

 NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC



HISTORY

ON THE SILK ROADS

TRADE IN THE
ANCIENT WORLD

**JUST A LOVE
AFFAIR?**
THE POLITICS OF
CLEOPATRA AND
MARK ANTONY

**ST. PAUL THE
APOSTLE**
FROM ENEMY TO
MISSIONARY

**PERSIA'S TOLERANT
CONQUEROR**
KING CYRUS
THE GREAT



PLUS:

The Great Smog of London
Pollution That Paralyzed a City

SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and purchased it for our **Sedona Turquoise Collection**. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique, one-of-a-kind matrix surrounded in Bali metalwork. You could drop over \$1,200 on a turquoise pendant, or you

could secure 26 carats of genuine Arizona turquoise for **just \$99**.

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. If you aren't completely happy with your purchase, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

The supply of Arizona turquoise is limited, don't miss your chance to own the Southwest's brilliant blue treasure. Call today!

Jewelry Specifications:

• *Arizona turquoise* • *Silver-finished settings*

Sedona Turquoise Collection

A. Pendant (26 cts)	\$299*	\$99	+s&p	Save \$200
B. 18" Bali Naga woven sterling silver chain		\$149	+s&p	
C. 1 1/2" Earrings (10 ctw)	\$299*	\$99	+s&p	Save \$200
Complete Set**	\$747*	\$249	+s&p	Save \$498

**Complete set includes pendant, chain and earrings.

Call now and mention the offer code to receive your collection.

1-800-333-2045

Offer Code STC944-09

You must use the offer code to get our special price.

*Special price only for customers using the offer code versus the price on Stauer.com without your offer code.

Stauer®

14091 Southcross Drive W., Dept. STC944-09,
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 www.stauer.com



Rating of A+

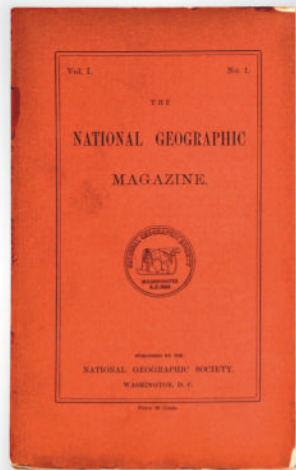
B.

*26 carats
of genuine
Arizona turquoise
ONLY \$99*

A.

Necklace
enlarged
to show
luxurious
color

Stauer... Afford the Extraordinary.®



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION

On a cold January evening in 1888,

33 scientists, scholars, and explorers met at the exclusive Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C. They discussed the idea of founding a society of geography. Several months later, for October, they issued the first *National Geographic* magazine (pictured above).

This month we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of *National Geographic History*. With a decade of publications behind us, we aim to carry on the tradition set forth for “a society for the increase and diffusion of geographical knowledge.” In 10 years we’ve covered a lot of ground. We’ve traveled down rivers and ancient roads to examine empires and civilizations, crossed mountains and oceans with explorers and colonizers, probed for answers to unsolved mysteries, marveled at works of art, and uplifted forgotten stories.

In this issue we profile a woman called “the greatest fossilist the world ever knew,” reexamine the love affair between Cleopatra and Mark Antony, discover the many routes that made the Silk Roads, and look back at the time bustling London was brought to a halt. We hope you enjoy the issue. Thank you for being here and exploring the past, and all that’s in it, with us.

Bridget E. Hamilton

Bridget E. Hamilton, Editorial Director

Grab Your Piece of America's Silver Legacy

**99.9% Fine
Silver Bars**

Actual size is
30.6 x 50.4 mm

Fill Your Vault with Morgan Silver Bars

Not only are these hefty bars one full Troy ounce of real, .999 precious silver, they're also beautiful, featuring the crisp image of a Morgan Silver Dollar struck onto the surface. That collectible image adds interest and makes these Silver Bars even more desirable. Minted in the U.S.A. from shimmering American silver, these one-ounce 99.9% fine silver bars are a great alternative to one-ounce silver coins or rounds. Plus, they offer great savings compared to other bullion options like one-ounce sovereign silver coins. Take advantage of our special offer for new customers only and save \$10.00 off our regular prices.

Morgan Silver Dollars Are Among the Most Iconic Coins in U.S. History

What makes them iconic? The Morgan Silver Dollar is the legendary coin that built the Wild West. It exemplifies the American spirit like few other coins, and was created using silver mined from the famous Comstock Lode in Nevada. In fact, when travelers approached the mountains around the boomtown of Virginia City, Nevada in the 1850s, they were startled to see the hills shining in the sunlight like a mirror. A mirage caused by weary eyes?

No, rather the effect came from tiny flecks of silver glinting in the sun.

A Special Way for You to Stock Up on Precious Silver

While no one can predict the future value of silver in an uncertain economy, many Americans are rushing to get their hands on as much silver as possible, putting it away for themselves and their loved ones. You'll enjoy owning these Silver Bars. They're tangible. They feel good when you hold them, You'll relish the design and thinking about all it represents. These Morgan Design One-Ounce Bars make appreciated gifts for birthdays, anniversaries and graduations, creating a legacy sure to be cherished for a lifetime.

Order More and SAVE

You can save \$10.00 off our regular price when you buy now. There is a limit of 25 Bars per customer, which means with this special offer, you can save up to \$250.

Hurry. Secure Yours Now!

Call right now to secure your .999 fine silver Morgan Design One-Ounce Silver Bars. You'll be glad you did.



One-Ounce Silver Morgan Design Bar
\$49.95 ea.

Special offer - \$39.95 ea. ^{+s/h} **BUY MORE
SAVE MORE!**

SAVE \$10 - \$250

Limit of 25 bars per customer

**Free Morgan Silver Dollar
with every order over \$299
(A \$59.95 value!)**



FREE SHIPPING over \$99!

Limited time only. Product total over \$99 before taxes (if any). Standard domestic shipping only. Not valid on previous purchases.

For fastest service call today toll-free

1-888-201-7144

Offer Code MSB283-05

Please mention this code when you call.

SPECIAL CALL-IN ONLY OFFER

GOVMINT®
THE BEST SOURCE FOR COINS WORLDWIDE

GovMint • 1300 Corporate Center Curve, Dept. MSB283-05, Eagan, MN 55121

GovMint® is a brand of Asset Marketing Services, LLC (AMS). AMS is a retail distributor of coin and currency issues and is not affiliated with the U.S. government. The collectible coin market is unregulated, highly speculative and involves risk. Prices, facts, figures and populations deemed accurate as of the date of publication but may change significantly over time. All purchases are expressly conditioned upon your acceptance of our Terms and Conditions (www.amsi-corp.com/terms-conditions); to decline, return your purchase pursuant to our 30 day Return Policy (www.amsi-corp.com/product-return-policy). ©2024 Asset Marketing Services, LLC.

DARKNESS AT NOON

A bus makes its way through thick daytime smog on December 6, 1952, at the height of London's Great Smog, an extreme pollution event that killed thousands of Londoners.

UPPA/AURIMAGES

Features

20 Cyrus, the Model of Kingship

Although Greeks and Jews saw the Persian Empire as tyrannical, they deeply admired its founder. Classical and biblical sources hail Cyrus the Great as a just king who fostered religious tolerance among his people.

34 Cleopatra and Mark Antony

One of the most celebrated love stories was also a great political alliance. Tying her fortunes to Antony, Cleopatra's skilled maneuvering brought glory to Egypt, and she outwitted her Roman masters until the tragic end.

50 Spinning the Silk Roads

Flourishing under China's Tang dynasty, the overland and maritime routes linking China, India, Arabia, and Europe carried goods, ideas, and faiths for centuries, until they were limited by the rise of Ottoman power.

68 In the Footsteps of St. Paul

The tentmaker from Tarsus was once the scourge of Christians. After his conversion en route to Damascus, Paul logged thousands of miles on his missionary journeys, after which he took the new faith to Rome.

82 The Great Smog

As capital of the world's first industrial nation, London was used to pollution. Then, in December 1952, the Great Smog descended, paralyzing the city, killing thousands of Londoners, and spurring lawmakers to clear the air.

Departments

6 NEWS

A rare trove of golden coins has lifted the lid on life on the troubled frontier between Greece and Persia in the fifth century B.C. Who buried them, and why?

10 PROFILES

Mary Anning's flair for finding and reassembling dinosaur skeletons on England's Jurassic Coast was never fully recognized by scientists. Today, the fossil hunter of Lyme Regis is finally getting her due.

14 DAILY LIFE

From Samoa to New Zealand, tattoos both intrigued and appalled colonizers, who tried to stamp out the practice. Against all odds, the intricate designs have survived and are now enjoying a renaissance.

18 ANIMAL HISTORIES

Ten mummified crocodiles found in southern Egypt yield grisly insights into animal sacrifices in the fifth century B.C.—and how the unfortunate reptiles met their end.

90 DISCOVERIES

In the mid-1800s, mounds in Iraq were identified as the Sumerian city of Eridu, a metropolis so old that it existed before the Flood.



Persian drinking vessel, fifth century B.C., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
ALBUM



Camel riders travel through the Nubra Valley, India, on the route that once linked southern Asia to Rome along the Silk Roads.

TEERAYUT CHAISARN/GETTY IMAGES



HISTORY

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR BRIDGET E. HAMILTON

Deputy Editor JULIUS PURCELL

Editor TIARA BEATTY

Editorial Consultants JOSEP MARIA CASALS (Managing Editor, *Historia*)

INAKI DE LA FUENTE (Art Director, *Historia*)

VICTOR LLORET BLACKBURN (Editorial Consultant and Contributor)

Design Editor VERÓNICA MARCARIAN

Photography Editor MERITXELL CASANOVAS

Cartography Editor CHRISTINE FELLEZ

Production Editor ALEXANDRA HARTNETT

Contributors CAROLINE BRAUN, SANDRA DANE, EMILY SHENK FLORY, ELENI GAGE, CINDY LEITNER, SARAH PRESANT-COLLINS, JENNIFER VILAGA

PUBLISHER JOHN MACKETHAN

Advertising ROB BYRNES

Consumer Marketing and Planning LAUREN BOYER, ANDREW DIAMOND, KATHERINE M. MILLER, ROCCO RUGGIERI, SUSAN SHAW, JANET ZAVREL

Production Services JAMES ANDERSON, REBEKAH A. CAIN, JENNIFER HOFF, KRISTIN M. SEMENIUK

Customer Service SCOTT ARONSON, JORDAN HELLMUTH, TRACY PELT

FOR SUBSCRIPTION QUESTIONS, VISIT www.nghservice.com OR CALL 1-800-647-5463.

TO SUBSCRIBE ONLINE, VISIT www.nationalgeographic.com/history/history-magazine.

FOR CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS, VISIT natgeo.com/corrections.

WHILE WE DO NOT ACCEPT UNSOLICITED MATERIALS, WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS AT history@natgeo.com.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

PRESIDENT, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CONTENT COURTENEY MONROE

EVP & GENERAL MANAGER DAVID E. MILLER

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

VICE PRESIDENT, SOCIAL MEDIA TULANI ANDRÉ

VICE PRESIDENT, INTEGRATED PLANNING & OPERATIONS MARCELO GALDIERI

VICE PRESIDENT, GROWTH STRATEGY & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT JULIANNE GALVIN

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & EDITORIAL DIRECTOR NATHAN LUMP

DIRECTOR, PRINT OPERATIONS JOHN MACKETHAN

COPYRIGHT © 2025 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC AND YELLOW BORDER DESIGN ARE TRADEMARKS OF THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, USED UNDER LICENSE. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

RBA

PRESIDENT RICARDO RODRIGO

CORPORATE MANAGING DIRECTOR JOAN BORRELL

MANAGING DIRECTOR ÁUREA DÍAZ

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR SUSANA GÓMEZ MARCULETA

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR MÓNICA ARTIGAS

MARKETING DIRECTOR BERTA CASTELLET

CREATIVE DIRECTOR JORDINA SALVANY

National Geographic History (ISSN 2380-3878) is published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December by National Geographic Partners, LLC, 1145 17th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. Volume 11, Number 1. \$39 per year for U.S. delivery. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. **SUBSCRIBER:** If the Postal Service alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within two years. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *National Geographic History*, P.O. Box 37545, Boone, IA, 50037. In Canada, agreement number 1000010298, return undeliverable Canadian addresses to *National Geographic History*, P.O. Box 819 STN Main, Markham, ON L3P 9Z9.



Printed on 100% PEFC-Certified Paper-PEFC/29-31-58
Please recycle.



Explore the Columbia & Snake Rivers with the Leader in U.S. Cruising

Follow Lewis and Clark's epic 19th-century expedition along the Columbia and Snake Rivers aboard the newest ship in the region. Enjoy unique shore excursions, scenic landscapes, and talented onboard experts who bring history to life.

Your Columbia & Snake Rivers Cruise Includes:

- ★ 9-day/8-night exploration
- ★ 8 ports of call with guided excursion options at each
- ★ All onboard meals and our signature evening cocktail hour
- ★ Full enrichment package with guest speakers and nightly entertainment
- ★ All tips and gratuities



Call today

800-894-8574

to request a
free Cruise Guide

Small Ship Cruising Done Perfectly®



HOUSE OF THE HOARD

Archaeological workers at Notion, on Turkey's Aegean coast, excavate the house under which the fifth-century B.C. coin hoard was buried.

NOTION ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT/
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



NOTION is located in the ancient Greek region of Ionia, on the Aegean coast of western Turkey. Poised between Europe and Asia, with a tradition of shifting cultural identities, the well-preserved site has much left to explore.

NGM MAPS

THE GRECO-PERSIAN CLASH

Stunning Gold Coins Reveal Glimpse of a Turbulent Age

Life on the troubled frontier between Athens and Persia is reflected in a rare coin haul. Who buried the coins, and why were they never retrieved?

What was it like to be sandwiched between two clashing powers during some of the most consequential wars in classical antiquity? A sensational stash of coins found in Turkey is furnishing some answers.

Led by Christopher Ratté, professor of ancient Mediterranean archaeology at the

University of Michigan, a team was excavating a house on the site of the harbor city of Notion, in western Turkey, when they struck gold: They found a pot containing Persian coins, all depicting a kneeling archer, buried years before the house was built.

Artifacts found near the hoard create a picture of daily life in the city. Objects in the

same layer as the hoard date the coins to the late fifth century B.C., when Notion lay in the buffer zone between Athens and Persia. Although full-scale Greco-Persian wars had ended by then, both continued to be enemies.

Context Is Key

The ruins of Notion lie on a hilltop overlooking Turkey's



CONQUERED BY THE GOLDEN ARCHER

STAMPED WITH a distinctive kneeling archer design, the darics found in the Notion hoard were minted from gold of very pure quality, likely in nearby Sardis, the capital of Lydia. Located by the Pactolus River, Sardis was rich in gold deposits, a crucial resource for the wealthy King Croesus before he was defeated and conquered by Persia in the sixth century B.C. The name "daric" could be derived from Darius I, Persian king until 486 B.C., or from *dari-*, the root of the Old Persian word for gold. The figure of the archer is in a kneeling position, holding a bow in his left hand and a spear in his right. Used to pay Persian mercenaries, one daric was equal to a month's wage.

Golden daric found in the hoard at Notion, western Turkey, from the fifth century B.C.

NOTION ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT/
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Aegean coast. Perched on the frontier between Asia and Europe, citizens of Notion in the fifth century B.C. split into opposing factions: pro-Persian and pro-Athenian.

The gold coin hoard found by Ratté's team comprises Persian darics minted under the Achaemenid Empire, or first Persian Empire, whose territory extended from Libya to the Indus River Valley

from the late sixth century B.C. until Alexander the Great's conquest in 330 B.C. Emblazoned with the distinctive kneeling archer motif, darics were used to pay pro-Persian mercenaries.

"Not only is it very unusual to find a hoard of coins, especially gold coins, in an archaeological excavation, it is also extremely rare to make such a valuable find

in a setting which gives us so much historical context," Ratté told *History*.

Persian daric coins are usually discovered by farmers, looters, or construction workers, who take them without recording their historical context. Researchers were surprised the valuable hoard had not been found and taken long ago. The paucity of standing monuments may have made Notion an unattractive target for looters.

Violent Times

Placing a date on the coins has enabled the team to speculate on the hoard's background story. "The fact that the coins

were never retrieved points to a dramatic event," Ratté explained. In the late fifth century B.C. Athens was embroiled in war with neighboring Sparta, but the threat from its old foe, Persia, still loomed to the east. According to Greek historian Thucydides, a dramatic episode took place in Notion that laid bare the conflicting loyalties of Notion's inhabitants.

Notion had been Persian until 479 B.C., when it was liberated from Persian rule by Athens and its allies. Sometime between 430 and 427 B.C., Persian sympathizers occupied a part of Notion with the help of

Objects found near the coin hoard help build a picture of daily life in this harbor city.

A red vessel from Lydia likely contained perfume.

NOTION ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT/UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN





ARCHAEOLOGISTS WORK on the ruins of the *heroon* (a shrine dedicated to ancient heroes, used to commemorate their accomplishments) at Notion. The ruins have been dated to the Hellenistic period following Alexander the Great. Divided into two rooms, the structure features a subterranean crypt. NOTION ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT/UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Greek mercenaries, threatening Athenian control over the city-state. In response, the Athenian general Paches attacked and killed a troop of pro-Persian mercenaries. He later expelled the Persian sympathizers from the city, and Athenian control of

Notion was bolstered. This could be the reason the gold Persian

coins were deposited, perhaps by a loyalist of the Persian cause who never returned to retrieve them.

The team, Ratté said, can speculate about possible scenarios surrounding a find that “illuminates the precarious character of life on this frontier zone . . . But we will never be able to reconstruct the precise details.”

Persian mercenaries were certainly crucial to Persian

power in the region, and the primary use of daric coins was to pay such soldiers. The coins could have been the stash of a mercenary commander for his payroll or the savings of a veteran soldier. However, there is also the possibility they belonged to a prominent citizen unconnected with any military role.

Beyond Notion

Soon after their discovery, the coins were housed at Ephesus Archaeological Museum. The ongoing excavations at Notion, which started in 2022, will delve deeper into the archaeological context of the hoard, and the coins will be submitted for further study

to understand their wider function and significance.

The find has historical implications beyond Notion. Persian darics have long been studied by researchers, but dating them has been a challenge, as their design changed very little over the centuries.

The fact that a date has been placed on the Notion set is a significant step in understanding the chronology of Persian coinage. Having established so much detail on the circumstances of the Notion find, historians will be able to better refine the timeline of these glittering objects that became so emblematic of Persian power.

— Anna Thorpe

Mercenaries played a key role in the Persian army and were paid in darics.

