Society of Archaeology Masters Students (SAMS) 6th Annual Conference
University College London Institute of Archaeology
17 March 2018

(In)visible Pasts

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Since it opened in 1976, archaeology has played a key role in the Museum of London, which can be best summarised by three strands: firstly, the Museum’s link to excavation work (direct involvement in the past, now the Archaeological Archive); its presentation of archaeology through its permanent galleries; and finally, its presentation of archaeology in its temporary exhibitions and public programmes. Sometimes, as with galleries and exhibitions this involvement is very visible, but much of it is less visible, such as the curation and storage of London’s archaeological past in the Museums’ Archaeological Archive. The talk will explore how the relationship between the Museum and archaeology has evolved and look to the future: to the forthcoming Roman Dead exhibition and longer term to the New Museum of London in Smithfield.
17 March 2018 Schedule

10 am: Registration and coffee (IoA front steps and 609)

11 am: Session 1 – A Whole New World (612)
Carly Pope, UCL MA Archaeology
*Caribbean Ceramics in the Pre-Arawakan Pottery Horizon and Climate Variation*

Gabriela Dziki, University of Cambridge MPhil Archaeology of the Americas
‘Don’t judge a mound by its dirt’: A study of structure D-14 at the Site of Ka’akabish, Belize, and its implications at the time of the Terminal Classic to Early Postclassic hiatus.

Rosamund Eileen Fitzmaurice, UCL MA Archaeology
*Maya Graffiti in building A13, Xunantunich, Belize*

12 pm: Lunch (609)

1 pm: Session 2 – Bodies of Information (612)
Gwendoline Mauer, UCL MSc Environmental Archaeology
*Diaspora Subsistence Strategies*

Dominic O. Halliwell, UCL MSc Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology
*Invisible pasts: The impact of animal scavenging on the preservation of human remains*

Lisa Briggs, Oxford DPhil Archaeological Science
*DNA from the Wine-Dark Sea: Searching for ancient DNA on Mediterranean shipwrecks*

2 pm: Tea break (609)
2:30 pm: Session 3 – Engaging the Past (612)
Cailee Mellen, UCL MA Managing Archaeological Sites
To remember or to forget? The function of Khmer Rouge sites in contemporary Cambodia

Maya Howard, UCL BA Archaeology and Anthropology
Learning through Artefacts

Iida Kayhako, UCL MA Public Archaeology
Disobedient objects: protest made visible in the museum

3:30 pm: Tea break (609)

4 pm: Session 4 – Africa Reconsidered (612)
Alyssa James, UCL MA Archaeology of Egypt and the Near East
Dust & Blood: Famine and Fertility in the Age of Akhenaten

Maria Magdalena Gajewska, UCL MA Archaeology
Beyond Post-Colonialism: Swahili Identity Reconsidered

5 pm: Keynote Lecture (G6)
Jackie Kiely, Senior Curator at the Museum of London
Visible and Invisible: Archaeology and the Museum of London

6 pm: Closing Reception
Abstracts

Carly Pope, UCL MA Archaeology

*Caribbean Ceramics in the Pre-Arawakan Pottery Horizon and Climate Variation* (pottery, Caribbean, Pre-Arawakan, climate, fishing)

Traditionally researchers have thought that any ceramics in the Greater Antilles were the result of an influx of Arawakan-speaking peoples called the Saladoid, who originally came from the Orinoco Basin in Venezuela. Their migration to the islands around 500 BC dramatically changed the cultures of the Caribbean in ways that are still being understood, but chiefly they are credited with bringing settled village life, agriculture, and ceramic technology to the area. However, it has been acknowledged recently that a different, early ceramic assemblage exists in the Greater Antilles, which has been termed the Pre-Arawakan Pottery Horizon. This crude, coarse pottery was originally identified as anomalous, intrusive sherds when excavated but reappraisal has indicated that they represent a distinct style that emerged in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and even Puerto Rico. The evidence suggests that these ceramic vessels were semi-independently invented on the islands. They emerged in a time when rising sea levels and tropical storms made food scarcity an unpredictable threat, and in order to address this stress, Caribbean peoples diversified the marine resources they exploited and innovated technologically to better process and store foodstuffs. In this context ceramics emerged, almost a millennium before the Saladoid pottery arrived.

Gabriela Dziki, University of Cambridge MPhil Archaeology of the Americas

*‘Don’t judge a mound by its dirt’: A study of structure D-14 at the Site of Ka’kabish, Belize, and its implications at the time of the Terminal Classic to Early Postclassic hiatus.* (Maya, Belize, Transformation, Hiatus, Transition)

Archaeological investigations at Structure D-14 situated at site core of Ka’kabish in Northern Belize changed the chronology of the site and previous understanding of its development. Past excavations on site pointed toward it being abandoned between the Terminal Classic period and the Late Postclassic (AD600-AD1300), however evidence from structure D-14 shows the site to have been occupied and the building modified right at the transitional period towards the Postclassic. During a period of socio-political uncertainty, the Maya elite were materialising their ideology through
architecture to ensure that people still perceived them as the powerful and dependable rulers. Moreover, this study contradicts the idea of a Maya collapse at the end of the Terminal Classic Period as the elite of the site still had enough power to organise people to build and the site was not abandoned. In the face of shifting Maya ideology towards a more maritime commerce oriented secular society, the inland site of Ka’kabish was not abandoned for a more favourable location. Ritual and architectural transformation occurred during the time to show the people of Ka’kabish and neighbouring sites that the elite were still in charge.

