CALL FOR PAPERS! ~ 90th Annual SWAA Conference

APRIL 19-20, 2019
GARDEN GROVE, CA
90TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
SOUTHWESTERN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Legibility:
Practice/Prospect
in Contemporary
Anthropology

Abstract Submission Open
from January 1 through
February 15
For more details visit:
swaa-anthro.org
Greetings from Vietnam and Happy 2019!

I am writing from Saigon where I am currently leading a study abroad program for thirteen California State University, Fullerton students. This is also the first moment of downtime I have had to reflect on the trip and all that has changed since I led this program in January 2018. This city can, quite literally, change overnight. Trying to express the perpetual development of a city like Saigon to a group of students who are traveling here for the first time is always more difficult than I expect. We have not yet unpacked what this city means, nor will we be able to in such a short amount of time. The project of legibility is a tricky one.

With thirteen students and thirteen cameras (plus smart phones), I spent the first two days of the new year emphasizing the ethics of photography and subject consent. While visiting requisite tourist spots in the city and south of the urban center, in the Mekong Delta, I emphasized the complexities of the tourism industry (now the fifth largest industry in Vietnam) and the environmental degradation that comes with millions of tourists consuming things in a Mekong Delta village. As we move on to my field site in the south-central highlands of Vietnam, our discussions will turn to the politics of representation—of coffee farmers, the Vietnamese university system, and agricultural branding.

Of course, all of these discussions are rooted in an anthropological sensibility—a perspective on the world that is simultaneously critical and careful, sensitive and realistic. I am careful not to lead students down a road of exoticization of this place, but I also want my own anthropological knowledge of various industries and Vietnamese culture, generally speaking, to be legible. One way to do this is to explore alternatives to text-based forms of knowledge production and exchange. These forms are slowly coming to fruition in many social scientific disciplines and I hope that the forthcoming 2019 Annual Conference will introduce the SWAA community to these spaces of creativity.

With this in mind, I am excited to announce that Dr. Sherine Hamdy (University of California, Irvine) will be the distinguished speaker at the forthcoming SWAA Annual Meetings. Below is the title and abstract of her talk:

### Abstract: Legibility through Comics: The Making of *Lissa*, an ethnoGRAPHIC Story

Sherine Hamdy will discuss her move from medical anthropological research to working on creating a graphic novel, featuring women from extraordinarily different circumstances, each facing a medical decision the other can't understand. *Lissa*, which takes place against the backdrop of Egypt's popular uprisings, is informed by Hamdy’s ethnographic research in Egypt on the vulnerabilities that expose people to kidney and liver disease, and the difficulties of accessing proper treatment. The work also draws on Coleman Nye’s research in the U.S. on the social and political calculus of managing genetic risk for breast and ovarian cancer within a commercial healthcare system. This graphic work of “ethnofiction” tells the story of an unlikely friendship between Anna, the daughter of an America oil company executive living in Cairo, who has a family history of breast cancer and Layla, the daughter of the bawab of Anna’s apartment building, who grows to become a resolute physician struggling for better public health justice and rights in Egypt. Following the women as they grow up together and grapple with difficult medical decisions, the project explores how different people come to terms with illness and mortality against the backdrop of political, economic, and environmental crises.

Please see page 5 of this Newsletter for more information about Dr. Hamdy and her work.

The Call for Papers, registration and hotel information, and information about the Student Paper Competition and Student Poster Competition can be found on pages 3 through 6.

**We look forward to seeing you at the Conference in April!**

Sarah Grant
SWAA President 2018-2019
Call for Papers: Conference Theme

Legibility: Practice/Prospect in Contemporary Anthropology

The concept of legibility is not new to anthropology. Scholars have understood it as a project of high modernism—a project of making state-subjects legible and thus decipherable and easy to manage. Other scholars have explored the concept in terms of the legibility of state bureaucracies or the “legibility effect” of governance that classifies and regulates collectives of people. The 2019 SWAA Annual Conference takes on the task of expanding and thinking through legibility with original and critical anthropological and anthropology-allied research. It also expands upon the concept of legibility to address the prospects that exists within it.

Inspired by a recent call for “ethnography attuned to its times” and the possibilities that exist in and through collaborative relationships, this conference speaks to the moment we are living in now. If legibility is about decipherability and clarity, how do we make our research legible through scholarly production and pedagogies? How do we make our discipline legible to a broader public through collaboration and other means? This conference seeks to think through legibility as a concept to help us better understand what it means to decipher and make something legible be it communities, individuals, multi-species relationships, economic processes, an archaeological site, evolutionary history, the human genome, our primate relatives, or the archaeological record.

Those submitting 2019 SWAA Annual Conference abstracts are encouraged to think about the ways in which legibility engenders the possibility of making communities and their respective positions comprehensible. This may come in the context of spectacular violence, resistance movements, everyday life, infrastructure or the structural inequalities that manifest across race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and education. Posters, films, organized sessions, and other paper submissions that take up the task of unpacking this concept are encouraged.