Persian soldier in a bas-relief, circa sixth- to fifth-century B.C., Persepolis

ALAMY/CORDON PRESS



LIVING IN THE BUFFER ZONE

THE CITY-STATE OF NOTION was famed in antiquity for its military harbor. From the seventh century B.C. it was eclipsed by neighboring Colophon, but following the latter's fall to Persia in the sixth century B.C., Notion flourished in the orbit of Athens. Stout fortification walls were built following Alexander the Great's conquests. The University of Michigan team is focusing

ALL: NOTION ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT/UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

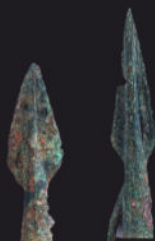
on residential life at Notion. The hoard of Persian daric coins was buried in the courtyard of a late fifth-century B.C. house, the walls of which are shown in purple in the plan below. Over the ruins of this house, a later house was built, dating to the Hellenistic period (after the time of Alexander the Great). That house's walls are shown on the plan in yellow.

TWO HOUSES

occupied this site at different times. Objects found buried near the coin hoard also date from different periods.



1 DARIC COINS from the fifth century B.C. were found buried in a pot in the courtyard of the older house. Its walls are marked in purple.



2 BRONZE ARROWHEADS date to the period before the conquests of Alexander the Great.



3 FIGURINE HEADS made of terra-cotta date to the period after Alexander the Great.



4 A COIN WITH HOMER'S head, from nearby Colophon, dates to the first century B.C.

Mary Anning: The Lady Who Built Dinosaurs

A fossil hunter since childhood on England's Jurassic Coast, Anning's skills in reassembling dinosaur skeletons won her fame but earned little recognition from scientists.

Jurassic's Greatest Fossil Hunter

1811

As a child, Mary Anning uncovers a complete ichthyosaur skeleton with her brother, Joseph, in Lyme Regis, England.

1823

On the Jurassic Coast of southern England, Anning discovers the first complete plesiosaur, known briefly as the sea dragon.

1824

Anning realizes a group of hollow-seeming fossils are in fact coprolites, fossilized feces containing remnants of digested creatures.

1826

Despite opening Anning's Fossil Depot, she remains poor. A lithograph of Lyme Regis is later sold to benefit Anning and her family.

1847

Anning dies of breast cancer at age 47. Three years later, her local church installs a stained glass window in her memory.

When Scottish geologist Roderick Murchison arrived in Lyme Regis, England, in September 1825, he knew exactly where to go on his hunt for important fossils. As he walked down a beach in the wake of drenching rain, he found who he was looking for: 26-year-old Mary Anning. "I soon discovered her with her dog, hammer & basket," he later wrote. "Her genius in grouping the dislocated bones of any one of the [dinosaurs] is astonishing," Murchison observed. He had just met one of the most important figures in early geology and paleontology: a woman whose class and gender made her a most unlikely fossil expert.

On the Coast

Born in 1799 to a cabinetmaker and his wife, Anning was one of 10 children in a working-class family. At the time, Lyme Regis was a celebrated resort town, and locals like the Annings mined their home's natural resources to supplement their income.

From a young age, Anning accompanied her father

and brother as they combed Lyme Regis's fossil-filled beaches in search of curiosities to sell to well-off tourists.

Lyme Regis's coast was once at the bottom of a vast tropical sea. During the Jurassic period, between about 199.6 and 145.5 million years ago, now extinct creatures swam in the waters near Lyme Regis—and when they died, their carcasses got stuck in the ooze at the bottom of the sea. As geologic events took their course, the region developed large clay and shale cliffs that eventually began eroding, exposing fossils that Anning quickly learned how to identify, clean, and sell.

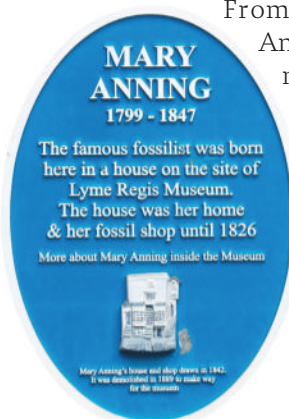
At the time, paleontology and geology were still emerging sciences dominated by leisured upper-class men. During Anning's lifetime, these scientists began to realize that some of the fossils represented extinct animals.

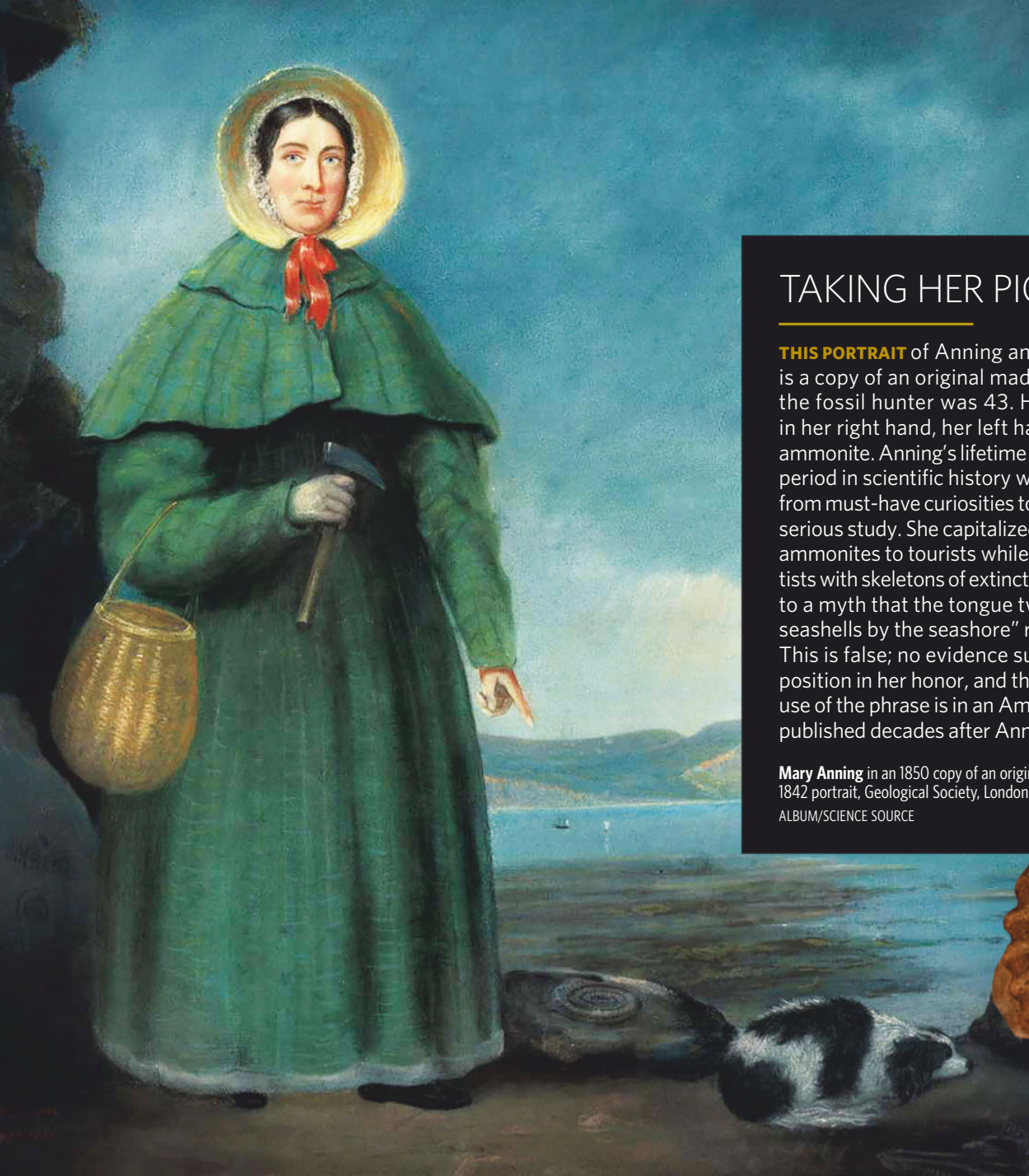
Early Discoveries

Before she was a teenager, Anning had already discovered an intact ichthyosaur skeleton. (The head was found by her brother, Joseph.) Initially thought to be a crocodile, the specimen gained international acclaim after William

Mary Anning's social class and gender made her a most unlikely fossil expert.

Blue plaques are erected in the United Kingdom to identify historic landmarks, including the houses and birthplaces of notable figures. ALAMY/CORDON PRESS





TAKING HER PICK

THIS PORTRAIT of Anning and her dog, Tray, is a copy of an original made in 1842, when the fossil hunter was 43. Holding her pick in her right hand, her left hand indicates an ammonite. Anning's lifetime straddled an odd period in scientific history when fossils went from must-have curiosities to items worthy of serious study. She capitalized on both, selling ammonites to tourists while providing scientists with skeletons of extinct animals. This led to a myth that the tongue twister "She sells seashells by the seashore" refers to Anning. This is false; no evidence supports its composition in her honor, and the earliest known use of the phrase is in an American magazine published decades after Anning's death.

Mary Anning in an 1850 copy of an original 1842 portrait, Geological Society, London
ALBUM/SCIENCE SOURCE



An ammonite
found on the
shoreline near
Lyme Regis,
England

ALAMY/CORDON PRESS

Bullock, a collector and museum owner, displayed it to patrons. The artifact eventually ended up in the British Museum, and collectors spread the word about Anning's knack for unearthing incredible finds.

Anning was an astute fossil hunter, says Paul Davis, geology curator of the Lyme Regis Museum: "What set Mary apart was her appreciation for the bigger picture."

She eventually opened her own fossil shop, which soon became a haven for collectors. Fossil hunting was dirty,

dangerous work, but Anning, driven by financial need and her own curiosity, defied the gendered expectations of her wealthier customers.

"Mary would have been absolutely caked in mud," says Davis. "She'd have been lugging big boulders off the beach . . . whereas the more genteel ladies would only have taken an afternoon ramble down the beach." Once Anning dug out fossils, she'd take them back to her shop, where she would spend hundreds of hours preparing them for display and sale.

Though almost entirely self-taught, Anning consulted with scientists who were interested in her finds. Through her connections, she obtained the latest scientific papers. She even dissected and drew animals to learn more about their anatomy. Anning often advised the scientific luminaries who made the pilgrimage to her shop in search of groundbreaking finds.

Making Waves

Anning's fossils created sensations in scientific circles, from a complete and



PREHISTORIC CLIFFS

The rocks of the Jurassic Coast near Lyme Regis were created during the Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous periods. The exposed strata of rock crumble onto the beach, revealing hidden fossils.

ALBUM

controversial plesiosaur so spectacular that it was briefly considered a fake to a variety of ichthyosaurs and fossilized fish. She also discovered that coprolites, a type of fossil once thought of as stone, were actually fossilized feces containing bones and remnants of other extinct creatures preserved through digestion.

But Anning's gender and social class barred her from formal participation in the scientific community and membership in its all-male societies. She never got the fame or wealth many of her male counterparts gained from the work she enabled, and ongoing money problems fostered some bitterness in her life.

"According to her these men of

learning have sucked her brains, and made a great deal by publishing works, of which she furnished the contents, while she derived none of the advantages," a friend wrote about Anning in 1831. After Anning was swindled out of her life savings, British geologists raised money for her, even obtaining an annual annuity for her work from the government. Henry Thomas De la Beche, director of what is now the British Geological Survey, sold prints of fossils she discovered and gave her the proceeds.

Anning's discoveries were presented to the Geological Society—albeit through the mouth of one of its male members. "That was huge—almost unique to my knowledge," says Davis. William Buckland's paper cited her discovery of coprolites: "Miss Anning informs me . . . she has found them within the ribs or near the pelvis of almost every perfect skeleton of

ENSHRINED ON THE COAST

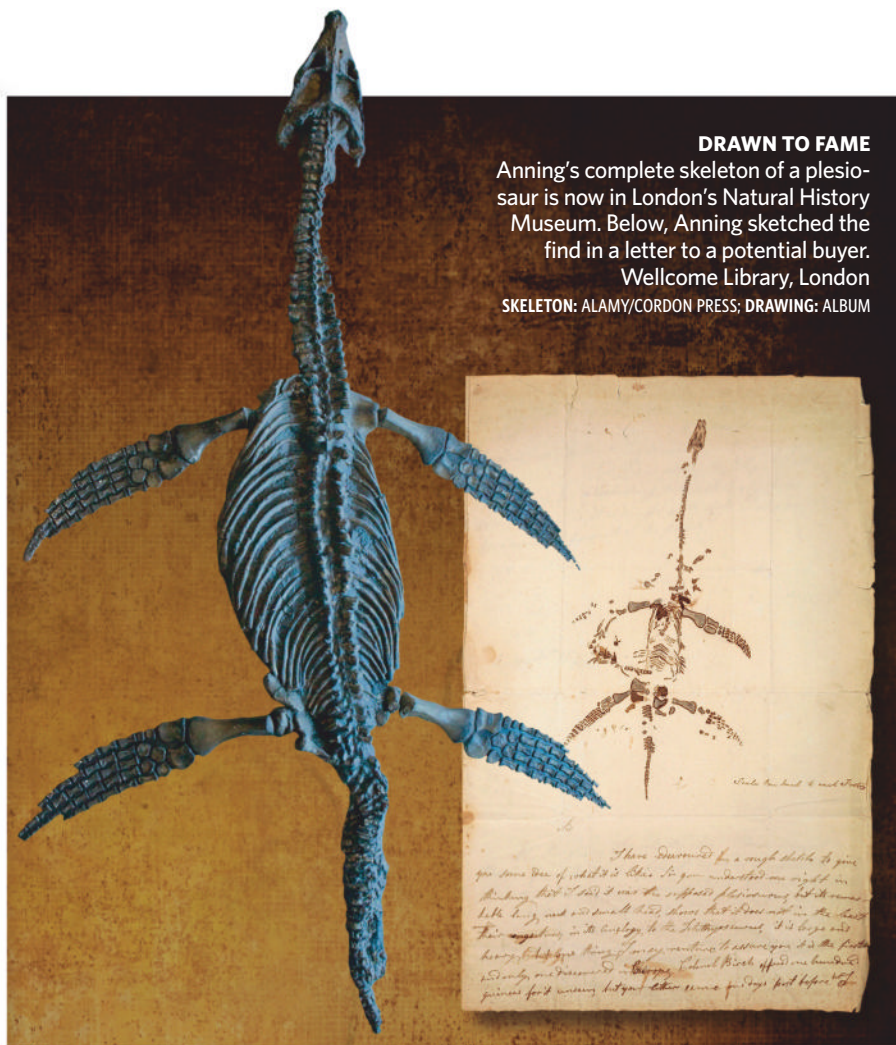
BRITISH SCULPTOR Denise Dutton memorialized Anning in this bronze statue overlooking the English Channel at Lyme Regis after a campaign spearheaded by an 11-year-old girl from the same town. Anning's fame and the natural beauty of Lyme Regis (and its use as a setting in Jane Austen's 1817 novel *Persuasion*) draw large numbers of visitors to the narrow streets of the town every year.

ALAMY/CORDON PRESS



FAMOUS FIRSTS

SCIENTISTS had already discovered the existence of massive swimming reptiles, now known as ichthyosaurs, before Anning spotted one of the gigantic skeletons as a child. But her fossilized finds were often the first to be correctly identified as extinct species. She is even credited with discovering the first known pterodactyl—revealing the existence of flying dinosaurs. Anning's best known find was the plesiosaur, an ancient marine reptile described as almost perfect in its day; it was so stunning that some contested it as a fraud. When other plesiosaur skeletons were uncovered at Lyme Regis, her critics backed down; further study revealed the reptiles coexisted with dinosaurs. Today, multiple extinct species are named in her honor, including the *Ichthyosaurus anningae*.



DRAWN TO FAME

Anning's complete skeleton of a plesiosaur is now in London's Natural History Museum. Below, Anning sketched the find in a letter to a potential buyer. Wellcome Library, London

SKELETON: ALAMY/CORDON PRESS; DRAWING: ALBUM

Ichthyosaurus which she has discovered.”

Kieran Satchell, the Lyme Regis Museum's learning and engagement officer, says Anning's gender helped her legacy even as it stifled her potential during her life. “If Mary Anning was Michael Anning [and] was born a man, I don't think the story would be half as impressive,” he says. The fossil-finding she turned into an art still inspires scientists.

Beyond Extinction

Anning's life and work are anything but outliers, says Natalia Jagielska, the

museum's engagement and collections curator. Behind the era's celebrated men was a legion of brilliant women “who knew the science,” she says, “but they were usually supplemented or overshadowed by men who did the publishing.”

When Anning died at 47 from breast cancer, she was widely celebrated. But little remains of her aside from letters, fossils, and her singular published article about a fossilized shark jaw.

Today, Anning's pioneering work and shrewd scientific brain are revered, and she is considered one of the

founding mothers of both geology and paleontology. And thanks to the work of those keeping her legacy alive, Anning's stature is bigger than ever before. Fossils she discovered and prepared are in important collections around the globe—and there may be more that simply do not bear her name.

But the indirect contribution of her discoveries may be her largest legacy: By drawing attention to remnants of now gone animals, Anning helped establish the existence of extinction. A revolutionary concept in the period before Darwin's theory of natural selection, this better understanding of fossilization and extinction helped lay the foundation for modern science as we know it—all thanks to Anning and her amazing fossilized finds.

She never got the fame or wealth many of her male counterparts gained from the work she enabled.

Engraving of the ichthyosaur skull
found by Mary and Joseph Anning in 1811
ALBUM/GRANGER



— Erin Blakemore

Tattoos, the Enduring Body Art of Polynesia

Persecuted by European colonialists and missionaries, the ancestral intricacy of Polynesian body ink almost didn't survive. Today, from New Zealand to Samoa, it is enjoying a resurgence.

In July 1595 Spanish explorer Álvaro de Mendaña found himself on the shores of the small island of Fatu Hiva, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The name he gave to it was Magdalena. He called the surrounding archipelago las Islas Marquesas de Mendoza in honor of the viceroy of Peru, who had organized the expedition. Pedro Fernández de Quirós, captain of the expedition's flagship, wrote in his logbook of the local warriors: "They all came naked, without any part covered; their faces and bodies in patterns of a blue colour, painted with fish and other patterns." Without realizing it, he had just recorded the first description of a Polynesian tattoo known in the Western world.

Tattooing, the art of decorating the body with permanent designs of ink introduced into the skin using sharp implements, is attested as far back as the Neolithic period in various parts of the world. Ötzi, a man whose 5,000-year-old mummy was found in 1991 in a glacier in the Ötztal Alps, had tattoos all over his body, 61 in total.

