

Pitt Rivers Museum Members Magazine

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Cover image: People wearing the VR headsets and watching the immersive videos of Evenkia created by artist Anya Gleizer. (See article on page 6)

science. But instincts other than the purely scientific often drive how cultures behave. The public in France and the US have diametrically opposing views on nuclear power and GM food respectively. The science is the science in both countries – differing opinion thereof is a cultural thing. If we want cultures to do something about climate change, we must give a thought to anthropology.

Meanwhile, it is still raining. Is there anything in the PRM to help? Plenty of items address a shortage of rain: a carved lightning stick used in rainmaking rituals by the Pueblo Indians of Arizona or 'rainstones' used in Uganda to a similar end. Better, just now, would be one of the plant fibre umbrellas from the Andaman and Nicobar islands or a Nagaland 'rain shield'.

Anthony Flemming, Member of the PRM Liaison Committee

Museum Musings

Sitting down to write this, yet more rain is falling. The weather, and rain in particular, is a culturally important thing. The British are obsessed with it – or at least find it a serially useful diversion when conversation dips. The Damara people of Namibia categorise 11 types of rain and one anthropologist postulated that for them "rain is not a discrete moment, but a unity across a succession of 'nows'...". I know the feeling.

The effects of weather and climate on material culture are legion – from architecture to apparel. One recent paper considered the influence of high rainfall on the culture of Manchester. Certainly, the iconic parka jackets worn by Liam Gallagher (of Manchester-based band Oasis) are an adaptation to life in the 'rainy city' as much as anything. The importance of culture is increasingly recognised in the field of climate change. True, science is to the fore, but how this will be received and acted upon is affected by more anthropological factors. Scientists, and I am one, tend to bristle at this, suspecting an alibi for dilution of the



Photo © Anthony Flemming



Umbrella Cabinet in the PRM

Photo © Anthony Flemming

Editorial



Photo © Dawn Osborne

Many thanks once again to all the Museum staff, those involved in production, and contributors to the Magazine for the extremely interesting content this issue!

I was particularly delighted to read the involvement of our President in a project in Mongolia and China which has received a multi million grant, as I am lucky enough to have visited the terracotta warriors in Xi'an and to have seen the tomb of the First Emperor which will be part of the excavations (see page 10).

As a graduate of Magdalen College I am delighted to have procured an article kindly contributed by its Old Library

about its dynamic astronomical texts (see page 9).

I am aware that there will many old Oxonians and graduates from other esteemed institutions amongst our readership who must be aware of other research projects or treasures held in academic institutions that would produce excellent subject matter for an article for our Magazine. Perhaps you have a suggestion for an article on a topic we have never written about?

This issue we have received an informative article about Nigerian Pidgin English from Dr Peter Finn who has a background in linguistics and was inspired to write an article after seeing the 'Unmasked' exhibition at the Museum. Highly relevant and enlightening, we would have commissioned it, had he not volunteered it on a plate, complete and ready for publication. Are you another potential contributor? If so, we look forward to hearing from you.

Dawn Osborne, Editor

From the Museum



As we move forward in 2024, the Museum is embracing spring with a spring in its step. Teams are getting ready for Easter holidays and all the family events that are coming up, with trails being finalised and some lovely new products being ordered for the shop, there certainly seems to be a gentle buzz in the air. Following on from a great series of talks for KK day in early March, we are also seeing a welcome return

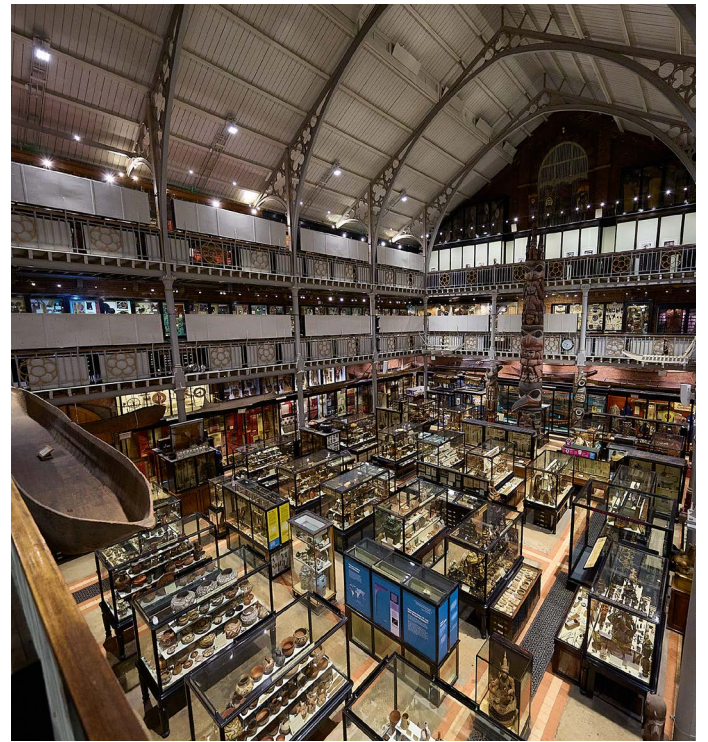
of more visitors, local and from further afield, and it has been great to hear more of what visitors love and would like to see more of, as we undertake our annual visitor surveys. Thanks to all Members for filling in their survey! We will be looking at all these ideas and suggestions very carefully and doing our very best to incorporate them into our programming.

We have been busy over winter getting some of our systems upgraded and have a new visitor counter system as well as a new kitchen! Thank you to Fatai and Dan, our facility team, for making the kitchen happen!

The lawn outside has been waterlogged over winter, but much of the building work that has been happening around the Museum is near completion, and we look forward to a drier summer with activities back on the lawn (which we share with Natural History Museum). Our May late night (17 May) will have a water theme, so do look out for tickets and pop along for an evening visit as the evenings get lighter. If you are a Member, do also look out for free Member

exclusive behind-the-scenes visits, which will be on the website. Tickets will be limited to 10 people per session, so do get your tickets early to avoid disappointment. Also, next time you are in, do look out for the new Pitt Rivers' jigsaws which will keep you busy for any rainy days that may come our way. Have a lovely spring and summer and see you in the Museum!

