

The Collaborative for Cultural Heritage and Museum Practices (CHAMP),
with support from the Center for Global Studies, announces a CONFERENCE

*Pseudo-Science, Erasure, and Exclusion:
Why the Past Is Important in the Present*

Friday, April 10
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

First Floor Reading Room of the Levis Faculty Center

Nations around the world are looking to their past as a source of national identity and competitive branding in the global marketplace. Yet recent history as well as current events reveal significant instances of deliberate misinterpretation and outright destruction of the past. The past is important in the present – for our representations of it may have dramatic social, political, economic and religious outcomes for majority and minority populations, sometimes with wide-reaching global significance.

morning session – 9 a.m. to noon

Helaine Silverman (University of Illinois)

The Tibet Museum: Representations and Erasures in an “Autonomous Region” of China

Timothy Landry (University of Illinois)

The Slave Route: Touring the Inaccurate and Experiencing the Authentic in Bénin, West Africa

Hans Henrich Hock (University of Illinois)

Hindu Nationalism, Originalism, and the Redefinition of Indian Prehistory

Lance Larkin (University of Illinois)

Artistic Vision, Absent Voices: Excluding Zimbabwean Sculptors from Global Art Markets

afternoon session – 1:30-4 p.m.

John Bohannon (Science Magazine and Visiting Scholar at Harvard University)

Bosnia’s Valley of the Pyramids: Nationalism and Pseudo-Science in the Balkans

Lena Mortensen (University of Toronto)

The Mysterious Maya and Modern Central American Nationhood

Michele Hanks (University of Illinois)

Ghost Tourism, Paranormal Investigation, and the Struggle to Define the British National Past

Keynote Address – 4-5 p.m.

Alexei Vranich (Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA)

Pseudo-science, the Popular Past, and Contemporary Politics

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

John Bohannon

Bosnia's Valley of the Pyramids: Nationalism and Pseudo-Science in the Balkans

More than a decade after civil war and genocide ripped apart Yugoslavia, Bosnians are still digging up unidentified bodies and unexploded shells. But for those digging into the large hill near the Bosnian city of Visoko, this is not a time of despair but rather mystical wonder and hope. According to Bosnian entrepreneur Semir Osmanagic, this is not a hill but rather a 12,000 year-old pyramid, built by a lost civilization. Osmanagic is regarded by many in Bosnia as a national hero for the pride he has given this poor country and because Visoko's conversion to a tourist mecca is feeding a war-torn local economy. Almost all archaeologists and scientists – including many in Bosnia – reject identification of the structure as anything but a natural hill, but Osmanagic and his followers persist. This is a fascinating case of the tensions between well-meaning nationalism and highly problematical pseudo-science that can damage the reputation of Bosnia's archaeological community.

After obtaining his Ph.D. in molecular biology (Oxon, 2002), Dr. Bohannon left the laboratory to write full-time. He is a contributing correspondent for Science Magazine and also writes a regular online column, "The Gonzo Scientist." He is currently a visiting scholar at Harvard University in the Program in Ethics and Health. Bohannon has won various awards for his science and creative writing (including plays). He served a research assistant to the scientific advisor of the famous TV series, "The X-Files."

Michele Hanks

Ghost Tourism, Paranormal Investigation and the Struggle to Define the British National Past

In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in all things paranormal across the United Kingdom. Ghost tour operators and paranormal investigating groups host overnight vigils or investigations in a range of reportedly haunted buildings, often museums and heritage sites, across Britain. These tours and investigations directly aim to phenomenologically encounter ghosts or paranormal activity, and, in doing so, generate insights into the British national past. This paper examines the politics of knowing and understanding the past in contemporary Britain. In the course of staging overnight tours and investigations, tour operators and investigators enter into direct contact with museum curators and heritage officials. These interactions often engender epistemological conflicts regarding the correct or ideal way to access and understand the past. While one might anticipate that the contents of the past conjured by ghost tour operators, tourists, and paranormal investigators form the crux of the conflict, debates about modes of knowing the past, and, indeed, the very nature of science constitute the core of the conflict. Ultimately, these investigations and tours result in public debates regarding the nature of popular scientific authority and expertise. Drawing on my fieldwork with paranormal investigators and tour operators, I examine the on-going contestations between heritage officials and paranormal investigators over authority, expertise, and power to define the popular past.