Tattoos have also been found on mummies from Greenland, Alaska, Siberia, China, Egypt, Sudan, the Andes, and the Philippines. But nowhere are tattoos more important than in Polynesia.

Tattoo Paradise

The term "tattoo" derives from the Tahitian word *tatau*, meaning "to mark or strike." It was adopted into English by the first European sailors to arrive in Tahiti in the 18th century. This is also when the practice of tattooing among seafarers began. The oldest tattooing tools from the Polynesian region, dating back some 2,700 years, were found at a site in Tonga. And it was from Tonga that many people immigrated to archipelagoes dotted around the Pacific, within the vast triangle stretching from New Zealand to Easter Island and Hawaii. They took their tattooing technology and traditions with them.

Although traditional tattooing tools vary across the Pacific, the basic principle has changed little over the centuries: the introduction of pigment

into perforations in the skin. The traditional implement, or *'au*, is a kind of comb lashed to a wooden handle. The razor-sharp teeth of the comb are dipped in ink and then applied to the skin of the person being tattooed. Traditionally, the teeth were made of sharp bone or shell, but in New Zealand the material began to be replaced by metal in the 1800s. Later, in the 19th century, needle tattooing was adopted.

Gift of the Gods

Tattoo designs evolved significantly across space and time. As the Polynesians colonized more and more Pacific archipelagoes, the patterns, symbols, ceremonies, and legends associated with their tattooing developed into rich and diverse traditions.

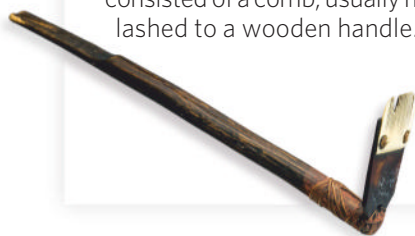
According to Polynesian mythology, the art of tattooing was a gift from the gods. In all the Polynesian islands it was performed as a rite of passage into adulthood. The artistic and ritualistic aspects of tattooing went hand in hand. The process could be painful, and the person being tattooed needed courage to bear it. The ritual act of tattooing was performed by an expert priest. In Tonga they were known as *tufuga tā tatau*; in the Marquesas Islands as *tuhuna patu tiki*. The ritual took place in a dedicated hut, and throughout it the priest intoned chants and prayers believed to merge with the tattoo itself, giving the wearer continuous spiritual protection.

There were variations in tattoo styles among the different archipelagoes, but in general the designs were geometric, stylized representations of everyday

PRECISION TECHNIQUE

THE MAIN TOOL used for tattooing in much of Polynesia was the *'au*. It consisted of a comb, usually made of shell or bone, with very sharp teeth lashed to a wooden handle. The comb's teeth were dipped in an ink made from seed smoke and oil and then applied to the skin by rhythmic blows.

Tattooing tool from the Samoan archipelago
BRIDGEMAN/ACI



THE ART OF WAR

An engraving of a tattooed Nuku Hiva man from the Marquesas Islands in the southern Pacific illustrates an account from a Russian expedition to this part of Polynesia in 1803.

ALBUM



INTRICATE DESIGNS

THE TATTOOING tradition of the Māori of New Zealand, *tā moko*, distinguishes between men and women. Generally, women tattoo only their chins and sometimes their lips. For men, the *tā moko* can cover the forehead, nose, cheeks, and lower jaw in complex designs formed of interlocking curvilinear lines. Far from being merely decorative, tattoo designs once contained information about the ancestry, social status, and exploits of the person who wore them. Today, as the practice of *tā moko* enjoys a resurgence in New Zealand, new design traditions and codes have developed. If a woman has a *tā moko* on her lips, this indicates that she is a proficient speaker of the Māori language.

Tāmāti Waka Nene, 19th-century Māori leader, in a painting by Gottfried Lindauer, 1890

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



objects. The same designs would appear as decoration on fabrics, vessels, and other objects. The most frequent tattoo motifs were birds, fishing nets, shark teeth, mountains, weapons, and gods.

Biographical Drawings

Both men and women would get tattooed. In Samoa, for example, men are still tattooed from the navel down (waist, buttocks, and thighs) to form the *pe'a*, the traditional tattoo

that the first Europeans to arrive in Polynesia mistook for clothing. Those who didn't have tattoos were called *tefefua*, meaning "naked."

In Tonga, all men had tattoos except the Tu'i Tonga, the most important chief, whose lack of tattoos indicated his high social rank. The tattoo might also mark an important event in the wearer's life. Some women tattooed marks at the corners of their mouths to indicate the children they'd had. In Hawaii, some widows had their tongues tattooed (a very painful act) as part of the mourning process after their husbands died.

In certain areas of Polynesia, the tattoo also served as identification of the clan to which the bearer belonged, the island or region where they lived, their ancestors, or even the god they most worshipped. On some islands the tattoos provided specific biographical details about the person's life.

In 1769, in the middle of his first round-the-world voyage, James Cook arrived in Tahiti, where he noted the islanders' body art: "Both sexes paint their Bodys, Tattow, as it is called in their Language. This is done by inlaying the Colour of Black under their skins, in such a manner as to be indelible."

In 1769 Cook arrived in New Zealand. He realized that the Māori, the archipelago's Indigenous people, shared a similar culture and language with the people of Tahiti, despite being separated by 2,400 miles of ocean. Cook noted, however, that the Māori had

Frequent tattoo motifs were birds, fishing nets, shark teeth, mountains, weapons, and gods.

Woman with tattoos from Maui, Hawaii, in an 1842 engraving by Jacques Arago

BRIDGEMAN/ACI





A SAMOAN TATTOOIST and his apprentice apply a tattoo to a man's back using traditional tools around 1895. In contrast to other areas of Polynesia, Samoan tattooists managed to maintain the practice despite disapproval from missionaries.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

facial tattoos while their Tahitian cousins typically did not. On arriving in New Zealand, he recorded in his journal:

Many of the old and some of the Middle aged Men have their faces mark'd or tattow'd with black . . . The figures they mostly use are spirals, drawn and connected together with great nicety and judgement. They are so exact in the application of these Figures that no difference can be found between the one side of the face and the other . . . The Women inlay the Colour of Black under the skins of their lips . . . the bodies of both sexes are marked with black ink drawings called tā moko, by the same method used in Tahiti, called tattooing; but the men are more marked and the women, less.

What surprised Cook was that, among the Māori, the tattoos were

concentrated on the faces of both men and women. In the case of traditional Māori tā moko, the *tohunga tā moko* (tattooist) did not introduce ink into the skin with an 'au but rather with a small chisel-like tool called an *uhi* that cut grooves into the skin.

Keeping the Art Alive

In the 19th century, Christian missionaries participating in colonial adventures on the Pacific islands regarded tattooing with attitudes ranging from disapproval to outright prohibition.

Many European and colonial figures nevertheless maintained a strong fascination in the body art of the islanders, recording it on their travels. These included the French artist-explorer Jacques Arago, who participated in the Freycinet expedition to Hawaii in 1819, and the Russian artist-explorer Louis Choris, who sailed on Otto von

Kotzebue's 1820s Pacific expedition.

Islanders continued to learn and teach tattooing. But the restrictions on openly expressing the tradition led to a decline in the practice across much of Polynesia. Although it endured remarkably well in Samoa, by the 1920s the practice had all but died out in New Zealand.

In the 1970s Polynesian culture enjoyed a revival as Polynesians reclaimed their ancestral customs. Today, what started as a ritual practice in Polynesia has become a global phenomenon. In New Zealand tā moko became popular among young Māori from the early 2000s. Many people of Samoan ancestry in the United States have helped drive a resurgence of interest in the dazzling designs of Samoan body art as a means of connecting to their roots.

— Jordi Canal-Soler

Clues in a Croc Mummy Mystery

A cache of mummified reptiles yields details on how they died—and their unusual embalmmment.

In 2019, while excavating the necropolis of Qubbet el Hawa, across the Nile from Aswan in southern Egypt, Belgian and Spanish archaeologists unearthed a trove of mummified crocodiles: five almost complete skeletons, plus five heads.

Although crocodiles are often found in Egyptian tombs, it is rare to discover 10. The findings, published in the journal *PLOS One*, shed light on the embalming technique used and even how the animals might have died.

Sacrificed to Sobek

Animals in ancient Egypt were mummified for use as votive offerings. The objects often took the form of the god being offered to—in this case, the croc-headed god Sobek.

Linen that once wrapped the mummies had long been consumed by insects. Examining the remains, team members were surprised they did not find traces of resin used in conventional mummification. The animals' internal organs had not been removed either, suggesting the bodies had been laid in sandpits, where they naturally mummified in the dry desert heat.

In high demand, the crocodiles had likely been hunted in the fifth century B.C. Although the team failed to find evidence of any trauma on the specimens, traces of rope suggest the reptiles perished from a simple, if cruel, method: tied up and left in the hot sun, until they died of dehydration.

—Carme Mayans



ZOOARCHAEOLOGISTS from the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences analyze the bones of the 10 mummified crocodiles found in the tomb at Qubbet el Hawa.

ALL: ZUMA PRESS/CORDON PRESS



The teeth are well preserved on one of the crocodile skulls from the tomb at Qubbet el Hawa.



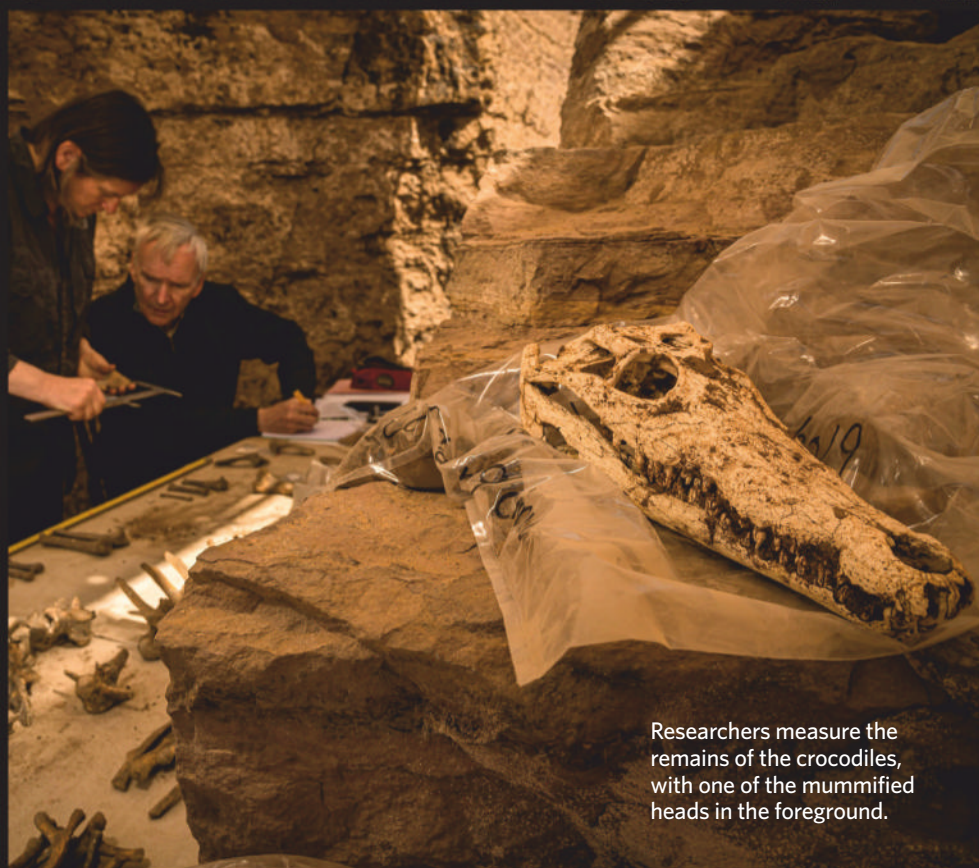
The 10 crocodile mummies, comprising five nearly complete individuals and five heads, were found packed together.



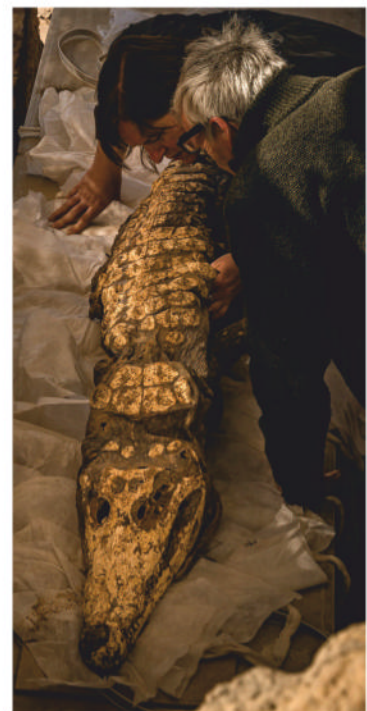
REVERED AND FEARED

EGYPTIANS SAW crocodiles as intermediaries between humans and Sobek, the crocodile-headed god of water and fertility—vital attributes in a desert land where all life came from the Nile. The specimens found at Qubbet el Hawa belong to two species: the Nile crocodile and the West African crocodile. When alive, the mummified crocodiles ranged in size from around six feet to 11.5 feet. In addition to their association with Sobek, crocodiles had plenty of day-to-day experience being observed, and feared, by the ancient Egyptians they lived among. Nile crocodiles are still spectacularly aggressive hunters, capable of holding prey underwater until it drowns. In 2023, 115 people were killed in attacks by Nile crocodiles across their range in Africa.

Archaeologists study one of the best preserved crocodile specimens.



Researchers measure the remains of the crocodiles, with one of the mummified heads in the foreground.





PROFILE OF A CONQUEROR

Cyrus the Great, whose Persian Empire stretched from Turkey to India in the sixth century B.C., is pictured in a headdress in this 19th-century A.D. engraving. A Persian griffin-headed armlet (opposite), made soon after Cyrus's reign, is part of the Oxus Treasure, held at the British Museum.

CYRUS: BRIDGEMAN/ACI. COLOR-
IZED BY JOSE LUIS RODRIGUEZ;
ARMLET: DEA/ALBUM

CYRUS THE GREAT

FOUNDER OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

Ancient Greek sources portrayed the kings of Persia as ruthless despots—all except Cyrus II, whom they lauded as a model leader.

JORGE PISA SÁNCHEZ





SWITCHED PLACES

Jean-Charles Nicaise Perrin's 1789 painting tells the story of baby Cyrus, who was ordered to be killed. To save him, a still-born shepherd's son (at left) is passed off as Cyrus, while the real Cyrus (at right) takes the dead boy's identity and survives.

MICHEL URTADO/RMN-GRAND PALAIS

The Achaemenid kings of Persia ruled the largest empire in the world between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C., but much of what we know about them today comes from Greek rather than Persian sources. The various Greek authors who wrote about the Persians tended to depict them as decadent and weak-willed, ruled by a series of self-styled great kings. Persian culture was often contrasted with the austerity of Athens and Sparta. The stories of Persian kings that have filtered down through Greek works of philosophy, history, and

plays mix firsthand observations with a large dose of fiction and fantasy. It should be remembered that the Greeks saw the might of Persia as a huge threat. For half a century they were engaged in the Greco-Persian wars (499-449 B.C.), fighting to keep that threat at bay, and this enmity shaped how they framed their accounts. The Achaemenid kings were usually portrayed as exhibiting the most ignoble vices: being arrogant and cruel, lazy and weak-willed, lovers of luxury, and easily seduced by spies in the harem. The Greeks painted Persian kings as stereotypical barbarian rulers of a foreign

MASTER OF THE EAST

559 B.C.

Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great) succeeds his father, Cambyses I, as king of the Persians. His mother, Mandane, is the daughter of Astyages, king of Media.

Gold head, fifth to fourth centuries B.C., from the Oxus Treasure. British Museum, London
SCALA, FLORENCE



550 B.C.

With the help of Nabonidus, king of Babylon, Cyrus attacks his grandfather Astyages. Cyrus defeats him and sacks his capital, Ecbatana.



world dominated by violence and cruelty.

There is, however, one exception: Cyrus II, known as Cyrus the Great. In general, the Greek sources present a very different story of his reign, which saw the creation of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, a vast dominion stretching from Asia Minor to the Indus River Valley, the largest empire known at the time. Through a series of brilliant military campaigns, Cyrus conquered all the great states of the Near East (except Egypt) in just over 10 years (550 to 539 B.C.). He took Media in northwestern Iran, the Lydian kingdom ruled by Croesus in

modern-day Turkey, the Greek cities of Asia Minor, and the Babylonian Empire in Mesopotamia. Under Cyrus, the Persian Empire became the hegemonic power in the East. Despite beginning his reign as a vassal king subject to the Median Empire, which he would later conquer, Cyrus was fierce and effective in battle. But he has also gone down in history as a humane leader and liberator who respected the customs, laws, and religions of the peoples whose lands he conquered. This aspect of his kingship was lauded in the ancient world and has defined his portrayal through the centuries.

FOUR CAPITALS

Cyrus conquered the Median city of Ecbatana (today in Iran) in 550 B.C. It would become one of the four capitals of the Persian Empire, along with Susa, Pasargadae, and Persepolis.

ALAMY/CORDON PRESS

546 B.C.

Cyrus defeats Croesus, the king of Lydia (modern-day Turkey), and the following year conquers the capital, Sardis, becoming the master of Asia Minor.

539 B.C.

Cyrus enters Babylon after defeating Nabonidus. He allows captives brought there by the Babylonians, including the Jews, to return to their land.

ca 529 B.C.

Cyrus dies near the Aral Sea fighting a Scythian tribe, the Massagetae. He is succeeded by his son Cambyses II, who wins Egypt.

A fish created from hammered gold sheets by Persian artisans in the fifth to fourth centuries B.C.

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE



Cyrus grants freedom to the Jewish exiles held in Babylon in this 19th-century engraving by French illustrator Gustave Doré.

ALAMY/ACI



DECREETING TOLERANCE

THE **CYRUS CYLINDER** was found in 1879 in Babylon's Temple of Marduk by the Assyrian archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam. Shortly after Cyrus took Babylon in 539 B.C., this cylinder was formed out of clay, and while it was still wet, 45 lines of a royal decree issued by Cyrus were impressed into its surface in cuneiform. The decree pours scorn on the last Babylonian king, Nabonidus, for his impiety toward Marduk, patron god of the city, and exalts Cyrus for being a liberator of peoples, including the Babylonians. Although the text is clearly propagandist, it upholds the version of Cyrus in the Bible as a liberator. In the Book of Ezra, Cyrus allowed the Jews, who had been exiled in Babylon since the time of King Nebuchadnezzar II, to return home. In Isaiah 45:1, Cyrus is singled out by God: "Cyrus is my anointed king. I take hold of his right hand. I give him the power to bring nations under his control."

