



*The Roman town of Umm er-Resas, Jordan, its military origin clear from the sharp lines of the rectangular curtain wall and projecting square towers. Excavations have revealed mosaic pavements from the post-Roman phases of AD 574/589, and even AD 718 and 756, long after the Islamic conquest. The view here shows the fort as it was later adapted to civilian use and then outgrew even that to acquire the much less orderly suburb on the right with yet more churches. (Photo Ref: RHB 0071 April 07). See Kennedy, D.L. & R. Bewley (2004) *Ancient Jordan from the Air*, London (CBRL): 206-7; Kennedy, D.L. (2004) *The Roman Army in Jordan*, 2nd ed., London (CBRL): 135-9.*



Aerial photographs showing the north (top) and south (bottom) views of a ploughed out Viking Age burial ground at Stiklestad, Verdal, North-Trøndelag (160km north of Trondheim), Norway. The mounds, which are round, long and 'star-shaped,' originally numbered 28-29; all but one have been removed by ploughing. The photographs were taken on 6 July 2007 from a helicopter flying at c. 150m above the ground using a Canon D350 Digital SLR camera with a 24mm zoom lens. Photographs courtesy of Lars Forseth, County Archaeologist, Nord-Trøndelag (Email: lars.forseth@ntfk.no) (Copyright: RA/SLF/NTFK).

EDITORIAL

☞ Arriving at the *Society for American Archaeology* conference at Vancouver, I had the now familiar feeling that there was no way I could get to half the lectures and – what with such a large number of delegates to talk to – I might even get to none at all. In a later search of the abstracts (published on CD-ROM), I found that there had been 321 Symposia, General Sessions and Poster Sessions and roughly 4000 papers. Is there really that much new archaeology to talk about? Well of course there is – especially if we ‘push back the envelope’ to include its dissemination and reception, uses and abuses, social values and deficiencies. The first evening thus began fittingly with an assessment of the state of collaboration, which included speakers from Native American and First Nation (Canadian) communities. The mood was upbeat: ‘Native people have made the passage from protest to professionalism,’ we were assured, and archaeology was coming to be regarded more as an asset than an impertinence: ‘Native Americans were always losing things – archaeology gives them a chance to find them.’ Nevertheless, I am sure that many groups, whether from North America or elsewhere, will have found participation in this massive event a little daunting. The exhibition hall alone was a wonder to behold, as vast as an Olympic stadium and as professional as any trade fair. Seventy five organisations, including your journal, took adjacent booths measuring 2×3 m at \$800 (Canadian) a time.

For that part of the world dedicated to the selling of archaeological books and courses, this was an exemplary occasion. Our subject is booming, and SAA must be one of its most productive gatherings. It was certainly one of the more serious. Lectures ran from 8 o’clock in the morning to 9 o’clock at night, with no remission for good behaviour. There were some parties, in the form of stand-up receptions sponsored by publishers and universities. But no emulation of the legendary EAA night out on the host town, or the WAC drumming festival, or the TAG thrash in which delegates dance themselves into oblivion in the early hours. Comparisons are perilous, but the impression is that mature, well-dressed, lightly polished SAA presents archaeology as a business, building business links, while others still cling to the conference as an oasis of unreal recreation.

☞ Giving papers is essential for developing the art of speaking in public, getting work noticed and for plotting new projects – all admirable and necessary aspects of our metier. I particularly like the rise of the ‘Poster’ as a way of introducing both a project to the community and its author to the business of communication. The poster is generally about 2×1 m and has a text of *c.* 500 words and 4 pictures. The author stands next to it at certain hours to chat to interested visitors – which in many cases constitute his or her first taste of an audience. Here you first learn what wasn’t clear in your presentation, and perhaps what still isn’t clear to you.

At *Antiquity*, our admiration for the poster has resulted in comparable presentations published every quarter online as the ‘Project Gallery’ (see <http://antiquity.ac.uk/ProjGall/projindex.html>). Contributions are not peer-reviewed, because their purpose, like that of the poster, is to put new ideas and new people on the map. Many of the projects are not finished, and some indeed have not even started. The Project Gallery is an intrinsic part of the journal and is archived with it in perpetuity. The ‘digital posters’ reach an enormous

readership – our website has readers calling in from 20 000 different addresses every month. Project Gallery pieces generally turn around in less than three months, and placing an email address at the foot of the piece means that authors can have the pleasure (or pain) of feedback that is almost immediate.

