



WORLD HISTORY

INSIDER

Members' Magazine

April 2023



Danish Treasure Redates Norse Myths

Engaging with cultural heritage and improving history education worldwide

2,958

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1,253

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15,228

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in
April

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“Remember that all
through history, there
have been tyrants
and murderers, and
for a time, they seem
invincible. But in the
end, they always fall.
Always”

Mahatma Gandhi

Welcome



Welcome to your April magazine! Wherever you live in the world, this can be a lovely time of year: the days are finally warming up for those of us in the Northern hemisphere, whilst my brother in Australia reports that the terrible heat is now finally waning.

If you are a regular reader of the magazine, you will notice some more new features in this issue. We have decided to start a 'Letters' page, so do please write to me or any of our editors and share your thoughts on any aspect of history that has grabbed your attention, the website or magazine. Our second new feature in this issue is the return of our 'Quick Quiz' for team members. We have some new team members that we haven't featured, so thought it was time for you to meet them!

I know that both of our featured exhibitions are from the British Museum this month, but I couldn't decide between the two - so I included both of them, as they both start in April. You may remember a similar Persian exhibition that was on last year at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles which we featured in the April issue of the magazine, including one of the fabulous gold armlets as the cover. This London exhibition has a different viewpoint to the Getty one, but has some of same exhibits, including the beautiful armlet.

In this issue we have a feature on the discovery of Troy and our guest feature from *Antiquvvs* magazine is about the Ajanta Caves in India. In the news is a 'once-in-a-lifetime' discovery in West Yorkshire in England, a redating of the first reference to the Norse God Oden from a treasure hoard in Denmark, ancient ice skates in China plus a new Moai found on Easter Island.

In other matters we have currently managed to raise half the funds needed to cover our server costs for the year, so if you can help us spread the word about this, we would still really appreciate your help.

To all our new and current members, thank you so much for all your support! It really does make a massive difference to us, and we are so grateful that memberships are on the rise - which means you all care about history as much as we do. I hope

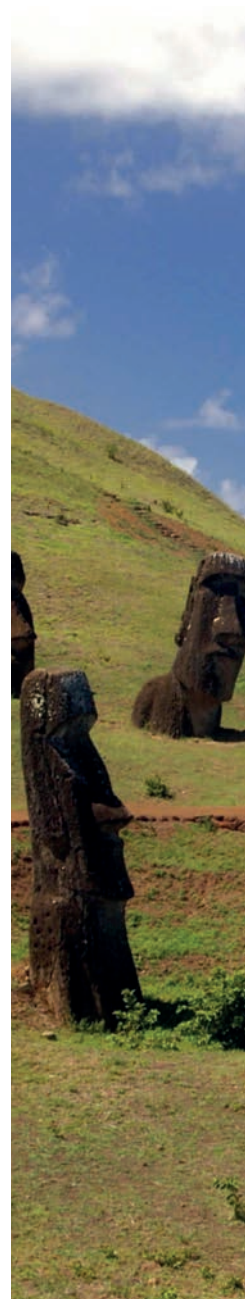


A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Fiona'.

Dr Fiona Richards
Editor, *World History Insider*



*Above: Thank you letters.
Jan writes to everyone who has donated over \$100 to server costs personally to say thank you.*



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• Museum Opening • News • Guest Article: Ajunta Caves, India • Letters to the Editor • Books

WHAT WILL FORCE PUTIN TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE?

BY JOHANNES EBER

There have always been wars. And there has always been the transition from war to negotiation. But how does this transition come about?

A central idea of science is simplification. The reduction to the essentials.

We try to understand the world by abstracting it. In the end, however, the knowledge must be brought back into the real world. Otherwise, knowledge remains an end in itself.

Economics also works under this principle.

Human coexistence is analysed by reducing human interactions to core elements. This reduction can then, in turn, be applied to many cases of human coexistence.

For example, when warring parties go to war and when they are ready to negotiate.

Looking at human interactions in this way, there have always been and still are two fundamental ways of human interactions throughout history.

In the one form of interaction, one side takes what it wants from the other, mainly by force (history is full of examples of this form of “human coexistence”). The other way of living together is based on voluntariness. You only get what you want if the other side is willing to give it.

The latter way is the principle of a free and civilised society, and negotiation is the means of putting this principle into practice.

In recent history we’ve seen a shift away from force to negotiation. Wars have become less common.

For example, between 1500 and today they were [more than 50 wars between “Great Powers”](#). The number of years in which “Great Powers” fought one another in each century has declined over the centuries.

Furthermore human’s expectation to die violently has reduced dramatically through time. [The rate of deaths per 100.000 people has been falling for decades.](#)

Luckily, what we are seeing is mostly negotiation. Also in our daily life. We just rarely realise it any more (at least as long as everything goes smoothly, which it mostly does).

Buying bread rolls in the morning at the bakery, working in the office, booking a holiday by the sea – in every activity, there is a negotiation aspect that is usually not carried out openly since legislation dramatically shortens the negotiation process (buying bread rolls only takes a few moments, but, hey, ask a lawyer what happens in these few moments viewed from a legal position and you will spend a whole evening on this subject).

War, as it is currently happening in Ukraine, is the exact opposite of this way of living together. Rules are overridden. There are no negotiations. People take what they want – even human lives.

How can that change? How can this lousy form of human interaction, namely appropriation through violence, turn into a decent form again, where one does not do what the other does not want? How and when does war turn into a negotiation?

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[A debate has erupted \(once again\) in Germany](#) about whether my country should halt arms deliveries to Ukraine and do whatever it takes to force both sides to the negotiating table. More than half a million people (!) have petitioned against the supply of weapons. The idea of these people is that if no more weapons were supplied, then negotiations were more likely to happen.

Is this train of thought promising?

To answer this question, one has to link the two possibilities of human interaction mentioned above (bargaining vs coercion).

In a world without morality, violent takeovers are an effective strategy. Unlike in negotiations, you don't have to give anything for what you get.

This type of acquisition is effective as long as you are powerful enough to carry out the acquisition. If the other side becomes powerful too and can defend itself successfully, the strategy must change. Then negotiation replaces predation.

In other words, which form of human coexistence people/parties/countries choose – bargaining or force – depends on the conditions.

Referring to the war in Ukraine, this means that there will only be negotiations if negotiations are seen as more profitable for both sides than the continuation of violence.

Putin's Russia, which started this war (and could end it overnight if it wanted to), will only be willing to negotiate if such negotiations

promise a better outcome than moving on with the fighting. This means the weaker Russia's position on the battlefield, the more likely negotiations will succeed.

We can draw parallels to the American Revolutionary War: Britain, the more powerful nation at the time, only agreed to negotiate independence after trying and failing to subdue the colonies. France supplied the US with arms, ammunition, military know-how and naval support. According to the US State Department, ["French assistance was crucial"](#) in winning the decisive battle of Yorktown and bringing the British to the negotiating table. The Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783 and gave the United States its independence.

What follows from these thoughts for the free world? Continued military support for Ukraine will strengthen the prospect of a negotiated settlement.

This is an uncomfortable truth for peace activists. It's nonetheless the truth. Or as Wesley Clark, a retired four-star U.S.-general, recently [said in the New York Times](#): "If we want to end the war with a negotiated peace, we have to figure out the battlefield situation that will lead to a successful negotiation." And Clark added: "That probably requires going after Crimea in a serious way to convince Putin that he can't win." 🇺🇸



Johannes Eber (<https://twitter.com/StrollEconomist>) is a German economist and journalist. Among other things he runs the blog "Strolling Economist" (<https://www.strollingeconomist.de>) that is about everything economics knows about the good life.

Team News

This month's highlights
from the Team



Our annual [Server Fundraiser](#)

is approaching half of our target of \$21,000. If you have the financial

ability to do so, please donate to help us reach our goal! Thank you.

If you are viewing our website on a desktop or laptop computer with a HD screen, you will have noticed a floating table of contents on the left hand side of articles and definitions. We've added this to make navigating our pages easier, and to highlight features that are found below the articles, such as the bibliography, related content, recommended books, external links and citation information.

We've greatly improved the quality of our images on high-resolution devices, such as high-end mobile phones and tablets, as well as laptops and desktops with UHD screens. If you are browsing our website from such a device, you may have noticed that our images are sharper and with more details visible. On standard-resolution devices we continue the normal images as usual, which are smaller and quicker to load.

Some of you may have already encountered a new micro survey on our website: Users who are highly engaged with our content may see a pop-up message asking them the nature of their interest in WHE; whether they are history enthusiasts, teachers, students, librarians, or scholars. We want to better understand who our users are to be able to better serve them in future.

This magazine now has its own page on our website! If you head to our shop, and click

on magazines, you will see World History Insider at the top of the list. As a logged-in member you will also be able to directly read issues from that page, in addition to your My Membership page.

We have completely rewritten the code that handles memberships. While nothing changes immediately for most of you, it enables us to develop new membership features much more quickly in future, and it reduces bugs, too. Those among our members who have signed up via Paypal will notice that they are now receiving more transactional emails, for payments, cancellations, and refunds.

Institutional ad-free subscriptions for schools use the same code base as membership and as a result they are now entirely self-serve and have flexible pricing for institutions with over 2000 students, so that every institution just pays for the number of students they have.

Education is important to us, and for those schools, colleges and universities who want to go ad-free on our website we want to make it as easy as possible to sign up. No quotes, and manual setup.

In an ongoing effort to focus more on memberships and donations and to reduce our reliance on advertising, we've implemented additional analytics that allow us to better understand which marketing channels lead to membership sign-ups and how much revenue they generate for us. This will allow us to figure out what works and what doesn't with a higher degree of certainty. We will be doing the same for donations soon. »

DID YOU KNOW?

By Joshua J. Mark

The birthstone for April is the diamond, first used in ornamental jewellery as early as c. 1200 BCE. The gem was associated with strength, clarity, victory, beauty, and similar virtues, but not with romantic love or engagement rings until the mid-20th century when De Beers Consolidated Mines, operating the diamond mines of South Africa, launched one of the most successful and influential ad campaigns of all time, establishing the diamond as the gemstone symbolizing love and fidelity.

Although the origin of April Fool's Day is still debated, many scholars believe it began in France in the 16th century when the Julian calendar was replaced by the Gregorian calendar. The Julian calendar celebrated the New Year on 25 March: the Gregorian on 1 January.

Not everyone got the news, however, and those who continued celebrating the event on 25 March were subjected to pranks by others. The earliest joke involved pasting a paper fish on someone's back because fish were easier to catch in April as they were more plentiful, giving rise to the claim they were more gullible concerning bait. 1 April became April Fool's Day simply because it fell one week after 25 March when misguided celebrations would have occurred.

April Fool's pranks continue in the present day. Among the most famous is the 1957 BBC broadcast showing a Swiss family picking spaghetti off their "spaghetti tree" and claiming it was the best crop they had in years. Many people believed the report and contacted the BBC on how they could cultivate their own spaghetti tree. »



*Inset: A diamond polisher in Amsterdam.
Image: Andere Andre.*



The city of Byllis was situated on a hill overlooking the Vjosa river valley, an important ancient route across ancient Illyria to the Adriatic sea. I took this photograph from the vantage point of the ground floor of one of the stoas which opened onto the agora of the ancient city, built during the latter part of the 4th century BCE.

Later, the Illyrian city was colonised by the Romans and then, during the Christian period, several basilicas were built on the site, often using the material from earlier buildings. In the picture you can see that I am standing behind the apse of a basilica. It was built upon the ground floor of the stoa, and the walls of the nave echo the width of the earlier structure. You can make out the large limestone blocks of the earlier period, and some reused tile in the later wall.

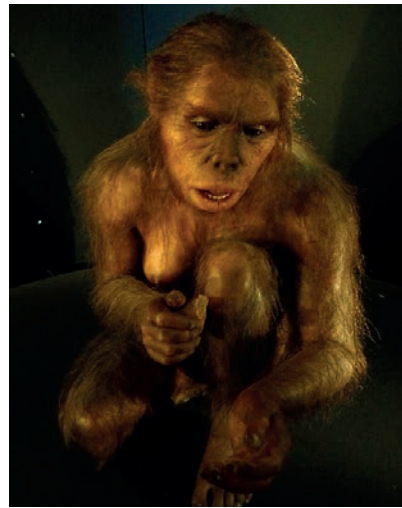
Beyond the basilica you can see the wide river valley of the Vjosa, the ancient Aoos, which arises in the Pindus mountains of Epirus (now Greece). It was an important route in ancient times, hence the siting of Byllis, which has 360 degree views from the walled city.

