Double-spout bottle, Peru (ca. 200 B.C. — A.D. 600)

"Masterpieces of the Peabody Museum" — a preview essay

Nazca ceramic bottle by Geoffrey W. Conrad

The Nazca culture of Peru's south coast is famous for its boldly painted pottery. Nazca ceramic artists used a relatively wide variety of colors, and the double-spout bottle shown here bears no less than seven: white, cream, gray, rusty orange, maroon, brown, and rusty orange.

The Nazca style is characterized by a succession of "Monumental," "Prolificous," and "Disjunctive" subphases. This particular vessel dates to a time when the change from Monumental to Prolificous was taking place. In this transitional period, which occurred about midway through Nazca history, figures that had been given more naturalistic treatment during the earlier Monumental subphase became increasingly abstracted, embellished, and mythicized.

The principal motif of the bottle, depicted twice in polychrome painting on the vessel's upper body, is a creature known as the Horrible Bird. This grotesque monster has the head, beak, body, tail, and wing of a bird, its legs and single arm are human. Five writhing serpents extend outward from the body. The wing and tail feathers end in simplified faces, those of the wing have long, snakelike tongues. The monster's only hand holds a trophy bead, is very common in Nazca pottery from the body.

Nazca pottery is one of the most complicated Peruvian pottery styles, a fact that has had both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, the complex nature of the Nazca ceramic art has attracted considerable attention and has enabled archaeologists to trace the evolution of the style in great detail. The problem is that such stylistic studies constitute nearly all of the research that has been done on Nazca culture. Other aspects have been badly neglected.

As a result, it is difficult to place this bottle in a broader context. The Horrible Bird is a mythical being, and the vessel's meaning is undoubtedly religious. Beyond those simple statements there is little to say. Was Nazca pottery mainly concerned with shamanistic visions and experiences, as seems to be the case with roughly contemporaneous Moche ceramics of the north coast? Was the Nazca supernatural world, as the frequency of monsters and trophy heads in the pottery style might suggest, basically hostile to humanity, something to be feared and appeased? For the present, these and many other questions about Nazca culture must remain unanswered.

Joins emeritus ranks

Professor Whiting's studies include: Becoming a Kwoma: Teaching and Learning in a New Guinea Tribe; Child Training and Personality; Six Cultures, and Children of Six Cultures.

We are here to honor our respected and beloved Professor John Wesley Mayhew Whiting. We all know that John Whiting is really an oyster fishermen, gardener, sailor, poker player, and golfer from Tisbury Great Pond on Martha's Vineyard, and that his major hobby has been anthropology!

Johnny is descended from Thomas Mayhew, an English merchant who founded the first European settlement on Martha's Vineyard in 1644. John was born in Chilmark and left the Vineyard for the Mainland in 1914 to prepare at Phillips Academy, Andover for Yale.

When he graduated from Yale in 1915, he accepted his first job at a small prep school in westernMassachusetts where he coached wrestling and taught history. The coaching went well, but he taught history in a novel way. He began with The New York Times and worked back in time. At the end of the year his students flunked the history exam on their college boards and Johnny was fired!

John returned to Yale to undertake graduate work in anthropology. It was back at Yale that he met a fellow graduate student, the bright and lovely Beatrice Hamilton Blyth, who became his life-long partner in anthropological research.

Harvard captured him in 1949, and he has been with us ever since as a member of the faculty of the School of Education, the Department of Social Relations, and the Department of Anthropology.

For the recent field research has been with the Kikuyu in Kenya where he maintains a magnificent field station in the highlands above Nairobi.

John Whiting was toasted, "roasted," praised, presented with a silver tray and given a package of tomato seeds (!) at a dinner in his honor attended by colleagues and friends at the Harvard Club of Boston on May 18.

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Publish or Perish!
Where's Masterpieces?
P.M.A. Tour of Persia
Peabody exhibition news
Hugh Hencken honored

Dr. Hugh O'Neill Hencken is Director and Chairman Emeritus of the American School of Prehistoric Research (the Museum's Department of Old World Archaeology) and Curator Emeritus of European Archaeology. He was presented with a volume of essays, Ancient Europe and the Mediterranean, prepared in his honor by friends, former students, and colleagues, at the Faculty Club on March 30.

A prolific scholar, Dr. Hencken's latest book has just been published. Mecklenburg Collection. Part II: The Iron Age Cemetery of Magdalenska gora in Slovenia presents the results of the excavations done by the Duchess of Mecklenburg in 1907-1913. In its introduction, Dr. Hencken discusses the nature of the Duchess's excavation techniques and the complicated, but fascinating history of the Mecklenburg Collection.