It is gratifying that among the new kinds of authors attracted by this format are archaeologists of meagre means from Asia and Africa – many of whom have neither the resources nor the time to nurse a full research paper into being. We are also glad to welcome that other group of highly competent archaeologists who have access to many of the world's newest discoveries but are notoriously short of the time to research them, namely the commercial practitioners known generally by the epithet CRM. This professional group, an expanding feature of many countries, has undertaken some of the largest field projects that the world has ever seen. Here is a way we could at least tell each other that they have happened.

🔍 Research projects by contrast have more exposure in conferences and in print. Among the star attractions at SAA was the Chan Project in Belize, directed by Cynthia Robin of Northwestern University which began as a survey focussed on the Late Classic monument of Xunatunich ('shoonatonic') and has since tracked social, economic and ideological change in its hinterland from 800 BC to AD 1200. The sequence was informed by the dissection of a selected site (Chan) where 275 earthworks were investigated over 3.2km². Struggling to liberate houses and temples from tree-roots, the excavators have produced a rich assemblage of pottery and shells giving a picture of developing religious orthodoxy which is of relevance well beyond Mesoamerica. A second star attraction was Çatalhöyük, the well-known Neolithic settlement mound (höyük) in Turkey where Ian Hodder of Stanford University is undertaking a neat if traditional context-only excavation, enhanced by on-site interpretation ('at the trowel's edge') and seasoned with a wealth of post-processual cogitation (see also Stuart Campbell's review on p. 497).

What is wholly admirable about both these projects is the way that their numerous participants step up to the podium in turn to report on specific studies. This also reflects the protocols of ventures that are reasonably well-funded, since the work-force consists largely of professors, post-grads and post-docs, rather than labourers, students, volunteers, friends and relations. In the case of Çatalhöyük, the agenda and results are driven by a discourse between specialists, while in the case of Chan, the agenda and results are driven by a pre-evaluated multi-disciplinary design. Whether the one approach or the other is best suited to mining new knowledge remains to be seen.

🔍 Not the least interesting aspect of both these projects lies in their terminal phase, when the greatness of an ancient community suddenly ceased. In its April edition, *New Scientist* carried a couple of scare features attractively entitled 'The End of Civilisation' and 'Are we doomed?'¹ According to author Debra MacKenzie the modern world system has become so interdependent that the failure of one part will inevitably result in the collapse of the whole. The loss of the electricity supply would result in rapid starvation, since towns only contain three days' rations, all dependent on refrigeration. This is certainly bad news

¹ *New Scientist* 5 April 2008: 25-8.

for those living in towns, most of whom also expect to be inundated fairly shortly due to global warming.

The ancient world by contrast is seen as much less complex, so the loss of a few thousand slaves in an epidemic need not greatly affect the economy. MacKenzie's main source is Joseph Tainter, whose fine book *The Collapse of Complex Societies* was published in 1988². Perhaps *New Scientist* could have noted that one or two things have been published since, for example Bruce Trigger's masterpiece, even redefining 'civilisation' and questioning whether 'civilisation' is really the gold standard it is cracked up to be. Tainter concluded that 'the collapses of the Western Roman Empire, the Southern Lowland Maya, and Chacoan society can be understood as responses to declining marginal returns on investment in complexity', – which leads without excessive strain to the idea of diverse regeneration expressed by Norman Yoffee at the end of the 2006 volume *After Collapse*: 'collapse seldom connotes the death of a civilisation as opposed to a particular form of government' and he speaks of 'the new opportunities presented to peripheral regions and secondary elites'. Phew! For one minute I thought that we had decided that the Early Middle Ages was a cultural void. And who is to say that ideological orthodoxy, central heating and public executions make a better world than finding weevils in your porridge? Clearly there is room here for new *Antiquity* authors to develop their own take on such hot topics, and I hope they do. We can then feed journalists on richer, fresher rations, weevils and all.

Following Edinburgh University's parsimonious perception of archaeology (Editorials in Volume 80: 778, 988, 993) it is a pleasure to extend a warm welcome to three new groups of archaeological researchers, starting with the University of Aberdeen. The Head of Department is Neil Price, author of a celebrated treatise on Viking religion *The Viking Way*, and his full-time colleagues are Karen Milek (soil scientist), Gordon Noble (Neolithic Scotland) and Peter Jordan (Siberia) with contributions from T. Douglas Price (isotopes), Stefan Brink (Scandinavian Studies), Kevin Edwards (environment) and Tim Ingold (anthropology). The current mission for Aberdeen is to explore and explain human settlement in cold places, which they are well-placed to do and have already established links around the Arctic Circle. But perhaps this was a little hasty. After a winter in Aberdeen, students might crave an archaeological experience somewhere a bit warmer, like Egypt - or Rome.

