

ARCH 0420: Archaeologies of the Greek Past

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WEEKLY POSTS



Feasting at the Palace of Nestor at Pylos by Todd Stewart

April 24, 2014 · 10 Comments

Discussing the “Animal Sacrifice, Archives, and Feasting at the Palace of Nestor at Pylos” Article by S.R. Stocker and J.L. Davis

Hey guys! Unfortunately, my plan of intentionally losing all the class competitions to get out of writing this blog have apparently been to no avail. However, this does mean that we all get ONE MORE BLOG to soak up before the semester ends! Gosh I’m going to miss this class.

I’ll be writing about an article by S.R. Stocker and J.L. Davis on animal sacrifices, archives, and feasting at the Palace of Nestor at Pylos. The past few classes we have been covering the diacritical role of feasting in the Mycenaean palatial society, and this article raises some very intriguing points on the subject and can help us better understand the institution of feasting.



The article deals primarily with the contents of a single room in the palace of

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Nestor of the Archives complex (known as room 7) of the palace and the implications of these finds. Burned animal bones (primarily mandibles and leg joints of 5-11 cattle, and parts of a single red deer), one ceramic pithos, Linear B tablets, 20-22 miniature kylike cups, a sword and a spearhead make up the contents of the room. The burned animal bones are certainly the remnants of ritual sacrifice that took place in the LHIII B period, shortly before the final destruction of the palace. The spearhead and sword were most likely used in the ritualistic slaughtering of the animals, and the miniature kylike cups, too small to hold very much liquid, were very likely used to hold a symbolic toast during the ceremony. Particularly interesting is the placement of these bones in this specific room, which served as the office of an archivist of sorts as indicated by the presence of many Linear B tablets. The question then, was what were these remains of ritual animal sacrifice doing in an administrative office?



More than 200 Linear B tablets were in the room at the time of the palace's destruction. Some of these tablets tell us of offerings that will be made to Poseidon by the King of Pylos and its military commander, and others suggest that paired dining was a component of feasting at the palace at Nestor. It was suggested that these tablets represent an "audit of the palace's equipment for banqueting" and in fact these tablets tallied a total of 22 chairs and 11 tables – a remarkable number in that 22 is the same amount of kylike cups found. Additionally, a fresco depicting two people dining across from one another at a table was found in the Throne Room of Nestor's palace. The number of kylike cups very likely corresponds directly to the number of seated guests present at the feasting ceremony. Perhaps these diners were comprised of high-ranking palace officials, or affluent representatives from provinces in the kingdom of Pylos; these diners were certainly representative of the elite of society. The 11 cattle slaughtered for this feast would have been an enormous amount of meat to be consumed, too much for only 22 diners. Therefore, it can be surmised that a hierarchy of feasting existed at Pylos, with seated individual elites dining

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privately in ceremony and a much larger mass group of lesser-privileged men. The material evidence of Room 7 leads us to believe that the remnants of sacrifice (the sword, spear, animal bones, kylikes cups) were moved to that room to be catalogued, perhaps as proof the sacrifice took place, rather than the actual ceremony having taken place in room 7.



While reading this article I was enthralled by the idea of the private, seated dining the 22 elite individuals experienced. What were these men gathered here to discuss under such ceremony and pomp? Were these men foreign ambassadors, seeking to strike alliances with Pylos? More ominously, perhaps some of these 22 men had something to do with the destruction of the Palace of Nestor itself. Were subterfuge, treason and treachery afoot during this ceremonious feast? The imagination abounds with scenarios. Maybe I've been watching too much Game of Thrones. Regardless, the material evidence found at the palace at Nestor helps provide remarkable insight into the nature of feasting and sacrifice in the Mycenaean world. The fact that we can tie depictions of feasting, to archived primary records of the ceremony, to the very material culture that was used during the ceremony is momentous. It is this momentous find, and others like it, that fuels the passions of archaeologists the world over.

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Survey archaeology: the first glimpse into any archaeological site by Emile Bautista

April 4, 2014 · 7 Comments



Today in class, we used survey techniques to inspect approximately half of Brown University's main green. We split up into about 13 transects and walked in our own paths to see what types of 'pottery' and 'stone tools' we could discover laying around (in reality, we substituted things we would actually find on the main green for objects typically found at a site).



This activity was quite the change of pace for our class and differed greatly from any of the group activities or discussion done in class. Spending class time outdoors, as cold as it was, was a refreshing way of simulating some of the things learned this week about the Greek countryside. Much of the countryside has been inspected by archaeologists using techniques similar to the ones we used, but on a much grander scale. Trying to use survey methods ourselves really puts the work done by archaeologists into perspective. The bitter cold combined with the biting wind made being outside insufferable at times. And yet, there are archaeologists who document the countryside, no matter the weather. Additionally, it took us far longer to examine a small portion of the main green than I had ever expected. The prospect of having to do this on a larger scale frightens me and I respect those whose passion is this.



My 'finds' consisted mainly of branches, which served as pottery in our case. I would estimate that about 80% of the things I documented were sticks. This led to another epiphany: survey archaeologists surely find many of the same artifacts and it is their duty to record all instances. The monotony of that concept is not lost upon me. I found myself in a state of excitement when I found things like cigarette butts (aka roof tiles), something that was rare in my transect. Yet, I would expect that something like this is commonplace among many sites and these sorts of feelings are few and far between. I'm sure I speak for the entire class when I say that this activity really put into perspective the field work done by archaeologists around the world.

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TimeMapper Projects

April 1, 2014 · Leave a Comment

The goal of this exercise was to think about the interactions between people, places and things across time and space through using the TimeMapper visualization technology on three particular case studies.

Group #1: The Buildings of Delphi

(Logan Bonney, Angela Cao, Mario Gionnazzo, Abigail Moses, Ashley Urrutia)

Please click here to see the [TimeMapper Visualization of the Buildings of Delphi](#)

Nestled in a bucolic valley of the Greek countryside, the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi was an important pan-Hellenic site. Before the sanctuary was dedicated to Apollo, it was dedicated to Ge, mother earth. Delphi housed many significant temples, treasuries, and monuments kept by some of the most prominent city states of the Greek world. The site housed the influential oracle Pythia, whose

prophetic declarations were sought by influential leaders before they made important decisions like going to war. Delphi was also the site of the Pythian Games, wherein a year-long truce among the cities allowed the Amphictyonic League to focus on preparing for the games.

