Artefact variability, Assemblage Differentiation, and Identity Negotiation: Code-switching in material culture - workshop

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ABSTRACTS in alphabetical order of speakers

“What have the Romans ever done for us?” The reception of archaeological material in second-century AD Galilee by Rick Bonnie, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

The reply from the audience to the title’s rhetorical question posed by the rabble-rouser Reg in Monty Python’s Life of Brian concludes on the one hand a lot, but on the other hand not much. Aside from listing a bulk of archaeologically visible elements by his audience that had a significant effect on their lives such as aqueducts, roads, public baths, and sanitation, the question remains how much did the adoption of such and other material represent their identity and attitude towards ‘Rome’?

In the case of the second century AD in the region of Galilee (northern Israel), similar material changes have been acknowledged. New cityscapes, roads, aqueducts and other materials seem to penetrate into its society. Yet, these material changes, besides reflecting a visual adaption to Roman rule, have been deprived of much significance on local identity. Instead, archaeologists have used other, more local traditions to argue that society in second-century Galilee maintained a predominantly Jewish character.

Whether adopting new materials or continuing local traditions, the local reception of these archaeological remains through time seem less well understood. Did the incorporation into the Roman Empire affect local behaviour, and, if so, how is this behaviour related to local identity? Put in short, what did Rome actually mean to Galilee? Let’s broaden our field of vision and look at some, maybe unintentional experiences of Empire in Galilee’s society.
Fibulae as indicators of identity, and the reconstruction of dress by Cecilie Brøns, University of Copenhagen

Our knowledge of how people dressed in Iron Age Italy is not extensive, due to the scarce examples of preserved textiles and iconographic depictions and the absence of literary sources. Among the few indications of dress are the fibulae, which are among the most extensively studied artefacts and perhaps the most common finds in the graves. For this reason, they are an obvious point of departure for a study of dress and identity.

This paper treats the question of whether we can determine aspects of identity, in the form of gender and age, on the presence of fibulae. The individual fibula types are analysed in relation to the examined skeletons, for thus to determine whether they can be used as indicators of gender, and if any age related patterns exist in the deposition of fibulae.

The results are used as a starting point for an investigation of Iron Age dress through a critical survey of the evidence at hand. Thus iconographical, and other archaeological evidence in the form of e.g. preserved textiles and ornaments are investigated as sources to how men, women, children and elders were dressed for in this way to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relation of gender, age and dress.

Marble-mania: identity negotiating in Roman Cyprus? By Jane Fejfer, University of Copenhagen

From Chythra to Olla, the shape of culture by Smadar Gabrieli, University of Western Australia

The conservative nature of food and foodways in pre-modern societies is clearly reflected in their material-culture manifestation, the pottery of food-preparation. This resistance to change, however, makes cooking wares a sensitive marker for identifying changes that reflect cultural shifts as opposed to “fashion statements”. This is particularly true in rural economy. In this paper we shall examine assemblages that straddle the transition period of the chora of Metaponto in Magna Grecia from Greek Colony to annexation by Rome.

The survey project of the University of Texas at Austin in the chora of Metaponto combined an extensive survey with a number of small scale excavations. One of the excavated sites was a kiln from the Roman Republican period, with an associated dump that contained not only kiln-debris but also used and discarded pottery, dating between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD. In this stratified dump there is indication of a change in the functional orientation of the cooking wares assemblage, and in particular a shift from the Greek rounded-base cooking pot, the Cythra to the flat based, multi-functional Roman Olla. The survey collections present another picture, one in which Roman types of cooking wares play no part. By looking at the patterns of landscape use in conjunction with the evidence of the stratified site, we examine the possible interpretations of this difference.
The process of romanization in the Iberian Peninsula from the perspective of the Iberian cultures by Tanja Gouda

The study of romanization has undergone profound changes primarily due to the adoption of anthropological concepts such as acculturation, integration or hybridization, the latter having stimulated the analysis of the relationships between Romans and Iberians and specifically of how the conquered populations were actually using and adapting ‘foreign’ material. We use ethno-archeological tools to classify artefacts in its historical context taking into account the concept of diverging ideas among subcultures, regional cultures or identities. Failure to conform may be a sign of ignorance but may equally be taken as a willful refusal. The presence of imports, especially in rural areas, may indicate a cultural change, but does not prove first hand contact. So the variable use of roman material fits into much wider cultural patterns. Does roman pottery in tombs indicate a buried Roman or a romanized Iberian? To some extent, the quantity of roman material suggests the adaption to roman culture, although it should not be misread as a symbol of roman identity. Another example of how problematic the interpretation of material can be, are the regional differences in locating the so-called republican roman camps in Hispania. Whilst they are defined by accumulations of pottery in Castulo, they are deducted from the presence of cisterns in Emporion, republican wall constructions in Tarraco or post holes in Valenta.

