**Conversations on Byzantine Archaeology in North America: The Role of**

**Overseas Research Centers**

The second of these meetings on Byzantine archaeology took place in Dumbarton Oaks on January 13-14, 2012, this time organized with the Council of American Overseas Research Centers. Participants included representatives of the American Overseas Research Centers (AORCs), Byzantine archaeologists working in American universities, archaeologists from host countries, and fellows and staff of Dumbarton Oaks. Colleagues from Harvard, CASVA, the Freer-Sackler and (now) the Getty helped by chairing sessions.

Questions posed arose both out of the earlier discussions in April 2010, and from advisers like John Haldon of Princeton (and a Senior Fellow of Dumbarton Oaks), and Sharon Gerstel of UCLA, neither of whom could be with us. The aim was to clear a way for CAORC and DO to make an application to funding bodies to support missing pieces of infrastructure for Byzantine archaeology: fellowships, conversations and workshops, field-schools and language schools. This would be at the level of coordination rather than supporting CAORC itself, or individual AORCs or individual projects, though we were to spend a lot of time trying to think of ways to fund all these levels of operation.

The first afternoon was given over to the AORCs, a bewildering range of large and small, rich and poor, new and old, archaeological and non-archaeological. **Tony Greenwood** for ARIT (Istanbul) talked about the resources of his Center including the library with Kenneth Snipes’s books and then addressed the question of the proportion of Byzantinists in ARIT in terms of activities and grants, suggesting that the proportion of Byzantinists is rising, particularly in grants given to Turkish nationals. **Elif Denel** (Ankara) added her perspective and talked about the increasing difficulties with Turkish requirements for field projects. Then **Jodi Magness**, speaking for AIAR (Jerusalem), and ACOR (Amman), talked about issues of periodisation (4th to 7th century), and the gap filled by AORCs in a country where there is no central clearing house for archaeology and no archaeology departments either: offering fellowships for unpublished excavations, planning high-profile lectures, beefing up library provision, setting up workshops, training young scholars seemed to be key functions for her. She highlighted the difficulties Byzantine archaeologists face in that they have to look or jobs in classics, art history, anthropology, religion or history departments. Problems of a shortage of specialists and the need to have Byzantine levels recognized emerged. **Andrew McCarthy** for CAARI (Nicosia) painted a picture of the operation of his AORC, founded five years after the defining moment of 1974, offering a neutral space in a divided island. He talked about local collaborations, and excavation collaborations with universities further afield, and looked to participating in multi-country fellowships, GIS collaboration and their petrographic library**. Michael Jones** of ARCE (Cairo) talked about progress in conservation of monasteries at St Anthony’s, St Paul’s, the Red Monastery and St Matthew the Potter as well as work at Old Cairo. He acknowledged the support of US AID. **Nacéra Bensiddik** explained that the American Center recently set up for the Maghrib was not concerned with archaeology though that is now changing; she announced a CAORC workshop next summer on Art and Archaeology of the Sacred**in Oran, Algeria,**  and for the rest of her time gave visual reasons why Byzantine archaeologists should be interested in north Africa: a sumptuous array of cities, fortresses and churches with substantial masonry remains awaiting investigation. **Hendrik Dey** for the American Academy in Rome gave a dynamic and informed presentation of recent work in an area where the B-word is rarely spoken, where Byzantinist fellows are rare, and where it is unlikely that a Byzantine excavation will be run very soon. The archaeological summer program, particularly the pottery school, was greatly commended from the floor. **Guy Sanders** from the other early foundation, the ASCSA (Athens) talked of early days in which no contribution was made to Byzantine archaeology apart from five days destroying seven Byzantine monuments at Plataea; he then talked about the glory days of Corinth X, XI, XII, and the advent of survey. He talked of recent developments at Corinth, of excellent collaboration with the local ephorate under Athanassoulis, and commitment to single-context open-area excavation. From the floor came tributes to summer programs, to the Agora and Corinth as training excavations, to the Gennadeion, influencing archaeologists now working in very different parts of the Byzantine empire. **Todor Petev** for ARCS (Sofia) talked about putting Byzantium on the map through his very new Center, building a book collection, attracting donors, offering accommodation for 9 fellows, organizing trips to Byzantine countries, taking an interest in site preservation—and offering up to $50k for archaeological projects! He proposed ways of collaboration for countries in the Balkans. We had learned a lot though we had not heard from AORCs in Palestine, Yemen, Mongolia, Niger, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Cambodia or the subcontinent. Before dinner in the Refectory, **Michael Jones** moved into more reflective mode, asked by Mary-Ellen to speak on ‘what I would do if I could’, discussing issues that arise when Byzantium (in the shape of the Coptic church) is still part of the wider cultural environment, and the specific domestic environment of major sites under conservation. He spoke movingly about a future for those modern representatives of Byzantium.

