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*From the Edge to the Centre: Suggested Directions for the Study of Greek
“Colonization”*

The study of ancient Greek colonization was irrecoverably thrown off its traditional course during the 1990s, as scholars questioned old ways thanks particularly to the application of postmodern, postcolonial, and interdisciplinary approaches. As a result, Greek colonization came to be viewed in a more complex and realistic manner. Despite these advances, the subject remains fragmented, and no clearly formulated agenda for the future has ever been proposed. The subject is in something of a crisis. Where might the study of ancient Greek colonization go in the 21st century?

This paper suggests three possible directions. First, further study of the faulty analogies and terminology that still lie at the subject's core needs to be undertaken. We must abandon the terms “colonies” and “colonization” which, as is well known, are generally misnomers for this ancient phenomenon. In their place can be suggested other models of culture contact and terminology, which combines ancient terms with new coinages based thereon. At the same time, we must continue studying the faulty analogies between ancient Greek “colonization” and modern European colonialism and imperialism, even if we have rejected these analogies, since we need to understand better the historiographic tradition that has shaped the concepts and questions we have inherited.

Secondly, we need to re-assess our historical practices, which still tend to be disciplinary based, in spite of growing theoretical sophistication. Written and archaeological sources are usually treated separately, whereas they are obviously more effective when combined. A special kind of interdisciplinarity requires developing, particularly prehistoric and contact archaeologies, to move the subject forward.

Thirdly, scholarship must find new meaning in the study of ancient Greek “colonization,” whose scholarly purpose has traditionally been to disseminate a higher and aggressive classical culture to more primitive and passive peripheries. The ancient Greeks, in other words, used to be held up as a mirror and precedent for the aspirations and behaviour of nineteenth- and twentieth-century European states and empires. But ancient Greek culture contact history can be used in other ways, given the widespread study of and fascination with ancient Greece around the world, including in non-Western contexts.

Contemporary relevance can be found especially in the multiculturalism and migrations of the 21st century. In engaging multicultural issues in the past, and the interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives needed to understand them, our own world is inevitably thrown into the spotlight. Ancient Greek “colonization” was also characterized by the interplay of local, regional, and global dimensions of the human past, and so it is another example of world history, which is again coming back into vogue in historical studies. In adopting such an approach, we will begin to appreciate again the wider world of the ancient Greeks, beyond the Aegean basin, where the focus continues narrowly to be placed.

June 3rd 2008



Sjoerd van der Linde (Leiden) presents: *Digging holes in foreign cultures? | Sjoerd will present [his research outline](#) Digging holes in foreign cultures? Development of an ethical and sustainable framework for managing archaeological sites in the developing world (NWO).*

May 6th 2008



Tim Williams (UCL) presents: *Urban archaeology: why don't we really use the data from stratigraphic excavation?*

For many years now urban archaeologists in Western Europe have been gathering large quantities of data on complex urban stratigraphy, primarily through rescue archaeology. There has been a strong emphasis upon standards of recording - single-context records, environmental retrieval, artefact recovery, etc - the ‘preservation by record’ that salves our consciences as to the scale of destruction. But how do we use this amazing research opportunities? Why so often do we write simple narratives of individual interventions, into much larger urban landscapes? We do not use the complexity of the resource: instead we simplify it. Is it because of the operational demands of organisations and funding arrangements that we seldom have a broader focus? How can this change, and what is the role of Universities in this process?

April 22, 2008: **Alice Samson (Leiden) and Dr Bridget Waller (Portsmouth University, Great Britain)**



Not growling but smiling: using biological evolutionary approaches in archaeological interpretation in the precolumbian Caribbean

Understanding the character of social relations in past societies is hard. In this case study, a multi-disciplinary combination of archaeological and biological evolutionary approaches is used to assess the social value of a hallmark motif, the bared-teeth motif, in precolumbian iconography of the Greater Antilles.

This motif, which appears after AD 1000 on a wide range of bodily adornments and items associated with shamanic activities, has generally been interpreted as representative of death, aggression or the shamanic trance. It has never been examined in terms of its signal value as a positive facial expression. It is our contention that the motif functioned in the precolumbian Caribbean as a communicative signal in complex social interactions in both human and non-human (spirit, animal, natural) worlds, and may have been essential for the maintenance of cohesive and social relationships.

David Kertai – April 22th 2008



Why Space Syntax misrepresents space and how to live with that

The social structure of buildings has received increasing attention within the field of archaeology. An often used set of tools for such research is called *Space Syntax*. This method was first introduced in 1984 in the book *The Social Logic of Space* by Hillier and Hanson. While it has become a popular approach within archaeology it remains an obscure method within the field of architecture. This is probably due to the Modernistic tendency within *Space Syntax*. This presentation will argue that the theory behind *Space Syntax* has some fundamental flaws but that it is nonetheless a useful tool for analysis.

The Archaeological Forum is an archaeological discussion meeting which takes place every 2 weeks on Tuesday afternoons. The aim is to foment debate on a wide range of archaeological issues. Presentations are short (20 minutes max.) and the focus for the rest of the hour is on discussion.