The river is important today too and is often termed ‘the last wild river in Europe’. It is home to many aquatic species and supports a wide range of wildlife, including the Egyptian vulture, otters and the critically endangered Balkan lynx. On 15 March 2023, the Vjosa river valley became Europe’s first wild river national park, an historic moment for the protection of the environment, and a testament to the people who have campaigned for nearly 10 years to protect its beauty and biodiversity. ➡

Homo Habilis

Homo habilis ("handy man") is an extinct species of human that lived in East and South Africa between 2.3 and 1.5 million years ago and plays an interesting role in the discussion surrounding the dawn of our genus of *Homo*, which is thought to have first appeared around 2.5 million years ago.

Homo habilis was often seen as one of the earliest members of our genus and, for a long time, was commonly depicted as the ancestor of *Homo erectus* (thus, being a direct ancestor of our own species, too). Nowadays, this is debated, and a much more complex picture of the early days of *Homo* has emerged. Much discussion remains about the place of *Homo habilis* within this picture. What we do know is that *Homo habilis* was both fully bipedal, as well as a good and probably frequent climber, with strong hands that fashioned stone tools. [Read more>](#)



Homo habilis reconstruction in the Museo de la Evolución Humana, Burgos, sculpture by Elisabeth Daynes (2010) based on the KNM-ER 1813 cranium (Koobi Fora, Kenya, dated 1.9 Ma).



The decoration on both lizard-headed female figurines might well represent tattoos or jewelry. The one on the right side appears to breastfeed an infant. Such figurines were probably made for ritual purposes. Ubaid period, 5200-4200 BCE, from Ur, southern Mesopotamia, Iraq. (The British Museum).

Mesopotamian Art and Architecture

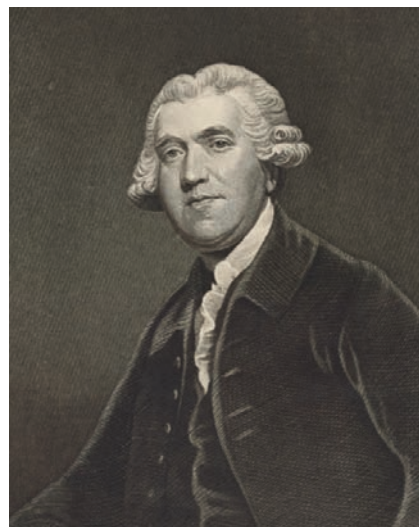
Ancient Mesopotamian art and architectural works are among the oldest in the world, dating back over 7,000 years. The works first appear in northern Mesopotamia prior to the Ubaid Period (c. 5000-4100 BCE) and then developed in the south during the Uruk Period (4100-2900 BCE) in Sumer which established the first historical civilization.

Artworks included reliefs, sculpture, statuary cast in metal, ceramics, jewellery, cylinder seals, stele and monuments, obelisks, and wall paintings. Mesopotamian monumental architecture is epitomized by the ziggurat, but the Sumerians were also responsible for the first large-scale palaces and temples, as well as urban planning, the arch, canals, and aqueducts, landscaped gardens, and architectural ornamentation. [Read more>](#)

Josiah Wedgwood

Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795) was an English manufacturer and inventor who designed and created pottery of all kinds. Noted for his jasper stoneware, Wedgwood was also innovative in how he set up his factory works, for embracing new technology like the steam engine, and using creative sales and marketing techniques. Wedgwood pottery is still made today and remains highly collectible.

Josiah Wedgwood was born in 1730 in Burslem (now part of the city of Stoke-on-Trent) in Staffordshire, England. Josiah's father Thomas was a potter, and he came from a long line of potters. Josiah went to school at Newcastle-under-Lyme and then he learnt his pottery craft as an apprentice in what was by then his elder brother's company in Burslem, the Churchyard Pottery Works. Leaving the family firm after his brother refused to allow him to become a full partner, Josiah worked for several other pottery companies over the next few years. [Read more>](#)



A portrait of the celebrated potter Josiah Wedgwood (1730-95). From *The Scientific Correspondence of Joseph Priestley by Priestley, Joseph*, New York: Collins Printing House, 1892. (Science History Institute, Philadelphia).

King of Mauretania for 50 years, he was also known as an explorer, historian, geographer and botanist

Juba II was born c. 48 BCE, as the only son of King Juba I of Numidia (60-46 BCE). Juba I was an ally of Pompey the Great during the Civil War between Pompey and Julius Caesar (49-48 BCE). Juba I was defeated by Caesar at the Battle of Thapsus in 46 BCE, and subsequently committed suicide. The orphaned prince Juba II was taken captive and led in Caesar's triumph in Rome to represent the victory over Numidia.

Despite this bleak start to his young life, Juba II's fortunes quickly improved. Julius Caesar chose to foster the young boy in his own household. Growing up in Caesar's family, he was treated with the same care as his adoptive siblings. Despite not being Roman by birth, he received Roman citizenship early in life and was fluent in Greek and Latin. After Caesar's assassination in 44 BCE, Juba II was cared for by Caesar's relatives; eventually ending up in the household of Caesar's grandniece Octavia Minor (69-11 BCE). Octavia already had three small children of her own, and she adopted several other children after Juba II.

As a young man, Juba II produced some of his earliest literary works; mainly on history and linguistics. His books *Roman Archaeology* and *Resemblances* both focused on Rome's cultic traditions and may have been part of a larger work on Roman history, linguistics, and religion. By the time Juba II was in his early twenties, he had already cemented his reputation as a notable scholar, and his works were circulating in Roman literary society.

Juba II was nicknamed "rex literatissimus" by his contemporaries (Latin for "the scholarly king") and is considered one of the foremost scholars of his era. In doing so, he was following in the footsteps of his grandfather

Hiempsal II (88 - c. 62/50 BCE), who was also a historian.

In addition to being a scholar, Juba II was a military veteran and served in many campaigns under Octavian (the future emperor Augustus). He proved himself as a commander at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, which ended in the defeat of Cleopatra VII and her lover Mark Antony. In 28 BCE, Augustus briefly restored Numidia to Juba II as a reward for his service.

Numidia returned to direct Roman control in 25 BCE when it became an official province.

Augustus and Octavia arranged for Juba II to marry Antony and Cleopatra's daughter Cleopatra Selene II when she came of age in 25 BCE. Juba II and Cleopatra Selene II had both reached marriageable age and were of equal status as the children of kings and queens. They also had much in common such as a passion for knowledge and an appreciation for Greek culture. That both of

them had been orphaned by Roman warfare, only to be raised by their parents' enemies, was also not lost on their contemporaries.

Augustus gave Cleopatra Selene II the kingdom of Mauretania as a dowry upon her marriage so that she and her husband could rule jointly. Krinegoras of Mytilene (70 BCE - 18 CE), a Roman court poet from Lesbos, was commissioned to write an epigram celebrating the marriage of Cleopatra Selene II and Juba II. The couple had at least one son, Ptolemy of Mauretania (r. 20 CE - 40 CE), who succeeded them as king.

Juba II was an advisor to Gaius Caesar (20 BCE - 4 CE), who commanded Rome's eastern provinces in his uncle Augustus' stead. Gaius and Juba II toured the eastern Mediterranean from 2 BCE

to 2 CE, visiting Syria and Arabia. Juba II dedicated a book about their journey titled *On Arabia to Gaius Caesar*, who died of illness in 4 CE.

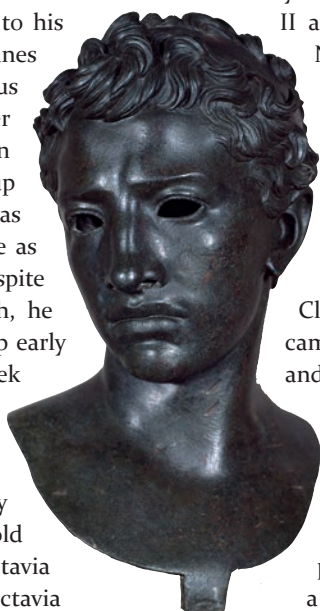
Juba II explored parts of Africa and Asia unknown to Mediterranean peoples. He also founded trading colonies on the west coast of Africa and authored several works on the geography and peoples of Africa and Asia. His body of work became a major source for Roman authors who lived after. Excerpts from Juba II's bibliography largely survive through these later authors, who have become primary sources on the history of the early Roman Empire.

Juba II was a prolific author throughout his life and produced books on topics which include natural history, archaeology, medicine, botany, and geography. These writings are cited by ancient scholars such as Galen, Plutarch, and Pliny the Elder. Around 25 BCE, he wrote *The Wanderings of Hanno*, a chronicle of the 5th-century BCE Carthaginian explorer Hanno the Navigator's voyages along the coast of West Africa. On Euphorbion documented the discovery of Euphorbia, a plant in the Atlas Mountains with medicinal properties. He is also credited with penning several plays and poems over the course of his life.

In the final years of his life, Juba II ruled jointly with his son Ptolemy. He died of natural causes in 23 CE and was buried alongside Cleopatra Selene II in the Royal Mausoleum of Mauretania, near Caesarea.

Juba II built the mausoleum as a lasting monument to the power of his dynasty and may have modelled it after the similarly built Mausoleum of Augustus in Rome. The mausoleum is still standing in present-day Algeria, although Juba II's remains have been lost to time. Ptolemy of Mauretania ruled after Juba II until 40 CE when he was executed by his first cousin, the Roman emperor Caligula. ➡

[Read more>](#)



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Last month we celebrated many special days including Water Day, Poetry Day and Women's History Month.

World History Encyclopedia
Published by Liana Miate

Queen Zenobia's Last Look Upon Palmyra, by Herbert Gustave Schmalz (1888 CE). Original on exhibit, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.
<http://worldhistory.org/queen-zenobias-last-look-/>

Zenobia (b. c. 240 CE, death date unknown) was the queen of the Palmyrene Empire who challenged the authority of Rome during the latter part of the period of Roman history known as The Crisis of the Third Century (235-284 CE also known as The Imperial Crisis), defined by constant civil war.

#WomensHistoryMonth




whencyclopedia

Eleanor of Aquitaine

Eleanor of Aquitaine (l. c. 1122-1204 CE) was one of the most impressive and powerful figures of the High Middle Ages (1000-1300 CE) – male or female – whose influence shaped the politics, art, medieval literature, and perception of women in her era. A great patroness of the arts she inspired the works of Bernard de Ventadour (12th century CE), Marie de France (wrote c.1160-1215 CE), and other influential Provençal poets.

Eleanor's influence defined her time not only in the regions she governed but in those she came in contact with. She served as a role model for a number of upper-class women, and her legacy was continued by her children and grandchildren. Her interest in the literary arts and patronage of them produced the most interesting and popular genre of the day – Provençal romantic poetry.



whencyclopedia Happy International Women's Day!

Here are some inspirational, strong, and memorable women from history!

World History Encyclopedia @whencyclopedia Mar 21

Happy #WorldPoetryDay!


WORLD POETRY DAY

Promote

World History Encyclopedia
Published by Buffer

Isabella d'Este (l. 1474-1539), was the leading lady of Renaissance Italy who funded the works of such renowned artists as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. Many of the greatest Renaissance artworks would not exist today if not for the patronage of Isabella.


#WomensHistoryMonth



WORLDHISTORY.ORG
Isabella d'Este
Isabella d'Este (l. 1474-1539), was the leading lady of Renaissance Italy who...

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whencyclopedia



whencyclopedia Today is World Water Day! 💧

In antiquity, aqueducts transported water from one place to another, achieving a regular and controlled supply to a place that would not otherwise have received sufficient quantities. Consequently, aqueducts met basic needs such as the irrigation of food crops and drinking fountains.


World History Encyclopedia
Published by Liana Miate March 19 at 11:06 PM

Beware the Ides of March!