Karrine Sanders, *PRM Senior Administrator*



View of the PRM from the balcony

From the Director



On the 20th May 2024, we will celebrate the 140th anniversary of the Pitt Rivers Museum. While we will use this moment to look back and celebrate our history, we will also look forwards as we embark on a journey of renewal towards our 150th anniversary in 2034. The Museum's vast collections of anthropology and world archaeology stand as a beacon of human ingenuity: its wealth

of cultural diversity demonstrates the artistic creativity of the thousands of makers, users, traders and thinkers who crafted the objects in our displays.

Living in a rapidly changing world, the General's collecting was motivated by documenting processes of change and adaptation. Much like in 1884, when people were experiencing the shift between the first (steam) and second (electricity) Industrial Revolution, today, we are again living

in volatile, transformational times, particularly because artificial intelligence (AI) is expected to fundamentally transform how we interact with things and machines as we transition from the 4th to the 5th industrial revolution with dizzying speed.

At last month's Romanes lecture, Professor Geoffrey Hinton, so-called 'Godfather of AI', eloquently discussed the existential dangers of AI for humanity. We don't yet know how AI will affect the creative industries and the Museum: we are however sure that deepening cross-cultural understandings of diverse epistemologies and a renewed focus on ethics and values will be key to grounding ourselves in these volatile times.

Today, it feels even more crucial for a museum like ours to actively celebrate the richness of human existence. We need to reimagine our displays and narratives through iterative, collaborative methods, weaving indigenous voices and knowledge into the fabric of the Museum's displays and databases so that we can foster cultural care and cross-cultural understanding in our ever-changing world.

Laura van Broekhoven, *Director*

The Language of Agaba Masquerade: Pidgin



Calabar, 2015: an Agaba masquerade, expressed via Nigerian Pidgin English

Since I have a linguistics background, I was intrigued to encounter amongst the artefacts of the PRM, a museum that I admire, a cultural artefact less often on show: language, in the form of the pidgin English used in masquerade in south-east Nigeria, as part of the fascinating exhibition *'Unmasked: Spirit in the City'*.

Academic linguists identify Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) as belonging to a type of second-language English that, in a particular colonial situation, underwent radical restructuring.

NPE is multilingual Nigeria's most widely spoken language, with 116 million speakers accounting for over half the population. Standard English is used for official purposes, but NPE is common in market-places and workplaces, albeit with lower status, being associated with poorer, less well educated city dwellers – the demographic in *'Unmasked'*.

Why does this stigmatisation occur? Originally, communication was limited to immediate need: direct, practical relations, but the power differential favoured the Europeans. Any pidgin usually took most of its vocabulary from the Europeans' dominant language. Because both languages typically share so many words, people may think they're the same thing. When words are different or put together differently from the colonisers' language, differences may be considered inaccuracies; pidgins are misconceived as 'haphazard'.

But a pidgin isn't some misunderstanding of another language. Its purpose is facilitating inter-ethnic communication. Pidgins do have norms that you have to learn to gain proficiency. They are legitimate, rule-governed languages that differ systematically from the colonisers' language. They are not intrinsically inferior.

And a pidgin like NPE may convey culture – including masquerade or Afrobeat. NPE is broadcast (notably by the BBC), popular among students, and an identity marker for Nigerians.

So what do we mean by NPE having 'structure' and 'rules'? Here's some (simple) examples from *'Unmasked'*:

- NPE's vocabulary is mostly from English, with special usages like *'chop'* 'eat, food', and words from other languages like *'ashawo'* 'prostitute' (Twi) or *'wahala'* 'trouble' (Arabic)

- in pronunciation, English 'th' corresponds to 't' or 'd' in words like *'tink'* 'think', *'dat'* 'that'

- verb endings don't exist, so *'Polly picture kiss me'* 'Polly's picture kisses me' or I *'tire'* 'I got tired'

- *'de'* translates 'will' or 'would': *'I no de like cocktail'* 'I

won't like the drugs', *'who de give me beans?'* 'who would give me beans?'

- ending a sentence with 'o' gives emphasis: *'dat cocktail for stress my life o!'* 'that drug really stressed me out!'

How did NPE arise?

It's not alone in West Africa. People speak a similar pidgin English in Cameroon and Ghana. Krio, spoken in Sierra Leone and on Bioko, Equatorial Guinea, is similar but a 'creole' – a native-language variety deriving from an original pidgin.

The similarity of these varieties suggests a shared history. And it may well be that they didn't all develop separately on West Africa's coast, as you might expect, but that they went across the Atlantic and back again, with an original pidgin transplanted from West Africa to the Caribbean, then one of its creole descendants being re-implanted in Sierra Leone and spreading.

Linguists think the Caribbean's English-based creoles arose when African slaves, brought to work the plantations, lacking a common language, had to use pidgin English to communicate. Their descendants used an 'expanded' form of the pidgin as their native language: a creole.

That original pidgin was perhaps used by slaves working at England's first West African trade fort. Evidently some such slaves were taken to the earliest Caribbean colonies: other slaves were imported when those islands began producing sugar. The 'fort slaves' acted as overseers: it was their pidgin that the new slaves adopted and that creolised. As sugar cultivation spread, so did the creole.

Around 1790 some Jamaican 'Maroons' – descendants of runaway slaves – were 'repatriated', with others, to Sierra Leone. It seems their Caribbean creole shaped the developing Krio.

Later, Krio-speakers settled on Bioko, temporarily leased from Spain. Krios from Sierra Leone and Bioko engaged in trade, missionary and colonial work in Nigeria and Cameroon, where re-pidginised Krio evidently became a useful lingua franca.