**Rosamund Eileen Fitzmaurice, UCL MA Archaeology**

*Xunantunich Graffiti in building A13*

(Maya, graffiti, drugs, shamans, patolli)

Maya Graffiti from the Pre-classic to Post-classic has been best studied in Tikal, Guatemala where the earliest archaeologists described it as childish doodles and later, as the desecration of sacred spaces. From these assessments Haviland & Haviland considered a new approach, suggesting that the graffiti artists were recording images projected onto the plastered surfaces of the building during a drug-induced, altered state of consciousness. This new interpretation has been both embraced and rebuked by other scholars who offer their own alternatives for the graffiti. Hutson believes that some of the work was done by children learning about the world around them, while Źralka understands the graffiti as a form of self-expression.

**Gwendoline Mauer, UCL MSc Environmental Archaeology**

*Diaspora Subsistence Strategies*

(Zooarchaeology, Near East, Early Bronze Age, Kura-Araxes, Tel Bet Yerah)

The plaza, SA-M, at Tel Bet Yerah has been identified to act as an occupation area for the Early Transcaucasian migrants reaching and settling the site in the Early Bronze Age III (2900-2700 BCE). This paper presents a zooarchaeological analysis of the faunal assemblage from the plaza. Insights into the subsistence strategies and the social and cultural processes, the Early Transcaucasian migrants had in place in the southern Levant, are presented. This contribution offers observations on the fluidity and focus of the subsistence systems the Early Transcaucasian migrants possessed in the southern Levant in the Early Bronze Age III. The subsistence economy
was predominantly based on livestock husbandry of sheep, goat, cattle, pig and equids, as well as on a range of hunted wild animals and fish. Sheep/goat present the highest representation within the ETC faunal assemblage at Tel Bet Yerah. The ETC community seemed to have herded cattle for traction and transportation means. Equids are comparably highly represented to local assemblages from Tel Bet Yerah.

**Dominic O. Halliwell, UCL MSc Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology**

*Invisible pasts: The impact of animal scavenging on the preservation of human remains* (taphonomy, scavenging, forensic, anthropology, bioarchaeology)

Animal scavenging can have a large impact on the degree of preservation of human remains, with potential implications in both forensic and archaeological contexts. The extent of damage to human remains can depend on the type of animal scavenging in question, and a variety of related factors. Carnivorous scavengers, such as foxes and wolves can consume human remains as food, and unearth shallow burials. Such scavenging can lead to the loss of material and reduce the amount of information available ascertainable from these remains. Insect activity by flies and their larvae, colonising human remains as a source of food, can have be useful in the estimation of post-mortem interval (PMI) in forensic contexts. This can be influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic variation related to the individual and the context in which their remains were deposited. The variety of factors make it difficult to generalize the extent to which, if at all, animal scavenging impacts the preservation of human remains, and the implications this may have in both archaeological and forensic contexts.

**Lisa Briggs, Oxford DPhil Archaeological Science**

*DNA from the Wine-Dark Sea: Searching for ancient DNA on Mediterranean shipwrecks* (Ancient DNA, shipwrecks, amphorae, Mediterranean)

Finding a way to accurately characterise the contents of amphorae recovered from Mediterranean shipwrecks would provide invaluable insight into cargo compositions and trade dynamics. Is DNA the answer? There is tremendous potential for DNA studies to resolve long-standing questions in both terrestrial and underwater archaeology. Great optimism for the recovery of ancient DNA (aDNA) from maritime sites has spurred a series of studies claiming to have successfully extracted aDNA from a variety of artefacts
recovered from underwater sites including plant remains (Elbaum et al 2005; Manen 2003), human skeletons (Hershkovitz 2008) and shipwreck amphorae (Hansson and Foley 2008, Foley et al. 2012). However, these studies have not adequately addressed the source of the DNA recovered: does it derive from taxa present in the underwater deposition environment or the artefact itself? My research eliminates this ambiguity by examining the efficacy of extracting aDNA from the ceramic matrix of vessels recovered from five ancient Mediterranean shipwrecks and establishing what DNA is present in the water column and seafloor sediments that surround these sites. The methods used in this research promise to set a new standard for the recovery of ancient DNA from underwater archaeological sites.