Michele Hanks is a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She completed a master's degree in anthropology at the University of Iowa. She is currently conducting her dissertation fieldwork with ghost hunting groups and ghost tour producers in Northern England. Her dissertation focuses on the ways in which paranormal, or ghostly, knowledge and evidence are produced and circulated in England.

Hans Henrich Hock

Hindu Nationalism, Originalism, and the Redefinition of Indian Prehistory

The claim of modern scholarship that the speakers of Sanskrit/Indo-Aryan came to India from the outside has been questioned since at least the time of Vivekananda (1897). From the early days of Hindutva (the modern militant Hindu-nationalist movement), the claim has been labeled a western colonialist-missionary invention, intended to divide "Aryans" from "Dravidians." Hindutva proponents instead claim that all adherents of indigenous Indian religions are Aryans and that their languages are

descended from Sanskrit, which moreover is said to be the ancestor of all non-Indian Indo-European languages. Believers of other religions, especially of Islam, are considered not truly Indian and therefore at best entitled to second-class citizenship. A horrible consequence of this ideology is found in the violent 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat. To justify their interpretation of Indian prehistory, Hindu nationalists engage in a massive effort to discredit modern scholarship as biased, and to provide supposed evidence against its claims. In this presentation I focus on one aspect of this endeavor — alternative interpretations of the linguistic evidence, and I show that these violate basic principles of scholarly methodology.

Professor Emeritus Hans Henrich Hock has taught Linguistics and Sanskrit at the University of Illinois since 1967 and has been an invited visiting professor at various other universities, including as a Fulbright Scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. He also has been an invited guest speaker in numerous international venues. His primary research focuses on historical and comparative linguistics, comparative and diachronic syntax of Indo-European languages (especially Sanskrit/Indo-Aryan, Germanic, Latin), Sanskrit linguistics (synchronic and diachronic, syntax, phonology, language contact, sociolinguistics; Vedic, modern spoken Sanskrit), convergence phenomena, clitics, prosody, and the phonology/syntax interface. He has been Associate Director of the Program in South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Illinois, as well as Director (since 1996) of the Linguistic Institute of the Linguistic Society of America. In addition to journal articles and edited volumes and special issues, he is the author of Principles of Historical Linguistics (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986, 1991) and Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship: An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996, with Brian D. Joseph, junior author). He has had a long-term interest in issues of identity in India and ethnic conflict in Europe, from the Nazi era through the present.

Timothy Landry

The Slave Route: Touring the Inaccurate and Experiencing the Authentic in Bénin, West Africa
In Ouidah, the port city of Bénin (West Africa), the memory of the transatlantic slave trade is very much alive. Contemporary Bénin is a post-Communist country that is struggling to establish new identities based on selective appropriations, re-memberings, and re-creations of the past. Thus, in an effort to attract tourism to the country the current democratic government (with the help of UNESCO) constructed, for tourists, *The Slave Route of Ouidah*. With the memory of the transatlantic slave trade still strong in Ouidah, each time a person actively participates in or reproduces the script created by *The Slave Route*, local memories of the slave trade are reinforced and remembered. While several historians have argued that some of the “facts” given by *The Slave Route* are made-up fantasies, local people continue to believe them to be true. However, regardless of these historical “inaccuracies” one cannot deny that UNESCO and the local government carry the necessary symbolic capital to enable them to mobilize the past, almost without effort, as they create and promote the narrative of their choosing. I examine the scripts that are generated by *The Slave Route* project in Bénin while presenting ethnographic evidence of a cultural heritage “site” of international interest that is simultaneously inaccurate and authentic.