The Personal Death? Code-switching in funerary materials and the question of identity by Jane Hjarl Petersen, University of Copenhagen, & Stine Birk, University of Aarhus

Burial material has always served as a fantastic starting point for studies of identities both on individual and collective levels and the ways of approach have indeed been manifold. Whilst there can be no doubt of the potentials, it is probably fair to ask whether it represents a material group without limitations? In this paper we aim to pinpoint some of the limitations which we have met most frequently in our own work, and to discuss how to get beyond these obstacles and move in the direction of a firmer ground for studying the constructions of individual and shared identities.

Late Chalcolithic – Early Bronze Age transition: Identity and changes in materiality by Susanne Kerner, University of Copenhagen

The Late Chalcolithic of the Southern Levant is characterised by an increasing complexity, which can be seen in several different parts of the material, social and cultural life. Not only archaeological material points to a vertically sub-divided society, where different groups specialise on different subsistence models (specialised pastoralism, full-time specialists producing ceramic etc.), but other realms such as burial practice also show either socially or regionally divided patterns.

These phenomenon should have formed the jumping off point to an all together more complex organised society (the contemporary development in Egypt and Mesopotamia shows such a development towards the state). This did not happen in the Southern Levant, where the beginning of the Early Bronze Age shows different socio-political and material patterns. There is neither an increase in the number and levels of prestige objects, nor a further tendency towards specialisation or social differentiation.
The reasons for this “non-progress” are not clear; some influence must be contributed to the changing relations with and the reversal of influence from Egypt. Other, possibly in the moment under-researched, reasons might be found in the problems of maintaining a common identity through the area of the Southern Levant. There was already a strong regional (in opposition to over-regional) element in identity building during the Late Chalcolithic period (visible in different cultic and ritual expressions) and this might have proven a decisive flaw for further complexity and centralisation. The material on which I will base the discussion of identity forming will be pottery and cultic objects.

Language and iconography: The identity of sub-groups in Italian funerary monuments by Kathryn Lomas, University College London

In communities with multi-layered identities, it may be possible to identify the various cultural strands but it can be much more difficult to work out how these strands relate to each other, and in particular, how they were perceived by the inhabitants of the communities in question and what they signified in terms of cultural identity. A recent study of Roman culture (Wallace-Hadrill 2009) has suggested the linguistic model of code-switching as a possible model for interpreting cultural identities, arguing that the ability to switch between different cultural idioms can be used to display and reinforce different aspects of multiple cultural identities, depending on context.

This paper examines this issue by analysing the inscriptions and iconography of funerary monuments from two contrasting areas of Italy where multiple cultural groups came into contact: North-east Italy (where Venetic, Celtic, Etruscan, Greek and Roman cultures came into contact) and Campania (a key area of Greek, Oscan and Roman contact). These monuments allow us to examine both visual and linguistic identities, and by considering this evidence in the wider context of other changes to local culture, we may be able to reach some conclusions about the level of intent behind the cultural symbols used. It may also give some insight into how different cultural elements were perceived, and how they were manipulated to create cultural dialogues as well as establishing cultural identities. In particular, it may also allow us to examine the group identities of particular sub-groups within these societies.

The bilingualism of material culture? by Alex Mullen, University of Oxford

Identities can be negotiated in myriad ways. This paper considers the interaction between the negotiations of multiple identities through language and through material culture. Classical linguistics has been rejuvenated by the adoption of modern bilingualism theory (Adams 2003) and two exciting developments are currently underway. The first is the creation of interdisciplinary methodologies, integrating disciplines such as anthropology, cultural history, art history and archaeology with linguistics (Mullen and James). The second is the use of linguistic models to interpret cultural interaction. Wallace-Hadrill has recently put forward the suggestion that ‘bilingualism is at least as interesting a model as fusion or creolisation’ (2008: 13), and that code-switching specifically (a bilingual phenomenon) might be used to describe how identities and cultures interact. Wallace-Hadrill is clear, however, that just because linguistic negotiations might operate in a certain way, other aspects of identity, such as material culture, need not necessarily correlate (2008: 77). How useful might bilingualism
prove as a model for archaeologists? In the case of code-switching, should we also consider the sub-categories set up by linguists? How could these be applied to the analysis of archaeological material and visual culture? I give examples to illustrate the scope and limitations of this approach using evidence ranging from funerary reliefs to ceramics. Adams, J. N. (2003) Bilingualism and the Latin language (Cambridge)
Mullen, A. and James, P. (eds) (forthcoming) Multilingualism in the Greco-Roman worlds (Cambridge)

