

# Editorial

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On 6 May 1999, the Scots elected their first parliament in 300 years. On the same day, the Welsh elected their assembly. The politics of these events is strongly related to culture, as recent Celtic debates in the pages of *ANTIQUITY* and *The Scotsman* relate. Yet, of all the major parties north of the border, only the Scottish Nationalist Party had an evocative cultural image in their manifesto: the Stones of Callanish under the word Democracy. Only the Scottish Liberal Democrats explicitly sought to protect and market Scotland's natural, built and cultural heritage, while Scottish New Labour plans 'to maximise the benefits of Scotland's unique strengths of history, culture and natural beauty . . .'. The most specific cultural pledge of most of the parties is to enable free entry to museums. These are vague pledges given the cultural basis of the whole political initiative.

The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and the Society of Antiquaries of London (the last co-ordinated by a Welshman) took a much more intelligent approach. A joint meeting (30 April–2 May 1999) was organized with a timing redolent with political meaning, exploring the intense interaction of culture and politics in a

highly successful occasion. Icons of Scottishness were studied at every turn: the Royal Park of Holyrood (including Arthur's Seat), the new Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace, Holyrood Abbey and the archaeological foundations under the future Scottish parliament.

The Museum of Scotland has been well visited by political controversy, fuelled by politicians focusing more on events and individuals such as William Wallace than on the long time-depth of material culture in Scotland. A modern Pitt-Rivers-type museum has been created in a setting which brings together material culture, modern art and architecture. Paolozzi People holding early artefacts greet the visitor who is drawn through a thematic presentation of the early Scottish Past. 10,000 objects were chosen from the full collection of some 750,000 objects, but these were whittled down to 4,000 by design teams in the final displays. In the early section, chronology is collapsed in these displays into a series of themes — People, A generous land, Wider Horizons, Them and Us, In Touch with the Gods — which allow the *longue durée* of material culture to be explored.



*Abstract Paolozzi people guard the entrance to the prehistory gallery, in groups which focus on different parts of the exhibition. Chronology gives way to material culture.*

'People' introduces the exhibition's absentees, through figures sculpted by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi. The figures stand for Scotland's early people. They are abstract because there is little evidence to help us identify and describe them realistically. Each group of figures also highlights a section of the exhibition. A Generous Land looks at the land's resources and how people used them. Wider Horizons explores the theme of contact with a wider world and the movement of people, goods and ideas. In Them and Us issues of conflict and imperialism, power and status, are examined, while In touch with the Gods concentrates on spiritual life.' (<http://www.nms.ac.uk/mos/>). This emphasis on material culture drew out a number of intriguing insights. One was a display case that showed the distribution of the use of whale bone throughout the ages across the outer islands of Scotland. Another was a basket, originally considered modern, reallocated to archaeology from the ethnography section by a specialist dating and conservation programme. At times the displays require background knowledge and a reading age of 13, but the experiment, once fully appreciated, is highly successful. The whole project is backed by a wider Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network, or SCRAN, accessed from the internet (<http://www.scran.ac.uk/>) which will supply educational information to schools. Perhaps the politicians of the future will be more informed about their deep historical past, and save more space in their manifestos for the cultural heritage.

The Royal Park has recently been systematically surveyed by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland which survives intact north of the border. This landscape which dominates Edinburgh is full of metaphor. Arthur's Seat inspired Ruskin to evoke the peak as 'Vesuvius without the vigour of the vines'. The Commission's more empirical study has recorded material culture and earthworks which range from the Late Bronze hoard found in 1778 in Duddingston Loch, to the 17 miniature coffins found just below the summit of Arthur's seat in 1836, to the modern excavations of the 8.4 ha fort on Arthur's seat itself. The result is a palimpsest of landscapes, some material, some immaterial, that could provide an informative focus for the landscape studies that govern many of the activities of prehistorians south of the border.

Lastly, the foundations of the proposed Scottish Parliament building are providing an interesting archaeological history of the medieval levels of the Canongate quarter adjoining Holyrood Abbey and progress can be followed on the internet (<http://www.holyroodarchaeology.org/index.html>) — although like some other internet pages this has not been updated as frequently as when first established.

