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Research Plans for the Modern Period (1827-2000 A.D.)

Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey

Lita Diacopoulos

1999

INTRODUCTION

The Modern Period in the EKAS is defined as the period from the formation of the Modern Greek State in 1827 until the present. Until very recently, the Modern Period has been of little interest, if none at all, to traditional practitioners of Greek archaeology, whose main concerns have been associated with studies of the more distant past. Thus, a realization of the significance of modern components in comprising a distinct chronological period to be investigated in its own right is a relatively new phenomenon. In the last decade, and as a result of an increase in the number of regional surveys adopting a diachronic, landscape approach to archaeology, pre-modern and more recent cultural components (post-medieval to present) are now being incorporated within such projects, bringing discussion of the cultural landscape up to the present. Archaeological surveys which have included a modern component within their research design have usually focused, however, on evidence of “traditional” and recently-abandoned settlements, seasonal structures, as well as agricultural land use. We are pleased that EKAS is the first regional survey in Greece to fully integrate the Modern Period within the wider survey fieldwork system, by designing, refining, and applying a set of methods for modern data collection to be carried out by the survey field teams. Given the logistical complexity inherent as a result of the vastness of modern data, these data will be collected in such a way as to avoid overwhelming the system and slowing down the in-field-process, and on the basis of their usefulness and compatibility with the data collected for all other periods in investigating the primary questions of the EKAS research agenda.

RESEARCH AGENDA

The theoretical considerations relating to the modern period centre around the following key issues:

1. The direction of trade and communication in the Eastern Korinthia during the modern period. Was the Eastern Korinthia tied to Korinth as a major distribution centre, or did it react independently with outside interests (such as Athens)?
2. The impact in the Eastern Korinthia of the following events:
 - a) the overthrow of Ottoman rule and the founding of the modern Greek State in 1827;
 - b) the founding of Modern Korinth in 1858
 - c) the opening of the Korinth Canal in 1893
 - d) the construction of the National Highway in the 1960s
 - e) the two World Wars and the civil war;
 - f) the junta during 1967-1974;
 - g) the return of democracy in 1974 and the rise of a socialist government in 1981;
 - h) Greece’s membership in the European Union.

3. An investigation of the role of archaeology in modern Greek Society: how archaeology in general, and EKAS more precisely, impacts on the lives of the locals in the eastern Korinthia, its significance in terms of the heritage value of the area, and its contribution to environmental considerations and more precisely to Cultural Resource Management (CRM).

FIELD METHODOLOGY

Information relating to the modern period will be collected and recorded by the fieldwalkers in the same manner as for all other periods. Fieldwalkers are required to observe modern feature types (buildings, agricultural fields, structures, walls churches, dump sites, industrial facilities, etc.) and record them on the DU recording forms. They are also required to include all modern ceramics and glass fragments (other than window glass) in their counts and recording, and examples of these should be flagged in the same manner as for artefacts of all other periods so they can be assessed by the processing team. These data recordings should allow for the retrieval of groups of information and the subsequent analysis of these in terms of their location and spatial distribution after they are entered in the database at the end of the day. DUs with large concentrations of modern artefactual material (especially ceramics and glass) and significant feature types, which are recognised by the fieldwalkers to contain important information relevant to the main research questions above, should be assigned a LOCA status and investigated in an appropriate manner, depending on the LOCA's size and character. The artefactual analysis will be complemented by an investigation of the relevant written records – both historical and archival-- as well as oral information from the local inhabitants.

CRM AND PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY

In terms of CRM, EKAS is closely collaborating in terms of resources and expertise with the local representatives of the Greek Archaeological Service.

The EKAS contribution to CRM includes creating an electronic database with GIS capabilities containing sites of archaeological significance, allowing the Greek Archaeological service easy access and retrieval of the relevant data. At the same time, such collaboration with the Greek authorities will allow for an evaluation of the archaeological sites within the EKAS research area, as well as the relevance of EKAS to the concerns of the wider public. EKAS is committed to informing the local people and communities of the project's research objectives and considering their concerns in relation to these objectives, through consultation, public presentations, and written handouts.