Cailee Mellen, UCL MA Managing Archaeological Sites
To remember or to forget? The function of Khmer Rouge sites in contemporary Cambodia
(Cambodia; Negative Heritage; Heritage; Museum Interpretation; Conflict Archaeology)
How should communities relate to the darker aspects of their past and what role does heritage play within this dynamic? Given that much of human history is composed of less than savoury elements, the interplay between collective remembrance and collective amnesia is a recurring topic within the heritage studies field. While most research on this phenomenon has focused on European remembrance following the World Wars, it is also applicable to post-conflict societies the world-over. The aim of this essay is to explore the ways in which negative heritage sites are viewed and used in recent post-genocide areas, using Khmer Rouge sites in Cambodia as its primary case study. A brief recent history of the country will be provided along with an overview of the functions of these sites within society, which can broadly be broken down into sites of education and remembrance; sites of healing; and sites of development. I will work within the theories of negative heritage, memory-work, and healing heritage to evaluate how effectively these sites fulfill these prescribed roles and will conclude with a discussion of this prevalent question: do genocidal sites in Cambodia warrant being preserved at all, and if so, in what form?
Maya Howard, UCL BA Archaeology and Anthropology
Learning through Artefacts
(object-based learning, student engagement, material culture, student-led, using the collections)
Learning through Artefacts is a student-led project on artefact handling sessions for children between the ages of 7-12 years. Students from a range of backgrounds come to research and work with the collections. We unite the archaeology and anthropology collections to create sessions on Material Culture themes such as Value, Belief, The Life of an Artefact, Myth, and Music.

Iida Kayhako, UCL MA Public Archaeology
Disobedient objects: protest made visible in the museum
(protest, conflict, museums, heritage, collecting)
Bolt cutters, shields, smoke grenades. Gas masks, spray paint, banners. Flyers, pamphlets, zines. The material culture of protest encompasses a huge variety of objects – material which attempts to bring chaos to the hegemonic structures of society or state, and to disrupt and distort the everyday. This material culture has its own distinctive uses and lifespans, as well as its own histories and production methods. These objects are often destroyed or damaged in use and remain invisible to many outside of the moment of protest. Increasingly, however, it is material culture that is made visible: it is collected and displayed in museums, and protected by state heritage bodies. My research concerns the incorporation of these objects into national heritage regimes. This research sits at the intersection of a number of subdisciplines: heritage studies, conflict archaeology, material culture studies and archaeology of the contemporary world. What happens to protest objects when they enter the museum? How do museums envision themselves as political actors? What are the implications of this collecting activity for the future of museums and for the future of protest? My presentation will include photographs from my fieldwork with activists in London, and interviews with activists and museum professionals.

Alyssa James, UCL MA Archaeology of Egypt and the Near East
Dust & Blood: Famine and Fertility in the Age of Akhenaten
(Akhenaten, Amarna, Aten, Mesopotamia, Environment)
I expand the inquiry into the unusual life of the pharaoh Akhenaten. Amongst incongruities of his reign, the deity known as the Aten has been
one of the most elusive. The relationship between Akhenaten and the Aten was clearly central to much of the oddity of his reign, affecting the visual depiction of the pharaoh and the many alterations to notions of kingship Akhenaten implemented. However, no clear understanding of Akhenaten or the Aten exists. Data from recent excavations point towards an alternate view of Akhenaten’s motivations, rather than religious zealotry. Bones exhumed from the South Tombs Cemetery show signs of malnutrition and disease. Environmental data shows a decrease in inundation and pollen levels. The Amarna Letters confirm cultural contact between the Mitanni and the 18th Dynasty, as well as the influx of Near Eastern deities into Egypt. I argue that Aten worship was a synthesis of Mesopotamian notions of cosmologically abstracted fertility deities and the Egyptian sun god, Ra. The shift of the capital, theology, and depiction of the royal family were in response to a time of disease and famine, with the king’s body and deity being a propagandist tool to maintain control under the threat of collapse.

Maria Magdalena Gajewska, UCL MA Archaeology

*Beyond Post-Colonialism: Swahili Identity Reconsidered*

(Swahili, identity, post-colonialism, Shanga, Islamic archaeology)

As a region involved in the Indian Ocean trade since the pre-Islamic times, East African Coast has been long exposed to foreign influence. Early colonial scholars interpreted it as the root of social and cultural complexity, debased through contact with the local populations. Post-colonially, focus shifted towards the local crafts, traditions, and societies, ‘classic Swahili’ culture defined as a fusion of foreign influence (stone architecture, glazed pottery) and specifically local crafts and activities (shell bead making, iron smithing, marine subsistence). However, recent research shows that these two often do not align chronologically. Rather than a local identity changing through contact with the Indian Ocean, Coastal identity itself has undergone a process of ‘Swahilification’, until recently largely unexplored. This paper will present a reassessment of data from the site of Shanga, excavated by Horton in the 1980s. A critical evaluation of material culture, especially but not only local pottery, will show ‘Swahilification’ in practice, pointing to changing social and economic structures and putting forward a tentative interpretation of Shanga’s demise in the 15th century.