

History Happenings

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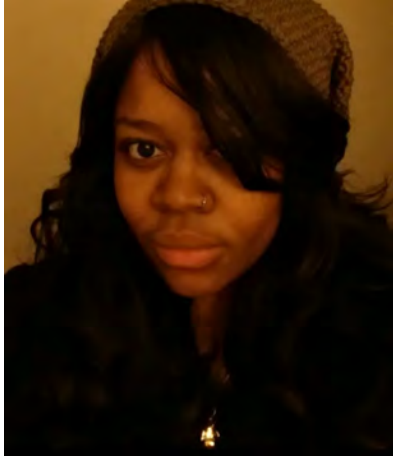
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Graduate Student Conference in African American History-2017

By Rebekkah Mulholland



Rebekkah Mulholland is a PhD candidate

In October 2017, the Graduate Association for African American History (GAAAH) hosted another successful conference at the University of Memphis. The theme for this conference was, “From the Archives to Social Media: Exploring Black, History, Culture, and Lives.” The 18th Annual Graduate Conference in African American History attracted applicants from universities throughout the nation and around the world. The three-day conference featured a keynote address, roundtables, and several student panels from October 18th-20th. We owe many thanks and gratitude to our generous sponsors, the Department of History, African and African American Studies Program, Benjamin Hooks Institute for Social Change, Marcus Orr Center for the Humanities, Memphis Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and the Department of Political Science.



Kicking off the conference was an amazing keynote address by the phenomenal, Dr. Paula



Giddings, the Elizabeth A. Woodson 1922 Professor of Africana Studies at Smith College. She is the author of *When and Where I Enter: The Impact on Black Women on Race and Sex in America* and most recently, the biography of anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions*, which won *The Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Biography and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle award. During her speech, she argued, Ida B. Wells started the modern Civil Rights

Movement with her anti-lynching activism. She also talked about Memphis history of having self-sufficient and thriving black communities. Her presence and speech drew a large crowd of students (undergraduate and graduate), faculty, staff, community members, as well as her sisters of the Memphis Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

The conference held in rooms in the University Center on campus, featured originally research papers presented by seventeen participants. Organized thematically, session topics were, *Racial Politics and Education*; *Gender, Identity, and Labor*; *Enslavement, Childhood, and Labor*; *Race and Public Spheres*; *Migration and Transnational Relationships*; *Radical Black Thought*; *From Riverside to the River City: The Prophetic Pessimism of Martin Luther King*; and *"If I Can Help Somebody": The Rhetorical Influence of Martin Luther King Jr.*



The annual, *Memphis State Eight* paper prizes went to Adam Neil, pictured, (Simmons College) for third place with his paper entitled, "Quest for Purification: Black Women Abolitionist Dreams in the Early Radical Abolitionist Period, 1830-1845." Second place went to Jonathan Smith (University of Memphis) with his paper, "Synecdoche, Ideology, and Enduring Struggle in Martin Luther King Jr.'s Speech, 'Honoring Dr. DuBois'." Top prize went to Hollie Pich (University of Sydney) for her paper, "Plunging into the Race Question: The Battle over Memphis' Park, 1909-1913."

Each year, we collaborate with the Benjamin Hooks Institute for Social Change for their prestigious National Book Award luncheon and lecture. The most recent award winner, Russell Rickford drew an impressive crowd as he discussed his book, *We Are An African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination*.

A roundtable discussion with staff from local historical and cultural institutions such as Slave Haven Museum (Elaine Turner) and the Pink Palace Museum (Caroline Carrico) discussed the history behind their institutions, their collections, and how research are able to access their materials.

Each year, GAAAH members work for months to put on a stellar conference. This conference is made possible with support from our faculty advisor, Dr. Brian Kwoba. Dr. Kwoba also served as a commentator on a student panel. We would like to thank other faculty members in the department for their willingness to serve as commentators, Drs. Michele Coffey and Susan O'Donovan. Dr. Andre Johnson from the Department of Communication served as a commentator for two panels full of presenters from his department. Also, big thanks to GAAAH and UofM alum, Drs. KT Ewing, Le'Trice Donaldson, and James Conway for their continued support, presence, commitment to GAAAH, and for serving as commentators. We extend a huge thank you Dr. Aram Goudsouzian for his support and guidance. We owe a great deal of gratitude to Karen Bradley and Karen Jackett for all of their time, work, and support. Thank you to all of our supporters and volunteers. We hope to see you again in the fall for another successful conference.