 Culture may be one step ahead of politics in the English part of the United Kingdom. Here cultural management is undergoing its own regionalization. Regional offices for English Heritage (EH) have recently been planned in Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Guildford, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Northampton and York, as centres for the management of the heritage, and these same locations are in some cases collecting other cultural organization (Arts Council etc.). The same centres may in turn become the political centres of regional devolution, the bases for regional assemblies, a striking return to the 1st millennium AD as we approach the 3rd. The culture of each region is slightly different — more or less centralized — and cultural administration may be based in one or more areas. Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Newcastle and York do appear to be developing as stronger cultural foci which, as north and west of the border show, can lead in time to political developments. These are developments which will be watched with interest in the coming years.

One immediate consequence for those involved is disruption all round, and especially so for the employees of EH, who are being scattered to incomplete offices, new labs, and away from their traditional heartland in central London. It will take time to see how this all works, but as one colleague commented, the corporate memory of the organization is fast disappearing. Civil servants and others are moving through and out of the administration, leaving just a few old hands in the regional outposts! With the amalgamation of the English Royal Commission on Historical Monuments and English Heritage now complete, and naturally some wastage and redundancies from that episode, the career life of the QUANGO employee is becoming progressively shorter.

 The Eastern region has over the last few months witnessed a curious cultural event at

*The Holme 'circle' in early July 1999, at the half-way stage of excavation. As the editorial goes to press, the central inverted oak has just been removed.*



the The Holme circle, whose investigation has become a distillation of many current archaeological issues. During exceptionally destructive tidal activity over the last couple of years, peat sediments at Holme were washed away and eroded remnants of a timber circle were exposed on the tidal beaches of this remote part of north Norfolk, on the seaward side of an important nature reserve. Should the circle be allowed to decay naturally or should it be systematically studied and recovered for posterity? Should an important discovery be made public when it is located in a fragile natural habitat? How should such a unique site be interpreted?

It did not take long for a wide range of interests to become attached to the 'circle', regardless of its actual form or function. The lunatic fringe have always fastened onto the form of the circle – be it in stone or in other materials. The recent exposure of the the Holme Circle in Norfolk is no exception. The Press called it Sea Henge although it was quite obviously not a henge at all, and very quickly, during the late Spring and early Summer this year, the newly created and self-discovered 'Tree Druids' set up vigil at the site, during low tide when the timbers were visible, and claimed it as their own! This claim was soon in conflict with the intervention of archaeologists who were commissioned to study and then remove the timbers from the fast disappearing 'circle'. Every daily tide and the encroachment of seawater meant that the timbers, dated by  $^{14}\text{C}$  and dendrochronology to around 2000 BC (or the early

Bronze Age), weakened by wood-boring sea creatures, were likely to erode to the point of total destruction in a short time-period. As fast as the archaeologists worked, their efforts were hampered by the Druids who sat upon the central upturned tree-trunk that formed the focus of the circle. As a solution to permitting progress in the study of the structure, Druids were included in meetings about its future. It has been reported to this office that the Druids have taken a leading hand in these meetings. Now archaeologists, local officials, druids and others must sit around the table conforming to the time-consuming Druid way of conducting meetings. Only when the druid staff is in their hands may they speak . . . !

The editors visited to view progress, which had then seen the removal of half the circle, and has opened a new problem in remote north Norfolk — the tourist! The local discoverer of the circle was holding forth during our visit, and as a dedicated amateur, explained that the circle has attracted such interest since it was older than all the invasions of England — the Normans, the Romans, indeed, it had attracted such interest, he declared, since it was really English ! Perhaps a future circle, in a new regional climate, will be declared to be quintessentially Anglian.

📖 The latest National Art Collections Fund Annual Report for 1998 contains an interesting message for archaeologists which is both worrying and encouraging. The report lists and

