Connecting Continents: Archaeological Perspectives on Slavery, Trade, and Colonialism

Final Program and Abstracts

November 5-7, 2015 www.saa.org
Thursday Morning 8:00-8:45am Keynote

8:00-8:30 Speaker: Hofman, Corinne Title: NEXUS 1492. New World Encounters in a Globalizing World

8:30-8:45 Discussion

Thursday Morning

8:45am-12:10pm Slavery, Colonialism, and Heritage in Comparative Perspective

8:45-9:00 Speakers: Kvetina, Petr; and Hrncir, Vaclav

Title: Archaeology of Slavery in Cross-Cultural Perspective

9:00-9:15 Speaker: Cameron, Catherine M.

Title: Slavery and Power in Small-Scale Societies: Through Time and Across Continents

9:30-9:45 Speaker: Calaon, Diego

Title: Early Medieval Venice and Slavery: Trade and Labor Organization Policies between Archaeology and Historiography

9:45-10:00 Speakers: Price, Neil; Kjellström, Anna; Naumann, Elise; and Raffield, Ben

Title: Slavery and the Vikings: Archaeological Perspectives

10:00-10:15 Speaker: Turcanu-Carutiu, Daniela; Ion, Mariana-Rodica; Theodorescu Razvan; Gheorghe Carutiu

Title: Basarabi Churches as evidence of commercial and military road linking Scandinavia to Byzantium

10:15-10:30 Speaker: Hsieh, Ellen

Title: A Spanish Colony? A Chinese Colony? Colonialism in Manila: A Historical Archaeology Viewpoint

10:30-10:40 Break
Thursday Morning

8:00-8:45am Keynote

8:00-8:30  Speaker: Hofman, Corinne  
Title: NEXUS 1492. New World Encounters in a Globalizing World

NEXUS1492 investigates the impacts of colonial encounters in the Caribbean, the nexus of the first interactions between the New and the Old World. This project intends to rewrite a crucial and neglected chapter in global history initiated by European colonisation by focusing on transformations to indigenous, Amerindian cultures and societies. NEXUS1492 addresses intercultural Amerindian-European-African dynamics at multiple temporal and spatial scales across the historical divide of 1492. The trans-disciplinary synergy of archaeologists, social, natural and computer scientists, and heritage experts pioneer new analytical tools, and apply multi-disciplinary cutting-edge techniques, theoretical frameworks, and skill sets to provide a novel perspective on New World encounters in a globalising world. NEXUS1492 works with local experts to develop sustainable heritage management strategies, creating a future for the past. This past is under threat from looting and illegal trade, construction development, and natural disasters (e.g., climate change, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions). By placing the Caribbean’s indigenous past within a contemporary heritage agenda, this programme strives to increase the awareness and protection of heritage resources.

:30-8:45 Discussion
Thursday Morning

8:45-12:10am Keynote

Slavery, Colonialism, and Heritage in Comparative Perspective

8:45-9:00 Speakers: Kvetina, Petr; and Hrncir, Vaclav
Title: Archaeology of Slavery in Cross-Cultural Perspective

The social institution of slavery has existed in long-term perspective across the history of humankind, up to the present. We could possibly not identify a region on the Earth where slavery has not occurred either in distant or recent past. Slaves and slave masters were part of Western societies during the colonial period, advanced cultures of ancient Greece and Rome, and also archaic agricultural and hunter-gatherer populations. While in literal and ethnographic societies we can discuss particular material aspects of slavery (e.g., sleeping quarters, burials, food, apparel), it is difficult to find such evidence for prehistoric societies. A possible way how to handle this problem is a comparative analysis of ethnographic data aiming at identification of archaeological indicators of slavery. The analysis of cross-cultural sample of 186 world cultures will be presented. A society’s mobility, mode of subsistence, social stratification, types of dwellings, specialisation of production, or social complexity in general belong among the indicators surveyed. The results show a strong relationship between the institution of slavery and several social traits, which could be possibly identified archaeologically.

9:00-9:15 Speaker: Cameron, Catherine M.
Title: Slavery and Power in Small-Scale Societies: Through Time and Across Continents

Archaeologists envision status differences in small-scale societies as based largely on age, sex, and membership in stratified kin-groups. They have largely overlooked marginal people, including captives and slaves, who were commonly found in historic small-scale groups throughout the world. Slaves and captives were almost certainly present among small-scale groups prehistorically. Although they might seem the most marginal of people, the impact of captives and slaves in small-scale societies was not insignificant. Their labor and their value as items of trade provided considerable economic power for their masters. They could produce surplus food and craft goods which their master could transform into social capital. Slaves were a valuable trade item among small-scale groups and also served as especially compelling gifts in alliance making. Furthermore, the mere presence of these hapless and lowly people increased the status of their owners and other full members of the society. In this presentation I use ethnohistoric, historic, and archaeological data on captive-taking and enslavement in small-scale societies in the both the Old and New Worlds to demonstrate the importance of these marginal people to the creation of status and power.