Due to its status as a hub of Greek religious and political gatherings, Delphi acted as a stage upon which rival powers displayed their might through lavish gifts to Apollo and the construction of grand monuments, temples, and treasuries. These structures, built to advertise the wealth of their donor cities, reflected the competition that existed amongst the cities. They also represented competitions among the Gods. The style, position, dedicator, and who it was dedicated to showcased the diachronic changing of power and politics in the Aegean. For example, in the building of treasuries Greek powers jostled for prime real estate within the sanctuary to win Apollo's favor and display their power and wealth in the most conspicuous locations. Areas along the sacred way were coveted, and rival polities constructed their treasuries close to one another, begging comparison with their neighbors. The city state of Thebes built its treasury opposite of a group of Spartan statues on the other side of the sanctuary. The Thebans intended for their large, simply crafted treasury to be compared with the lavish spartan statues near the sanctuaries gates. The Siphnian Treasury was built next to the Sikyonian on a natural incline of the terrain so that it looked over its neighbor and could be seen from outside of the sanctuary. Since there was limited space, treasuries were relatively small, causing there to be little differentiation in the size of each structure. Since polities were unable to construct treasuries which were physically bigger than their neighbors they displayed their wealth and power through ornate column groupings and elaborate metopes. In some cases treasuries were intentionally built with austere facades to represent the no-frills piety of their donor state.

The Timemapper software showed how the buildings fit together and allowed a more comprehensive look at the progression of the site from the Geometric through the Hellenistic periods. We found the most helpful feature was the temporal separation of the buildings, which allowed us to look at phases of the site. This is contrasted with maps, which don't have the fluidity necessary to model changing political rivalries. Utilizing the software, we could see building patterns and trends such as the rise of military dedications in the first half of the fifth century, which we could then tie to the Persian wars and showed the changing nature of Greekness and the tension between polis and larger alliances.

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Group #2: Doric Temples

**(Aubree Moore, Liam Casey, Alexandra DeFrancesco, Sophie Cohen,
and Grace Cinderella)**

Please click here to see the [TimeMapper visualization of Doric Temples](#)

In this project, our group was responsible for mapping the location of Doric temples built by ancient Greek cultures, as well as determining the timeframe in which these temples were built. We discovered that contrary to what is commonly believed, Athens was not the main location in which Doric temples were found. Many of the earliest Doric temples were actually located in regions outside of Athens, with some appearing as far away as Sicily. The Temple of Apollo at Thermon and Temple of Hera at Pasteum demonstrate how some cities outside of Athens served as leading forces of artistic expression and monument building beginning in the Archaic period.

The Archaic Temple of Apollo at Thermon served as a prime example of an Ancient Greek Doric temple. Multicolored ceramic metopes decorated with mythical scenes, such as Perseus grasping the head of Medusa and a hunter thought to represent Heracles, adorned the top of the temple, signifying the universal prevalence of mythological figures in Ancient Greek cult.[1] The metopes at Thermon are the earliest known remnants of this art form, which appeared in many other Doric temples as a component of the frieze — demonstrating the influence that this temple presumably had on other Greek Doric temples across the Eastern Mediterranean.[2] The temple also later served as a location for the assembly of Aetolian League and was therefore an important center of political activity within Thermon, the focal point of political and religious activity within Aetolia.[3] The Temple of Apollo at Thermon indicates the significance of Doric temples located outside of Athens, perhaps even suggesting that this temple, and others of this period, may have influenced the monumental temples of Athens — Athens may not have been the first to represent the designs we have come to know as Doric.

The Temple of Hera at Pestaeum was one of the most interesting temples of the Doric style and the development of that style. The temple contains some characteristics that are not commonly seen in Doric temples such as a different

method of spacing the columns on the front and the incorporation of Ionic characteristics. The temple was also one of the first sites to have certain features which later became common to the Doric style: the entasis and the use of interaxial measurement as the basis for the measurement of the whole temple.

[4] The Temple of Hera at Paestum serves as a powerful example of the artistic development of the Doric style that took place outside of Athens. Many of the features used in the temple were incorporated into later Doric temples and it is clear that many later architects took inspiration directly from the temples design. Much like the Temple of Apollo at Thermon, the Temple of Hera at Paestum also indicates the significance of the Doric style and monumental architecture outside of Athens and reinforces the notion that Athens was not the original and only developer of the Doric style.

Although our time-mapper project mainly focuses regions other than Athens, it is important to consider Athens in the discussion of Doric temples. Looking at one, if not the most, famous temple the Parthenon in Athens, modern scholars as well as the general public are constantly reminded of this architectural style. That being said, the temples mentioned our time map highlight that these temples, although less known, are equally as important in the discussion of Doric style and should not be overlooked.

[1] James Whitley, *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 160; J.H. Croon, "Artemis Thermia and Apollo Thermios (With an Excursus on the Oetean Heracles-Cult)," *Mnemosyne* 9, no. 3 (1956): 206.

[2] R. M. Cook, "The Archetypal Doric Temple," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 65 (1970): 17-18.

[3] Whitley, 160; Croon, "Artemis Thermia and Apollo Thermios (With an Excursus on the Oetean Heracles-Cult)," 205.

[4] Symeonoglou, Sarantis . "The Doric Temples of Paestum." *Journal of Aesthetic Education*. no. 1 (1985): 49-66. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3332558?> (accessed March 31, 2014).

Group #3: Uluburun Shipwreck

(Emile Bautista, Gabrielle Hick, Thomas Pettengill, Todd Stewart, Guo Wang)

Please click here to see the [TimeMapper visualization of the Uluburun Shipwreck](#)

The Uluburun Shipwreck was an ancient ship discovered close to the east shore

of Uluburun and was, in its time, the deepest shipwreck to be completely excavated by underwater archaeologists. The wreck contained a significant cargo of trading goods, many of which originated from thousands of miles away. The ship was most likely sailing from a Levantine port, carrying Canaanite merchants to a Mycenaean emporium, when it sank off the coast of southern Turkey around 1305 BCE. The bulk of the items found were trade goods purchased or obtained along the Levantine coast, with the rest of the cargo most likely consisting of personal belongings of the crew and passengers. The most significant portion of the cargo was copper ore and ingots from Cyprus. The trade goods varied in both quality and kind, ranging from luxury items like Canaanite gold jewelry to jars of incense. Although the origins of the items found at the Uluburun shipwreck covered a geographical range as far west as Romania and as far east as Afghanistan, the majority of the trade goods were traced back to the Levantine coast, which was controlled by the Egyptian and Hittite Empires during this time. The bulk of the goods on board – the copper ingots and ore – originated from the island of Cyprus, which at this time had a Mycenaean presence but was independent of any large empire. Other commodities included Egyptian ebony, 2,000 pounds of terebinth resin stored in Canaanite jars, and almost 200 coloured disc-shaped glass ingots from the northern Levantine coast.