All About Maritime History

By Dr. Stephen K. Stein

Guiomar Duenas-Vargas: Professor Stein, tell us about your latest book, *The Sea in World History: Trade, Travel, and Exploration*, published by ABC-CLIO, in 2017.

Stephen K. Stein: This one is a two-volume encyclopedia of maritime history. Organized chronologically into eight time periods. It features long essays on particular cultures, nations, and regions, and about 500 shorter entries on important events, explorers, places, ships, and technologies, as well as some primary sources.

Duenas-Vargas: This is a very ambitious project. How did it come about? What is different about your project from a similar one done by Oxford University Press?

Stein: Over the years, I have written several dozen entries for specialized encyclopedias, including ABC-CLIO's *Encyclopedia of World War II* (2004), *Women and War* (2006), and the *Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Wars* (2009). So when they approached me, I was interested. It seemed an interesting and worthwhile project, and one that played to the organizational skills I developed as the History Department's associate chair. I enjoy collaborative work, which is something we do not often get to do in the humanities.

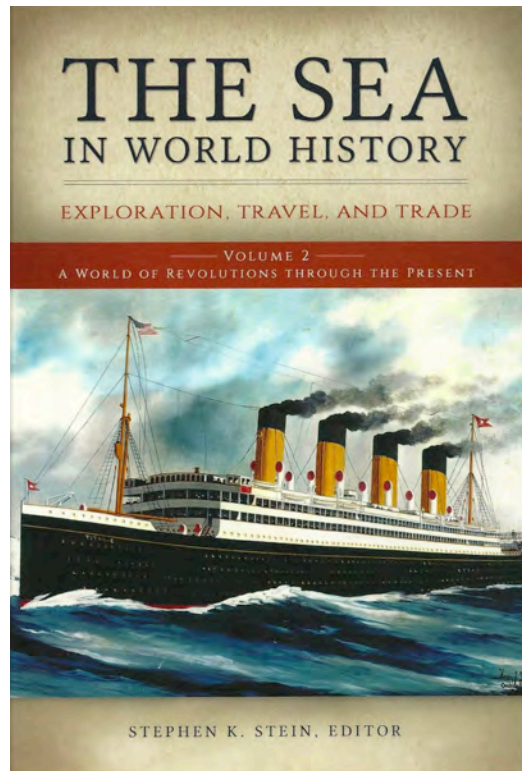
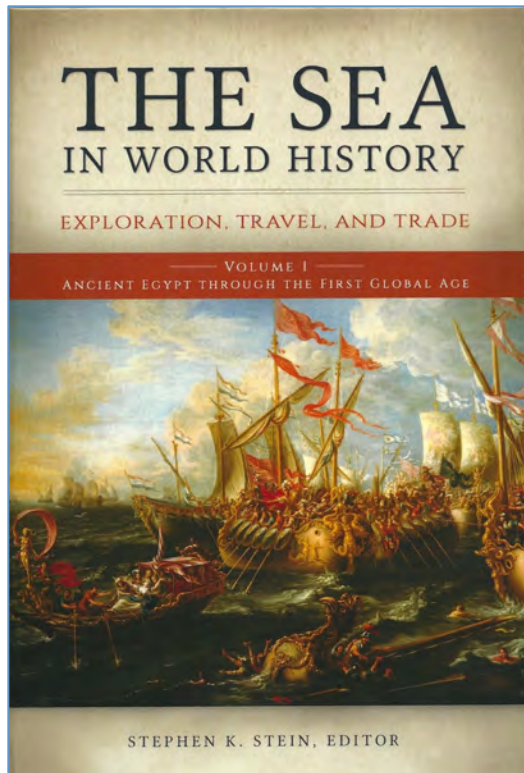
Interest in maritime history has increased in recent years, and the only other encyclopedia on the topic was published by Oxford about a dozen years ago. It is aimed at scholars and is rather Eurocentric. In contrast, *The Sea in World History* is aimed at an undergraduate audience, and we worked very hard to cover the entire world. So, there are detailed essays on African, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Latin American, Native American, and Polynesian maritime history, as well as the expected essays on the Vikings, Great Britain, and Europe's other important seafaring nations.

