



# The Post Hole

The student-run archaeology journal

## 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

November 2013



**Poa Kichizi:  
Excavations at Songo Mnara**

**Myths of the Spanish Conquest**

**Phenomenological Methodologies**

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Front cover: *Flooded Mangroves at Songo Mnara* (Image Copyright: Henriette Rødland)

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# Editorial: *The Post Hole* celebrates its 5<sup>th</sup> birthday this year

As we embark on a new year for *The Post Hole*, we must look back at the previous team to congratulate them on the success that they achieved. David Altoft, editor-in-chief for 2012-13, said “a brand new year, a brand new Post Hole”. Last year’s team improved *The Post Hole* and it has reached new standards, through their hard efforts. Last year saw the redevelopment of the website, creating an interactive experience and an easily accessible archive of issues dating right back to 2008, when *The Post Hole* began. Combining this with the **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Google+** pages, the team were able to attract readers and authors from all over the world. The previous team also successfully integrated four other Universities, through PR coordinators at Cambridge, Durham, Southampton and Reading. The widespread readership of *The Post Hole* grew, resulting in nine fascinating issues from June 2012 to September 2013. A big mention must go out to all of the old team for their dedication to *The Post Hole*, and we wish them every success in their future.

This year sees an exciting chance for *The Post Hole* to expand its publicity further. We are introducing ‘Digging through the profession of Archaeology,’ an online series of interviews exploring different jobs within the archaeological vocation, what they entail and the companies involved. The first to be released is an interview with Nick Pearson, ‘Working within Commercial Archaeology,’ conducted by Henriette Rødland and Rianca Vogels. This will shortly be published online; links will be posted on our **Facebook** and **Twitter** accounts.

This year *The Post Hole* celebrates its 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Since the journal began in 2008 there have been 31 interesting and exciting issues. When *The Post Hole* began its journey in 2008, it became the first undergraduate-run archaeological journal in the whole of the UK. This year we plan to celebrate *The Post Hole*’s 5<sup>th</sup> birthday with many exciting issues, new developments on the **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **Google+** and *The Post Hole website* and creating a better relationship with you, our readers. The original team must be remembered and thanked for creating the journal, and the previous and future teams to come for maintaining and managing. A big thank you must go out to our audience especially for your support over the years - without you we wouldn’t have such interesting and diverse topics to publish, *The Post Hole* wouldn’t be as successful, and we would never have achieved the point at which we are at today.

This year we hope to establish a stronger presence for *The Post Hole* and maintain its success as an archaeological journal. Now that we have a newly developed website, our PR coordinators are in place and the new team is set up and raring to go, we look forward to reading your article submissions and expanding *The Post Hole* further.

I hope you enjoy reading the new team's first *Post Hole* issue. There is a huge range of articles in this issue accommodating a broad range of interests. In this issue, **Daniela Noemí Ávido** explores objects discovered at the "La Elvira" site in Argentina. Using a report founded in order to stop the 'La Elvira' house being demolished; Ávido explores the site and explains the significance of these objects.

**Arnaud F Lambert** re-evaluates a petroglyph (rock carving) from the archaeological site of Chalcatzingo in Morelos, Mexico. By comparing it to other rock carvings in Oaxaca, Lambert investigates past interpretations and argues its association with other Olmec-style monument.

**James Johnson** using John Loudon's seminal book of 1843 explains the benefits of exploring graveyards using two case studies in York. Discussing the re-use of closed and disused churchyards is combined in order to make a successful argument.

**Sam O'Leary** delves into understanding phenomenological approaches, analysing how they help us archaeologically understand the landscape and are an effective method. Combing a number of different projects of research, O'Leary explains how landscape archaeology could be improved.

**Henriette Rødland** provides an exciting account of the excavations at Songo Mnara in Tanzania that took place over the summer. Rødland's account of daily-life combines an understanding of the project that is taking place out there but also a first-hand account of archaeological evidence discovered this season.

Finally **Laura Tradii** from the Department of Anthropology in Aberdeen, re-examines the conquest by Columbus and Cortés exceptional men. Tradii studies the historical idealisation of Columbus and Cortés and Pizarro combining it with the idea of western superiority.

We always look forward to receiving your submissions so please keep sending them in to [submissions@theposthole.org](mailto:submissions@theposthole.org) and don't forget to sign up to our bi-monthly **newsletters**. These will be released with and between each new issue of *The Post Hole* and will keep you updated on the latest exciting developments and ways in which you can get involved with the journal. To receive these newsletters, simply enter your name and email address at [www.theposthole.org/newsletter](http://www.theposthole.org/newsletter).

Best wishes,

Emily Taylor

(Editor-in-Chief of *The Post Hole* - [editor@theposthole.org](mailto:editor@theposthole.org))

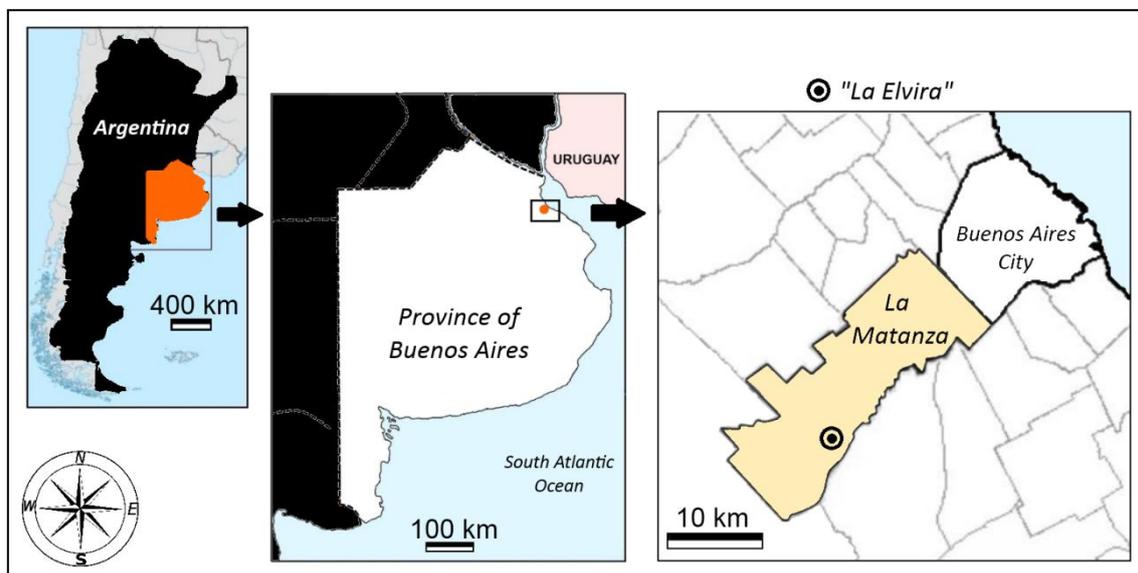
# A case of deliberately concealed objects from Argentina (Province of Buenos Aires, 19<sup>th</sup> century)

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*This paper describes a peculiar set of objects from the “La Elvira” site, also known as The Bicentennial House in La Matanza, the most populated county in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina (Figure 1). These objects were found in the last standing building from “La Elvira”, a 19<sup>th</sup> century productive ranch in the countryside near Buenos Aires City. A project was developed in order to prevent the house from being demolished, as it was considered of historical value. “The Bicentennial House” project consisted of the disassembling and transportation of all the elements of the dwelling, carried out in conjunction with an archaeological survey. During the monitoring of the former activities, the objects presented here were recovered.*

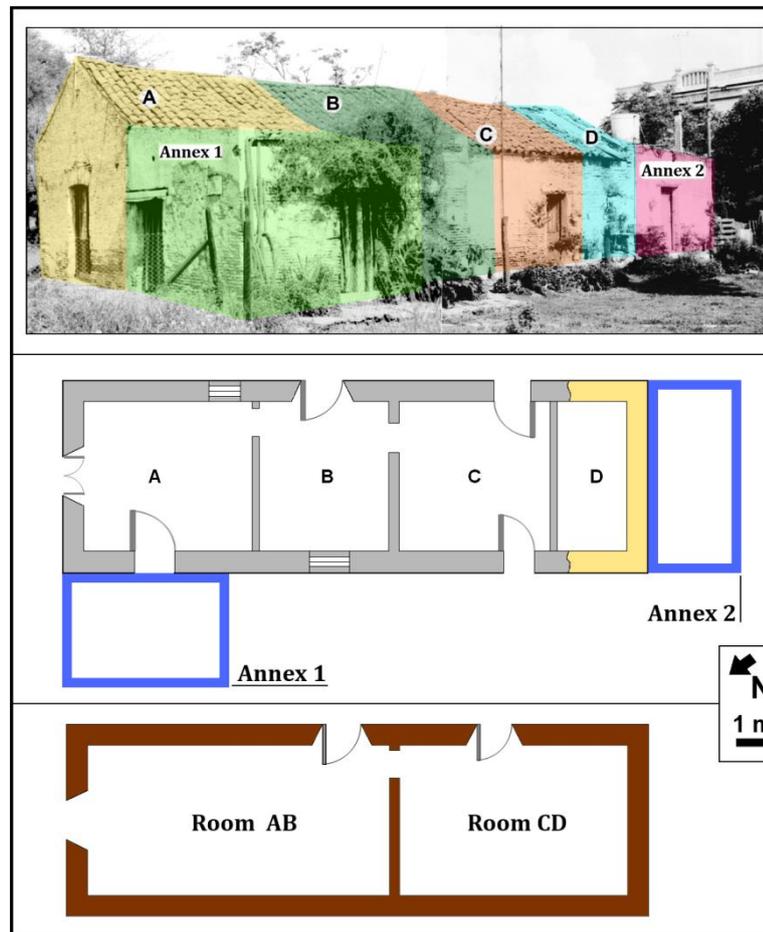


**Figure 1.** Location of the site “La Elvira”, in La Matanza, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina (Image Copyright: Daniela N. Ávido).