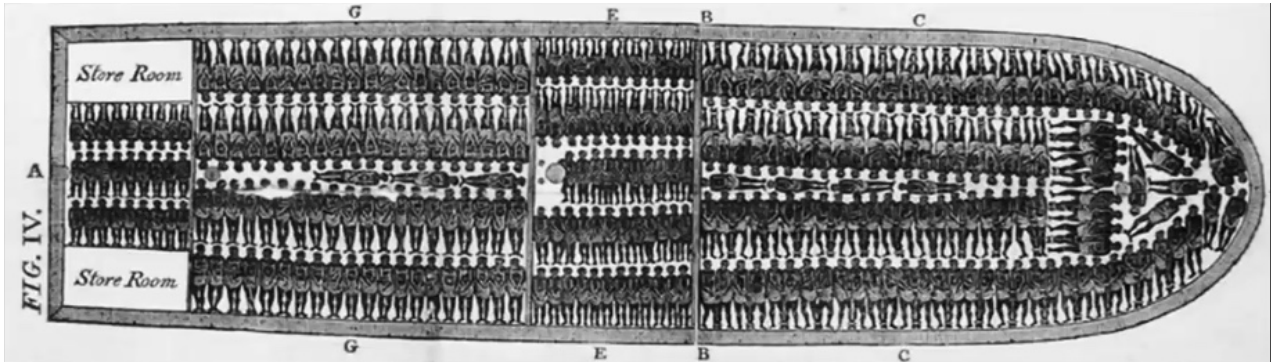
Today pidgin English is strongest in certain Nigerian and Cameroonian ports. NPE is gaining speakers, despite competition with other lingua francas. Whilst in Akan-dominant Ghana, pidgin's foothold is shakier, it is Nigeria's most popular, dynamically expanding language. Belittled, NPE nevertheless facilitates vital cultural expression, and is of value to millions.

Dr Peter Finn, Member and Editor, Open University



A pidgin speaker? Colonial officer J. B. A. Matthews, as depicted by a Nigerian carver [1981.12.1].

Kenneth Kirkwood Day: Slavery – an enduring problem



The Brooks travels through the Slave routes

This year's hugely successful 24th Kenneth Kirkwood Study Day took slavery as its theme, and its closing message was a sombre one: not a lot has changed in the past few hundred years, because all over the world vulnerable people continue to be exploited.

The slavery dynamic remains the same too: these vulnerable people get preyed on by the strong, simply because of greed.

The day began with some scene-setting through the lens of specific historical studies.

Associate Professor of Latin American History at Warwick University Dr Camillia Cowling, whose work has focused on the history of slavery and emancipation in Cuba and Brazil, chose one woman's fight against enslavement in nineteenth century Cuba as her subject.

In 1854 Teresa Mina, a West African, walked into a Cuban colonial office to claim she had been wrongly enslaved, and Prof Cowling traced Teresa's arduous journeys around Cuba by foot, sea (and possibly rail) in her efforts to resist her enslavement.

Long after her initial terrible journey in a slaving ship from Africa to Cuba, forced movement continued to characterise Teresa's life. She was one of many thousands, all victims of the booming Cuban slave trade that had been fuelled by the growth of the sugar industry, who endured many exhausting journeys across the island. And still today, in many parts of the world, hundreds of thousands of people continue to make arduous and perilous journeys in the hope of escaping hardship and finding a better life.

Historically, slaving is most famously characterised as the forced movement of people from West Africa across the Atlantic to the Americas. But in her talk entitled *'The Aftermath of Slavery in Uganda'*, Dr Doreen Kembabazi, Assistant Professor of African History at Warwick, explained how in land-locked Uganda, African slaves were owned by fellow Africans. This practice escalated from the mid-19th century.

"Most people could afford one or two slaves and women formed the majority because enslaved women ensured social reproduction. Ugandan slavery was used more as a way of increasing the population of a Chief's group", in



1750: King Tegbesu of Dahomey annually sold c.9000 slaves to European traders. Income £250,000 (£31 million/2024)

contrast to the trans-Atlantic model where African slaves were transported to another continent to be used for economic purposes.

Today there are no discernible remnants of slavery in the country: no memorials, no descendant communities and nothing in the archives. "Formerly enslaved people seem to have simply melted back into Ugandan society, leaving no trace."

UNESCO award-winning journalist and writer Jeremy Hunter used the ten journeys made by a specific slaving ship, *'The Brooks'*, to illustrate the way slaves were captured, sold and transported across the Atlantic to provide labour for the sugar, rum and tobacco trades. In English law slaves were then classed as private property, in just the same way as animals.

"Europeans would sell luxury goods to African chiefs in exchange for slaves, who were captured, transported and often exposed to unspeakable acts of violence, terror and death. The slaves would be held in castles or cages to await the ship and were then packed in so tightly they resembled herrings in a barrel...scenes that brought to mind *'Dante's Inferno'*."

Contemporary Slavery expert Andrew Smith, of Hull University, rounded off the study day with some sobering perspectives on modern slavery. "Today there are an estimated 50 million people across the world trapped in some form of slavery. Slavery is essentially where ownership is exercised over another person, usually under threat. This can take the form of forced labour, criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and organ harvesting (though the latter two are less common in the UK than in some other parts of the world). Victims are often desperate because of extreme poverty or insecure immigration status and forced to live packed into too-small houses, swapping mattress space in round-the-clock shift systems.

The social costs of globalisation have been written out of the price of goods and services and we need to write them back in. I feel not a lot has changed in the last few hundred years and unless we change the root causes, we're never going to stop slavery."

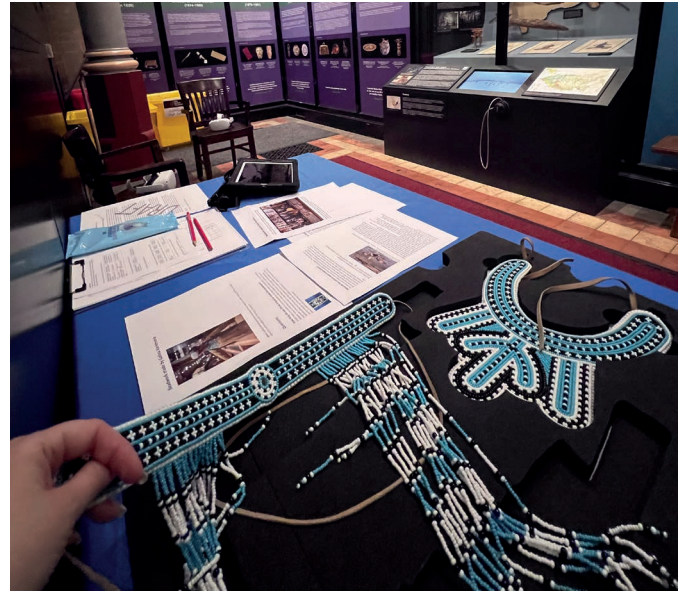
Nicky Moeran, Friend

Photo © Open Source

Wandering in Other Worlds



Evenki artist and cultural knowledge holder, Galina Veretnova, stands in front of the new display on Evenki cosmologies listening to the audio as part of the display, wearing handcrafted beadwork.