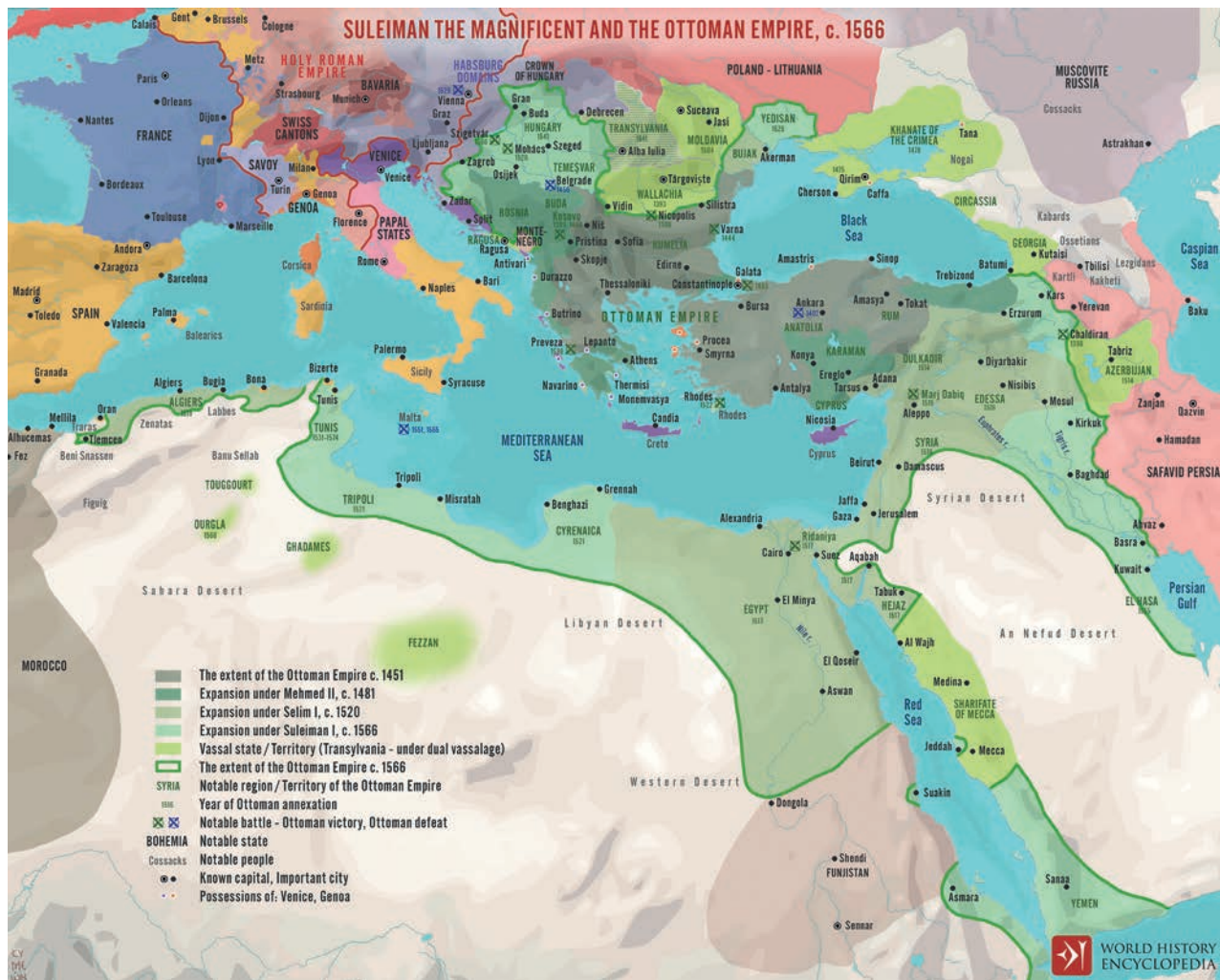
On this day in 44 BCE: Julius Caesar is assassinated by Marcus Junius Brutus, Gaius Cassius Longinus, Decimus Junius Brutus Albinus, Gaius Trebonius and other members of the Roman Senate.

Read more: <http://worldhistory.org/the-assassination-of-julius-/>

Painting by Vincenzo Camuccini.



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SIMEON'S CHOICE OF THE MONTH:

Suleiman the Magnificent (also given as **Süleyman**, **Suleyman I**, or **Suleiman the Lawgiver**) was the Ottoman Empire's tenth sultan and the longest-reigning one (he was on the throne for 45 years - from 1520 until his death in 1566), overseeing a realm of more than 25 million people. A most formidable leader (even when compared to his notable royal contemporaries, Francis I of France, Henry VIII of England, and Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor), Suleiman conquered Hungary (the Ottomans kept control for more than 150 years) and advanced to the heart of the Habsburgs domains besieging Vienna, wrested control of Iraq from the Safavid Persia, captured all principal ports in North Africa and for quite a while turned the Mediterranean into an Ottoman sea. Moreover, economic growth, trade, and support for cultural and artistic advances often describe this period of Ottoman history as a golden age. ➡

In previous issues of our newsletter, we introduced you to our hard working team members dedicated to bringing you WHE. As we have some new members, we thought now would be a good time to introduce you to the new faces!

So over the next few months, you will meet our new team members. They come from different backgrounds, but all share one thing: a love of history.



Harrison Mark - Writer

Harrison is a freelance writer who studied history and political science at SUNY Oswego on Lake Ontario, Canada.

Are you a: Tea/ coffee person?

Coffee. Perhaps to an excessive degree.

Dog/cat person?

I'm a dog person for sure!

Sweet/savoury?

Savoury.

What is the first thing on your bucket list?

Solo travel in Europe..

If you could go back in time, what period/ date would you choose? Why?

If we're talking about just visiting, I'd love to experience life in classical Greece for a bit, to get a better sense of what they were really like and what it would be like to live in that society for a couple months. If we're talking about moving somewhere permanently, I'd probably choose a safer, more boring answer like 1960s America (provided I don't get drafted to fight in Vietnam!).

Where is your favourite place to do your work?

Anywhere outdoors, preferably a spot along the Hudson River.

If you could meet anyone (today or from the past), who would it be?

Marie Antoinette is someone who has been incredibly vilified throughout the centuries. Having just researched the French Revolutionary period, I would love to be able to interview her and see events through her eyes.

What is your favourite season?

Fall.

What is your favourite film?

Lord of the Rings (I can't choose between the trilogy!).

What do you dislike most?

Excessive self-centeredness/greed.

If you could be anything you wanted, what would it be?

A writer or actor (both things I am already doing to certain degrees!). 📺

2 April 1513: Ponce de Leon Names Florida



On 2 April 1513, Spanish conquistador and explorer Juan Ponce de Leon (l. 1474-1521), sailing from Puerto Rico, sighted what he thought was an island. Owing to its lush vegetation, and because it was the time of the Easter celebration of Pascua Florida (Festival of Flowers), he named the land La Florida ("Land of Flowers"). Precisely where de Leon landed is disputed (as is the date) but, generally, thought to have been at St. Augustine. The event has been commemorated in the State of Florida on 2 April since 1953 as Pascua Florida Day when observances highlight the state's history.

4 April 1775: First Abolition Society Founded in the USA



The first United States abolition society – known as The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage – was established on 14 April 1775 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by a group largely composed of Quakers. Their goal was the abolition of slavery in the United States which was met with such resistance the group disbanded. Reformed in 1784 as the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, they elected Benjamin Franklin as their president and sent him to petition Congress for their cause in 1790. Although these efforts were also dismissed, the group continued their work, inspiring others, until the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution abolished slavery in 1865. The society continues in the present day working to combat racism and social injustice. ➡

22 April 1864: Coinage Act of 1864 and "In God We Trust"



The United States Coinage Act of 1864 was passed on 22 April 1864, authorizing the creation of the two-cent coin, modifying the one-cent coin, and establishing the use of the phrase "In God We Trust" on US currency, beginning with the two-cent coin. The initiative to add the phrase to coinage was encouraged by the American Civil War (1861-1865) as it was noted that the Confederate States referenced God in their constitution and battle standards while the Federal Government of the Union did not. The phrase was not met with approval at first, and was widely mocked but, within ten years, had become the national motto, appearing on coins up through the mid-20th century when it also was included on bank notes beginning in 1955. ➡

Object of the Month | Montezuma's Throne

By Mark Cartwright

A throne belonging to the Aztec King, Montezuma or Motecuhzoma II, dating to 1507 CE and considered a masterpiece of Aztec art.

The magnificent stone monument variously referred to as the Monument of Sacred War, the Teocalli of Sacred War, the Temple Stone or, more simply, the throne of Motecuhzoma II (Montezuma), the Aztec king (tlatoani) who ruled at the time of the Spanish conquest, is covered with relief carvings of symbols, gods and Motecuhzoma himself. The throne, carved in the shape of a pyramid temple, commemorates the New Fire Ceremony of 1507 CE and, through art, demonstrates the inseparable link between fire and water and between this world's rulers and the eternal cosmos. It is one of the masterpieces of Aztec art and can be admired in its permanent home in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.

Discovered in 1831 CE near the palace of Motecuhzoma II under what is now Mexico City, the throne was carved in 1507 CE from volcanic stone and measures 1.23 metres in height and around 1 metre in both depth and width. The object as a whole celebrates the triumph of the sun and the top is inscribed with the year 2 House which translates as 1345 CE, regarded as the traditional founding date of the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan. The throne appears in the form of a typical Aztec stepped pyramid with the back representing the sacred temple which stood at the top of such monuments. The stone may, in fact, be considered as a votive commemorative or teocalli (meaning 'house of god') of sacred warfare and the New Fire Ceremony (Toxihmolpilia). This ritual, held only once every 52 years on the completion of the full Aztec calendar cycle, was perhaps the single most important event in Aztec religion and life in general.

Presided over by the Xiuhtechutli, the god of fire, the purpose of the ceremony was to ensure the successful renewal (or re-occurrence) of the sun. Atop Mt. Uixachtecatl (or Citlaltepec), near the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, priests gathered

at midnight and waited a precise alignment of the stars. Then a sacrifice was made to Xiuhtecuhtli by cutting out the heart of a sacrificial victim. Fire was then kindled inside

the open chest cavity and if the fire lit successfully all was well. If the flame did not light then it was believed to signal the coming of terrible monsters, the Tzitzimime, who would roam the darkness eating all mankind.

The back of the seat of the throne carries a large sun disk on which are indicated the cardinal and inter-cardinal points, a common motif in Aztec art. On the left of the sun disk stands the figure of Huitzilopochtli, the god of war and the sun, wearing

his usual hummingbird headdress and

with his left foot in the shape of a fire serpent whilst on the right stands Motecuhzoma II performing a sacrifice to the god. The seat of the throne has a relief of the earth monster Tlaltecuhli of Aztec mythology. Therefore, when Motecuhzoma sat on the throne, he was in contact with

both the earth and sun, and so was fulfilling his role as sacred guardian of both, separating them with his person and preventing the sun from collapsing onto the earth. [Read more>>](#)



The Discovery of Troy

Did Heinrich Schliemann help or hinder history with his excavations at the ancient site

In his epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the Greek poet Homer (c. 750 BCE) told the story of the Trojan War, a ten-year siege of the city of Troy by an alliance of Greek city-states. Troy was also known by its Latinised name of Ilium and was located on the northwest coast of Anatolia (modern-day Turkey).

The city was continuously inhabited from the Early Bronze Age (c. 3000-2200 BCE) for around 4,000 years until two major earthquakes destroyed Troy in 1300 CE, and it fell into decline. Archaeological finds suggest that a small Byzantine community lived at Troy in the 12th century CE, but the powerful kingdom of Homer's epics was lost to history, although it remained in the popular imagination.

In the 19th century, Hisarlik was widely believed to be the site of ancient Troy. Its location on a hill near Tevfikiye in the Dardanelles, which connects the Aegean to the Black Sea, was a strategically important position because it commanded a major trading route. Archaeologists started to excavate the strata or layers of the different settlements, which, over time, had formed a mound or tell 20 m (65 ft) in height, and these layers are labelled Troy I to Troy IX. To date, nine cities and 46 levels of occupation have been unearthed, showing that there was no single Troy but a succession of civilisations that occupied the area.