## The dwelling

“La Elvira” site consisted of a three-room house (A, B and C in figure 2) which, according to the construction materials and techniques observed before its disassembling, was around 200 years old. A preliminary study of the changes in the structure (Ávido 2012a), the foundations and the roof, along with

other features, showed that the dwelling was originally planned as a two-room house but, after the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was divided into four rooms. Later, two other rooms were annexed. By 2011, when the disassembling and the archaeological survey were carried out, both annexes and room D had already been demolished.



**Figure 2. Top:** Photomontage artificially colored to differentiate the rooms. **Center:** plan of the dwelling, where it can be distinguished: *in gray*, standing remains at the time of the intervention by mid-2011; *in beige*, foundations of room D; *in blue*, foundations of Annexes 1 and 2, probably constructed at some point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. **Bottom:** in dark brown, recreation of the original structure of the house by early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (after Ávido 2012a).

### An overview of the findings

More than one thousand artefacts were collected during fieldwork, 61% of them glass fragments and 16% of them animal remains, while other classes were represented by less than 7% each. Table 1 shows details of the archeological remains from “La Elvira”, per collection unit. The “vegetal” category includes wood fragments, seeds and charcoal, while the “animal” category includes leather and bone fragments. Additionally, “ceramic” includes fragments of redware, stoneware, porcelain and earthenware, but excludes bricks and tiles which are counted under the “construction” category.

Collection units (C.U.)	Material Types									totals per C.U.
	vegetal	animal	ceramics	glass	metal	construction	plastic	other		
Test 1	16	114	14	224	15	45	3	4	435	
Test 2	1	4	6	10	6	4	1	1	33	
Test 3	2	7	2	42	2	1	0	1	57	
Pits 1 to 6	4	17	2	30	2	1	1	9	66	
Monitoring	2	23	42	309	21	4	3	10	414	
									1005	

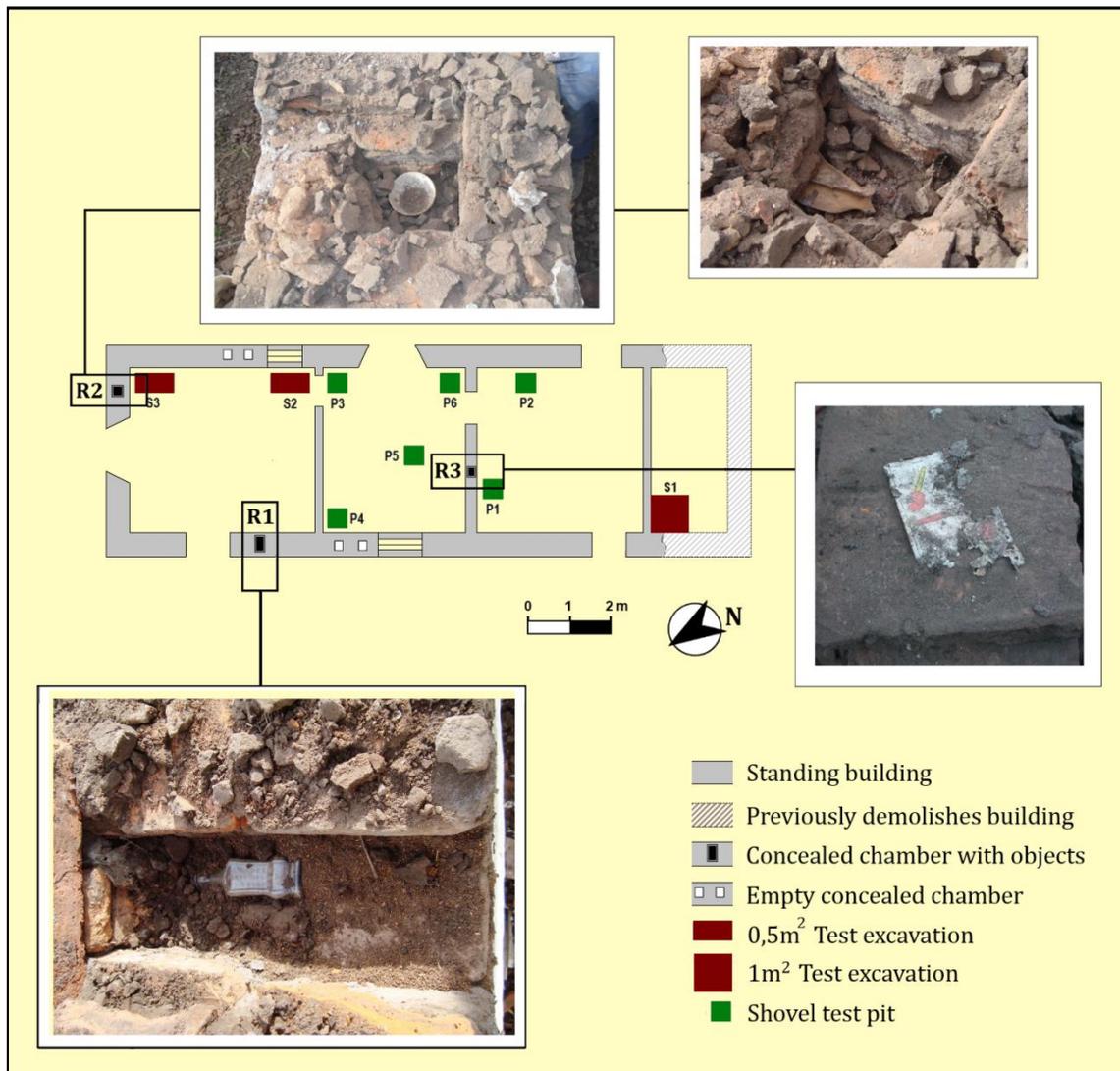
**Table 1.** Detail of the archeological remains from "La Elvira", per collection unit (after Ávido 2012b).



**Figure 3.** Odd findings: objects found inside concealed chambers within the wall (Image Copyright: Daniela N. Ávido).

Among these findings, there were some odd ones: a glass bottle, a playing card, an animal bone and a pot (Figure 3). What was odd about them? They were found inside voids or “chambers” within the walls. These were not just voids between bricks, but structured and sealed chambers within the structure of the wall: their existence was intended. Three of these chambers, located in three different walls, contained the mentioned objects, while other chambers were empty. They could not be seen nor accessed from outside or inside the house, since the walls concealing the chambers had no marks or signals and the plastering had no cracks. Thus, we considered these objects were not accidentally there, like trapped coins between the

cracks of the floorboards; the chambers and their content had more likely been deliberately concealed (Mackay 1991). Figure 4 shows the location of the chambers with concealed objects.



**Figure 4.** Plan of the dwelling showing the excavation units, the location of the concealed objects and their *in situ* contexts. R1, R2 and R3, according to their recovery during fieldwork, stands for Recámara 1, 2 and 3 (“recámara” is the Spanish word for “chamber”) (Image Copyright: Daniela N. Ávido).

### Deliberately concealed objects

We faced these odd findings as a novelty for South American archaeological contexts since, to our knowledge, there were no reported cases with similar attributes. Hence, in order to understand this practice, we focused our attention into previously researched cases from Europe, Oceania and North America (Ávido 2012c).

Shoes are the most commonly concealed objects, thousands of them having been recorded within the UK alone (Dixon-Smith 1990; Mackay 1991; Pitt 1998; Swann 1998; Harvey 2009). Indeed, in Northampton there is a “Concealed Shoes Index” (Mackay 1991; Pitt 1998; Riello 2009; @2) which, for decades, has been

recording all the shoes reported by people who have found them at their homes or workplaces. According to this Index, there are three outstanding characteristics about the concealed shoes: a) they are in bad shape, either being well-worn before depositing or, more interestingly, having been destroyed on purpose; b) the location of the concealment is not easily reachable; and c) they are found accidentally, mostly during remodeling or other construction works (@1; @2). Similar cases were reported in Australia (Evans 2009), the United States (Manning 2011) and Switzerland (Volken 1998), though their frequency is lower than that of the UK.

In addition to the shoes, other kinds of materials were found in concealed contexts, like bottles, garments or coins, to name only a few. Witchbottles, which consist of ceramic jars or glass bottles filled with urine and nails, are considered as home-made devices for countering witchcraft (Becker 1980; Fennell 2000; @3). Some concealed contexts contained more than one item; a worth noting case is the “Bryce House” in Annapolis, Maryland (the USA), studied by Leone and Fry (1999), who found a few caches with rocks, pieces of pottery, glass, coins and animal remains (@6; @7). They suggested that, since they lacked Christian items, these caches were probably an Afro-American creation (Leone and Fry 1999; @6; @7). Dried cats have also been reported as concealed items, for they have been found hidden above ceiling boards, within walls and below floor boards (@3).

One more interesting precedent is the “Deliberately Concealed Garments” project (@1) which, as the “Concealed Shoes Index”, has developed a database for the reported findings within the UK of concealed items of clothing. Again, the outstanding characteristics of these garments are the same ones listed for the concealed shoes. They refer to this practice as folklore and superstitious tradition.

Summarizing, the preceding projects were cited in order to show the variety of reported cases of objects that have been deliberately concealed and accidentally found. Frequently, these findings are seen as ritual behavior dealing with home protection or for preventing witchcraft (Dixon-Smith 1990; Evans 2009; @3). Would this be a suitable explanation for the concealed objects from “La Elvira” site? Were they protecting the family or countering suspected witchcraft? It is certainly a tough question to be answered, since we lack documents describing the practice and its meaning. For the time being, all we can do is stress some points:

- a) According to the location of the caches (Figure 4), the objects were grouped in three different walls: the perfume bottle was in the NW wall, the playing card was in the SW wall, and the pot and bone were in the NE wall. All three caches enclosed the AB room (Figure 2).
- b) There were some empty chambers in both NW and SE walls (Figure 4). We do not know if they were meant to be empty or if it is a preservation issue.
- c) The perfume bottle from R1 was lying on its side, with its top NW oriented. It was filled with a sawdust-like content, which is to be analyzed.

- d) The pot and bone inside R2 were "mounted" one above the other: the pot was the first to be discovered and, after its collection, the bone was found (see Figure 4).
- e) The bone inside R2 was a canid scapula, probably from a dog. Its spine was incomplete/broken and there were several marks in the glenoid cavity. Furthermore, the pot base was broken and black stained.
- f) The playing card found in R3 was incomplete and lacked its backside.
- g) The perfume maker of the R1 bottle, a French company named Monpelas, started its business in 1830 (Rigone 2008).