While it is inferred from the personal possessions found on board that the crew and ship were either from Canaan or Cyprus, certain personal items seem to indicate that two crewmembers were Mycenaean. A number of weights were also discovered in the wreckage, and considering merchants traditionally owned a personal set of weights, it may be argued that the seemingly out of place Mycenaean weights were travelling merchants. However, the lack of any Aegean weights further proves that the Mycenaean crewmembers were not merchants, and therefore were most likely crewmembers. The stone sceptre head found, whose closest parallel was discovered in modern day Bulgaria, helps to connect this ship and its trading endeavors to the lands north of Greece. Additionally, the tin ore found, mined in Afghanistan, indicates trading relationships between the eastern Mediterranean world and Asian tribes almost as far east as the Himalayas. Therefore, the excavated artifacts prove that the Levantine coast and Cyprus would have served as centres of major international trade, connecting not only the two major powers of the Hittite and Egyptian Empire, but also the Mycenaean culture and those tribes as far inland as Afghanistan.

While international trade in the Eastern Mediterranean, to an extent, centred on the Mycenaean culture and the Hittite and Egyptian Empires, this was in the context of a larger web of international trade which, as previously suggested, involved trading powers as far east as Afghanistan and as far west as Romania. While none of these international powers directly controlled Cyprus, the island served as a major source for material resources like copper, and more

importantly, was a strategically important centre for trade. It has been postulated that the Uluburun ship had even set sail from Cyprus, which would make sense given the vast amount of copper found on board. By sourcing the origins of all the items found in the Uluburun Shipwreck, a detailed picture of international trade during the Late Bronze Age can be painted. The Uluburun Shipwreck proves a significant archaeological find; the historical information archaeologists may ascertain from the wreckage more precious than any copper ingots.

The TimeMapper program was extremely useful for visualizing the connections between trading powers in the Late Bronze Age. It allowed for the mapping of the shipwreck's contents, as well as where and when they were from, creating a map that simplifies the trade networks.

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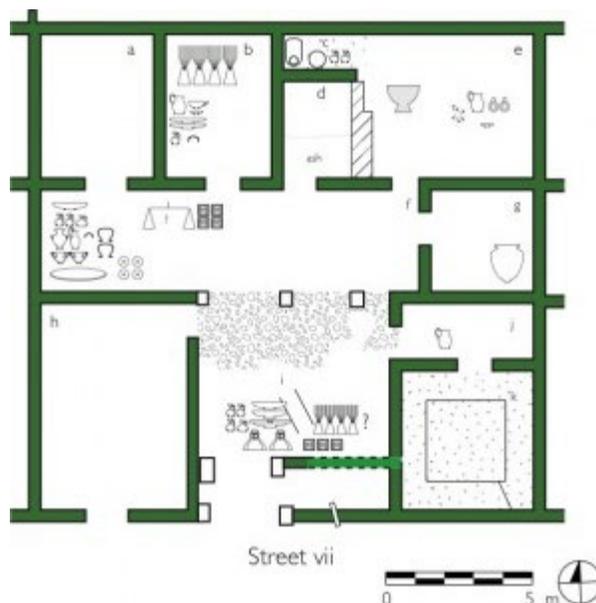
An Early Spring Day in Olynthus House A vii 4 (Angela Cao)

March 25, 2014 · 8 Comments

This paper seeks to explore a day in the life of an ancient Greek household at Olynthus, drawing especially heavily upon Nicholas Cahill's plan of House A vii 4 that includes the artifacts were found in each room. The reconstruction further uses readings about Greek daily life and determines in which rooms of this house certain activities occurred, in order to recreate a potential daily routine for the woman of this household. Specific explanations for these choices can be found in the footnotes below.

Soon after the sun rises, I wake in my bedroom on this chilly day. I lie in bed and watch the weak sunlight shine in through the small

window. ^[1] My thoughts wander to strange and faraway places: How long would my family live in this house? What would remain when we are gone? Could someone in the future understand how we live based



on what objects and architecture remains? However, it is time to rise and start the day, so I send my slave girl to heat water in the flue and prepare my bath in the adjacent bathtub.^[2] I walk down the stairs and enter into the kitchen to take my bath using the fragrant oils and perfumes I store there.^[3] Once I am finished bathing, my slave girl empties my dirty bath water in the court where it can drain out to the street, while I go back upstairs and retrieve the peplos I will wear today from my wooden clothing chest.^[4] It is early spring, so the woolen peplos will keep me warm. I arrange my hair into a plait and awaken my young son and daughter for the day, helping them to get dressed as well.

Since we are all dressed, I am prepared to begin the day. My children and I go downstairs, where my slave girl is tending to the charcoal fire in the flue. The weather is cold because it is still early in the day, so we use the fire in the flue for warmth.^[5] The loom on which I have been weaving a piece of cloth to make a new blanket is in the multipurpose room adjacent to the flue. We use this room to store many things, and because it is next to the flue, I can weave my cloth here and remain warm while having enough light to see the detailed pattern I am creating.^[6] I sit down to continue weaving the wool as my children play in the pastas. During this time, my slave girl cleans the family's dirty laundry in the court, hanging up the clothes until they are ready again to be stored. Later into the morning, I finish making my piece of fabric and remove the completed cloth from the loom so that my slave girl can take apart the loom and put it back into storage in this room. I bring the fabric upstairs and put it into the wooden chest where I keep the bedding for my household, where it will remain until I can weave a plain piece of fabric to be the reverse side to the blanket.