The VR experiences and handling object activities take place opposite the Evenki display on the ground floor of the Museum.

Since June 2023 a series of pop-up activities have been run at the Pitt Rivers Museum on Tuesday and Saturday afternoons opposite the Evenki Cosmologies display. These have been facilitated by a fantastic group of Museum volunteers - Aaron, Beth, Dot, Gerald, Joana, Keren, Shayan, and Zarifa - and have been made possible through work by artist and doctoral candidate Anya Gleizer, who also shares more about the project with the public during these sessions. Visitors have been invited to handle beadwork, view two short immersive films through wearing virtual reality (VR) headsets, and learn more about Evenki culture. These activities have allowed us to share the wider project behind the new display that was installed in Autumn 2022 as well as experiment with how digital technologies can be used in the galleries to deepen cross cultural understanding and extend storytelling beyond the objects on display.

In preparation for her research trip to Siberia in 2019 Anya Gleizer filmed 360 degree footage of the Museum and the previous display, taking it for people in Evenkia to view the Museum virtually via VR headsets. While in Evenkia, Gleizer recorded 360 degree footage, and has edited it into two short experiences: a sleigh ride created with young Evenki, and a journey across a lake to a chum to share the Evenki story of why the wolf howls at the moon. Just as members of the Evenki community experienced the Museum through VR technology, visitors are now invited to digitally travel to Evenki and experience some of their world through wearing the headsets in these sessions. These videos have been warmly received by many visitors, with feedback collected including comments such as:



Still from one of the VR experience videos showing the snowy landscape of a sleigh ride in Evenkia. Film created by artist Anya Gleizer with young people in Evenkia.

“the VR experience was the best part of my trip!” and “Thank you! The VR format is wonderful and immersive. Great way to tell a narrative and move people.”

Alongside the video works, two pieces of beadwork have been created by co-curator of the display and Evenki artist and cultural knowledge holder, Galina Veretnova. These represent ceremonial pieces that would be used on special occasions and contain motifs such as the diver bird,

which is central to the Evenki creation story, and links to a diver bird featured in the display. Encouraging visitors to look closer at the beautiful handiwork, and linking back to the display, has also facilitated more sharing of Evenki culture with visitors during the drop-in activities, as well as conversations with visitors about the display and opportunities to collect feedback.

Sharing the beadwork with members of the public, alongside the affecting immersive videos, has been a great experience, leading to many interesting conversations with visitors to the Museum. So far, we have delivered 22 sessions, representing over 50 volunteer hours, and we have actively engaged over 700 people with the display and wider project during these facilitated activities.

Look out for sessions advertised on our website, to join us as we seek to provide further opportunities for deepening cross-cultural understanding in the Museum galleries, and to share about Evenki culture in particular through the work of the ‘Wandering in Other Worlds’ project.

For more information about the project itself, visit www.prm.ox.ac.uk/wandering-in-other-worlds.

Katherine Clough, Digital Projects at the PRM

Resisting Silence: Revealing everyday lives of plantations through material, oral and archival histories



Water wheel of the sugar mill at Balenbouche Estate, February 2022.

In February 2022, Dr Ashley Coutu (PRM) and I conducted a pilot project called *'Resisting Silence'*. The project was envisioned as a collaborative and interdisciplinary exercise, involving an archaeological survey of the former sugar plantation Balenbouche Estate on the island of St. Lucia. The project was done in partnership with the St. Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society (AHS) and the Biology department at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) in St. Lucia.

Archaeological research in St. Lucia has focused on the pre-Columbian era, and much less attention has been paid to the landscapes of the numerous colonial estates and the lives of enslaved people who laboured on them. *'Resisting Silence'* aimed to use archaeological, oral history, natural history, and archival evidence to tell the stories of everyday life on the case study site of Balenbouche, in southern region of Choiseul in St Lucia.

Human settlement in the region of Balenbouche dates back to 2000 years ago, when it was home to the indigenous population of the region. In 1740, Balenbouche was first established as a sugar plantation operated with enslaved labour. At the point of emancipation in 1834, the 587 acres estate had a population of 166 enslaved. In 1964, the estate was purchased by the current owners, the Lawaetz family. Today, Balenbouche is recognised as a local heritage site open to the public, and the Lawaetz's run a small eco-guest house and farm.

The site of Balenbouche was the site of previous excavations by the University of Bristol's Archaeology department, where they ran a field school for two seasons between 2000-2002. The work done by the field school was primarily focused on the industrial archaeology of the site, i.e. the sugar mill, boiling and curing houses, and not necessarily the daily lives of the enslaved. However, the field school did extensive excavations on the estate that would lead to a significant detour from our project's original goal.

Dr Coutu and I conducted GPS surveys to identify previously excavated trenches, and artefact scatters from



Entrance to Balenbouche Estate, St Lucia, February 2022.

walking across the site. We also dug test pits in possible slave accommodation areas, finding glass, ceramics and clay tobacco pipes. However, we decided to limit our excavations to a few pits and focus our energies on preserving the extensive material cultural excavated by the field school 20 years earlier. Unbeknownst to us, the previously excavated material had been left in buckets and bags in the 'basement' of the estate house for 20 years. When we arrived, the material was in disintegrating plastic bags, with labels falling off and artefacts visibly damaged or deteriorating. We decided that the most ethical course of action was not to do more excavations, but to re-bag all the objects, catalogue them, and store them in new plastic bags/boxes.

