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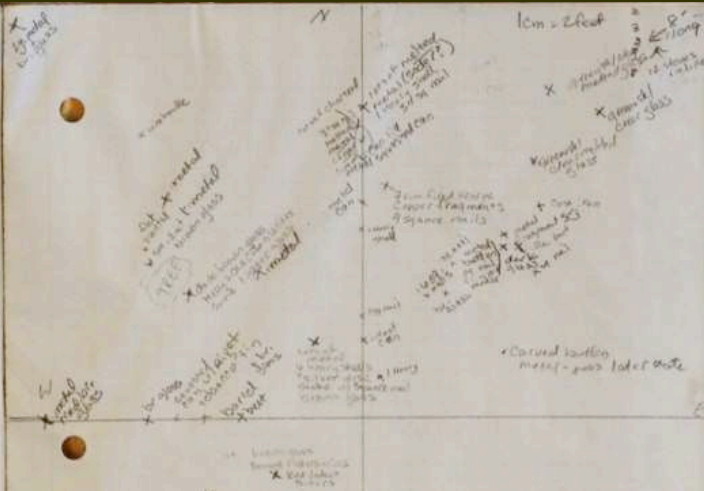
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Online Journal in Public Archaeology

POINTS OF YOU

Community engagement through archaeological ethnography: learning in situ with a field school in Gonies Maleviziou, Crete.

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Philioremos means 'friend of the solitary'. And when on top of this Minoan peak sanctuary, which dates back to c.1800BC, you can feel why. A hill much lower than the imposing Ida Mountains in the south, it nonetheless commands an impressive 360° view of the surrounding mountain valley. Standing on top, usually ducking to avoid the strong, cold wind, you have the impression of being at a distance from everything. The sounds of sheep bells, fragments of speech, the howl of the wind, a passing car in the distance, a dog barking somewhere, village bells, gradually surround you and make you turn inside, to the sound of your beating heart and your panting breath. It is a sense of solitude that contrasts the criss-crossing networks and flows of people, objects, animals, memories, stories, and official bodies that make up this site. These immaterial flows often make no sound that can be picked up in the natural soundscape of the area. But as one draws near the village, the fragments of sound turn into a profusion of voices.



Gonies used to be a large and strong village up until the 1960s. It is now home to less than 180 inhabitants, mostly elderly. Walking its narrow alleys, may give a first impression of abandonment. Getting to know its people, the Goniotes, however, begins to tell a story of resilience.

We got to know this place through the archaeological lens. Invited to do ethnography as part of the “Three Peak Sanctuaries of Central Crete” archaeological project (<https://www.facebook.com/ThreePeakSanctuariesProject/>), we hoped to bring up the connections of this group of people with the Minoan past. Traces of human presence in the area since the deep prehistory abound: place names of antiquity, fragmented ancient material culture, important Minoan landmarks, all surround the daily lives of the Goniotes. It soon became evident that the locals were fully aware of the deep past of this place and expressed it in many ways. However, they did not draw a sense of identity from this past. The stories they tell of themselves are stories of mobility and settlement in the past few centuries. They know this place is ancient, but they do not believe they were always here. They are the current stewards of this place’s past rather than being a community of Minoan descent. To our persistent questions about the ancient past, they replied with more and more histories about recent events. This was what was important to them. So, the project gradually turned its attention to what the community wanted to know about itself, its history and heritage.



This shift of focus broadened the scope of our project and made it more inclusive of the community interests, as well as more participatory. In a sense, the community took control over the production of knowledge and turned it into a collective process. It is this collaborative venture that prompted us to create a field school that enables the locals to teach their own history and heritage to students from all over the world.

We opted for the form of a field school rather than a lecture-based one to open up the process of collective ethnographic learning. On a daily basis, students, scholars and locals share experiences, discussions, celebrations, mournings, and stories, for a month every summer since 2014, contributing this way to the creation of a community-controlled archive of knowledge.



