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Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient History 2009
University of Reading: 28 March 2009

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Introduction

The Department of Classics at the University of Reading hosted the Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient History (AMPAH) on March 28 2009. Papers were presented on a range of topics by twenty-six postgraduate students from thirteen universities across the UK and Ireland. Panels were arranged by topics, which included archaeology, art, both Greek and Roman historiography, and religion. The keynote address was given by Dr Emma Aston. The meeting was both productive and enjoyable for all who attended. We look forward to the next meeting in the spring of 2010, hosted by the University of Nottingham.

Keynote Address: Dr Emma Aston: 'Was there a cult of Thetis in Thessaly?'

The day began with an address from our keynote speaker, Dr Emma Aston. Dr Aston spoke about the issue of whether there was a cult of Thetis in Thessaly, discussing the vast range of written, epigraphical and numismatic evidence which has been used to infer the existence of a Thessalian Thetis cult. Dr Aston drew attention to the individual insufficiency of the mentions of Thetis in a Thessalian context which ranged from the Classical through to the Roman Imperial period for concluding the existence of a specific cult there, but asked the important question of whether a collection of many more ambiguous pieces of evidence could, as a whole, have greater weight and act as confirmation. In discussing this, Dr Aston touched upon the vital issue of how we, as ancient historians, should approach our work methodologically

due to the fragmentary and ambiguous nature of our evidence, and demonstrated how tenuous and misleading reconstructions of damaged inscriptions can be. Dr Aston's talk concluded with a question and answer session from the audience.

Review: Panel 1C

During the first session in the morning, there was a panel with papers by students from Reading University, Cambridge University and the University of Wales, Swansea. The first paper was given by Lucy Fletcher of Reading and was entitled 'Plutarch's *Theseus-Romulus* and its Second Sophistic Context'. Lucy discussed the distinctiveness of the *Theseus-Romulus* as a pair of Plutarch's *Lives* that treated of mythical subjects, rather than his more usual choice of historical figures – a change in emphasis that Plutarch himself noted and explained in his introduction to the two *Lives*. Lucy noted that mythical figures were indeed as suitable for Plutarch's moralising aims as historical figures, and suggested that Plutarch's *Theseus-Romulus* presented Plutarch's conceptions of the contrasting cities of Athens and Rome. An interesting discussion followed Lucy's paper, in which questions were asked on the method of rationalising myth as seen in the two *Lives* discussed, and on the similarities between the *Theseus-Romulus* and Plutarch's *Lykourgos*, another *Life* discussing a semi-mythical character.

Moving east from Plutarch's location, Kathryn Stephens of Cambridge presented 'Beyond the Muses: Hellenistic Scholarship from Alexandria to Babylon', in which she discussed the issue of the relationship between the Greek intellectual elite in the Mediterranean with native scribes in Seleukid Mesopotamia. Kathryn raised the question of the attitudes of the scribes to the Greek Hellenistic intellectual elite, noting that the scribes were continuing a native tradition of scholarship in Akkadian and Sumerian whilst Aramaic and Greek were becoming the languages of the Hellenistic world. Kathryn considered the self-presentation of Seleukid leaders in the Borsippa Cylinder and looked at surviving Akkadian and Sumerian texts from the Hellenistic period, and asked whether the native traditions could be seen as part of

conventional Hellenistic scholarship or as an emblem of cultural resistance. In the preceding discussion, the attitudes of modern scholars towards the east was considered by Kathryn, and she noted that a habit of considering the east as unchanging and conservative could be seen in our designation of Mesopotamian intellectuals as 'scribes' who copy texts rather than as scholars who create them.

In the final paper of the session, Swansea's Jeremy Welch drew us back into the Classical intellectual milieu with a paper entitled "Could you dumb it down for me?" Plato's Science of Social Mobility Presented as Myth in the Republic'. Jeremy drew attention to the 'myth of the metals' invented by Plato to explain to the citizens of his ideal city their place within its hierarchy, and noted that this myth is conventionally considered to be a fiction created in order to placate those whom the city would oppress. Jeremy noted that this traditional interpretation ignores the fact that the 'myth' allows for social mobility, as it recognises that 'silver' children may be born to 'gold' parents and vice versa, thus allowing for the movement of persons up and down the ranks. Jeremy pointed out that there was a practical purpose for the 'myth', and that it should be seen in a context in which people made use of myth to explain natural phenomena and social status. A lively discussion ensued, in which other ancient Greek ideas about genetics and the relation of other philosophical doctrines on social hierarchy were considered.

Review: Panel 2A

This panel was composed of three papers addressing various issues of power and representation in the Republic and early Principate. Simon Day discussed, in great detail, the evidence for what the *imperium* granted to Pompey in 67 BC under the *Lex Gabinia* actually meant in terms of the power he had in dealing with provincial governors. His evaluation of the material supports the early theories developed by Mommsen despite their rejection by later scholars.

Lee Moore looked in great detail at the *lectiones* of the Senate over the course of approximately 250 years of the Republic and, using statistical analysis, addressed the rates of expulsion and the likelihood of its occurrence based on status and length of time in the Senate. His results show, interestingly, that little political power could be either advantageous or not depending on external circumstances, and that the longer one actually spent in the Senate, the more likely one was to face censor at some point.