Another strand of the project was ethno-botanical research with SALCC Biology department. A cohort of 15 students joined us for a day of fieldwork on the estate, where they learned about the history of the estate's flora, many of which are still used on the island today and how the enslaved used it as remedies. The students collected botanical samples and over the course of two months tested the antimicrobial properties of 13 indigenous flora found at Balenbouche Estate against the bacteria *E.coli*. Their results showed that some of the historically used flora had properties that significantly hindered bacterial growth.

Finally, in partnership with University of Plymouth Literature department and eight St Lucian poets, authors and musicians we ran a series of workshops aimed at creating a 'soundscape of memory' at the estate. The final product will be an experimental album that fuses the works by the poets, with the historical and contemporary musical traditions of the island and the sound of the estate.

'Resisting Silence' has thus expanded to a project concerned about the ethics of archaeological fieldwork, cultural care and artistic practice.

Marenka Thompson-Odlum, *Research Curator*

The Tawasap - A Symbol of Indigenous Eco-activism



1945.7.31 - a woven feather headband made by members of the Shuar community in Ecuador. It was collected by Major Ronald Hawksby Thomas during his travels in South America in the 1930s, and came to the Museum in 1945.

The Shuar are one of several Indigenous groups who live in the biologically exuberant rainforest areas of south eastern Ecuador. While the Shuar may have most famously been associated with the historical practice of creating ‘*tsantsa*’ (or “shrunk heads”) as part of head-taking ceremonies, today much of Shuar national identity centres on advocating for the protection of the natural environment.

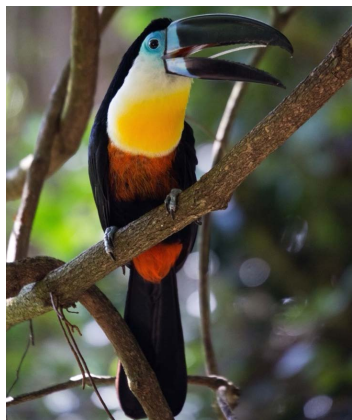
This feather headband in the Pitt Rivers Museum is an important part of this advocacy. Known as a ‘*tawasap*’, the headband is a symbol of power, nature and spirituality. It represents the unique relationships the Shuar have to the land and forest. It is the most highly respected and valued component of Shuar traditional dress, worn exclusively by important men in the community, including leaders, teachers ‘*juakmaru*’, shamans ‘*uwishins*’, and revered hunters.

Made from an intricate foundation of woven plant fibres which are tied together and secured at the back with cotton cords, the *tawasap* is a hugely impressive piece of craftsmanship. The feathers are skilfully attached using careful binding techniques. The bright red and yellow feathers come from toucans and are individually attached to the headband using tiny knots with cotton thread. Each toucan only possesses a small number of these coloured feathers at the base of the tail, so one *tawasap* can require up to 100 individual toucans! Toucans (or ‘*tsukanka*’ in Shuar) are one of the most important birds in Shuar cosmology. They are hard to hunt and are considered to be resistant to blowgun poison. Only a great hunter can gather enough feathers to make the feather crown, and it can take months to finish.

In more recent times, increased trade with outsiders and tourists has fuelled demand for the development of cheaper and more easily constructible styles, which may substitute



The woven structure of the *tawasap* headband



Feathers from the rump of the various toucan species are used to create the *tawasap*

the traditional toucan, hummingbird or curassow feathers for more readily available dyed chicken feathers. Spiritual leaders in the community argue, however, that crowns made with artificial or dyed feathers do not have the same importance as the traditionally made *tawasap* because chickens do not possess the same symbolic power or beauty as the rainforest birds within Shuar cosmology. Making *tawasap* using traditional making and hunting techniques is seen as a central part of preserving Shuar cultural identity. This is one of the areas researchers at the Pitt Rivers Museum have been working to support, by helping to document the processes and techniques of current makers in the community through filming and interviews.

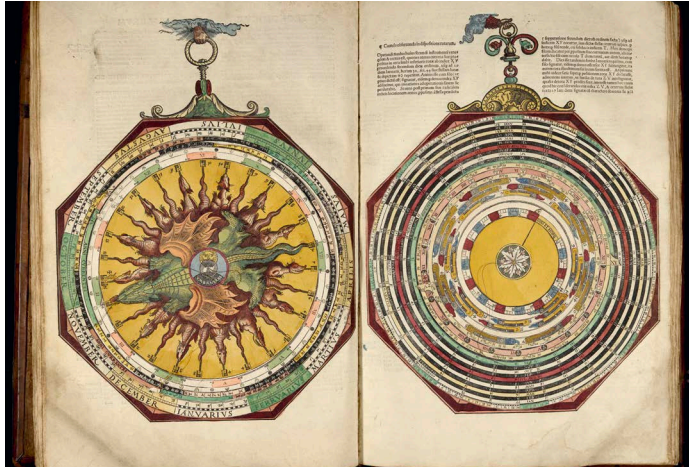
The *tawasap* is also being mobilised on the international stage, particularly as part of discussions around climate change and biodiversity loss. At the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26), Tunkiak Katan, vice coordinator of the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations

of the Amazon Basin addressed the UN whilst wearing his *tawasap*. He spoke of the importance of indigenous voices in the fight against climate change. Indigenous peoples make up only 5% of the total global population, but indigenous territories sustain over 80% of the Earth’s remaining biodiversity. Despite this, indigenous voices are not always equally invited within the spaces where planetary futures are discussed. In the Pitt Rivers Museum, we are working closely with Shuar artists, activists and ecologists to think collaboratively about how Shuar ecological wisdom and identity can be showcased and celebrated through objects like the *tawasap* in the Museum. Our aim is to create new opportunities for dialogue, as we all must negotiate future challenges in the Anthropocene.

Rosa Dyer Researcher

Rare Astronomy Books in Magdalen's Old Library

Photo: © Colin Dunn and reproduced by kind permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford.



The spectacular hand-coloured volvelles (moveable wheels) in Peter Apian's 'Astronomicum Caesarium' (Old Library, Arch.C.1.5.8).