***On Saturday***

**Susan Alcock** began by suggesting ways in which Byzantine archaeology could escape its apparently inevitable fate and find a healthier place in the Academy. She pointed to the elasticity both of ‘Byzantine’ (definable, redefinable any time from 200-1500, anywhere an AORC may be found, as ancient, medieval, mediterranean, crusader, Venetian and of ‘archaeology’ (softest to hardest of social sciences) and of its attractiveness to hard science partners in a rapidly changing entrepreneurial academic world.

We then turned to discussing current issues in Byzantine archaeology and through them the place of the AORCs. **Bill Caraher** gave an excellent survey of issues around intensive pedestrian survey on a regional scale, asking questions of rural landscapes, and suggesting that the Byzantine period is well suited to the method, but also the AORCs with their diachronic focus. He talked about problems of stratigraphy, sampling, determining function, and wondered whether Byzantinists were pulling their weight in advancing the methodology and theoretical positioning of survey: very few large-scale surveys were run by Byzantinists. He ended with a plea for relevance: what can we do to advance world archaeology? In discussion the ability of Byzantium to ask big questions and for survey to answer them was pointed out.

**Scott Redford** thought about Byzantine cityscapes in the present state of thinking about tourism in Turkey (Byzantium as faith tourism, tourism-driven restoration) and recent developments in city walls and citadels. AORCs can contribute through supplying bookshops with the right kind of treatments of Byzantium, through support for publication, as memory repositories. Integration of city- and landscapes was also discussed and UNESCO preservation of landscapes; ways that funding, e.g. Welcome in UK, can skew research was noted, and the shortage of synthetic work even after the salvage excavations of the 1960s. How can AORCs partner with government agencies? How can they build connections with deans of universities mandated to be international?

**Brian Rose** talked about cultural heritage and site management, talking about his experience with the AIA in a decade of world crisis—iconoclasm in Afghanistan, wars in Iraq, the Arab Spring. He talked about a wider educational agenda: gift-shops at sites, playing-cards in the military, lesson-plans on websites to put the subject in people’s minds. He reminded us of the tendency for countries to ask for their antiquities back and for other countries to comply; and of the danger to Byzantine levels in the push for big digs to dig as much as they can. His was a masterly survey of how archaeology is always political, and archaeologists must be politicians. **Bob Ousterhout** looked atIstanbul in particular, andUNESCO World Heritage issues for the 2010 capital of culture. Discussion ranged from proposals for education (and accounts of how it has worked in Egypt) to issues in Northern Cyprus, from sites without touristic potential (Troy also not an eyecatcher) to the possibilities of reenactment, from Whittemore as constructing a narrative for Byzantium as glittery as the texts to sites in nature preserves and the restoration of the environment.