Taking a slightly different approach, Ellie Glendinning assessed the representations of Cleopatra's suicide in early Augustan literature written by Horace, Propertius and Vergil. Though suicide in defeat is generally considered a noble act by the Romans, her conclusions were that by including elements of otherness such as the asps, mosquito nets and the Egyptian gods, the poets were able to emphasize Cleopatra's foreignness and thereby remove any aspects of nobility from her final act.

Review: Panel 3B

The papers presented in this panel were entirely devoted to Greek, Roman, and Etruscan iconography. Katherine Dunleavy began the session by discussing Roman artists' use of earlier Hellenistic sculptural models as inspiration for the creation of their own works of art. Using the example of satyrs, she discussed the similarities and differences in context and function between Greek originals and later Roman pieces and she sought to understand why these Greek models were so popular to Romans.

Eóin O'Donogue's paper addressed the different ways in which Etruscan artists depicted athletes. He chose examples from tomb paintings, engravings on mirrors, and the perizoma group of Athenian black-figured vases. Eóin's paper looked at both the body language and the costumes depicted in each of these different athletic scenes with the intent to identify the different characters depicted by artists and compare their status with other characters depicted in the same scenes. Furthermore, Eóin also discussed parallels and

comparisons between the Greek and Etruscan ideals of male masculinity and beauty.

Finally, Katerina Volioti closed the session with two case studies of Attic black-figured lekythoi excavated in Thessaly. She considered that although the images depicted on the different lekythoi were difficult to determine, the different elements from each of the scenes on these particular vessels could still provide useful comperanda. She sought to establish that the overall outlook of these unguent containers influenced the visual impact of each vessel's iconography, that the differing physical attributes of each affected the viewer's absorption of the imagery depicted on the lekythoi, and finally, that certain features found in one type of figural theme reminded the vessel's owner of his or her own social experiences.

Appendix: Papers Presented

Panel 1A

- Lorie Anderson (Bristol): 'Monarchies, Tribes and Nomads: The Reception of Foreign Polities in Herodotus' *Histories*'
- VJ Baba (Exeter): 'Barbarian Women in Later Antique Historiography: Boundaries & Identity'
- Andreas Morakis (Cambridge): 'Thucydides and the character of Greek Colonization in Sicily'

Panel 1B

- Charlotte O'Neil (Reading): 'Just Where Were the *Fasti Capitolini* Located?'
- Duncan Taylor (KCL): 'Provincial Tax Revenues and the Imperial Budget'

Panel 1C

- Lucy Fletcher (Reading): 'Plutarch's *Theseus-Romulus* and its Second Sophistic Context'

- Kathryn Stevens (Cambridge): 'Beyond the Muses: Hellenistic Scholarship from Alexandria to Babylon'
- Jeremy Welch (Swansea): "'Could you dumb it down for me?": Plato's Science of Social Mobility Presented as Myth in the *Republic*'

Panel 2A

- Simon Day (Durham): 'Pompey's Constitutional Position in 67 BC under the *Lex Gabinia*: A Reassessment'
- Eleanor Glendinning (Nottingham): 'Nobility, Barbarity & Redemption: Representing Cleopatra's Suicide'
- Lee Moore (UCL): 'Expulsion from the Roman Senate by the Censors, 318-50 BC: Demographic Considerations'

Panel 2B

- Christopher Farrell (KCL): 'Revisiting our Assumptions of Xenophon's Political Ideology'
- Karen Pickford (Cambridge): 'Disobedience or Democracy?'
- Andrew Roberts (KCL): 'Eastern Premise: Alexander the Great, Ancient Conquest and Modern Empire'

Panel 2C

- Peter Maskell (Manchester): 'Mercantile Colonialism in the Archaic Mediterranean: Just Another Phoenician Mirage?'
- Sian Thomas (Cambridge): 'Law, Language & Custom: The Coexistence & Interaction of the Egyptian & Greek Legal System in Ptolemaic Egypt'
- Nick West (Reading): 'Coercion, Cattle and Cultic Chores: Chaeremon of Alexandria and Egyptian Ritual Knowledge'

Panel 3A

- Caillan Davenport (Oxford): 'Emperors, Elites & the City of Rome AD 235-337'
- Shushma Malik (Bristol): 'Youth and *Luxuria* in the Imperial Household'

- Simon Speksnijder (Cambridge): 'The *Salutatio*'

Panel 3B

- Katherine Dunleavy (Edinburgh): 'Roman Artists: Copyists or Creators'
- Eóin O'Donoghue (NUI Galway): 'The Persona of the Athlete in Archaic Etruria'
- Katerina Volioti (Reading): 'Materiality in Vase Iconography'

Panel 3C

- Lucy Jones (KCL): 'The Social Memory of Republican Rome in Ciceronian Oratory'
- Jack Lennon (Nottingham): 'Cicero & the Rhetoric of Religious Impurity'
- Stephen Royston-Davies (UCL): 'The Persecution of Christians at Lyon in AD 177: a study in Roman Law & Public Administration'