

societies.... Under these condition, a basic question is whether... past experience sufficient for predicting the future, or is a high degree of unpredictability of the future the essence of human adventure, be it at the level of individual learning or at the collective levels of history making? (Nicolis and Prigogine 1989: 238).

This contribution explores several implications of the question for fresh alternatives to the hitherto most influentially opposed visions of the tasks of experimental archaeology, in light of projects that not only involve new alliances between fields specialised in physical, organic and cultural realms but are also facilitate upstream public participation in bringing heritage conservation to bear upon major life quality issues.

Exploring new theories for Mediterranean prehistoric archaeology

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Session abstract:

Mediterranean prehistoric archaeology may be thriving, but it is arguably also badly in need of a new conceptual map. On the one hand, many established concepts have become outdated and insufficient for the challenges posed by an anthropological archaeology of people. On the other hand, most Mediterranean prehistorians find contemporary philosophies and their implications and applications obscure, daunting, and not immediately relevant to their experiences of archaeological remains. As a consequence, Mediterranean prehistoric archaeology today can be characterised by a dependence on tried, tested and taken-for-granted research themes.

Common themes, represented in recent books such as *The Archaeology of Mediterranean Prehistory* (Blackwell, 2005), include: the changing landscape; transitions from hunter-gatherers, to early farmers, complex societies and early states; the exploitation of local resources and the origins of the Mediterranean diet; tool production, tool use and technological change; human settlement, monument-building and the development of early towns and cities; mobility, trade and social interaction over land and sea and their impacts; ritual practices and religious beliefs; stylistic expression and visual representation; local, regional and multi-cultural identities; colonisation and colonialism; social identities and status; gender relations; agency, power and ideology; tradition, change and hybridization; contemporary tensions surrounding the archaeological heritage; and regional traditions of archaeological research.

The challenge posed by this session, then, is to question the dominance of these established themes and to explore a new and exciting set of theories, concepts and themes

for us to think with in the future about the worlds and lives of people in the past. Speakers have been invited to contribute short and provocative papers that address these issues.

Session papers:

Exploring new theories for Mediterranean prehistoric archaeology: a very brief introduction

Robin Skeates (Durham University, Robin.Skeates@durham.ac.uk)

A story out of (pre)history: stronger narrative discourse at the root of a theoretical renewal of prehistoric archaeology

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The increase in systematic and salvage exploration of prehistoric sites in the Aegean has led to an arithmetic explosion of longer and shorter publications. One of the results of this flourishing activity, however, is fatigue on the part of the scientific readership and a constant rehash of conceptual objectives. I believe that one facet of this impasse lies, inter alia, in the glossomorphically stereotypical presentation of archaeological material. The descriptive language used, whether morphological, metrical or technological, is intended to reduce the intrusion of the contemporary subjective element in the representation of prehistory, so as to preserve the 'purity' of prehistoric man. This dichotomy between past and present, objectivity and subjectivity, which persists in the archaeology of Aegean prehistory contra the historic, socio-modernist and post-modernist influences, has left traditional archaeological language unable to meet the need of today's specialist for a contemporary reading of the prehistoric past, let alone that of the ordinary reader to create a composite image of prehistoric man.

With this in mind I propose as a starting-point for meditation on a regeneration of archaeological theory a shift in thrust from a simple description of prehistory to a narration of prehistory. The data would not be absent from such an account, but would be converted, with the use of certain language-structure choices, from voiceless codified and arithmetical elements into narrative points: man would then become the chief actor, the archaeologist the narrator and the objects the scenery for a story or perceptible (re)presentation. Within this context pre-historic man would cease to be an invisible figure in the wings of a material civilisation and would become a specific actor, whose hands gave the archaeological material its meaning.

The outsider's view in Mediterranean archaeology

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Outsiders have long contributed to Mediterranean archaeology, as testified by the success of the foreign Schools, and they have often played a role in setting the intellectual agenda of the fields where they work, for example in studies of the Neolithic transition in Italy.

