The Roman Archaeology Conference, 27-30 March 2014

The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies’ biennial conference will be taking place at the University of Reading. There will be a reception and keynote welcoming lecture on the Thursday evening, followed by two-and-a-half days of parallel sessions, ending on the Sunday afternoon with an optional excursion to Silchester Roman Town. This year the conference is joined by TRAC, the Study Group for Roman Pottery and the Roman Small Finds Study Group.

Website: http://www.reading.ac.uk/archaeology/Conferences/RAC2014/

Insularity and Identity in the Roman Mediterranean

Session organiser: Anna Kouremenos

Insularity – the state or condition of being an island – has played a key role in shaping the identity of populations inhabiting islands of the Mediterranean. As entities surrounded by water and usually possessing different landscapes and ecosystems from those of the mainland, islands allow for the potential to study both the land and the sea. For Robb, islands are ‘ideas, inhabited metaphors with natural symbols of boundedness’ (Robb 2001). Archaeologically, they have the potential to reveal distinct identities shaped by such forces as invasion, imperialism, colonialism, trade, etc. However, the theme of insularity and identity is seldom studied in Roman archaeology but has been more prevalent in scholarship dealing with the prehistoric periods (see e.g., Held 1993; Broodbank 2000; Knapp 2007 and 2008).

Taking the broad theme of islands as ‘symbols of boundedness’ into account, the papers in this session will look at the concepts of insularity and identity in the Roman period by addressing some of the following questions: how has insularity shaped ethnic, cultural, and social identity in the Mediterranean during the Roman period? How were islands connected to the mainland and other islands? Did insularity produce isolation or did the populations of Mediterranean islands integrate easily into a common ‘Roman’ culture? How has maritime interaction shaped the economy and culture of specific islands? Can we argue for distinct ‘island identities’ during the Roman period?

The papers in this session explore the themes of insularity and identity in both large (Sardinia, Sicily, Crete, Cyprus) and small (Malta, the Northern Sporades) islands.

Email@wherever

Friday, Room 102, Palmer Building

9.00  Continuity and resistance? Insularity and identities in Roman Republican Sardinia, Andrea Roppa

9.30  A study in small-island interaction: pottery from Late Punic and Roman Malta, Maxine Anastasi

10.00 Re-evaluating Sicilian identity and insularity in the Roman period: the view from ceramics, Carmela Franco

10.30 Coffee

11.00 Insularity and identity in the Northern Sporades Islands: the question of Roman policy in central Greece, Alkiviadis Ginalis

11.30 Cretan insularity and identity in the Roman period, Anna Kouremenos

12.00 An island backwater? Insularity and identity in Roman Cyprus, Jody Michael Gordon
Continuity and Resistance? Insularity and Identities in Roman Republican Sardinia
Andrea Roppa (University of Leicester, UK)

The island of Sardinia was annexed to Republican Rome in 237 BC as a result of the First Punic War. Unlike other early annexations, such as northern Italy, in Sardinia no Roman colonies were founded and no evidence of a typical Roman ‘centuriated’ landscape can be found during the whole Republican period. Because of the island’s strong Punic cultural background and remote location in the central Mediterranean, this is generally interpreted as evidence of continuity and resistance to the Romans. In this paper, I focus on the archaeological record at the urban site of Nora in south eastern Sardinia, and settlement patterns in the countryside surrounding Olbia in the north-eastern part of the island. Through an in-depth analysis of these two urban and rural case-studies, I aim to show how the island’s involvement in Rome’s political and commercial networks had a strong impact on Sardinia’s identities

ar336@leicester.ac.uk

A Study in Small-Island Interaction: Pottery from Late Punic and Roman Malta
Maxine Anastasi (University of Oxford, UK)

Little has been done to investigate the idea of insularity and interaction on Malta during periods other than the prehistoric. The transition between the Late Punic and Roman period in the Maltese islands offers an interesting window into exploring how a small island’s role and identity within the wider Mediterranean context may have adapted to a radically changing geo-political and economic clime. One way of investigating these roles is by tracing the economic exchanges between islands and elsewhere. This paper aims to explore this theme by using quantified pottery data from three Maltese sites in a bid to gauge the degree and nature of imported and exported ceramics throughout the course of the Late Punic and Roman periods and offer some interpretations about the cultural and economic choices the islanders made.