On the occasion of the publication of this volume it seems appropriate to quote a recent statement made on the fiftieth anniversary of Dr. Hencken's first project: "Many deserved honors and distinctions have been bestowed upon Hugh O'Neill Hencken both in his own land and abroad in the world of active European prehistory, for by his works, and their example, he has cemented that bond of friendship and solidarity that unites the archaeologists of our many nations. We of the Cornwall Archaelogical Society are proud of all that began amongst us in those distant days when the twentieth century was still young."

Aztec Eagle awarded

Prof. Evon Z. Vogt was decorated with the Order of the Aztec Eagle by the Mexican Government in recognition of twenty years of anthropological work in the Mexican central highlands of Chiapas. The Honorable Santiago Roel, Minister of Foreign Affairs, made the presentation on January 5, 1978 in Mexico City. The decoration is the highest award presented to foreigners by the Republic of Mexico. The ceremony was attended by Octavio Paz, Dr. Manuel Velasco Suarez, former Governor of Chiapas, and ten members of Prof. Vogt's family.

Prof. Vogt's field research has been primarily concerned with the processes of social and cultural change among the Indian communities of Chiapas. His work has furthered an understanding of the past and made predictions about the future of these modern descendants of the ancient Maya.

The Peabody Museum has recently published Prof. Vogt's Bibliography of the Harvard Chiapas Project, 1937-1977 - The First Twenty Years. Twenty-seven books and monographs, twenty-one dissertations, thirty-three undergraduate honors theses, two novels, and a film have been produced by the 138 people who have taken part in this remarkable project!

Postscripts...

Dr. George Way Harley was a medical missionary in Liberia for more than thirty years. His extraordinary collection of 100 full-size and numerous small masks is now in the Peabody Museum. In April, a group of six scholars who have done field work among the peoples surrounding the Manto where Harley worked, attended a conference at the Peabody organized by Prof. Marie Jeanne Adams. A publication of the papers read at the conference will include a catalogue of the entire Harley collection.

On leave, and working in the New Territories of Hong Kong, Asst. Prof. Judith Strauch writes, "I'm getting fascinating data on ethnicity (Cantonese/Hakka), traditional land tenure patterns still in practice, and relations between original settlers (lineages going back 500 to 1000 years) and 'outsiders' (immigrants from the mainland who have been here some five to thirty years.')

Students of Prof. Lambert-Karlovsky again took part (Feb. - May) in the five-year comprehensive survey program in Saudi Arabia. Initiated by Lambert-Karlovsky for a brief time, by mid-season the expedition had recorded more than 100 previously unknown sites (12 sites were discovered last year). Concentrating in the central desert region, about 150 kilometers southeast of the Arabian capital of Riyadh, the sites range in date from the Monumen
tarian (50,000 B.C.), to the early Islamic period (A.D. 1000). Of particular interest has been the discovery of numerous Hellenistic sites - indicating the hitherto unsuspected importance of Arabia within the Hellenistic world.

Everyman's Brew

The following resolution was presented to J.O. Brew, Peabody Professor of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Emeritus, and a former Director of the Peabody Museum:

WHEREAS, having concluded its seventy-seventh meeting at Lyndon B. Johnson State Historical Park, Texas, after a tour of the great Southwest, the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments feels it would be remiss to adjourn without acknowledging the outstanding service of Dr. J.O. Brew.

WHEREAS, Dr. Brew's presence is testimony that he survived his twenty-fifth year of service after a field trip under conditions that can only be found in the spectacular but treacherous terrain of the great American Southwest, to wit:

- At Chaco Canyon National Monument, New Mexico, Dr. Brew endured an exhausting twelve-hour, 700 mile trip to that archaeological crown jewel of the National Park System without so much as suflfing his straw hat.
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- At Chaco Canyon National Monument, New Mexico, Dr. Brew endured an exhausting twelve-hour, 700 mile trip to that archaeological crown jewel of the National Park System without so much as suflfing his straw hat.
- At the Southwest Regional Office, he per­served through a cocktail party in the stupe­

- At Bandelier National Monument, he expe­

- In the deep interior of Big Thicket National Preserve, where the burning sting of an insect threatened to immobilize his hand, he treated himself by ingeniously using the cold conduit of the charter bus air conditioning system to stop the swelling.
- At Padre Island National Seashore he suffered a bumpy, tortuous safari down the beach, under adverse conditions of wind, sun, and a cowboy 6 by 6 truck, all of which threatened to separate him from his straw hat, his diggers, his wnt, and his good humor - without success,
- And finally, at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Site where the magnificent beauty of the land and the warmth of the people forced him to again renew the supply of Kodachrome for his ever active camera, to the distress of his wallet and credit.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this session closes honoring Dr. Brew's silver anniversary on the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments.

Signed: Edgar A. Toppin, Secretary