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Frontispiece 1. Kemune Palace, Duhok province, Kurdistan, Iraq. In 2018, the unusually low water level behind the Mosul Dam revealed a Bronze Age palace located on the former bank of the River Tigris. The complex is currently under investigation by a joint German-Kurdish team. The site dates to the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries BC, the time of the Mittani Empire. Some of the mud-brick walls survive to over 2m in height. Finds include painted wall plaster and cuneiform tablets, one of the latter suggesting that the site is the Middle Bronze Age city of Zakhiku. Photograph: University of Tübingen, eScience Center, and Kurdistan Archaeology Organization.

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Frontispiece 2. Excavation of a small trench (6 × 4.5m) in 2017 on the island of Kinolhas, Republic of Maldives. The team is at work on a rectilinear sandstone structure and an accumulation of coral stone grave markers and sandstone blocks. The structure appears to post-date, and may have disturbed, the burial of an individual, found lying on their right side, facing west, with legs slightly flexed. Large fragments of glazed pottery of Southeast Asian and Chinese origin within the rubble, in addition to radiocarbon dates, suggest that the structure was destroyed in the fifteenth or sixteenth century AD. The research was funded by the Leverhulme Trust (RPG 2014-259 to Anne Haour and Alastair Grant, UEA). Drone photograph: Aslam Abubakuru, Annalisa Christie and Ali Riffath.

EDITORIAL

Writing African narratives

From Hegel to Hugh Trevor-Roper, the notion of Africa as a continent without a precolonial history of its own dominated European thinking for two centuries. Today, the idea of an 'unhistoric' Africa rightly seems absurd. But who gets to write that history? An essential part of the decolonisation of narratives, of both the past and of the present, is that African voices are central. Yet there are real barriers preventing those voices from being heard within and especially beyond the continent. Archaeology and tangible and intangible heritage are at the forefront of these issues, distilling the difficulties and the opportunities of developing alternative narratives and reconciling rapid development with enhanced awareness of archaeological heritage, tourism with environmental and cultural protection, and local needs with global demands.

These are complex issues, certainly not unique to Africa, that require multiple and long-term solutions. One initiative intended to address some of these challenges is a British Academy programme to facilitate workshops promoting interaction between UK-based scholars in the humanities and social sciences and researchers in the 'Global South'. One particular aim is to promote, through training and mentoring workshops, the publication in international academic journals of research by scholars from regions such as Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Such scholarly venues help to amplify voices on the global stage. The current winner of the 2019 *Antiquity* Prize—'Elites and commoners at Great Zimbabwe' by Shadreck Chirikure, Robert Nyamushosho, Foreman Bandama and Collet Dandara—demonstrates that there is wide interest in the archaeology of Africa and for the research of African scholars.[1]

In this context, the British Academy programme has funded 20 writing workshops across the humanities and social sciences, with many of these focusing on African scholars and one specifically intended for archaeologists. 'Bringing the past to print: archaeology for and by West African scholars', led by Anne Haour (University of East Anglia) and Didier N'Dah (Université d'Abomey Calavi), involves a series of intensive workshops and mentoring for eight early-stage researchers from Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Benin. In late May, the group gathered for a one-week workshop at the Université d'Abomey Calavi in Cotonou, Benin. During the week, there were presentations and Q&A sessions with the editors of international journals—the *Journal of African Archaeology*, *Azania* and *Antiquity*—and from British Archaeological Reports. The participants were able to seek clarification about such topics as the peer-review and editorial decision-making processes in order to help demystify

[1] Chirikure, S., R. Nyamushosho, F. Bandama & C. Dandara. 2018. Elites and commoners at Great Zimbabwe: archaeological and ethnographic insights on social power. *Antiquity* 92: 1056–75. https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2018.137

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scholarly publishing. Work also started on draft articles stemming from the participants' own research; with the support of mentors, these texts will be gradually refined over the coming months. Following the Cotonou workshop, the participants gathered again in July to continue that work at the 16th West African Archaeological Association (WAAA) meeting held in Accra (more on which below).[2]

Abomey to Accra

The Republic of Benin has been very much in the news of late in the context of the debate on sub-Saharan African artefacts held in European museums. A report commissioned by the French president Emmanuel Macron, published in autumn 2018, calls on France to repatriate the many cultural artefacts acquired during the colonial period. These objects include one of the Musée du Quai Branly's most eye-catching displays—the royal regalia looted by French troops during the 1892 sacking of the Royal Palaces of Abomey, one of the former capitals of the kingdom of Dahomey. The lead on the artefact-repatriation working group, Patrick Effiboley, attended several of the Cotonou workshop sessions to discuss the initiative, and the participants then made a visit to the Museum of Abomey, located at the palace site (Figure 1). They were shown around the existing collections by a guide who brought out the significant events in the history of the Dahomey, generating much discussion among workshop participants, many of whom research the history of neighbouring polities such as Ọyọ, in western Nigeria.