The simple act of having a local point at a wall and tell its story, give a guided tour of the village, describe the process of recognising his own sheep from those of others, and commenting on the effects of urbanization and development, broadens the

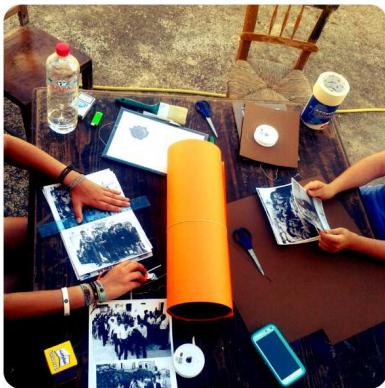
gamut of educators in the village. Everybody can be a teacher. The subjects discussed are chosen by the speakers themselves. We usually give prompts, discussing the subject of each year's school with people in the village.

Locals impart knowledge we do not and cannot have, the embodied experience of dwelling in this landscape for decades. And we impart our own experience of dwelling in a space that is sustained by the pull of theoretical activity in academia and the realities of being in the field. Knowledge production, collaborative research is a more encompassing praxis. It involves talking to people, forging and maintaining relationships, resolving conflicts. For some people in the village, the summer school is a highlight of their seasonal life, an encounter they look forward to. An occasion when the village resonates with voices, when some houses in the neighbourhood have lights on again at night. We create a multidisciplinary space between history, archaeology, art, museum studies, archival research, and oral history that leads to incredibly rich research contexts.



From the very beginning, our work was geared towards improving the livelihood of the people in the village either directly or indirectly. In the first season of our field school (2014), we collaborated with the Technical University of Crete, Department of Social Work, to provide a detailed census of the medical provisions and the needs of the village inhabitants. This census helped the social services of the Malevizi Municipality to plan better the health care for the village inhabitants, who on a weekly basis visit the elderlies' home (ΚΑΠΗ), used for physiotherapy and occupational therapy sessions, gatherings, creative activities and small feasts.

Simultaneously, during the first year of our field school, the archaeologist-artist Vasko Demou collaborated with us to implement a public art installation. It was based on ethnographic information provided by the locals about pastimes, landmarks and habitual practices, and gave us the opportunity to express this collectively created knowledge in forms beyond the conventional ethnographic ways.



This art installation, that took the form of a mapped itinerary in the village, was expanded in the following years into a trail that incorporated several interesting stops along the way, which reflected the embodied knowledge of the locals. Retracing the guided walks that the locals gave to us and the field school students, the trail was a way to transmit this knowledge to the visiting public. A communally created map was an opportunity for underplayed aspects of local heritage to be presented on an equal part with more male-dominated understandings of history when, for example, village ovens and the village's springs were put alongside the heroic feats of 19th century brigands, thus creating discussion in the village about how exactly their heritage works.

Engaging the locals in the production and representation of ethnographic and archaeological knowledge finds fertile ground in community art projects, such as the one we implemented in 2015. The archaeologist Celine Murphy, specialising in Minoan clay figurines, in collaboration with the experienced potter Vasilis Politakis implemented a three-week workshop that involved locals and visitors in the collection, preparation and working of clay.



Within the framework of experimental archaeology, participants were asked to emulate the possible techniques used to make clay figurines. Embodied memory appeared to be a very important parameter of this workshop because a number of elderly Goniotes showed us the clay working techniques they used in their childhood in order to make their toys and utensils.

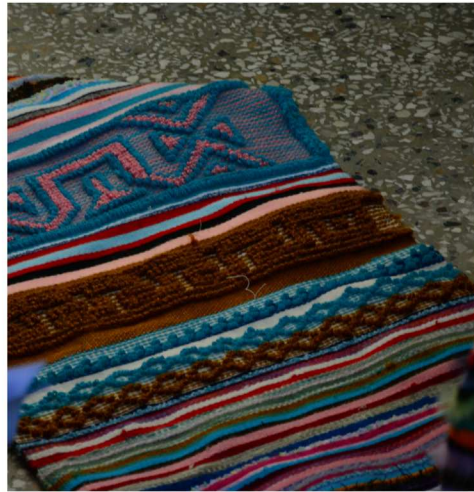


The artefacts created by the locals were presented in an open-air exhibition, which added to the already-existing path in the village, with the ultimate aim to turn the village into an open-air museum.



Art practice helps us create uncommon research situations by setting up hubs in the village that bring together individuals of different generations and backgrounds, and evoke embodied memories and techniques as well as personal narratives and stories, while they result in the creation of a communally produced work of art.