It is almost time for our midday meal, and my husband and our slave boy should return home from the market shortly. My slave girl gathers barley from the pithos in the storeroom and tells me that the grains are nearly depleted.^[7] I must remember to restock the barley soon, as it is one of the most important components of my family's diet. Like most families that live in our area on the North Hill, we only have one relatively small primary pithos buried in the storeroom. Because we are located very close to the center of Olynthus and have easy access to the market, we have no need to store a large amount of grain in our house.^[8] However, we do keep extra grains at the communal storage on the North Hill, which we keep in the event that there is suddenly a food shortage.^[9] My slave girl grinds the barley at the mortar in the kitchen and then kneads the flour into dough, while I add more charcoal to the fire to ensure that it will be strong enough to bake the dough into bread.^[10] I go into the kitchen and bring

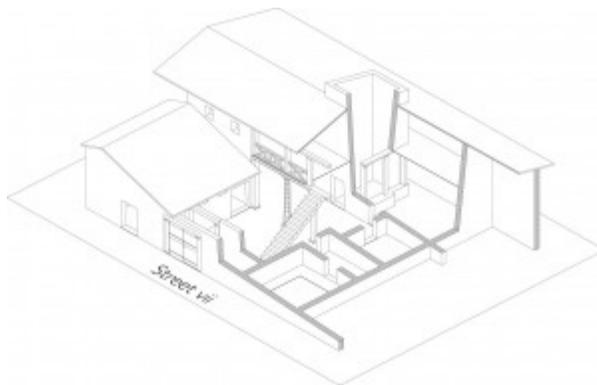
the olive oil and honey to the room in which we will dine. I set the accompaniments to our bread on the wooden table and ensure that all of the cushions to the seats around the room are in place.^[11] Because we Greeks take light midday meals, the only preparation I have left to do for lunch is clean the radishes and figs we will eat as well. I take a bowl from the wooden cabinet in the pastas and place the radishes and figs inside it, arranging the bowl on the table in the dining room.^[12] My slave girl finishes baking the bread in the flue and brings this to the table as well, just as my husband and our slave boy return home from the market. My husband has brought back an eel that was caught in Lake Kopais. This is one of the best loved foods imported to Greece, and I shall cook it later for my husband to serve to the friends he has as guests in the symposium he will host this evening.^[13] I call my children to the dining room, and my family and I eat our midday meal together there.

After we finish eating our meal, our two slaves clear the table together, washing the cookware in the court and storing the serving dishes away. My husband goes to retrieve the scales and weights from the multipurpose room in order to prepare for selling this afternoon, bringing them to the shop.^[14] In the shop, my family sells a variety of agricultural goods that change depending on the crops that are growing well. Today, my husband will sell olives and grapes, as well as cucumbers, all of which our slave boy will clean before it is sold. After the fire in the flue is extinguished, my children ask me to help them fix one of their toys, a ball made out of a pig's bladder. I use the ashes to make the ball rounder and the children go to play in the court.^[15] Because the sun is now out, I take some wool that my slave girl has just brought in and brush it out in the court. I like to enjoy of all of the light that the court allows to stream into my house, and the wool can be quite dirty, so it is beneficial to brush apart the tangled wool in the open air rather than in one of the enclosed rooms in my house.^[16] When I have finished separating the wool, my slave girl begins to spin the wool that I will use to make more cloth.

My house is in need of more water, so I take the hydria from the pastas and go to the fountain house and collect more water for my house, stopping to speak with a few of the other women that I encounter.^[17] I bring the hydria back to the pastas and take out a loom from the multipurpose room, which I set up in the court. The weather is pleasant right now because of the sun, but I must complete my work on the loom before nightfall as the cold weather of the night can damage the loom, and it is difficult to move the loom while there is an unfinished piece of cloth on it.^[18] Luckily, I am only weaving a small piece of fabric that will become part of the blanket that I am making. While I work, my daughter

approaches me with one of her dolls that has lost an arm. I take a break to quickly mend the doll for her, and she returns to playing in the court. My son is here as well, chasing after our family goose.^[19] I spend a very pleasant afternoon completing this piece of fabric while watching over my children. Once I have finished working on the cloth, my slave girl takes apart the loom and replaces it into storage.

It is now nearly time for my husband to begin preparing to have his guests over for the symposium tonight, so he brings the scales and weights from the shop back to the multipurpose room for storage. Our slave boy cleans the whole of the anteroom



and the andron, ensuring that the colorful walls are bright for the guests. To facilitate this, my husband brings the lamps from the kitchen and sets them up in the andron.^[20] In the kitchen, I begin to prepare the Kopaïc eel for my husband to serve tonight, while my slave girl restarts the fire in the flue. She prepares the meal for my children and me, which will include pig, grains cooked into porridge, and pumpkin. This is our main meal, so I like to ensure that my children and I will eat a significant amount. My husband and I mix a great deal more in metal kraters for the men to drink after they have finished eating.^[21] I finish cooking the rest of the dishes for my husband's guests and leave them on the kitchen table for our slave boy to serve. My slave girl brings the dishes to the dining room for my children and me to eat, which we do in the light of the lamp. Once we have finished, I go to help my children wash and prepare for bed as my slave girl cleans up after dinner, and then I head back upstairs to bed myself. So ends another fulfilling day in my house.

^[1] The second floor may have contained bedrooms, but no archaeological material remains because wooden beds and bedding would have disintegrated over time.

^[2] The flue is room D on Figure 1, identified by ashes and burn marks found on the stone floor. The bathtub was next to the flue, in room C, but has since been removed. Most middle to upper class families in Greece had at least one slave.

^[3] The staircase on Figure 2 leads downstairs to the court, which is room I. Two lekythoi were found next to the space the terra cotta bathtub used to be located.

^[4] Greeks commonly used wooden chests to store clothing and bed linens.

^[5] The flue featured an open air shaft rather than a chimney, so Greeks preferred charcoal fires as it burns with less smoke than wood. Olynthus was cold in the winter.

^[6] Room B on Figure 1 contained many assorted household items, including 23 loom weights, and was a storage space as well as multipurpose room.

^[7] The storeroom is room G on Figure 1 and was discovered with one pithos inside.

^[8] North Hill houses like A vii 4 generally contained one single small pithos in the store room that could hold a month's worth of grain, whereas houses in the Villa Section were farther from the market and had multiple large pithos, used to store a year's worth of food.

^[9] There is evidence of a communal storage facility dug into the North Hill.

^[10] The kitchen is room E on Figure 1 and contained a large stone mortar.

^[11] A lekythos was found in the kitchen, and Greeks typically ate bread with olive oil and honey. This room is room A on Figure 1, which was found devoid of artifacts. It is a dining room in this essay as the wooden furniture would have disintegrated over time, and the room is private so the family can eat together in peace.

^[12] Many eating and drinking vessels, as well as the metal remnants of a piece of furniture, were found in the pastas.

^[13] Eel from Lake Kopais was a particular delicacy in Greece.

^[14] Two scales and weights were found in room B on Figure 1. The shop is room H on Figure 1, identified because it has an entrance directly into the street. A shattered pithos was discovered here, but it is unclear exactly what kind of trade took place in this room.

^[15] A ball is a common toy with which Greek children liked to play.

