

Interview with Dr. Carrie Murray, 2010-2011 IEMA Postdoctoral Fellow

James Artz

Dr. Carrie A. Murray is currently the Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for European and Mediterranean Archaeology at the University of Buffalo, SUNY. She received a Bachelor's of Arts with honors in Anthropology and Archaeology from University of California, San Diego. For her graduate studies, she earned her Master's of Philosophy in Archaeological Science from the University of Cambridge, and then went on to University College London for her Doctor of Philosophy in Archaeology. She has since held posts at the University of Cambridge in the Faculty of Classics and Downing College, and also at the University of Wales, Lampeter in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology. Her background enables her to combine interests in Cultural Anthropology and Classical Archaeology. Dr. Murray's research covers pre-Roman and early Roman Italy, and Greek colonization, and she focuses on understanding social action through developments in ritual spheres.

What are your current research interests? What publication projects are you working on?

The main publication that I am currently writing is one of the outcomes of the Leverhulme Greek Colonization and European Development Project at the University of Cambridge, directed by Professor Martin Millett. This is a co-authored book with my partners on the project, Sara Owen and Jason Lucas. We are each researching a number of case studies across the Mediterranean, involving both particular colonial settlements and the local settlements in the surrounding areas. In particular, we are interested in exploring the complex dynamics of the social interaction between Greek newcomers and locals, which can no longer be understood as a one-way, dominant influence of the 'superior' Greeks over 'naïve' locals. The Greek colonization research fits into my interests of exploring cultural interaction, recognizing choice and action at individual and group levels, and investigating material culture as meaningful social expressions.

Are you working on any field projects at the moment?

I am currently organizing a new field project on the island of Pantelleria. I will be co-directing with Sebastiano Tusa, the Soprintendente del Mare, Regione Sicilia. The site includes the standing remains of what seems to be a Hellenistic Period fort structure. It is very exciting to be working with the Italian authorities on a site that has not been previously investigated. I am particularly interested in discovering the long-term use and transformations of this structure. The project will

also help demonstrate how Pantelleria, situated between Sicily and Tunisia, played a key role at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Sea.

What was your dissertation topic? Has your dissertation work played a significant role in developing your current research interests, or have you moved in new directions?

My dissertation topic investigated the development of authoritative statuses in Etruscan culture through changes in monumental architecture, burial practices, and the iconography involved in both. The research was so interesting for me, combining different types of archaeological evidence that had not been considered together, and with anthropological questions in mind. Elements of the approach and methodologies have remained key things in my mind. Going straight from an early Etruscan topic for my dissertation into a Greek colonization topic for the Leverhulme Project certainly meant delving into whole new areas of data, but I am still fascinated with how material culture (from small artifacts to monumental architecture) can reveal much about complex social expressions, particularly in ritual spheres—religious and funerary.

Where do you see your research and fieldwork going in the future?

I am looking forward to writing a book that has been on my mind for quite some time. I plan to expand an area of my doctoral research that I had to omit from my dissertation due to space. In terms of fieldwork, I am looking forward to expanding the Pantelleria Excavation Project.

What are your thoughts about working in the US after doing your Ph.D in Britain?

Studying and working in the United Kingdom was an amazing experience. It was exciting to be a part of interdisciplinary departments, and have access to excellent library resources. The weekly guest lectures at the Accordia Research Seminars, University College London and Classical Archaeology Seminars, Faculty of Classics, Cambridge were invaluable opportunities to meet scholars and learn about their research. Going to the pub after the seminars was a great chance for faculty and students to interact and discuss ideas. It was also extremely helpful getting so much teaching experience on such a wide range of topics at Cambridge and Wales; it was tough during the busiest times, but very beneficial in the end.

After having experience in the UK juggling different types of teaching, administrative duties, and research, I feel very able to handle just about anything now. It has been exciting to return to the US after being away for such a long time. Working at IEMA is a nice way of transitioning into the US system, by being a part of a research institute, as well as the Anthropology and Classics Departments.

What have you found most helpful and rewarding about the IEMA Postdoctoral Fellow position? What has been most challenging?

It is very helpful being involved in the interdisciplinary context of IEMA, interacting with colleagues and students in Anthropology, Classics, and Visual Studies. With my own work, I am enjoying developing my own research topic, and organizing the associated conference. It is exciting to see the event and the edited volume coming together with interesting contributions from so many scholars. Teaching the graduate course is also fun, because we are covering a wide range of contexts and materials. The class discussions are lively with students from Anthropology and Classics bringing different perspectives to the table. It is challenging juggling the different responsibilities, and learning about the particular ways things are done at UB, but it is all just part of the normal game.

Do you have advice for graduate students?

If I could offer any advice to help graduate students, I think I would mention these three things: First, work on what interests you. Do not worry about what topics seem to be on trend, you have to be truly interested in something you will spend years doing. Second, do not be afraid to meet senior scholars. Go to conferences and guest lectures. You can learn a lot about areas

outside of your normal range, and even enjoy being part of the community. And third, of course, publish. It is difficult to fit more work into our schedules, but if you can strategically carve an article out of your dissertation research, it is worth it.