Duenas-Vargas: Who are the contributors to this important book?

Stein: One hundred and fifteen people wrote entries for *The Sea in World History*. They include prominent scholars from around the world, such as John Hale, who wrote the highly regarded *Lords of the Sea* (2009), as well as many young scholars who are in the early stages of their careers, and a few who are still doing graduate work, including some in our own graduate program. Several of my friends at the U.S. Naval War College, for which I lecture on occasions, wrote entries, as did Benjamin Graham, a recent addition to our faculty, who wrote an essay on the Columbian Exchange. Our former department colleague Courtney Luckhardt (now at the University of Southern Mississippi) wrote several entries on seafaring in Medieval Europe. Michael Lejman, and Rachel Mittelman, who earned their doctorates in our program, contributed several entries, as did a few of our current graduate students.



Dr. Stephen Stein, Associate Professor, military history



Duenas-Vargas: Was it difficult to find scholars and students willing to contribute with your project?

Stein: It was pretty easy to find people to write about European maritime history. Finding people with the necessary expertise to write about other regions was harder, particularly India and Latin America. I wrote or co-wrote several of those entries, which required a bit of research on my part.

Duenas-Vargas: You mentioned earlier that several department graduate students wrote entries for the book. How did that work?

Stein: It is always nice to integrate our teaching with our research and writing, and I seized the opportunity to do that with this book by teaching a graduate seminar on maritime history. Students in the course wrote articles of various lengths as if they were writing for the encyclopedia. I often show students drafts of what I am working on, and in this case the students and I were all writing similar pieces on similar topics. Some of their best work appears in the book.

Duenas-Vargas: Were all of your seminar students published in the book?

Stein: Unfortunately not. While most of them did good work in the course, but often not on topics I still needed. Often, I had already found contributors to write them. Nonetheless, Samantha Haines wrote several entries for the book; James Barney wrote about adventurer Francis Chichester; and Harry Barber, built on his experience as a naval officer to write about the

Imjin War and crossing the line ceremonies—the ways in which navies around the world commemorate a sailor's first crossing of the Equator.

Duenas-Vargas: What was the most challenging aspect of the project?

Stein: Apart from tracking down contributors, which required a fair amount of tracking people down and emailing back and forth, organizing the project and keeping it on track to meet my deadline proved challenging. I was never able to find people to write some entries, and had to write those myself, which sometimes required a fair amount of research on my part. I actually wrote many more entries than I expected, some because I wanted to, but other because I had to. As is to be expected with a project this large (more than 500 entries totaling almost 350,000 words), some contributors failed to deliver and had to be replaced, or delivered poor work that required substantial revision and editing. For the most part, though, my contributors came through, which was a great relief.

Colonial Africa, 1994-1994

By Dr. Dennis H. Laumann



Dr. Dennis Laumann, Professor, African History

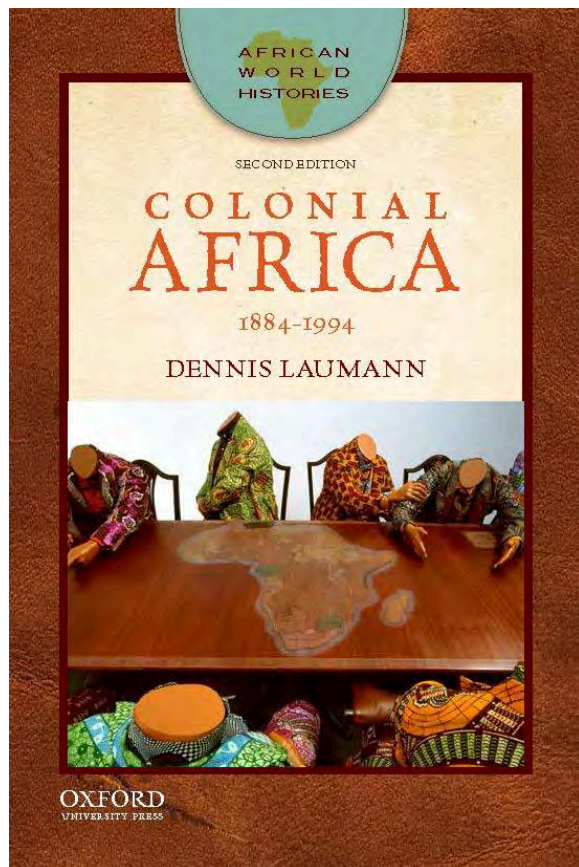
Guiomar Duenas-Vargas: A second edition of your book, *Colonial Africa, 1994-1994*, will be released in March 2018. What is new about the second edition?