^[16] Greek women typically wove textiles for the household from wool that they

[\[17\]](#) A hydria was found in the pastas. There was no well or water sources at this house. Greek women typically collected the water for the household and used the fountain houses as an opportunity to gossip and have social exchanges with their peers.

[\[18\]](#) The court contained some loom weights and would have had a large amount of light needed to weave, as shown in Figure 3.

[\[19\]](#) Dolls were common toys for Greek children, and the material later disintegrated. Geese were the most common pet for Greek households.

[\[20\]](#) The andron is room K on Figure 1, and the anteroom is room J, identified by the offset doors, rich decor, and close location to the street, as well as the platform in the andron. Lamps were found in the kitchen and would provide a low amount of light at night.

[\[21\]](#) At symposia, Greek men drank wine only after the meal had been eaten. No metal kraters were found in the house, perhaps because the residents fled with these vessels or because they were looted later.

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The Propylaea (by Guo Wang)

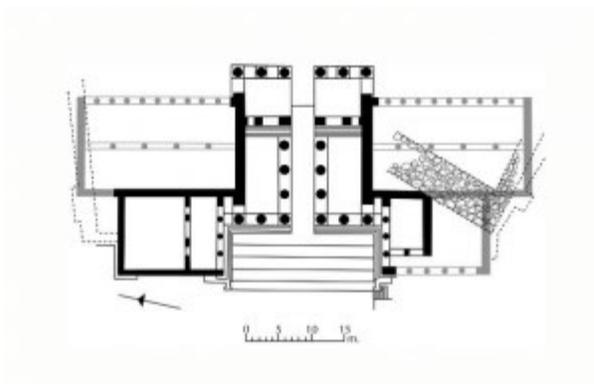
March 5, 2014 · 7 Comments

Today, the Parthenon hogs all the glory on the Athenian Acropolis. Tourists flock to it every day, all but ignoring an equally-remarkable structure as they walk right through it. The Propylaea, part of Pericles' grand construction plan, straddles the entrance to the Acropolis. Its construction was directed by Mnesikles, and began directly after the Parthenon was completed. Contemporary writers such as Pausanias and Demosthenes valued the Propylaea just as greatly as the Parthenon, naming it as one of Athens' greatest monuments and going on at length about its marble roofs and gilt decorations.



Clearly, Mnesikles designed the Propylaea as more than a simple gatehouse – it was designed as a central hall with four wings projecting from it, two on each side. The building's core consisted of a wide set of steps leading up to a gateway, with its five openings of varying size. Interestingly, the threshold of the left-most entrance is much more worn than those of the other gateways. This strongly suggests that the other gates (three of which are larger and more centrally-located) were sealed off at some point (likely with doors, as evidence shows), with the left-most door left open as the only entrance. Taking this one step further, since the Acropolis was intended to double as fortified ground, the Propylaea was almost certainly intended to serve as the fully-sealable gate that barred access to the Acropolis in case the Athenian populace ever retreated there during a siege.

This utilitarian function does not explain why the Propylaea was so beautifully designed and well-decorated, however. For example, the Pinakothek, the larger of the two constructed wings, was anything but a stark guardpost. It was suggested to be a hospitality area to accommodate pilgrims to the Acropolis, though others proposed that it was used as a formal banquet hall instead. Later on, it also displayed pictures within it, though that may not have been its original purpose.



No matter whether the Pinakothek served as a rest stop, a dining hall, or a gallery, it was almost certainly an ancillary component to the full structure, and is not indicative of its primary purpose.

The clue to the purpose of the Propylaea not only lies in its construction, but also in its location. An imposing structure such as this situated at the head of the Acropolis could hardly be missed from most points in the city, including the Agora to the northwest. In addition, it also



lies at the end of the Panathenaic way, guarding the entrance to the most sacred ground in the region. Once a year, the Panathenaic Procession would pass down the Panathenaic way from the Dipylon Gate all the way to the Acropolis. Led by the wheeled ship bearing the robe of Athena (the *peplos*), the procession consisted of members of most walks of Athenian life: old generals, young athletes, women escorting the wheeled ship, *metics* (foreign residents in Athens) bearing gifts, and representatives from every deme in Attica. In Athens' later imperial years, representatives from every allied state were also required to be present, bearing offerings. As the parade reached the foot of the Acropolis, the first of the offerings to Athena were made here, in the shadow of the towering Propylaea. Only citizens were permitted to pass beyond this, and escort the wheeled ship to the Erechtheion. Here, the Propylaea marked the boundary between the civil world of the city of Athens and the spiritual world of the Acropolis, in a suitably grand style.

The location of the Propylaea, in conjunction with the context of the historical environment in which it was built, gives us a real sense of what Propylaea was mainly designed to do. Yes, it was in essence a gate. But no gate needs to be so monumental and beautiful to fulfill its function of controlling access. Instead, we should consider it as part of Pericles's grand construction project, which began soon after the Athenian victory over the Second Persian Invasion. Athens has just risen from its lowest point – the occupation and razing of the city – to its highest, after its singlehanded defeat of the force which brought the rest of the Hellenic world to its knees. Pericles' building program was therefore symbolic of that bounce back from foreign destruction, stronger than ever. Like a phoenix rising from its own ashes, the Propylaea rose on top of an earlier structure (which served a similar function and was no doubt destroyed by the Persians) to light up the classical skyline. To Athenian citizens, this fortress of white marble and glowing bronze stokes the fires of patriotism in the grandest display of

power the city has seen yet. To foreigners, including the “allies” of the Delian League, the same sight asserts the political, economic, and military might of Athens. No matter who stands at the foot of the Propylaea, gazing up in wonder, Mnesikles is sending a clear message: Athens has risen from its ashes stronger than it has ever been.

