

**97th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America AIA/
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Sunny California was host to the 1995 meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America and American Philological Association (AIA and APA). An estimated 1500 people were in attendance over the four day period, with almost 400 as presenters. Every year the AIA/APA conference attracts archaeologists and classicists from around the world, providing a reputable forum for the exchange of ideas, particularly in the field of classical archaeology and associated disciplines.

As *per* usual, the conference was organised into a series of colloquia forming sessions. There were up to seven AIA sessions and nine APA sessions running concurrently during the morning period and again in the afternoon period. Before, after, and in between these two main presentation periods were scheduled committee meetings, workshops, displays and receptions. Members were thus bombarded with a vast array of activity and lecture options, requiring a high degree of selectivity as it was impossible to attend everything. The two main criticisms of this type of conference is that first, everyone is spread thinly over a course of four days, and second, an overtly verbose speaker can throw a whole session out of synch. It therefore must become a priority in each session for the chairperson to enforce the allotted time to each speaker.

The reviewer is a member of the AIA and attended AIA sessions only. The AIA organised 33 sessions over the course of three days, accommodating an astonishing 188 speakers. There were dominant themes at the AIA conference with most papers dealing with aspects of Greek and Roman archaeology, and others presenting their work on archaeological issues in the ancient near East. Unfortunately, very few papers dealt with archaeology in the New World.

Of the papers that the reviewer attended, three in particular stood out. Ernestine Elster and Elizabeth Barber presented a paper on textile production at Sitagroi, Greece. The paper dealt with the techniques of ancient weaving using illustrations from Classical Greek vases and modern ethnographic parallels. They presented an interesting and insightful talk on a subject not commonly dealt with in Classical archaeology. Elster and Barber's anthropological interpretation of the textile industry in ancient Greece was a refreshing perspective on the material evidence of common weaving implements found on many sites. They convincingly speculated on the social significance of the weaving industry, and the potential for woven goods to be used in trade and exchange. The ramifications of weaving on the social environment within a village and its economic role in linking the village with out-lying areas was thought provoking, and raised questions such as: what was the worth of a woven piece of cloth or garment relative to other goods? What economic role did woven goods play in the local village environment? How much of the trade involved larger urban centres? Elster and Barber made it clear that maintaining an industry such as weaving took a great deal of time and resources, from supporting flocks of sheep for fleece, to the production of yarn, to the final woven article. The return from trade for such items had to have been considerable to substantiate the

costs of maintenance and production. The discussion continued during the end of the session with an age-old, yet still unresolved question raised by John Papadopoulos, a discussant on the panel: when is a loom weight a loom weight and not a fishing weight? The question, unfortunately, is still unresolved, although it was agreed that analysing the archaeological context and finds associated with a weight was the greatest aid in deciphering its use and function.

In the past, the AIA has held a session involving zooarchaeology in Classical archaeology. Unfortunately, the zooarchaeologists were underrepresented in the program this year. Cameron Walker presented a paper on the fauna from two Bronze Age wells at Palaikastro, Crete. The paper was interesting and well received, but left this reviewer wondering whether the site had any faunal evidence from more useful contexts which might shed light on the actual occupation. Walker noted that the wells had gone out of use during the Late Minoan IB period (c. 1400BC), but continued to be used as refuse pits until the late Minoan era. Interpretation of the bone material was therefore dubious as the wells produced an assemblage of bones from a 400 year period. The domesticated species represented in the sample were those you would expect from the geographical and chronological period, the usual sheep, goat, pig, dog and cattle. The remains of an ermine (mistakenly affiliated with the domestic ferret by the speaker), however, were also reported. This discovery is surprising since it will have been the first ermine discovered from Minoan Crete; the species is not even indigenous to the island! Walker went on to suggest that from the presence of these bones in the well, ferrets may have been pets in the late Minoan period, and supported her suggestion with a slide of a woman holding a so-called ermine in an embrace from a Renaissance painting!

An equid metapodial was also discovered with cut marks along the shaft. Walker suggested that these were marks from a butchery practice that produced hides. The skin from the lower leg of an equid is very difficult to remove due to the small circumference of the bone and the tough ligaments and muscles; too much trouble for an extra scrap of hide, one would think. The cut marks are more indicative of the dismemberment of the carcass, which did not figure into the interpretation of the presenter.

Of particular interest, and one of the most well attended lectures, was by Petros Calligas, visiting from the Greek Archaeological Service in Athens, who presented his paper 'The reconstruction project of the Acropolis Monuments'. Dr Calligas presented the work of the last twenty years of the Greek Archaeological Service in restoring, conserving and reconstructing the Parthenon and surrounding buildings on the Acropolis in Athens. It was a fascinating lecture, which assessed the problems in dealing with the monumental size of the buildings and their blocks, the removal of sections and their replacement with casts, the effects of pollution on marble, and the plan for the new Acropolis Museum. His final statement was bold yet sympathetic: it is hoped that the new Acropolis Museum will be the new home to the entire range of original Acropolis finds, especially the sculpture, from the Acropolis site and abroad. It is clear that he was referring to the Elgin Marbles removed from the Acropolis by Thomas Bruce, seventh Lord of Elgin in the early-nineteenth-century, and now housed in the British Museum. The return of the sculptures to Greece has been a controversial issue in the media for years, and was the focus of the efforts of the late Melina Merkouri, the respected Greek Minister for Culture. Britain refused to return the marbles, stating among other things, that the environment in which the sculptures are stored at the British Museum is better for their preservation than the facilities that the Greek state could provide for them. Now

with the new Acropolis Museum under way, it will be interesting to see how the controversy is resolved after the Greek facilities equal, if not better, those of the British Museum. It is still unlikely that Britain will allow the removal of any of the Elgin Marbles from the British Museum, because it goes against its policy of not parting with any acquisitions. Of course the fear is that if Britain surrenders the sculptures, other countries may come forward and attempt to retrieve their treasures from the Museum as well.

The organisers of the 1995 conference should be congratulated on successfully orchestrating a mass of presenters and attendants. The 98th annual AIA/APA meeting will be held in New York from 27-30 December 1996.