Magdalen College's Old Library was among the first library spaces to be built in Oxford. Books have been housed and cared for here since the late 1400s. Among them are rare, beautiful and (for their time) cutting-edge texts on astronomy, indicating that the early College was an exciting place to study the heavens.

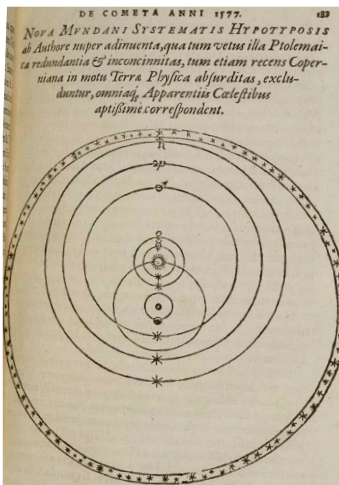
'Laying the Foundations: Ulugh Beg'

One of Magdalen's earliest astronomical texts is the 'Zij-i Sulṭānī' (star catalogue) by Ulugh Beg (1394-1449). Though our copy was published in 1665, the original manuscript was written in the 1430s, over two centuries before the telescope was invented. Even without access to such a key piece of equipment, Sultan Ulugh Beg of the Timurid Empire was an incredibly accurate astronomer who made significant progress in cataloguing the positions of stars and the lengths of planetary orbits. Magdalen owns the first European edition of his star catalogue, transcribed and translated by former Bodley's Librarian Thomas Hyde (1636-1703). Our copy includes an inscription from Hyde to Magdalen Fellow and Librarian John Fitzwilliam (d. 1699).

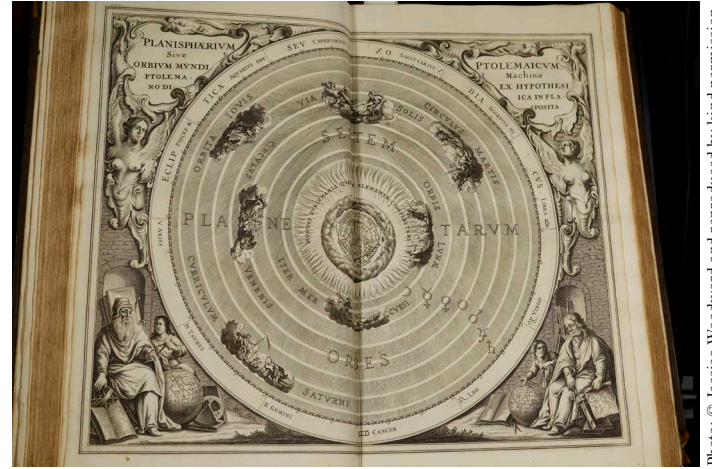
'The Big Three: Ptolemy, Copernicus, and Tyco Brahe'

Ulugh Beg and his contemporaries would have been schooled in the Ptolemaic model of the Universe. Ptolemy of Alexandria (c.100-c.170) was the Egyptian scholar who formulated this geocentric system, in which Earth sat at the centre of the Universe, with all the planets and stars orbiting around it. Ptolemy's system appealed widely on religious and philosophical grounds and was upheld by scholars for over 1,400 years.

However, sixteenth-century technological developments obliged scholars to confront the model's scientific flaws. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) was the first astronomer to publish a book giving evidence for the heliocentric model, that is, the model we recognise today of planets orbiting a central Sun. The work caused decades of theological resistance, culminating in 1633 with Galileo Galilei's lifelong house arrest for the "heresy" of agreeing with Copernicus.



Tycho's Brahe's geo-heliocentric model, as shown in the 1610 edition of his 'De mundi ætherei recentioribus phænomenis' (Old Library, Q.18.14)



A double-page engraving of Ptolemy's model in Andreas Cellarius's 'Harmonia Macrocosmica' (Old Library, Tab.2.17)

In the late sixteenth century, Danish astronomer Tyco Brahe (1546-1601) found a compromise. His "geo-heliocentric model" suggested that the Sun and Moon orbited Earth but all the other planets in our solar system orbited the Sun. More palatable to many, this model was widely accepted for just over a century.

Magdalen is fortunate to own rare copies of all three seminal theories in the history of astronomy. We have the first printed Greek edition of Ptolemy's 'Almagest' (dated 1538), the first edition of Copernicus's 'De revolutionibus' (1543), and one of the earliest editions of Brahe's 'De mundi ætherei recentioribus phænomenis' (1610).

'Celestial Beauty: Astronomical and Astrological Illustrations'

The Ptolemaic model may have been scientifically disproved, but that does not mean that Ptolemaic texts lack attractions for today's scholars. In terms of craftsmanship, the showstoppers of Magdalen's astronomy collections are Peter Apian's 'Astronomicum Cæsarium' (1540) and Andreas Cellarius's 'Harmonia Macrocosmica' (1665).

Created to entertain the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, the 'Astronomicum Cæsarium' contains not only stunning engravings of the heavens (inspired by the Western Zodiac as well as scientific astronomy) but volvelles, or paper wheels, which the reader can turn to calculate the planets' Ptolemaic positions. Our copy comes with the bonus of hand colouring, making it a visual and tactile delight.

The 'Harmonia Macrocosmica' discusses Copernicus and Brahe as well as Ptolemy, but its most celebrated feature is its traditional engravings of the Zodiac. These depictions of celestial figures circling Earth may be fanciful by today's standards, but they bring to life the beliefs of our forebears, including Magdalen's earliest astronomy students.

If you'd like to book an appointment to see any of these books in real life, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at library@magd.ox.ac.uk.

Jessica Woodward, Special Collections Librarian at Magdalen College

Photo: © Jessica Woodward and reproduced by kind permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford.

Photo: © Jessica Woodward and reproduced by kind permission of the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford.

Horsepower



Photo: © Rory Carnegie

Figure 1. The Horsepower team travelling across western Mongolia

In September 2023 our group drove 4000 km across western Mongolia through some of the most spectacular landscapes on earth, in grassland steppe bordered by the Altai Mountains, on good roads and bad, looking for archaeological sites (Figure 1). Our partner, Professor Turbat Tsagaan, Mongolia's premier archaeologist, led us to burial mounds and stone circles dating over the last five thousand years he had long wanted to excavate. Later that month we were extremely lucky to see behind the scenes in the Terracotta Warrior Museum in Xi'an, becoming privy to their latest excavations and results, as we are also partnering with them. We are starting a six-year project investigating the interactions between Mongolia and China, working closely with scholars from both countries.