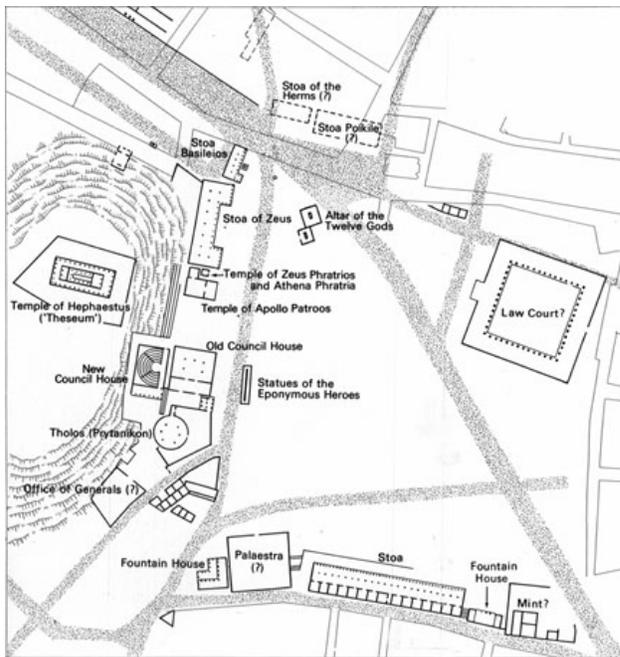
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Agora

February 19, 2014 · 10 Comments

A day in the Agora: a farmer



I get up early and start my day by coming in to Athens from Attica. Luckily I live and farm close to the city. There are others that have a sizable journey to Athens when it is their turn to be on the council.



I set up my olive oil at a stall in the middle of the Agora in my usual spot in a circle with other olive oil sellers. We start to sell our products. At one point, a customer contests the amount of oil in my jars, so we go to the metronomoi in the South Stoa. The benches set up in that stoa are dedicated to commerce regulations. The metronomoi fetch their weights from the Mint next door and ascertain that my jars are the weight I say.



Bronze weights from early Classical

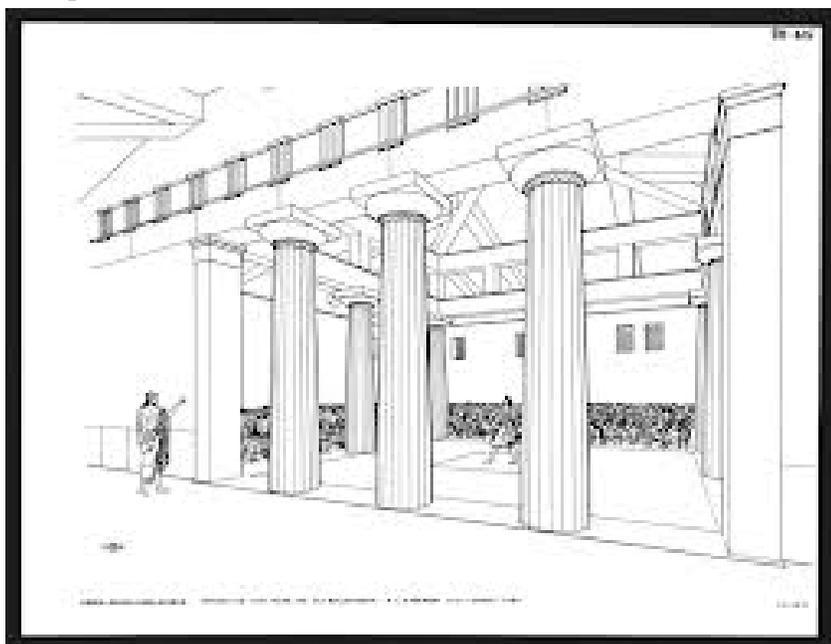
(http://www.agathe.gr/democracy/administration_and_bureaucracy.html)

Eventually it is time for the Boule to assemble. I am one of the 50 representatives from my tribe this year to serve in the Boule. The stalls are packed up and the red rope is dragged through the marketplace to ensure everyone who needs to be participating in civic pursuits is where they should be. It is good that the market is so close to the Bouleuterion because it allows me to

make a living while participating in the democracy.

As I enter the Bouleuterion, I feel a sense of pride and importance from being one of the 500 Athenian citizens chosen to represent the people. We have much to do today, including planning for the upcoming ekklesia (assembly of all the citizens) which is happening tomorrow in the Pnyx. The Pnyx is located on a hill in central Athens and is able to hold thousands of citizens who all had the right to speak. Since I am a farmer, my responsibility for the ekklesia is the grain supply. Throughout the planning and the discussion for the ekklesia, I can't help but feel a sense of corporate identity that transcends my life as a farmer

Headed home with tired eyes and worn out eardrums, I get some supper and rest for the announcement some of our Boule members will be making to inform the general public of our ideas and conversations.



(http://www.agathe.gr/democracy/the_boule.html)

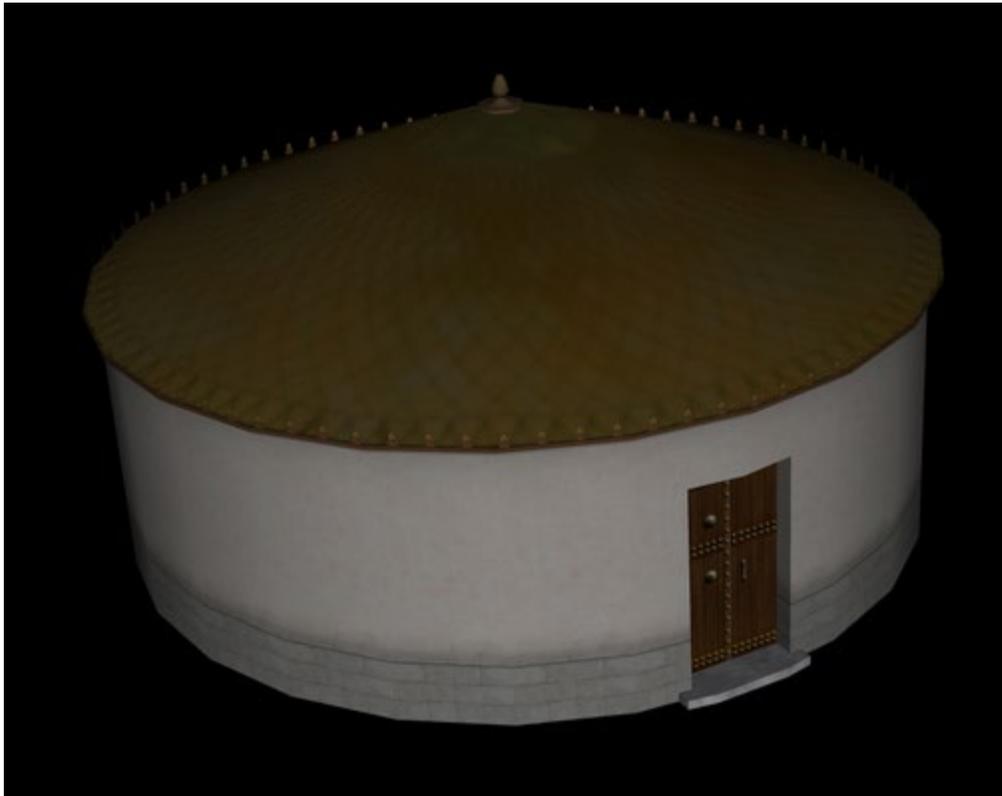
The next day, as we assemble as a group to approach the people, I quickly gather my ideas to make sure I can remember all the necessary points if I am asked to explain anything in my area of expertise. I look out over the thousands of citizens here at the Pnyx, who are ready to consider and vote on the topics we will be discussing today. While I am one of the 500 Athenian citizens chosen by lot to represent tribes this year, the citizen body gathered today for the ekklesia helps to choose what actions will be carried out regarding both executive and legislative decisions. The out of town citizens emerge from the stoas, and everyone waits to hear the proposals discussed previously in the Bouleuterion.