Dennis H. Laumann: The original book, published in 2012, is the bestselling title in the “African World Histories” series from Oxford University Press. It was written for two main audiences: (1) scholars and

general readers who want a concise, up-to-date, critical analysis of the colonial period of African history and (2) higher education instructors who need a readable, comprehensive, academic text to assign to courses in African and world history. The book reached a truly global audience, as evidenced by the countless emails and other communication we received from readers far and wide, and it was assigned to classes at institutions around the world. In the United States, *Colonial Africa, 1884-1994* is required reading in undergraduate and graduate courses at institutions as diverse as Brandeis, Northwestern, Rutgers, and Stanford, and it is used at universities in Africa, Asia, and Europe. It was also translated into Arabic by Belabbes Ali Abdelhafid and published in Algeria by Dar El Adib Editions in 2016. In short, it is exactly the kind of book I wished to write, a history of Africa that is widely read and enthusiastically received.

Due to its popularity, Oxford asked me to write a second edition partly based on feedback from readers, instructors, and students. New sections have been added on

topics like ethnic identities and gender roles, exploring how these changed during the colonial period, and the examination of the colonial economy has been expanded, including an analysis of the use of forced labor in the construction of railways and the impact of railways on agriculture and urbanization. We also added more historic images to each of the chapters and updated the cover, of course.



Duenas-Vargas: Tell us about the cover of the new edition.

Laumann: The renowned British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare graciously allowed us to feature a shot of his celebrated installation “Scramble for Africa” on the second edition cover. Shonibare’s art, which explores colonialism and challenges stereotypes about identity, has been displayed at institutions like the Museum of Modern Art

in New York and the Tate Collection in London, so it really is quite an honor that this image graces the cover of my book. “Scramble for Africa” is an intriguing depiction of the infamous Berlin West Africa Conference, held from November 1884 to January 1885, at which delegates from European imperialist nations established rules for the conquest and occupation of the African continent. In Shonibare’s rendering, these delegates appear headless and dressed in African cloth.

Duenas-Vargas: Are your research and teaching reflected in this book?

Laumann: My presentation of this history is certainly shaped by the ways I teach it as well as the research I have conducted. The overall emphasis of *Colonial Africa, 1884-1994*, is on economics, such as the economic motives for the colonization of Africa by European imperialists and the economic impact of colonial rule on African societies. I also have a chapter devoted to the centrality of violence in the colonial period, a subject I stress in my courses on African history. Colonialism was violent from beginning to end: Europeans used machine guns in the late 19th century to annihilate African armies which were at a technological disadvantage for the first time in history and Europeans committed genocide in the early 20th century to defeat anti-colonial movements like the Herero war in what is today Namibia. Likewise, Africans had little choice but to resort to violence to win back their independence in some colonies, most notably Algeria, where the French committed atrocities that today we would label “crimes against humanity.” Thus, in my teaching and writing, I always dispel the notion that colonialism was somehow benevolent. More specifically, some of my own research on the German

Togoland colony, presented in my recently published *Remembering the Germans in Africa* (Peter Lang Publishers, 2018), makes its way into the book, especially my discussion of the uses of oral history in reconstructing the history of the colonial period.

Duenas-Vargas: Has the study of colonialism in Africa changed over time?

