

Fifty Years On

EXPEDITION IN A “FLAT” WORLD

FIFTY YEARS AGO, when *Expedition* was launched in 1958, globalization was a dream as the world enjoyed an era of almost unparalleled harmony led by a trio of leaders installed in 1953. Dwight D. Eisenhower was in his second term as President, serenely basking in popular acclaim. Nikita Khrushchev, the

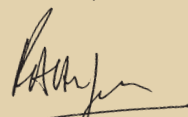
leader of the Soviet Union, was pursuing the de-Stalinization of the USSR and, in 1959, made an upbeat tour of the USA, staying on President Eisenhower’s Pennsylvania farm. Dag Hammarskjöld was Secretary-General of the United Nations—perhaps the most charismatic advocate of this era—and he set the tenor for international discourse in fast-changing times. The text of these years, though, was provided by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, who, in a 1959 election speech, famously asserted to his audience that “they had never had it so good.”

When *Expedition* was launched in 1958, Froelich Rainey was in his twelfth year as the Penn Museum’s Director. His archaeological teams were conquering the world, just as a young Lewis R. Binford was conjuring up the first sketches for the ‘New Archaeology’—archaeology as anthropology—that in the heady 1960s would fuel the enthusiasm of young archaeologists in the USA and Europe. Perhaps it is strange to consider now that Eisenhower’s political serenity nurtured such intellectual radicalism, of which *Expedition*, with its popular reporting of worldwide research, proved to be a not insignificant outlet.

Now, in a digital ‘flat world’ nothing seems serene—far from it. Yet, the turbulence of change and accelerated global interaction should be an encouraging moment for archaeologists and anthropologists. After all, as Fro Rainey well understood, for a Museum with huge archaeological and ethnographic collections drawn from all the inhabited conti-

nents, the world is our stage. *Expedition* was the bearer of this message, nuanced by different voices and designs as the Museum came to terms with the 1960s, 1970s, and beyond. Today and in the future its role is no less essential.

Archaeology in the 1950s was trying to define itself. Studying art and architecture was now downplayed in favor of being anthropologists and historians. Today, these issues are no less apparent, but the discourse is being steadily dominated by the place of archaeology and anthropology in defining the identity of states and in generating revenues through cultural heritage tourism to combat poverty. As *Expedition* looks forward, in common with the Penn Museum, it would be wise to reach out to the pressing archaeological and anthropological issues of our era. How are we best placed to examine issues of identity? How should we engage with cultural heritage issues? How should we deal with the trade in illicit antiquities? And, in a digital, flat world, how can we move beyond stereotyped post-colonialism so that first-world institutions like the Penn Museum can play an active educational and research role in collaborating with third-world communities? Presently archaeologists and anthropologists debate all these issues, but this is much like debating how we would run a research project. Now, there is an urgent need for engagement, for the radical institutional overhaul of grant-giving agencies, and for change in the universities. Written and published in an accessible voice, appropriate to such a new challenge, such debates should be at the heart of *Expedition*’s mission for the next 50 years. 🏠



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