maxine.anastasi@arch.ox.ac.uk

Re-evaluating Sicilian Identity and Insularity in the Roman Period: the View from Ceramics
Carmela Franco (University of Oxford, UK)

Sicily’s unique topographical position, at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Basin, between the two halves of the Roman Empire, make the island a privileged point for the study of socio-economic, political and cultural processes that fostered the development of particular ethnic and linguistic identities. This paper discusses Sicilian identity through evidence derived from material culture. First, it addresses the adoption of the symbol of the Triskeles in ceramics as a distinctively Sicilian symbol. An overview of Sicilian wine amphorae produced from the 1st to the 6th century AD offers new perspectives on the economic interactions between Sicily and Rome, while assessing the unitarian regional morphological logic behind the adoption of a specific flat-bottomed shape. The literary evidence mentioning the ‘urnalia sicula’ and Sicilian ‘lagonae’ will be presented. Differences in technological aspects of manufacture and morphologic variations will provide a basis for ensuring the presence, beyond the ‘Sicilian amphorae koinè’, of several sub-regional types of amphorae manufacture which were all integrated into the wider Sicilian artisanal production, thereby indicating a high degree of insularity.

carmela.franco@arch.ox.ac.uk

Insularity and Identity in the Northern Sporades Islands: the Question of Roman Policy in Central Greece
Alkiviadis Ginalis (University of Oxford, UK)

The Northern Sporades, an archipelago which includes the three main islands of Skiathos, Skopelos (ancient Peparethos) and Alonnesos (ancient Ikos), formed one of the most important island groups in the Aegean. Due to their geographical position off the Thessalian coast, they constituted not only...
the gate for the military control of continental Greece but also formed an important junction for the trading routes and shipping lanes to the markets of Asia Minor and the Black Sea. However, the Roman Empire followed a somewhat contradictory policy in the area that can best be described as isolation and globalisation. This paper aims to investigate the ways the close vicinity of the Northern Sporades to the mainland influenced Roman policy in the region and, consequently, how this policy affected the degree of insularity and the nature of island identity in the Northern Sporades.

alkiviadis.ginalis@arch.ox.ac.uk

**Cretan Insularity and Identity in the Roman Period**

Anna Kouremenos (University of Oxford, UK)

Homer called Crete the land of 100 poleis but during the Roman period there were only about 20 cities left. As the largest island in the Aegean Sea, Crete is an ideal place for the study of insularity and identity. The island’s environment played an important role in determining the course of its history long before the Romans conquered it in 67 BC. Crete’s long pre-Roman history had a significant impact in shaping Roman attitudes toward a uniquely Cretan socioeconomic system that could not be reconciled with the Roman way of life. The island’s location in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea made it an ideal place for the east-west and north-south trade route which, through trade in goods and ideas arriving from both the eastern and western parts of the empire, shaped much of its prosperity during the Roman period. Yet, this relative peace and prosperity came as a result of a shifting identity across the island which was distinctly different from the one that had been established in Crete long before the Roman conquest.

anna.kouremenos@arch.ox.ac.uk

**An Island Backwater? Insularity and Identity in Roman Cyprus**

Jody Michael Gordon (Wentworth Institute of Technology, USA)

For most of the twentieth century, Roman Cyprus’ archaeology was characterized as that of a generic, backwater province of the Roman East. Mitford stated that Cyprus’ Roman history was marked by a ‘tranquil obscurity’, while Maier and Karageorghis called Rome’s cultural influence ‘all-pervading’. More recently, however, scholars—such as Danielle Parks—have stressed how Cyprus’ nature as a sea-girt island permitted Cypriots to be influenced by the cultural trends of the wider empire ‘while maintaining a distinctly Cypriot identity’. This paper expands on such perspectives by examining how Cyprus’ insularity affected the construction of local identities. First, Cyprus’ permanent island features, such as its geographical location, ports, resources, and long-term cultural history are explored to discern Rome’s administrative attitude and Cyprus’ connectedness to imperial culture. Then, by analysing coins, sculptures, and architecture, I show how Cypriots could construct polyvocal cultural identities that were meaningful on both the imperial and island-wide levels.

gordonj7@wit.edu