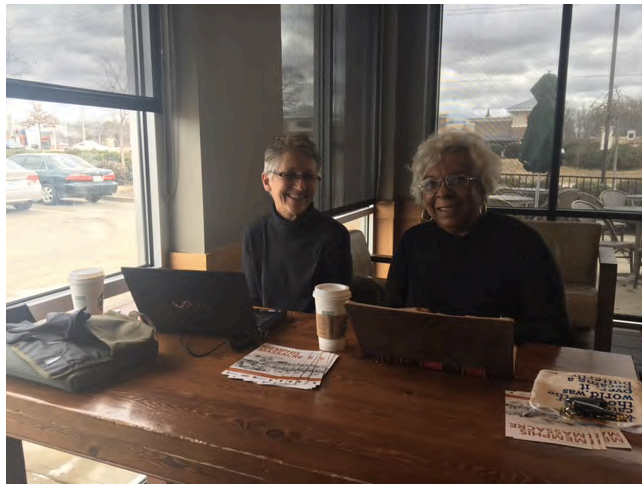
Laumann: As in any field of study, there definitely are topics that appear to be trendy each decade. While historians focused on labor in the 1980s and gender in the 1990s, for example, right now the “hot” research areas in African colonial history are marriage and the family and popular culture. Moreover, there are theoretical shifts, of course, and these tend to mirror larger ideological transformations in academia and society as a whole – though I am happy to say, as a field, historians of Africa tend to uphold more radical perspectives on the past. Perhaps was it most innovative in the study of colonialism in Africa is methodology. Historians of African have always been in the forefront of developing pioneering ways of exploring the past, such as making the case for the relevance and reliability of oral history. We are always indentifying new methods of examining the colonial past so that we search for new sources and present new voices. For instance, several important books have been recently published that utilize transcripts from European colonial era courts to highlight women’s initiatives in challenging European and African patriarchy. Reader surveys have indicated that one of the particular strengths of *Colonial Africa, 1884-1994* is its analysis of this very subject: how the colonial period is not only as a historical topic but a field of scholarly debate and innovation.

Duenas-Vargas: How relevant is the colonial period to African countries today?

Laumann: While Africa was the last continent in the world to be colonized by Europeans and the colonial period lasted only a few decades in some parts of the continent, it must be emphasized that most African nations are quite young, meaning colonial rule ended relatively recently. The most obvious case is South Africa where white minority rule was defeated roughly 20 years ago. So, some of the most contested and difficult issues facing African countries today, like the redistribution of land, are very real legacies of colonialism. The second edition includes an updated discussion of this topic, offering recent cases of how colonialism continues to impact the lives of Africans, such as the elderly Kenyans who successfully fought for reparations for the horrific violations of their human rights, including rape and torture, committed by the British in the 1950s and 1960s. Another example, and especially relevant to us here in Memphis, is the recent student-led movement, dubbed #Rhodesmustfall, that led to the removal of statues of the imperialist Cecil Rhodes in South Africa. Indeed, I think one of the reasons *Colonial Africa, 1994-1994* has been so successful is the very fact that the colonial period remains deeply relevant to Africans today,

Celebrating African American History

By Drs. Beverly Greene Bond and Susan Eva O'Donovan



Drs. Susan O'Donovan and Beverly Bond, Associate Professors of African American history at the University of Memphis.

February is “Black History Month,” and those of us who study the African American past are bombarded with speaking requests from community groups. We’re always happy to oblige, enlightening local audiences with our knowledge of a rich history that is too often under-told. But as we prepare for our talks, we wonder how much our audiences understand the rich history behind “Black History Month” itself. Our audiences are usually familiar with the roles of W. E. B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, and Association for the Study of African American Life and History in researching, preserving, and presenting black history, but W. C. Pennington, Gertrude Bustill Mossell, and other early chroniclers of the African American experience are less well-known.

Yet they too contributed to the literature that Black History Month commemorates, and they too shared Carter Woodson’s 1926 assertion that “If a race has no history, if it has no worth-while tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated.”