Around 200 BCE two states emerged with enormous historical consequences. The better-known is the Qin state in China, famous for the burial of the First Emperor and his attendant terracotta warriors; less well understood but equally interesting and consequential is the first state in Mongolia, the Xiongnu, the people who invented cavalry, becoming in the process the cultural ancestors of Genghis Khan. The Qin and the Xiongnu enjoyed a complex love-hate relationship, by turns trading Mongolian horses for Chinese metals and silk and also fighting: the Great Wall was built in an unsuccessful attempt to keep the Xiongnu out.

The history of the horse is central to our investigation. Horses were bred on the steppe, with the Mongolian grasslands being crucial, to be used locally and traded to China. One of our team, Professor Ludovic Orlando (Toulouse), has analysed ancient genetics to reveal the long-term history of the horse. Ludovic's work has shown that the horse was first domesticated around 2200 BCE on the vast pastures between the Black and Caspian Seas. From there it spread eventually from Ireland to Japan, reaching Mongolia about 1600 BCE.

A further member of the 'Horsepower' team, Professor



Photo: © Turbat Tsagaan and Ursula Brosseder

Figure 2. The *khirgisuur* in the Upper Orkhon Valley (in the foreground)

Ursula Brosseder (Mainz), has worked for over 20 years in Mongolia, enjoying a close working relationship with Turbat. Their joint excavations of a massive burial complex, known as a '*khirgisuur*,' dating to around 1100 BCE have recovered a large number of horse bones from a series of small mounds around a central human burial, where horses were sacrificed in large numbers (Figure 2). Ludovic's initial results (still unpublished) show fascinating differences between the horses in the mounds. Ludovic is hoping to work on bones from Chinese sites, including the mausoleum complex of the First Emperor, which contained large numbers of horses across the site. His work will make possible very detailed comparisons between ancient horses in China and Mongolia, allowing an understanding of the trade in horses.

Furthermore, Dr. Ruiliang Liu, curator of Chinese material at the British Museum, is working on ancient metals from China and Mongolia, using his own collections and those in China to further understand the making and movement of metals, some of which were traded from Mongolia to China.

Excavations are planned, analyses are underway and our collaborations are being further developed as the '*Horsepower*' project starts to unfold. Results will be published in academic journals, but also broader engagement will occur in Europe, Mongolia and China through the project photographer (Rory Carnegie), artist (Miranda Creswell) and scientific journalist (David Shukman).

The '*Horsepower*' Project is supported by a six-year ten-million-euro research grant (2023-2029), co-funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and UK Research Innovation (UKRI) under Grant Agreement: 101071707. We are also grateful to our primary partners: Professor Li Gang, Director of the Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum and Professor Turbat Tsagaan, Director of the Archaeological Research Centre, National University of Mongolia.

We aim to keep the Friends updated on a regular basis.

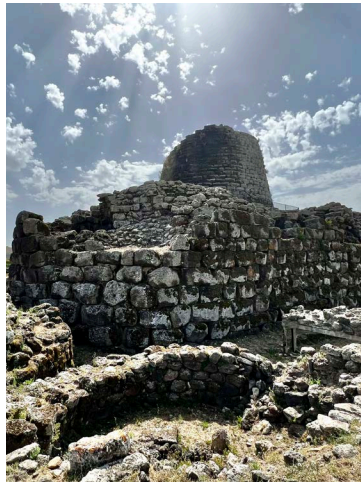
Chris Gosden, School of Archaeology,
University of Oxford

Sardinia and the Nuraghi

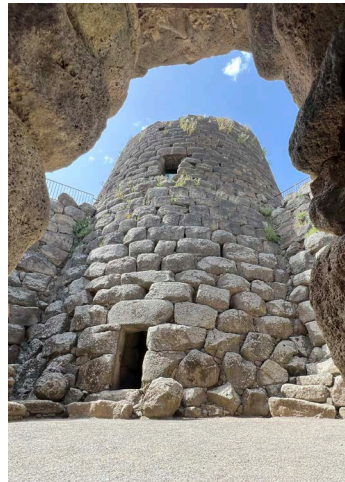
One of the fascinations of archaeology is imagining the archaeologist experience in the moment of discovery – the thrill when Carter saw “wonderful things” or when Schliemann “gazed upon the face of Agamemnon”. The momentary sense of history collapsing before your eyes, of the past reuniting with the present. Perhaps we ordinary folks get a glimpse of this when unexpectedly stumbling across something not well known at least. It seemed so to me when I ‘discovered’ the Nuragic civilisation of Sardinia.

This bronze age civilisation emerged from c.1800 BC: roughly contemporaneous with the last modifications to Stonehenge, the Minoan palace at Knossos and the emergence of Mycenaean. Nuragic derives from ‘Nuraghi’ (singular: ‘Nuraghe’, etymology unknown) which are the unique towers built by this civilisation. They built a lot of them: 7000 scatter the Sardinian landscape even today. Constructed from dry-laid boulders, the simplest are a single tower typically enclosing a large, corbelled chamber or ‘tholos’. Others are megalithic castles with interconnecting towers of several stories, curtain walls, courtyards, wells and a surrounding village. They have a shared architectural style representing an organised culture in which ideas could be held in common and realised. As John Ruskin observed “architecture is the work of nations”. Yet just what these structures were for is debated: residences of rulers, military forts, meeting halls, religious buildings or some combination thereof?

More obviously sacred are fountain houses: small buildings, of superior masonry, where a stone bench integrated into the circular wall surrounds a central water basin fed by spouts from the outer wall. Perhaps these were just bathhouses, saunas even, but water had some spiritual significance as there are also much larger water temples. These have a ‘crypt’ with a cistern and well, accessible by stairs and communicating with the structure above via an oculus.



