

Medieval and Post Medieval Archaeology in the Mediterranean ~ an official interest group of the archaeological institute of america

Minutes: Archaeological Institute of America Annual Meeting 2005

08 Saturday, Jan 2005

POSTED BY BILL CARAHER IN MINUTES

≈ LEAVE A COMMENT

Medieval and Post-Medieval Archaeology in Greece Interest Group
Archaeological Institute of America, Annual Meetings, Boston, Mass

Dear friends and colleagues

A group of us met at the AIA meetings in Boston to commence the new group of medieval and post-medieval archaeology in Greece. I will here summarize the topics of discussion and ideas that occurred during our maiden brainstorming session.

First, I would like to thank all of you for the overwhelmingly positive response to this project. Please, stay tuned for more meetings to come. I would also like to thank Fred Cooper who made his hotel suite available to us and provided food, drink and good spirit.

The first consideration in our meeting had to do with the title and chronological limits of our focus. We unanimously decided to leave particular periodic descriptions out of the title (Byzantine, Frankish, Ottoman, etc) in order to avoid any chronological bias. Our working title, "Group in Medieval and Post-Medieval Archaeology in Greece," is flexible and covers a great span from the "Dark Ages" of the late sixth century to the early modern period. Another important decision related to the character of the activities, namely to seek recognition through our products. By the simple fact of collaboration, the sharing of data, collective involvement in conferences and publications, we will reach recognition. Here are some arenas of productivity discussed in the meeting.

ATTENDING

William R. Caraher, Frederick A. Cooper, Helen B. Foster, Timothy E. Gregory, Kostis Kourelis, Lita Tzortzopoulou-Gregory

MINUTES

CONFERENCES

Using the forum of existing organizations, we will disseminate our interests and archaeological field work. Starting with the AIA, we plan to hold a colloquium session a year from now at the Montreal meetings (January 5-8, 2006). "Medieval and Post-Medieval Archaeology in Greece: Histories and Methods" will present an overview of methods and traditions that have innovated our discipline. The deadline for submissions is in February, so I will solicit individual paper ideas from you very soon. Although extremely preliminary, here are some general thoughts about the potential topics: open area excavation (Guy Sanders), surface survey (Tim Gregory), physical anthropology (Sandra Garvie-Lok), structural archaeology (Lee Striker), remote sensing (Fred Cooper), late ceramics (Joanita Vroom), modern cemeteries (Lita Diacopoulos), the archaeology of Greek-Americans (Phil Duke). More suggestions/commitments are welcome. In addition to the AIA meetings, there are two more conferences in which we should play a collective role. Amy Papalexandrou, the program chair of the 31st Byzantine Studies Conference (Athens, GA, October 2005), will organize a round table on archaeology in addition to individual panels that we might individually direct. Finally, the Byzantine Archaeology Group, a new group at the University of Birmingham, has organized three international conferences (see <http://www.byzarch.bham.ac.uk/>). Archie Dunn, the Group's director has pledged support to our initiatives and has encouraging our involvement with this sister institution. In summary, we hope to show a strong presence in 2005 through the AIA, the BSC and the Birmingham conferences.

WEBSITE

In the next few months we shall develop some web presence that will progressively grow in content and scope. A free yahoo website will initially serve our needs for member communication. It should immediately contain a short description of all current projects of post-antique archaeology and even some future initiatives in the pipe line. There is a substantial body of field work going on currently. Since most of it has not been published, it remains unknown to the larger community (Corinth, Isthmia, Kenchreai, Clarentia, Heptapyrgion, Mount Lykaion, Karpathos, Zaraka, the East Korinthia Survey, the Paliochora-Kythera Archaeological Survey, the Sikyon Survey, etc.) I will solicit short descriptions from all project directors. I think that we will all be amazed at the size of activities once we gather all the pieces. In this listing, we should also include all graduate students working on this period including research topics.

A large part of our discussion related to the sharing data. Many of us use fairly advanced digital data such as satellite images, topographical maps, demographic databases, and GIS. Given the goodwill of our group and the desire not to duplicate each other's labor, we hope to share such information. A central digital library would be an amazing feat. Thanks to the internet, the sciences have already undergone an important paradigm shift in the availability of data. Given its proprietary history, archaeology has been very slow towards this culture of openness. We can lead the way towards this direction and become a model for other organizations. One issue of great interest to the members of the meeting is the desire to assist the general community (both lay and scientific). We have all discovered that the general community is much more receptive to medieval and post-medieval archaeology than academia.

Digital data is not the only thing we can share. We discussed the gathering of bibliographies some of which is already found in electronic format. Many of us have published our field work in obscure places. We can compile as much as we can in PDF documents. In addition to secondary literature, there are some primary sources (documents of social history, demographic data) that we could start gathering. For example, we discussed one particular genre of literature, the locally printed village histories that contain invaluable information on toponyms, lost archaeological traces and genealogies. Such pamphlets have limited circulation and are not collected by any library (in Greece or North America). The Morea Project

has systematically collected them through its travels in the Peloponnese. Some collaboration with the Gennadios Library might also be fruitful here. Our library science experts Camilla McKay and Deb Brown addressed the problems in bibliographic listing in our field.

The final and most ambitious goal for the website would be a refereed electronic journal. Given the shortage of existing publications for post-antique archaeological matters, this would be a great venue to post preliminary field reports as well as scholarly articles. Any ideas / suggestions in this front are welcome. Given the economic problems of most existing journals, we should limit our scope to electronic publications.

The website initiative would certainly be the most time consuming and expensive venture. It might be necessary to seek some financial support through grants and donors. As we get started with the above objectives, let's keep this in the back of our minds.

COMMUNITY

By far the greatest benefit of our new group is the sense of a community. This was apparent in our meeting at Boston. We had a great time exchanging ideas, sharing information and outlining future collaborations. A loose organizational structure seems to be the most effective. We are small enough of a community to dispense with offices, committees and hierarchies. For the time being, I can serve as central communicator in distributing information and setting up the network. As time progresses, I am sure that various members will take on individual tasks and report to the rest. This will be easy once we set up the initial nervous system on the web. We can do most of our work electronically, but we should also try to meet as regularly as is convenient. Let's shoot for a second annual meeting at the AIA conference next January accompanied with a big debut panel. Judging from the wide-ranging response I have received in the last few months, I am very excited about the prospects of our new group. Thanks to everyone individually for contributing to our early stages.

Kostis Kourelis

[Blog at WordPress.com.](http://www.wordpress.com)