While Black History Month did not figure into the annual calendar of Susan’s childhood in the Pacific Northwest (I will expand on that some other time), Beverly, who was born and raised in Memphis understood from an early age that black Americans were history makers. Whether she viewed history from the bottom up or top down, awareness of African American contributions to America’s social, economic and political life was ever-present. Official commemorations of Negro History Week (as it was known until the 1960s) may have lasted seven short days, but Beverly, her friends, and her classmates absorbed black history year-round. Pictures of notable African Americans – Harriet Tubman, George Washington Carver, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Booker T. Washington – adorned the walls their schools, churches, and homes. But some notable African Americans were their neighbors. Black Memphians like Florence Talbert McCleave, a renowned opera singer who married a Memphis physician, made a valiant (but unsuccessful) effort to teach Beverly to play the piano. The Martin brothers – physicians, pharmacists, and activists – owned the city’s Negro League baseball team and the stadium where hundreds of black Memphians watched them play. A. Maceo Walker, of the Universal Life Insurance Company and the Tri-State Bank, was a neighbor; his son was a classmate. Beverly and her family frequented Church Park, founded by Robert R. Church Sr., and strolled past Solvent Savings Bank and the Historic First Baptist Church on Beale Street, the first brick church in the South built for and by black people after the Civil War. Journalist Ida B. Wells published her newspaper, the *Free Speech and Headlights*, in the basement of the church. For

Beverly, Negro History Month simply confirmed a past she knew as intimately as Memphis itself.

But while many African Americans shared Beverly's intimate interactions with black history, it was a history that was ignored or unacknowledged by other Americans. By the end of the nineteenth century, most had a cursory knowledge of black emancipation and even less understanding of the reconstruction that followed the Civil War. Awareness of black contributions to American life before these mid-nineteenth century events were nominal. Jim Crow had reconfigured public memory of Africa and its descendants. Historian Carter G. Woodson, the second African American (after W. E. B. DuBois) to earn a doctorate from Harvard University, set out to restore Africa and African Americans to our national story. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915 and, eleven years later, created Negro History Week (NHW). NHW's mission was to counter public ignorance and miseducation. "Not to know what one's race has done in former times is to continue always a child," he explained. "The Negro knows practically nothing of his history and his 'friends' are not permitting him to learn it. The Negro, therefore, is referred to as a child-like race."



Dr. Carter G. Woodson

Black Memphians seized on Woodson's project of historical reclamation. Jeraldine Franklin Sanderlin, a life-long Memphian who has been a student, teacher and administrator in the Memphis City Schools, remembered the impact of Negro History Week students in the city's African American schools. As a child, she learned about historical figures like Harriet Tubman and Booker T. Washington, recited the poetry of Langston Hughes and Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and memorized all four verses of Dunbar's "Negro National Anthem" to be sung at assemblies and programs. Churches incorporated black history into their Sunday school curriculums, and Negro History Week programs introduced students to the central roles people of Africa had played in world as well as national history: marking achievements in the arts, education, religion, education, business, engineering, and the ongoing fight for democracy.



A student reviews materials at the Memphis Public Library's first Negro History Week display

Sanderlin and her cohorts probably didn't realize that in learning black history, they were helping to make black history. By the 1940s, Negro History Week had begun to merge with an accelerating struggle for full civil and political rights. In 1947, the Memphis National Council of Christians and Jews, along with two black newspapers (the *Memphis World* and the *Mid-South Courier* co-sponsored a Negro History Week commemoration. The Memphis NAACP also launched a membership drive to commemorate Negro History Week and the birthdays of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass.



The University of Memphis's Black History Month 2018 poster – "Driven to Dream: MLK 50"

As community institutions desegregated in the 1960s, commemorations of Negro History Week became more widespread. As the only library facility open to black Memphians, the Vance Avenue branch (opened in 1939) had always been a place for students to research Negro History Week projects. The city's library system desegregated in 1960 and, seven years later, mounted the first Negro History Week display, probably at the main library on McLean. Negro History Week transitioned into Black History Week and in 1970, black educators at Kent State University officially celebrated Black History Month. Six years later, President Gerald Ford marked a watershed in American history when he became the first U.S. president to celebrate a history that had once been deliberately erased from popular memory. Since then Black History Month has become a fixture in communities across the United States, in Canada, and the United Kingdom (including Susan's home town). And those of us who study history have embedded commemoration of the black past into not just American history but into the global histories we teach and tell, and we don't limit ourselves to a month. Black history has become an integral part of the history we celebrate every day of every year.