The preceding list was intended to show the peculiarity of the location and content of the caches found in this site. It does not answer the problem of their function and meaning; on the contrary, it opens new questions. In-depth research will certainly show us the way to understand who did this and why. Even though all the researchers I have spoken to would ascribe this practice to African and Afro-American people, I suggest Catholic people should be considered as potential concealers as well. Regarding the symbolic component of the concealed objects, we can hardly know the meaning given in the systemic context. But we can explore existing and alternative explanations for this practice from an archaeological approach, studying the diversity of concealment items and their contexts. On the other hand, it is clear that we are bound to do what it takes to preserve these witnesses of time, for they constitute "an 'inside out' memory" of the building they belonged to (Eastop 2006, 251).

*"When we rebuilt a 17th century Cheshire long house in 1998, the builder asked for pairs of old shoes from each member of the family. He put them up in the roof by the chimney in order to ward off evil spirits. I was more than happy to help keep alive an old tradition and gave 4 pairs of shoes to him. What will the finders say when the house is next rebuilt in about 2100?"*

Comment to the note "Concealed shoes: Australian settlers and an old superstition"  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16801512?postId=111999731>

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**Recommended websites:**

1 "Deliberately Concealed Garments" Project. Available at: <http://www.concealedgarments.org/>[Accessed September 2011]

2 Northampton Museums & Art Galleries Available at:

<http://northamptonmuseums.wordpress.com/2012/06/19/concealed-shoes/>[Access: September 2012]

- 3 “Apotropaios” Available at: <http://apotropaios.co.uk/index.html>[Accessed September 2011]
- 4 “Ian Evans's World of Old Houses” Available at: <http://www.oldhouses.com.au/>[Accessed December 2011]
- 5 “Gentle Craft – Shoe Museum” Available at: <http://www.shoemuseum.ch/>[Accessed February 2013]
- 6 “Input on Tortoise Shell” Available at: <http://bannekerdouglassmuseum.blogspot.com/2008/03/input-on-tortoise-shell.html>[Accessed July 2012]
- 7 “More on the Tortoise Shell” Available at:  
<http://bannekerdouglassmuseum.blogspot.com/2008/03/more-on-the-tortoise-shell.html>[Accessed July 2012]

# Re-Imagining Chalcatzingo Monument 10 in Light of Late Classic Period Oaxacan Sculptural Analogues

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*The present paper re-evaluates a petroglyph, designated as Monument 10, from the archaeological site of Chalcatzingo in Morelos, Mexico. Although this rock carving's formal properties place it within the Classic period, Monument 10 continues to be associated with the other Olmec-style monuments at the site and interpreted as a proto-rain god image. By comparing this petroglyph with the Late Classic period carvings of Los Santos Reyes Nopala in Oaxaca, however, it is proposed that the rock carving may be referencing a local ruler, possibly in the role of an ancestor.*

Chalcatzingo Monument 10 was originally discovered by Gillett Griffin in 1969 and first reported by Carlo Gay (1972, 66). It consists of a petroglyph carved on the northern face of a large boulder near the summit of Cerro Chalcatzingo (Figure 1). Although earthquakes split the boulder into several sections prior to August 2005 when I began my investigations of this monument, the rock carving remains intact although highly eroded and obscured by modern graffiti (Figure 2).

The petroglyph is composed of two distinct elements (Figure 3). The main element consists of a human head portrayed in frontal view. The physiognomic features of the face include rounded eyes with large incised irises or pupils, sometimes referred to as "goggle-shaped eyes". The face is also pictured with a broad, flaring nose and downturned mouth surrounded by thick lips. Underneath the mouth, the head terminates in a slightly pointed chin. The ears are not visible but are implied by the presence of two large circular ear ornaments, each connected to a tapered pendant or feather that hangs down to the chin. The top of the head is covered by a pointed headdress or turban, similar to those found on some of the Formative period C8 figurines from Chalcatzingo.

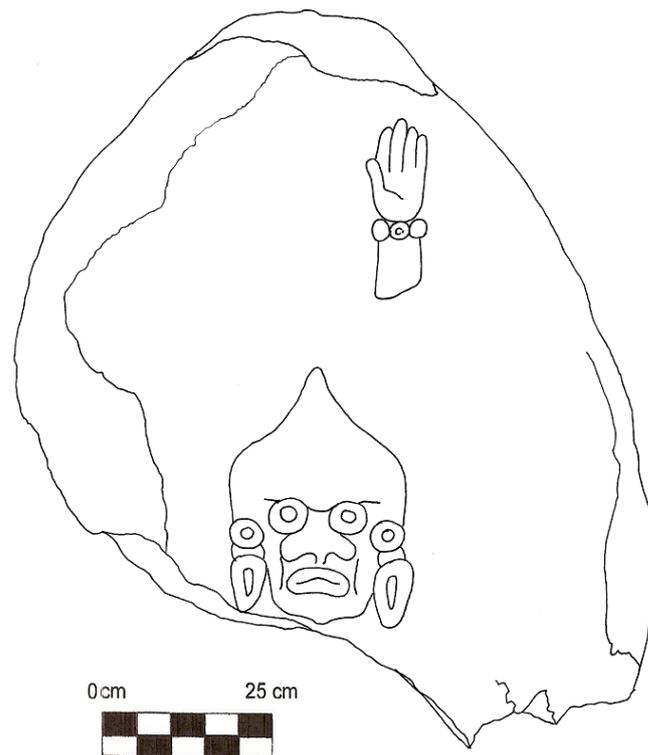
Above and to the right (observer's point of view) of the head, there is a second smaller element depicting a forearm and a left hand. The hand is shown palm-outward with all fingers extended upward. The wrist is decorated with a beaded bracelet consisting of three circles. The distance between the head and hand is more or less anatomically correct suggesting that this monument does not utilize the synecdochic principle of pars pro toto so often seen in other examples of Olmec-style art (Reilly 1995). Rather, the lack of lines connecting the head and hand may be explained by the coarseness of its granodiorite medium or may be an intentional aspect of the carving related to the subject matter of the rock carving.



**Figure 1.** *Cerro Delgado as seen from the summit of Cerro Chalcatzingo* (Image Copyright: Arnaud F. Lambert).



**Figure 2.** *Chalcatzingo Monument 10 in August 2005* (Image Copyright: Arnaud F. Lambert).



**Figure 3.** Scale drawing of Chalcatzingo Monument 10 (Image Copyright: Arnaud F. Lambert).

### Previous Interpretations of Chalcatzingo Monument 10

Since the discovery and initial documentation of Monument 10, its archaeological significance and chronological position have been the subjects of on-going debate. Some researchers have advanced the argument that Monument 10 belongs to the site's corpus of Olmec-style art. For instance, based on its physical attributes (i.e. its goggle-shaped eyes) and its apparently serpentine imagery (i.e. a headdress shaped like the tail of a rattlesnake and pendulous ear ornaments resembling fangs), Carlo Gay (1972, 66-69) contended that this rock carving depicted a Formative period precursor to the Classic and Post-Classic period rain god, glossed as "Tlaloc". Following the work of Gay on the positioning of Chalcatzingo's rock carvings (1972, 39; Fig. 9a), Reilly (1991, 164; Fig. 17) argued that Monument 10 formed part of a conceptual axis mundi which was used to orient the Olmec-style rock carvings on Cerro Chalcatzingo during the Middle Formative period. In so doing, he not only kept the Olmec artistic affiliation for Monument 10 but also many of its associations with water (Reilly 1991, 165).

By contrast, although David Grove and Jorge Angulo have acknowledged that the facial features of the figure in Monument 10 are typical of those found in Olmec-style art (Angulo 1987, 154; Grove and Angulo 1987, 130), their interpretations of Chalcatzingo Monument 10 have been much more nuanced. For instance, Angulo successfully demonstrated that this petroglyph does not belong to the Formative period by noting that the features of the head were carved in frontal view, a feature of Classic period low-relief carvings. Formative period sculptors, by contrast, appear to have favored the representation of human

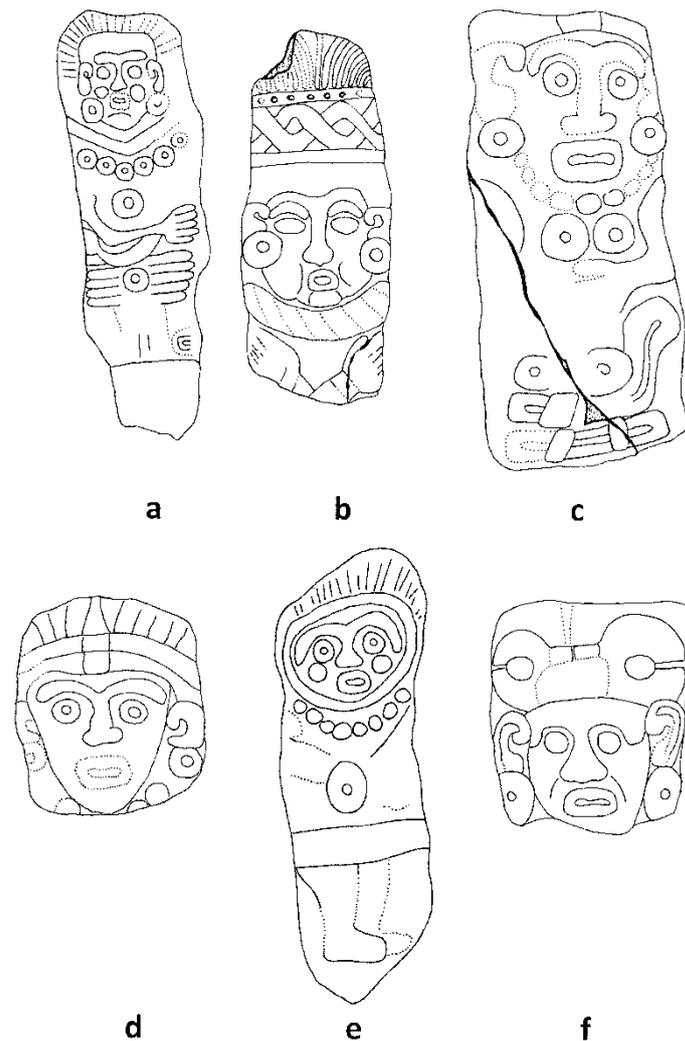
heads in profile (Coe 1965, 749). There is certainly evidence for Classic period occupations at Chalcatzingo, including two small pyramids, a ball court, and several rock paintings in the caves of Cerro Delgado (Apostolides 1987, 191-193; Martín Arana 1987, 387-394). However, Angulo has also been suspicious of interpretations of Monument 10 which emphasize its similarity to the rain god images typically associated with Classic art period (Pasztory 1974). For instance, it is not clear that the eyes are goggles at all. They may in fact be very large circular representations of eyes. The serpentine nature of the headdress is also problematic given the rock carving's poor state of preservation.