This conference provides a great opportunity for scholars across the many fields of anthropology and allied disciplines to present original research on what legibility is in your respective fieldsite(s) and how the concept may be employed whether you are a cultural anthropologist, archaeologist, biological anthropologist, ethnographer or something in-between. We also encourage submissions that explore specific questions about anthropology’s legibility—must it be legible, and for whom—and “salon session” submissions that foster undergraduate and graduate student engagement. Organized sessions around public anthropology, pedagogy, and advocacy are especially welcome.

We ask students, scholars, and practitioners from all anthropological subfields and allied disciplines to contribute. Abstracts for all submission types will be accepted on the SWAA website until February 15, 2019.
Conference Registration:
Full registration for the conference includes one year membership in SWAA, the SWAA quarterly Newsletters, Conference tote bag and pen, and access to the Friday evening Reception.

- Regular conference registration: $90
- Emeritus conference registration: $70
- Graduate student conference registration: $50
- Undergraduate student conference registration: $50

The deadline for online ADVANCE registration is Tuesday, April 8, 2019. [Conference attendees who do not register in advance may also register on-site.]

Use this link for SWAA conference registration.

Abstract Submission:
If you plan to submit an abstract, you must register for the conference.

Hotel Reservations:
Rooms are available at the SWAA rate for $149 per night, for singles or doubles for April 19th and 20th, if you book by March 27. Parking is available at the hotel for $10 for one day, and $14 for overnight.

Make your hotel reservations HERE.

Saturday Evening Banquet, April 20th:
Banquet tickets are $46. Tickets may be purchased at the same time that you register for the conference. The deadline for purchasing banquet tickets is also Tuesday, April 8, 2019. If you have already registered and need to purchase banquet tickets separately, use this link.

Distinguished Speaker Dr. Sherine Hamdy [See pages 2 and 5 for more information about Dr. Hamdy]

Banquet Menu includes:
Entrée [see choices below], and a Classic Caesar Salad with herbed croutons, cherry tomatoes, shaved parmesan, with a lemon Caesar dressing, a bread basket with fresh butter, a Fresh Fruit Tart with Pistachio Crème Anglaise, freshly brewed coffee and tea, red and white wine.

Entrée Choices:
♦ Free Range Chicken Piccata
♦ Grilled Sustainable Salmon
♦ Four Cheese Ravioli (vegetarian)
♦ Vegan Option
We are excited to welcome **Dr. Sherine Hamdy** as our distinguished speaker for the SWAA 2019 conference.

Dr. Hamdy is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine, where she joined the faculty in the Fall of 2017, after being a professor for eleven years at Brown University. She received her Ph.D. in 2006 from New York University Department of Anthropology.


[Below are screen shots provided by the author]
### Student Poster Competition

**Competition Requirements**

1. Posters submitted to the competition must be presented at the SWAA Annual Conference of the same year. The submitted poster may not differ substantially from the poster at time of presentation.

2. Only single-authored posters are allowed.

3. The author must be an undergraduate or graduate student and must be enrolled in a college or university at the time when the poster is presented at the SWAA Annual Conference.

4. In order to be in the competition all you need to do is present your poster during your allotted time slot. All single-authored student posters are automatically entered into the Student Poster Competition. See this link for Poster Guidelines.

5. Questions? Please contact Janni Pedersen.

### Student Paper Competition

**Competition Requirements**

To submit a paper to the competition, the student must first register for the Conference, choosing “yes” for submitting an abstract.

1. The student must submit an abstract by February 15, 2019

2. **Full papers** should be submitted via email to Eric Canin by April 2, 2019.

3. Papers submitted to the competition must be presented at the SWAA Annual Conference of the same year. The submitted paper may not differ substantially from the presentation. See this link for Paper Guidelines.

4. Only single-authored papers are allowed.

5. The author must be an undergraduate or graduate student and must be enrolled in a college or university at the time when the paper is presented at the SWAA Annual Conference.

   The full paper entry to the competition must be submitted by the submission deadline: **April 2, 2019**

### Student Abstract Guidelines

See this link for helpful information about writing abstracts.
In Memoriam

With deep sadness we share the news that our dear friend and two-time SWAA President, Kim Martin, passed away peacefully on Jan. 7, 2019. Some of you may have known that she was being treated for cancer. She had hoped to be with us a bit longer, but her usual, boundless strength finally ran out. She died with her loving sister, children, and grandchildren by her side. Now, we are thinking of appropriate ways to honor her memory. (A full obituary will be published in the Spring SWAA Newsletter. We hope to do something in her honor at the annual SWAA Conference.) Feel free to share your fond memories of Kim Martin with us, either by emailing me (Hilarie Kelly, SWAA Communications Chair) or by posting on our Southwestern Anthropology Association Facebook page. Life is short, so live it as fully as possible!

A memorial will be held at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden in Claremont on January 20 at 2:00 pm, (www.rsabg.org) Admission and parking are free. Check in at the entrance kiosk in the lower visitor parking lot for directions to the memorial site. Some handicapped parking is available on the upper level. It is possible there will be tram service to the memorial from the lower public lot.

