



EDITORIAL

 The Danish government, often a leader in archaeological matters, has provided a sum of money for training its PhD students for the world of work. ‘Work’ in this case largely means working in universities and museums, for which one key qualification is naturally deemed to be the writing of academic papers. Responsibility for tutoring Denmark’s archaeology students in the business of publication was accorded to the department at Aarhus, which duly held a workshop for them in late 2005. There the students were told how to prepare a paper and how to choose a publisher, and there was a lively discussion about the central issue – who are we doing this for? As usual, the academics insisted that it was the referees that would control the selection (and thus the research that got published), while those publishers present attempted to persuade us that it was the market – the readers – that would determine the value of the research in the long term, by buying it or not.

Denmark’s most read archaeological publication is probably the Danish language periodical *Skalk*, founded by Harald Andersen in 1957 and still very much a private enterprise. It is lively but choosy, rejects 60 per cent of its submissions, and by no means trivialises research: it provides the latest Danish archaeology for the busy professional. It’s probably time we stopped calling this type of journal ‘popular’ or as Glyn Daniel would say ‘haute vulgarisation’. Done like *Skalk*, it is a necessary part of the research communication system: and its contributors are paid. Danish students have many of the same kinds of outlet as other European students, but perhaps recognise more than most that completing a PhD is no longer enough. If you want to get a job doing archaeology in a university, you need to get publishing long before that, in media both recreational and lofty.

My colleague Dr Humphrey Harumpher was not invited to the workshop, but that never stops him giving an opinion to any who will listen (in this case me). ‘Professionalising post-graduates is poppycock’, he alliterated, angrily. ‘The PhD course is a tryst between an individual and the unknown, the only time in the whole of a life where you are free to read what you like, go where you like, waste time if you like and think the thoughts you want to think – wherever they lead. This is the only way to produce new ideas, new directions, great art and some mildly independent archaeological theory. Who wants the government interfering with this deeply personal and spiritual experience? Might as well try and teach them how to make love’. Humphrey has yet to be fully professionalised himself – but he is on a waiting list to have the operation. (He is in no hurry, thinking it will probably prove fatal).

 It’s a pleasure to draw attention to the appearance of new books on the archaeology of China. Those of us teaching world archaeology courses have had to rely for decades on milky pictures and old newspaper cuttings. But not any more. Li Liu’s *State Formation in Early China* (with Xingcan Chen) (Duckworth 2003) is followed by her brilliant *The Chinese Neolithic* (Cambridge University Press 2004). What Neolithic in any country has been treated to such a detailed and lucid presentation, and such rational modelling? The nursery of China’s first emperors turns out to be a place of political experiment in which the religious leader in the form of the shaman is a principal player. With a spring breeze of common sense she bangs no theoretical chime bells, but allows social and environmental



Strange meeting. Frank Goddio's underwater explorations in the ancient harbour of Alexandria are the subject of the exhibition Egypt's Sunken Treasures opening at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin on 13 May 2006. Also participating is Oxford University's Centre for Maritime Archaeology (Photo Jérôme Delafosse. Reproduced by permission of Frank Goddio/Hilt Foundation).

voices to be engaged in dialogue: *'In China the regional Neolithic cultures experienced different trajectories toward social complexity, which must have been affected, to some extent or other, by the particular ecological settings in which these ancient stratified societies arose'* (2004: 32). Amen to that; it seems that history, and a changing environment, actually happens after all.

For the full imperial glory one has *The Formation of Chinese Civilization* (Yale University Press 2005) in which a galaxy of authors edited by Sarah Allan take us from Beijing (Peking) man to the end of the Han with large numbers of juicy pictures. Especially welcome and evocative are the photographs of excavations, for example of the grave mounds at the *Goddess Temple* Niuheliang, the palaces at Erlitou, and the Shang city of Yanshi, all showing beautifully cleaned sites with vertical edges. Whether it is for us to welcome these archaeological colleagues to our world, or them, us, to theirs, this book opens a new chapter in archaeology, which, as a number of the authors rightly say, will never be the same again. Even cynics, having glanced at the credits and noted that the project was driven in part by George Bush Sr, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski will lose none of their enthusiasm. It is not just the giant palaces, cities and tombs that leave one gasping, but the depth of social understanding which is possible from what can be justly claimed as the richest, most extravagant, archaeological sequence in the world.

But what about all that killing? Six hundred horses in a pit at Iron Age Linzi, 79 humans, 28 horses and 3 monkeys in a second rank tomb at Wuguan, 21 sacrificed females aged 13-25 in the tomb of the 45-year-old reprobate Marquis Yi of Zeng, 2000 sacrificial pits in Anyang, topped up with slaves at every ceremony in the annual cycle. So much blood, and for what? We cannot just dismiss these things as the weird practices of a distant age. We are, after all, the Darwinian descendants of the world's most successful copulators and killers, and still not averse to sacrificing healthy young lives for supposedly moral causes.