Remains of the Pnyx

(<http://www.stoa.org/athens/sites/pnyx/source/d000326073.html>)

After the ekklesia is completed and the citizens begin to disperse, I remain to speak with some of my fellow members of the Boule. We watch as the 50 members of the Prytaneis (executive committee) of the Boule heads back to the round building of the Tholos in order to dine together. While they are all fed at public expense, some of the Prytaneis must sleep in the Tholos each night in case there is an emergency. Athens and its democracy, thus, is always running, no matter what time of day or night it is. I consider for a moment whether the Prytaneis feels pride as I do in being a member of the Boule, but I am happy to retire once again to my own home.



3D Representation of Classical period Tholos

http://project.athens-agera.gr/index.php?view=ekdpar&pid=14&lang_id=en

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The Mycenaean Collapse

February 11, 2014 · 5 Comments

Our in-class workshop on Friday, February 7th 2014 focused on the explanations of the Mycenaean collapse. After reading literature pertaining to theories of Mycenaean collapse, each group made concept maps to visualize the relationships among the factors that they deemed the most important.

Historically, when we say “Mycenaean collapse,” we refer to the destruction of several of the more populated palaces in the region circa 1200 BCE. The aftermath of this included severely reduced literacy (and the loss of Linear B, the written language of Mycenaean administration), interrupted trade routes, a much smaller population, and an end (or severe weakening of) the palatial system. “Mycenaean society” itself did not perish at this time, however. A much

less populated Mycenae continued to subsist, if not thrive, until the (likely accidental) Granary fire of around 1100 BCE.



(click on the map to see a larger image)

My group's concept map divided the factors we saw troubling for the Mycenaean civilization into three main categories: internal/societal struggles, external conflict, and the ancient Greek environment. In the "internal" category, we included an idea that kept recurring in the readings. This was the argument that the Mycenaean society had become overly complex and the political system was thus too large, inefficient and bureaucracy-heavy. Conant's "Citadel to City-State, the Transformation of Greece" in particular stressed the argument that the palatial system had started as merely a means for farmers to store their surpluses. As the populations, territories, and bureaucracy of the government expanded, the palatial system did not adapt sufficiently. The already stressed administration was unable to deal with issues it may have otherwise been able to solve (or at least endure). This argument appealed to our group as a holistic approach to the collapse. Our general idea was that this burdensome bureaucracy was the root of the problem; the other struggles that arose (whatever they might have been) were each exacerbated or caused by the failing administrative system.

Another point that we found critical to the collapse was the idea of ecocide. This theory states that as civilizations grow and become more complex they cause environmental degradation, which in turn can bring an entire civilization to its end. The expansion and large populations of the Mycenaean states would have meant increasing demands from the agricultural industry (which was the base of the palatial system's power, as they had no currency). The resulting erosion of top soil, salinization of groundwater, and soil fatigue could have easily caused famine and social unrest.

Finally, a key idea is that the Mycenaean collapse was not unique. Several surrounding civilizations exhibited signs of struggle at this time. This led some scholars to suggest that a series of natural disasters (e.g. "Earthquake Storm"), felt throughout the area, could have contributed to the Mycenaean collapse. Earthquakes are common in this area so this seems likely. One could argue that

since they are common, these civilizations ought to have been able to deal with them. However, if one follows the overtaxed political system theory, it seems likely that such a crisis could have been the end of an already struggling system.

All three groups read the same papers on the collapse, yet we had slightly different takes on what actually may have caused it. Group 1 seemed to focus on the “external factors” like wars and raids that would have weakened the Mycenaeans. Our perception of the Mycenaeans from surviving works of art and classical pieces is that they were often at war, or at least had several types of daggers and ornamentations associated with fighting. Group 2 favored the concept of ecocide of growingly complex societies. One interesting aspect of the discussion is that we all seemed to agree on what could have possibly happened but there was some debate about the relevance of each issue. Different groups had different opinions on what may have been the root of the Mycenaean issue.

I personally had never used a website to make a concept map before this assignment. One aspect that I appreciated is that (with [wisemapping.com](https://www.wisemapping.com)) I was able to make my group members (Gabrielle, Guo, Abigail, and Logan) contributors to the map. This way they were able to view it throughout the process and make changes to it. I think this facilitated our collaborated effort, especially since we at no point met in person to work on this in the same room. Our discussion was fully online. I also liked that I was able to draw relationship arrows between points in different categories to show when we thought the ideas were closely related.

Our map: [map \(1\)](#)

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Early Cycladic Figures

February 3, 2014 · 10 Comments

This week in class we focused on the sculptures found in the Cycladic Islands of the southern Aegean: the collection of art known as Early Cycladic figures. After reading several analyses that hypothesize about the figures’ form, context, and overall meaning, we discussed in our small group sections our observations and our own theories about the works. Why are there a vast number of figures understood to be female, and so few depictions of the male form? Perhaps, as was suggested in my section, women had a significant role in the mourning

rituals during the Early Cycladic era, a view supported by the vast majority of the figures found in graveyards. Why, of the five figures depicting red lines on the face, are four significantly larger in size? We discussed in my section that, if the red lines are meant to be a pictorial representation of the historically controversial practice of women scratching their cheeks until they bleed as a symbol of grief, perhaps the larger figures depict more important women. Maybe we are analyzing sculptures of dead queens.



