

OBITUARIES

Ya'akov Meshorer
1935-2004

Ya'akov Meshorer died on 23 June 2004. His love of coins and of the history they revealed grew in him from an early age. As boys, he and his twin brother Asher would find ancient coins as they wandered round the city of Jerusalem, which was then growing rapidly. He said once, "the most exciting part was realizing that our forefathers had used the same language and lived in the very same place where we spent our free time". The twins donated their first coin finds to the Department of Antiquities of the new-born State of Israel when they were only 14. Among the many coins Meshorer found at that time was an Archaic Athenian tetradrachm — one of the earliest coins ever recorded as a surface find in Israel. This coin was published as his first article.

Ya'akov Meshorer was born in 1935. After completing his army service in 1956, he became a member of Kibbutz Hazerim, where in the same year he married Adaya Weiss. During the five years they lived there, Ya'akov devoted his spare time to his "hobby" — archaeology — and established a museum on the kibbutz. In 1960 the family moved to Jerusalem, where Ya'akov enrolled as a student at the Hebrew University, studying there from 1960 to 1966. For his B.A. he studied archaeology and Jewish history and for his M.A. Classical Archaeology. He received his Ph.D. in numismatics from the Hebrew University in 1971.

In 1969 Meshorer established the department of numismatics at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, remaining its head until 1993. The department, built up from individual coins, collections and funds donated to the Museum through Meshorer's tireless efforts, now holds one of the most important collections of ancient Jewish coins in the world, as well as an impressive collection of Islamic gold coins and a significant group of Roman city coins of Palestine. Meshorer was particularly dedicated to the task of locating important Jewish coins and acquiring them for the collection, and he assembled the best specimens of this group. Over the years, he also mounted numerous numismatic exhibitions, affording visitors the opportunity to view important coins and learn about their rich past. Meshorer also served as Chief Curator of the Archaeology Wing of the Israel Museum from 1975 to 1982 and from 1990 to 1996. He retired from the museum in 2000.

Meshorer contributed greatly to the development of numismatics as an important area within the discipline of archaeology and helped promote the study of ancient coins as an academic field in Israel. He lectured on numismatics for many years at the Hebrew University, and was appointed professor of numismatics there in 1983. Meshorer had the wisdom to delegate responsibilities to students in a manner that enabled them to develop professionally, thus ensuring the next generation of numismatists. He was an enthusiastic and popular lecturer, who knew how to make everyone — colleagues, scholars and laymen — as enthusiastic about numismatics as he was.

Meshorer's passion for coins and boundless intellectual curiosity are notable in his many publications (19 books and more than 100 articles). His writings on Jewish coins struck in ancient Palestine, and his grasp of the material and interpretation of the subjects, have fundamentally shaped the field. His *Ancient Jewish Coinage* (1982, and the updated edition *A Treasury of Jewish Coins*, 2001) included the entire group of coins struck by Jewish leaders over a period of five hundred years. The books contain detailed discussion of the motifs appearing on the coins, some of them never published before. His works are used not only to date archaeological finds but also to understand the historical, economic and political circumstances which led to the minting of Jewish coins.

Meshorer's work on Nabataean coins and his pioneering study of Samaritan coinage earned him international acclaim. His doctoral thesis on the Nabataean coins was published as a book in 1975 and is still the principal publication in this field. In 1982, on the basis of four coins which he

had published, he dared to propose (in the addendum of *Ancient Jewish Coinage I*) the existence of Samaritan coinage. Scholars were sceptical about this proposition. However, nine years later in *The Coinage of Samaria in the Fourth Century BCE* he and Shraga Qedar were able to publish 106 Samaritan types, and since then, this coinage has become an extremely popular topic of study. In 1999 Meshorer and Qedar published another book on this subject, *Samaritan Coinage*, which includes a total of 224 issues. These two publications are among the most important breakthroughs in numismatic research of the last few decades.

Meshorer was a member of many governmental and academic bodies concerned with coins and numismatics. In 2001 he was awarded the Huntington Medal of the American Numismatic Society, and at the opening of the XIII International Numismatic Congress in Madrid in 2003 he was elected an honorary member of the International Numismatic Commission. In 2002 a prize in numismatics was established in Meshorer's name at the Israel Museum. His last work, a three-volume catalogue of the Abraham Sofaer Collection of Coins from the Holy Land, is to be published by the American Numismatic Society as part of the Ancient Coins in North American Collections series. In addition, the Israel Numismatic Society plans to dedicate the next volume of the *Israel Numismatic Journal* (vol. 15) to his memory.

He leaves his twin brother, Asher, wife Adaya, three children and three grandchildren.

Haim Gitler

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Paolo Vivante

1921-2004

Professor Paolo Vivante died in Montreal on 17 July 2004, from respiratory complications.

Paolo Vivante belonged on his father's side to the ancient Jewish community of Italy. He was born in Rome on 30 September 1921 and grew up in Siena. By 1938, anti-Jewish legislation had persuaded the family to go into exile, and they managed to find refuge in England. Paolo served in the British army during the war, as an interpreter, and afterwards went back to England, where he read classics at Pembroke College, Oxford. Subsequently he returned to Italy and studied further in Florence. In 1959, with the enthusiastic support of Eduard Fraenkel, he came to Israel and worked for three years at the Hebrew University, where his classes on Hesiod made a marked impression and are still remembered. His lectures on Greek poetry became a cultural event for Jerusalem audiences far beyond the ranks of the University's students. However, he never mastered Hebrew, and finally moved to America, teaching at the University of Texas at Austin from 1963 to 1966. In that year he moved to McGill University, in Montreal, where he stayed, eventually (in 1982) becoming full professor and a year later, in 1983, being made the first holder of the John S. MacNaughton Chair in Classics.

Vivante spent his entire career as a student of Greek poetry. Only one of his articles ventures outside the bounds of Homer and Pindar, and all five of his books were devoted to Homer. For most of his writing career he deliberately avoided what he saw as technical detail that had little to do with the truly poetic quality of the poems. *The Homeric Imagination, a study of Homer's perception of reality* (1970) examined nature and reality in the poems, and looked especially at the representation of time in the heroic narrative. This was followed in 1982 by *The Epithets in Homer, a study in poetic values*. Here Vivante studied the use of the Homeric epithets and sought to suggest poetic meaning, going beyond the mere suitability of such words on metrical grounds, in their use. In *Homer* (1985) he offered a literary reading for a more general audience, concentrating on literary form in the two poems and presenting them not as narrative but as drama, 'events in the making'. This approach was extended in *The Iliad: Action as Poetry* (1990). In his last book, *Homeric Rhythm: a philosophical study* (1997), he turned to more technical aspects of