The context and consequences of human sacrifice is the kind of research question to which archaeology can and should bring further understanding.

One of the concluding authors is Xu Pingfang, who suggests that the Chinese people may have evolved separately from their own local version of *homo erectus*. Even more controversially, he would like us to accept that the unification of China was inevitable: ‘*In the long course of Chinese history, there have been many twists and turns and reversals, but historical principles override human intentions. Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty followed the tide of history. He completed the great task of unification begun by the First Emperor of Qin and consolidated the transformation from a political system based on kinship relations to an administrative structure based on territory*’. A territory in which historical principles override human intentions?

🏰 Europe continues to conduct alphanumeric manoeuvres on the broad plains of the internet. Our Correspondent Nathan Schlanger has been attending recent head-banging sessions, and writes: ‘The meeting held in Namur in late November 2005 was the “grand finale” of Planarch 2, a project funded by Interreg IIIB for North-Western Europe, led by Kent County Council and including partners from Belgium, Germany, France, the Netherlands and the UK (cf. <http://www.planarch.org>)’. He goes on to translate this into human-speak, explaining that the project aims ‘to promote the archaeological heritage through its better integration in processes of spatial planning and environmental assessment’ and aims to win wider audiences, ‘such as planners, educators, the general public, and even politicians and the youth’. While the youth remained elusive, the politicians apparently put themselves in easy reach when the whole meeting adjourned to Brussels for a cocktail reception at the European Parliament. Here, mingling with the hosting MEPs (Roger Howitt and Philippe Busquin) proved to be a good way to further the integration of archaeology in both planning and research. In research, although Europe offers generous subventions for projects that unify our past, archaeology risks falling between the European Commission’s selected themes, ironically due to its much-praised multidisciplinary and transferable qualities. But archaeologists are incurable optimists, and need to be: as one of the speakers had earlier proclaimed “human history has been with us for a very long time indeed” (er . . . and is likely to remain so?).

In European planning, the 1992 Valletta (Malta) convention of the Council of Europe¹ provides the gospel. It enshrines the archaeological heritage as a shared historical and scientific source, stipulating that legal and scientifically valid measures should be taken for preserving this heritage from physical destruction, urging reconciliation between the requirements of archaeology and those of development, and finally calling for appropriate public and/or private funding to be provided for rescue or preventive archaeology. As could be expected, these laudable principles leave much scope for interpretation and implementation by the convention’s signatories, many of which were discussed at the annual seminar of the *Europæ Archaeologia Consilium* (a network of AHM organisations – not, as some too hastily render it, the ‘European Archaeological Council’) held at Roses on the Costa Brava in October last. The main question for delegates here was the matter of site selectivity. Given that not all archaeological remains will receive the attention they ideally deserve, how *do* we prioritise sites for preservation and study? And once these choices

¹ <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/143.htm>.



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are made, how can we ensure that work is conducted to scientific standards of operation, recording and publication? The dozen or so papers presented on these topics (including several 'multiple perspectives' on the same country) only confirmed the current diversity of European solutions – from no prioritising to random prioritising, from the maintenance of a centralised, government-led, quality control to self-regulation by private societies of professionals. Should Europe head for the American *Section 106* system, with its SHIPPOs, national register and measures of significance? Or is there still a European way, forced on us by broader values and deeper deposits, in which *everything* is potentially relevant to this very long, and very rich material history, unless and until proved otherwise?

📄 TAG (The *Theoretical Archaeology Group*) in December 2005 was held at Sheffield where there was a great deal to delight the curious. Sadly it is impossible to go into everything, but I found particularly enjoyable Kenny Aitchison and Thomas Evans' session on the *Archaeology of the Inaccessible*. This included Vince Gaffney's magnificent mapping of the bed of the North Sea, and Beth Laura O'Leary's archaeology on the surface of the moon. Yes, we have managed to create a heritage issue on our nearest celestial body (see <http://www.antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/oleary>). This year's quiz winners were Andrew Fleming, Anthony Sinclair, JD Hill and Mary Ann Owoc, who were awarded a year's Premium subscription to *Antiquity*. The Premium facility continues to amaze all who use it, whether for teaching or research. Readers are encouraged to emphasise this message to their libraries: the *Antiquity* electronic archive (Premium) is a powerful search machine providing students and researchers with access to the ideas and discoveries of the last 80 years; it is not at all the same as having back numbers on the shelves.

TAG enthusiasts will also be pleased to know that we have created and are hosting a TAG website (at <http://www.antiquity.ac.uk/tag>). Theorists will be able to look up what they said, or planned to say, or planned to be able eventually to say, all those years ago and blush or chirrup accordingly.

Martin Carver
York, 1 March 2006