

## Some highlights of the 2003/2004 academic year

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*The Director of the Institute comments on developments since the sixth issue of Archaeology International was published.*

**A**s in previous years, I start by referring to some of the initiatives announced on the back cover of last year's issue of *Archaeology International*.

- I am delighted to be able to announce that the proposed collaboration with the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) will soon become a reality. Dr Wang Tao will become Senior Lecturer in Chinese Art and Archaeology (half time at the Institute and half time at SOAS), and Lukas Nickel, of the Department of East Asian Art History of the University of Zurich, who is currently deputy director of the Swiss-Chinese excavations at the Temple of the White Dragon (Shandong Province) is expected to join the staff of the two institutions at the beginning of next academic year. So I hope that we will now begin a fruitful collaboration, with the relevant heads of department agreeing for the first time which undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Chinese archaeology should be available to Institute and SOAS students. I also look forward to SOAS, with their two half-time posts, making a major contribution, with the Institute, to the activities of the newly established International Centre for Chinese Heritage and Archaeology.
- Secondly, I am pleased to be able to make personal the information in the third bullet point on last year's back cover by identifying the Turkmen who was awarded the first new scholarship (see p. 3 in last year's *AI*) for our Managing Archaeological Sites MA degree. She is Sonia Lollekova, who studied Neolithic stone tools from Turkmenistan for her research degree at the Institute for the History of Material Culture in St Petersburg. I am also very pleased to report that the World Monuments Fund has agreed to fund a Turkmen team to work with Sonia, initially for the next three years, in order to develop programmes of archaeological documentation, preventive conservation and interpretation at the Ancient Merv Archaeological Park. Furthermore, International Student House in London has offered a further partial MA scholarship for the academic year 2004/2005.
- Thirdly, I should report that the eight books of the Encounters with Ancient Egypt series were duly published on time by UCL Press in – biased though I no doubt am – a particularly attractive format,<sup>1</sup> and that the three published reviews received to date are all flattering positive. There has even been a

proposal by one Egyptologist that the whole of our Egyptian Archaeology MA degree should be restructured around the eight books, which persuades me that I may have succeeded in at least part of my aim of broadening the traditionally narrow study of the archaeology of Egypt.

And this is not the end of collaboration between the Institute and UCL Press: the Institute's Publications Committee now includes the executive chairman of the Press and it has been agreed that the Press will normally publish those books recommended to it by the Committee (after they have been reported on positively by referees). The Committee will also give its opinion on manuscripts and proposals for archaeological books submitted directly to the Press. Furthermore, the arrangement with the Press is expected to lead to the establishment of an account from which, in future, grants towards the costs of publication, such as preparing illustrations, may be awarded.

The Deputy Director of the Institute and I have already undertaken our first joint visit overseas (see the first and second bullet points on the back cover of this issue of *AI*). We were both present at the signing in Rabat in October 2003 of the Agreement for Cooperation between the Ministry of Culture of Morocco, represented by the Minister, M. Mohammed Achari, and the UCL Institute of Archaeology. The ceremony took place in the presence of ministry officials, including Dr el-Hajraoui (Director of the Division du Patrimoine), Professor Aomar Akerraz (representing the Institut National des Sciences de l'Archéologie et de Patrimoine (INSAP)), Haydon Boyd Warren-Gash (British Ambassador to Morocco), Dr Gaetano Palumbo (representing the World Monuments Fund), Tarik Oualalou and John McAslan (architects associated with the Volubilis project), and Rita Bennis-Palmieri (a private donor). The agreement is for five years (renewable) and the main aims of the programme are to produce plans for the management, conservation and interpretation of the site of Volubilis, to undertake archaeological excavations as and when necessary, and to publish the results.

The Centre for the Evolutionary Analysis of Cultural Behaviour, directed by Stephen Shennan, deserves its own paragraph. It is funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Board as a joint enterprise between the Institute of Archaeology, the Department of Anthropology at

UCL and the Department of Archaeology at the University of Southampton. It remains the only AHRB Research Centre in the field of archaeology, and it has been continuing its programme of projects that explore analogies between biological and cultural evolution. It disseminates the results of its work widely, and in 2003 organized a session on evolutionary methods of analyzing cultural diversity at the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Milwaukee, a session on evolutionary approaches to subsistence transitions at a meeting in St Petersburg of the European Association of Archaeologists, and a workshop at the Institute on the origin and spread of Neolithic plant economies in the Near East and Europe, which was attended by archaeobotanists from all over Europe. Both the first and last of these events will result in books, which it is hoped will be published by UCL Press.

It is a great pleasure to welcome to the Institute for at least the next five years Honorary Professor Ole Grøn from Norway. In addition to his research on the northwest European Mesolithic and his ethnoarchaeological studies in Siberia, he will teach an optional course on underwater techniques and methods as part of our developing programme in maritime archaeology.

A feature of this year's activities has been the Institute-wide series of research seminars, the theme of which was "Tales of the city: current research on urbanism and urbanization". Organized by Todd Whitelaw and Tim Williams, the seminars took place weekly through the autumn and spring terms, and the speakers included ten colleagues from other universities, as well as twelve members of staff of the Institute. The topics covered a wide range of current research on complex urban communities, with contributions on specific settlements in Latin America, Africa, Europe (including Britain), and Southwest and Central Asia. Contrasting theories of social organization and ideologies were discussed and advances in the archaeological study of urban dynamics were highlighted.

### Note

1. The eight books in the Encounters with Ancient Egypt series were all published by UCL Press in 2003. The series editor is P. J. Ucko, and the titles and editors are: *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, D. O'Connor & A. Reid; *Ancient perspectives on Egypt*, R. Matthews & C. Roemer; *Consuming ancient Egypt*, S. MacDonald & M. Rice; *Imhotep today: Egyptianizing architecture*, J.-M. Humbert & C. Price; *Mysterious lands*, D. O'Connor & S. Quirke; "Never had the like occurred": *Egypt's view of its past*, J. Tait; *The wisdom of Egypt: changing visions through the ages*; P. Ucko & T. Champion; *Views of ancient Egypt since Napoleon Bonaparte*, D. Jeffreys.