9:30-9:45 Speaker: Calaon, Diego
Title: Early Medieval Venice and Slavery: Trade and Labor Organization Policies between Archaeology and Historiography

Medieval Venice has been defined as a mainspring for the modern colonial capitalism. It has been noticed how the Serenissima controlled the Mediterranean market through a series of political and military actions, supported by massive technical improvements (mainly for an effective mercantile fleet) and financial innovations (established credit system, mortgage infrastructure, banking tools, etc.). Recent research indicates the significance of these elements and the role they have played since the very beginning of Venetian history. A crucial aspect of the early medieval Venetian market system was enacted through the slave trade. Further, the management of local labor forces (slaves, semi-slaves?) was one of the main concerns of the early medieval aristocracy. The conquest of the Mediterranean economy was possible thanks to the control of the skilled labor forces employed in crucial activities, such as ships construction, forest management, and channels/ports improvements. Local historians tend to underestimate the role of slave trade in early medieval Venice, reducing it as occasional activity. Equally, for many years archaeologists have been inclined to read material records as proofs of a liberal market, which should reflect a “positive” historic narrative without any scope for describing the key role of forced labor in the making of the medieval emporium. This paper shows the potential role of the archaeological perspective in considering the material evidences of the origin of the city, more closely associated with the late antique pre-capitalistic slavery system than previously argued. Equally, a Mediterranean archeological perspective helps to define the central role of commercial contacts with the first Venetians and the Islamic world, where the slave trade was likely directed. A massive medieval and modern historiography, in fact, has managed to disguise this initial phase. Scholars have concentrated on the medieval economic and social relationships between Venice and Constantinople. An ecological/anthropological perspective provides novel approaches in the evaluation of labor provision and work organizational costs. New and old material evidences from Venetian excavations should be re-interpreted to study how the Serenissima was able to produce technologically advanced “things” (i.e., the Venetian Galea vessel, ports, piers, or Venetian glass goblets). The labor control policies, also, could be evaluated in the topography of the antique city. Furthermore, the paper, considering Venice as a case study, addresses to ethics within an historic perspective. Viewing slaves and labor forces as a material commodity, how is it feasible to reconcile the traditional (and generally accepted) historic narratives on the Venice origins (based on the idea of freedom and democracy) with the slavery trade? How the material approach could help on focusing on the role of forced labor communities in the making of medieval Europe? Could post-classical archaeology enrich the debate on the origin of the European trade?

9:45-10:00 Speaker: Price, Neil; Kjellström, Anna; Naumann, Elise; and Raffield, Ben
Title: Slavery and the Vikings: Archaeological Perspectives

The cultures of the Viking Age in Scandinavia (ca. A.D. 750-1100) were economically dependent on widespread, complex, and deeply rooted systems of slavery. However, this aspect of the period was long neglected by scholars, partly due to the diluting influence of contemporary terminology. A Viking slave was
By examining archaeological evidence and written sources, it is possible to put together the prehistoric Scandinavia and the Viking Age. The Viking Age is dated to c.800-c.1100, as a proof of warriors, traders, settlers from the modern day countries of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. The Basarabi Church was on the trade route between Scandinavian areas and Constantinople, known under the name “the route from the Varegs (Vikings) to the Greek” and is one of the most impressive archaeological sites from Europe, consisting of churches dated from 9th–11th century. It is recognized as the first religious monument from medieval Dobrogea. The chalk incised, preserves drawings of ships, texts that certifies trade and military route. The monument is situated on a chalk hill, and is built from amorphous calcium carbonate, sensitive to moisture, frost, salts, as the most important and common causes of monuments degradation. It is built from amorphous calcium carbonate (calcite), sensitive to humidity, frost, salts etc. Stone surfaces are continuously exposed to physical, chemical and biological degradation. Some petrographic and physico-chemical of wall samples are presented in this paper, putting into evidence the status of degradation and the possible solution for its conservation.

The significant role of Manila in terms of the global trade network and cultural exchange between the East and the West has been emphasized by scholars. Nevertheless, the power relationships that defined colonial life in the Manila area were taken for granted. The major ethnic groups of colonial Manila—the Spaniards, the indigenous Tagalog, and the Chinese—formed a specific urban landscape of the colony. Eric Wolf (1982) notes that after the beginning of the Manila Galleon, Manila became “not only a Spanish city but a Chinese one as well.” This ongoing archaeology project aims to reevaluate this statement through a consumption theory viewpoint. The preliminary analysis of excavated materials from sites in the Manila area since the 1960s is showing that archaeology offers an alternative perspective of colonial history in Manila. This research is one of the few archaeological case studies of colonialism in East and Southeast Asia. This project will be an important reference with regards to cultural change as a result of interaction between the traditional oversea Chinese and Islamic networks and the incoming European networks. In a broader global context, this project will also be a good case study of postcolonial theory discussions.