



Archaeology in action at a small prehistoric site in the area of Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. At this point several flakes had been recovered. The site was located as a part of an environmental impact assessment. The alluvial deposits of the site are overlain by a thick organic deposit. Photograph taken in September 2012 by Jason Jeandron.



Chavín de Huántar, in the highlands of Ancash, central Peru, is part of the territory where the Andean civilisation was born. The monumental platforms and plazas that now form a UNESCO World Heritage Site were built around 1000 BC; however, earlier construction phases date from the second millennium BC, with the lowest occupational levels being associated with the preceramic settlers of the area. During its apogee, Chavín de Huántar became a remarkable religious centre, where expressions of power and authority were modelled and dispersed throughout the Andes. This image shows the main platform and plaza of Chavín around sunset, surrounded by the rugged nearby hills and the Mosna River valley. Photograph taken in 2008 by Jorge Gamboa Velásquez.

EDITORIAL

Most people would agree that global warming is, on the whole, a bad thing. As average temperatures rise, weather patterns shift and the fragile balance that sustains a world population of seven billion people (and growing) is thrown into doubt. From an archaeological perspective, this is the latest episode in a long-running story. Humans themselves are often held to be an ice age species, formed in the peculiarly volatile climatic conditions of the last two million years. The crucial ability to adapt in response to rapid and unforeseen changes could be one of the principal drivers behind our social and cognitive composition. In addition to ‘natural’ climate changes (including catastrophic events such as the Mount Toba eruption some 74 000 years ago that may nearly have wiped out early humans), archaeology also tracks the growing impact of human activity on our climate. It has been argued that the adoption of agriculture some 10 000 years ago, and the large-scale husbandry of domestic livestock in particular, has had an irreversible effect on the global climate and that anthropogenic emissions have forestalled the prospect of a further ice age. The statistic that atmospheric CO₂ concentrations are now higher than they have been for 3–5 million years, and are still rising, should certainly give all of us food for thought. We have covered the issue—and archaeologists’ response to climate challenges—on several occasions in recent issues (*Antiquity* 82 (2008): 1093–103; 84 (2010): 1163–71; 85 (2011): 1039–48).

Like so many things, however, global warming has perverse effects, and among these has been the growing number of discoveries of fragile and perishable artefacts released by the melting snows and retreating glaciers. Two of the papers in this issue of *Antiquity* report on recent discoveries from the melting snow patches of Norway. The more recent in age is a woollen tunic from Lendbreen (pp. 788–801), which radiocarbon dating has placed in the third or fourth century AD. This ancestor to the modern Norwegian sweater had been patched and mended before it ended up in the remote location where it was found. Was it bundled up and forgotten by an absent-minded hunter? Scandinavia is of course famous for its prehistoric textiles and clothing, especially those from the bog bodies and log coffin burials of Denmark. They provide insights into what is otherwise an obscure but vitally significant area of material culture. There will no doubt be further revelations as analysts work through the dozens more garments that have come to light in this way.

Still older in date is a group of prehistoric artefacts from Oppdal, 100km to the north. These are the subject of the second paper (pp. 728–45), and include five arrow shafts and a substantial fragment of a wooden bow stave. Radiocarbon dates place three of the arrow shafts in the fourth millennium BC, and the others plus the bow stave in the late third or second millennium BC. As the author observes, it was previously assumed that the warm period of the Roman Iron Age will have melted earlier snow patches and destroyed any organics trapped within them, but these recent finds demonstrate that that is not the case. It shows once again how unusual our recent global temperatures have become, with particularly dramatic impacts in the colder regions of the world. We should expect a spate of further discoveries in the coming years.

SAA Hawaii

☞ Few places on earth can be further from the melting ice sheets than Hawaii. It was here, in the spacious setting of the Hawaii Conference Center, that the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology was held in April 2013. The Opening Session took the form of a traditional Hawaiian welcome in the spectacular ballroom at the Hilton Hawaiian Village. Conch shells were blown, and a traditional prayer offered. The welcome was followed by the President's Forum on 'engagement with descendant communities' including perspectives by indigenous archaeologists from Canada, Australia, South America, the USA and of course Hawaii itself. A recurrent theme was the difficulty of archaeological engagement and the all-too-often inadequate consultation of descendant communities in CRM contexts.

The conference itself ranged far and wide with 2800 papers presented in almost 300 sessions, and a total of 3400 participants. With so many parallel sessions there was the inevitable frustration at having to choose which to attend, but once again it was an excellent opportunity for a sizeable fraction of the international archaeological community to meet together and exchange news and ideas.

Descendant communities are still actively engaged in Hawaii's archaeological past—it is a living tradition. The splendid Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu presents the Hawaiian past from an indigenist perspective, referring to 'our ancestors' (Bernice Pauahi Bishop was a great-granddaughter of King Kamehameha I). The richness of material culture is astonishing, and it is sobering to reflect how little of it would survive under standard archaeological conditions: the coloured bark cloth, wooden bowls, carved wooden figures, featherwork and basketry all would perish, leaving only the stone adzes, the shell beads and fishhooks, and perhaps the bone and ivory ornaments. The loss of the perishable organics would leave us with a radically depauperated image of Hawaiian skill and craft sophistication. For how many societies of the prehistoric past, I wonder, are we making that mistake?

