

## “Symposium On Mediterranean Archaeology, Fifth Annual Meeting of Post-Graduate Researchers”, School of Archaeology Classics and Oriental Studies, University of Liverpool, 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> February 2001

Carrie Murray

Institute of Archaeology, UCL.

The “Symposium on Mediterranean Archaeology” was very well attended this year, with presenters and attendants travelling from all over Britain, as well as America, Belgium, Crete, France, Germany, Greece, Italy and Poland. The main aim of the conference was to bring together the various types of archaeological research being conducted all over the Mediterranean. SOMA seeks to be a forum for discussion of mainly post-graduate ‘works in progress’ and fieldwork reports, as a means of obtaining feedback and criticism from other peers. This year also included the possibility of publishing the presentations as articles in a supplementary journal of the *British Archaeological Reports* series.

The papers were spread across three days and were divided into twelve thematic sessions of: “Space, Movement and Social Dynamics”; “Urban Dynamics and State Formation”; “Aspects of Subsistence”; “Iconography”; “Architecture”; “Body, Gender and Space”; “Landscape and Topography”; “Methodology and Material Analysis”; “Cult, Burial and the Archaeology of Death”; “Heritage and Language”; and “Pottery Analysis”. These categories were chosen in an attempt to bring together projects from distant parts of the Mediterranean, which also happen to share general research aims. The result was a wide-range of interesting topics covering the Neolithic to the fourth century CE in several Mediterranean regions, as well as one paper which discussed the 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Despite the large number of presenters and possible discussion topics, the symposium remained heavily Aegean in focus, as it has been in the past. Half of the papers (roughly 25 out of 49) concerned Greece, Crete and Cyprus. Unfortunately, the discussion periods after the presentations were often very short, with few, if any, questions being asked. This was probably due in part to the large size of one room, which made it difficult to hear the presentations.

Within the sessions many different aspects were discussed. Archaeological science was broached by two papers, the first given jointly by Gianna Ayala and Matthew Fitzjohn (University of Cambridge), and the second by Doortje Van Hove (University of Southampton), in which they discussed the use of Geographical Information Systems in their surveys. Several papers discussed reinvestigations of material culture, such as Gerasimos Vallerios Stergiopoulos’ (University of Edinburgh) paper on Cycladic idols, Dimitris Pappas’ (University of Crete) paper on Aegean wall-paintings and several papers on pottery, including Ivonne Kaiser’s (University of Heidelberg) paper on Minoan cooking pots. Other papers focused on reinvestigating gender. Dr Margarita Sanchez (University of Durham) used ethnographic

studies to establish the role women played in the socio-economic societies of prehistoric Spain, and Katerina Koltsida (University of Liverpool) utilized archaeological evidence of 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty villas in Amarna to argue that women were not secluded in portions of the villas, as previously indicated by artistic representations and textual information. A number of presentations dealt with tomb evidence for a means of investigating social change through different periods. Luca Cherstich (University of Chieti) investigated the relationship between the necropoleis and settlements of ancient Cyrene, and Roman Salewski (University of Cambridge) investigated the construction of *gens* ideology through funerary representations in Hellenistic Etruscan tombs.

Professor John Davies gave a very insightful closing statement. He brought to light the under-representation of certain areas of the Mediterranean, by mentioning the few presentations that discussed Italy, Iberia, Libya, Egypt and the Near East, as well as one presentation that discussed the ancient sailing season (James Beresford, University of Oxford). Professor Davies then asked the symposium members to decide if they were involved in "archaeology of the Mediterranean, or archaeology in the Mediterranean". He went on to question the present organisation of archaeological studies, by asking if it is really useful to deal with the Mediterranean as one region. Are there common links that inseparably tie together these diverse areas or should the regions be redistributed and combined into Europe, the Near East and Africa, respectively? And if the Mediterranean Sea both divides and draws together different cultures, Mediterranean archaeology should address these issues more readily. Professor Davies' Closing Statement added a needed bit of perspective, to what is seemingly an ever-increasing departmentalisation of research in the Mediterranean. A wider perspective of the Mediterranean as a whole, if not always feasible for doctoral research, could make the "Symposium on Mediterranean Archaeology" a more suitable forum for discussion and progress.