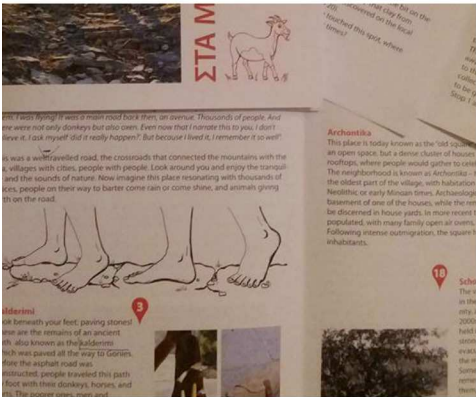
In 2016, the artist in residence, Aleka Karavela, and one of our former students and curator, Katerina Konstantinou, transformed a room in the abandoned school into an open studio with looms donated by the village. In the "loom project" men and women of all ages collectively weaved a cloth.



At the end of the field school, instead of making a presentation about the project's outcome, we chose to put words to a traditional motif sung for the first time by Nathenoyannis and recorded in the village by the Swiss ethnomusicologist Samuel Baud Bovy in 1953-1954. This song was sung during the feast closing our research season in the village.

Alongside the weaving project, in the 2017 field season landscape was also a topic for exploration. Having experienced first-hand the locals' relationship with their natural surroundings, we did not conceive landscape as a mere geographical space but as a cultural concept and a set of values significant to the local inhabitants. Some of the older ones, who know the area very well and have been walking it since childhood, gave our team a series of guided walks on what used to be the old paths that connected Gonies with the valley. In these walks we managed to acquire a sense of the landscape as a social and cultural construct modelled and embodied by the people who use it, live off of it and experience it on a daily basis. This unique natural, social and cultural entanglement helped us create a series of interpretive panels and signs, setting up a cultural heritage trail inspired by local knowledge and based on local narratives.

The ethnographic information we collected about knowledge on raw materials, techniques and local produce made us want to explore further the relationship of memory and material culture in the 2017 season. Memory in the village is often carried through material objects and artefacts. From a small handmade leather sack, the so-called sakadelo, that contains the utensils necessary to the shepherds' everyday needs, spring not only objects but stories, reminiscences, sometimes even songs.



Unpacking the family trunk is like a stratigraphy of layered personal and historical memories. The 2017 season focused on exactly that: the materiality of things and their anchoring of memory.



Introducing, for the first time, visual documentation into the study of material culture and memory, we created a series of interviews on camera with the aid of our photographer in residence, Manolis Kandanoleon. This resulted in the creation of the community's oral history archive, which we will continue to enrich in the following field school seasons.



Everything we collected this season relating to memories, visual images and material culture were great sources for the design of a small-scale exhibition as part of the closing ceremony of our field school. The exhibition comprised of various daily life objects kindly donated to us by the Goniotes, a number of oral narratives, artistic drawings and video projections.



There were times in the process of the exhibition design that it felt odd to be so self-referential, seemingly attempting to display to the village inhabitants elements familiar to them, closely relating to themselves and their lives. We often wondered what the purpose of such an exhibition would be, especially because our aim was not to simply display the tangible and intangible elements they shared with us but to present our ethnographic information and our experience of their own life experiences in new interpretive ways. Working and thinking in a self-reflexive manner is a core part of ethnographic research and thus it soon became clear to us that the exhibition could act as a field that voices the merge of our own contextualisation with the contexts that the locals communicate to us, relating to gender issues, love, emotion, belief, reminiscences, and practices.

Within the framework of Greek archaeological research, the fields of public/community archaeology and archaeological ethnography are two largely underdeveloped research arenas, mainly due to legal and institutional entanglements. Rather than perpetuate this problem, in the international field school we acknowledge local communities as integral constituents of the field, since they directly or indirectly influence our research questions as well as the processes and progress of our study. By co-producing and co-managing approaches of the ancient or more recent past with the local community, we end up with richer, less clinical, and more locally relevant results.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Community and the Cultural Association of Gonies, all the village inhabitants, our artists in residence and the participants in the field school. Without them, this project would not have been materialized and enriched, allowing us to further our engagement with the village community in the years to come.