Artifacts and Human Remains in Theban Tomb 16

By Dr. Suzanne Onstine

During January and February 2018 the University of Memphis mission to Theban Tomb 16 held its 10th field season of work in Dra abu el-Naga, Egypt.¹ This area is part of the larger Theban necropolis sometimes called the Valley of the Nobles near the modern city of Luxor in southern Egypt. Ancient Thebes was a very important political and religious center in the New Kingdom and later so the necropolis is full of burials of elite people who built beautifully decorated tombs, like Theban Tomb 16. Hundreds of tombs dot the landscape, and it is the site of intense archaeological work by teams from all over the world.

This tomb originally belonged to a man named Panehsy and his wife Tarenu, both of whom were chanter-priests in the temples of ancient Egypt. It is beautifully painted with scenes of daily life

¹ See Newsletter entries in 2013 and 2016.

and religious iconography. The original use dates to the 19th dynasty (Ca. 1250 BCE) but their tomb was also reused for about 1000 years after for the burials of other individuals. This reuse of tombs was very common, and in fact, many of the artifacts discovered in excavations date to Dynasties 21 and 22, ca. 1000-700 BCE, when reuse of tombs was most common. The assemblage of materials used for funerary purposes have distinctive stylistic markers that can be dated, so while the tomb was extensively looted in modern times, we are still able to confidently assign dates to much of the activity in the tomb. The looting left most things in the tomb broken into pieces, including the human remains, which were in a terrible state of disarray. The looters unwrapped and broke apart mummies in their search for jewelry, gold, and amulets of protection hidden in the wrappings and on the bodies.

The abundance of funerary material and human remains has given us much to study. During the last season of fieldwork carried out in January-February 2017 we completed excavations inside the tomb. This season's focus was on analyzing the human remains and artifacts excavated in 2017 as well as creating a plan of the tomb now that it has been cleared. To accomplish these things, specialists in various disciplines joined the team in the field.

This year's team:



Left to right standing: Jesus Herrerin, physical anthropologist, Rosa Dinares, radiologist, Margaret "Taylor" Deane, UM Egyptology PhD student, Hanan Hassan, Ministry for Antiquities inspector, Miguel Sanchez, paleo-pathologist, Khaled Omar, Ministry for Antiquities inspector, Virginia "Ginni" Reckard, UM Egyptology PhD student, Kneeling: Mohammed Farouk, foreman, Abdel Hadi, workman, Suzanne Onstine, director, Sherif Abdel Basset, workman, Ahmed Abdel Hadi, workman. Not pictured: Amr Khalaf Shahat, UM Egyptology alum and UCLA PhD student, Peter Robinson, surveyor and mapping specialist.



Amr Shahat, helps explain the ancient uses of dom palm fruit by cutting open a modern fruit.

One of these specialists is PhD student Amr Shahat. Amr is a graduate of the UM's MA program in History and has gone on to specialize in archaeology at UCLA where he has delved into archeobotany, the study of ancient plant remains. Many different kinds of plants were discovered in our excavations including dates, dom (a kind of palm tree fruit), persea leaves, and wheat. These plants would have been part of funerary offerings of food or strung together in garlands placed on the coffin.

The physical anthropology team (Rosa Dinares, Miguel Sanchez, and Jesus Herrerin) spent almost three weeks analyzing the human remains through visual examination and x-raying. We continue to find unique cases that demonstrate a diversity of mummification practices as well as clues about the



The physical anthropology team - Rosa Dinares, Miguel Sanchez, and Jesus Herrerin, examine the torso of a child.

health of the ancient people. One of the more interesting finds was the identification of a woman who died in childbirth. The woman's genitalia are intact and the vagina is in a distended state only possible during childbirth or within 24 hours after. This case, as well as others related to women's health issues are being prepared for publication in journals of physical anthropology.