The Cyrus Cylinder, from the sixth century B.C., was found at Babylon in 1879. British Museum, London
SCALA, FLORENCE



According to Herodotus

Cyrus, founder of the Achaemenid Empire, usually appears in Greek sources as an exemplary ruler and clement king, an image backed by Babylonian and Hebrew sources. In the writings of Greek historian Herodotus, around a century after Cyrus's death, Cyrus is depicted as benevolent, brave, and on good terms with his soldiers. And it is Herodotus who provides one of the most complete accounts of Cyrus's origins, albeit including some elements that are clearly legendary. He writes that Astyages, king of Media and grandfather of Cyrus, had a dream in which Cyrus seized the throne. Before the rise of the Achaemenid Empire, Persia was subject to Median control for many years as a vassal state. To avoid a future challenge from his grandson Cyrus, who was still a baby at the time, King Astyages ordered his general to kill the infant. But instead, the general took pity on the baby and secretly gave him to a family of humble shepherds to raise. As the young Cyrus went through childhood, he stood out for



his daring nature and leadership. This eventually led Astyages to discover his true identity. A conflict later ensued between the Persians under Cyrus and the Medes under Astyages, and the Persians won.

Herodotus describes how Cyrus, having decided to rebel against the Medes, needed to gain his soldiers' commitment. So he gave them a task. He ordered the men to spend all day clearing a field of thorny plants. The next day they returned to find a great feast awaiting them. When they had eaten their fill, Cyrus asked which they preferred: to remain enslaved and exploited by the Medes, which was akin to clearing a field of thistles, or to throw off the Median yoke, attain freedom, and enjoy abundance by creating their own empire. This episode gives an insight into how skilled Cyrus was at motivating his soldiers for war, a factor that would be key in his future conquests. Herodotus writes that the Persians felt such affection for Cyrus that they thought of him as a father figure. Plutarch, another Greek historian,

MIGHTY BABYLON

Fought over since the Bronze Age, Babylon's splendor peaked under King Nebuchadnezzar II. When Cyrus took Babylon in 539 B.C., it occupied four square miles and was likely the biggest city on Earth. The image shows part of its wall, reconstructed in the 1980s.

GETTY IMAGES

corroborates the claim: "The Persians love those with aquiline noses because Cyrus, the most beloved of their kings, had a nose of that shape."

Herodotus does, however, mention Cyrus displaying some worrying behavior at the end of his life. One example is the strange punishment the king inflicted on the Gyndes River (possibly the modern-day Diyala River) after one of his horses drowned in it. Cyrus allegedly set his army to work for a whole summer dividing this tributary of the Tigris into 360 channels as revenge for the horse's death. Given that the Persians believed watercourses were sacred, this was a sacrilegious act as well as an irrational one.

Herodotus also relates it to the dramatic circumstances of Cyrus's death. He records that the king was killed while fighting against the Massagetae, a nomadic people of Central Asia ruled by Queen Tomyris. Cyrus's body was then defiled by Tomyris as revenge for her son's death. According to Herodotus, this last military campaign was driven by Cyrus's arrogance

On a fifth-century B.C. Attic amphora, King Croesus of Lydia sits atop a pyre being lit by a servant after Cyrus sentenced him to death. Louvre Museum, Paris

TONY QUERREC/RMN-GRAND PALAIS



KING CROESUS ESCAPES THE FLAMES

AFTER DEFEATING CROESUS, the wealthy ruler of Lydia (and Astyages's ally and brother-in-law), Cyrus condemned him to be burned alive. According to Herodotus, Cyrus conceded a last-minute pardon to Croesus; the pyre was already burning, and Cyrus's servants struggled in vain to free the king from his chains and put out the blaze. Fortunately, Apollo (at whose sanctuary in Delphi Croesus had offered fabulous gifts) intervened, sending rain to quench the flames. Greek historian Ctesias recounts that Cyrus offered Croesus governorship of a city near Ecbatana. In the version told by poet Bacchylides, Croesus stepped voluntarily onto the pyre, ready to die as his family wept. But Apollo intervened, extinguishing the fire and transporting Croesus to the legendary land of the Hyperboreans for his piety.

and led to him being punished by the gods.

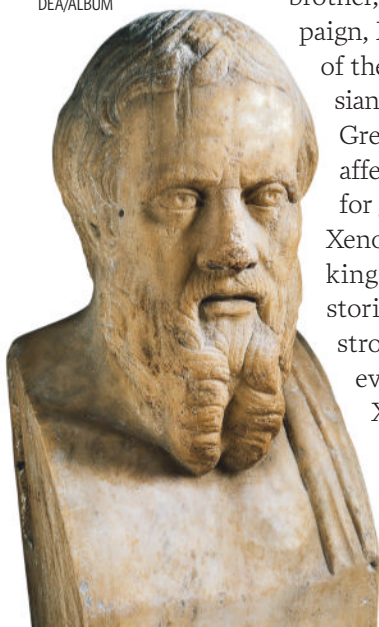
Herodotus uses this narrative to reflect on the degeneration of Persian power. He claims that as Cyrus's conquests stacked up, he and his people began to abandon the austerity and self-discipline of their origins in favor of opulence and ease. According to Herodotus and later Greek authors, it was this shift in behavior that triggered the decadence of the Persian Empire and the corruption of its great kings.

A Romanticized Vision

The *Cyropaedia* is an idealized biography of Cyrus as the philosopher king, compiled by Xenophon, who was an Athenian historian and philosopher who lived between the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Xenophon, who supported the idea of a monarchy, used Cyrus as a figure to project his vision of the ideal monarch. The Cyrus portrayed in the *Cyropaedia* should be read as a largely fictional character, created by Xenophon to reflect his own political views. To write the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon drew

EARLY HISTORY

Greek historian Herodotus, depicted in this fifth-century B.C. bust, wrote about Cyrus in *Histories*, circa 425 B.C. National Archaeological Museum, Naples
DEA/ALBUM



on the works of earlier Greek authors such as Herodotus, but he also had firsthand knowledge of the Persian world. From 401 to 399 B.C. Xenophon participated in the expedition of the Ten Thousand as a member of an army of Greek mercenaries recruited by another Cyrus of the Achaemenid dynasty, Cyrus the Younger. This Cyrus was rebelling against the authority of his brother, King Artaxerxes II. During the campaign, Xenophon must have heard accounts of the life of Cyrus II, embellished by Persian tradition. Xenophon depicts Cyrus the Great as a studious king, just, generous, affectionate with his men, brave, and eager for glory. Cyrus the Great as portrayed by Xenophon matched the cliché of the great king that was typical in popular Persian stories of the day: He was handsome and strong, and his kingly qualities had been evident from childhood. According to Xenophon's account, Cyrus the Great piously fulfilled all his religious duties, thereby winning favor from the gods.



Put simply, the great king “excelled in governing” because “so very different was he from all other kings.” This positive view is supported by the historian Diodorus of Sicily, who writes that Cyrus “was pre-eminent among the men of his time in bravery and sagacity and the other virtues; for his father (Cambyses I) had reared him after the manner of kings and had made him zealous to emulate the highest achievements.”

Many of Cyrus’s conquests, such as Media and Lydia, are often ascribed to his military expertise. The fall of Babylon, however, is also accredited to King Nabonidus’s failure to honor the city’s chief god, Marduk, causing dissension and the opportunity for invasion. Cyrus’s religious tolerance, abolishment of labor service, and the freeing of Jews garnered him praise.

Xenophon claims that the great king exhorted his subjects, saying: “Next to the gods, however, show respect also to all the race of men as they continue in perpetual succession.” This was an indication of Cyrus’s humanitarian qualities that so exalted him in the eyes of

the Greek historian. The *Cyropaedia* contains a variant account of Cyrus’s death: He did not die in combat, as Herodotus claimed, but in the palace surrounded by his sons. Xenophon adds that death came while Cyrus was immersed in a conversation about immortality and urging his listeners to lead dignified and pious lives. This scene is reminiscent of the death of Socrates, Xenophon’s mentor, who died by suicide surrounded by his friends and followers after his fellow Athenians condemned him to death.

Plato and Ctesias

The philosopher Plato, another disciple of Socrates, also makes reference to Cyrus, again portraying him as an exemplar of justice and wisdom. According to Plato, the Persians under

A PRIZE FOR THE PERSIANS

The city of Sardis in Turkey (above) served as the capital of the wealthy kingdom of Lydia. It fell to Cyrus in 545 B.C. after a 14-day siege. Persian troops destroyed much of the city, which was later rebuilt.

GETTY IMAGES

Greek historian Xenophon’s description of Cyrus’s death evokes the suicide of Socrates, Xenophon’s mentor.

BABYLON FALLS

Catering to the 19th-century appetite for dramatic historical art, this 1835 mezzotint by English artist John Martin (later colorized) imagines the forces of Cyrus conquering Babylon. In the account by Herodotus, Cyrus takes the city only after a struggle. The Babylonian Nabonidus Chronicle suggests Babylon fell quickly. However, a portion of this chronicle was written under Cyrus, revealing Persian bias against the rule of Nabonidus and his worship of another god.

ALAMY/CORDON PRESS





Queen Tomyris orders Cyrus's severed head to be immersed in a wineskin filled with blood in an early 18th-century painting by Gerard Hoet. Private collection
BRIDGEMAN/ACI



BLOOD WILL HAVE BLOOD

HERODOTUS LINKS the death of Cyrus to the king's hubris in the final years of his life. Puffed up with pride from his constant victories, Cyrus declared war on the nomadic Massagetae people, ruled by Queen Tomyris. Cyrus then tricked the Massagetae by feigning a retreat. He ordered his army to abandon their camp but leave large quantities of undiluted wine and all kinds of delicacies. The Massagetae, led by Spargapises, son of Tomyris, approached the abandoned camp. When they had drunk the wine that was left behind, Cyrus returned with his forces. Spargapises, once he had sobered up and realized his mistake, took his own life. Outraged, his mother rode out to confront Cyrus in battle with the bulk of her troops. Their final face-off saw the Persian army defeated and Cyrus killed. Tomyris ordered her troops to collect Cyrus's body from the battlefield and cut off his head. She then plunged the severed head into a wineskin full of human blood, saying: "You have destroyed me, taking my son by guile; but just as I threatened, I give you your fill of blood."



Cyrus maintained the correct balance between servitude and freedom. This enabled them to become masters of an empire. But after Cyrus's reign, this balance was upset as his successors succumbed to the love of luxury, decadence, and the pleasure of the harem, which eventually led to the empire's collapse.

Not all Greek authors are so favorable to the figure of Cyrus, however. Ctesias, for example, was a Greek physician and historian who, in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., served at the court of the Persian king Artaxerxes II. There, Ctesias says, he was able to consult the royal annals of the Achaemenids directly. The information Ctesias conveys about Cyrus is characterized by hostility and suspicion and contrasts with earlier accounts. According to Ctesias, Cyrus's origins were not as noble as Herodotus and Xenophon indicate. He claims that the future monarch was born the son of a bandit called Atradata and a goat herder called Argoste. Cyrus's humble, nomadic background framed him as a barbarian at odds with the



civilized life of Greek society. His rise to kingship was not too praiseworthy either. According to this account, after rebelling against the Median king Astyages, Cyrus allegedly killed the defeated king's son-in-law Spitamas and married the king's daughter Amytis. In other words, Cyrus was a usurper, with no birthright to the Median throne. Ctesias also has a different story of Cyrus's death, claiming that the king died of a thigh wound sustained during a confrontation with the Derbices, a people from eastern Iran.

A Less Than Pious King

Finally, Isocrates, Athenian orator and politician, also mentions Cyrus but does not consider all his actions to be pious or just. Regarding the war between the Medes and Persians, Isocrates writes that after Astyages, king of the Medes and grandfather of Cyrus, had been defeated, Cyrus had unjustly ordered his death. This account should be seen in context. Isocrates was a defender of the Greeks' union against the

Persian threat. His views on Persia may have influenced his negative depiction.

Despite a few detractors, Cyrus II was the Achaemenid king treated best by Greek tradition. He was generally presented as an ideal monarch, a model of the wise, pious, and just sovereign. According to Greek tradition, the decline of the Persian Empire began with his son, Cambyses II. From then on, according to the Greek sources at least, Persia would be ruled by cruel, impious despots. Xerxes I, the Achaemenid king who dared to attack continental Greece in 480 B.C. during the Greco-Persian wars, was foremost among these. The Greeks' biased portrayal of the Persian monarchy has influenced ideas about the Achaemenids up to the present day. ■

ARCHAEOLOGIST AND AUTHOR JORGE PISA SÁNCHEZ HAS PARTICIPATED IN NUMEROUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIGS AND IS A SPECIALIST ON PERSIAN HISTORY.

Learn more

Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire
Matt Waters, Cambridge University Press, 2014

A KING'S EPITAPH

Ancient authors identify this gabled structure near the site of Pasargadae, in Iran, as Cyrus's tomb. One source records his epitaph (not yet found) as: "Mortal! I am Cyrus, who founded the Persian Empire . . . Grudge me not then my monument."

OSHIN ZAKARIAN/BRIDGEMAN/ACI



THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

THE PERSIANS WERE AN ANCIENT nomadic people who settled in Parsa, the high plateau of Iran, around 1000 B.C. For generations, they lived in the shadow of their Median kinsmen, who had created a great empire in Mesopotamia following the fall of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh

Persian gold rhyton. This drinking vessel is decorated with a lion's head and dates to the fifth century B.C. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York ALBUM

in 612 B.C. Cyrus II (later Cyrus the Great) ascended to the Persian throne in 559 B.C., organized a powerful army, and founded a new capital—one of many—Pasargadae. He defeated the Median ruler Astyages (his grandfather) and undertook a series of successful campaigns against Ashur, Armenia, northern Syria, Cilicia, and Lydia, where he defeated King Croesus and absorbed the capital Sardis into the Persian Empire. In 539 B.C. Cyrus crossed the



Zagros Mountains to conquer the greatest prize of all: Babylon, then probably the biggest city in the world. Divided into districts called satrapies, the Persian Empire became the largest empire the world had yet known under Cyrus's successors, Cambyses II and Darius I. Although the Greeks did thwart Persian expansion in the fifth century B.C., the empire remained a formidable power until its collapse following the invasion of Alexander the Great.



Bronze lion weight.
Created in western Turkey in the fifth century B.C. under Persian rule, this lion likely represented one talent, an ancient unit of weight.
SCALA, FLORENCE



CLEOPATRA AND MARK ANTONY

HISTORY'S FIRST POWER COUPLE

The controversial relationship between the queen of Egypt and the Roman triumvir was not only about erotic love. Shared political interests helped ensure that their alliance stayed strong until the bitter end.

JAVIER NEGRETE



THE BARGE SHE RODE IN ON

Shakespeare modeled his description of Cleopatra enticing Antony from the "burnished throne" of her royal barge in 41 B.C. on the account written by the Greek historian Plutarch. The episode is re-created in this 1883 oil painting by Lawrence Alma-Tadema, which is held in a private collection.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



CO-RULER OF THE ROMAN WORLD

This bust of Mark Antony, now in the Chiaramonti Museum at the Vatican, was carved shortly after 43 B.C., the year he began ruling Rome along with Octavian and Lepidus.

ORONOZ/ALBUM

Cleopatra and Mark Antony: These two names are inextricably linked in one of the most famous (or infamous) romances of all time, a union that led to a military disaster in the Battle of Actium, followed by the death of both lovers. But the pair weren't just ill-fated romantics; they were major players, and victims, of the political forces of their time. Though Antony and Cleopatra had met before—when she was Julius Caesar's lover (and the mother of his son) and Antony was his right-hand general—their romantic relationship began after the Battle of Philippi (42 B.C.), where Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius. Octavian and Antony had been forced into an uneasy allegiance while vying for Caesar's political inheritance. They divided the Mediterranean in two: Octavian administered Italy and the other western territories in what is now Europe, while Antony was in charge of reorganizing the eastern domains of the Roman Republic.

Several vassal kingdoms in the eastern region were dependent on Rome. The most important,

in terms of prestige, population, and wealth, was Egypt, ruled by Cleopatra VII. Cleopatra had taken command of the country a few years earlier after getting rid of her brother, Ptolemy, with Caesar's help. Instead of visiting Cleopatra in Egypt, Antony summoned her to the Anatolian city of Tarsus in 41 B.C. She made a grand entrance, and, although Antony was married to a woman named Fulvia, he and Cleopatra soon became lovers. Fulvia died shortly after Antony's return from Egypt, and Cleopatra gave birth to Antony's twins—but this didn't prevent him from making a politically advantageous marriage to Octavia, the sister of his co-ruler of Rome, Octavian. Still, with some periods of separation, the destinies of the Roman general and the Egyptian queen remained entwined until their tragic deaths in Alexandria in 30 B.C., after the Battle of Actium.

Smart Man, Foolish Choices?

Antony was a man of intense passions, fond of not only physical exercise but also parties and carousing with women. His peers often disapproved of his choice of lovers. The actress Cytheris was seen as dissolute; Fulvia,



A PAIR SO FAMOUS

41 B.C.

As co-ruler of Rome, Mark Antony summons Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, to Tarsus, where they begin a relationship.

40 B.C.

Antony returns to Rome and marries Octavia, sister of his powerful co-ruler, Octavian (who will later rule solely as Augustus).

32 B.C.

Antony divorces Octavia. Tensions between Antony and Octavian increase. Octavian declares war on Cleopatra.

31 B.C.

After being defeated by Octavian at the Battle of Actium on September 2, Cleopatra and Antony flee to Alexandria.

30 B.C.

Following a victory in Alexandria, Octavian conquers Egypt. Antony and Cleopatra take their own lives.

A GODDESS FOR A QUEEN

As queen of Egypt, Cleopatra identified with the goddess Isis, whose temple on the island of Philae, near Aswan, was built by her Ptolemaic forefathers in the third century B.C.

NEIL FARRIN/AWL IMAGES



Coin commemorating Octavian's victory; The crocodile symbolizes "Egypt Captured."

ALBUM

ANTONY TAKES CLEOPATRA'S BAIT

IN PARALLEL LIVES, Plutarch's second-century collection of biographies of Greeks and Romans, the author relates a tale about Antony fishing with his lover in the Nile. Aggrieved at getting no bites, he orders fishermen to dive down and secretly put their catch on his hook. Cleopatra pretends not to notice the ruse, but the next day she has a servant put a salted herring from the far-off Pontus region on Antony's hook, causing hilarity at his expense. According to Plutarch, the queen berates Antony: "Imperator, hand over your rod to the fishermen; your sport is the hunting of cities, realms, and continents." Shakespeare used the tale to portray Cleopatra as a crafty seductress. Thinking of the fish she'll catch, the queen boasts: "And as I draw them up/I'll think them every one an Antony/And say, 'Aha! You're caught.'"