Whether the Trojan War was a Late Bronze Age (c. 1700-1000 BCE) historical event or merely Greek mythology remains the subject of scholarly debate, but the city of Homer's *Iliad* is generally accepted to have been found and is associated with three famous archaeologists: Heinrich Schliemann, Wilhelm Dörpfeld, and Carl Blegen.



Above: German pioneer archaeologist Johann Ludwig Heinrich Julius Schliemann (1822-1890), whose excavations revealed what is universally accepted to be the site of Troy in what is now Hisarlik in modern-day Turkey. Photo taken by Ed. Schultze Hofphotograph Heidelberg Plöckstrasse 79, between 1866 and 1890. University Library Heidelberg.



HEINRICH SCHLIEMANN: FINDING & ALMOST LOSING TROY

Johann Ludwig Heinrich Julius Schliemann (1822-1890) achieved worldwide fame in 1873 when he claimed to have discovered Troy. Schliemann was a German businessman and a pioneer archaeologist (although untrained) who was fascinated by the idea of Troy after seeing a picture of the city burning in a book entitled *Weltgeschichte für Kinder* ("World History for Children") when he was seven years old.

The son of an impoverished Lutheran pastor and the fifth of seven children, Schliemann was an extraordinarily gifted linguist who spoke more than 15 languages and started travelling at an early age. He wanted to emigrate to South America and took a position as a cabin boy on board a vessel bound for La Guajira, Colombia, that was wrecked off the Dutch coast in 1841. He stayed in Amsterdam and worked as a bookkeeper for a city merchant, learning French, Dutch, and English – the main trading languages. In 1846, Heinrich Schliemann became an agent for the German trading house B. H. Schröder & Co. and was

sent to Saint Petersburg because he was the only Russian-speaking employee. This was the start of Schliemann's accumulation of his fortune, trading in indigo dye and saltpetre before arriving in California in 1851 and turning a multimillion-dollar profit during the Gold Rush.

Heinrich Schliemann retired in 1858 at the age of 36, having returned to Europe and marrying his first wife, Russian-born Ekaterina Petrovna Lyschin (1826-1896). He spent his time touring classical archaeology sites, and in 1868, Schliemann met Frank Calvert (1828-1908), a British expatriate diplomat whose Levantine English family owned land in Hisarlik, which included the eastern half of the Hisarlik mound (the western half belonged to the Turkish government).

Calvert studied the site, excavated trenches, and was convinced he had found Homeric Troy, but he lacked the finances to conduct further digging seasons. Calvert invited Schliemann to dinner, recognising that the German businessman was backed by an enormous

Above: A map illustrating the location of notable towns and the distribution of rulers and heroes as mentioned in Homer's Iliad, retelling the final year of the Achaean (Ancient Greek) War against the city of Troy in western Anatolia. The Trojan War is variously dated sometime between 1135 BCE and 1330 BCE. Map by Simeon Netchev.

fortune and a fierce determination to find Troy. The two men embarked on a partnership, and Heinrich Schliemann began excavations in 1870, bringing along his much younger second wife, Greek-born Sophia Engastromenou (1852-1932), whom he married in 1869 after divorcing Ekaterina.

Schliemann's excavation methods have been called into question. Employing 80 to 160 unskilled workers daily, Schliemann and his team dug a 14 m (45 ft) trench through the centre of the tell, tossing aside earth and building rubble from layers he considered too late in time to be Troy. Schliemann assumed the lowest layer (Troy I) was the city of Troy, so destroying the 'real Troy' that was later identified in the upper layers. Pickaxes, shovels, and dynamite were used, and the site was very nearly destroyed, leading many professional scholars to accuse Heinrich Schliemann of being more a treasure hunter than an archaeologist. Kenneth Harl, a classical scholar, said in his Asia Minor lecture series that Schliemann did what the Greeks could not: razed the city walls.

In May 1873, Schliemann claimed to have discovered "Priam's treasure," a hoard of gold, valuable artefacts, and jewellery, including the famed golden diadem (royal headdress) worn by his wife, Sophia, in a photograph taken in 1874. Schliemann equated Priam's Treasure with the riches mentioned in Book 24 of the Iliad. Priam's Treasure was found in Troy II – a layer showing evidence of fire – but Priam would have been the king of Troy during the time of Troy VI (1750-1300 BCE) or Troy VIIa (c. 1300-1180 BCE).

Controversy focused on Schliemann's diaries of the dig, which were incomplete. He also misidentified artefacts, and the dates when some of his discoveries were unearthed are vague. This led to accusations, among them being that Schliemann did not tell the truth and combined his findings with artefacts found elsewhere on the site. Schliemann habitually drew any object he found, but Priam's Treasure was photographed instead, and not one of the artefacts was mentioned in early documentation. Did Schliemann's single-minded pursuit of legendary Troy lead

Right: Sophia Schliemann (1852-1932), born Sophia Engastromenou in Athens, Greece, wearing Priam's Treasure (1873). Sophia was the second wife of the German archaeologist Johann Ludwig Heinrich Julius Schliemann (1822-1890), famous for his discovery of Troy.



Far right: Priam's Treasure, which Heinrich Schliemann claimed to have found at Troy. The collection was divided in 1880, so this photograph was most likely taken before then.



him to falsify his discoveries? This is a question that has been asked ever since, and it was not helped by Schliemann later admitting that he had sensationalised the account of his wife, Sophia, being present when Priam's Treasure was found. She was, in fact, in Athens with her family following the death of her father.

Schliemann then smuggled Priam's Treasure (around 8,000 objects) out of Turkey. Most of the collection went to the Neues Museum in Berlin, and during World War II (1939-1945), it was hidden beneath the Berlin Zoo. Soviet soldiers discovered the bounty, and it was taken to Moscow and displayed at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, where the majority of the artefacts are still held. Priam's Treasure has been dated to 2200 BCE or earlier, and this is 1,000 years older than Homeric Troy. Schliemann also crated up pottery, gold jewellery, bronze kettles, and figurines and shipped them to Europe or sold artefacts to private collectors.

In 1876, the Turkish government brought a lawsuit against Schliemann, who promptly left the country and headed to Greece, where he began excavations at Mycenae. Here he

discovered the Greek Bronze Age "Mask of Agamemnon," the gold leaf funeral mask of the famous king of ancient Mycenae who led the Greek army in the Trojan War of Homer's Iliad. This find has also met with controversy, with some critics accusing Schliemann of having the mask forged. Modern archaeological research suggests that the separated eyebrows of the mythological king of Mycenae are stylistically different from other death masks found at the site.

Nevertheless, Heinrich Schliemann became an international celebrity, spending over 20 years and seven digging seasons at Troy, deepening and widening what is known as Schliemann's Trench and destroying valuable material in the process. He never credited Frank Calvert, who perhaps may be considered the true discoverer of Homeric Troy.

Although Schliemann's archaeological methods were often brutal, he is considered the founder of modern field archaeology, but it took the work of another archaeologist, one who pioneered stratigraphic excavation, to shift Schliemann's focus from the lower to the upper layers of Troy.

Below: The so-called death mask of Agamemnon - the king of Mycenae in Homer's Iliad. Gold funeral mask from Grave Circle A, Mycenae (mid-16th century BCE). The mask in fact predates Agamemnon by 400 years but nevertheless remains solid evidence of Homer's description of Mycenae as 'rich in gold'. (National Archaeological Museum, Athens). Image: Xuan Che.





Above: German architect and archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1853-1940), who excavated Troy with Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890) and carried on Schliemann's work after his death in 1890.

WILHELM DÖRPFELD

Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1853-1940) was a German architect born in Prussia, who, like Schliemann, was a firm believer in the historical reality of places mentioned in Homer's epics. His final resting place is in Greece, on the island of Lefkada, overlooking a landscape he argued was Homeric Ithaca.

Dörpfeld studied at the Bauakademie (Academy of Architecture) in Berlin from 1873 to 1876, specialising in ancient Greek architecture. He also studied ancient Greek, and in 1877, was sent to Olympia in the Peloponnese to excavate the Temple of Hera. The young architect developed the "rotting wood" theory while on site, suggesting that the peristyle stone columns in situ were originally wooden. Wilhelm Dörpfeld also developed basic field techniques from observing and meticulously documenting to interpreting and dating historical buildings, a practice called *Bauforschung*.

Heinrich Schliemann visited Olympia in 1881 and met Wilhelm Dörpfeld, who took him on a tour of the excavations. Schliemann invited Dörpfeld to join him at Troy to assist with the next digging season in 1882. Schliemann had divided the site into nine layers, which he numbered from the lower layer upwards instead of the accepted technique of starting with the upper layers and working down.

Dörpfeld corrected Schliemann's identification of Troy II as being Homeric Troy. Troy II was an extensive early Bronze Age settlement with a fortification wall and evidence of destruction by fire, which prompted Schliemann, in his enthusiasm to find the city, to declare he had found Troy. Dörpfeld considered that it was in the layers of Troy VI or Troy VII where the legendary city lay, and he painstakingly excavated layer by layer. The German architect was a pioneer of stratigraphic excavation, which meant he systematically identified artefacts in each layer of soil and sediment, thoroughly documented them, and studied the relationship between layers.

In Troy VI, Dörpfeld revealed a city with a citadel surrounded by defensive walls, a megaron (large rectangular central hall), pottery, and jewellery, along with evidence of destruction by fire, which were all consistent with Homer's descriptions of King Priam's



palace in the Iliad. Dörpfeld argued that Troy VI was the most likely candidate for the legendary city and that Heinrich Schliemann had dug right through it.

In 1890, Heinrich Schliemann collapsed and died on a street in Naples at age 68 as the result of an ear infection, and it was left to his wife, Sophia, to continue financing the Troy dig. Wilhelm Dörpfeld dug for two seasons, in 1893 and 1894, further revealing massive 5-metre-thick (16 ft) defensive stone walls surrounding the citadel with several large towers, public buildings such as workshops and storage rooms, gateways, and mud brick houses – all suggestive of a city with a complex social and economic structure.

Sophia devoted herself to promoting Heinrich Schliemann's work and legacy following her husband's death. She

travelled widely, delivering lectures and publishing (with the help of archaeologist Alfred Brueckner) Heinrich Schliemann's *Selbstbiographie* (autobiography). Sophia Schliemann continued to fund excavations at Mycenae and is credited with the discovery of the tomb of Clytemnestra. Known for her philanthropic work in Greece, she lived out her life in Athens and died at the age of 80. Their son, Agamemnon Schliemann (1878-1954), was the Greek ambassador to the United States in 1914.

In 1887, Wilhelm Dörpfeld was appointed the director of the German Archaeological Institute in Athens, a position he held until 1912. He excavated or studied several sites in Greece: the foundations of the Hekatompedon Parthenon, the Temple of Apollo at Bassae, and the ancient theatre at Epidauros.

*Above: Schliemann's trench. Layers are marked with Roman numerals.
Image: Winstonza, CC BY-SA 3.0.*



Wilhelm Dörpfeld brought rigor and a more meticulous approach to archaeology, placing a strong emphasis on documenting his findings in detail. He helped to provide a more accurate account of the history of Troy and was – according to the British archaeologist, Sir Arthur John Evans (1851-1941) – Schliemann’s greatest discovery.

CARL BLEGEN

The next major figure involved with Troy’s excavations was Carl William Blegen (1887-1971), who was an American archaeologist of Norwegian descent. Blegen was the first professional archaeologist to manage work on the site between 1932 and 1938, leading seven annual expeditions to Troy. Educated at Yale and the University of Minnesota, he

was professor of classical archaeology at the University of Cincinnati from 1927-1957, specialising in Greek prehistory.

Blegen was somewhat sympathetic towards Heinrich Schliemann’s reckless methods, pointing out that in 1876, scientific excavation techniques were not known. Yet, he differed from Dörpfeld’s view that Troy VI showed evidence of fire and destruction from warfare and concluded the city had been destroyed by a violent earthquake around 1300 CE. Working to refine Dörpfeld’s stratigraphy, Blegen found compelling evidence to suggest that Troy VIIa (c. 1300-1180 BCE) had witnessed a lengthy siege and was ultimately sacked. His team found Greek-style arrowheads buried in walls, unburied skeletons, animal bones, scorched buildings, and other buildings divided into

Above: Walls of Troy, Hisarlik, Turkey. Image: CherryX CC BY-SA 3.0.