In contrast to these questionable comparisons to Classic period rain gods, Angulo favored interpreting the figure pictured in Monument 10 through the use of ethnohistoric and ethnographic analogies as a representation of a dualistic deity such as Itzamna with sacred mountains, rainfall, thunder, and lightning (1987, 154-155). Nonetheless, he was painfully aware that there were no written or graphic references known at the time that could help in the identification of the figure and its body language. Fortunately, this situation has changed recently with the documentation of a series of relief carvings from the town of Los Santos Reyes Nopala in southern Oaxaca (Bustamante 2003). Dating to the Late Classic period (600-900 AD), these sculptures come from several neighboring archaeological sites: Cerro de la Iglesia, El Zanate, and Arroyo de Piedra. Through careful comparison, these carvings may help us to re-evaluate the features of Chalcatzingo Monument 10 and provide insight into its archaeological significance.

### **Chalcatzingo Monument 10 and the Late Classic Period Sculptures of Los Santos Reyes Nopala**

One of the most striking features of the corpus of sculptures from Los Santos Reyes Nopala is their adherence to a set of formal aesthetic principles that are remarkably similar to those found on Chalcatzingo Monument 10 (Figure 4). Regardless of whether or not the sculptures depict a whole human being (Figure 4e), the upper torso and head (Figures 4a-c), or just a disembodied head (Figures 4d and f), they are invariably executed as low relief carvings on relatively flat slab-like stones, possibly stelae. The carvings themselves are often simple, using heavy lines to demarcate major areas of the figures such as the head and arms. Incised details and glyphs (Bustamante 2003, 84-86 and 105-106) are relatively rare, possibly due to the coarseness of gneiss as the medium used for the majority of the sculptures. Finally, all of the carvings from Nopala are also rendered in frontal view as was common practice in the Central Highlands of Mexico during the Classic period (Angulo 1987, 154).

In addition, there is a considerable degree of correspondence between the Nopala sculptures and Chalcatzingo Monument 10 in terms of the nature and arrangement of their respective iconographic elements, i.e. physiognomic features, overall posture of the figure, and elements of dress. Although some of these similarities may be due to their adherence to modes of representation common in Classic art, it is certain that they may also reflect less widely-shared sculptural practices. If this is the case, then the sculptures of Los Santos Reyes Nopala may be especially useful in gaining insights on the identity and significance of the personage portrayed in Monument 10.



**Figure 4.** *Selected Late Classic Period (600-900 AD).* Sculptures from Los Santos Reyes Nopala, Oaxaca: (a) SRN-IGL-24 (redrawn after Bustamante 2003: 110); (b) SRN-PM-06 (redrawn after Bustamante 2003:76); (c) SRN-PP-11 (redrawn after Bustamante 2003:86); (d) SRN-CP-27 (redrawn after Bustamante 2003:116); (e) SRN-IGL-25 (redrawn after Bustamante 2003:112); and (f) SRN-PM-30 (redrawn after Bustamante 2003:122). Drawings are not to scale. (Image Copyright: Arnaud F. Lambert).

I will begin by comparing the physical traits portrayed in the sculptures of Los Santos Reyes Nopala with those observed on the face rendered in Chalcatzingo Monument 10. The main figure in each of these sculptures seems to be pictured with relatively thick lips and a downturned mouth. Even though this cluster of features is often linked with Olmec-style art (Magni 2003, 177), there is no evidence to suggest that these conventions for representing the human face were necessarily absent in later traditions of Mesoamerican art. Simplistic eye-forms are also common in Nopala, probably due to the difficulty of the rock medium. Among these, large circular eyes with incised pupils or irises are fairly common (Figures 4c-e) and correspond exactly to the eye-form of the individual portrayed in Monument 10.

Another point of iconographic comparison that must be addressed is the overall posture of the figures carved in the monuments. Excluding all of the disembodied heads from the Nopala corpus, it seems quite

clear that all of the remaining low relief carvings represent individuals in an upright position. Presumably, based on the position of the hand relative to the head, the same pattern holds true for the person portrayed in Chalcatzingo Monument 10. This observation brings up another problem however. As I previously noted, scholars have been repeatedly puzzled by the position of the hand in Monument 10. If one examines the full-bodied figures from Nopala, one quickly discovers that hand positioning is an important element in the representational system used at the site. Some of the sculptures show individuals with their arms crossed or flexed (Figures 4a-b); while others depict them with out-stretched arms (Bustamante 2003, 94 and 108) or holding an object (Bustamante 2003, 78). Given the complexity of the costumes shown on these personages, there may be a relationship between the meaning of the gestures and these elements of dress.

Indeed, the elements of dress which characterize the individuals depicted in these sculptures may offer the best hope for shedding light on the significance of the character portrayed in Chalcatzingo Monument 10. Simple body adornments such as jewellery may be the best place to start. Take for instance, the circular ear ornament. Originally used to chronologically tie Monument 10 to the Formative period Olmec-style rock carvings at Chalcatzingo (Gay 1972, 66), circular ear ornaments are a common feature of the Nopala sculptures (Figures 4a-d, 4f) although they are connected to visible ears and lack the pendulous elements found on the petroglyph from Chalcatzingo. Beaded bracelets and necklaces are also widespread at Nopala (Figures 4a, d-e) and appear to be signs of status or perhaps ritual costuming. Absent from these representations is any hint that the individuals portrayed in the sculptures were deities. In fact, none of the carvings of Nopala appears to be associated with any standardized set of symbols for the representation of divine beings. Rather, it appears that costume elements such as elaborate headdresses demonstrate a level of distinctness accorded to different individuals (Figure 4), possibly lords or recent ancestors, participating in ritual acts that were commemorated by the community. In the Late Classic and Epiclassic art period of El Tajín, variant hand gestures were used to communicate differences in status, such as being a noble or a captive, as well as participation in different ceremonial activities like human sacrifice (Ladrón de Guevara 2005). Given the distinctive nature of the headdress in Chalcatzingo Monument 10 and its strong resemblance to headdresses found among C8 figurines that may have been used as portraits of rulers at the site during the Middle Formative period (Grove and Gillepsie 1984, 33), a similar interpretation may be warranted for this rock carving.

## Conclusions

To summarize, there is no satisfactory stylistic or contextual reason for continuing to argue that Chalcatzingo Monument 10 is a Middle Formative period, Olmec-style precursor to Classic period representations of a rain god or any other deity. Rather, comparisons with analogous Late Classic period sculptures of Los Santos Reyes Nopala in southern Oaxaca demonstrate that this petroglyph is more likely to be referencing a high ranking member of the community. The beaded bracelet and the elaborate conical

headdress suggest a local ruler, perhaps using symbols of status present at Chalcatzingo since the Middle Formative period. The raised hand and out-stretched palm suggest a ritual posture, possibly indicating a ritual act or that the individual portrayed in Monument 10 has achieved a different state of being such as that of an ancestor. Until the variant hand gestures observed at Chalcatzingo and Nopala can be properly contextualized and our understanding of their iconography more fully developed however, these alternative interpretations must remain speculative.

### **Acknowledgments**

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# Language and Culture on Welsh Memorials

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*This article will explore the possibility of the adaptive re-use of closed and disused urban churchyards as public spaces. This will be done by engaging with previous work on the subject, including the suggestions made in John Loudon's seminal book of 1843, and by exploring the potential benefits and reasons for such an undertaking through looking at two of York's defunct churchyards.*

From its beginnings, historical graveyard archaeology has been influenced not only by the passionate interest of amateurs like genealogists and churchgoers, but by the academic fascination of the historians and archaeologists who have studied them. As far back as the year 1843, with John Loudon's publication *On the Laying Out, Planting and Managing of Cemeteries*, it has been appreciated that grave markers are important historical records (Loudon 1843, 13). For many communities prior to the introduction of a national system of education, they may have been the only locally available source of written history. Despite attempts by church staff and clergymen to maintain proper records and grave plot maps, there is, almost without exception, a great deal of information missing from the cemetery records of many communities, both urban and rural.

The work of academics such as Dr. Harold Mytum has sought to rectify this, but without the widespread aid of the many communities for whom the graveyards were constructed, there is only so much to be done in a lifetime. The academic world has, unfortunately, moved onto more theoretical challenges. From beginnings in art history and genealogy, theories now abound on organising data sets, to collecting data from cemeteries as a sampling technique for demographic study (Mytum 2000, 47). The work presented by Mytum focuses more and more on theoretical aspects than on saving and preserving the graveyards and their monuments for posterity or for their value as unique landscape features with many potential uses (Mytum 2000, 48). In Ireland, the Irish Graveyard Surveyors have set themselves the mammoth task of recording every extant gravestone and memorial in the Republic of Ireland, and despite Herculean efforts, are struggling to conquer this task alone (IrishGraveyards.ie 2007). The communities served by churchyards are all too frequently concerned by their states of disrepair, but do not know how to go about tending or improving them (Albert 1994, 17). This situation can, and has led to many churchyards becoming neglected and derelict, and some that have been given attention have received the wrong kind of attention, with repairs affected by amateurs or without the necessary research to be done properly (Meller 1981, 17).

