

curator and casual lecturer of the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology is Ms May Abernethy. Casual tutoring is provided by Ms Gayl Wimblett and Ms Diana Cooper and technical support by Mr Robert Palmer.

#### Student enrolments in 1998

First year enrolments total 170, second year subjects have attracted from 20-40 students, third year from 20-30 with 12 students completing Honours. The Masters in Cultural Heritage program is well supported with from five to 25 students enrolled in the range of core and elective subjects. There are approximately 15 full time equivalent postgraduate students currently enrolled in the Masters of Science and Arts by research and the Ph.D. by research.

#### Research activities

Over the last three years staff have been successful in attracting well over \$500,000 in nationally competitive research grants from the Australian Research Council, the Australian Institute of Nuclear Science and Engineering, the Australian National Centre of Excellence for Maritime Archaeology and from industry. Major research projects include:

1. Prehistory of eastern Indonesia, focussing on the Aru Islands (in collaboration with ANU)
2. Laser extraction of samples for AMS <sup>14</sup>C dating of rock surface accretions with reference to rock art
3. Systematic excavation and survey program in the Western Desert
4. The Pitcairn Project – a combined prehistoric, maritime and historic archaeological investigation of Pitcairn Island and HMS *Bounty*.

Future projects include:

1. The Mer Project – systematic survey and excavation of middens and rockshelters on Murray Island, Torres Strait
2. Comparative study of heritage and identity focussing on north Queensland, the Solomon Islands and Pitcairn Island
3. The historic archaeology of pearling in the Torres Strait.

#### Teaching curriculum

Given the appointment of new staff with a range of research interests and following on from major revisions of curriculum, partly assisted through a grant from the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching, the School has been able to offer a wider range of electives while at the same time streamlining its core offerings. New awards are offered in cultural heritage studies from postgraduate certificate through to Masters level. The curriculum reflects four areas of Departmental strength as identified in both the School's and Faculty's strategic plans. These may be summarised as:

1. Archaeology of human colonisation processes
2. Studies in art and material culture
3. Critical issues in cultural heritage studies
4. The archaeology of maritime societies.

Core subjects include World Archaeology, Introduction to Archaeological Methods, Principles of Archaeological Investigation, Archaeological Field Techniques and Critical Issues in Archaeology. Electives focus on the areas of Departmental strength, as identified above, however also include regional studies in the archaeology of Australia, Oceania, Asia and Europe and field schools in rock art, maritime and terrestrial archaeology.

#### External research links

Staff in the Department have strong links, often expressed as formal memoranda of understanding, with external agencies which reflect current and developing research strengths. These include the Australian Heritage Commission, state and national museums within Australia, heritage agencies from Australia, Indonesia, PNG, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and a number of university centres and museums based in Europe, the USA and Asia.