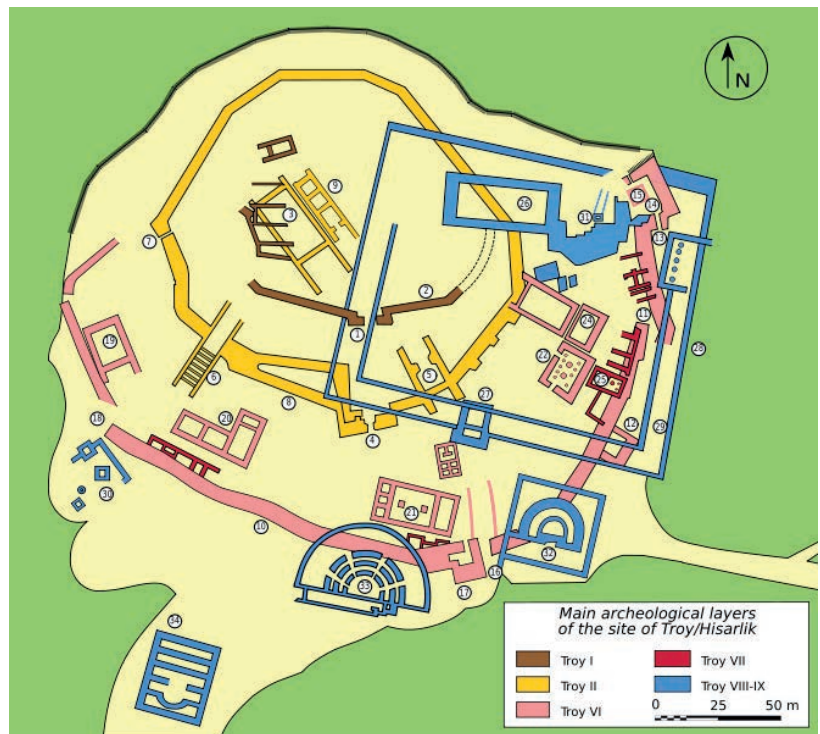
rooms that could accommodate families seeking shelter. Blegen dated the fall of Troy to c. 1250 BCE.

However, new evidence uncovered by an international team led by German-American archaeologist Manfred Korfmann (1942-2005) of the University of Tübingen suggested that Schliemann, Dörpfeld, and Blegen had merely been digging around the citadel area and a densely populated and far larger lower city existed outside the fortification walls.

The Troy VIIb layer was a demarcation point for Blegen between two very different phases in Troy's history. In that layer, he unearthed pottery showing influences from the southeast Balkans and new architecture such as simpler houses, leading him to consider the distinct possibility that Balkan migrants had replaced the previous inhabitants. This, of course, pointed to the human destruction of the city in the Troy VIIa layer and evidence for the tale of Homeric Troy.

One of Blegen's objectives was to search for cemeteries at Troy, and in 1932, he discovered "A Place of Burning," 90 m (295 ft) northwest of the citadel. This site contained burial urns and amphoras, as well as burnt bones. Blegen interpreted the site as evidence of cremations contemporary with Troy VIIa. Blegen's extensive work, which was continued by the University of Cincinnati's former classics professor Brian Rose in the 1980s, revealed a Late Bronze Age city with a population of 5,000-6,000, covering an area of approximately 35 hectares (86 acres), surrounded by a crenellated fortification wall and defensive U-shaped ditch.

Carl Blegen left Troy to excavate in Greece in 1939, where he found 600 clay tablets inscribed in Linear B script (an early form of Greek), dating from the late 14th-13th centuries BCE. Blegen also discovered the Mycenaean Palace of Nestor at Pylos, described in Homer's Iliad.



Above: Map of Troy. 1: Gate 2: City Wall 3: Megarons 4: FN Gate 5: FO Gate 6: FM Gate and Ramp 7: FJ Gate 8: City Wall 9: Megarons 10: City Wall 11: VI. S Gate 12: VI. H Tower 13: VI. R Gate 14: VI. G Tower 15: Well-Cistern 16: VI. T Dardanos Gate 17: VI. I Tower 18: VI. U Gate 19: VI. A House 20: VI. M Palace-Storage House 21: Pillar House 22: VI. F House with columns 23: VI. C House 24: VI. E House 25: VII. Storage 26: Temple of Athena 27: Propylaeum 28: Outer Court Wall 29: Inner Court Wall 30: Holy Place 31: Water Work 32: Bouleuterion 33: Odeon 34: Bath.

FROM MYTH TO REALITY

Despite Heinrich Schliemann's controversial methods, his smuggling of valuable artefacts, and his failure to give credit to Frank Calvert, he uncovered Homer's Troy, proving that the Iliad was based on historical fact. He destroyed the upper layers of Bronze Age Troy and was condemned by later archaeologists for being a flashy treasure hunter, yet his excavations popularised archaeology.

Wilhelm Dörpfeld and Carl Blegen brought scientific rigour and systemic excavation techniques to Troy, meticulously recording the location of every artefact unearthed and studying the context in which it was found. Blegen, in particular, discerned the possibility of a historic Trojan War when he found evidence of human destruction in Troy VIIa. 📌

Luxury and Power: Persia to Greece

British Museum, London

Showing from: 4 May - 13 August 2023

This major exhibition at the British Museum will explore the relationship between luxury and power in the Middle East and southeast Europe between 550-30 BCE. This was a period when the Persian empire of ancient Iran clashed with the cities and kingdoms of Greece before it was conquered by Alexander, king of Macedon, known to history as 'Alexander the Great'.

Luxury and power: Persia to Greece moves beyond ancient Greek spin to delve into a more complex story of luxury and power in ancient Iran, Athens, and the world of Alexander.

Drawing on exquisite objects from Afghanistan to Italy, it explores how the royal Persian court used objects of exquisite luxury

as markers of authority, defining a distinct style that was copied by different social classes throughout the empire. Early democratic Athens rejected Persian culture as decadent yet adopted luxury in intriguing ways. Alexander then swept aside the Persian empire and ushered in a new age in which eastern and western styles of luxury were fused.

Among the exceptional loans to the exhibition is the extraordinary Panagyurishte Treasure from Bulgaria. Accidentally discovered by three brothers in 1949, these treasures are outstanding examples of ancient metalworking and demonstrate the influence of Persian and Greek luxury across the Balkans. The Treasure consists of nine richly decorated gold vessels: eight rhyta used to pour wine and one bowl to drink it.

The exhibition will also feature objects from the British Museum collection, bringing together astonishing artefacts of gold, silver and glass. A gilt silver rhyton shaped as a griffin is a remarkable example of Persian craft. Originally used as a wine-pourer, this drinking vessel reflects the opulence of the Persian court.

Also from the Museum's collection will be a gold wreath from Turkey, similar to those found in elite tombs in the kingdom of Macedonia. The gold oak wreath, consisting of two branches with a bee with two cicadas, showcases the spread of luxury across the region and how styles evolved into the period after the death of Alexander in 323 BC.

Dr Jamie Fraser, curator at the British Museum, said: "Traditionally, we have viewed

*Below: Gold wreath
© The Trustees of the
British Museum*





Above: Panagyurishte Treasure © National Museum of History, Bulgaria R.
Below: Lion head drinking cup © The Trustees of the British Museum.

the Persians and their apparently “decadent” love of luxury through the eyes of their enemies, the Greeks. This exhibition is a chance to explore beyond these biased accounts and understand how Persians wielded luxury as a political tool across a vast and complex empire.”

Dr Henry Bishop-Wright at the British Museum, said: “This exhibition is a superb opportunity to explore different notions of luxury across the Persian, Greek and later Hellenistic worlds; particularly, how they interrelate and inform contemporary attitudes. It’s incredibly exciting to display the Panagyurishte Treasure, a once-in-a-generation loan, in this wider context.”

Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum, said: “Luxury and power: Persia to Greece provides a fascinating opportunity to look at the ways luxury influenced political power across Persia and Greece. The exhibition explores the people of the past and their way of life, from the highest elite of the Persian court to the ordinary citizens who were affected by them.” 🇮🇷



China's hidden century

British Museum, London

Showing from: 18 May - 8 October 2023

In a global first, a major new exhibition at the British Museum showcases the resilience and creativity of 19th-century China. The Citi exhibition *China's hidden century* will illuminate

a pivotal period in China's history – one that forms a crucial bridge to the modern nation the country is today.

This is the first exhibition to focus on individual groups of people in 19th-century China. Visitors will experience the visual richness of this era through the material culture of multiple sections of society – the court, the military, artists and writers, farmers and city-dwellers, globalised communities of merchants, scientists and diplomats, reformers and revolutionaries. The show consists of 300 objects, half from the British Museum, half borrowed from 30 different British and international lenders, with most being publicly displayed for the first time.

China's 'long 19th century' stretches from the accession in 1796 of the fifth emperor of the Qing dynasty, Jiaqing, to the abdication in 1912 of the tenth, Puyi, making way for a revolutionary

republic. Between 1796 and 1912 Qing China endured

cataclysmic civil and foreign wars (including Britain's notorious Opium Wars), culminating with the revolution that ended 2,000 years of dynastic rule. Tens of millions perished in the conflicts and the chaos they generated.

Despite this tragic backdrop, the events and people of 19th-century China launched the country on a far-reaching, multi-faceted quest for modernity. Survivors of this century's

dislocations, from many social classes and economic groups, demonstrated extraordinary resourcefulness, both driving and embracing cultural and technological change in painting and politics, war and craft, literature and fashion.



Inset: Empress Dowager Cixi's robe, China, about 1880–1908. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Clockwise from top left: Elaborate headdress, 1800–1900, China. © The Teresa Coleman Collection; Luxury fan, Guangzhou, 1800–1840. © The Teresa Coleman Collection; Waterproofs for a worker, 1800–6, Southern China. © Trustees of the British Museum 2023.

The show is underpinned by conservation and refurbishment of remarkable items never before placed on public display. Surviving objects from the 19th century – such as a water-proof straw cape made for a street worker, farmer or fisherman – offer fresh, direct insights into the textures of everyday life. Conservators have painstakingly brushed individual strands of straw and humidified each stalk to bring the garment back to its original shape; the piece and its restoration highlight the exceptional craftsmanship that flourished across all levels of late imperial Chinese society.

Visitors will also see a stunning robe – loaned from the Metropolitan Museum of Art – that belonged to the Empress Dowager Cixi, the de-facto ruler of China from 1861 to 1908 and a direct contemporary of Queen Victoria. The gown – featuring a swooping phoenix amid lush chrysanthemums and wide sleeve bands – is a gorgeous combination of Manchu, Chinese and Japanese motifs, in purple, gold and turquoise. The Empress Dowager's

wardrobe contained hundreds of such dazzling items, which she would accessorise with grandiose, jewelled headpieces.

The exhibition is the result of a four-year research project supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, led by the British Museum and London University. The show was made possible thanks to the collaboration of over 100 scholars from 14 countries.

Jessica Harrison-Hall, Head of the China Section, Curator of the Sir Percival David Collection, Chinese Ceramics and Decorative Arts at the British Museum, commented: "In this show we have sought to highlight the creativity and resilience demonstrated by so many citizens of Qing China amid exceptionally hard times. Our aim was to celebrate the contributions of remarkable individuals. Putting the show together has been a huge collaborative effort and it has been wonderful and inspiring to work with so many scholars, collectors, designers and students." 📖

Ad Gefrin Anglo Saxon Museum & Whisky Distillery, UK Opened: 25 March 2023



Above: The Shield Boss, courtesy of The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, arrives at Ad Gefrin Museum

The Ad Gefrin Anglo Saxon Museum and Whisky Distillery recently opened at the end of March and promises to bring to life the hidden history of the 7th Century Anglo Saxon Royal court of Northumbria. Discovered at Yeavering, only four miles away, it was one of the 20th century's most remarkable archaeological finds, telling the fascinating history of Northumberland's Anglo-Saxon 'Golden Age'.

Discovered in the 1950s the historical site of Yeavering was uncovered revealing a huge complex of large timber halls and a unique wooden grandstand. This was the royal summer palace of the Northumbrian Kings and Queens: a story largely untold. Kings were celebrated for their generosity; women could own property and were equal in the

eyes of the law, diversity was embraced and there was the expectation that new friends and visitors would give, not take away. The Great Hall of the Royal Court was a destination for international trade and cultural exchange with connections to people from across Europe and as far as north Africa.