Timothy Landry is a doctoral candidate in sociocultural anthropology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign with ethnographic interests in West Africa and the African diasporas. From 2001-2004 he conducted research in Haiti where he explored spirit possession and the roles that the spirits played in the socialization of children. Since 2004 he has become increasingly interested in transatlantic dialogues that exist between practitioners of Haitian Vodou and Béninois Vodun. Since starting his project in Bénin in 2006, he has become fascinated with the interplays that exist between international tourists and Vodun (voodoo) practitioners in Bénin (West Africa). More broadly, he aims to contribute to efforts that enrich understanding of, and tolerance for, religions that may seem “different” from those we are accustomed to seeing. His other research interests include: interpretive theory, the anthropology of memory, sensuous scholarship, religion, ritual, witchcraft, tourism, transnationalism and cultural heritage.

Lance Larkin

Artistic Vision, Absent Voices: Excluding Zimbabwean Sculptors from Global Art Markets

The Zimbabwean stone sculpture movement began in the 1960s and has been marketed as a continuation of “traditional” carving as practiced by the Shona people, the dominant ethnic group in Zimbabwe, whose ancestors created the renowned 15th century settlement of Great Zimbabwe. Early European patrons of the contemporary art form presented the sculptures as an indigenous tradition with ancient roots – even inventing traditions and ascribing the work to a single ethnicity. Many individual sculptors are comfortable with this association, often overtly linking their works to notions of traditional Shona culture, by giving titles to their sculptures such as “Witchdoctor” and “Spirit Ancestor.” At the same time, some contemporary Zimbabwean artists adeptly use Western art markets to dispel notions of “dark Africa,” and travel internationally, deploying tools of modernity to further their careers as artists, not Zimbabwean or African artists, but artists. In this paper I explain how early patrons positioned the artwork as an avant-garde form of “primitivist” art. Forty years later, although artists have more direct contact with buyers, the framework of “tradition” presents an obstacle to sculptors who seek to have their works displayed in Western galleries. These sculptors resent when they are marginalized through categorization as part of the Zimbabwean “traditional stone sculpture movement,” yet many are forced to negotiate the modern/traditional dichotomy in order to gain remuneration. Currently, artists approach a crossroads within international art markets – do they sculpt “traditional” artworks to gain cash, or travel down the more difficult path of the unique modernist artist in global art markets?

Lance Larkin has studied the Zimbabwe stone sculpture movement since 2001 and is currently completing his doctoral research on this subject at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Originally a graphic designer, his interests in the political economy of the arts also includes a project on U.S. counter-culture arts.

Lena Mortensen

The Mysterious Maya and Modern Central American Nationhood

The ancient Maya have achieved international popularity as both an archaeological subject and a tourism object through complex historical processes of discovery, research, and international fame-making that have linked "Maya" with "mystery" and transformed this identity into a valuable commodity. In recent years, Honduras, like many of its neighbors, has aggressively targeted archaeological parks for development with the double goal of increasing economic development and strengthening national identity based on a celebrated past. Faith and investment in this strategy stems from the ever-expanding market for tourism of the ancient Maya, a globally famous archaeological culture whose major cities have been reconstituted in the present as international destinations. In Honduras, the ancient Maya are most notably represented by the archaeological site of Copán, the country's only cultural entry on the UNESCO World Heritage List and Honduras' link to the lucrative tourist consortium, the "Mundo Maya," which highlights cultural, natural and archaeological resources of its five member nations. Although the ancient Maya make up only a small part of Honduras' rich cultural history, Copán's high profile, and consequent ties to the Mundo Maya, has resulted in the disproportionate promotion of Maya history for both national and international audiences. This historical "Maya" bias has serious consequences for the present, especially for contemporary Maya and other indigenous groups who must constantly negotiate their identity and social power in relation to the public celebration of their archaeological ancestors.