describes the objects supported by grants from the Fund in order to permit purchase by the National Museums. The Fund concentrates on art, but 11 groups of objects can be broadly classified as archaeological: the Haynes hoard of Late Roman coinage and jewellery (Bedford Museum), the Appledore hoard (British Museum), an *aureus* of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus (British Museum), a *denarius* of the Roman emperor Carausius (British Museum), the Buckingham coin hoard (Buckinghamshire County Museum), the South Cerney harness mount (Cirencester Museum), 13 Medieval floor tiles (Devizes Museum), the Little Smeaton hoard (Doncaster Museum), a Runic shilling (Fitzwilliam Museum), four Anglo-Saxon pennies (Exeter Museum) and a prehistoric stone ball from Eden Valley, North Cumbria. No less than six of these were found by metal detectors who had often travelled a great distance to find their treasure. The rest were mainly *found* in auction houses. The worry is that the discovery of archaeology without context by metal-detecting continues, fuelled by the value enshrined in art. The encouraging aspect is that at least some of these artefacts are being saved for the wider public and archaeological interpretation. Better relations are being established between detector groups and archaeologists. The Portable Antiquities Scheme (<http://www.finds.org.uk/>) is one such initiative to encourage everyone to work together in recording and reporting the context of finds.

❧ A promising opportunity has presented itself to British research archaeology in the form of new funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB). This new Board (not yet a research council) has some £50 million at its disposal of which £22 million is ear-marked for research studentships and £19 million for research. Formerly, archaeology research funding was awarded principally from the British Academy, and grants were of a quite modest level, covering fieldwork and small research projects. Of the *c.* £1 million allocated to the humanities, the total amount reserved for archaeological fieldwork was about £350,000 and about a further £100,000 was received for small grants. These funds were fairly and evenly distributed to worthy projects, with sums ranging from around £2000 to £20,000 annually.

The new Board is governed by a new — and evolving — set of rules. Grants have become

much larger in comparison to past awards, and this important innovation offers the possibility for applicants to seek sums between £5,000 and £500,000 over a five-year period. The figures include a large chunk of salary overheads (45%), on a principle taken from the other Research Boards and Councils, where it is appreciated that the researchers require the support of infrastructure.

Some £15.7 million has recently been awarded in the first three rounds of AHRB applications, and it has been divided as follows: 77% to the humanities and 23% to the arts. The total sum compares favourably with the sums administered by the British Academy, but there is no longer a guarantee that 35% be reserved for archaeology on the clear grounds that it is the one humanities subject which requires fieldwork and considerable archive preparation before analysis can take place.

An analysis of the recently released, but incomplete, statistics for the major grants of over £5000 makes interesting reading (<http://www.ahrb.ac.uk/pressrel.html>). Several approaches to the AHRB failed to release the full figures since 'proper procedure' had to be observed. This procedure, by many accounts, has a touch of the unprepared, and is necessarily under review in a newly established organization. Once the first annual report is published after delayed final meetings, we will, of course, revise any misconceptions we may have formed on the basis of the limited release of information and invite the chief executive and director of corporate communications to make their response.

On our current understanding, support for our 'editorial definition' of archaeology has increased by 147% in absolute terms, but the proportion of support within arts and humanities funding has fallen by 28%. Nearly 60% of the funding has been allocated to the creation of catalogues where the text is privileged over other forms of material culture.

Funding has been distributed between disciplines (arranged within panels) according to the following criteria: the number of applications, the correction factor for the expense of a particular subject and the national size of the research-active community. Archaeology has produced a high number of applications, demonstrating the discipline's urgent need. Together with music and the performing arts, a correction factor of 1.3 has been applied to the re-

sources available to archaeology. However, on the final criterion (size of the research community) archaeology, a young discipline, is at a major disadvantage compared with the serried ranks of research-active staff established since the time of Herodotus. In this respect, there is a particularly interesting comparison between history and archaeology. Archaeology had 15 projects funded out of more than 100 applications and received a mere 7% of the total funding, with an average £74,000 allocated to each successful project. History had 23 projects funded out of, we estimate, half the number of applications and received more than 34% of the funding, with an average £233,000 allocated per project (of which 15 were catalogues and 8 were analytical). At a rough guess, the 94 funded projects sharing the £15.7 million total should have had an average of around £167,000 each. Clearly archaeology has been pretty short-changed from this exercise! Furthermore, 77% of the funding for archaeological projects was allocated to projects involving collaboration outside the United Kingdom, a highly rated research characteristic, whereas 71% of history projects had a prominently English base.