NILE PURSUITS

This first-century B.C. Nile mosaic (left) shows the Roman fascination with the richness of Egypt's waterway. Archaeological Museum, Palestrina, Italy
DEA/GETTY IMAGES

Antony's first legitimate wife and mother of two of his children, was said to have too much political ambition. When the relationship between Antony and Octavian broke down completely, Antony's critics claimed that he'd become entangled by the wiles of another ambitious woman: the perfidious Cleopatra.

In male-dominated Greco-Roman society, it was inconceivable that an imperial leader such as Antony would relate on an almost equal footing with a female foreigner. Critics argued that Cleopatra, an expert in botany and pharmacology, must have bewitched him. Plutarch wrote of Antony: "He was not master of his own faculties, but, as if he were under the influence of certain drugs or of magic rites, was ever looking eagerly towards her, and thinking more of his speedy return than of conquering the enemy."

The couple's detractors portrayed Cleopatra as a femme fatale who resorted to artful seductions

to keep Antony ensnared. The poet Horace, in one of his *Odes*, calls her *fatale monstrum* (accursed monster). And Plutarch writes that when Cleopatra suspected Antony might return to Rome and his wife Octavia, she "pretended to be passionately in love with Antony herself, and reduced her body by slender diet; she put on a look of rapture when Antony drew near, and one of faintness and melancholy when he went away."

Politics and Passion

In 36 B.C. Antony launched a military campaign against the Parthians, who controlled a huge empire in what is now Iran and Iraq. When the campaign failed, Antony's critics claimed this was because he had rushed the operations in order to be back with Cleopatra as quickly as possible.

Cleopatra was also blamed for prompting Antony's shameful flight during the Battle of Actium (31 B.C.), the culmination of a decade of rivalry between Antony and Octavian over who would rule the Roman Republic. He abandoned the bulk of his fleet, which was fighting against Octavian, and instead followed the Egyptian



Octavia the Younger, sister of Octavian and fourth wife of Mark Antony, is believed to be depicted in this first-century B.C. cameo. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
BPK/SCALA, FLORENCE





BAD REPUTATION

John William Waterhouse's 1887 painting "Cleopatra" depicts the queen as calculating and malign. This widespread view of Cleopatra was informed by Roman writers and later immortalized by William Shakespeare.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI



FALSE HOPE

In this 1769 painting by J.H. Tischbein, Antony tells Cleopatra of his initial success in holding off Octavian's siege of Alexandria in 30 B.C. Soon after, however, Octavian would conquer the city.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

ships that carried the fleeing Cleopatra. “No sooner did he see her ship sailing off,” Plutarch writes, “than he forgot everything else, betrayed and ran away from those who were fighting and dying in his cause, got into a five-oared galley . . . and hastened after the woman who had already ruined him and would make his ruin still more complete.”

Are the ancient authors justified in seeing Cleopatra as a manipulative enchantress who led Antony to abandon his Roman values and betray his countrymen in seeking to make Alexandria the new capital of the empire? Or were there rational motives behind Antony's decision to side with Cleopatra and her realm?

There was certainly a strong bond between them. An extremely attractive, intelligent,

and cultured woman, Cleopatra spoke several languages.

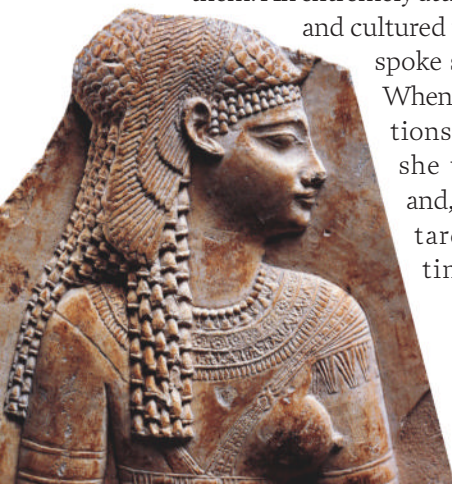
When she began her relationship with Antony, she was 28 years old and, according to Plutarch, “at the very time when women

have the most brilliant beauty and are at the acme of intellectual power.” Philostratus the Athenian wrote in the A.D. 230s of another philosopher called Philostratus (the Egyptian), who had studied with Cleopatra and as a result, “adopted the panegyric and highly colored type of eloquence; which came of associating with a woman who regarded even the love of letters as a sensuous pleasure.”

Cleopatra was branded as promiscuous by her adversaries, but Caesar and Antony were her only lovers recorded by history. Julius Caesar was a man of refined tastes and literary interests, while Antony had a more impulsive character. “Cleopatra observed in the jests of Antony much of the soldier and the common man,” wrote Plutarch, “and adopted this manner also towards him, without restraint now, and boldly.” The queen is said to have played dice with her lover, and hunted at his side.

A Strategic Alliance

As rulers and individuals, Antony and Cleopatra had a lot in common. But the Roman triumvir also had political and military reasons for



This bas-relief from the Ptolemaic period is believed to depict Cleopatra. Louvre Museum, Paris
ALBUM/DEA/DAGLI ORTI





UNCONQUERED

The magnificent south gate of the Parthian city of Hatra (now a World Heritage site) lies in northern Iraq. Mark Antony's campaign against the Parthian Empire, starting in 36 B.C., was a costly failure. The Parthians would be a thorn in Rome's side for the next two centuries.

ALAMY/CORDON PRESS

BITUMEN AND DATES: CLEOPATRA VS. HEROD

HEROD THE GREAT relied on Mark Antony, as Rome's eastern triumvir, to maintain his power as king of Judaea. This situation brought Herod in conflict with his regional rival, Cleopatra. The Egyptian queen had persuaded Antony to grant her the Dead Sea's bitumen deposits, an important product used for caulking ships and baskets, and for embalming mummies. The deposits belonged to the king of Nabataea, who was forced to pay Cleopatra an annual tribute of 200 talents, a fee Herod had to collect on her behalf. The Jewish Roman writer Josephus



describes Cleopatra's visit to Judaea, during which Herod had to restrain his antipathy to "this woman, irksome to all." Cleopatra also toured agricultural land near Jericho that Antony had forced Herod to grant her, which produced lucrative harvests of date palms.

BLACK GOLD

Bitumen from the Dead Sea was used in mummification, a process depicted in this first-century A.D. fresco (left) from the catacombs of Kom el Shoqafa, in Alexandria.

SCALA, FLORENCE

allying himself with the Egyptian queen. They were both statesmen accustomed to the cut-throat nature of politics and prepared to act behind the other's back if this was in their own best interest.

Some sources say Cleopatra and Antony were married in an Egyptian ceremony in Antioch in 37 B.C., although their union was not recognized as legal in Rome, where he was still married to Octavia. As Cleopatra's consort, Antony secured his dominion over Egypt, a land of great natural resources that loomed large in the Roman imagination. Thanks to the annual Nile River floods that irrigated its lands, Egypt produced a surplus of wheat, which was crucial for Rome as it struggled to feed an ever growing population.

Sharing the Wealth

Having influence in Egypt was also useful in terms of trade; Egypt was the main gateway to trading routes across the Indian

Ocean. The volume of goods passing through Egypt was already increasing in Antony's time and would become even more important in the decades that followed. A few years after Octavian defeated Cleopatra and Mark Antony at Actium and annexed Egypt, more than 120 ships were working the routes linking Egypt with the Indian Ocean. The Greek geographer Strabo (ca 64 B.C.—ca A.D. 24) refers to merchants who, at the time he was writing, "sail from Egypt by the Nile and the Arabian Gulf to India." From there they brought back spices, incense, fine silks, and precious stones to fulfill the demands of wealthy Romans. Had Antony triumphed at Actium, controlling this trade route would have made him immensely rich.

Egypt also provided an element of stability in the East, a base from which Antony could act to maintain control over the entire eastern Mediterranean. Despite the prowess of Rome's armies, Egypt's contribution in terms of military backup should not be underestimated. When Antony launched what turned out to be a disastrous campaign against the Parthian Empire in 36 B.C., Cleopatra contributed to it with supplies, military equipment, and money.



Isis nursing Horus. This Roman-era sculpture, made around the time of the rule of Cleopatra, is in the Gregorian Egyptian Museum of the Vatican.
SCALA, FLORENCE





WATERS OF CIVILIZATION

Giving life to a green strip that snakes through hundreds of miles of desert, the Nile passes near Amarna, nearly 200 miles south of Cairo. The river made Egypt one of the most fertile regions in the Mediterranean.

KENNETH GARRETT



LAST OF THE PTOLEMIES

The great hypostyle hall of the Temple of Hathor in Dendera, pictured here, was built in the middle of the first century B.C. by Ptolemy XII, Cleopatra's father. Cleopatra had herself and her son and heir Caesarion depicted in its art.

STEFAN CRISTIAN CIOATA / GETTY IMAGES





CLEOPATRA'S GATE

The name for this entrance to Tarsus in modern-day Turkey reflects the close association of the city with Egypt's queen. The scene of her fateful meeting with Antony, Tarsus lay in Cilicia, a region Antony later gave to Cleopatra.

IMAGEBROKER/ACI

Struggling Against Octavian

Antony was criticized in Rome for making territorial concessions to Cleopatra, giving her land in an act that his enemies interpreted as a betrayal. In fact, he shrewdly gifted her Cilicia Trachea, the western part of an Anatolian province, along with some areas of Phoenicia and the island of Cyprus—all territories renowned for their timber production, which was crucial for building warships with which Antony planned to consolidate his power in the eastern Mediterranean. In return, Antony expected Cleopatra to administer these territories efficiently and use their resources to support him in the military confrontation against Octavian, which everyone knew was coming. In 32 B.C., Octavian launched a series of political attacks to turn public opinion against Antony—who had, by now, divorced Octavia. By late 32 B.C., over 200 Roman senators decamped from Rome to Antony's headquarters in Alexandria. Octavian declared war—not, technically, against Antony, whom he feared Romans would not betray, but against Cleopatra, whose role as a “foreign temptress” would damage Antony's cause.

When it came time to fight Octavian, Cleopatra's involvement was crucial. The Egyptian fleet, which she commanded in person, consisted of 200 ships. She also contributed food, supplies, and 20,000 talents from the royal treasury. None of that helped the pair at Actium, and, when Octavian followed them to Alexandria, Antony used his sword to take his own life. Cleopatra killed herself soon after—according to legend, by allowing herself to be bitten by a poisonous snake.

Though it ended in death, Antony's relationship with Cleopatra was more than an erotic obsession gone wrong; there were political and military calculations behind it. The defeat by Octavian led to the pair being immortalized as tragic, compelling figures. But had they triumphed, their supporters would have written the history books, very likely telling a different story about one of the world's most notorious couples. ■

AUTHOR AND HISTORIAN JAVIER NEGRETE HAS WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY ON CLASSICAL GREEK HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY.





END GAME AT ACTIUM

This first-century A.D. marble relief depicts the Battle of Actium off the western coast of Greece, where the fleet of Octavian broke Antony and Cleopatra's power in the eastern Mediterranean. Collection of the Dukes of Cardona, Cordoba, Spain

ALBUM



▲ **Tetradrachm** portraying Mark Antony wearing the ivy-leaf crown associated with Dionysus (first century B.C.)
SCALA, FLORENCE

A DIVINE DUO: DIONYSUS AND ISIS

Mark Antony and Cleopatra liked to present themselves in the guise of divinities: Antony with the trappings of Dionysus, and Cleopatra as Venus, Isis, or Selene.



CULT OF DIONYSUS

Mark Antony's reverence for Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, was widely shared in the Roman world. This second-century mosaic depicting a Dionysian procession was found at the Roman city of Thysdrus, now called El Jem and located in modern Tunisia. The mosaic is in the National Archaeological Museum of El Jem. BRIDGEMAN/ACI

POWERFUL ROMAN figures often identified themselves with Greek gods, a propaganda technique employed by both Mark Antony and Cleopatra. According to Plutarch, when Antony arrived in Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey) in 41 B.C., "men and boys arrayed like Satyrs and Pans, led the way before him, and the city was full of ivy and thyrsus-wands and harps and pipes and flutes, the people hailing him as Dionysus, Giver of Joy and Beneficent." A few months later, Cleopatra arrived in Tarsus to meet Antony. Plutarch describes how she was enthroned on a golden barge with purple sails "dressed as Venus in a picture, and beautiful young boys, like painted Cupids, stood on each side to fan her." The couple cemented their connection

with an array of gods. "In paintings and statues, he was represented alongside Cleopatra as Osiris or Dionysus, while the queen was Selene or Isis," the third-century historian Dio Cassius wrote of Antony. From Rome, Octavian criticized the pair's "divine" ways. Dio Cassius quoted him as saying that Antony "bows down to her [Cleopatra] as if she were some Isis or Selene . . . he takes for himself the title of Osiris or Dionysus . . . as though he were master of the whole earth and the whole sea."

Seen as Cleopatra, the figure in this first-century B.C. statue wears a crown with a triple uraeus, the rearing cobra identified with Egyptian nobility. Her dress is tied with a knot typical of the goddess Isis. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
BRIDGEMAN/ACI



THE SILK ROADS

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER BETWEEN CHINA AND ROME

As silk fabrics from the East became all the rage in imperial Rome, explorers and merchants opened up land and sea routes to Central Asia and beyond.

JUAN PABLO SÁNCHEZ



FABRIC MERCHANTS

Two merchants show fabric to potential buyers in this Roman bas-relief from the second century A.D. Museum of Roman Culture, Rome. A clay figurine (left) in the form of a camel loaded with goods. The camel became an essential resource in overland transportation.

RELIEF: SCALA, FLORENCE CAMEL: ALBUM





Marble bust of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius.
Circa A.D. 170. Archaeology Museum, Istanbul
AURIMAGES

In A.D. 166, Chinese chroniclers recorded that ambassadors from the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius presented themselves at the imperial court of Luoyang in east-central China—and were given an unusual welcome. The travelers had come via Malaysia, followed the coasts of Thailand and Vietnam, and docked at a Chinese port at the mouth of the Red River in the Gulf of Tonkin. Then, escorted by Chinese military authorities, they traveled overland for another 1,200 miles or so, passing numerous fortresses and walled cities. Anticipation at the Chinese court mounted as the travelers grew closer. The Chinese had long been aware that the Roman Empire existed; they knew it as Da Qin, “the Great China” and considered it to be equal in power to their own empire. But this was the first time direct contact had been established.

However, when the ambassadors arrived, it was noted with some disapproval that they had only brought with them mere “trinkets” picked up in Southeast Asia: ivory, rhinoceros horns, and turtle shells, but nothing that evoked the glory of Rome. The Chinese emperor and his courtiers wondered if they might be Western merchants living in Asia and not really emissaries of the Roman emperor at all. The Chinese were also confused about why these Western travelers had come via Vietnam. The normal route between East and West was through the Gansu Corridor, which connected





A PAGODA FOR A HERO

The Great Wild Goose Pagoda in Xi'an, central China, was first built in the seventh century in honor of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang. Seized with a desire to visit India, birthplace of his faith, Xuanzang journeyed west along the Silk Roads, later returning to Xi'an (then known as Chang'an), bearing many Buddhist texts.

ALAMY/CORDON PRESS

BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

138 B.C.

Zhang Qian leads a Chinese diplomatic mission to forge alliances with the Yuezhi tribes in Central Asia.

118 B.C.

Eudoxus of Cyzicus is the first Greek to cross the Indian Ocean from Egypt to India. He is guided by an Indian sailor.

26 B.C.

Isidore of Charax details an overland trade route between Turkey and India in his book *The Parthian Stations*.

c. A.D. 50

The Greek travel book *Periplus Maris Erythraei* describes navigation and trade between ports on the Red Sea and Indian coasts.

101

Maes Titianus, a Macedonian merchant, sends traders to Tashkurgan with the aim of reaching China.

7th to 10th centuries

Under China's Tang dynasty, multidirectional trading booms along the Silk Roads, spreading languages and ideas.

13th to 14th centuries

Mongol-era trade helps spread the Black Death along the Silk Roads. The routes decline with the rise of Ottoman power.



Gold pendant from the Kushan empire of Central Asia, bearing the image of the emperor Constantine the Great. Fourth century, British Museum
SCALA, FLORENCE

the Yellow River Basin with Central Asia. Chinese explorer and diplomat Zhang Qian had traveled to Central Asia via the Gansu Corridor in the second century B.C., and the fertile strip of land would later become a significant section of the Silk Roads.

In the West, interest in the great route through Asia had begun centuries earlier. The Western presence in Central Asia dates back to the time of Alexander the Great, who led his troops as far as the Indus River and founded several cities in the region. But the first trading contacts with the Far East were established by sea, following a route from the Egyptian port of Alexandria, during the Ptolemaic dynasty. The ambassadors' pathway was more evidence of the growing number of routes along the Silk Roads.

A Castaway Reveals the Route

The discovery of a maritime route to the Far East came out of a chance encounter. The crew of a patrol vessel in the Red Sea found a ship adrift with a half-dead man on board. As no one spoke his language, they couldn't establish where he was from and decided to take him back with them to Alexandria. When the man had learned sufficient Greek, he explained to them that he was an Indian sailor and that his ship had drifted off course. Grateful for the treatment he received in Alexandria, he offered to navigate for any Greek vessel that would return him to his homeland.



TABULA PEUTINGERIANA

This parchment shows the network of Roman roads that ran through the empire in the fourth century A.D. The easternmost section is reproduced here. A "Temple of Augustus" is clearly indicated (bottom right) next to the city of Muziris in India, just to the left of the oval-shaped lake.

AKG/ALBUM



scythae.
xatis. scythae.
Taurus.
Antiochia.
Alexandria.
Hic alexander responsum accepit.
Vsq; quo alexandria.
Caspus.
Seraonior.
Magaris.
Calm.
Ganges.
Antiochia tharmata.
Paleris.
Thumara.
Calippe.
Aunes.
Patinae.
Cotiana.
Pirate.
Blinca.
Moziris.
Temp. Augusti.
Pisanta.
Tondis.
Hineildae.
Paricea.
Isgu.
Carpobae.



Purple and silk textiles.
Mural painting in the
Villa of the Mysteries, in
Pompeii, Italy, from the
first century A.D.