There is hope though, for the closed church and the disused churchyard. With the proper use of modern conservation techniques such as those laid out in Historic Scotland's two-volume *Guide for the*

*Conservation of Graveyards*, the old stones and their settings can be given new life, and bearing in mind some of the principles of John Loudon's seminal work, can be put to new uses in a changing world.

This article will present, through the use of case studies and available academic publications, the case for the sympathetic redevelopment of full or disused churchyards, particularly in crowded cities, to allow their use as breathing space, a natural area for the enjoyment of the public, whilst still allowing their traditional values to be retained (Foramitti and Piperek 1975, 57). Traditional values incorporate their genealogical, religious, and cultural importance inherent not only in their monuments, but also in their churches, settings, and layout. I will start by looking at why urban churchyards in particular should be considered for this kind of adaptation to green space status, and how it can benefit those who live near them. An overview will be given of the ideas suggested by Loudon over a century and a half ago. I will then use the case studies to show what can be done, and make suggestions for future projects.

Loudon's book recommended a wholesale reorganisation of the way in which cemeteries are laid out, in order to create pleasant paths and walking routes, whilst also retaining the original memorials for the purposes for which they were built (Loudon 1843, 11). It is my intention to show that the reuse of a graveyard can be a more *laissez faire* undertaking, with only minimal changes and maintenance required to transform a derelict graveyard into a pleasant landscape for public enjoyment. The options available include transfer to local authority care of the churchyard itself, which might be useful if the church is still active. This can also lead to the potential adoption of Nature Reserve or park status, allowing specialist care to be taken, and for wider use to be encouraged (Burman 1988, 89). The Churches Conservation Trust's involvement might also be encouraged if the church is defunct, allowing once again for specialist care, but also encouraging the local community's involvement through the CCT's widespread use of volunteers. To show the scope and feasibility of these schemes, I will use case studies. My first will be Holy Trinity Church in Goodramgate, York, a defunct 13<sup>th</sup> century church which is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. It is used as a tourist attraction, has a great volunteering base which attracts tourists and local visitors interested in the city's history, and its churchyard provides through access to shopping areas, and a quiet space for relaxation and rest. My next case study is St Cuthbert's Church, Durham, an active church with a full yard which is now under the Local Authority's care, and has been given Nature Reserve status within the city itself, providing a novel attraction for local residents and visitors to the area. In support of these case studies, I will refer to the many guides and publications available on the subject, written by Historic Scotland and English Heritage amongst others.

### **Why Churchyards?**

A great deal of work has been done in studying the psychological effects of living in urban environments. The studies undertaken for UNESCO by Foramitti and Piperek (1975) may be a little early, but it provides a fascinating insight into the mind of the city-dweller, and the potential problems which relentless urban exposure can cause (Foramitti and Piperek 1975, 46). Although I do not believe that an urban churchyard is

enough to stave off psychological collapse, the green spaces of cities ought surely to be considered an essential and beneficial addition to any urbanised area. Specifically, they mention that older buildings, natural light and a secluded space are all important requirements for a healthier urban lifestyle (Foramitti and Piperek 1975, 47). This conclusion is supported by the Department for the Environment's 1996 guide *Greening the City*, which mentions cemeteries specifically as an area which can be successfully converted into green space. The guide also suggests that such an improvement can have wider-ranging benefits than simply improving quality of life. They might also serve to develop an area economically through visitors, and provide a stronger community focal point for the local area as well. The lack of greenery and natural landscape in central London has been a concern for many years, and is part of the reason Abney Park cemetery became such a renowned arboretum and Highgate such a world-class landscape garden in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Meller 1981, 52). The connection with nature is one which provides comfort and reassurance to people with little or no contact with the countryside on a daily basis. Those visiting cemeteries in London and other large cities do so not only to visit the dead, but also to find a quiet, green space where they can escape the relentless drive of city life (Francis, Kellaheer and Neophytou 2005, 208). The Victorians were well aware that fresh air, sunlight and green areas with plants were all beneficial to the lives of those who lived in increasingly polluted and choked cities (Meller, 1981, 51). This idea is one which has taken hold in some areas, with churchyards and their inherent green areas being used for the much needed peace and quiet they provide. The churchyard is, in a way, an instant park. It is already an open space, unpaved for the most part, and often contains trees and flowering plants around the site's perimeter, especially if it is walled, as many are. The passive nature of a park or green means that it is the easiest of tasks to convert a churchyard, with only a minimum of effort in terms of the alteration of the space for this new purpose. With the additional interest of the monuments, architecture and atmosphere of a burial ground, its cultural and potentially its environmental importance, makes the churchyard an ideal candidate for conversion to park or Nature Reserve space.

### **Loudon's Suggestions**

John Loudon's life was spent in travelling the world and learning his trade as a landscaper and gardener. His was a 'classic' Victorian style, now well known to the 21<sup>st</sup> century historian. His ideas were centred on calm, elegant beauty and natural landscapes in even the most sombre of locations (Loudon 1843, 12). His book *On the Laying Out, Planting and Managing of Cemeteries* contains an extensive section on the beautifying of graveyards and cemeteries. Although his inspiration came from notable cemeteries abroad, such as those of Istanbul and Paris's Pere La Chaise, his interpretation of them was very much a British affair, and one of his main reasons for their redesign was to encourage good manners (Loudon 1843, 11). The designs he presented were filled with promenading couples, native British trees, and the book even contains an exhaustive list of suitable native species for planting. One of his many explanatory notes states that Britain deserves to have pleasant and attractive spaces for her dead, and that they should also facilitate enjoyment for the living, rather than fear and superstition (Loudon 1843, 9)

The sections which are of most interest to the matter at hand are those on the fixing in place, and relaying of monuments. A great deal of space is devoted to how memorials and monuments can be fixed in place. The major recommendations made by Loudon are that the monuments be bedded in a masonry foundation six inches deep, that the soil be allowed to settle before the stone is inserted, and that any stone which is in danger of falling over should be reinforced with non-ferrous dowelling or cleats (Loudon 1843, 29). Anyone who has taken the time to inspect a graveyard will doubtless have found lead cleats and steel rods inserted into at least one or two of the monuments therein. Unfortunately, the soft nature of lead means that these cleats often buckle, and causes even more damage to the stone they were designed to protect (Historic Scotland 2003, 9). Steel is extensively found in gravestone repairs, despite a one hundred and seventy year-old book recommending non-ferrous metal, as the rusting of steel not only discolours, but damages stones which contain such materials (Loudon, 1843, 29). The use of Loudon's work might be suggested as a key text for anyone wishing to take care of a cemetery or graveyard, or engage in repairing them, as his sound advice on this matter has been widely ignored for nearly two centuries.

Loudon also looks at how stones can be moved and replaced to create a more enjoyable open space for the public to use. His concerns are less to do with the preservation of the memorials in context, and more with not walking across graves or the inhumed deceased (Loudon 1843, 39). Though this is an admirable and relevant concern, it misses one crucial aspect of graveyard conservation I wish to address: the plight of the gravestone. Although the respect of the remains in the graveyard is paramount, coming in a close second in the chain of concern is the respect of the memorials, and this is the conservation issue I will look at most in the course of this study.

Another of Loudon's suggestions is the planting of flowers, trees and hedges in the graveyard, to allow not only beautification, but also the creation of a pleasant atmosphere, rather than the morbid, sombre environment often conjured up in the minds of Europeans when graveyards are mentioned (Loudon 1843, 12). This idea is one to be borne in mind when conserving graveyards, as plants and flowers provide much needed habitats for wildlife, but can also cause damage to monuments through the spread of root systems and lichenous growth.

This all illustrates how the graveyards of today, whether derelict, crowded, full or closed, can all be put not to a new use, but to an adaptation of their original purpose. Put simply, in Loudon's own words:

"Churchyards serve to improve morals and taste, cultivate the intellect botanically, and act as historical records." (Loudon 1843, 13).

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# How Can Phenomenological Methodologies help us understand past Landscapes?

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*'Narrative is a means of understanding and describing the world in relation to agency. It is a means of linking locales, landscape, actions, events and experiences together providing a synthesis of heterogeneous phenomena. In its simplest form it involves a story and a story-teller'* (Tilley 1994, 32).

This statement encapsulates the central interpretive methodology of phenomenological approaches in archaeology: the narrative. Strongly influenced by the development of post-processual ideas throughout the 1980s and 90s, Tilley presented 'the narrative' as an alternative to conventional methodologies focusing on the primacy of empirical data. In the same year as Tilley's (1994) publication, Gosden's (1994) *Social Being and Time* contributed to a phenomenological understanding of landscape through a consideration of the perceptual nature of the temporal framework of human action. From these beginnings, several applications of the theory were published, from Edmond's (1999) consideration of Neolithic landscapes through phenomenology to non-prehistoric case studies (e.g. Johnson 2002) to a more rigorous and methodologically confident approach in the mid-2000s (Cummings and Whittle 2004; Hamilton et al. 2006; Bender et al. 2007). Throughout the development of the theory, a series of methodological approaches have taken phenomenological interpretations beyond the subjectively constructed narrative. Perhaps unsurprisingly, phenomenology has had its share of critics, most notably Fleming (1999, 2005, 2006) who took issue with a lack of reference to the material evidence in its interpretations. Whilst many of Fleming's criticisms were valid, I will demonstrate through a consideration of the changing approaches, that phenomenological methodologies still have great potential for contributing to our understanding. Furthermore, I will consider how future methodologies might better integrate phenomenological approaches with material evidence in order to move towards a more nuanced understanding of past landscapes.