Respect for the living tradition of indigenous Hawaiian communities is expressed very clearly in the temple sites or heiau that are protected by the US National Parks Service. The most prominent feature of these structures are the massive stone platforms that once supported timber shrines. The reconstruction at Pu'uohonua o Hōnaunau gives an impression of the original appearance, complete with elaborate carved wooden images and a restored mortuary hut. This is very much a museum, with a steady stream of visitors, although noticeboards advise of its sacred status and ask people to keep to the paths and not to climb on the structures. The message is even clearer at other heiau. At Hikiau, for example, the platform is once again restored but out of bounds to non-native Hawaiians, with signboards instructing visitors to keep off and warning of 'kapu' (taboo). The continued significance of these structures to the indigenous Hawaiian communities, if now rather different than in the pre-European past, is a welcome contrast to the fossilisation to which archaeological sites can so often become victim.

Several of these heiau have significant historical associations. Hikiau overlooks Kealakekua Bay where Captain Cook and his two ships anchored in 1779, and the heiau itself was the scene of some of the key events that played out in the course of that tragic encounter. It was



The reconstructed Hale o Keawe heiau at Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau.

at Hikiāu that Cook conducted the funeral service for one of his crewmen, and the memorial to Cook's own death can be seen across the bay. The still more impressive Pu'ukoholā heiau on the north-western coast of Hawaii overlooks the site where Kamehameha, founder of the Hawaiian royal line, established his dominance over the island in 1791 by dispatching his principal rival. These terrace platform heiau are themselves related to political changes that set in during the seventeenth or eighteenth century, replacing the open court heiau of previous periods (*Antiquity* 85 (2011): 927–41; 86 (2012): 902–909). As religious authority became more entrenched, so the temples became more monumental and exclusive. Kamehameha's message in building the massive Pu'ukoholā heiau in its ridge-top position can hardly be mistaken, but he wasn't leaving anything to chance; the smaller Mailekini heiau a little way downslope became an artillery battery furnished with European naval guns.

Looting in Egypt

There has been tragic news for archaeology in Egypt as the Arab Spring takes a darker turn. The breakdown in law and order has meant that many archaeological sites are unprotected and have become the target of widespread and systematic looting. The important cemetery of Abu Sir el-Maleq, near the mouth of the Fayum, is one of the major casualties, along with other sites in the Beni Suef governorate. There have been only limited excavations at Abu Sir el-Maleq, but these have revealed graves from the fourth-millennium Nagada II Period down to the Late Period (712–332 BC). Particularly significant are a group of burials of the Hyksos period, a phase otherwise much better represented in the delta. All this has been trashed. Professor Salima Ikram, of the American University in Cairo, has spoken of “a pock-marked lunar landscape with dense scatters of mummy wrappings pulled

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off bodies, and huge piles of bones". Antiquities dealers are active in the local cafés, and these are not only small portable items that are for sale, but entire painted coffins and sarcophagi complete with their mummies.

The same sad tale can be recounted at other locations throughout Egypt. Tanis in the delta, and the desert oases of Kharga, Dakhla and Baharia (the latter the location of the famous Graeco-Roman necropolis dubbed the 'Valley of the Golden Mummies') have all been affected. Even the famous Qubbet al-Hawa 'Tombs of the Nobles' overlooking the Nile at Aswan have not been spared. At Tanis the looting is being blamed on teams coming from other parts of Egypt, but the local people are unable to prevent it. Some of the looting is on a professional scale and there are reports of geophysical equipment being deployed to locate buried structures. Hitherto protected sites are also being damaged by the uncontrolled expansion of settlements and fields.

A major driving force is the easy money to be made, but before we rush in with our criticism it is important to understand better the circumstances in which many Egyptians find themselves at the present moment. The tourist market has collapsed, and with it the local economy around many of the famous archaeological sites. Visitor numbers to the Nile Valley have declined sharply and hotels even in Luxor stand half empty. It is not surprising then that some have been driven to make a living in whatever way possible, and as always in times of political disturbance, archaeology suffers. It is difficult to imagine a future economic revival in Egypt in which the resurgence of tourism does not play a major part, and that depends on placing value on the cultural heritage. As Salima and her colleague Monica Hanna lament, "the loss of Egyptian heritage affects the whole world, but it affects the Egyptians the most. By sacrificing the past they will sacrifice the future, both in terms of economy and identity". We can only watch and hope that government-backed security returns to Egypt's archaeology in the very near future.

All change in the UK

🏰 In Britain meanwhile we are awaiting the details of the latest round of government funding cuts and changes to the planning process. In Scotland, the two bodies Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland are to be merged into a single charitable organisation. By contrast, south of the border there are proposals to split the government agency English Heritage into a National Heritage Protection Service, responsible for the preservation and identification of sites and monuments, and a self-supporting National Heritage Collection that will look after the 420 archaeological sites and historic buildings open to the public. It remains to be seen how well archaeology will flourish under the new arrangements.

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