Standing in front of the hearth in the recreated Great Hall, visitors can now be swept up in the rich stories of the time, through cutting-edge immersive AV technology that brings this period of history to life through spoken word, art, music and dance. As visitors enter the museum experience, they are immersed into the atmosphere of the Great Hall with a full-scale projection bringing the main characters to life. From the bard, standard-bearer and weaver and those that follow the royal entourage to Queen



*Top: Replica of Franks Casket in Ad Gefrin museum courtesy of The British Museum.
Middle: Penanular Brooch comes home to Ad Gefrin Anglo-Saxon Museum courtesy of The*

Middle: British Museum. © Sally Ann Norman.

Below: Making an entrance Ad Gefrin Anglo-Saxon Museum & Distillery © Sally Ann Norman.



Aethelburh and King Oswald themselves, the life stories of those that inhabited the royal court unfold for all to see.

It is then only a step through into the main museum itself to witness the artefacts that these people would have held and treasured, depicting the rich culture, creativity and artisanship that characterised the Golden Age of Northumbria. On display will be a number of archaeologically-important artefacts both found at the original site, and borrowed from leading international museums and collections.

Commenting on the opening of Ad Gefrin, Director, Dr Chris Ferguson said: "We are delighted to announce the official opening of the Museum. Since the very beginning of this project, we strongly believed that the story of Yeavering and of the 'golden age of Northumbria' was worth sharing with the world and we look forward to welcoming visitors here at Ad Gefrin.

We wanted to create an immersive experience for our visitors because Ad Gefrin is about much more than exploring history - which the Museum does beautifully through working with our partners, particularly the Gefrin Trust, and the objects kindly loaned by





Above, left: Square Headed Brooch, Courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Above, right: Castle Eden Claw Beaker, Courtesy of the British Museum.

the British Museum, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Ford & Etal Estates, and the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne.”

The Museum has partnered with the British Museum and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust to loan objects from their collections including those discovered in the locale and wider region, returning them home and making them accessible to new audiences.

Highlights include a Great Square Headed Brooch and Shield Boss, both loaned from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, as well as objects from the British Museum’s early medieval collections, such as a Pseudo Roman Coin Pendant, Silver Wrist Clasp, high-quality Replica of The Franks Casket, and the Castle Eden Claw Beaker, which is one of the best-preserved pieces of Anglo-Saxon glass work to survive.

The Great Hall is the stepping-off point for Ad

Gefrin’s wider offering, which will celebrate and showcase the unique heritage, ancient hospitality and contemporary crafts, arts and produce of Northumberland. The site will include a bistro, bar, gift shop and the Ad Gefrin whisky distillery - home to the first Northumbrian English Single Malt Whisky, and the county’s first (legal) whisky distillery in 200 years.

Maria Bojanowska, Dorset Foundation Head of National Programmes at the British Museum says: “This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase these rare Anglo Saxon objects in Northumbria, where they originated. The Castle Eden Claw Beaker is a highlight of our early medieval collections and it is hugely exciting to see it return to the North East for the first time in 32 years. We are delighted to be collaborating with the Ad Gefrin museum and look forward to bringing these objects to a new audience, facilitating new perspectives and ideas.”

Left: Shield Boss, Courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.



Ad Gefrin is the brainchild of the local Ferguson family who have been living and working in Northumberland for four generations and is born out of a desire to create a visitor destination that is meaningful, enduring, brings people together and creates jobs. Ad Gefrin is a genuine cross-generational regeneration effort; a catalyst for positive change that aims to revitalise the local community.

The archaeological site of Ad Gefrin, Yeavering, is 5 miles from the museum. Internationally renowned, Yeavering is the most thoroughly excavated Anglo Saxon palace complex in Europe and the only archaeological site to have evidence of a timber grandstand and gathering place. This was the 7th century royal summer residence of early Anglo Saxon kings and queens including Aethelfrith, Edwin and Aethelburga, the saintly Oswald and his younger brother Oswy. Discovered in 1949 through aerial photography, and excavated by Brian

Hope-Taylor in the 1950's and 60's, the scheduled archaeological site is today under the ownership and management of The Gefrin Trust. The Trust was formed to ensure the future preservation of the site through sympathetic management, conservation and investigation. Ad Gefrin Museum and Whisky Distillery is working in partnership with The Gefrin Trust to further illuminate the importance of the archaeological site within the exhibition at the Visitor Centre.

Chris Ferguson has held senior management team positions with York Museums Trust and Auckland Castle Trust, as well as roles at the Oxfordshire Museums Service and the Ashmolean Museum (Oxford). With a PhD in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Northumbria, Chris has a depth of knowledge of the Ad Gefrin story, and he was responsible for representing the Medieval and Anglo Saxon Galleries at the Ashmolean. Chris is the eldest son of the Ferguson family. ➡

Roman burial unearthed at hidden cemetery near Leeds

Skeletal remains of a high-status Roman woman encased in a lead coffin have been unearthed at a hidden cemetery in West Yorkshire, dating back 1,600 years.



Above: Multiple burials in the same grave are among those found at the ancient cemetery in Garforth. All images: West Yorkshire Joint Services/ Leeds City Council.

A high-status female Roman burial discovered at a hidden cemetery in West Yorkshire has been described as a “once-in-a-lifetime find”, by archaeologists. It was found together with sixty skeletons, believed to include both late Roman and early Saxon men, women and children at a site in Garforth, Leeds and it is thought to be the first Anglo-Saxon cemetery found in West Yorkshire. The cemetery was discovered as part of a standard archaeological survey on the site, which had been earmarked for development.

One of the main burials was of a female in a lead coffin. Experts said the fact the coffin had been made out of lead signified the skeleton was someone of importance.

David Hunter, principal archaeologist for West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service, said: “Lead coffins were expensive. The fact the family gave this person the expense of getting sheets of lead and the expertise to make the coffin, then it tells us a lot.”

Other burial practices found in the cemetery indicate early Christian beliefs

as well as Saxon burials, which were accompanied by personal possessions such as knives and pottery.

Mr Hunter said: "At Garforth we've got the Roman graves which are roughly east west in alignment and the Saxon graves which are north south in alignment, so the differences stand out like a sore thumb."

Archaeologists who worked on the excavation hope the site can help chart the largely undocumented and historically-important transition between the fall of the Roman Empire in about 400CE and the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms that followed.

Mr Hunter said the discovery would also help fill in historical gaps about the Kingdom of Elmet - the huge swathe of land before it was broken down into Yorkshire subdivisions.

Describing the unearthing of the cemetery as a highlight of his career, he said: "This has the potential to be a find of massive significance for what we understand about the development of ancient Britain and Yorkshire.

"The presence of two communities using the same burial site is highly unusual and whether their use of this graveyard overlapped or not will determine just how significant the find is." Although the exact location has been kept confidential at the developer's request, the excavation was in part prompted by the previous nearby discovery of late Roman stone buildings and a small number of Anglo-Saxon style structures. Now the dig is complete, expert analysis of the remains will take place, including carbon dating to establish the precise dates as well as chemical tests that can determine details such as individual diets and ancestry.

Because about half of the skeletons were younger than full adult age and consisted of some multiple burials, they will also be examined for signs of disease or injury.

But knowing exactly who these people were is something that will never be established.

Mr Hunter said: "We can find out through archaeological means and by scientific techniques a lot about their lives and where they came from but unfortunately we will never know their names." 📺



Top: Carbon-14 dating will help determine a precise age of the remains.

Middle: Several archaeologists worked for weeks excavating the site and removing the lead coffin.

Left: It is hoped the lead coffin will be displayed in a future exhibition at Leeds City Museum.

All images: West Yorkshire Joint Services/ Leeds City Council.

Oldest known reference to Norse God Odin discovered

A treasure trove from the Danish town of Vindelev has revealed the oldest reference to the ancient god



Scientists in Denmark have found the world's oldest inscription featuring the god Odin on a gold bracteate in the Vindelev hoard. This means they can date Nordic mythology to 150 years earlier than before – back to the early 5th century. The runes are the most “spectacular since the golden horns” and may help researchers understand other prehistoric runic inscriptions.

The Vindelev treasure trove was found about 18 months ago and was one of the biggest, richest and most beautiful hoards of gold ever found in Denmark. But new research on the hoard has uncovered another exciting discovery.

On one of the gold bracteates (thin, ornamental gold discs), writing experts discovered the world's oldest inscription featuring the name Odin, the main god of Norse mythology. Part of a sentence –

“He is Odin's man” – refers to the portrait on the bracteate of an unknown king or overlord, whose name (or nickname) may have been “Jaga” or “Jagaz”. This means that the gods we know from Norse mythology were already familiar at the beginning of the 5th century: 150 years earlier than previously established.

It was the National Museum of Denmark's runologist/writing expert, Lisbeth Imer and the linguist, Krister Vasshus who made the discovery.

“The runic inscription was the most difficult I have ever had to interpret in all my years as a runologist at the National Museum of Denmark. But the discovery is also absolutely amazing. It is the first time in the history of the world that Odin's name was mentioned. This means that Norse mythology can now be dated all the way back to the early 5th

Above: The inscription “He is Odin's Man” is in a round half circle over the head of the portrayed. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen, The National Museum of Denmark.

century. This just makes the Vindelev hoard even more spectacular. Since the golden horns, I've never seen such well executed runes and such a long text on a Danish find from this period. It may help us understand other prehistoric runic inscriptions, which we haven't yet been able to read," says Lisbeth Imer.

"We have black-and-white evidence. It's a huge discovery. I'm simply ecstatic. This type of inscription is extremely rare. We may be lucky to find one every 50 years. This one turns out to be a chapter in world history," says Krister Vasshus, a specialist in the history of ancient languages in Scandinavia.

Hitherto, the oldest inscription featuring the name of Odin was on a brooch from the latter half of the 6th century, found at Nordendorf in southern Germany. In Denmark, the oldest inscription to date is on an amulet made from a piece of human skull found in Ribe. It dates back to the beginning of the 8th century.

The runic inscription is difficult to decipher, because the bracteate is worn, and in significant places the runes have almost disappeared. The text was also written without spaces between the words and is in a language that is more than 1,500 years old and has evolved radically since then.

"Not only has the structure of the language developed tremendously since the 5th century, but many words have also fallen out of use," says Krister Vasshus. "Generally, we find short runic inscriptions with fairly comprehensible content, but this time the text is long and consists almost entirely of new words. That made it extremely difficult to interpret. In itself, the interpretation is quite a major achievement, which will help us understand other runic inscriptions – on other bracteates, for instance."

More than 1,000 bracteates have been found in Northern Europe, more than 200 of them with inscriptions. But the vast majority of runic inscriptions on bracteates make no linguistic sense. The runes tend to be 2-3 mm high, and because they carry many pictures there is not much space to write on. The inscriptions consist mostly of short, sacred words, or they are distorted or warped copies of an inscription that once made sense, but was lost. The interpretation of the runic inscription has already solved several mysteries.



The Vindelev hoard contains another bracteate, who's inscription is a copy the bracteate with the Odin inscription on it. This inscription is poorly executed, probably by someone with limited knowledge of runes, given that the runes are less distinct and many of them are distorted. The bracteate with the copy inscription turns out to have a 'twin' made with an identical stamp, found in 1852 at Bolbro on the outskirts of Odense. The National Museum of Denmark has had it in their collection for 170 years, but could never decipher the script – until now! The bracteate is on display in the National Museum of Denmark's gold room. ➤

Top: The gold bracteate with the Odin inscription. Photo: Arnold Mikkelsen, The National Museum of Denmark.

Above: The many gold pieces from The Vindelev hoard, which includes the bracteate with the Odin inscription, is exhibited at the National Museum of Denmark. Photo: Joakim Züger, The National Museum of Denmark.

New Moai statue found on Easter Island

The 1.6-metre statue has been described as ‘full-bodied with recognisable features but no clear definition’



Above: Moai on Easter Island. Image: Rivi, CC BY-SA 3.0


A new moai – one of Easter Island’s iconic monolithic statues – has been found in the bed of a dry lake in a volcano crater, the Indigenous community that administers the site on the Chilean island has said.