During this visit, the workshop members were also able to inspect a large archaeological site within the palace complex. This site had been identified by Didier N'Dah some months earlier, when he participated in an impact assessment of it and noted substantial archaeological remains that had been missed by an earlier assessment undertaken by a team of geographers.

In the context of a programme to boost tourism, initiated by the Benin president (Patrice Talon), there are plans to redevelop the Abomey palace World Heritage Site. A new museum, intended to receive the Dahomey artefacts currently held in the Musée du Quai Branly, is planned for the site, and the archaeological impact assessment at Abomey is an encouraging sign that archaeology is increasingly taken into account in advance of development activities in Benin. The Abomey site holds important archaeological clues about the origins of the Dahomey polity, and known *in situ* remains include evidence for unique features such as a cowrie-processing area. It is therefore vital that prior to construction of the museum, archaeologists should be able to carry out investigations.

As mentioned above, the Cotonou workshop participants reconvened on the occasion of the 16th biennial WAAA meeting held in Accra, Ghana, from 9–13 July. Hosted by the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies of the University of Ghana, nearly 150 presentations and keynotes considered a range of subjects including palaeoenvironment and the archaeology of shell mounds, shipwrecks, metallurgy, mosques and city walls. One recurrent theme addressed by many sessions and papers was that of the threat to the archaeological record resulting from West Africa's rapid economic development. Urbanisation and

[2] I am enormously grateful to Anne Haour and Didier N'Dah, both for the invitation to participate via Skype in the Cotonou workshop and for many of the details in this editorial.

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Figure 1. The participants of the 'Bringing the past to print' workshop, including organisers Anne Haour and Didier N'Dah, on a visit to the Museum of Abomey, Benin, located within the palace of the former capital of the kingdom of Dahomey.

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infrastructure projects, such as road building and, as in Benin, a planned oil pipeline crossing the entire country, threaten archaeologically sensitive areas, and speakers called for greater awareness and action among decision-makers and planners in support of stronger legal protections. The damage caused by the illicit trafficking of antiquities was also discussed in this context. Other speakers focused on the need to break free of colonial frameworks and to position the archaeology and heritage of Africa more centrally in the global picture. Seen as key to this latter point are the strengthening of school curricula to support Africans in taking ownership of their archaeological heritage and of university courses to provide the skills necessary to protect it. Restitution and the repatriation of cultural heritage are also essential elements of a new approach, as is World Heritage. Indeed, the overarching conference theme was 'Archaeology and World Heritage Sites in West Africa'.

Africa is notably under-represented on both the World Heritage Site list and the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Several papers explored ways of increasing the numbers of African sites recognised by UNESCO, and the opportunities and challenges involved. Economic development through both local and international archaeotourism, for example, needs to be balanced with sustainable practices. There are also some difficulties in aligning African heritage with UNESCO categories and criteria. Once on the World Heritage list, there are also challenges to staying on it, and speakers examined case studies to illustrate some of the problems. The WAAA meeting, and its main theme, were well timed, for as the Accra meeting got underway, in Baku, Azerbaijan, delegates were gathering to list the latest tranche of World Heritage Sites.

New World Heritage Sites

The 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee met from 30 June to 10 July. As well as reviewing the Heritage in Danger list and a range of other activities, the delegates also inscribed 29 new properties, the highest number added in a single year since 2001. Of these, 24 are cultural, four natural and one mixed, representing a highly varied set of sites, ranging from Babylon to the Jodrell Bank radio telescope observatory. The sites document the extraction of resources—flint in Neolithic Poland, silver and tin in medieval Central Europe and coal in industrial Indonesia; the management of water—the Late Neolithic Liangzhu state in the Yangzte Delta, the aquaculture of the Gunditjmara Aboriginal nation in southwest Australia and the hydraulic engineering of Augsburg, Germany; the expression of faith—Buddhist Bagan in Myanmar, churches in western Russia and the cultic caves and temples of Gran Canaria; and the monumentalisation of death—the early second-millennium BC burial mounds of Dilmun (Bahrain) and mounded tombs, or *kofun*, on the Osaka Plain, Japan. As in previous years, European properties continue to feature strongly, although sites in Asia are not far behind; the Americas are represented by just three sites, and Australia and Africa by a single site each.

This year, only one property was inscribed under criterion i, that is, representing a masterpiece of human creative genius. Jodrell Bank was added to the list as an exceptional ensemble that marks the technological transition from optical to radio astronomy, transforming understanding of the universe through the study of space. Perhaps this criterion sets a very high bar or perhaps the concept of 'genius' is simply less fashionable than it once was. Either

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way, the inscription of Jodrell Bank coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing and points, like a telescope, to the future possibility of the protection of heritage on the lunar surface. Meanwhile, most of the other 28 properties added in 2019 were nominated under criteria iii and iv: bearing a unique or exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition, either extant or extinct, or as an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural ensemble or landscape that illustrates a significant stage in human history. The sole new addition from Africa to the list of World Heritage Sites is inscribed under both criteria iii and iv, as well as vi: directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs of outstanding universal significance. The 'Ancient ferrous metallurgy sites of Burkina Faso' comprise five locations across the country, with evidence for a variety of metallurgical furnaces and associated infrastructure and settlement. The oldest of these is Douroula, dating to the first millennium BC. The other four sites—Békuy, Kindibo, Tiwêga and Yamané—all date to the second millennium AD.