We ask readers whether the innovative field of archaeology has been properly rewarded. A large subject with a low application rate will have much less competition for funds within AHRB if this formula continues. Many colleagues have contacted us about this rather worrying outcome, and generally there is a sense of doom and gloom for the future of research archaeology in Britain. The whole basis on which a post-war generation of British archaeologists has collaborated with international colleagues is at risk, since only a very few projects will now be funded.

A further point of concern is that the British Academy had given every expectation that it would fund a number of archaeological field-work projects for five years. In this original allocation of funds by the AHRB, many projects were stopped in mid-stream, just at the moment when post-excavation was intensifying. This cataloguing phase is precisely the activity that has been prioritized for other subjects by the AHRB, since 60% of the funds have been allocated to 'projects' of this type. Archaeologists are sometimes accused of taking time to publish. For a few weeks, it seemed that it might be the next generation who would have to do

our publication, since some of the largest AHRB grants have been allocated to precisely this type of activity covering the tracks of work not done in the last century (Anglo-Saxon sculpture, Greek inscriptions and the like). Fortunately, the AHRB does now appear to be allocating further funds — after much protest from the archaeological community — to some of these projects promised five year funding, but *only* at the lower level of support given by the British Academy in previous years. Archaeologists are very good at putting together portfolios of funding to support their international research. There are many archaeological projects which work closely with local communities at home and abroad. For these projects, £5000 is often too little and £50,000 is sometimes too much, given the level of voluntary support. An appropriate level of funding also needs to be found to cover this type of work.

The new trends in archaeological research funding are worrying. Catalogues are all very well, but for archaeologists they are just one part of the exercise of turning field data into digestible form, ready for analysis, comparison, interpretation and understanding. It seems that the great and the good who determine the manner and direction of humanities research think otherwise — for them, if the current pattern is really one to be established, it is the published catalogue that is the final aspiration of humanities research. After all, lots of RAE points can be attached to a hefty, worthy and unreadable catalogue. The trouble is that many of the clearly worthy, but immensely expensive, projects that have been funded are putting together some very old data, and in many cases simply reorganizing, updating and republishing some even older catalogues. There can be no greater contrast than between these projects (a professor and his research assistants and students in a library) and collaborative archaeological field-work projects which bring professors and teams of students and local communities together, uncovering primary data.

At a time when archaeology as a discipline is obtaining an almost immeasurable quantity of new archaeological data through the developer-funded fieldwork that is thriving in Britain at present, there is a very real need to comprehend it in an academic manner. So much, so fast, and barely understood beyond the site report, the huge increase of information on Britain's past really needs comprehensive analysis

and synthesis. This is where cataloguing activity is required, rather than recataloguing catalogues.

Academic archaeology has also been fortunate to receive science funding currently channelled through the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). There are signs that this source of money may also become more difficult to achieve. Until recently, archaeology had a 'ring fenced' allocation of funds, amounting to between £1 and £2 million a year, shared between perhaps 10–12 successful projects annually. Things here have also changed dramatically, and the ring fence has been removed (archaeology must fend for itself alongside the rest of the NERC sciences). The result seems to be that funding for archaeology has in reality fallen to a quarter of the former levels, but is shared between a similar number of projects. The impression of some colleagues is that there is considerable misunderstanding about the nature of archaeological science research, and instead the emphasis is on hypothesis-testing, rather than information-gathering and analysis. Some researchers have had extraordinary responses to their fund applications, where it seems quite clear that in the absence of sufficient funds to share around an unprecedented number of applications, curious excuses are made about 'insufficient' information, even for routine requests like  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates! First impressions also suggest that biology, environment and dating are the more successful areas, whereas conservation and technology have been poorly supported.

The retiring Chair of SBAC writes:

I don't think it is the case that SBA is getting any less funding than it was. The figures are in any case too easy to dress up to fit one argument or another. The key issue is that the goalposts are constantly on the move, so that old funding scenarios are constantly dwindling, though new ones are arising, and the critical thing is following this moving landscape. A lot of applicants still have a mindset lodged in the old SERC system (with an emphasis on new techniques) which is quite different from NERC, which is far more interested in major issues and major questions, however tackled.

Within SBA, what has dwindled over the past few years is major grants, particularly in the material areas, and this has been led by the dwindling of applications, not allocations, which proportionately stay at the normal level. What has risen is small grants, both in application and allocations, and this may be a realistic reflection of changing needs in the discipline.