The More Wine, the More Mixed Identities! A Multiplicity of Messages on Mould-Made Wares from late Roman Sagalassos by Elizabeth Murphy (Brown University), Jeroen Poblome (KULeuven), Daniele Malfitana (Istituto per i Beni Archeologici e Monumentali, CNR)
Meaning is never static. It is contextually and temporally situated in social and cultural frameworks. In consideration of this precept, this paper will evaluate our current state of knowledge at Sagalassos on four classes of objects (figurines, oil lamps, oinophoroi, and face pots) in order to better understand the multiplicity of audiences and contexts such items would pass through. Thereby, a small corpus of late Roman (4th – 6th centuries AD) artifacts will be investigated from their site of production through their deposition into (and retrieval from) the archaeological record. By tracing these artifacts through the record of the Roman city of Sagalassos in Asia Minor, we will explore materiality of these objects and how the perception of them changed throughout the course of their ‘lives’. That is, in the hands of different individuals, in different contexts, at different moments of time, these items were situated in distinguishable frameworks of meaning and significance. As a provincial city of the Roman Empire, the issues we raise concerning the fluidity of meaning, context, and identity, can all be perceived in function of the ‘romanization’ debate, although these issues also have relevance for archaeological material culture studies, more broadly.

Elite, Death and Identity by Nora Petersen
How do you make sure that a person’s identity and authority is maintained even after death? This is a question that leaders in the past - as well as in the present - may have asked themselves. When you die, your identity is already determined. Yet, there are certain elements that might help maintain the integrity of a deceased leader’s identity.

With examples from the Mediterranean elite tombs from the Orientalizing period, the focus in this workshop will be on the dead bodies or the remains. In addition to the feeling of loss arising after the death of a leader, the physical decay of said leader is also relevant, since the logical legitimization of the leader collapses with the decomposition of the body.

The odour of a dead body is quite penetrating, and reminds the living of the decay of the deceased. Cremation and other forms of preservation may have been an attempt to avoid that the elite person was associated with bodily decay and therefore identity deterioration. In the Orientalizing elite burials there are several ways to preserve the deceased, e.g. cremation, immersion in oil, embalming. Precious metals, such as gold and silver, may also have a particular relevance in this context.
The main focus of my presentation is centered on the treatment of the bodies and thus the "future" identity of the deceased. The aim is to highlight the conservation of the body.

Ways of being Roman: rethinking ethnicity in an imperial context by Louise Revell, University of Southampton

Evolving Identities in Medieval Archaeology: Audience, Context, and Encounter by James G. Schryver, University of Minnesota, Morris

For over a decade now, scholars have been examining the issue of identity in Medieval Archaeology. Yet we rarely stop to ask what it is we are looking for. A perusal of the recent literature makes it very clear that there is still a great deal we do not understand concerning the relation of identity to and its expression through material culture, for example. Too often, we have as a result become satisfied with a superficial reading of the situation, which focuses on dichotomies and polarizing labels that increasingly do not appear to have existed in reality. Identities are and were complex, they are not hard and fast objects that we can hold in our hands. Studying them is a challenge. And, there are no easy answers. Identities are formed and re-formed over time in response to or in anticipation of the various circumstances that make up one’s environment. Yet at the same time, they are something that at their basic core are aggressively maintained and protected. If this is truly the case, then how should we view identity in the past and what are the questions we need to be asking? How do we reconcile these two extremes?

This paper will suggest that we need to shift our thinking to acknowledge identity as something that is negotiated. I would like to challenge the notion that there is a one-to-one correlation between ethnic identity and social practice, or that every single aspect of daily life has equal weight in terms of reflecting one’s identity. This paper will suggest a new approach, one that is methodologically and theoretically robust, and one that is focused not on the issue of pots equaling people, but on those of audience, context, and encounter.