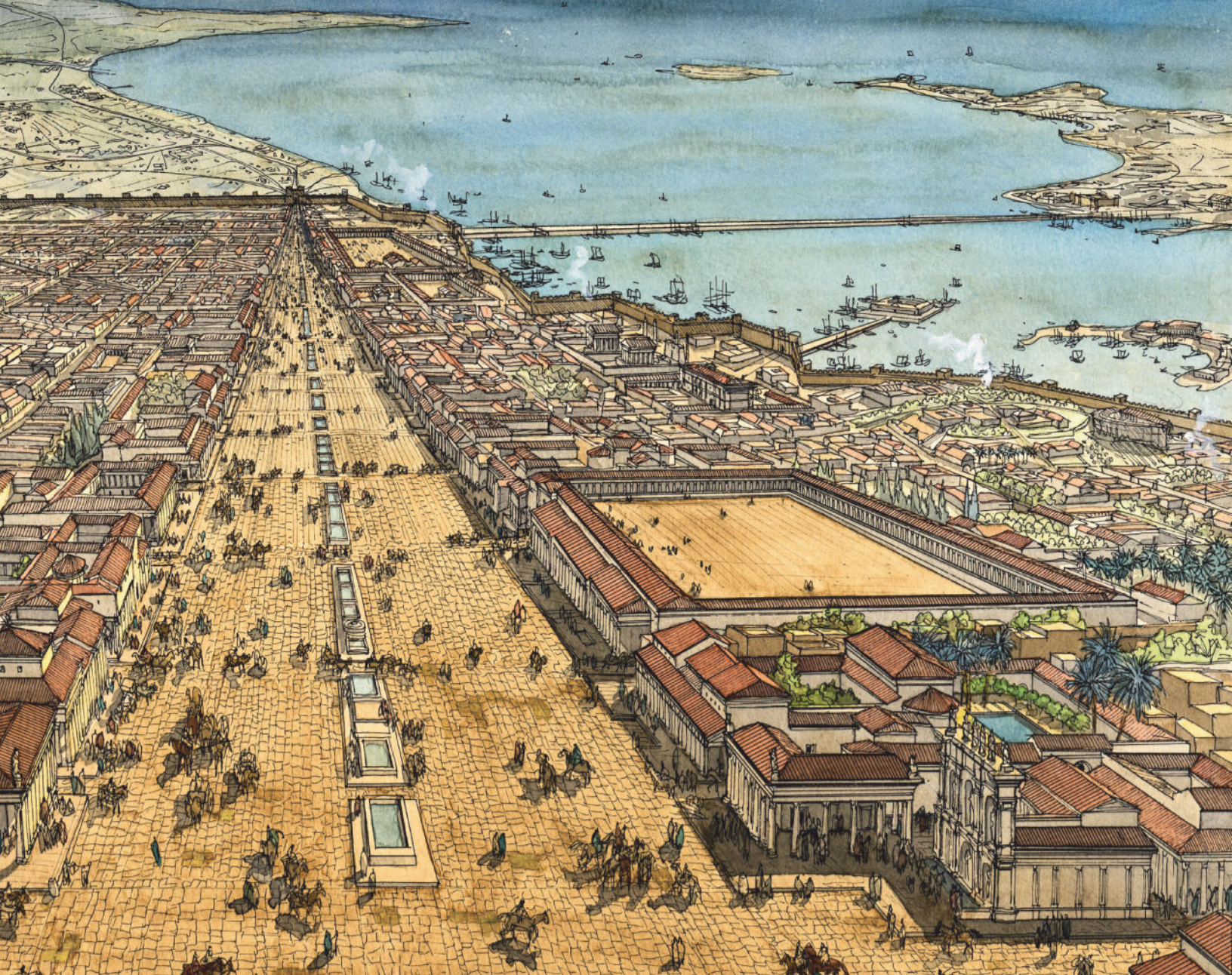
LUCIANO ROMANO/SCALA
FLORENCE

ROME'S SILK OBSESSION

DURING THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS, a fondness for silk had taken hold of the Roman upper classes. First-century poet Martial likened a lover's kiss to the beautiful scent "of silken robes of the Empress from her Palatine wardrobe." The term *siricaria* found on a Roman tablet from the first century A.D. is thought to refer to an enslaved person specialized in taking care of the costly silk garments in a household. Men also started to wear silk, a practice Roman moralists regarded as unmanly. According to the author Tacitus, in the early first century the Roman Senate decreed that "oriental silks should no longer degrade the male sex." In truth, the demand for silk created a trade imbalance with China while draining the Roman Empire of gold. According to historian Suetonius, Caligula (emperor from A.D. 37–41) paid no heed to the ruling and "did not follow the usage of his country and his fellow citizens," but appeared in public "sometimes in silk and in a woman's robe."



The king of Egypt (Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II) entrusted the command of an Indian expedition to the explorer Eudoxus of Cyzicus, a Greek who had entered the court of Alexandria as ambassador of his native city, Cyzicus, on the shores of the Sea of Marmara. At court, Eudoxus heard about navigation routes up the Nile and of the exotic wonders that could be found along the shores of the Red Sea. He was an astute man of the world and soon picked the Indian sailor's brain about how best to cross the Indian Ocean. The vital information needed was how to take advantage of changing seasonal conditions: The monsoon winds blow from the southwest toward India from March to September, and from the northeast toward Egypt from October to February. By following the sailor's advice and



harnessing the monsoon winds, Eudoxus managed to get all the way from Egypt to India in a matter of weeks. Then, after exchanging gifts with local rajas (chiefs or kings), he returned to Alexandria laden with spices and precious stones. Eudoxus's pioneering voyage revealed a fascinating new world to his contemporaries. Merchants from both East and West were soon taking advantage of the opportunities to trade across the Indian Ocean.

Cosmopolitan Alexandria

After the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 B.C., Alexandria became the main port of entry for goods arriving from the East. Having reached the Red Sea coast, these goods were transported inland by camel to the Nile and shipped

to Alexandria, from where they were distributed throughout the Mediterranean. People from the Middle East and India became a common presence in the streets of Alexandria. Syrians, Arabs, Persians, and Indians rubbed shoulders with Greeks and Romans in the audiences at lectures and recitals. A tattered papyrus discovered at Oxyrhynchus, a city south of Cairo, contains the script for a comic play actually set in India. The play, called *Charition*, features a drunken and lustful raja, a ship's captain anxiously awaiting

ALL POINT EAST

This illustration shows the Roman-era Egyptian city of Alexandria, one of the largest ports in the ancient Mediterranean and a trading hub for the East.

JEAN-CLAUDE GOLVIN. MUSÉE DÉPARTEMENTAL ARLES ANTIQUE © JEAN-CLAUDE GOLVIN / ÉDITIONS ERRANCE

Alexandria was the gateway for eastern goods that were then distributed around the Mediterranean.

MOUNTAINS AND MONUMENTS

The 14th-century ruins of a fortress near Tashkurgan in western China lie near one of the key Silk Roads. This route passed through the Pamirs, across modern-day Tajikistan, and to the monumental city of Balkh in Afghanistan, sacred to Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and Muslims.

SHUTTERSTOCK







Camels rest at the Great Colonnade at Palmyra, on the western end of the Silk Roads. Much of the site, today in Syria, was intentionally destroyed by the terrorist group Islamic State between 2015 and 2017.

NIELS VAN GIJN/AWL IMAGES

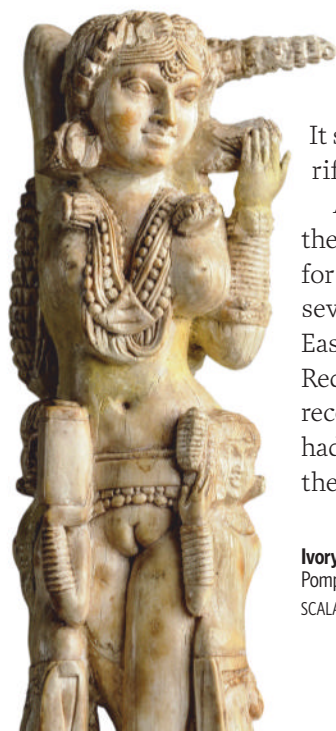
artisans paid eight drachmas; sailors, five; soldiers' wives, 20. Prostitutes, meanwhile, had to pay a hefty 108 drachmas. The journey through the desert was made at night to avoid the intense heat. The route passed military garrisons stationed along the way, where the caravans could stock up on water and food before continuing their trek.

The busiest Red Sea ports were Myos Hormos (Quseir al-Qadim), just over 100 miles (five or six days' journey) east of Koptos, and Berenice, which was 250 miles (12 days' journey) south. Caravans of traders from Greece, Egypt, and Arabia congregated in these ports to receive shipments from India of ivory, pearls, ebony, sandalwood, Chinese silk, and spices. They sent the ships back to India laden with wine and other Western goods. During Roman rule, the traffic was intense: Up to 120 ships sailed every year to India from Myos Hormos alone. This was a huge increase from the situation under the Ptolemies' reign, when only a few intrepid explorers, like Eudoxus of Cyzicus, had dared to make the crossing.

Red Sea to Indian Ocean

A merchants' handbook of the Indian Ocean dating to the mid-first century A.D., known as the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, mentions the main Indian ports where these ships arrived. They were Barygaza (modern-day Bharuch) in Gujarat; Muziris, believed by many scholars to be on the site of modern-day Pattanam in Kerala; and Poduke (modern-day Arikamedu) in Puducherry. The rajahs had attracted a good number of travelers to these ports, as well as merchants, musicians, concubines, intellectuals, and priests who thronged the streets. In Muziris, for example, there were so many foreigners that they even erected a temple dedicated to the first Roman emperor, Augustus. A young student from Alexandria could now decide to embark on an adventurous trip across the Indian Ocean instead of the typical cruise on the Nile.

However, few travelers ventured beyond India. The *Periplus Maris Erythraei* confirms that silk came from China and was brought overland through the Himalaya to the Indian port of Barygaza. The Chinese were known as the *Seres* (silk men), but very few travelers had seen a Chinese person. Some even thought of the



a favorable monsoon wind, a farting fool, and Indians who speak in a fake tongue intended to evoke a "barbarian language." It seems that stereotypes about the East were rife in Greco-Roman Egypt.

All the goods and people had to pass through the city of Koptos (also known as Qift), a center for trade on the banks of the Nile. From here, several caravan routes departed through the Eastern Desert of Egypt in the direction of the Red Sea. An inscription discovered at Koptos records that those passing through in caravans had to pay tolls at varying rates depending on the traveler's profession. For example, skilled

Ivory stauette depicting an Indian goddess or princess was discovered in Pompeii. First century A.D. National Archaeological Museum, Naples
SCALA, FLORENCE



Chinese as blue-eyed and blond-haired. They may have confused them with the Caucasian-featured middlemen who traded with the Chinese in Afghanistan. Many Romans, knowing nothing of the silkworm, believed that Chinese silk was a kind of plant fiber. The poet Virgil writes in *The Georgics* about silk being harvested as if it were fluff produced by a tree: “The Seres comb from off the leaves / Their silky fleece.” In the West, many people were aware that a distant country existed where a fine cloth was produced and brought back to be woven with gold thread in Alexandria or dyed with the imperial purple of Tyre. But the exact location of this marvelous place was a mystery to most.

Having arrived in India, the merchants did not usually travel on to China directly. They

EXOTIC GLIMPSES OF THE OCCIDENT

HOU-HAN-SHU, a book chronicling events that took place in the first and second centuries during China’s Han dynasty, marvels at imperial Rome’s wealth. Although written in the fifth century by Chinese historian Fan Ye, the accounts were taken from merchants who transmitted the information along the Silk Roads and sea routes. It explains that in the city of Rome there are five crystal palaces. The “king” hears cases each day in a palace, and a man with a bag follows the king’s carriage: “Those who have some matter to submit, throw a petition into the bag. The king . . . examines into the rights and wrongs of the matter. The official documents are under the control of thirty-six *chiang* [generals] who discuss government affairs.”

Above, a classical funerary stela from the first century B.C. shows a deceased Roman woman (seated) examining her objects of wealth and luxury.

AURIMAGES





THE GATES OF CHINA

At an altitude of over 15,000 feet, the Khunjerab Pass, whose name means "blood waterfall" in Wakhi, links western China with northern Pakistan. It is traversed by the modern Karkoram Highway, linking China with Islamabad, and follows sections of the ancient Silk Roads.

GETTY IMAGES

would first stop on the island of Taprobane (Sri Lanka) and then, crossing the Strait of Malacca, continue to Cattigara (Óc-Eo), in the delta of the Mekong River in Vietnam. Precious stones carved with Roman-inspired motifs and medals bearing the effigies of the Roman emperors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius have been found here, along with Chinese and Indian objects. The finds suggest that Cattigara was a bustling trading center, and this raises the possibility that the supposed Roman ambassadors in China, who presented themselves at the court of Luoyang on behalf of Marcus Aurelius, were in fact merchants from Cattigara.

The Treacherous Overland Route

Merchants also had the option of traveling eastward over land by camel across the steppes and deserts of Central Asia. These overland routes had been established for centuries; the Nabataeans from Arabia brought incense in caravans from Yemen to Petra in modern-day Jordan, and then on to the Mediterranean via the ports of Al-'Arish (Egypt) and Gaza. The merchants of Palmyra, the legendary "Venice of the Sands," imported silks, pearls, and all kinds of spices from Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf. But the Roman emperors always wanted to trade with China directly, cutting out any intermediaries. Yet trying to do this over land routes was fraught with difficulty and danger. Rome's enemy, the Parthians, who controlled a powerful empire in what is today Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, would divert the Roman caravans to the ports and markets under their control.

The Romans made numerous attempts to open new overland routes to the East. Geographer Isidore of Charax, thought to be in the service of Emperor Augustus, described the routes from Roman Syria to the Arachosia region of Afghanistan in a first-century B.C. pamphlet, "Parthian Stations." It details the distances between towns and mentions where there are strongholds and royal treasures. It even specifies the points at which a Roman contingent could replenish its supplies or ford a river.

The geographers Ptolemy and Marinus of Tyre writing in the second century A.D. both mention Maes Titianus, a traveler described as being of Macedonian origin. Maes Titianus paid for a commercial expedition to China, hiring

traders who started their journey at Hierapolis (today Manbij in Syria). Then they went south through Mesopotamia and crossed the Tigris River to continue their journey to Bactria (Balkh in Afghanistan). At that point they were still only halfway to China. Ahead of them lay a journey of several weeks to reach Tashkurgan and the upper reaches of the Yarkant River. It would take another 10 days to reach Kashgar, in the western Tarim Basin, and then cross the Pamirs to enter Chinese territory.

It is not known if the traders hired by Maes Titianus ever reached the capital of the Han Empire. The Chinese sources specify that the first contact with the West was that of the merchants who traveled from Malaysia in A.D. 166. But Maes' party would have spent almost

LUXURY GOODS

This first-century Roman vessel once held ointments and oils from the East. Museum of Medieval Art, Vic, Catalonia, Spain.

PRISMA/ALBUM





two years on their trek across Eurasia. Compared with the few weeks needed to cross the Indian Ocean from the ports of the Red Sea, it's understandable that a mission like that of Maes Titianus would have been exceptional. The closest most Westerners got to the East was through buying silk fabrics in the markets of Greece and Rome. There, no doubt, wily merchants would tell wondrous tales of their journeys to the East as they tried to extract the highest price possible for their precious goods.

Over time, mathematics, languages, enslaved people, inventions, and the Black Death have traveled the routes. Although the use of the Silk Roads would rise and fall, Rome and Han China experienced two additional periods of intense trade.

During China's Tang dynasty, from A.D. 618 to 907, multidirectional trade boomed. A final revival occurred under Mongol control in the 13th and 14th centuries. The Silk Roads dwindled when the Ottoman Empire prevented Europe's direct overland trade with the East and imposed high taxes, causing increased use of maritime routes. As merchants began searching for new paths to Asia, one Italian explorer, Christopher Columbus, would sail to the Americas. ■

CLASSICIST JUAN PABLO SÁNCHEZ RECENTLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE
BRYN MAWR CLASSICAL REVIEW ON INDIAN-OCEAN TRADE IN ANTIQUITY.

Learn more

www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/medieval-cities-silk-road-lidar?loggedin=true&rnd=1730230316741

PLEASURES OF THE HAN COURT

Around A.D. 101, the Macedonian merchant Maes Titianus set out to reach the Han capital, Luoyang. This Han-era relief (first and second centuries A.D.) shows musicians entertaining courtiers.

ALBUM



ROUTES FROM ROME TO THE EAST

THE OVERLAND ROUTE to Central Asia, India, and China that Roman merchants or emissaries followed can be divided into three main stages. The first took them to the eastern borders of the Roman Empire, either Palmyra, in the Syrian desert, or Alexandria, in Egypt. The second crossed the Parthian Empire as far as Bactria (modern-day Afghanistan), a major intersection between the West and the East. The route then continued through the Pamirs mountain range, over passes as high as 16,500 feet, before skirting the Taklimakan Desert and finally penetrating Chinese territory en route for the capital, Jicheng (today's Beijing). The third was a maritime route, which was more popular among Greek and Roman travelers in antiquity, started from Alexandria, continued along the Red Sea to the Indian coast, skirted the Malay Peninsula, and reached southern China.



(Above) A first-century plaque from Bagram, today in Afghanistan, a city influenced by Hellenistic culture and Silk Roads trade, shows a woman and a girl playing the flute. (Left) A vase with a mythological scene, made in Alexandria, Egypt, was also found in Bagram.

ABOVE: ALBUM; LEFT: SCALA, FLORENCE





Trade network

- Silk Road
- Land route
- Maritime route
- Greatest approximate extent of the Roman Empire (2nd century A.D.)
- Greatest approximate extent of the Han Empire (A.D. 100)
- NGM MAPS

FERGANA

SOGDIANA

XIONGNU

Sea of Japan
(East Sea)

TAKLIMAKAN
DESERT

WEI

KUSHAN

TIBET

SHU

HAN EMPIRE
WU

INDIA

HIMALAYA

South China
Sea

Bay of Bengal

INDIAN OCEAN

PAUL OF TARSUS

THE TRAVELING APOSTLE

A vision on the road to Damascus turned this zealous persecutor of Christians into an apostle who did more than any other to spread the new religion to every corner of the Roman Empire.

ÁNGEL NARRO



APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

This fifth- to sixth-century fresco (right) from Ephesus, in Turkey, was discovered in the 1990s. A book on his lap and two extended fingers from his raised right hand show Paul of Tarsus preaching. Above, a late Roman-era mosaic with a Christogram, the symbol that superimposes *chi* and *rho*, the first two Greek letters of "Christ."

Museum of the History of Barcelona, Spain

FRESCO: MARCO ANSALONI; CHRISTOGRAM: ALBUM







A Christian cross on a menorah is flanked by a palm and a ram's horn in this fourth-century inscription from a church in Laodicea in today's Turkey.

MARCO ANSALONI

Saul Paul, better known as Paul of Tarsus, went from persecuting Christians to preaching the Gospel. He is one of the most influential figures in the history of early Christianity. His origins, conversion, and the circumstances surrounding his preaching gave him a unique profile and made him a point of reference for the first Christian communities as they were established and spread after the death of Jesus.