Recent successes have been the Joint Infrastructure Funding of two AMS machines which greatly strengthens UK involvement in dating and the expansion of NERC training support to include the Reading geoaerchaeology course.

The Science-Based Archaeology Strategy Group (SBASG) is in discussion with NERC to establish thematic areas (<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/es/sbastrategy.htm>) where funding applications for archaeology can be directed, and perhaps given a greater hope for success. Prominent among these will be the study of early humans in various forms (precision chronology and evolution), biomolecular archaeology and trade and exchange. A similar thematic direction is also being proposed within the AHRB which could logically focus on a later period and give further opportunities for the interdisciplinary ingenuity of archaeologists. AHRB and NERC should not forget that archaeology as a discipline is one of the highest scoring in the British Research Assessment Exercise. Invariably it scores much higher than all other humanities except Classics, and lack of funds for research will of course lower its research rating very dramatically within the next five years!

In conclusion, the future of funded archaeological research in Britain looks bleak and we shall reap the results of this in future years. As editors, we are pleased to commission, select and publish good research in all fields of archaeology. We anticipate a real lack of material — field, interpretive or analytical — from our compatriots in the future. ANTIQUITY will, of course, be delighted to publish excellent work funded by bodies outside Britain, so we expect great things from CNRS, CNR, NEH, NSF and others, but at the expense of British archaeology.

The key message for all British archaeologists is that we must continue to apply for all these and other diverse sources of funding. A strong tradition of archaeological research has been established and we continue to demonstrate need by the number and quality of our grant applications.

 We are pleased to offer two special sections in this issue. The first looks at the question of the relationship between identity and archaeology in East Asia. The second relates to the direction taken by the study of landscapes in the United States.

## Erratum

It has been drawn to our attention that an author was wrongly referenced in L. García Sanjuán's 'Expressions of inequality: settlement patterns, economy and social organization in the southwest Iberian Bronze Age (c. 1700–1100 BC)' in the last *ANTIQUITY* (73: 337–51).

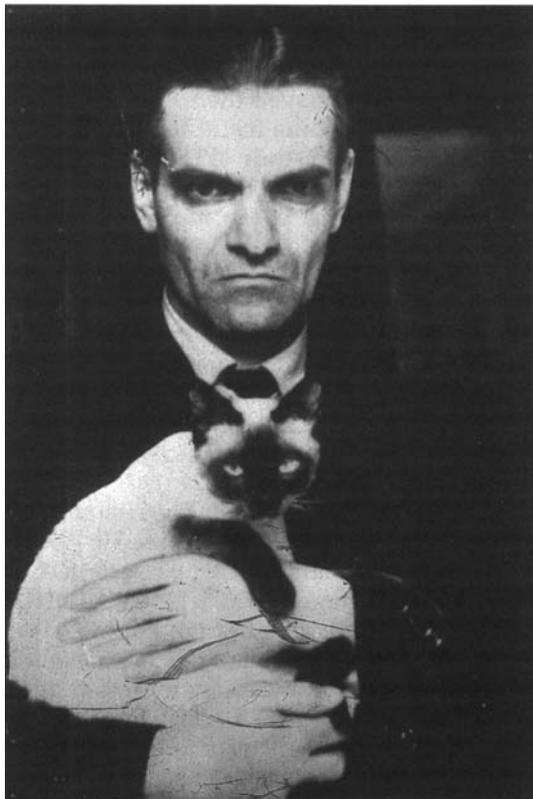
For Díaz (1993; 1995), read Díaz-Andreu (1993; 1995).

☞ We have invited Norman Hammond, Advisory Editor to *ANTIQUITY*, to prepare the following obituary.

### Yuri Valentinovich Knorosov (1922–1999)

Although the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing, more than that of Egyptian hieroglyphs or Mesopotamian cuneiform, has been a cumulative enterprise, Yuri Knorosov has a good claim to having been its Champollion or Rawlinson. In the simple boldness, subsequently so self-evident, of his claim that Maya writing represented real language phonetically expressed. Knorosov's achievement can also reasonably be compared with that of Michael Ventris and his realization that Linear B was an archaic form of Greek. In essence the language is still spoken by several million Maya across the Mesoamerican lowlands where the civilization of their ancestors had waxed and waned more than a millennium ago.