Similarity, Difference and Code-Switching in Archaic Sicily by Gillian Shepherd, University of Birmingham, UK

This paper examines some of the problems associated with the interpretation of archaeological evidence (especially for burial) in archaic Sicily in the light of current theories regarding the relationship between identity (especially ethnic) and material culture, especially in the context of the code-switching model, one of main themes of this workshop. The interaction between Greeks and the indigenous populations of Sicily for a long time provided one of the best case studies for the Hellenisation argument, and although the application of more recent theories such as acculturation and hybridity have produced some interesting results, nevertheless they remain problematic in some respects with regard to the material culture of Sicily. This paper observes some discrepancies in the correlation between the archaeological and textual records for Sicily and proposes that code-switching might provide a better explanation for combinations of “Greek” and “Sicilian” artefacts and constructed contexts and that these combinations are less to do with the declaration of ethnic identities as with the assertion of status via combinations of similarity and difference, and attempts to establish not just local
high status cultures but also to participate in a larger elite arena via a more internationally understood “language” of elite status.

**Pottery for the Roman peasants: patterns of production, trade and consumption by Emanuele Vaccaro, University of Cambridge**

The “Excavating the Roman Peasant” project in inland southern Tuscany is the first to examine the architecture, material culture and lifestyle of Roman and late antique Italic peasants, through the excavation of a series of Roman small and medium-sized rural sites, recently discovered during a systematic and intensive field survey.

This paper uses pottery to reconstruct the system of connections engaged by the Roman peasants of an inland area between the late Republican and late Roman periods. Thanks to the support of thin-section analysis this study reveals that not only coarse and kitchen wares were produced within the regional “borders”, but also that some heretofore unknown amphora types come from regional or even local sources since as early as the Augustan period. The use of this new data and the existence of a sophisticated network of regional exchange takes our understanding of Roman rural communities to a new level, on which some traditional concepts such as isolation often applied to Roman peasants are totally inappropriate.

This paper also draws upon and exploits the fresh integrated data produced by the Roman Peasant project; through a holistic approach, combining pottery, archaeo-zoology and palaeobotany, it aims to shed light on if and how peasant eating habits changed over the long period 200 BC – AD 500.

In just three years, this project has produced a large dataset which will be discussed to determine if and how the socio-economic and cultural behaviours of Roman peasants can be tackled through an integrated and in-depth analysis of their pottery.

**Technological choices and interacting knowledge systems in the production of terra sigillata by Astrid Van Oyen, University of Cambridge**

This paper will access artefact variability through technological choices (Lemonnier 1993) made in the production of terra sigillata, and of a range of ceramics traditionally designated as ‘présigillées’, ‘imitations’ etc. A number of case studies will be discussed in detail.

Based on the principles of Actor-Network-Theory (Latour 2005), a model of knowledge systems will be forwarded as a way of framing these technological choices. The focus will be on the encounter between knowledge systems, and how this brought about different modalities of interaction. However, this analytical framework does not offer any interpretation of the phenomena under study, but urges us to do justice to the possible plurality of actors and to the contingency of the knowledge systems.

Consequently, it will be explored whether linguistic concepts (Adams 2003) offer scope for interpreting the attested technological choices, and their social embeddedness. A number of problems will arise out of this discussion. For instance, code-switching seems to be limited to rather instantaneous, short-lived phenomena. But to what extent does it tally or impact on routines and practices (or habitus, for that matter)? Does the actor-network of sigillata production (including financial investment, economic circumstances, equipment, skill, etc) allow for such momentary switches? Are other concepts such as diglossia a better fit? Can we
Negotiating civic identity through memory management at Hellenistic Labraunda by Christina Williamson, University of Groningen

In the mid-fourth century BC, the Hekatomnids, satraps of Karia, turned the modest hillside shrine of Zeus Labraundos into the sacred center for all of Karia. The complex truly was a masterpiece of Hekatomnid architecture, with its cascading terraces, sumptuous dining halls, paradisiacal setting, and splendid view across southwest Karia. It also became contested space in the Hellenistic period, after the nearby polis of Mylasa made claims which were opposed by the priests and finally settled by the kings, in Mylasa’s favor. This conflict was initially used to explain the dearth in building activity after the Hekatomnids as overall stagnation. The excavator, Pontus Hellström, however, recently proposed that Labraunda was intentionally kept intact as a ‘Memory Theater’, recalling the glorious past. This paper examines this idea by using Actor-Network Theory to interpret these monuments together with inscriptions, numismatic evidence, and even the view, as artifacts in a web of associations that was employed by the polis to stake its claims to the sanctuary. Unraveling this web will show how Mylasa deployed a strategy of social memory management to build its own identity through the sanctuary and cult of Zeus Labraundos.