Please pass this information to people who knew our lovely friend and colleague, Kim, and would like to honor her memory at this time.

An obituary for Dr. Kim Martin was posted in the Claremont Courier on Friday, January 11, 2019.

Hilarie Kelly
Sociology and Anthropology Department
University of Laverne
hkelly@laverne.edu

Our La Verne Campus Community received this message from the Office of Human Resources:

“If you would like to honor Dr. Martin, please consider giving to Uncommon Good’s college access mentoring program at uncommongood.org/donate, or by check to 211 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont, CA 91711. Please specify that the donation is being made in memory of Kimberly Martin. Uncommon Good is a nonprofit organization that works to give every child, regardless of ethnicity or socioeconomic status, access to a meaningful college education. Her family has expressed gratitude for the heartfelt words honoring her life and legacy.”
Finally, this is the message that President Devorah Lieberman of the University of La Verne sent to our campus community:

Dear University Colleagues,

I am saddened to share with you news of Dr. Kim Martin’s passing on January 7. She passed peacefully with her family by her side in South Bend, Indiana.

Kim will be missed by scores of students, colleagues, community members, and friends. For decades, Kim was a force at the University; a professor who deeply cared about about her students. She founded the anthropology program and taught courses in cultural, linguistic, and psychological anthropology; human sexuality and research methods; as well as several travel courses in countries such as Mexico, India, Spain, and Egypt. Her areas of specialization included psychological and cognitive anthropology, intercultural communication, ethnic relations, evolutionary psychology, Mesoamerica, Polynesia, and Western Europe. She was fascinated by textiles, their production, symbolism, and use cross-culturally.

In addition to academic courses, Kim conducted multicultural workshops on and off campus for educators, professional organizations, and government agencies. In 1996, she was awarded the University of La Verne Excellence in Teaching Award.

Kim earned her Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from University of California, Riverside; her M.A. in Biological Anthropology from the University of Hawaii; and her B.A. in Psychology from Stanford University. She is survived by her daughter, Josie Kowalewski, and son, Will Porter Martin.

Information on memorial services will be forthcoming, once confirmed.

Sincerely,
Devorah Lieberman, Ph.D.
President
Bullion, Ghost Towns, & Living Ghost Towns

Across Nevada, Utah, and Colorado I encountered ghost towns, often only in the form of historical markers. East of Fallon, I passed two such places remembered only by historical markers, Fairview and Wonder, which boomed as silver strikes in the late 1880s and first decade of the 20th century. East of Ely were Taylor and Ward; at its peak Taylor had an opera house and seven saloons.

On May third I reached Austin, a living ghost town [pictured on right]. From the 1860s to the 1880s it was a center of a silver boom, then in 1979 it lost the county seat of Lander County to Battle Mountain on I-80. My wife Carole liked the International Café’s hospitality. A bicyclist came in and asked if he could refill his water bottle, the waitress said “sure.” They also had signs saying “free restrooms.” Distances are great, even between small towns on U.S. 50. From Austin it is 111 miles west to Fallon, 70 east to Eureka and 89 miles north to Battle Mountain.

Stoke’s Castle [left], built in the 1860s on the western outskirts of Austin, was based on an Italian castle. A rectangular three-story stone tower in a state of decay protected by a security fence, it was hard to imagine it as an Italian castle. As is characteristic of living ghost towns, Austin’s commercial buildings are either abandoned or serving a purpose other than that for which they were intended; some, such as Gridley Store made famous by Mark Twain’s story in Roughing It, may be historic. R.C. Gridley auctioned off a 50 pound sack of flour, then the purchaser also auctioned it off, and the process was repeated over and over. Money raised from these sales—$6,000—was donated to the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC), a voluntary Civil War organization which functioned much as the Red Cross now does.

Austin lies on the western slope of the Toiyabe Range, so leaving town I faced six and seven percent grades as I ascended Austin Summit, soon to be followed by Bob Scotts Summit. Snow was on the ground. The sky was a beautiful shade of blue, as it generally was as I crossed Nevada, which can be seen in the picture of the Gridley Store. Although they seemed more like overgrown shrubs than trees, juniper and piñon pines were the dominant trees here, as they were on the various mountain ranges I crossed in Nevada. On May fourth I saw the first of many pronghorn. Most were in small herds, occasionally one alone. To keep the weight I was carrying down, I carried a small camera, and came to know when an object was too far away for a good picture. Pronghorns stayed beyond camera range.
On Mother’s Day I walked through Eureka, Nevada, population about 800. Slag piles bookend the town to the east and west. Like Austin, most of the buildings are now being used for a purpose other than that for which they were originally intended. A log cabin built in 1865 is being preserved in a small park. After passing through town, I continued up New York Canyon, which separates the Diamond Mountains to the north from the Fish Creek Range to the south, and reached Pinto Summit at 7,376 feet. Emerging from the pass, I could see Little Smoky Valley to the south.

