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Conference Report:
Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient History
University College, London 12th of March 2011

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The Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient History, organised by the Department of History and the Institute of Classical Studies at University College London was held on 12th March 2011. 36 papers were presented on a variety of topics.

The day began with a brief welcome from Prof. Hans van Wees of UCL. The conference then divided into four separate panels, each containing four papers: 'Ancient Religion' chaired by Alexander Millington, 'Monuments in Late Antiquity' chaired by Gabrielle Villais, 'Greek Warfare' chaired by Lee Moore, and a split panel on 'The Archaeology of Food' and 'The Roman Home' chaired by Stephen Royston-Davies. Owing to the distance between the rooms in which the panels were held, we were advised against changing panels between papers.

The first of these panels contained almost all of the papers with any focus on pre-classical history given at the conference. Naomi Carless Unwin began the session with a discussion of the extent to which the etymological link between the Lydian *Labrys* (double axe) and the Greek *Labyrinth* is suggestive of early cultural links between Crete and western Anatolia. Later in the same panel Lauren Moore gave an interesting account of the syncretistic tendencies of the goddess Atargatis in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, arguing that the cult shows evidence of syncretism being a systematic rather than random process. Finally, Theodora Jim discussed *aparchai* and *dekatai*, forms of religious dedications, and Natalia Gourova examined the roles of Apollo and Hera in the Cimmerian pantheon. Unfortunately, despite the high quality of the papers given in this panel, owing to the size of the room and the lack of amplification, it was at times very difficult to hear what was being said.

After lunch, the conference was divided again into four panels, each of three papers this time: 'Approaches to Ancient Medicine' chaired by Sushma Jansari, 'The Power of Images' chaired by Elpida Kosmidou, 'The Fall of the Roman Republic' chaired by Charlotte Greenacre, and 'Greek International Relations' chaired by Cezary Kuzewicz.

The most interesting paper I saw was given during the fourth panel. Thom Russell spoke on the founding of Byzantium, coming to the conclusion that, rather than a single foundation, the city probably evolved from a group of Thracian villages. The mythical founder, Byzas, a Thracian king in the earliest sources, was probably named after the city rather than the other way around. Also in this panel, Kirsty Mason spoke on the relationship between Greece and Persia in the fifth century BC and Kristis Sergidis discussed the impact of natural resources on Athenian foreign policy.

This was followed, after a short break, by the final session of four panels, each consisting of just two papers: 'Reception' chaired by Stephen Royston-Davies, 'Athenian Society' chaired by Elspeth Rowell, 'Roman Empire' chaired by Sushma Jansari and Janet Kroll, and 'Greek Economy' chaired by Owen Rees.

In the second panel, Corinna Brunini-Cronin offered a compelling re-examination of the treatment of women as seen through the Greek orators. She argued against the traditional view that because the picture given by the orators had to be plausible to judges it had to be accurate and in so doing was able offered a less extreme picture of the life of Athenian women. Also in this panel Marloes Deene spoke on social mobility in Athenian society.

After the final session was a plenary address given by Prof. John North of UCL against the recent changes to university funding and tuition costs. Prof. North pointed out the negative impact this is likely to have on the education system as a whole and on ancient history specifically. In what he described as 'an economy run on the decisions of 18 year olds', he detailed a logical series of events in which students choose not to study subjects, such as history, geography and art, for which

the likely financial reward is perceived to be lower than the cost of study, and as a result these subjects lose their funding. Without funding, such departments are unable to survive and research in areas that are not financially self-sustaining becomes impossible. This was followed by a lively question and answer session.

Issue could perhaps be taken with the lack of diversity. Although it is open to postgraduates from all fields of ancient history, non-classical subjects were notable by their absence. I was amused, during the reception which finished the evening, by the common reaction when I mentioned the date of my own work (c. 2400BC): “History hadn’t started yet then, had it?” Nonetheless, the conference was thoroughly enjoyable, even to a non-classicist, and the hosts, speakers and organising committee are all to be sincerely thanked.

Abstracts are available at

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/history/events/ampah_2011/Abstracts_-_ampah_1_.pdf