Standing female figure, ca.
2600–2400 B.C.; Early
Cycladic II

Despite the significant guesswork about the figures and the role they would have played in the early Cycladic culture, it is almost impossible to prove any of these theories, considering the lack of writing from the time period. But the very existence of the sculptures does indicate certain possibilities about the Cycladic culture: some kind of social stratification, some kind of necessity or desire to depict the human form, an artistic cohesion across the islands, a society peaceful and economically stable enough to enable the creation of art and sculpture. Even though we may never be completely certain why and for what purpose the figures were made in the Early Cycladic time, their influence on our modern artistic aesthetics is definitive. Nowadays we would classify the figures' design as minimalist: a stripped down delineation of form, dependent on geometric stability rather than ornamentation. The artistic influence of the figures on modern sculpture is apparent in, for example, the sculpture of Amedeo Modigliani and Constantin Brâncuși. Modigliani's "Woman's Head" of 1912 is an abstracted, elongated form that recalls the facial features visible on the Cycladic figures. Brâncuși's "The Kiss" from 1916 evokes the consistent feature of the sculptures in the position of the arms, although it presents two figures in an embrace rather than an individual. The consistent abstract and minimalist

portrayal of individuals is, however, what unifies the aesthetic style of these works, be they from thousands of years before our time or a little over one hundred years ago. Or, one could simply say that, since we began to make art, it has been about the expression of the self. Humans have been depicting the human form since they have been able to use the power of art as a form of expression.



Woman's Head, 1912
Amedeo Modigliani.



The Kiss, 1916
Constantin Brâncuși.

This class was the first time I encountered the Cycladic figures, despite having already learned about the art they've influenced. For a reason I can't quite completely explain, the figures make me sad in some way, perhaps because they meant so much to an entire culture and we don't know why they decided to make them. Were they depictions of the dead – objects made out of grief and sorrow?

Were they representations of life, carried through time until they found their way into graves? Were they objects of ritual – dark and powerful talismans? I don't know. Although we discovered these artifacts that once belonged to people who must have had some of the same fears and dreams and loves we did, the people of these figures seem so far away. I advocate for the continued investigation into what the figures meant to the cultures that made them, so we can find out what they mean to us.

One peculiar feature appearing on almost all of the Cycladic figures is the pose of the crossed arms. Some argued that this pose was meant to represent the crossed arms of a corpse. Some say it was an ingenious decision by the designers to keep the arms intact. Others looked at the arms and imagined a mother cradling a child. When I look at the figures and their arms, I imagine them holding their secrets inside of themselves, safe and strong.

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Brainstorming about Early Cycladic figurines

January 31, 2014 · [Leave a Comment](#)

After our Friday workshop on Early Cycladic figurines, Gaby Hick writes about the workshop, discusses the different ideas proposed about the figurines' function and revisits some of the questions raised in the workshop by her fellow students. Gaby also offers her personal view on the figurines, their possible meanings in the Early Cycladic period and their appeal to our modern aesthetics.



Brainstorming about Early Cycladic figurines in Brown's amazing Digital Lab.

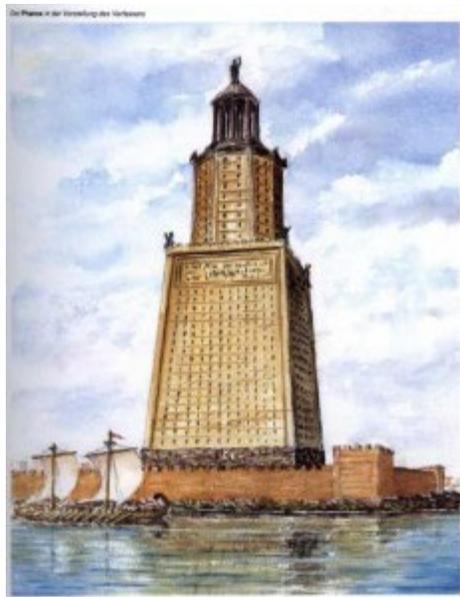
Why should one take a class on Greek Archaeology?

January 27, 2014 · 10 Comments

I have asked archaeology concentrators and non-concentrators to comment on why should a student take a Greek Archaeology class? What does one hope to take away from such a course and how learning about the Greek past is relevant to our students' lives? Tom and Sophie are taking the class this Spring and share their thoughts.

Tom Pettengill:

Every academic subject has something unique to offer, and archaeology is no exception. Studying archaeology challenges you to look beyond what you see and urges you to make connections to see the bigger picture – to go beyond merely memorizing details. It forces you to look at objects or events not only from your perspective, but from the perspectives of those who created, used, and experienced it. You learn to ask why and how, but you also learn to imagine the lives and stories behind things that are now past their time. Archaeology teaches you how to analyze, but it also teaches you to use your imagination and to recreate a world that once was. For me, studying Greek archeology will allow me to pursue all of the important benefits of archeology, all the while learning about one of the most influential and interesting ancient cultures of all time.



http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/ideas/Epiphany5/

The image I chose is the lighthouse of Alexandria. I took a course on Egyptology

last semester, and this is one monument that really stuck in my mind. It depicts the melding of both Roman and Egyptian cultures and was a major landmark of the city. It demonstrates a civilization's ability to grow and innovate into a more complex society. Also, lighthouses (to me anyway) have always symbolized a sort of mystery, knowledge, and fortitude – something that I'm sure we will all find within this class!

Sophie Cohen:

Homer's tales, Plato's teaching, Phidias's architectural feats are just a few of the many notable examples from the Greek past. As an archaeology concentrator, a class on archaeologies of Greece is imperative. Looking at the history of archaeology, it is hard to ignore this awe-inspiring branch of Classical Archaeology that has captured the minds of scholars, artists, poets, and authors alike. Not only are the civilizations and cultures of the Greek past still admired today, but also they were respected in their time as some of the most advanced and well connected people. Some civilizations like the Mycenaeans had elaborate fortifications and burial sites while others like the Minoans had strong seafaring capabilities and far-reaching trade routes. Regardless of what their strengths were, they solidified themselves as powerful and influential people in their respective times.

As Brown students, we are constantly presented with architecture, sculpture, and customs in our lives that are influenced by these ancient civilizations. Whether it is the columns on some of our university's buildings, or the upcoming Olympics, we are reminded of the archaeologies of the Greek past every day. Furthermore, a good archaeologist should not be exclusive – not choosing to study Greek history, in my opinion, would give an archaeologist an incomplete depiction of archeology as a whole.



(<http://www.ancient.eu.com/article/390/>)

This picture shows a Minoan fresco found in the palace of Knossos. This further illustrates their seafaring ways and their knowledge of the Mediterranean aquatic life. The immense detail of this piece gives us, as archaeologists and

students, a glimpse of the lavish palace and its artistic style.

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BROWN UNIVERSITY BLOGS THEME: CUTLINE BY CHRIS PEARSON.