didn't) and that American rock art contains motifs resembling Arabic characters—an idea first put forward by Barry Fell in his 1980 book *Saga America*⁴ (long since debunked,

³ Pulak, C. 1998. The Uluburun shipwreck: an overview. *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 27(3): 188–224. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1095-9270.1998.tb00803.x>

⁴ Fell, B. 1980. *Saga America*. New York: Times.

and rightly dismissed as ‘delusions’ by a former editor of *Antiquity* (Daniel 1980⁵). Not so long ago it was similarly being argued that the Chinese too had reached America before Columbus. Gavin Menzies in *1421: The Year China Discovered the World*⁶ argued that ships commanded by Ming admiral Zheng He not only sailed the Indian Ocean but also crossed the Pacific. We have textual and archaeological evidence for Zheng He’s extensive voyages to the Arabian peninsula and East Africa in the 1410s, ’20s and ’30s: the archaeological traces of Zheng He’s voyaging to the Arabian Gulf will be reviewed in a paper in the April issue of *Antiquity*. Claims that he voyaged beyond East Africa have very properly been dismissed by serious scholars, and certainly fail the test of evidence so far. We should perhaps bear in mind, however, that we can’t always know for sure. Chinese contact with America may be fanciful, but sometimes ideas that have widely been dismissed do deserve serious attention. In our June 2013 issue we reviewed claims for Palaeolithic migration from Europe to North America, set out in Stanford and Bradley’s *Across Atlantic Ice*⁷. And for a more recent period, what about Polynesian contact with Peru?

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 This February issue of *Antiquity* is the first to appear under our new partnership with Cambridge University Press. We hope that this will bring benefit to our readers, subscribers and contributors alike. The archive of back issues has been re-digitised and is available in a more easily searchable form. Our expansion to six issues will make it possible to cover more of the latest archaeological research and to publish it more promptly. As always, we welcome feedback on any aspect of these arrangements. You can contact us by telephone, post, email or Twitter (see our website for details). Or come and talk to us in person at the *Antiquity* conference stand—at the SAA meeting in San Francisco (April), the EAA meeting in Glasgow (September) and at TAG in Bradford in December. We look forward to hearing from you.

Chris Scarre

1 February 2015, Durham

⁵ Daniel, G. 1980. Editorial. *Antiquity* 54: 169–75.

⁶ Menzies, G. 2002. *1421: the year China discovered the world*. London: Bantam.

⁷ Stanford, D.J. & B.A. Bradley. 2012. *Across Atlantic ice: the origin of America’s Clovis culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.