In the evening we attended the 5 p.m. mass at Saint Brendan’s Roman Catholic Church and heard a Mother’s Day homily concerning a girl whose grandmother loved strawberry ice cream had been put in a rest home. When she visited her grandmother her mother said she should take her some strawberry ice cream. As the grandmother’s memory worsened she reached a point where she could no longer remember her granddaughter’s name, but she remembered her as “the girl who brings me the ice cream I love.” The priest concluded, your name might not be remembered but your expressions of love will not be forgotten, a point I could easily identify with.

As I walked across the nation I was the recipient of many acts of kindness from people whose names I don’t know, such as the many hands that reached out of automobile windows to hand me bottles of water. Such as one on June 24th east of Gusher, Utah. Kathy stopped and we talked briefly and as she was about to leave me the arm of a girl in her early teens reached out the back seat window to hand me a bottle of Gatorade. I didn’t see the girl’s face or get her name, but like the grandmother I didn’t forget her kindness. For that matter I don’t remember the name of the priest, but I remember his homily. ♦

After retiring from Cuesta College, long-time SWAA member Bill Fairbanks walked across America between 2009 and 2014. These are stories from his travels.

[Also: see his essay “Why Be a Board Member” on page 22]
**FILM REVIEW**

**Grab Your Popcorn:**

Cinematic Art Meets Ethnography in Acclaimed Mexican Films

Review by Jayne Howell, CSU Long Beach

This winter, film-loving anthropologists have the opportunity to see a variety of culturally based films – both drama and documentary – from Mexican directors. Most visible in early 2019 is Alfonso Cuarón’s *Roma*, which has received tremendous praise from critics and audiences alike since winning the Golden Lion award when it previewed at the Venice International Film Festival in August 2018. It has been highly touted in the Mexican and international press, and even former President Obama has named it his favourite film of the year. As a viewer, I appreciated the high quality of the cinematography and the care that writer/director/cinematographer Cuarón put into this beautifully produced semi-autobiographical work. It screened at Los Pinos, the former presidential palace that newly inaugurated president Andres Manuel López Obredor has converted into a cultural center, in early December 2018, shortly before its release on Netflix. (Sadly, I saw it on a 13” laptop.) As an anthropologist who has studied the lives of domestic servants, I was interested to see this film that focuses on an indigenous maid to a middle-class Mexico City family. It was all the more exciting because it stars a Oaxacan preschool teacher, Yalitza Aparicio, as the Mixteco-speaking *sirvienta* (household worker) Cleo. No need for spoiler alerts here – other than a brief summary of the premise, my comments reflect on the many stereotypes and realities in *Roma*.

*Roma* is a film of contrasts that encompass many of the issues that position domestic service as a nexus of the entangled debates about modernity, gender and ethnicity in contemporary Latin America, including in early 1970s Mexico where the film is set. Many of the images and scenes clearly position Mexico City as a site of a “modern lifestyle” where – in this film anyway – residents have the benefits of a well-developed infrastructure – hospitals, cinemas, paved streets, electricity, and running water. Additional markers of class differences discussed in ethnographic analyses of servanthood in Mexico are seen throughout the movie. Cleo and Adela, another young Mixteco-speaking domestic, live in cramped quarters in the service patio at the rear of their employer’s home. The family – a physician, well-educated housewife and her mother, and four children – are never seen at the back of the house, although their two dogs are. Inside the living areas of the home, Cleo, Adela and the family’s male driver eat huddled in the kitchen while the family eats in a spacious formal dining room. Invoking moments observed during my own fieldwork, at one point the family relaxes in front of the television on comfortable furniture; Cleo squats on the floor watching a program she clearly had no voice in choosing until her boss Sra. Sofia tells her to bring a drink to a family member.

This scene is a poignant reminder of the consistent discourse surrounding power differentials that favor employers and an overall ambiguity that runs throughout ethnographic studies of domestic service. In other words, although there is clearly affection between Cleo and the children she cares for, and between Cleo and her boss, there are constant reminders that Cleo is an employee. This invokes Grace Young’s (1987) assertion, made decades ago, that live-in workers in Latin America are at best “like a daughter” – they are of their employers' families, though never part of them. Other status differences are evident in the images of less affluent individuals taking buses to rural areas or in Mexico City, whereas both male and female adult members of the employer household drive, or are driven, in cars they own. Dress also separates these classes. Cleo wears flat shoes and inexpensive skirts, blouses and tops, in contrast to her employer Sra. Sofia, a well-educated housewife who wears more fashionable clothing, shoes with heels, and jewelry. One also sees that Cleo uses the formal address *Usted* when speaking to her employers, but they use the informal *tú* with her.