The statue was found on 21 February by a team of scientific volunteers from three Chilean universities who were collaborating on a project to restore the marshland in the crater inside the Rano Raraku volcano.

“This moai is in the centre of a laguna that began drying up in 2018,” said the director of the Ma’u Henua community that administers the Rapa Nui national park, where the volcano is found. The

interesting thing is that, for at least the last 200 or 300 years, the laguna was three metres deep, meaning no human being could have left the moai there in that time.”

“This moai has great potential for scientific and natural studies – it’s a really unique discovery as it’s the first time that that a moai has been discovered inside a laguna [lake] in a Rano Raraku crater,” they continued.

The Moai is 1.60 metres tall and was found lying down on its side looking at the sky. It is described as “full-bodied with recognisable features but no clear definition”, however, there were “no plans to remove the moai from where it is” at the current time. 

3,000 year old ice skates made of animal bone discovered

Ancient ice skates made of animal bones have been found at the Gaotai Ruins in northwestern China

Archaeologists have discovered ancient ice skates that were created from ox and horse bones and are likely to be over 3,000 years old.

Xinjiang, located at the crossroads of China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, is a mountainous region widely regarded as the birthplace of skiing. Cave paintings discovered in the Altai mountain range around 10,000 years ago appear to depict hunters on skis, while the Altai people who live in the area maintain an ancient tradition of hand-crafting wooden skis for transportation.

The skates were discovered in a tomb from the 16th and 15th centuries BCE in the Gaotai Ruins, about 240 miles (385 km) west of the regional capital Ürümqi, according to the regional institute of cultural relics and archaeology in Xinjiang.

It is unknown if the skates were used for daily transportation or for hunting. They are made of a straight piece of bone with holes drilled into it at either end, allowing them to be fastened to shoes. In contrast to modern skates, the resulting “blade” is incredibly flat, but it served as a cutting edge that made it possible for the wearer to glide across the ice. Archaeologists say they’re very similar to bone skates discovered in ancient Europe. They claim that this demonstrates clear evidence of communication between China and Europe during the Bronze Age.

Dozens of wooden vehicle parts, including 11 solid wooden wheels, were also discovered at the burial site, along with hundreds of pottery pieces, stone tools, animal bones, and bronzeware, among other relics. The Gaotai Ruins are “the largest, highest-[class], and best-preserved stone tomb architectural remains of the Bronze Age found in Xinjiang and even the Eurasian [landmass],” according to the Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology. 📷



Top: An animal bone skate unearthed from Gaotai Ruins. Xinjiang

Middle: Buried wooden vehicle parts.

Above: The Gaotai archaeological site. All photos: Xinjiang Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology

The following article is taken from:



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Ajanta Caves: Jewel in the Crown of Early Buddhist Art

Mark Merrony

Brief adventures sometimes yield unexpected discoveries that arouse the imagination. Such was the case on 28 April 1819 near Aurangabad in the state of Maharashtra, western India. Approaching the hottest time of the year, when temperatures approach forty degrees centigrade, the British army officer Captain John Smith, of the Madras Regiment, had embarked on a tiger hunt on the Waghora river, when events took a sudden turn. He became distracted by a young shepherd, who, in return for a baksheesh, agreed to help him track his quarry. Pointing to a cliff on the river, Smith observed an area of vibrant colour enclosed by an architectural setting, and enlisting the assistance of several local villagers, they beat a path to this spot. As they approached what appeared to be a cave, Smith lit a flaming grass torch, and, to his astonishment, the flickering light revealed a perfectly carved portico that lead to a monumental vaulted hall flanked on either side by thirty-nine octagonal pillars, its walls decorated with faded paintings; and beneath a dome, he was confronted by the serene countenance of the Buddha, a master artwork crafted from granite. Smith had made, arguably, the greatest discovery in nineteenth-century India – the Ajanta caves – and, to commemorate his discovery, promptly carved his name on a mural depicting a bodhisattva: ‘John Smith, 28th Cavalry, 28th April, 1819’.



This occurred in cave 10, one of a complex of some thirty caves and ancillary structures renowned today for their sublime ancient Buddhist paintings and sculptures within a setting of architectural splendour cut deep into the granite cliff. The Ajanta caves were primarily sanctuaries or chaitya halls (below and page 47) and monastic cave residences (viharas) (page 46, below). Ajanta was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage in 1983, as were the later Ellora Caves, the spectacular Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain site some 80km south-west of Ajanta (spanning AD 600–1000), also in Maharashtra.



Above: the geographical context of Ajanta and the later Ellora Caves in Maharashtra western India. Public Domain, modified by Mark Merrony.

Left: chaitya comprising a hall of octagonal pillars with stupa and apse behind, cave 9, Hinayana period, c. 100 BC–AD 100, but reused in the subsequent Vakataka period, 462–470. Public Domain.



The caves were excavated from the cliff in two phases. In the first, the Hinayana era (c. 100 BC–AD 100), six caves (8–10, 12, 13, and 15A) (page 45, below), were cut out in which the Buddha was worshipped in an aniconic or symbolic form. The caves are simple, austere, and sparsely decorated with murals, but those early paintings in caves 9 and 10 have been painstakingly restored since 1999 by Rajdeo Singh, chief of conservation and head of science at Aurangabad at the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) (above). The halls have a vaulted ceiling, terminate in an apse, and are divided internally by colonnades

into a central nave and side aisles, the latter extend behind the apse for ritual circumambulation (page 45, below; page 47). In the centre of the apse, the stupa is the focal object of worship or the rounded apse itself (chaitya). An astylar congregational hall (lacking pillars or pilasters), with cells on three sides (viharas), served as the accommodation for monks (below). In the second phase, the Vakataka era (in 462–470), the earlier caves were reused and a number of other caves were excavated (although caves 5, 24, and 29 were not completely cut out), comprising the angling out of side walls, cutting of ceilings, cells, peristyles, hall pillars, pilasters, main doorways, windows, shrines, and images of the Buddha (pages 45 and 47). Exquisite ceiling and wall paintings adorned the complexes, applied in the tempera technique, involving the use of powdered pigments mixed or ‘tempered’ with an organic binding of egg white or yoke producing a stunning vibrancy.

This period represented the floruit of Vakataka patronage, and some of its principal benefactors are known from inscriptions at the site (see below). Little of the paintings survive from the Hinayana phase, and most belong to the Vakataka phase (c. 468–478), but most caves were in fact unfinished, since this was a period of considerable political turbulence that Walter M. Spink, in 2014, termed ‘the Period of Disruption’ (mid-478–480). Inscriptions at Ajanta associate certain prominent patrons with the Vakataka king Harisena (r. 460–477), such as Varahadeva, one of the king’s courtiers who was a patron of cave 16; while cave 1 was donated by Harisena, and cave 2 either by a close relative or one of the king’s wives.

A considerable number of sculptural intrusions were also hastily added in the latter era, mostly representations of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, and stupas

Mural of a male subject in cave 9, Hinayana period, first century BC or first century AD. Courtesy of Prasad Pawar.

Vihara, which functioned as the accommodation for Buddhist monks, cave 4, the largest of its kind at Ajanta, c. 468–478. Public Domain.



(shrines), which were votive offerings by new donors. These additions may be linked to the sudden death of Harisena in 477 and the short-lived and ineffectual rule of his successor Sarvasena III who briefly came to power in 478. Prior to the death of his predecessor, in 475, Ajanta was taken over by the Asmaka dynasty, the local king Upendragupta defeated, and the site was abandoned by the end of 478.

At Ajanta, the conception of deeply cut and complex architectural spaces and their paintings and sculptures in such a relatively short time span must surely rank among the greatest cultural achievements of antiquity in southern Asia. A clear development in the arrangement of forms is discernible. From 466, shrines were added to every vihara and comprised a central block that was cut into a stupa (cave 11), and from 469 onwards these blocks incorporated the image of the Buddha. At first, these representations were simple, but from 470 they were complemented by a pair of the bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Vajrapani (cave 17 and 19), which may indicate that Buddha is Vairocana, one of the main Buddhas of East Asian Buddhism. This arrangement became crowded in some cases (caves 1 and 4), since the bodhisattvas were cut from the face of the central block. From around 475, Buddhas and their attendants were more openly spaced in the rear wall of shrines allowing the devotees represented at the base of the throne to be placed more easily (below). In 477, the 'Six Buddhas of the Past', attending the shrine

image on each flank gave the decorative programme added complexity (cave 4). Some shrines were the focal point of a sanctuary's monumental, pillared stupa hall (caves 6L (lower story of cave 6), 17, 19, 26), each with a colossal image of an enshrined Buddha, therefore functioning as a place of worship and the dwelling of the deity (gandhakuti) whilst he presided over the monks who lived and worshipped there (below).

It is interesting to plot the stylistic development in other aspects of architectural sculpture at Ajanta. Pillars at the site all tend to be variations of the octagonal shaft, as in the case of the earliest examples (caves 6L, 7, 9, and 11). Thereafter, high square bases are added (caves 1 and 19) with increasingly elaborate shafts of carved decoration, which eventually grew to cover most of the pillars' surface (caves 1 and 3). Pillar capitals also have a curious evolution, with a decreasing number of ribs on their under surfaces, reducing through time to become free of ribs and richly decorated with carved decoration (below). Where pilasters are concerned, the earliest examples at Ajanta were simply decorated with vertical striations, becoming more elaborate through the period, rendered as floral and conch motifs. Anthropomorphic details were later added (such as yaksas and ganas), and subsequently loving couples and triads. Other architectural elements also follow the trend of progressive ostentation, as in the case of porch and shrine doorways, initially functioning as openings, but increasingly decorated with sculptural forms, evolving into complex doorways (caves 1–3).



The majestic chaitya hall in cave 26 with its stupa and enshrined Buddha and elaborately carved pillar capitals, c. 468–478. Public Domain.

It is interesting to consider that the central image in cave 16, a Buddha seated on a royal throne in the classic legs pendant position – both legs extended and the feet firmly planted on the ground (bhadrasana) – is the first stone sculpture of this form known in western India (right), which was introduced to the subcontinent via Kushan royal portraiture; and it is thought that the bhadrasana may be associated with royalty and worldly action. It is possible that this sculpture may in fact have been a portrait of Harisena, allegorising him as the Buddha for ideological purposes.

The ceiling paintings at Ajanta are secular and predominantly depict scenes from nature – figurative (frolicking dwarves and lovers) and vegetal (lotuses and acanthuses) – framed within geometric schemes (below). Ceilings show a clearer course of ‘development’ than murals at the site, moving from the simple designs of caves L6 and 16 to the exuberant ceilings of caves 1 and 2. Murals are notable for their depiction of episodes from the previous lives of the Buddha (the Jatakas) (page 45, below). In the main they derive from the Mulasarvastivada school, one of the ‘mainstream’ schools of Indian Buddhism. Most of the narrative paintings are based on accounts that appear in the Mulasarvastivada–Vinaya (the Monastic Code) and the poems of Aryasura, a fourth-century Sanskrit poet, and Asvaghosa, a Buddhist philosopher (c. 80–c. 150).



Shrine in cave 2 dominated by the Buddha in the padmasana position. The sacred space is lavishly adorned with painted Buddhist reliefs, murals, and ceiling paintings, c. 468–478. Public Domain.

The Buddha, seated in the bhadrasana position, the earliest known representation of its kind in western India, c. 468–478. Public Domain.



It has been established that the ceiling paintings and murals at Ajanta were the work of guilds of painters from Maharashtra, especially Aurangabad, and other regions, rather than the monks who inhabited the caves. It is interesting to consider that these painters were most likely Jains and Hindus rather than Buddhists, and were commissioned for their artistic excellence and not on religious criteria, from families of guild painters who had practised their art for several generations.

Technical analysis has confirmed that the paintings were applied on layers of plaster. These consisted of local soil which derived from weathered basalt mixed with plant matter; over this a white layer was added, consisting of kaolin or lime; the paint was then applied, comprising several pigments including red and yellow ochre, orpiment (orange-yellow), red lead, green earth, and ultramarine blue (derived from lapis lazuli), most of these being locally available with the exception of the lapis lazuli-based pigment which was imported from Afghanistan.