The team spent two more weeks doing surveying and mapping to produce a plan of the tomb. Our mapping specialist, Peter Robinson, did a great job teaching students Ginni Reckard and Taylor Deane the basics of surveying for archaeological purposes. They produced plans that will be used in the full publication of the tomb. [See figures 4 and 5]



Drawing plans in the second room; Peter Robinson, Ginni Reckard, Taylor Deane



Learning basic surveying; Taylor Deane, Peter Robinson, Ahmed Hadi

We also spent time organizing the excavated materials into appropriate storage to make room for the next phase of work, which is conservation of the plaster wall surfaces in the two decorated rooms. A thick layer of soot covers much of the second room and several areas of plaster have been cut out by looters for sale on the illegal art market, leaving the plaster fragile in some areas. Work in 2019 will focus on cleaning, consolidating, and protecting the plaster. It is hoped that the tomb could be opened for tourism at some point, so this stage of work is crucial for safeguarding the monument for the future.

As always, we hosted many visitors to the tomb and we took time to visit excavations being carried out by other projects. This chance to network and to discuss as-yet unpublished material with other teams is very valuable for contextualizing our own work and for the graduate students who are doing dissertation topics related to various aspects of the Theban necropolis.

We look forward to returning to the field in 2019 to continue work in the tomb, but in the meantime, back to writing the book!

Performing Caribbean History

By Dr. Andrew Daily

Last February, I joined my colleagues at the University of Georgia to attend the North American premiere of *Histoire de Nègre* (A Tale of Black Histories). Originally written in 1971 by the novelist and critic Edouard Glissant in collaboration with his students, the play narrates in three parts the story of slavery, colonialism, and the struggle for freedom in the French Caribbean colony of Martinique. Their approach to writing the play was unique, as Glissant and his students constructed their texts from historical documents. Drawing from archival records, books, poems, and other historical records, the authors sought to use theatre and performance to educate their audience – made up of the popular classes of Martinique – into the history of their society.



*Dr. Andrew Daily, Assistant Professor,
Modern French and Global History*

During research in Martinique in 2007, I discovered the text of this play in an issue of the short-lived journal *ACOMA* in the archives of the Bibliothèque Schoelcher in Fort-de-France. Written for amateurs and performed in rural communities throughout Martinique in 1971 and 1972, its performance at University of Georgia marked its first performance in North America and its first performance anywhere since CARIFESTA 76 (Caribbean Cultural Festival) in Jamaica. As part of my research into Glissant, I had translated the play into English and annotated its historical and literary references. A friend suggested that I take the play to Emily Sahakian, a professor of French and Theatre at the University of Georgia

and a specialist in Francophone performance. Together, we completed translating the play into English and researched its performance history. In 2016, Dr. Sahakian secured a grant from the University of Georgia to bring Gilbert Laumord, a Guadeloupean actor and director and expert on French Caribbean theatre, to direct a staged reading of the play.

At the University of Georgia, Laumord worked closely with students from the Theatre Department to prepare a dramatic reading of *Histoire de Nègre*. He taught them Martinican and Guadeloupean dance, Creole songs, and the storytelling traditions of the French Caribbean. On February 18th, Laumord and the students performed the entire text at the University Theatre and then answered questions from the audience about the play and their performance. The cast commented in particular on the text's contemporary relevance and how its depictions of racialized oppression, violence, and cultural erasure spoke to contemporary concerns in American society from disputes over history to the Black Lives Matter movement to the 2016 election.

This project has – in what I can only imagine would make Glissant and his students extremely satisfied – now taken on a life of its own. Gilbert Laumord has successfully applied to the French Ministry of Culture for funding to produce a performance of *Histoire de nègre* in both the French Caribbean and in metropolitan France. Dr. Sahakian and I are working with him to streamline the existing text and to write our how “Part 4” in order to make the play relevant for contemporary audiences. In July, we will take our performance to the prestigious Festival d’Avignon, France’s preeminent venue for avant-garde theatre and performance. And this summer, Dr. Sahakian and I will complete our translation and prepare a critical edition, which is set to appear with Caribbean Studies Press in early 2019. What began as an accidental archival discovery has now become an exciting and ever-expanding interdisciplinary project.