The gendering of class differences is equally evident in the activities that women in this household perform. The majority of Cleo’s and Adela’s time is occupied in typical duties performed by the women who comprise over 90 percent of the approximately two million Mexicans working in paid domestic labor: cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, laundry and babysitting. In contrast, Sra. Sofia and her mother are filmed primarily spending their time eating and drinking, relaxing, talking with each other and family and friends, shopping, going on vacations, and to a varying extents throughout the film, engaging with the children. In other words, they are mostly at leisure. However, although they have scant scene time, we do see other women working outside the home in shops, restaurants, and in professional positions. Without going deeply into the plot, we also see some commonalities in the at times painful personal relationships Cleo and Sra. Sofia have with the men in their lives. It is important to note that although the children of both sexes appear throughout the film interacting with all the main characters, adult men receive far less attention. They are primarily seen working outside the home, and engaging in sporting-type activities. They are mainly presented through their relationships to Cleo and Sra. Sofia, even when they engage with their families, colleagues, and neighbors.

To a degree the main characters are presented in stereotypical ways, which extends to their differences in their knowledge of the world. Although both Cleo and Adela speak Spanish, they converse with each other in Mixteco. A child in the employer household asks Cleo not to speak it as he does not understand. While anthropologists may be delighted that the native language is still in use, it contrasts with the portrayal of the employers and their relatives as more
cosmopolitan, in that they can travel abroad and in some cases also speak English. Once again, the children do not understand nor seem to appreciate the latter. The idea of worldliness or lack thereof is evident in the reality that neither Cleo nor Adela is seen reading, albeit members of the employers’ households talk about books and the house is literally filled with them. Furthermore, while Cleo appears confident in interactions with individuals of rural origin in rural settings, she is at a loss in a number of interactions with urban professionals.

Finally, the state of Oaxaca itself is contrasted with Mexico City. This stereotype is founded in reality – Oaxaca is renowned for its rich folklore. The Mixtecs are one of the 14 indigenous populations who comprise one-third of Oaxaca’s 3.8 million residents. Moreover, the state is overwhelmingly rural. Thousands of communities have fewer than the 2500 resident designation the government uses to distinguish rural from urban communities. More than half of Oaxaqueños live in rural areas (relative to only one-fourth of all Mexicans), and this percentage was even higher (approximately 75 percent) in 1970. Oaxaca’s notorious reputation as one of the poorest states with among the lowest schooling rates in the nation reinforces the contrasts with the capital. Furthermore, it is common for poorly educated, poorer women from rural Oaxacan communities to work as servants in the homes of middle- and upper-income households in Mexico City or the state capital Oaxaca City. Interviews with actress Aparicio indicate that her mother has worked as a domestic, and that she had worked with her mother doing this labor when she was younger.

Thus, Cuarón’s Roma is ultimately a renowned director’s take on number of very real patterns regarding gender, class and regional differences that shaped individuals’ lives at a moment during his childhood in Mexico City. We may ask ourselves if he simply portrays or is in fact promoting stereotypes about Mexican women, men and the working and upper classes. Either way, these issues of poverty, identity and inequality are among a host of myriad concerns that are at the forefront of political and public discourse in one of the world’s most diverse nations. These topics similarly underlie scholarship regarding domestic service, which is one of the fastest growing occupations worldwide. And as in the gendering of service in Mexico, women migrants who typically move from less to more developed locales – be it nationally from rural to urban areas or from less to more industrialized nations – are the majority of workers in the global care chain. In a growing body of ethnographic accounts, these women are quite often the sole or primary support of their own children or dependent parents who remain in the natal community.

If you are unable to invest in a 2-hour-plus drama during a busy semester, you may want to consider the New York Times’ recommendation to enjoy a “Moment in Mexico” vis-a-vis a set of compelling Mexican short films that separately and collectively have anthropological and humanistic value (see NY Times link here). Noting that “Mexico is making some of the best documentaries in the world today,” the Times invited readers to view six powerful works that shed light on the critical issues at the forefront of national discourse, including ecology and nature, indigenous rights, medical access, poverty, and violence. I refer to them by their English titles here.

Ruptured City documents the inspiring recovery efforts following the September 2018 Mexico City quake, and The Diver focuses on the experiences of a Mexico City sewer worker. Children of the Narco Zone and A Prisoner in the Family provide two very different yet compelling views of children. As the first title suggests, the documentary provides powerful and disturbing insight into what it is like to have an alleged criminal for a parent. Although the second documentary has “prisoner” in the title, it actually presents a painful portrait of a mother disenfranchised from the medical system who is doing her best to care for her mentally ill son. Finally, Justice in Translation and Unsilenced address issues of social justice, whether it be ensuring that indigenous Mexicans have proper representation when dealing with the criminal justice system, or the unfortunate assassination and courage of an activist who accepted that his outspokenness put him at risk. Like Roma, these films offer a view of Mexican experiences of which the majority of us are unaware.