Rome's university 2 *Tor Vergata* (stripey tower) is named after a farmhouse with a tower painted with black and white stripes that was once a feature of the agricultural land on the south-eastern outskirts of Rome. Over this land the new university is expanding fast, revealing, as it dozes and levels, the earlier Roman farming establishments that once supplied Rome with copious amounts of wine. The university undertakes its own excavations of these *villae* using the staff and students of the *Centro Interdipartimentale per lo Studio delle Trasformazioni del Territorio* (CESTER) created by their senior archaeologist Andreina Ricci. With amazingly few resources, students at CESTER have constructed a GIS of all the surface

² J.A. Tainter *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge University Press): p. 192. Published in the same year was N. Yoffee and G. Cowgill's *The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988). Bruce Trigger's *Understanding Early Civilisations: A comparative study* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2003. *After Collapse* is edited by Glen M. Schwartz and John J. Nichols: *After Collapse. The Regeneration of Complex Societies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006), with Norman Yoffee's contribution at p. 222-7.

monuments of Rome that stand ‘beyond the forum’ – actually right out beyond the ring road. Every stump of wall and piece of tomb has been described and its context recorded by a video clip, in accordance with Prof Ricci’s approach to monumentality as something with a modern (as well as an ancient) meaning. Ricci’s new colleague Alessandra Molinari is an early medieval archaeologist well known for her research on Islamic Sicily – and especially for having brought to light the Islamic phase at Segesta. Visitors have long been familiar with the much-photographed temple and the hillside theatre of this beautiful site. Now at its summit they will find the foundations of the medieval castle, church and mosque.

Back in Rome, and right next to the Baths of Diocletian which houses the National Museum, is the University of Rome 3’s *Dipartimento di Studi Storico-Artistici, Archeologici e Conservazione*. Here is the new headquarters of Daniele Manacorda, director of the most comprehensive scientific excavations ever to take place in Rome, at the Crypta Balbi by the Field of Mars. Daniele, a valued teacher of field method to many generations, is shortly to be joined by Sandro Guidi, author of one of the first theory primers to be published in Italy. There is of course also a long established archaeology department at La Sapienza (a.k.a. University of Rome 1), but everyone will be gladdened by these new energetic additions to the archaeological talents in the eternal city.

🏆 The *Antiquity Prize* for the best article in 2007 is awarded to Roberta Tomber for her study of pottery imported into India from Rome and Mesopotamia during the first millennium AD (81: 972-88). Three other papers that could very easily have won were ‘Rethinking Erlitou’ by Li Liu and Hong Xu (81: 886-901), Terry Hopkinson’s ‘Transition from the Early to Middle Palaeolithic’ (81: 294-307) and ‘Redating Silbury Hill’ by Alex Bayliss and colleagues (81: 26-53). The *Ben Cullen Prize* for a young author was won by Søren Sindbaek for his model of Viking networks (81: 119-32) and the runner-up was ‘Creating urban communities at Kilwa Kisiwani (Tanzania)’ by Stephanie Wynne-Jones (81: 368-80). Many congratulations to all.

Readers will know that although no great photographer myself I have a passionate regard for archaeological photography and aim to use *Antiquity* shamelessly to encourage its improvement (80: 517-22). Accordingly we have now created an *Antiquity frontispiece prize* of £500 to be awarded to the best frontispiece of the eight published each year. For 2007, I have exercised a *droit de seigneur* and chosen Irina Arzhenseva’s aerial photograph of Por-Bazhin, the fort of a Chinese princess of the eighth-century AD in southern Siberia (81: 265). In future years I will hand over the judging to an *Antiquity* panel. The 12 examples published to date offer preliminary guidance to the photographers that we hope will be inspired to send in their work. We are looking for exhibition-quality photographs of landscapes, sites, excavations and objects which have a strong intellectual message conveyed by a memorable image. The caption should say what we are looking at and give technical details of how the photograph was taken. But composition is the key.

Martin Carver
York, 1 June 2008