#### The University of Queensland Archaeological Project at Copán: A progress report

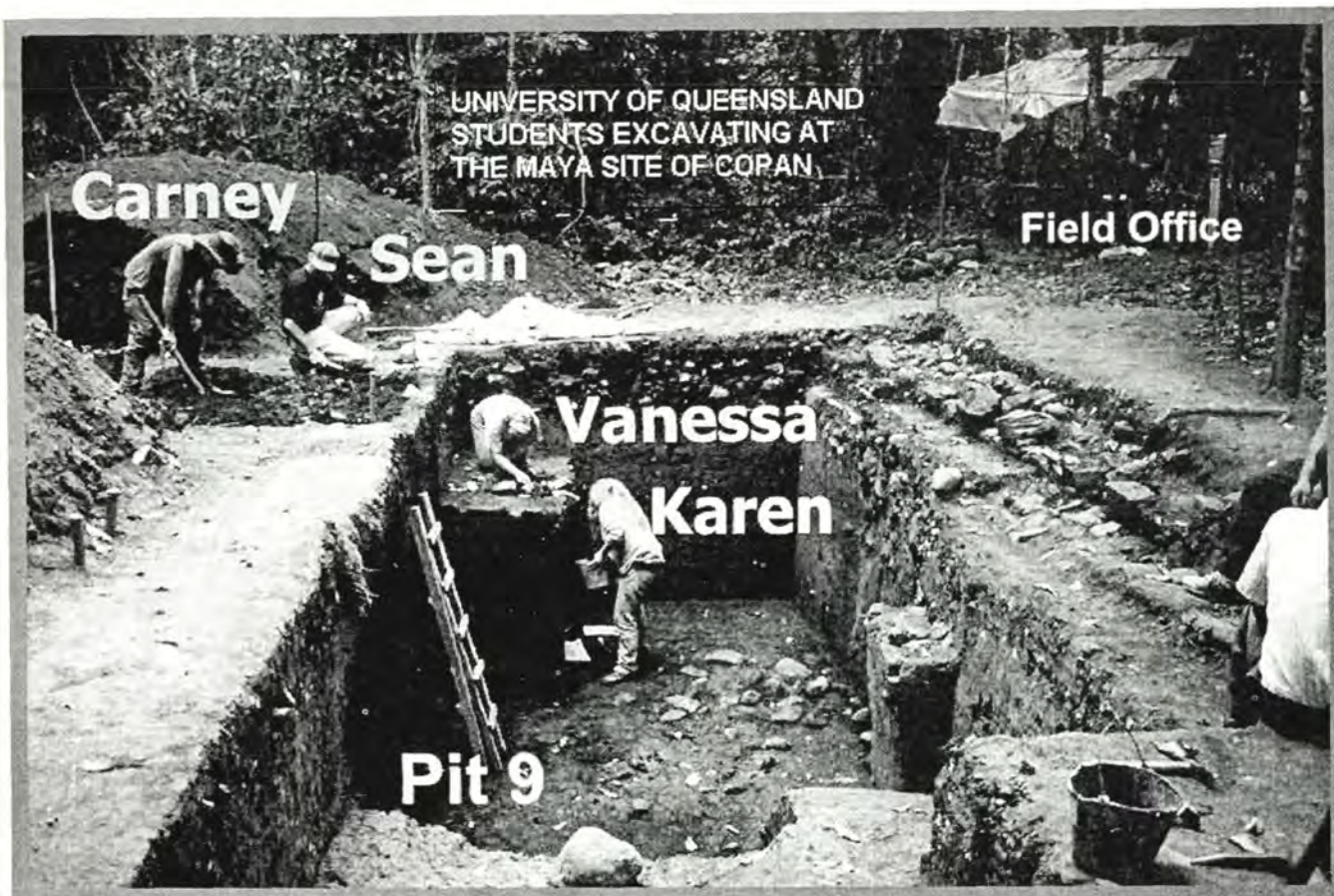
##### Jay Hall and Rene Viel

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Since 1993, The University of Queensland (UQ) has been carrying out research at the Maya site of Copán, Honduras, under the direction of Jay Hall and René Viel. Under the umbrella of the University of Queensland Archaeological Program in Central America (UQAPCA) research has focussed on two main projects. One, The Copán Formative Project, aims to discover the spatio-temporal extent of Preclassic or Formative settlement (ca. 1400 BC - AD 400) in order to understand the complex evolution of Classic society at this famous site. The other project involves an archaeological test of Viel's radical 'Pectoral' model of political organisation during the Classic Period (AD 400 - 800). The research is primarily funded by grants from The Australian Research Council and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (CEMCA and Commission de Fouilles) and is sanctioned by the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia.

The Copán Formative Project involved the excavation of some 45 2 x 2 m test pits in Copán's Urban Core site during 1993-95. This testing program revealed a much more extensive Preclassic occupation than previously thought (Hall and Viel 1994). However, while excavation yielded a full sequence of ceramics dating from the early Preclassic (ca. 1400 BC), no evidence of structural remains (houses, pits, burials etc.) was found. Subsequent geomorphological work demonstrated this lack to be due to destruction of settlements by torrential events and associated flooding of the Copán River (Hall and Viel 1998). This result led us to focus attention on areas less affected by flooding and during 1995-97 the expansion of test pits in the 'El Bosque' area revealed cultural features associated with an old (and wetter) landscape which was filled, levelled and covered by later Classic Maya construction. These features include an earthen platform, a collapsed house, earth ovens/kilns, pits and burials. Also, three hitherto unknown ceramic complexes were discovered (Plata, Bosque and Sebito). Occupation of this former landscape has been <sup>14</sup>C-dated to between ca. 800 BC and 100 AD. During this time span the terrain was much more undulating than today and was cut by channels and gullies. There is evidence later in the sequence that these natural channels were culturally manipulated to mitigate the river's impact and to enhance agricultural productivity. Analysis of ceramics has led to a total revision of Copán's Formative Chronology (Viel and Hall 1998) while preliminary





University of Queensland students Vanessa Kreuger and Karen McFadden excavate a Classic burial in Pit 9 while Carney Matheson and Sean Ulm extend the pit.

lithic analysis reveals that, contrary to the conventional view, obsidian (imported) was not the dominant raw material for artefacts; local cherts and quartzites from the riverbed nearby predominate. UQ students will analyse faunal remains and burials during the 1998-99 field season.

The 'Pectoral Model' is based on the dual observation that the sculpted images of Copán's 16 kings on The Altar Q and other monuments display three main types of chest ornaments (pectorals) and that there is a patterning to their appearance in the dynastic sequence (Viel in press). These observations led Viel to hypothesise that three elite groups (rather than the conventional single lineage) vied for political power in Copán during the Classic period. Further, each of these groups ('B', 'T' and 'Z') seems to have come to Copán from different parts of the Maya area at different times and controlled different parts of the Copán Valley and trade zones outside it. Archaeological testing of the model involves the study of a wide variety of material including ceramics, lithics, burials (mortuary practice, DNA analysis), architecture and iconography. This work is now in its second year and to date the model is not refuted.

This Copán research has involved numerous postgraduate and undergraduate students (photo), and their contribution is gratefully acknowledged. Five UQ postgraduate students and a number of undergraduate volunteers are planning to work in Copán in 1998-99.

#### References

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