Although very different, these documentaries – like Roma – tug at the heartstrings, and should have appeal to anthropologists, regardless of our sub-disciplinary or regional specializations.
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Blockbuster: 
What the Exhibition of “Tut” Artifacts Teaches Us About Art, Archaeology, and Patrimony

The exhibition “King Tut: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh” at the California Science Center in Los Angeles predictably drew large crowds and enjoyed an extended run through January 13, 2019. Ticket holders were required to enter lines at specific timed intervals to control the flow of visitors, a practice that has become commonplace in recent decades with especially popular, blockbuster exhibitions like this. (The lines, lighting, and eerie music were reminiscent of Disneyland.) While admission to the center’s permanent exhibits is free, the display of “Tut” artifacts is considered a “special exhibition” requiring a more substantial payment ($20-$30, plus parking.) This was even true for the very first “Tut” exhibitions to reach the west coast of the USA, back in 1962, and held true for every “Tut” exhibition here since. (There have been nine official traveling exhibitions of artifacts from Tutankhamun’s tomb, including the present one, which is the largest yet in terms of the number of items included. See Hawass 2018: 58-61.) It is heartening that the public has such an appetite for the art and science of the past and that so many are willing to pay, especially when public funding for museums has declined. In fact, these blockbuster exhibitions are part of what keeps museums open and inspires funding for further research and preservation efforts.

The topic of “Exhibitions of artifacts from the tomb of Tutankhamun” has its own Wikipedia entry. There have been that many, and they have been that important in the history of museum exhibitions. The tomb was the most intact ever excavated in Egypt, creating a bit of an international media sensation starting with its discovery in 1922, but few of the items went on tour outside of Egypt until over thirty years later. Everything that was exhumed was and still is officially considered property of the Egyptian Government, and this in itself is an important point to consider when we ponder the perennial question of who, precisely, legally owns the material evidence of cultures of the past. The next question to ask, of course, is where such items should be cared for and exhibited. The current Egyptian Government has said that this may be the last time that such “treasures” from the “Tut” tomb go on tour. One purpose of this current tour is to raise funds for the completion of the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza, which will become the permanent home of the artifacts. The goal is to keep them in Egypt for the benefit of Egyptians, both for national educational purposes and to foster tourism, which is of tremendous economic importance to the nation. Recently, the Ministry of Antiquities of Egypt has had some success in negotiating the repatriation of some artifacts that were removed inappropriately (see https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-46804806).

Traveling exhibitions that bring “Tut” artifacts out of Egypt are negotiated with extreme diplomatic care, are heavily insured, and require extraordinary logistics. How that was accomplished for this recent exhibition is detailed in a special sub-exhibit of photographs taken by former Los Angeles District Attorney Gil Garcetti, who happens also to be an accomplished photographer.
The art of preserving and packing King Tut’s treasures (left and below)

The titles of five “Tut” exhibitions that reached the United States suggest what exhibitors presume appeals most to the public: gold and treasure. Tutankhamun Treasures (1961-1967), Treasures of Tutankhamun (1972-1981), Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs (2004-2011), Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs (2008-2013), and King Tut: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh (current.) The artifacts in this exhibition (just over 150 out of 5,398) are mostly small to modest in size, including statuettes, jewelry, furniture and alabaster, and goods to aid in the afterlife, like model boats – all of them exquisite in their craftsmanship. Much that glitters really is gold, but there is also an abundance of wood, ivory and stone glowing with warmth even after millennia. (Tutankhamun died in 1323 BCE.) The famous golden death mask (which weighs over 200 pounds) and the boy king’s actual mummy no longer leave Egypt, however, so are not included here. In fact, the mummy was reinterred in its tomb in the Valley of the Kings after intensive study, some of which is explained in photographic panels and signage at the end of this exhibition. At some point, preservation takes precedence over revenue-generating touring exhibitions.

Artifacts, clockwise from top left:
Wooden gilded mirror case in shape of Ankh; Inlaid wooden cartouche box; Ebony and ivory chair; Alabaster vessels; Mini ivory game board and drawer for playing two games (senet and djau); mastless boat with cabin (one of 35 model boats found in the tomb).
The main exhibit area was in deep shadows, except where bright lights illuminated items in display cases and the accompanying bilingual signage (see top right). Visitors might occasionally glance at replicas of wall paintings from the tomb, which help to illustrate some of the key themes repeated throughout. There are dozens of representations of Tutankhamun himself in various forms, including some of him as shabtis, human-fashioned beings who do the heavy labor in the afterworld. This made me think of something many of us say today: that we wish we could clone ourselves to get all our onerous work done.

Religious symbolism abounds in Egyptian art. For example, scarabs festoon much of the jewelry. Scarabs represent dung beetles which, from sunrise to sunset, busily push the balls of dung containing their developing young. Ancient Egyptians associated them with the relentless force required to move the sun across the sky, representing the eternal cycle of the life, death and rebirth of the day. I learned from my own fieldwork that the Oromo, Somali, and other pastoral people of the African savannas, see dung beetles more prosaically as indicators of prosperity because they are drawn to herds of cattle that are well-fed and producing plenty of dung. Urban Americans might have a hard time thinking of dung beetles positively at all. Our thoughts and words for dung tend to be wholly disparaging and dismissive. However, one of the most popular places for visitors to take “selfies” was in front of an enlarged photo of a colorful scarab pendant.