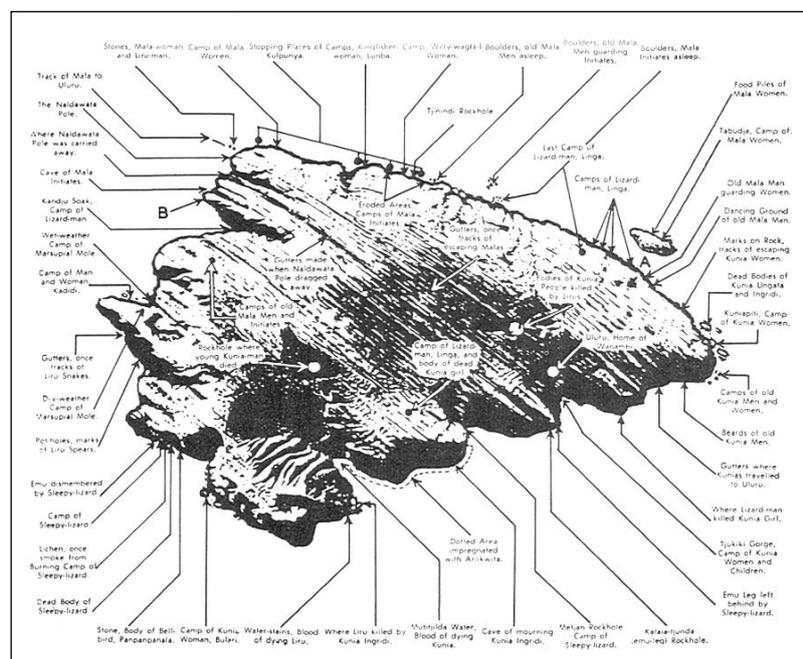
To understand phenomenological approaches in archaeology, we must first understand the basic suppositions of the form of phenomenology on which they are based, namely that of Heidegger. Heidegger's philosophy stipulates that, as social actors in the world, everything that constitutes our conscious self is intricately tied to both our social interactions and our perpetual physical environment. Thus, rather than referring to the self or subject, he uses the term 'Dasein' (literally 'being-there') to refer to the human entity (Heidegger 1962, 27).

*'The kind of Being which belongs to Dasein is rather such that, in understanding its own Being, it has a tendency to do so in terms of that entity towards which it comports itself proximally and in a way which is*

*essentially constant—in terms of the ‘world’.* (Heidegger 1962, 36).

Because our physical setting (the world) is constant, it forms the base line of all human ‘being’ and by extension knowledge, perceptions and understanding. Phenomenological approaches in archaeology, therefore attempt to understand the past through an experiential study of sites and landscapes, rather than synthesising them into units of divisible data for analysis. These approaches also take issue with an over-emphasis on social factors. Gosden’s (1994) critique of structuralism, post-structuralism and hermeneutics suggests that through a focus on the internal logics and meanings of social interaction these approaches ‘ignore the relationship of people to the world’ (Gosden 1994, 45). From the outset, phenomenological archaeology attempted to create a model of understanding which could characterise the entire human experience and would not be constrained by positivism or restrictive social models.

Maps are a mainstay of almost any study in landscape archaeology, as they graphically represent landscape features in a spatially logical manner. However, Tilley’s (1994) approach to the landscape was one focused on perceived space rather than absolute space, so he saw maps as removing ‘the operations and practices which constitute places and locales’ (Tilley 1994, 32). Instead he tried to understand the landscape by considering the location and orientation of sites in relation to each other. His approach to understanding British prehistoric landscapes entailed an application of ethnographic case studies from around the world as analogies for spatial perception. The totemic geography ascribed to the various formations of Ayers rock (Figure 1) given as a particularly rich example of a mythological landscape.



**Figure 1.** *The totemic geography of Ayers rock (after Tilley 1994, fig. 2.4).*

When applied to British prehistory, the focus is on trying to understand the visual interconnections between sites in the landscape. Tilley comments on how the megaliths of South-West Wales seem to make symbolic reference to what were named features in the landscape (Tilley 1994, 109) and how the Dorset Cursus

connects monuments in the landscape sequentially to create a 'spatial story' (Tilley 1994, 199). Whilst at times it seems highly subjective, in many ways this approach was a first step in the formation of a bridge between traditional micro-level site analysis and macro-level landscape analysis.

Following on from Tilley's research, several publications took the phenomenological method of the narrative further. Edmond's (1999) monograph *Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic* looks at a similar set of landscapes to Tilley. A central aim of the book was to capture the 'humanity and materiality' of life in the Neolithic (Edmonds 1999, ix) which Edmond saw to be lacking in the literature up to that point. His solution to this issue was to give a voice to past peoples and use this device to convey the material evidence:

' "Our first world was the forest, but before the forest there was ice. There was no colour and no time, no smoke and no tracks. The land was barren." ' (Edmond 1999, 11).

This characterisation of people of the past through narrative opened up new ways of structuring and interpreting the evidence. Subsequent work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, much of which would not identify itself with phenomenology, has frequently integrated this narrative characterisation into their methods for approaching the evidence. For example, Mithen (2003) follows John Lubbock as he visits people and landscapes throughout the Holocene, and Diamond (2005) paints vivid narratives of the 'collapse' of civilisations from the Easter islanders to the Greenland Norse. Despite its prehistoric beginnings, phenomenology soon found many more diverse applications. Johnson applied narrative approaches to investigate medieval castles in *Agency in Archaeology* (2000) and *Behind the Castle Gate* (2002). Kenilworth Castle (Figure 2) features heavily in both as an example of a complex sensory landscape.

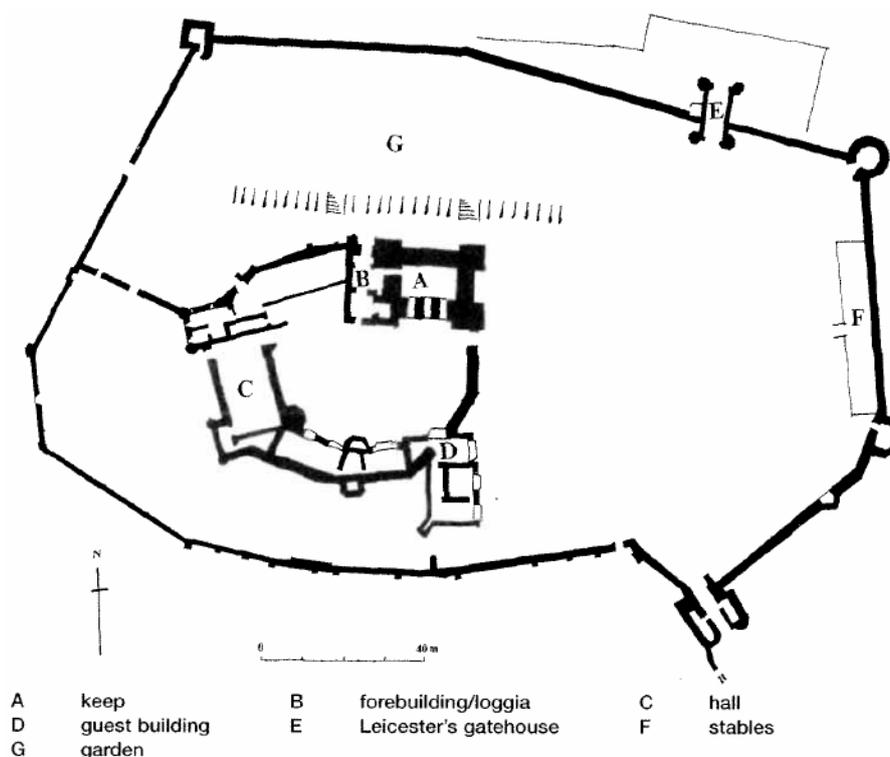
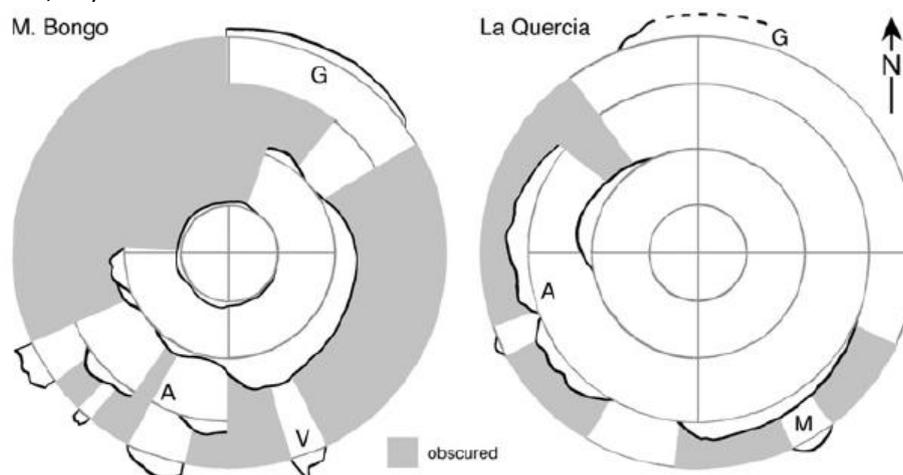


Figure 2. Plan of inner and outer courts of Kenilworth Castle (after Johnson 2000, fig. 14.4).

By utilising a combination of architectural and documentary evidence, Johnson demonstrates how the various features of the landscape fulfilled intentional effects on their beholders. For example, making use of a document recording Elizabeth I's visit in 1575, Johnson shows how certain features such as the archaic style of the gatehouse (Figure 2.E) and the vernacular styled stable block (Figure 2.F) constituted a landscape contrived to exude the values of Protestant chivalry (Johnson 2002, 157). This later period example demonstrates that with the benefit of documentary evidence, we can better appreciate the intentionality of phenomena in the landscape. Furthermore, it serves to strengthen the credibility of phenomenological methodologies in periods with less contextual information.

Since the work of Tilley (1994) and Gosden (1994), phenomenological archaeologies have come a long way and recent fieldwork shows a dedication to more rigorous methodologies. Cummings and Whittle (2004) brought a series of new approaches to the megaliths of South Wales. The landscapes were first recorded panoramically through circular sketch diagrams and photography then plotted using GIS, which allowed the production viewshed maps (Cummings and Whittle 2004, 17). Thus, on-site observations were not only reproduced in a somewhat standardised format but they could, to some degree, be tested against geographical data. In order to demonstrate the intentionality of the site locations, a number of 'control' points around the sites were analysed using GIS. This technique served to reinforce interpretations in some cases – but not consistently, as both the accuracy of the software and access to some locations proved problematic (Cummings and Whittle 2004, 21). While the authors acknowledge the limitations of their methodology: 'GIS simply cannot, at present, replicate the experience of being in the landscape' (Cummings and Whittle 2004, 22) but it was clearly an invaluable step in the right direction.