In their artistic style the Ajanta paintings depict a realism that is often said to derive from the Hellenistic world of the Indo-Greek kings (page 46, above; page 49), as suggested by William Dalrymple writing in *The Guardian* (15 August 2014). This point of view is most often expressed in relation to Gandharan art, but as Peter Stewart has persuasively argued (*Antiquus*, 2020.1, 33–39), it flourished considerably later than Hellenistic art, and owes its influence more to ancient



Rome than the Greek legacy of Alexander the Great. This is also logically the case with the paintings at Ajanta, and indeed the sculptures. The hallmark of the realism expressed in the Ajanta murals is encapsulated by the wistful expressions of many of its subjects; the Bodhisattva Padmapani depicted in cave 1 is one of the finest examples (left), painted with an artistic brilliance that rivals any painting produced in Europe from the Hellenistic period onwards.

Some of the murals depict people of foreign origin, as in the case of the so-called 'Persian Embassy Scene' in cave 1, incorrectly interpreted as such, but more likely the Buddha in his previous life as a prince. Considerable diversity is also represented in the Adoration of the Buddha in cave 17, especially in the group assembled in the bottom left hand corner (page 50, below). The variety of costumes and headgear depicted at Ajanta logically suggests cosmopolitan influences through trade with Bactrians, Hephthalites, Kushans, and merchants of other ethnicities.

Unfortunately, the discovery of Ajanta in 1819, and the subsequent exposure of its paintings after their seclusion in darkness since the site was abandoned in the later fifth century, led to their rapid deterioration. Although scholars were quick to recognise this, they strove to record rather than to conserve the paintings. It is well documented that Major Robert Gill (1804–1879) of the 44th Madras Native Infantry was commissioned

Above: mural depicting Bodhisattva Padmapani from cave 1 at Ajanta. One of the most stunning ancient Buddhist paintings, it is also historically significant in that it provides the earliest visual evidence of elaborate crowns worn to denote princely and divine status, and is an antecedent of those used in Buddhist ritual by the Vajracharya priests in Nepal during the modern era, c. 468–478. © 123RF.COM.



Right: Mahajanaka-jataka mural in cave 1 at Ajanta (detail) depicting King Mahajanaka sitting with his wife and being bathed by his attendants, c. 468–478. Public Domain.



by the Royal Asiatic Society to copy a number of the paintings between 1844 and 1863, and produced thirty large canvases (above). They were displayed in the Indian Court of the Crystal Palace in Sydenham but were lost in a fire there in 1866 with the exception of four that survived. However, in 1872, the Government of Bombay commissioned John Griffiths, the principle of the Bombay School of Art and his students to paint a new set of copies, many of which were displayed at the Imperial Institute in London, although more than a hundred canvases were destroyed by another fire there in 1885. The few surviving paintings by Gill, and those painted by Griffiths and his students, are now in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, beautifully recreating the original splendour of the Ajanta paintings. Many other copies were produced, such as a mural in

cave 17; in this case Colonel Thomas Holbein Hendley (1847–1917), who served in the Indian Medical Service, and was an authority on Indian art, commissioned a local artist to paint the Adoration of the Buddha to decorate a wall space in the Albert Hall Museum, Jaipur (below).

In 1953, the Archaeological Survey of India undertook the protection and preservation of the monuments. Whilst the paintings were subsequently coated with varnish over the accumulated matter from the immediate environment, this resulted in the alteration of their original colour. The organic matter and plaster of the basal layers of the murals and ceiling paintings have also deteriorated because of their infiltration by microbes, fungi, and insects; stream and rainwater seepage and the penetration of roots through the cave roofs have caused crack formations. One possible solution is the application of an artificial light-based method to protect the architecture, its paintings, and sculpture without disrupting the ecological diversity of the immediate environment. Like so many of the splendid archaeological sites in India and elsewhere, the preservation of Ajanta's cultural treasures pits conservation against the swift march of time.

Further Reading

For the definitive work on the Ajanta Caves, Spink, W. M. (2005–2017). *Ajanta: History and Development*, 7 vols. Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Publishers.

Above: painting of cave 1 at Ajanta (detail) by Robert Gill (1850–1854), oil on canvas. Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. IS.55-1885, © Victoria & Albert Museum.

The Adoration of the Buddha, a creative copy of the mural in cave 17 at Ajanta by local artist Murlī or Murali, c. 1887, commissioned by Thomas Holbein Hendley to decorate a wall in the Albert Hall Museum, Jaipur. Public Domain.



Letters to the Editor

Do you have anything you would like to share about aspects of history, WHE, it's website or this magazine? Then do please send us your thoughts to fiona.richards@worldhistory.org and we will try and feature your letter here. If you'd also like to reply to any letters featured here as well, then do feel free. Of course no grumpy or rude comments will be published! Thanks to Bruce Gaugler for starting us off!

Discovering World History Encyclopedia

I am very glad that I discovered World History Encyclopedia and that I have purchased a membership. What a world of World History! And yes, please continue your expansion to all historical eras while not losing your affinity for ancient times.

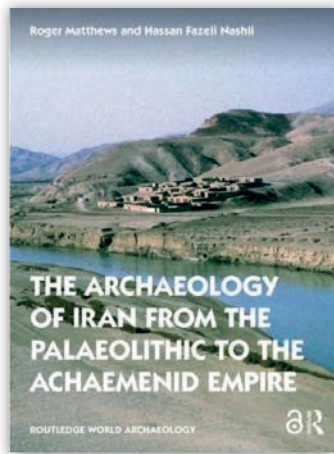
I will give you an example of my enjoyment. I went back to the first available membership newsletter, July 2021, to start from the beginning. And bang, I am now aware of Old World, a 4X computer game that is right up my alley and which I had never heard of before. I scrolled down to the section on Freya Stark; the links in this PDF copy are inoperative but I searched the web site and found the article which led me to getting "Passionate Nomad" by Jane Fletcher Geniesse from the library for more details. Then I noticed the picture of The Long Room in the Trinity College library, searched, and found my new Desktop Background image with an astonishing vanishing point view (it was taken

from one end at the second floor level).

All of this from one newsletter! I have since moved up to the January 2022 newsletter and I have just finished Mr. van der Crabben's essay on "The 30 Year Old Diskettes That Made World History," his father's gift to him of the computer game Civilization. My father was not involved — I have other fond memories of him — since I found Civilization on my own. But what Mr. van der Crabben said about that game having sparked a lifelong interest in world history is an experience that we share.

No wonder I feel like I have come home to WHE. Don't bother to reply; I am not looking for one. I just wanted to praise and encourage. Thanks.

Bruce Gaugler
Port Jefferson Station, NY



**The Archaeology of Iran
from the Palaeolithic to
the Achaemenid Empire**

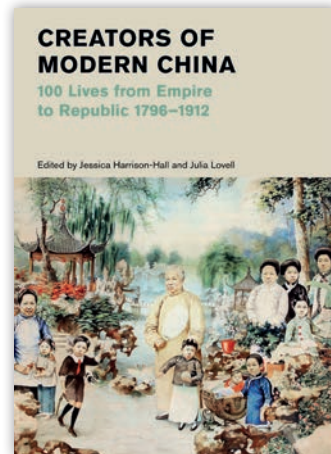
R. Matthews & H.F. Nashli
Routledge
Published: 2022

This book is the first modern academic study to provide a synthetic, diachronic analysis of the archaeology and early history of all of Iran from the Palaeolithic period to the end of the Achaemenid Empire at 330 BCE.

Drawing on the authors' deep experience and engagement in the world of Iranian archaeology, and in particular on Iran-based academic networks and collaborations, this book situates the archaeological evidence from Iran within a framework of issues and debates of relevance today. Such topics include human-environment interactions, individual and social identity, gender roles and status, the development of technology and the significance of early bureaucratic practices such as counting, writing and sealing.

With more than 500 illustrations plus an extensive bibliography this book is a major research resource for anyone concerned to learn more about the role of ancient Iran in shaping the modern world.

[Read review>](#)

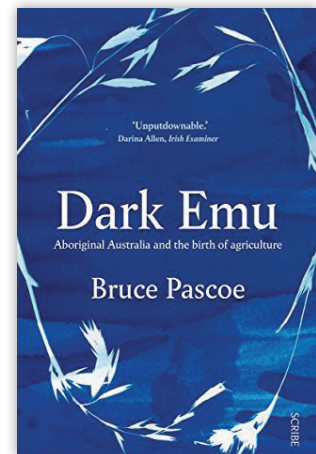


**Creators of Modern China.
100 lives from Empire to
Republic 1796-1912**

J. Harrison Hall & J. Lovell (Eds.)
Thames & Hudson
Published: April 2023

This insightful book, written by a large team of international scholars and specialists, sprang from a simple but original ambition: to provide the reader with an understanding—told through the lives of 100 significant individuals—of how China transformed from dynastic empire to a modern, republican nation during the period 1796 to 1912.

Both famous and surprisingly little-known women and men are brought together in eight thematic sections that illuminate the birth of modern China. Featured figures include the Dowager Empress Cixi, the power behind the throne of the Qing Dynasty for fifty years, Yu Rongling, the founder of modern dance in China and who trained in Paris with Isadora Duncan and Duanfang, China's first serious collector of international art before being murdered by his own troops in the 1911 Revolution. Each biography has been written by a specialist curator or scholar, making this a resource for anyone interested in the history of China.



**Dark Emu. Aboriginal
Australia and the Birth of
Agriculture**

Bruce Pascoe
Scribe US
Published: 2018

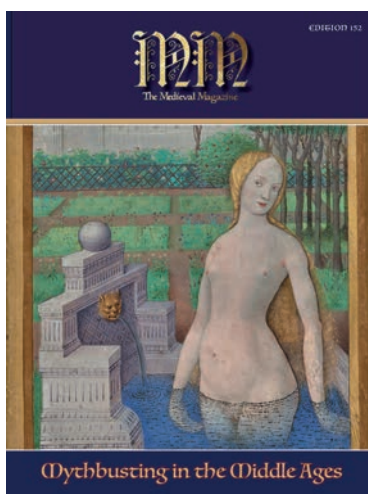
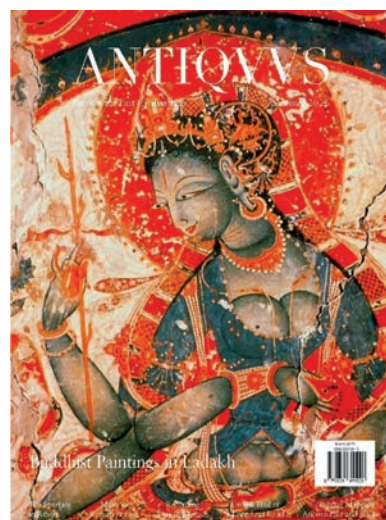
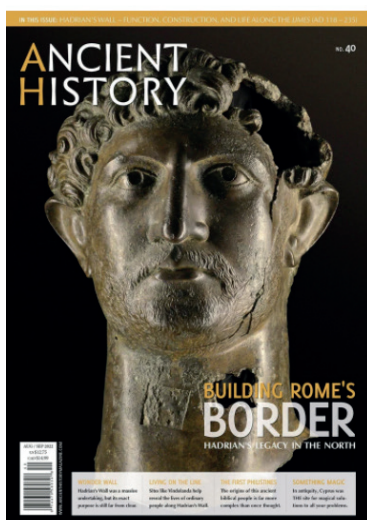
History has portrayed Australia's First Peoples, the Aboriginals, as hunter-gatherers who lived on an empty, uncultivated land. History is wrong.

In this seminal book, Pascoe uncovers evidence that long before the arrival of white men, Aboriginal people across the continent were building dams and wells; planting, irrigating, and harvesting seeds, and then preserving the surplus and storing it in houses, sheds, or secure vessels; and creating elaborate cemeteries and manipulating the landscape.

All of these behaviours were inconsistent with the hunter-gatherer tag, which turns out have been a convenient lie that worked to justify dispossession.

Using compelling evidence from the records and diaries of early Australian explorers and colonists, he reveals that Aboriginal systems of food production and land management have been blatantly understated, and that a new look at Australia's past is required—for the benefit of all Australians. [Read review>](#)

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