Lena Mortensen is a cultural anthropologist teaching in the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Toronto-Scarborough. Her research centers on the construction of heritage and identity, archaeological tourism, and the relationships between archaeological practice and the production and circulation of discourses about the past. She is involved in ongoing ethnographic research at the archaeological park of Copán and elsewhere in Honduras, which looks at the intersections of tourism, nationalism, archaeology, and identity-based movements. She is co-editor of the volume Ethnographies and Archaeologies: Iterations of the Past (forthcoming, University Press of Florida) and is co-chair of

the Working Group on Cultural Tourism in a multidisciplinary research project on "Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage." Before coming to UT-S, Dr. Mortensen was the Assistant Director of the Center for Heritage Resource Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Helaine Silverman

The Tibet Museum: Representations and Erasures in an "Autonomous Region" of China

The Tibet Museum in Lhasa opened in 1999. Housed in a beautiful new building that invokes traditional Tibetan architecture, it contains artistic treasures and ethnographic masterpieces of the region. The Tibet Museum not only is an outstanding cultural display, it diachronically presents China's case for incorporation of Tibet by China. This paper is a critical examination of the museum script in the context of historical Tibet-China relations over many centuries and the discourse of current Chinese politics and policies. New museum displays in Beijing about Tibet are also considered. This case study illustrates the important role of museums in manifold contestations of history and cultural heritage.

Helaine Silverman is Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She holds additional appointments in the Department of Landscape Architecture, Program in Art History, Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism, and the Campus Honors Program. She is the Co-Director of UIUC's Collaborative for Cultural Heritage and Museum Practices. After twenty years of archaeological fieldwork on the south coast of Peru, she has spent the past ten years studying museums and cultural heritage worldwide. She is interested in the production of national and local identities around appropriations and representations of the past as these intersect with cultural memory, tourism, globalization, urbanism and built environment, and nation branding. She recently finished a project on "the new Inca city of Cuzco, Peru" and hopes to conduct a comparative project in Asia. Among her recent publications in the areas of CHAMP's concern are Archaeological Site Museums in Latin America (University Press of Florida, 2006), "Mayor Daniel Estrada and the Plaza de Armas of Cuzco, Peru" (Heritage Management 1(2):181-218 [2008]), "Cultural Resource Management and Heritage Stewardship in Peru" (CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship 3(2):57-72 [2006]), "Embodied Heritage, Identity Politics and Tourism" (Anthropology and Humanism 30(2):141-155 [2005]), and "Touring Ancient Times" (American Anthropologist 104(3):881-902 [2002]). She is editor of Left Coast Press's interdisciplinary book series called "Heritage, Tourism and Community." Dr. Silverman is an International Member of the International Council on Monuments and Sites-ICOMOS, an Expert Member of the ICOMOS-International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM), and an Associate Member of the ICOMOS-International Cultural Tourism Committee.

Alexei Vranich

Pseudo-science, the Popular Past, and Contemporary Politics

The near lack of a historical record and centuries of intentional destruction of archaeological sites challenges the ability of the New World to construct empirically-based narratives founded exclusively on material remains. This paucity of data also provides an ideal environment in which metaphysical claims flourish and challenge empirically-based ideas. Of all the major sites in the Americas, it is the highland Andean site of Tiwanaku that has been a magnet for the most extreme ideas on the nature of indigenous Andean society. Global tourism, an indigenous revival movement, and a volatile political and economic climate have increased the number of stakeholders vying to control this high profile and potentially lucrative site. This presentation reviews the historical reasons why Tiwanaku has become such a draw for radical ideas and the effect that this environment has on the preservation of the site and future research. Ultimately, I address the question of the role that archaeology plays in this high-stakes arena of competing agendas and I offer relevant comparisons.

Dr. Alexei Vranich received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania (1999) and is currently a Research Associate at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology/UCLA. With multiple grants from the National Science Foundation and other agencies he has conducted fieldwork at the major Bolivian site of Tiwanaku and is now conducting research in Peru. He has a special interest in developing innovative approaches for the use of digital media in archaeology. Dr. Vranich has been a Fellow at Dumbarton

Oaks and an instructor at UCLA and the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to various published papers, he is the co-editor of Visions of Tiwanaku (forthcoming) and of Advances in Titicaca Basin Archaeology II (forthcoming).