Such contributions may provide a fresh view to debates which have stagnated or introduce entirely new theoretical perspectives. I shall discuss the conditions for successful communication (or for the lack of communication) between national 'scientific communities' of archaeologists studying the Mediterranean world. As well as issues such as language or intellectual arenas (for example in Britain we publish in journals, in other countries conferences may be more important for interchange), I shall highlight the important point made by idealist philosophers such as Croce and Collingwood that scholars tend to ask

questions (and therefore will be willing to accept answers) whose resolution is relevant to their own cultural and historical setting.

Around the fire: glimpses of daily life in a Neolithic site in Northern Greece
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Fire creates through destruction; it converts raw to baked and edible, mud to stable and tenacious material. It can create powerful feelings that anneal the memory: light in the dark, warmth in the cold, gathering of relatives and neighbors, the ritual (?) burning of a house. The impact of fire in a Neolithic community was constant and determinative in everyday life.

This paper seeks to explore issues of daily life around thermal structures (hearths and ovens) as distinctive areas of everyday activities (food preparation, weaving, production of stone and bone tools, gathering, disputing, thinking and believing). Fire installations constituted the mean by which fire was controlled and diffused in the community. They were the outcome of a dynamic process that involves conceptualization, planning, construction and maintenance. Their location and the distribution of specific artifacts around them was the result of conscious choices. Thermal structures recur consistently in Neolithic contexts inside a house or in the open spaces of a settlement. The study of their spatial distribution alongside with the contextual distribution of artifacts is expected to reveal diversification of daily activities in the routine of residence in a settlement and to identify the contribution of fire installations in every-day life. Where these features were regularly located? What activities were taking place there? Is it possible to detect individual repeated actions around them? These are some of the questions that are expected to open up a broader theoretical discussion through the study of a Neolithic site in Northern Greece.

Beyond typology: seeking meaning in material culture in the Central Mediterranean

Caroline Malone (Queen's University Belfast c.malone@qub.ac.uk)

Constrained by the dominant Classical tradition of material culture study, prehistory in the Mediterranean is variously used to perpetuate artistic typological schemes or scientific taxonomic schemes. The object remains the dominant element of research and study. Neither approach pays sufficient attention to context at a local or landscape level, or to function or meaning. Theory remains regardless of wider scholarly trends, firmly based in the study of material culture. In contrast, northern Europe, with its paucity of material culture has had to develop quite different approaches to prehistory and approaches the Mediterranean with a raft of theories that often sit uneasily with local archaeological tradition. This paper explores how ideas and methods relating to "Context" and "Artefact" are gradually taking root in the scholarly approaches and education of archaeologists, and examines how combining the many elements of archaeological data often results in valuable social, cultural and economic interpretation.

Everywhere so divided: status and settlement in Early Bronze Age Southern Greece

David Smith (University of Liverpool, D.M.Smith@liverpool.ac.uk)

My research attempts a critical re-evaluation of burial practices, settlement patterns, and monumental construction designed to challenge existing ideas of 'hierarchy' and social organisation in the Early Bronze Age Peloponnese. The Early Helladic period in the Peloponnese is seen as a period of expansive settlement growth, subsuming areas of minimal agricultural potential alongside positions more topographically and geologically favourable. This shift, however, is not uniform. Instead, we see peculiar temporal and spatial developments perhaps linked to the particular geological, geographical or socio-political

position of the study area. Variations in settlement size, largely defined by intensive survey, are used to theorise on the socio-political or economic position of these sites within the spheres of interaction in which they must have functioned, while their locations are deterministically evaluated by the technological capability of the inhabitants to render the position productive within the landscape. But with continuing criticism over the validity of data, alongside recent studies which question the relationship between size and rank, how far can we expect to construct a representative continuum of 'status' for prehistoric Greek 'sites' and those resident within them? This paper uses data drawn from recent intensive surveys to address the theoretical and conceptual issues associated with the study of prehistoric settlement, and to suggest possible future directions for inter-regional study of 'power' and 'status' in the Early Bronze Age Peloponnese.