Paul had a complicated trajectory to get to the position of respected apostle. He was born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia in southern Anatolia, into a Hellenized Jewish family. The inhabitants of Tarsus had enjoyed the privileges of Roman citizenship since the time of Mark Antony, in the middle of the first century B.C. This explains why Paul had a Roman name, consisting of a first name (praenomen), Saul, and a last name (cognomen), Paul. It was the cognomen Paul that he would later use to sign his letters. Nevertheless, his family must have been relatively humble, because Paul had learned the trade of tentmaking, which he continued to practice even after becoming a Christian apostle. This knowledge might have been a factor in allowing him to undertake such long missionary journeys. As he traveled around the Roman Empire, sometimes for years at a time, Paul would carry cloth with him and pitch a tent when needed.

Young Saul probably moved to Jerusalem while still a boy to complete his religious



FROM SAUL TO PAUL

ca A.D. 35–36

Saul, about age 31, renounces his persecution of Christians and uses his Roman name, Paul. His first preaching mission (circa A.D. 46–48) will pass through Cyprus and Turkey.



SAUL IN THE TEMPLE

The Western Wall of Jerusalem, near the Al Aqsa compound, is the only surviving section of the Second Temple, destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The young Saul was trained here by the great rabbi Gamaliel I.

RICHARD T. NOWITZ/AWL IMAGES

ca A.D. 49-57

Paul embarks on his second and third preaching missions, crossing Turkey from east to west and reaching several cities in Greece and Macedonia.

ca A.D. 59

Arrested by the Roman authorities, Paul begins a perilous voyage to Rome. Acts recounts that upon arrival, he carries on preaching under house arrest.

ca A.D. 64-67

Writings tell of Paul's martyrdom in Rome during Emperor Nero's reign. Paul's body is buried in the city that will become the headquarters of the Catholic Church.



An early Christian couple surrounded by saints, painted on glass. National Museum of the Bargello, Florence.
SCALA, FLORENCE



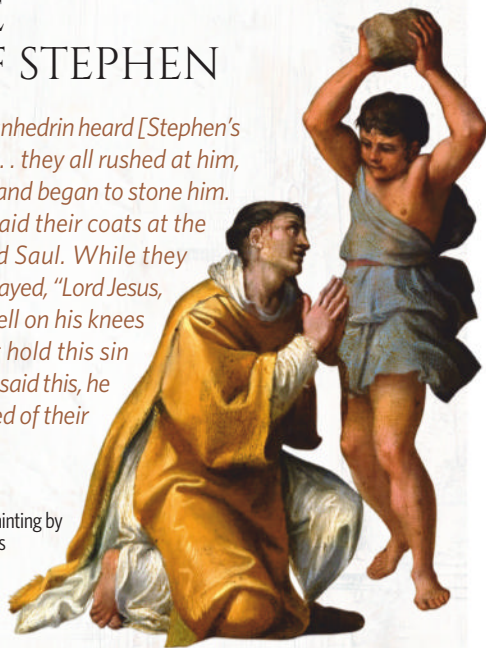
SAUL AT THE STONING OF STEPHEN

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard [Stephen's speech], they were furious . . . they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city, and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul approved of their killing him.

—Acts, chapters 7 and 8

"The Stoning of St. Stephen," 1603 painting by Annibale Carracci, Louvre Museum, Paris

HERVÉ LEWANDOWSKI/RMN-GRAND PALAIS



training under the rabbi Gamaliel I, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, the governing council of the Jews. Later, Saul was associated with the Pharisees, one of the two main Jewish parties. Unlike the more conservative Sadducees, which placed the written law of the Torah above all else, the Pharisees championed oral traditions and evolving interpretations.

Enemy of the Christians

Despite his more liberal readings of Jewish theology relative to the Sadducees, Saul was an Orthodox Jew who utterly rejected the emerging movement around Jesus of Nazareth. After Jesus died by crucifixion in the year A.D. 30 or 33, his followers kept faith that their Messiah would soon be resurrected and return to usher



While on the road to Damascus, Saul falls to the ground and hears a voice ask: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’

approved of the sentence. In the persecutions that follow, Saul is zealous in searching houses and dragging out any Christians he found.

But Saul’s anti-Christian zeal would radically change soon afterward. While on his way to the Syrian city of Damascus, he is suddenly thrown to the ground and experiences a revelation. He sees a bright light shining down on him from heaven and hears a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4). The voice, identifying itself as that of Jesus, urges him to enter Damascus and do as he’s ordered. After the vision, Saul is left blind. He arrives in Damascus, and meets a Christian named Ananias, himself told by Jesus in a vision to visit Saul. Ananias lays his hands on Saul, curing his blindness, as “something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes” (Acts 9:18). Saul had been blind for three days, the same length of time believed to have elapsed between the death and resurrection of Jesus. After recovering his sight, Saul was baptized into the Christian community and began to go by the name Paul. The fervor with which he had once renounced Jesus’s teaching would now be used to spread the Gospel.

in the end of the world. Saul reproached these Christians for not observing the Mosaic law and for associating with non-Jews, whom he regarded as idol worshippers.

These early followers of Jesus were mostly Jews themselves and participated in synagogue life, and Saul considered it his duty to identify them and call for their arrest and punishment. He is presented, initially, as a ruthless persecutor of Christians. In the New Testament book Acts, the future Apostle is mentioned for the first time in connection with the death of Stephen, a young follower of Jesus and the first Christian martyr. After an argument with some Jews, Stephen is arrested for blasphemy and tried by the Sanhedrin. He is condemned to death by stoning. Acts records that Saul

THE TURNING POINT

Saul falls off his horse upon hearing the words of Christ on the road to Damascus in this late 16th-century painting by Ippolito Scarsella (“Scarsellino”). Capitoline Museums, Rome
ALBUM

The Connection With the Messiah

Paul’s dramatic conversion was important because it justified the central role that Paul would have in the spread of Christianity. Strictly speaking, Paul didn’t fulfill the requirements to be considered an apostle, since he wasn’t one of the disciples who followed Jesus from his baptism to his resurrection and ascension to heaven. Paul, however, defended his position in his letters, insisting that those who had a vision of the resurrected Jesus, like the one he experienced on the road to Damascus, were indeed apostles called forth by God.

After his conversion, and for almost 30 years until his death around A.D. 64–67, Paul devoted himself tirelessly to Christian teaching. He made four great missionary journeys



CONDEMNED TO THE FLAMES

Eustache Le Sueur's 1649 painting depicts Paul watching as newly converted Christians in Ephesus prepare to burn their pagan books. National Gallery, London

AKG/ALBUM

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” emphasizes that everyone is equal before God.

covering a large swath of the Roman Empire. His aim was always to spread the Christian message and support the first groups of Christians who were establishing themselves in key locations. Paul's teaching was disseminated through a series of letters addressed to these new Christian churches that had expanded across the Roman Empire, to Greece, Ephesus, and beyond. Through these letters, which later formed part of the New Testament, he set out the basic precepts of Christian doctrine and instructions for how the faithful in these places should live.



A Universal Message

What set Paul apart from most of the early followers of Jesus was his firm commitment to spreading the Christian message to everyone, not only Jewish people. Paul opposed the members of the early church in Jerusalem who demanded that non-Jews be circumcised as a sign of their acceptance of the covenant between God and Abraham. In Paul's view, the Jewish law had been superseded by the new faith in Jesus Christ. “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus,” he declared in a passage of his letter to the Galatians (3:28).

Although in his missions Paul did convert some Jews, most of the new proselytes were

CHRISTIAN CYPRUS

These ruins of a fifth-century Christian basilica are at Kourion in southeastern Cyprus. When Paul arrived in Cyprus on his first missionary journey, a small group of Jewish Christians had already been living and practicing their faith on the island.

GEORGIOS TSICHLIS/GETTY IMAGES



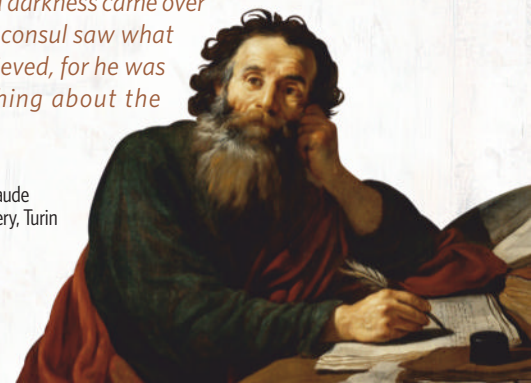
non-Jews. During his second and third journeys, Paul visited various cities in Asia Minor and continental Greece that had a long history of pagan culture; Ephesus, Thessalonica, and Athens were among them. There he preached the Christian message with notable success. In Thessalonica he persuaded some of the locals to abandon the gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon—“idols,” as he saw them—and instead “serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son . . . Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).


Chapter 17 of Acts recounts Paul’s long stay in Athens, the very heart of ancient Greek culture. Paul is troubled to see that the city is “full of idols,” so as well as going to the synagogue to argue with both Jews and Greeks, he goes to the marketplace to speak

PAUL BREAKS A MAGICIAN’S SPELL

CHAPTER 13 of Acts records Paul’s first journey, where he traveled to Cyprus and met the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus. The proconsul’s attendant, a “sorcerer and false prophet” named Elymas, opposed Paul and his message. Paul looked at Elymas, called him “a child of the devil,” and announced that he would be blind for a time. Then *“immediately mist and darkness came over him . . . When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord”* (Acts 13:7-12).

“Saint Paul the Apostle” by Claude Vignon, 17th century, Savoy Gallery, Turin
SCALA, FLORENCE





Paul in El Greco's double portrait "St. Peter and St. Paul." 1587-1592, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia

ALBUM

BALD, LONG-NOSED, AND BOWLEGGED?

PAUL'S IMAGE in artistic representations is relatively consistent. This may owe something to an apocryphal text, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, which recounts the influence of Paul's teaching on Thecla, a young noblewoman. In the beginning of the narrative, Paul is described as "a man small in size, bald-headed, bowlegged, well-built, with eyebrows meeting, rather long-nosed, full of grace." The text was described by Tertullian, an early Christian writer, who dates its composition to around A.D. 160. It was written by a Christian official in what is today Turkey, who was reprimanded for his flight of fancy and possibly stripped of his position. Nevertheless, it was widely read at the time and seems to have informed El Greco's vision of Paul in this 16th-century painting.

with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. These philosophers debate with him, with some saying, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, 'He seems to be advocating foreign gods.' They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:16-18).

The most outstanding episode of Paul's stay in Athens took place on the Areopagus, a hill near the Acropolis where an important court was located. In this symbolic location, Paul delivered a speech in which he emphasized the unique and exclusive nature of the Christian God and the resurrection of the dead. Although many rejected him, Paul succeeded in convincing some of those present, including an important member of the Areopagus, called Dionysius, who would later become one of the first bishops of the city of Athens, and a woman named Damaris. These non-Jews were just some of the many who converted after hearing Paul preach.

Pauline Doctrine

After Athens, Paul went to Corinth, where he stayed for a year and a half with a Jewish couple who were followers of Jesus and, like him, tentmakers by profession. While there, "every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4). Then he moved into a house adjoining the synagogue in Corinth. Thanks to Paul's preaching, "the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Other Jews, however, complained about Paul to the proconsul, or governor, of the province of Achaia, but no action was taken against him, and he was free to leave.

Paul's letters suggest that one of his main tasks was to resolve ethical or practical doubts as they arose within the Christian communities. In most cases, Paul tried to find a balance between the new teachings of Christianity and established customs. This may explain the stance he took on the position of women in society. In broad terms, Paul taught that Christians should view men and women as equals—as evident in his letter to the Galatians, "nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"—but in practice,



he held a highly conservative position. In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul urged: “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church” (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

Some scholars argue that Paul’s restrictions were intended to prevent women from teaching or asking questions only in public services as custom at the time did not permit women to have authority over their husbands. Given that a few chapters earlier, in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul explains how women should pray and prophesy, some scholars believe he did not

intend to silence women entirely. Paul called Euodia and Syntyche his co-workers “in the cause of the gospel” (Philippians 4:3) and Junia, who was in prison with him, “outstanding among the apostles” (Romans 16:7). In Romans 16, he greets several women who “work hard in the Lord.” Although some still debate the meaning of these verses, we know many women worked alongside Paul in spreading the Gospel.

Paul also pronounced how those in the new Christian communities should manage their sexual relations. He lauded chastity but

CASTING OUT DEMONS

Above, the 17th-century Dutch engraving reimagines the scene described in Acts when Paul casts out demons from a fortune-teller in the Macedonian city of Philippi.

ALAMY/ACI

‘For it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church,’ wrote Paul in his first letter to the Christian community in Corinth.

Paul spent time in Ephesus, in Asia Minor, on his second and third journeys. The image shows the library of Celsus, in Ephesus.

IVAN VDOVIN/AWL IMAGES



A PREACHER WHO INSPIRED WOMEN

ALTHOUGH THE PAUL of the New Testament can be conservative about gender roles, the apocryphal literature (accounts not included in the New Testament) reveals an Apostle whose preaching connects with women. The second-century *Acts of Paul and Thecla* tells the story of a young noblewoman moved by his teaching, while in another text, he inspires Artemilla from Ephesus and her servant, Eubula. The third-century *Acts of Xanthippe, Polyxena, and Rebecca* takes the Apostle to Spain, where, in an action-packed plot involving shipwrecks and kidnapping, sisters Xanthippe and Polyxena are captivated by Paul's teaching. "When Xanthippe saw Paul . . . her heart leaped continually, and as possessed with an unexpected joy she said to herself, Why does my heart beat vehemently at the sight of this man?"



considered marriage a useful defense against lasciviousness and the temptations of Satan. While saying that ideally the unmarried and widows should stay single and abstain from all sexual activity, he added the caveat: "If they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7:9). In this way, Paul integrated the most important values of the Christian message into the established social structures.

Biblical accounts and most other sources record Paul's fourth and final missionary journey to Rome. Although Acts doesn't include details of how he died, it's believed that he was martyred, a victim of Roman authorities who were persecuting Christians for refusing to



worship their gods and unjustifiably blaming them for the Great Fire of Rome. *Acts of Paul*, an apocryphal text from the mid-second century, records that he is beheaded by order of Emperor Nero. According to this account, when Paul's head is struck off, milk instead of blood flows from his neck. Then Paul is resurrected the next day and ascends to heaven, just as his teacher Jesus did.

Another account links Paul's martyrdom to that of the Apostle Peter, a tradition based on the close relationship between the two. In a fifth-century apocryphal text called *Acts of Peter and Paul*, Nero is advised about the fate of the two Apostles who were imprisoned together: "It is just that Paul's head should be cut off, and that Peter should be raised on

a cross." This account also describes how a group of Christians from the East tried to collect Paul's relics but was stopped from taking them out of the city by an earthquake.

Paul's body remained in Rome, and he was buried in the Ostian Way. Today the site is marked by the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. The original building dates to the time of Emperor Constantine I, who granted religious tolerance and freedom of worship to Christians. As the Apostle to the gentiles, Paul helped turn the Roman Empire into a center of Christianity. ■

HALLOWED GROUND

Built on the spot where Paul is believed to be buried, the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls is named for its location outside the third-century Aurelian wall in Rome. The basilica was rebuilt in the 19th century after a severe fire.

WISKERKE/ALAMY/CORDON PRESS

A SPECIALIST IN GREEK AND BYZANTINE HISTORY, ÁNGEL NARRO TEACHES IN THE CLASSICS DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VALENCIA, SPAIN.

PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

Paul embarked on long preaching missions with the aim of spreading Jesus' message across the eastern Mediterranean. The first three journeys are described in full in Acts. The New Testament's account of his final journey to Rome does not recount his martyrdom.

- ← First journey, ca A.D. 46–48
- ← Second journey, ca A.D. 49–52
- ← Third journey, ca A.D. 53–57
- ← Journey to Rome, ca A.D. 59–60

50 mi
50 km
NGM MAPS

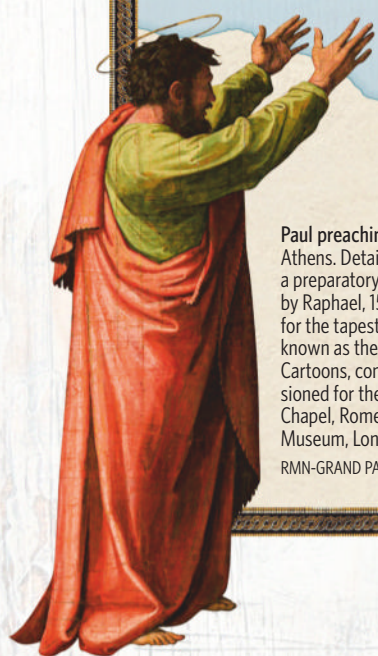
FIRST JOURNEY

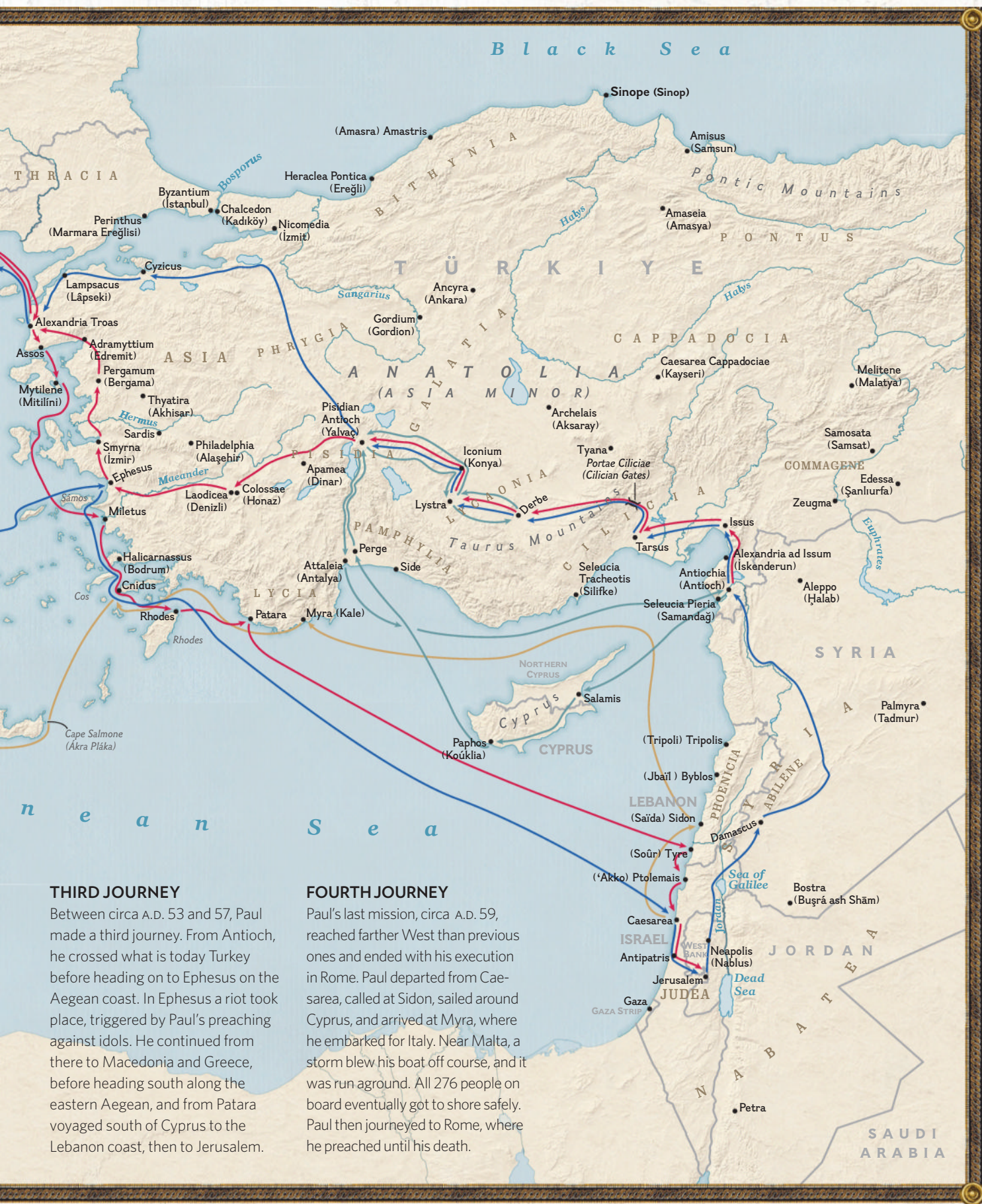
Accompanied by Barnabas, Paul set out to the island of Cyprus between circa A.D. 46 and 48. The pair left Antioch (today in Turkey) by boat and sailed to the Cypriot cities of Salamis and Paphos. In Paphos, Paul converted the local proconsul, Sergius Paulus. From Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas returned to the mainland of modern-day central Turkey, stopping at the cities of Perge, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

SECOND JOURNEY

Between circa A.D. 49 and 52, Paul made his second mission, this time with Silas. After leaving Jerusalem, they passed overland through Asia Minor, visiting Tarsus, Paul's hometown, and Alexandria Troas, before crossing into Macedonia and Greece. In Philippi they were imprisoned for exorcizing an enslaved girl. They went on to Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth, finally returning to Caesarea by sea and from there to Jerusalem.