The Maya script was probably the last great ancient code to be cracked (apart from the neighbouring and possibly related 'Epi-Olmec' texts on La Mojarra Stela 1 and the Tuxtla Statuette (Kaufmann & Justeson 1993)): neither Harappan nor Etruscan texts are long enough to provide the structures and checks needed to test putative decipherments. The story of the decipherment has been well told by George Stuart (1992), including a valuable emphasis on the work of forgotten 19th-century contributors such as Constantine Rafinesque, while more recent work has been described *in extenso* by Michael Coe in *Breaking the Maya code* (1992), utilizing Stuart's material *inter alia*. Coe had the advantage of interviewing Knorosov, although aspects of his account seem to have been mistaken (Knorosov in Kettunen 1998); he was from the beginning one of the most vocal Western proponents of Knorosov's work, and his book celebrates its general acceptance.



Yuri Valentinovich Knorosov (1922–1999).

Valeri Valentinovich Knorosov was born near Kharkov in the Ukraine on 19 November 1922, and began studying at Moscow State University when he was 17, with a particular interest in Egyptology. During World War II he served as an artillery spotter in the Red Army, and was among those who entered Berlin in 1945. Among the boxes of books from Germany's National Library that were shipped to Moscow, Knorosov eventually came across the 1930 Villacorta & Villacorta edition of the three extant Maya codices; but it was Paul Schellhas' 1945 article in the Swedish journal *Ethnos*, 'Die Entzifferung der Mayahieroglyphen: ein unlösbares Problem?', to which he was introduced by his professor, Sergei Aleksandrovich Tokarev, that steered him towards decipherment of the Maya script. His view then, and at the end of his life, was that 'whatever man has invented, man can solve: this is my point of view, [and] has always been' (cited in Kettunen 1998).

Knorosov was handicapped by the lack of both relevant books and academic jobs in the post-war USSR, but there was an opening in Leningrad, so he moved there, and spent the rest of his career at the Institute of Ethnology. He began work on a study of Diego de Landa's *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, with its tempting but misleading Maya 'alphabet', which formed the basis of his doctoral dissertation (eventually published in 1955). Knorosov used the 'alphabet', in reality a partial syllabary, to suggest a phonetic basis for the Maya script (Knorosov 1952 and subsequent publications), but ran into serious opposition from J. Eric S. Thompson, the leading Maya epigrapher of the middle 50 years of the 20th century. Thompson attacked Knorosov's work in a review in *Yan* in 1953, in his popular book *The rise and fall of Maya civilization* (1954: 174–8) and in *American Antiquity* (Thompson 1959); he scorned (in a private letter quoted by Coe (1982: 161) 'the Witches coven which rides wild at midnight in the skies at Yuri's command', but also his certainty 'that there never was any system such as Yuri propounds' — one in which hieroglyphic signs could work solely as phonetic syllables. Knorosov's view was that 'he [Thompson] dominated and nobody objected to him: it was like Marx: you couldn't oppose', although he also clearly saw part of the conflict as among 'the realities during the Cold War era' (quoted in Kettunen 1998). Thompson's trenchant views, aided by errors in Knorosov's early work, held sway until the former's death in 1975, but are now generally seen as mistakenly rigid, as are those of the German epigrapher Thomas Barthel, who shared Thompson's unphonetic view of Maya script and became another caustic critic of Knorosov's ideas.

Knorosov's own vital insight that the script was substantially syllabic has remained the basis of the subsequent revolution in decipherment, but his more recent translations, and those of his students, Galina Yershova and Anna Borodatova, of texts painted on vases have not gained acceptance: the thrust of successful Maya decipherment is now concentrated in a group of young scholars including Nikolai Grube, Stephen Houston, Alfonso Lacadena, Simon Martin and David Stuart, working in close contact from both sides of the Atlantic in the USA and the EU.

Yuri Knorosov died in Moscow on 31 March 1999; he had been due to receive the

Proskouriakoff Award from Harvard University for his contribution to Maya decipherment a few weeks later. The award was made instead to David H. Kelley, one of Knorosov's earliest and most constant proponents (Kelley 1962; 1976). Knorosov would have been pleased.

NORMAN HAMMOND

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