Hamilton et al. (2006) conducted a phenomenological survey of Neolithic enclosures on the Tavoliere Plain, Italy. The project marked a refinement of rigorous methodologies as well as introducing new approaches. Circular view diagrams are presented in a more regularized fashion, facilitating cross-comparison (Figure 3). The diagrams explicitly represent the landscape as it is perceived and have no relation to absolute distances (Hamilton et al. 2006, 42).



**Figure 3.** Circular view for two Neolithic enclosures on Tavoliere Plain, Italy (adapted after Hamilton et al. 2006, fig. 4).

The transmission of sight and sound at an intra-site level was tested through the placement of flags and people at site features and perimeters. The participants recorded the inter-visibility of major and minor gestures (e.g. arm waves and hand waves) and the inter-audibility of different sounds (e.g. speech, shouts, bells) across the enclosures (Hamilton et al. 2006, 46 – 9). For a wider conceptualization of the landscape, an adaptation of Higgs' (1972) site catchment analysis was applied, in which traditional observations such as soil type and maximum travel distance were made, alongside perceptual observations of site visibility which were described in terms of 'left, centre and right' rather than cardinal points (Hamilton et al. 2006, 55 – 58). Through this method and those mentioned above, the authors demonstrated an appreciation of the subjectivist criticisms levelled against phenomenology. By integrating phenomenological methods into a more traditional mode of investigation, Hamilton et al. set an example for a new, more rigorous phenomenology of landscape.

The critique of phenomenology has developed in tandem with the changing methodological approaches of this relatively new theoretical framework. Fleming (1999) identified some serious failings in Tilley's (1994) approach. The recording of directional axis and visibility/invisibility of monuments is criticised as highly subjective and open to a broad degree of interpretation (Fleming 1999, 120). Furthermore, Tilley is criticised for failing to consider the effect of ephemeral features in the landscape, such as trees, and his ethnographically based interpretations are criticised as 'a limited selection of the possibilities...unconvincing in terms of the archaeological record' (Fleming 1999, 123). Fleming's second critique came in 2005 following Cumming's and Whittle's (2004) publication. The subjectivity of site inter-visibility and the graphic recording of such instances are both identified as impossible to replicate in the field (Fleming 2005, 922). Moreover, Fleming attacks the narrative approach more directly, calling it 'a post-modern critique and interpretive writing' which fails to be 'investigative' (Fleming 1999, 931). I believe this is where Fleming goes too far in his criticisms, demoting phenomenological interpretations below the level of others. Phenomenology is nothing if not investigative, but unlike traditional methodologies its investigations are rooted in experiential practice rather than analytical empiricism. Fleming's point is elaborated in his publication of the following year in which he criticizes the post-processual 'rejection of long-accepted modes of fieldwork' (Fleming 2006, 267). This criticism is true of the earlier works but demonstrates a lack of appreciation for the development and refinement of methodologies evident in the work of Cummings and Whittle (2004), which led to the inception of new approaches as presented by Hamilton et al. (2006).

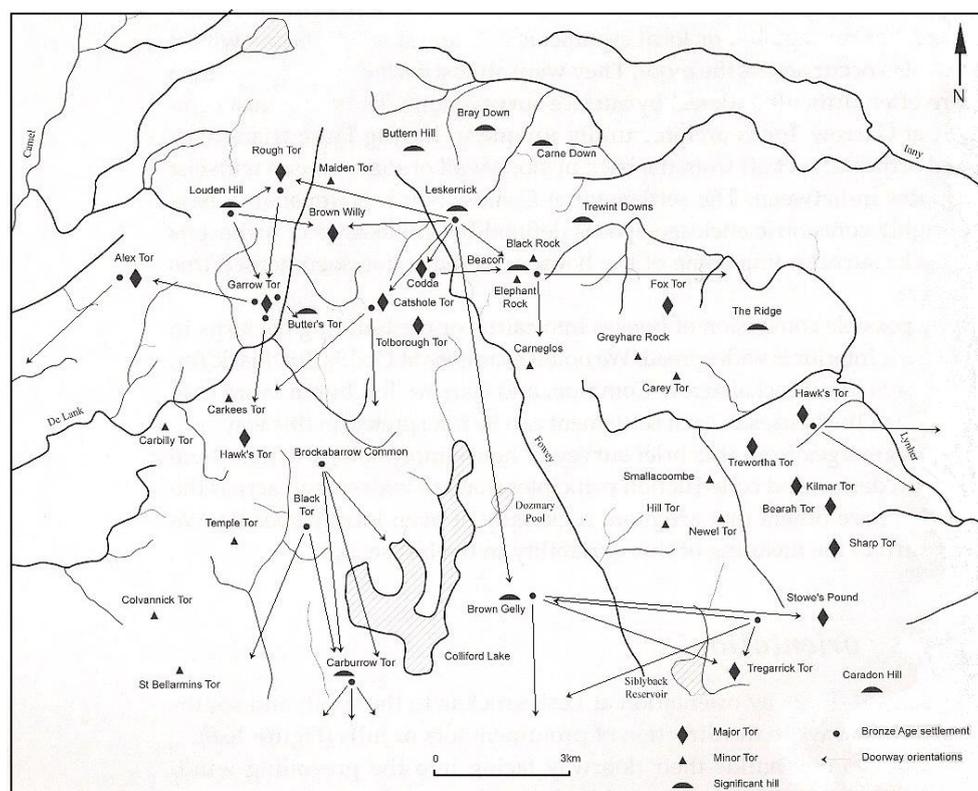
Brück's (2005) critique raised a more difficult epistemological issue to resolve. Referring back to the philosophical foundation of the approach, she questions whether notions of knowing and being would have been comparably perceived by past people and phenomenological researchers (Brück 2005, 45). Simply put, we cannot ever know if this is the case, but in many ways this critique of methodological epistemologies could be applied to any archaeological framework. We cannot know how past modes of being translated to sensory perception, but through a study of the sensory nature of landscapes we can at least come close to a working analogy. What both critiques highlight are the ongoing issues inherent in the phenomenological

approach, but when viewed alongside the developing methodologies, they can be seen as constructive contributors to a developing field of enquiry.

Following Tilley (1994), the Leskernick project (1995-1999) investigated the phenomenology of a landscape around a highland Bronze Age settlement on Bodmin Moor and resulted in a series of publications (Bender et al. 1997; Tilley 1996; Tilley et al. 2000). The aims of this project were fivefold:

- An archaeological and surface survey
- A geological and surface survey
- Installation of artworks
- An anthropological study of the research
- To experiment with new modes of written and visual landscape representation (Bender et al. 1997)

The publications produced during the course of the project were guilty of many of the methodological criticisms (Fleming 1999; 2005). However, the recent publication of *Stone Worlds* (Bender et al. 2007) readdressed the research conducted in the 1990s in the context of subsequent methodological developments. Interpretations of the past landscape were reworked to take into account environmental evidence from pollen and charcoal sampling (Bender et al. 2007, 48). Graphic representation of interpretations, such as doorway orientation (Figure 4), are also reworked and presented in a more comprehensible format.



**Figure 4.** Map of Neolithic and Bronze Age house orientations on Bodmin Moor (adapted after Bender et al. 2007, fig 16:8).

Central to this publication is the reflexive attitude it takes to reinterpretation:

*'It is our job to be as rigorous as possible in defining and assembling the evidence, as honest as possible in admitting when it goes against the grain of prior interpretation, and as open as possible to rethinking and reconceptualising interpretation, narrative and evidence.'* (Bender et al. 2007, 26).

Whilst the text itself is idiosyncratic (being interspersed with obscure diary quotes, poems and photographs of colourful, cling-film wrapped stones) the integration of more grounded methodologies demonstrates the changes that phenomenological practice in archaeology underwent in the preceding decade. For all their eccentricities, proponents of the phenomenological approach are clearly dedicated to adapting their methods following well-founded criticisms.

In 2009 Barrett and Ko published an article entitled '*A phenomenology of landscape: A crisis in British landscape archaeology*,' suggesting that Fleming's (1999, 2005, 2006) criticisms have barely been addressed (Barrett and Ko 2009, 276). I would argue that work such as Johnson's (2002) integration of documentary sources and Hamilton's (2006) refined methodologies have provided far more contextualized interpretations grounded in the material evidence. However, Barrett and Ko's central purpose is not to pick up where Fleming left off, but rather to suggest a return to Heidegger and a reformation of the theoretical framework on which phenomenological methodologies are based (Barrett and Ko 2009, 283). Thus for Barrett, the 'crisis' is not one of phenomenology vs. traditional methods, but is an issue of erroneous philosophical application. I suggest that this shift of criticism from outright dismissal to constructive theorization marks phenomenological archaeology's coming of age. In a recent paper Johnson (2012, 279-280) identified three new approaches for the continued improvement of phenomenology in landscape archaeology:

- Development of case studies with greater contextual information, (e.g. the medieval period)
- Further use of GIS and other technologies to provide an evidential base
- Integration of palaeoenvironmental data with experiential models

These areas are clear research directions that are set within a growing body of phenomenological and phenomenologically-influenced work not only in the field of archaeology, but in all areas of the social sciences.

Phenomenology has been applied to subjects as diverse as education (Dall'Alba 2009), religion (Crowe 2008) and human rights (Parekh 2008). Evidently phenomenology has a wide range of applications beyond the scope of archaeology. Ultimately, the development of a secure phenomenological model for studying landscape archaeology could facilitate new avenues for inter-disciplinary research, which otherwise may not have been possible. Having weathered the storm of its critics, phenomenology is developing into a diverse area of research which has the potential to provide fresh insights into the lives of past people and the landscape they experienced. Though it may always have its critics, this should not be seen as a failing.

As archaeologists, all our interpretations are provisional regardless of the 'scientific' base on which they are grounded. Ongoing debates over the applicability of theoretical models is part of the dialectic nature of our discipline, resulting in the continual generation of new questions and ideas that bring us closer to a more nuanced understanding of the past.