Paul preaching in Athens. Detail from a preparatory sketch by Raphael, 1515–1516, for the tapestry series known as the Raphael Cartoons, commissioned for the Sistine Chapel, Rome. V&A Museum, London
RMN-GRAND PALAIS





THIRD JOURNEY

Between circa A.D. 53 and 57, Paul made a third journey. From Antioch, he crossed what is today Turkey before heading on to Ephesus on the Aegean coast. In Ephesus a riot took place, triggered by Paul's preaching against idols. He continued from there to Macedonia and Greece, before heading south along the eastern Aegean, and from Patara voyaged south of Cyprus to the Lebanon coast, then to Jerusalem.

FOURTH JOURNEY

Paul's last mission, circa A.D. 59, reached farther West than previous ones and ended with his execution in Rome. Paul departed from Caesarea, called at Sidon, sailed around Cyprus, and arrived at Myra, where he embarked for Italy. Near Malta, a storm blew his boat off course, and it was run aground. All 276 people on board eventually got to shore safely. Paul then journeyed to Rome, where he preached until his death.

The Great Smog of London

From December 5 to 9, 1952, the British capital was engulfed in an immense cloud of pollution, which paralyzed the city and led to thousands of deaths. The episode triggered radical clean-air reform and a new era of environmental awareness.





UNREAL CITY

This eerie, nocturnal image of a bus moving along the London embankment on December 6, 1952, was taken in what should have been daylight. As the capital of the world's first industrialized nation, London suffered extreme environmental pollution throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, when spikes in deaths from respiratory diseases were commonplace.

The combination of smoke and fog gave rise to a new hazard of modern and industrialized life, and a new word—smog. When low temperatures, an anticyclone, and low winds coincided, the smoke emitted by factories and homes concentrated over the city without rising or dispersing. The resulting smog left the streets practically in darkness. These conditions came together to create the Great Smog of 1952. The streets were almost dark and traffic was interrupted by lack of visibility. London Airport (today known as Heathrow Airport) was closed, and Londoners were left without entertainment. Soccer matches were canceled, cinemas and theaters were closed, and smog invaded not only the streets and buses but also the interiors of buildings.

UPPA/AURIMAGES

THE CURSE OF COAL

The smog was caused by coal, which powered 90 percent of Britain's energy output in the 1950s. The coal-fired behemoth of Battersea Power Station (pictured), whose chimneys reared over the Thames River upstream from Westminster, was a major contributor to the capital's pollution. Most of the polluting smoke, however, came from the chimneys of private homes, as seen in the image at far right, taken a few years after the Great Smog. Londoners were attached to the tradition of gathering by the fireplace, despite the inefficiency of coal fires in heating the home. The domestic coal burned in London's hearths was often of poor quality, with a high proportion of sulfur. In areas of central London during the Great Smog, the concentration of sulfur dioxide in the air was 10 times normal levels.

LEFT: TRINITY MIRROR; RIGHT: ALAMY/CORDON PRESS









SULFUR SOUP

A pedestrian guides a motorist over a bridge during the Great Smog. Londoners called smog episodes pea-soupers, for the blackish yellow color of the air. Walking through one assailed the senses. It gave off a smell of sulfur, leaving a layer of grime on skin and clothes. Those who lived through the Great Smog remember how it muffled sounds. Most disorienting, however, was the loss of visibility. "You literally could not see your hand in front of your face," Londoner Barbara Fewster recalled in a 2002 interview with the BBC. She described driving back from a party with her then fiancé 50 years earlier: "The smog hit us like a wall. It was absolutely solid. It was a terrifying journey. The only thing to do was for me to walk in front of the car. My fiancé hung out of the window while I walked . . . in front to guide him."

PHOTOAISA



A CLEAN BREAK

A London public health official measures air quality in November 1954 (left) and a woman wears a smog mask (below) during a pollution episode in 1953, a year after the Great Smog. Although the capital continued to experience high levels of pollution, the 1952 Great Smog marked a turning point in public awareness of environmental contamination. Some 4,000 people were known to have died as a direct result of the five-day smog. It was the deadliest pollution event reported anywhere in the world at the time, and researchers today estimate the death toll to have been much higher. In 1956, based on the report of a special committee, the British Parliament approved a Clean Air Act that delimited urban areas where burning coal was prohibited. These areas expanded until they covered more than half of the municipal area in 1969. As in many modern cities, traffic pollution has now replaced coal as a public health hazard. While traffic-reduction schemes in London have proved successful in reducing pollution, they have also faced opposition from sectors of the public.

LEFT: DAILY HERALD/GETTY IMAGES;
RIGHT: POPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES



Eridu: First City of the Earliest Known Civilization

Unpromising mounds in the Iraqi desert turned out to be Sumer's earliest city. Its temple to Enki was built and rebuilt over centuries.

Buried in the Mesopotamian desert undisturbed for over two millennia lay a hidden key to understanding one of the world's oldest known civilizations.

In 1854 British official John George Taylor was sent on an excavation mission to the desert of southern Iraq by the British consul general in Baghdad. Taylor, an agent of the East India Company and British vice-consul at Basra, was commissioned with investigating a remote site called Tell Abu Shahrain, where there was a series of tells, or mounds, made up of debris left by human settlements. At first, Taylor was unimpressed. In the excavation report published in 1855, he wrote: "My visit this year to Abu Shahrain [sic] has been unproductive of any very important results."



NGM MAPS

He even questioned whether it had been worth transcribing his field notes.

Taylor had been hoping to uncover something impressive: statues, inscriptions, evidence of palaces and temples. What he found instead, in the short time he had available, were walls, drainage systems, stone platforms, and the remains of limestone columns decorated with mosaic cones.

In his journal, Taylor highlighted finding a statue of a black granite lion lying on the

surface. Even counting the lion, however, Taylor must have thought this too meager a haul to justify a second expedition. Only later would it be revealed how these unpromising mounds were the remnants of one of the oldest cities on Earth: Eridu.

Before the Flood

Eridu was a foundational city in Sumerian culture, the world's earliest known civilization, which flourished from around the fourth to second millennia B.C. in what is now Iraq.

Eridu's significance is evidenced by the Sumerian King List, various versions of which were inscribed in cuneiform toward the end of the third millennium B.C. The latter part of the list includes cities with royal dynasties that can be verified from historical

records. The early part of the list is more legendary, recording the original royal cities that existed before "the Flood" (an event that may reflect a

ARCHAEOLOGISTS excavate the site of the ancient Sumerian city of Eridu, near Basra in southern Iraq, in 2022.

ALAA AL-MARJANI/REUTERS/GTRES

UNDER THE SAND

1854

John George Taylor records archaeological features at Tell Abu Shahrain, the site later identified as Eridu.

1918

The British Museum appoints R. Campbell Thompson to excavate the site using Ottoman prisoners of war.

1946

Fuad Safar and Seton Lloyd begin excavations. They find earlier layers of settlement under a ziggurat dedicated to Enki.

1981

Safar and Lloyd's research at Eridu, a full survey of its eight mounds spanning three millennia, is published.



regional catastrophe or may be related to the biblical story in Genesis where the whole Earth was flooded). The first of these antediluvian royal cities was Eridu: “After the kingship descended from heaven, the kingship was in Eridu. . . In five cities, eight kings. . . Then the flood swept over.”

Of immense symbolic importance, Eridu was also home to the largest temple dedicated to Enki, the god of

water and wisdom, a key deity of the Sumerian pantheon. For centuries, this shrine attracted pilgrims from all over Mesopotamia to Eridu.

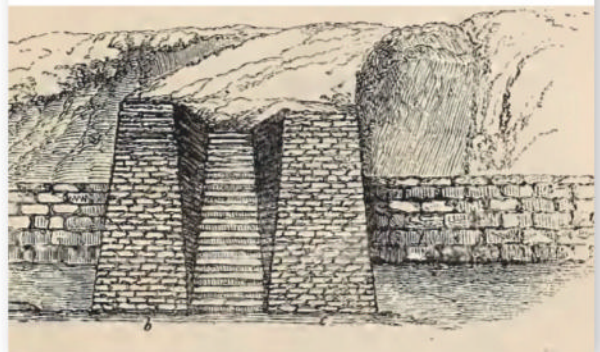
An Interest in Eden

Despite Taylor’s disappointment, his initial findings piqued the interest of scholars. Although no large-scale excavations were carried out in the decades that followed Taylor’s visit, officials at the British

PASSION FOR THE EAST

JOHN GEORGE TAYLOR had a deep interest in Near Eastern antiquities. From 1851 to 1861 he traveled around southern Iraq investigating sites including Tell el Muqayyar, which includes remains of the ancient Sumerian city of Ur.

Architectural structures at Eridu, engraving by Taylor, 1854–55
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND







The City of Enki

THIS IDEALIZED RECONSTRUCTION imagines what Eridu may have looked like at the height of its power in 3300 B.C. The city was centered around the temple of Enki. This likely comprised an elevated platform that incorporated the remains of previous

BALAGE BALOGH/SCALA, FLORENCE

temple buildings. The sanctuary itself appears to have been quite a large rectangular structure (approximately 65 feet by 40 feet) with an elongated central chamber, called a cella. There would also have been an access staircase.

Glimpses of Eridu

EXCAVATIONS at Eridu have uncovered a large number of objects spanning a wide period of Mesopotamian history. The votive cones, inscribed with details of the king and left in the foundations of monuments, date to the reign of Lipit-Ishtar in the 20th century B.C. The pottery bowls are vastly older: They were created during the pre-Sumerian Ubaid period of the sixth millennium B.C.

▼ **Foundation cones** bearing the name Lipit-Ishtar, king of the nearby city of Isin in the 20th century B.C.
BRIDGEMAN/ACI



▲ **Pottery bowls**, dated between the sixth and fifth millennia B.C.
GETTY IMAGES

► **Seal impression** on a brick from the temple at Eridu, 21st century B.C.
INTERFOTO/ACI



Museum remained interested in the site. In 1918, just before the end of World

War I, museum officials commissioned Assyriologist Reginald Campbell Thompson to carry out excavations at the site. For a month, Campbell made archaeological surveys, using Otto-

man prisoners of war as laborers. The following year, British Egyptologist Harry R.H. Hall arrived with the aim of identifying the site's monumental buildings.

Finding the Ziggurat

It was not until 1946, however, that the first large-scale excavations began. Iraq had gained independence from Britain in

1932, and the Iraqi government was keen to fund archaeological projects that might lend prestige to their nation-building narratives.

At the end of World War II, the Department of Antiquities of Iraq relaunched research at the site of Eridu under the direction of Iraqi archaeologist Fuad Safar, assisted by British

archaeologist Seton Lloyd. Safar and Lloyd knew each other well, having worked together at Tell Uqair, near Baghdad. They believed that fully excavating Eridu could yield important data on the earliest phases of Mesopotamian history.

They concentrated their efforts on Mound 1, an 82-foot-high tell covering an area of some 1,900 by 1,770 feet. Before long, they uncovered the remains of an unfinished ziggurat, or step pyramid, built at the end of the third millennium B.C. by a ruler of the 3rd dynasty of Ur, a late, short-lived Sumerian state. But what really

Safar and Lloyd believed excavating Eridu could yield important data on early Mesopotamian history.

Model of a skiff from Eridu, first half of the fourth millennium B.C.
INTERFOTO/ACI





ABALONE HUMMINGBIRD PENDANT & EARRINGS COLLECTION

Graceful Hummingbird Design

Solid 925 Sterling Silver

Abalone Mother of Pearl

Complimentary 22" Chain

1.57" Length



Natural
Abalone
Shell



Matching Abalone
Hummingbird Earrings

TAKE FLIGHT WITH THIS DAZZLING DELIGHT

The hummingbird is a traditional symbol of love and beauty. Suspended in mid-flight, with a **rainbow of iridescence** in wave-like patterns, outstanding shimmering Abalone decorates her body and wing.

Each unique, one-of-a-kind piece of Abalone shell has been molded into a sterling silver pendant. Traditionally, Abalone shell is believed to **induce feelings of calm, compassion and love**. It has a tranquil, warm and gentle cosmic vibration.

Spiritually uplifting, Abalone is said to soothe the nerves, encourage serenity and bestow a feeling of inner peace. Originally priced at \$249, this stunning piece of jewelry can be yours today for a **special offer price of just \$79** with promo code: **NG5MHB**

Original Price Without Code ~~\$249~~ - With Promo Code **Now Only \$79**

Abalone Hummingbird Pendant \$79 plus S&H

Abalone Hummingbird Earrings \$79 plus S&H

Abalone Hummingbird Complete Collection **Now Only \$149** (EXTRA SAVING)

ORDER NOW TOLL FREE 24/7 ON: 1-800 733 8463
AND QUOTE PROMO CODE: NG5MHB

Or order online at: timepiecesusa.com/ng5mhb and enter promo: **NG5MHB**

PAY BY CHECK: Timepieces International Inc. 10701 NW 140th Street, Suite 1, Hialeah Gardens, FL 33018

BURIED TEMPLES

IN 1946 the Department of Antiquities of Iraq began work at Tell Abu Shahrain. After a preliminary investigation, archaeologists Fuad Safar and Seton Lloyd focused on Mound 1, which, given its dimensions and based on previous excavation reports, they thought likely contained the most evidence of buildings. They opened up some trenches on the top of the mound and, as they dug further and further down, uncovered various strata containing the remains of successively older buildings. Their goal was to get down to virgin soil and on the way document all the strata. In total, they identified 18 strata and the remains of six successive temples.

Excavations at Eridu, led by Safar, in a photograph from September 1948
MARY EVANS/ACI



intrigued Safar and Lloyd was what lay hidden beneath the remains of that ziggurat.

City Upon City

They were not disappointed. Beneath remains dating to the Ur III (21st century B.C.) period were more levels of human occupation.

As they dug further, they hit a stratum dating to the Uruk period (4500–3200 B.C.). Below that were remains from as far back as the proto-historic, pre-Sumerian Ubaid period (5300–3800 B.C.) As they worked, they found multiple reconstructions of the temple of Enki, made over the course of two millennia, along

with other places of worship.

Italian Mesopotamian historian Mario Liverani writes that Eridu's temples were "reconstructed and expanded after each collapse, and their remains formed a raised platform on which new temples were constructed." As the temple of Enki was repeatedly rebuilt on the same site, its structure evolved.

According to Liverani, new iterations of the temple became progressively larger from the middle of the fourth millennium B.C.: "These imposing buildings . . . by far superseded anything ever built until then." Their emergence marks a transition

from worshiping at home to worshiping at specially built places. In parallel with this process, there is evidence of more complex social hierarchies emerging in the city.

The reconstructions of the temple stopped around 3200 B.C. A millennium later, with the brief return of Sumerian power under Ur III, the ziggurat would be erected on the ruins of all that had gone before.

More Secrets

Although Eridu declined, it continued to have relevance, probably as a place of pilgrimage. Excavation of surrounding tells provided more clues

to the timeline. Mound 2 contained the remains of a palace complex dating to the first half of the third millennium B.C. Mounds 3, 4, and 5 contain pottery dating to the second and first centuries B.C. but no remains from residential buildings. The city was only sparsely populated by that time.

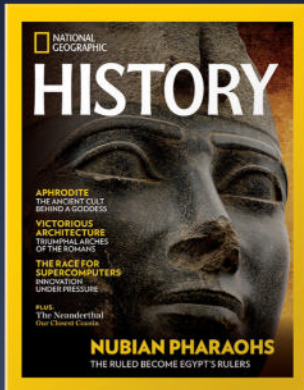
Safar and Lloyd's research was finally published in 1981. Despite the political instability of the region, Italian and French archaeologists seek to resume excavations at Eridu, the first city of the earliest civilization, and reveal more secrets.

—Antonio Ratti

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF



HISTORY



See more www.nghistory.partica.online/





NEW SERIES

DAVID BLAINE

DO NOT ATTEMPT

MAR 23

STREAM ON

 NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

 **hulu**