After a group photograph and lunch, the discussion continued, this time adding a theoretical dimension. **Jodi Magness** addressed the issue of transitions, chosen because of the exhibitions this year at the Onassis Center and the Met. She talked about periodization, continuity, and the need for non-archaeology students to be able to evaluate archaeological evidence. **Florin Curta** suggested that transition suggests comparison and offered ways of looking at the disappearance of the *villae rusticae* with comparisons from Germany, Serbia and Mucking; at hilltop sites in the Balkans in the sixth century compared with Butrint, Germany and Buckland. Discussion quickly shifted to ceramics and whether certain profiles can be called ‘Slavic’, but also to issues of transformation as well as transition. **Mike McCormick** raised issues to do with the fall of the Roman empire in the west and its visibility at his site at Tarquimpol. (Enter the Pacific rat and the Trondheim black mouse as ghost traces of migration.) Discussion suggested that Byzantine ethnicity is unfindable, but that Byzantine archaeologists may study many peoples other than Byzantines, and that Byzantine archaeologists are after all archaeologists as well as Byzantinists. Issues of the availability of analysis of material arose, and the need for specialists on excavations.

**Kostis Kourelis** then reflected on discussions so far and looked at the practice of one significant AORC, the American School, which has opened up its archives and revealed its colonialist past. He noted the connection of archaeologists with oppressive regimes (Mortimer Wheeler in colonial India, Kevin Andrews leaving the School to join the Greek resistance) and commended reflexivity. Archaeology as institution and archaeology as critical practice were opposed under the light of Bruce Trigger’s characterization of archaeology as imperialist, colonialist or nationalist. Discussion ranged from nationalism to involvement with the CIA or assumption of it ‘we are spies’, and from theoretical archaeology (watch for Kourelis and Caraher forthcoming) to disciplinarity, challenging the differential openness to Byzantine archaeology of various disciplines, and to functional concerns: are these conversations useful?

After tea we divided into small groups to consider our funding needs and to realize that it is not possible to do everything. Some considered job-creation, some sources of funding, some needs for cross-Center funding, some strategies to integrate Byzantine archaeology into large diachronic projects. The results are presented below. **Mary Ellen Lane** then closed proceedings, promising to absorb the lessons and to seek funding for the inter-AORC level rather than just for AORCs or for individual projects. We adjourned to the Museum courtyard for prosecco and goodbyes, with the opportunity, thanks to Gudrun Buehl, to view the results of Byzantine archaeological activity as well as of the collecting activity of the Blisses.

**Conversations, II Suggestions in the feedback sessions**

**Job creation**

* Give a certificate for professional skills learned (Harvard, Florida do this)
* Put students to work publishing Byzantine material
* Hope for a shift in Byz Studies from textual ☹ to material
* Target large Orthodox populations to support Byz Studies
* Where there are several Byzantinists found a Center
* Teaching Fellow in archaeology next time
* Summer programs in AORCs, spending the entire summer in 3 different countries
* NEH program –intensive course for non-Byzantinists for college teachers to create awareness—can do overseas
* One or two sessions at Kalamazoo

**Funding**

* NSF awards are coming to Byzantinists to get cross-disciplinarity
* Major companies in the national area
* Bulgarian-American community cf Gennadeion among Greek-Americans—already disposed
* Chambers of commerce-personal connections
* Anything inappropriate? Anything but the CIA
* CAORC as central agency and negotiator of conflicting applications, corporate acceptance policy
* Specific request e.g. washing machine for Loring Hall—alumni base

**Cross AORC**

* Sharing books, fellows, mentoring, laboratory facilities
* Study collections—AmAc ceramics; Corinth similar possibilities
* Summer school activities
* Tours to regions not visited by young scholars—Egypt, Bulgaria
* Crash courses useful for us to know about—sustainability, underwater archaeology
* Summer courses at Athens: Gertrude Smith professorships
* Thematic sessions at AIA, Kalamazoo
* Bibliographies of Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria (Todor)

**Promoting Byzantium on multi-period sites**

* Lists of specialists
* Projects to consider brief publication in individual countries cf Fasti
* Arrange collaboration at the highest level—incentives, publications possibilities
* Post-classical field school at ?Polis?
* To encourage publication of sites where there is a small post classical footprint (1 or 2 graves) collaboration among various projects in a geographical area