Metallurgy, and iron smelting and forging in particular, holds a key place in the study of the African past. The subject was addressed by a number of papers at the WAAA meeting and is also the focus of a travelling exhibition now at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington D.C. (previously on show at the Fowler Museum UCLA and moving in the autumn to the Musée du Quai Branly). Entitled 'Striking Iron: the Art of African Blacksmiths', the exhibition focuses on the role of metalworkers and the significance of iron in sub-Saharan Africa through a range of more than 200 objects.[3] It is perhaps inevitable that the emphasis of such exhibitions errs towards the aesthetic, but the material is framed with a section on 'Africa's iron origins', focusing on the early development of metallurgy and the use of iron objects at early sites such as Great Zimbabwe, Campo in Cameroon and Kamilamba in DR Congo. The majority of the objects, however, date to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and range from currency bars and tools to bells and ceremonial staffs. Throughout, both the cosmological and technological interpretation is informed by ethnographies, emphasising iron's utility, prestige, ritual potency and its value for both political and artistic expression. In turn, this reflects the importance of the living traditions and beliefs cited in the inscribing of the metalworking sites of Burkino Faso on the World Heritage Sites list.

In this issue

Among the varied content on offer in this August issue, we feature an article on another of the newly minted World Heritage Sites: the Plain of Jars in Laos. Within the wider context of Southeast Asian archaeology, the date and significance of the megalithic jar sites are comparatively poorly understood. Here, O'Reilly *et al.* report on new fieldwork that has identified a variety of mortuary practices associated with the stone jars. Typically thought to date to the Southeast Asian Iron Age, *c.* 500 BC–AD 500, the new radiocarbon dates cluster in the tenth to thirteenth centuries AD, perhaps hinting at longer-term activity and emphasising the need for further work at these sites.

[3] 'Striking Iron: the Art of African Blacksmiths'. Available at: https://africa.si.edu/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/striking-iron-the-art-of-african-blacksmiths/ (accessed 15 July 2019).

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The article by Loftus *et al.* takes us back to Africa and the announcement of the 'The Southern African Radiocarbon Database' (SARD), a new online, open-access database of published radiocarbon dates from southern African archaeological contexts. The authors introduce the database and demonstrate its functionality and potential with case studies examining the timing of Middle to Later Stone Age technological developments across southern Africa. The database is an important new resource for archaeologists working on this region, and provides a model for similar initiatives in other areas. Also focusing on Africa, Lancelotti *et al.* present ethnoarchaeological research on non-irrigated agricultural practices in the arid landscape of central Sudan and consider the implications for developing sustainable agriculture in the future. Finally, Vicky Van Bockhaven reviews the redesign of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium. The museum features collections from Belgium's former colonies of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, and has been the focus of intense debate about the nation's colonial legacy.

Several of the other articles in this issue address themes that resonate with contemporary concerns: inequality, migration, ethnicity and climate change. Fochesato *et al.* present a new method for comparing inequality in the past, adapting the Gini coefficient used by modern sociologists to examine the uneven distribution of resources within societies. Di Hu examines how the subject communities relocated *en masse* by the Inca sought to recreate their homelands and maintain their identities, and James Harland critiques the notion of essentialised ethnic identities in the study of Anglo-Saxon England. Meanwhile, Reeder-Myers and Rick turn to the issue of climate change and present a new kayak-based recording strategy to document estuarine sites threatened by rising sea levels and more extreme weather. In addition, some of our other articles feature Neolithic seaweed-eating sheep in Shetland and an intriguing hypothesis to explain the evidence for the storage of large quantities of animal fats at the site of Durrington Walls.

This issue's cover takes us to the August Project Gallery, where you will find short contributions on the archaeology of Ethiopia and Mongolia, and that range from human sacrifice to the long-term preservation of archaeological cores. Fittingly, our cover image comes from an article that takes a new look at the photographic archive of *Antiquity* founder O.G.S. Crawford. For the eightieth anniversary of the discovery of the ship burial in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo (see June editorial), Beth Hodgett considers Crawford's role in documenting the excavation—and the excavators—and how we can get a better sense of a man who preferred to remain firmly behind the camera.

In signing off, it seems appropriate to turn to another of the new World Heritage Sites: Le Colline del Prosecco di Conegliano e Valdobbiadene, in northern Italy. Inscribed on the list as an outstanding example of a traditional type of land use, the area's rugged terrain has been 'terraformed' into a distinctive viticultural landscape famous for the production of that celebratory tipple, Prosecco. Congratulations to all those involved in the latest round of successful nominations, *e salute!*

Robert Witcher
Durham 1 August 2019

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