Nuraghe Santu Antine. Described by one academic as “the most sophisticated dry-stone monument on earth’s surface”



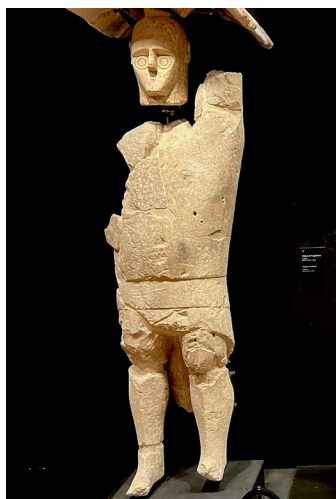
Main tower at Nuraghe Santu Antine, with three stories.



‘Fountain House’ at Su Nuraxi di Barumini.



Betyls at the Giants Grave at Tamuli, Macomer. 1m high, these are considered female.



A Giant of Mont'e Prama. A boxer holding a shield over his head.

Also frequently met is Nuragic funerary architecture. So-called ‘Giants Tombs’ are elongated barrows with an extended, semicircular, stone façade at the entrance. Alongside these tombs are sometimes found conical anthropomorphic stone figures. These mysterious ‘betyls’ may be the antecedents of arguably the most remarkable archaeological finds in Sardinia. In the 1970s, at the Nuragic necropolis in Mont’e Prama, were discovered the fragments of circa 40 giant statues which may have functioned like betyls. The unique ‘Giants of Mont’e Prama’ themselves have not all been reconstructed but those that have comprise boxers, warriors and, intriguingly, models of Nuraghi.

The Nur did not write and so the details of their story remain tantalisingly out of reach. Among their exquisite bronze figurines (to which Giacometti owed something surely?) of warriors and archers etc are also many ships, often with stags or other animals as figureheads, which hint at a seafaring people: their productions have been found across the Eastern Mediterranean. Some have identified the Nur as the warlike Sherden or Shardana (note the passing similarity to ‘Sardinia’) recorded in Egyptian history – they are depicted on the walls of the Temple of Medinet Habu, Luxor with headgear and swords as seen in the Nuragic figurines, and in ships with zoomorphic figureheads...

Whoever they were, this civilisation has left a remarkable archaeological assemblage whose international obscurity is hard to understand. Their end is assumed to be 238 BC when Sardinia fell to Rome, but some may have lingered in the mountainous region known as Barbagia (coined by Cicero who considered the inhabitants barbarian), even into the Christian era. I like to imagine this was so, that up there the remnants of the Nur still heard their old gods in the babble of mountain streams and in the rocky bluffs recalled the splendour of the Nuraghi of their fathers.

Anthony Flemming, Member and Representative of the Museum Liaison Committee

INFORMATION SHEET

The Members' Magazine is published three times a year

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Admission FREE.

For details of all current & forthcoming
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Refreshments. The Horsebox Coffee
Company on the lawn is open from 9.00 -
17.00 daily, serving hot and cold drinks and
homemade cakes. With delicious locally
roasted coffee, scrumptious brownies,
flapjacks and cookies, the Horsebox Café is
the perfect place for a coffee break!

All museum events:

www.prm.ox.ac.uk/events

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series.

MUSEUM DIARY DATES

We look forward to welcoming you to
the galleries, exhibitions and events.

Exhibitions and case displays

Display case C.22.A (Court)

Wandering in Other Worlds

Evenki Cosmology and Shamanic



Coloured engraving of Evenki Shaman, Russia.
PRM 2015.20.1

Image © PRM

Traditions

We invite you, through this display to
wander in another world, an Evenki world.

The Evenki are a diverse cultural group
living across Northern and Central Asia.
They are primarily reindeer-herding and
hunting people, although in the steppes
Evenki took up horse herding, while in
the Arctic fishing became an important
occupation. Adapting to change and living
in harmony with nature has always been
central to Evenki way of life.

Museum Trail

**Nothing Without
Us: Experiences of
Disability**

In the summer of 2023,
the Museum's Curating
for Change Fellow, Kyle
Lewis Jordan, led a
group of co-producers
in researching disability
across multiple times
and spaces. 'Nothing
Without Us' is a co-
produced gallery trail
that shares the lived
experiences of disabled
people, their stories
revealed by objects in
the Pitt Rivers Museum.

We invite you to
reflect on how such
experiences have not only shaped their
lives, but have a deeper connection and
meaning that matters for all of us.



Shabti Figure. Glazed
Pottery, Ancient Egypt.
Donated to the Pitt Rivers
Museum in 1884. PRM
1884.57.11

Photo: © PRM

MEMBERS' DIARY DATES

2024

Saturday 11 May

10.15 to 11.00 & 11.15 to 12.00

**Members Exclusive Behind the scenes
Tour with the Collection team**



A group looking at textiles in the research room

In these sessions you will be invited into
the Museum's research space, where you
will have the opportunity to get close
up to ethnographic and archaeological
objects normally in storage or behind
glass in the galleries.

Wednesday 14 August

12.00 to 13.00

**Members Exclusive Behind the scenes
Tour with the Conservation team**

In this session you will be invited into
the Museum's Conservation Laboratory
to see what the team are currently
working on. See objects up close and
hear how our conservators use a variety
of techniques to stabilise, preserve
and slow down the deterioration of
ethnographic objects.

Thursday 13 June

13.00 to 16.00

Yukon Beading workshop

Free, but booking required.

Discover the art of beadwork with
a Yukon First Nation artist where
you'll create a beaded keychain with
Lisa Dewhurst and/or Shirlee Frost.
Participants will have the freedom to
design their own patterns and select
from a range of vibrant colours to bring
their visions to life. This workshop is
being held to celebrate the opening of
the 'Honouring Our Future': Yukon First
Nations Graduation Regalia exhibition,
a collaboration between the Yukon Arts
Centre and the Kwanlin Dün Cultural
Centre which will be hosted at Canada
House in London from 13 June to 6
October 2024.

Coming Soon! Look out for more details
of our new exhibition:

**'HAWAI'I Ma uka i Ma kai: Quilting
the Hawaiian Landscape'** opening

on 12 June and learn new skills in our
Lacemaking Workshop on 14 September.