**Shabtis.** Blue shabti; Tut wearing a “bowling pin” hat, holding a staff and flail; Wooden shabti in round ebony wig popular with men and women—represents the king wearing a Nubian wig; Wooden shabti of Tut wearing an ebony khepresh crown (dark), holding a crook and flail which represents royal authority.
Other symbols much in evidence in the ancient Egyptian arts were snakes, lions, falcons, vultures, and sun disks – obvious references to the challenges of their desert environment. However, deities may take both human and animal forms, and Egyptian symbolism and art are rife with puns and double entendres.

Many religious symbols reference the politics of state formation and empire-building in Egyptian history, as well as Egyptian notions about the interconnectedness of life and death. In fact, the provocative, unsettling mystery of life and death must certainly be part of the draw that has lured hundreds of visitors of all ages to this exhibition every day (see right). These treasures were, after all, placed in and recovered from a tomb (below).
Some of the most important items had held the organs of the dead boy king: an exquisitely decorated gold coffinette that held his liver was placed snugly inside an alabaster canopic jar, which in turn was placed within a box and this was placed within a golden shrine.

The ancient Egyptians were, until the time of Tutankhamun’s father and predecessor (Akhenaten), religious polytheists, and returned to that when “Tut” assumed the throne. Much of the iconography in this exhibition concerned the divinity of the pharaoh, the ways in which pharaoh is a god, both living and dead. The very order of the universe, maat (personified as a goddess), depended on the proper realization of the divine life force or character (ka) of the pharaoh. But the pharaoh was associated with many gods that played important parts in his (or her) life and death story. Relying on plentiful signage or the self-guided audio tour, visitors learned about the many explicit and implicit artistic references to Osiris, the good god-king murdered by his evil nemesis and brother (Seth), who could be nurtured back to life through proper ritual and, lest we forget, the ministrations of a loyal sister-wife (Isis.) These and many other gods were everywhere on display.
Also evident were many representations of pharaoh’s forceful authority, whether hunting, or riding chariots, or smiting enemies, or striding confidently balanced atop a muscular black panther. The boy king “Tut” may have not actually done these things, based on the available forensic evidence, but that was the ideal image nonetheless. The Amarna aesthetic of his father’s reign is also still evident in many of the representations of Tutankhamun and his wife, for they are depicted more naturalistically and appealingly than was the case for most other royals (Hawass 2018:72). Some gold and wood images almost seem to breathe!

Clockwise from top left:
Pair of gilded wooden shields depicting Tut slaying lions;
Panel depicting Tut and his wife drinking;
Crook and flail associated with the god Osiris’ rule over the underworld—earliest emblem of kinship (Hawass 2018:96);
Gilded wooden figure of Tut on a papyrus raft throwing a harpoon—representing Horus who fights Seth, god of chaos;
Wooden guardian statue (life size) of the *ka* (divine character) of the king [black skin means rebirth through the Nile floodwaters and rich, black earth; gold gilding represents divinity; the pair of these statues represent day and night (Hawass 2018:125)];
Gilded wooden ostrich hunt fan, a prestige item.
Clockwise from top left: Wall painting: Maya (overseer of the treasuries) and Osiris; Wooden chest on tall legs; Tut’s wishing cup with lotus and buds representing the moon and the sun, a long reign, eternal contentment; Calcite domed vase on stand with cartouches of Tut and his wife; Golden eye bracelet; Golden house cartouche.
One interesting irony is pointed out several times in the exhibition. Although those who took over the Egyptian empire after Tut’s death tried to obliterate his name (and that of his family) and thereby rob him of his chance at immortality, Howard Carter’s discovery of Tut’s hidden and long-forgotten tomb, packed with treasures that demonstrated the highest levels of artistry achieved by Egyptian Civilization, have insured that the boy king’s name will not be forgotten. Tutankhamun has achieved a kind of immortality according to the thinking of his own time.

One poignant element in the final display hall downstairs was a photograph of a young Egyptian worker (not yet in his teens) wearing an elaborate pectoral necklace from the excavation site. He was allowed to pose with the stunning piece for a photograph because he, a mere “waterboy” to Carter, was the one who actually discovered the entry steps to the tomb, after Carter had tried and failed. (See King Tut Exhibit) Another photograph from years later shows him as an old man holding a copy of the original photograph. He had made a living in the intervening years by telling his own story of the discovery to tourists. His name was Hussein Hassan Abd el Rassuhl. When he died, his son continued to use the fading photograph of his father wearing the pectoral to re-tell the story to a new generation of tourists. (See Abdul Rassoul History). In a glass case to the side was the actual necklace, which Carter and his wealthy patron, Lord Carnarvon, had hoped to take possession of themselves, only to be thwarted by the laws of the Egyptian Government (Hawass 2018:44-47).