An archaeology of interaction for the prehistoric Mediterranean
Francesco Iacono (UCL, francesco.iacono@googlemail.com)

Interaction has been always one of the main research themes within Mediterranean prehistory. This interest is of course due to the wealth of evidence for inter-societal contact available in the area as well as to the very characteristics of the Mediterranean sea which, as it has been noted by many since Braudel's time, connects more than separates different geographic realities and human populations. Despite all this interest, however, there have been very few recent attempts to formalize interaction in a coherent theoretical whole. In this paper, drawing upon non-trivial version of Marxist social theory, I will try to sketch out how this kind of approach would look like. The basic starting point of this perspective resides in the acknowledgement that the form that interaction can take is fundamentally influenced by the different social organization which is possible to recognize in societies involved in those activities, and that, conversely, these differences feed back in general trends (often termed in the archaeological literature with terms such as "route") which is possible to distinguish at a Mediterranean-wide scale. I will support my point by the means of the archaeological record of the Bronze Age site of Rocavecchia in Adriatic Southern Italy.

Revisiting the human body in Mediterranean prehistory: a case study from Minoan Crete

Anna Simandiraki-Grimshaw (University of Bath, pytna@yahoo.co.uk)

Most research in Aegean Archaeology and within it the Archaeology of Minoan Crete (3rd-2nd millennia BC) is largely considered to belong to a traditional methodological paradigm. It is therefore not surprising that archaeologies of the human body, with few luminous exceptions, are still at their infancy. The prevalent assumption in Minoan Archaeology is that humans may be studied as artefactual categories (e.g. frescoes, figurines, seals) or themes (e.g. women, adorants, royalty). This often overlooks the inexhaustible possibilities of humans as complex, fluctuating phenomena and routinely conflates humanity of different areas, eras and physical conditions. This paper uses a case study to propose a methodology which attempts to bridge the gap between dominant tried-and-tested cultural historical discourses and postprocessual fertilisation, often considered 'fuzzy' within Aegean archaeological paradigms because of its lack of quantifiable results. More specifically, the paper proposes clustering corporal information across finds (e.g. artefacts depicting humans/humanoids in different media and skeletal remains), then plotting it temporally and regionally. What emerges, among others, is that this different way of interrogating the already existing dataset reveals hitherto neglected nuances of the prehistoric human condition, such as the significance of somatic diversity in the regional construction of the self and the collective.

Multisensory interpretation of the past and the experiential potential for Mediterranean archaeology

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Recent developments in archaeological theory have introduced the role of the human body and its sensory potential in interpreting the past. In particular recent research has showed that the human senses have a central role in shaping built space. The application of a multisensory interpretation, closely knit with sensory memory, can provide additional information on the potential ways people experienced their lives in the past. Furthermore, such an approach can work together with existing theories. Crucial for the development for such a theory is the preservation of building remains and distribution of material culture. The above mean that there is no need to invent new excavation techniques since existing methods are sufficient. An example from a site in Macedonia, Greece will demonstrate the potential of such an approach and its implications in interpreting the past.

The archaeology of personhood in the ancient Mediterranean: a case study from Iron Age Veneto

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In this paper I present my ongoing doctoral research concerning the construction of personhood in Iron Age Veneto (Italy) with the aim of suggesting a new theoretical framework suitable for scholars involved in the study of the Mediterranean basin as well as of other regions of the ancient world. By drawing on current anthropological research carried out, among others, by Lynn Morgan, I firstly define personhood as a moral categorization which discriminates between the individuals who are given full or partial membership in society and those who are denied any form of social inclusion. Secondly, I discuss how the construction of personhood is a process deeply embedded in dynamics of power and control often related to the management of the society at large and motivated by the necessity – which is common to every human group - to attribute to each individual a coherent location in the social body. Thirdly, I show how the analysis of specific segments of the archaeological record – the funerary evidence of pre-Roman Veneto in my case – can be a powerful tool to identify the ritual practices adopted by any given social group to display and reaffirm the degree of integration granted to its members.

At the textual margins of prehistory

Simon Stoddart (University of Cambridge, ss16@hermes.cam.ac.uk)

The paper will address the issues faced in the liminal period of protohistory when developing theory in Mediterranean prehistory. For many the very term protohistory has an archaic feel. In actual fact protohistory engages with new conceptual challenges introduced by the presence of restricted literacy. Two principal themes will be explored: landscape and the body. Both these themes have strong foundations in the Mediterranean and in theory, and are fruitful for new and creative combinations.