

Call for papers, Archaeological Institute of America 2023 Panel

# ***Decolonizing Classical Archaeology: A View from North Africa***

We warmly invite submissions of paper abstracts for a proposed panel at the Archaeological Institute of America's 2023 Annual Meeting (January 2023) entitled, "**Decolonizing Classical Archaeology: A View from North Africa.**" Submissions on all aspects of the topic are welcomed from participants from any location (North Africa, North America, Europe, or elsewhere). The panel is organized by Matthew McCarty (University of British Columbia) and David Stone (University of Michigan), and sponsored by the AIA's Archaeology of North Africa Interest Group.

## *Panel proposal*

Recent work has drawn attention to the ways that the discipline of archaeology has been bound up in issues of colonialism, racism, and inequality. This is especially true in North Africa, where European military officers, administrators, missionaries, and colonists were responsible for developing not only the practice of archaeology, but also the agendas and metanarratives that continue to structure knowledge about the region. From the types of sites chosen for exploration (primarily urban, monumental, and related to outsiders like Phoenician and Roman colonists), to the periods privileged (especially the Roman period), to the questions posed (about cultural change, religious practice, military occupation, or economic development), North African archaeology was enmeshed with colonial imaginations and experiences. Antiquity was made to resemble the colonized territory of modern empires, just as it was looked to as a model for how to rule foreign lands.

This colonial legacy still shapes North African studies. Despite more than 70 years of calls to decolonize North African archaeologies and histories, much of the scholarship produced continues to reinforce colonialist narratives and to operate within interpretive and epistemic paradigms bound up in colonial ways of knowing. Even certain postcolonial approaches simply transvalue old interpretations: for example, an inability for North Africa's inhabitants to "Romanize" becomes celebrated as African "resistance" or "Berber permanence," embracing the same essentializing culture-history categories. Latin epigraphy—inaccessible to North African Arabic or Tamazight speakers—continues to serve as the primary source for understanding histories of the region, marginalizing materials and peoples who did not engage with epigraphic habits and exerting its own hegemony over modern forms of enquiry and explanation.

In keeping with the [AIA's statement on archaeology and social justice](#), this session offers a space for presenters to document problems in past practices within the field of archaeology, and to advocate for novel and transformational approaches to both new and legacy data. Drawing on a range of theoretical and practical approaches (including deconstructionism, postcolonialism, new materialism) and focusing attention on peoples, periods, and forms of material that have long been marginalized (indigenous groups, the "protohistoric" Iron Age, and objects), this session will offer case-studies in how Classical archaeology might move beyond its colonial roots.

### *Practicalities*

The 2023 AIA Annual Meeting will be held from January 5-8, 2023, in New Orleans (USA). No decision has been made about whether the 2023 AIA Meeting will be hybrid, or allow for virtual participation in the session for those who are unable (or who prefer not) to attend in person, though it is a possibility. We will also work with participants for whom travel/attendance poses a hardship to find mechanisms that will support their participation; we cannot, however, guarantee full funding for participants.

To promote accessibility and engagement, **abstract submissions in French are welcome**. AIA policy requires that "All submissions and presentations must be in English." The session organizers will translate abstracts from French and work with accepted presenters to translate papers if such assistance is desired.

### *Abstract submission*

The panel organizers welcome submissions on all aspects of decolonizing North African archaeology. **We ask for submissions of 300 words (excluding title) by March 15, 2022. Questions about the panel and submissions may be sent to [matthew.mccarty@ubc.ca](mailto:matthew.mccarty@ubc.ca) and [dstone@umich.edu](mailto:dstone@umich.edu).**

Per AIA policy, please consider the following when submitting your abstract: Abstracts must include clear statements concerning the following issues (not necessarily in this order) that help to summarize your research:

- 1) The research problem addressed
- 2) Significance of the research (topic, methodology, or outcomes)
- 3) Goals of the study
- 4) Sources of evidence / data used in the study
- 5) Research / analytical methods
- 6) Conclusions of the study: please note that abstracts that do not include conclusions or outcomes of the research will not be accepted.