The catalog, Tutankhamun: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh, The Centennial Celebration (2018, Ministry of Antiquities of Egypt) features text by noted Egyptian archaeologist Zahi Hawass, a passionate defender of Egypt’s control over its own patrimony and a very enthusiastic scientist. It includes rich detail, for example, about the dramatic history of Howard Carter’s discovery and excavation of the tomb. In the exhibition, some of this tale is told in archival photos, video, and in signage located separately from most of the actual artifacts. The text-dense displays about the archaeology were located at the very beginning on the top floor, where crowds were lined up in a darkened room punctuated by brightly-lit descriptions of prominent Egyptologists; or, on the first floor, where ticket-holders were urged to visit after perusing the main exhibit on the upper floor. This separation seemed to be designed mainly to allow visitors to refresh themselves in the food court before seeing the final and much smaller exhibit hall, prior to exiting through the Tut-themed gift shop, at which one could purchase all manner of Tut memorabilia, from actual jewelry and crafts made in Egypt to caps and coffee cups made in China. Before being too cynical about this, we do well to remember that ancient Egypt during the New Kingdom was at the center of a vast trade network that they had helped to create. Yet, as history relentlessly reminds us, far-flung empires rise, and then they fall. All of them.

The “Frequently Asked Questions” section on the “Tut” exhibition page includes interesting information, including why it is housed in the California Science Center:

There is science throughout the exhibition. Displays explore the history of Egyptian archaeology and the work of Howard Carter, who discovered the tomb in 1922. The burial objects are analyzed in the context of the Egyptian belief system. Other displays highlight how more recent CT scans and DNA analysis of the King’s mummy have revealed new information about King Tut’s life. We are hosting the exhibition to stimulate curiosity and interest in such science exploration and to advance appreciation for the significance of this scientific discovery.

According to this page, the exhibition will next travel to Europe, and is expected to “visit 10 cities over the next seven years.” According to the exhibition’s Facebook page, it will next be in Paris.

Reference Cited

Hawass, Zahi (2018)
Why Be A SWAA Board Member?
By Bill Fairbanks

You Need the SWAA Board
& the SWAA Board Needs You:
A Reciprocal Relationship—It’s Basic Anthropology!

In programs leading to Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral degrees, persons learn a great deal, but unfortunately not everything they need to know to be successful in their careers. Beyond colleges and universities there are professional organizations, such as SWAA, which provide opportunities to network with faculty, emeritus faculty, fellow grad students from other universities, applied anthropologists, and other professionals.

SWAA needs students as well as professionals on the Board. Board members must be willing to work together for the good of the organization. Of course there are differences of opinion, but members present their positions, listen to those of others and come to an agreement. You may be committed to a cause and advocate for it, but for the good of the organization you may have to relent (many members of Congress, and even Presidents haven’t learned this lesson). SWAA’s Board provides an opportunity to learn to function effectively on boards, committees, councils, and other bodies making and implementing collective decisions.

SWAA’s President is responsible for the Annual Conference; however the Board is intimately involved with its organization, so members develop an understanding of what is necessary to organize major conferences; skills that carry over to planning other large events in our family or professional lives.

Board members are expected to attend two meetings a year: one is the afternoon before the Annual Conference, and the other about half a year later in October. A three-year term on the Board would mean three sets of these meetings. Fall meetings are usually held in the home area of the current President, where the upcoming conference will be held. Meetings are much more lively than some of the boring lectures you once may have suffered through when you were a student, or if you’re currently a student, more interesting than some of what you are suffering through in college.

At your first Board meeting you will feel welcomed. Perhaps you may feel a bit insecure and intimidated, but don’t worry. Those already on the Board will have knowledge of issues and prior knowledge you will gradually pick up, and by the end of your second meeting you will be up to speed and feel comfortable making your points. This initial experience of insecurity is simply “the learning curve.”

For students, accepting a position on the SWAA Board fills a gap in college and university programs for aspiring professionals. Unlike colleges and universities, it is free except for dues. No tuition, fees or expensive books to buy! What an opportunity!! What a deal!!

William Fairbanks II Ph.D.
Cuesta College Social Science Faculty Emeritus
Former SWAA President
Former Chairman SWAA Board
2012 Dan Crowley Award Recipient
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Membership in the Southwestern Anthropological Association includes a subscription to the quarterly SWAA Newsletter.

Information about how to join or renew is available at: [swaa-anthro.org/membership/](http://swaa-anthro.org/membership/)

If you’re not sure if your membership is up-to-date, contact:

Eric Canin at ecanin@fullerton.edu

**The SWAA Newsletter**

is published quarterly in March, June, September and December by the Southwestern Anthropological Association.

We welcome your submissions!

Submissions should be sent to: beeerickson@fullerton.edu or to Barbra Erickson at CSU Fullerton, 800 N. State College Blvd. Division of Anthropology, Fullerton, CA 92831. Phone: (657) 278-5697

Due Date: 1st of the month of publication for Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter issues (approximately March 1, June 1, September 1, December 1).

Authors, please include a brief statement describing your interests and affiliation.

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