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# Excavations at Songo Mnara in Tanzania

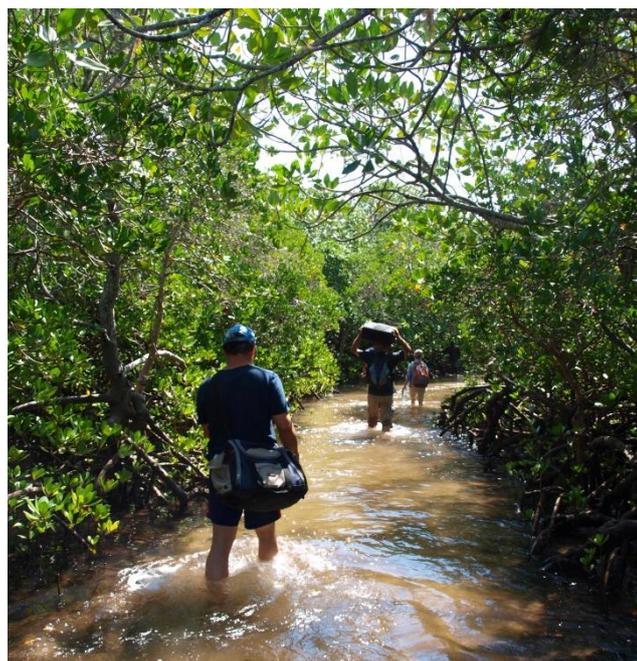
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*We slept in tents beneath palm trees, we showered with buckets, we ate fish straight from the sea and we waded through the mangroves. We were a long way from home. And, we would not have it any other way! The third field season at Songo Mnara, Tanzania has recently come to a close, and 20 odd students and archaeologists left the East African coast one by one after six weeks of excavation on a remote island.*

Led by Jeffrey Fleisher from Rice University and Stephanie Wynne-Jones from the University of York, the project at Songo Mnara has been running for five years, with the dig starting in 2009. Its aim is to increase our understanding of Swahili urban towns and the space and life within them (Songo Mnara, n.d.). Five students from the University of York, including myself, were lucky enough to take part in this year's field season, along with other students from the U.S. and Tanzania. Songo Mnara lies about an hour's boat ride from Kilwa Masoko on the mainland, and the more well-known island site Kilwa Kisiwani. We were dropped off on the beach by a small fishing village, before we headed through the often flooded mangroves to our camp (Figure 1). Our tents were pitched within view of the site, and together we made a little camping village dotted around a cement house functioning as a storage room and eating quarters. Women from the local villages, whom we referred to as "the Mamas", would arrive every day before dawn to cook our three daily meals. These would often consist of fish, squid, chicken, rice, beans and *chapatis*. To my own great joy our breakfasts were often home-made *mandazi*, which are deep-fried sweet rolls that taste uncannily like doughnuts. Good for our morale, not so good for our arteries.



**Figure 1.** *Flooded Mangroves in Songo Mnara* (Image Copyright: Henriette Rødland).

The site, a Swahili stone town dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, is adjacent to the ruins of old stone houses and mosques still standing nearby. The town was only occupied for a period of 200 years, which is relatively short compared to many other Swahili sites (Songo Mnara, n.d.). Taking our trowels, hoes and buckets, we headed for the trenches just after dawn, in order to take advantage of the precious cool hours of the morning. Three trenches were opened in the first few days; two in the open area outside the houses, and one inside one of the greater houses in the town. Subsequently, more trenches were opened inside this house to explore the various rooms and spaces within it. My first three weeks were spent in the open area, in the so-called daub trenches. These were two two-by-ten trenches aimed at exploring features from the geophysical survey from the previous seasons, they were believed to be wattle and daub houses. And indeed they were! As we dug down we exposed not only the red earth associated with daub features, but also pieces of hardened daub indicating that the structure had burned. We also unearthed rich material culture such as beads, imported pottery, iron and coins (lots of them!), showing that wattle and daub houses were not necessarily houses for the poor, which tends to be a common belief. The finds from both daub trenches led us to expand them, revealing the full extent of each daub house (Figure 2). Just to the south east, excavations within the stone house revealed similar finds, although we saw less of them due to the nature of the houses; things would not so easily get lost on a solid lime plaster floor. The material finds and the impressive architecture suggests that the town was wealthy and prosperous, and engaged in trade with both local and remote people.



**Figure 2.** *Excavation in the daub trenches* (Image Copyright: Henriette Rødland).

Although much of the work has been focused on excavations, various other methods of research have been used. Shovel test pits were dug throughout the site, as a means of understanding what lay in the open areas outside the town. Along with the geophysical surveys undertaken by Kate Welham and Charlene Steele, both of the University of Bournemouth, a broader image of the site had started to appear, showing habitation beyond the confines of the stone houses. The work of Matthew Pawlowicz showed that this was true for the entire island, as he and his team of local workers and students dug test pits across Songo Mnara, and found various evidence of occupation. Perhaps future research will grow to encompass not just the stone town but the rest of the island as well, as there is still much to explore. Research has also been carried out at a much smaller level. Federica Sulas from the University of Cambridge, was in charge of taking geochemical samples from the trenches across the site, which she will analyse in order to understand more about the ecological and environmental features on the site. Sarah Walshaw deals with slightly bigger samples, analysing macro-botanical remains from floatation and hopefully gaining knowledge about what was grown and eaten by the people of the town. Through each field season more and more is understood about the town and the people living within (and outside) it, but there are still many questions to answer; what was the function of the daub houses? Why did they burn? And why was the town abandoned after only two hundred years?

Our weeks in Tanzania were full of hard work, scorching sun and various insects, but also of great experiences, interesting people and learning. It allowed us to take our studies from theory to practice, and gave insight into the world of archaeology beyond university. Through working alongside local people we also got to know the wonderful humour, stamina and language of the Swahili people.

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# Myths of the Spanish Conquest: the league of Extraordinary Gentlemen

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*How could a “handful of Spanish” conquer and submit an empire? Were Columbus and Cortés exceptional men? In this article, the stereotypes surrounding key figures of the Conquest will be challenged.*

A famous sentence states that “a lie told often enough becomes truth”. We could easily say that the same lie, if repeated often enough and throughout time, may eventually become ‘history’. Such process is particularly evident in the case of the Spanish *conquista* of South America. In standard history texts and in the common perception, Columbus and the conquistadores (particularly Cortés and Pizarro) are represented as men of exceptional wits and uncommon strategic skills, who, in the company of a handful of brave men, conquered and defeated powerful empires. In truth, as Restall proves in his book *Seven Myths Of The Spanish Conquest* (2003), nothing is further from reality. In this short article, we will analyse the common perception of the conquistadores as exceptional personalities and we will explain how such understandings became history.

Sometimes men make history, and other times men happen to be in the right place at the right time. It is the case of Cortés and Pizarro: two *conquistadores* who are often presented as endowed with the geniality of great strategists such as Caesar or Napoleon. Their *successes* in *conquering* empires at the command of a *handful of brave men* have been commonly considered as tautological truths even by famous scholars like Todorov (1984) and Jared Diamond (2005). In truth, taking such elements for granted may become yet another way of indirectly supporting Western superiority even in the case of those who attribute the successes of the Spanish mostly to their sophisticated technology (Diamond 2005) or to their readiness in exploiting the military weaknesses of the natives (Todorov 1984).

## Columbus

One of the best examples of historical idealisation concerns the figure of Columbus. In the previous centuries, the Italian explorer has been characterized in a number of different ways, ranging from the brave hero to the misunderstood intellectual. Nevertheless, there are two elements which must be taken into consideration when analysing this enigmatic character: the content of the letters he wrote to the Spanish Crown and the perception of Columbus as a visionary and illuminated man.

Most of what we know about Columbus’s personality and ideas derives from what he documented about himself and his travels. In such documents, Columbus tends to oscillate between two tendencies: the idealisation and admiration of his discoveries and a veiled self-commiseration revealing his perception of

himself as an unappreciated intellectual. The letters he wrote to the Spanish monarchs during his travels were aimed at maintaining the funding of the Crown: the “wonders” of the New World are therefore presented in excessively colourful terms to convince the Spanish rulers of the success of their investments. An emblematic example is represented by Columbus’s description of his interactions with natives. In the letters addressed to the King he would emphasize the great deal of information acquired from the locals, but then in his personal notes we can often read how disheartening it was not to understand a word of what the “Indians” were saying.

Secondly, the idealization of Columbus as a visionary genius derives from the fact of his being firmly convinced of the roundness of the earth, making us see him as opposed to the darkness of ignorance embodied mostly by the church. Nevertheless, as Restall (2003) argues, by the time Columbus planned his travels most educated people took the roundness of the earth for granted. This idealisation is therefore a fabrication of history, derived from the inevitable study of the past with the wisdom of hindsight. Like the Conquest itself, Columbus’s “enterprise” must be therefore set in the context of mercantile rivalry and continual exploration rather than separated out as the unique deed of a misunderstood visionary man.

### **Cortés and Pizarro**

As Restall (2003) demonstrates, brave though Cortés and Pizarro may have been, they simply followed the patterns which had been laid down by dozens of conquistadores before them. The myth of the exceptional men emerged mostly from the survival of *probanza de merito* (“proofs of merit”) in Spanish archives. These were letters and documents which conquistadores would send to the Spanish crown to illustrate their successes in order to obtain titles, lands and privileges. It is therefore obvious that, due to the incredible amount of competition, the main concern of a conquistador was to have the ability to present himself and his actions as genial, inspired and unique in order to obtain the monarch’s approval. What was therefore a common pattern (looking for an interpreter, gaining knowledge of the territory from the natives, exploiting local rivalries) was presented to the Crown as tokens of the unprecedented spirit of initiative of the individual. Because of the undeniable bias of the *probanzas*, Restall (2003) calls for the necessity of inserting the figures of the conquistadores into their actual conquest, reminding us that exceptional courage (not everybody was or is willing to march through unexplored lands) did not make Cortés or Pizarro different from other conquistadores; they simply happened to be the ones who bumped into the most powerful empires.

This short article is an introduction to the fabrication of history resulting from the uncritical use of evidence containing an undeniable and interested bias. The persistence of such documents and the almost total absence of a native voice have greatly contributed to the creation of the stereotype of the extraordinary men, thus furthering to some degree the assumption of Western superiority.

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