

2019 MEDIEVAL MATERIAL CULTURE SERIES
THE VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES
ARCHAEOLOGY AND MEDIEVAL STUDIES TODAY
April 2-4, 2019, Harvard University



Professor Carver's lecture concerns recent research in the European early Middle Ages, reviewing his previously published work on Sutton Hoo and Portmahomack, newly-published work on Britain as a whole, and work currently in progress in Sicily. Each of these was (or is) primarily an exercise in archaeological investigation, attempting to explain what happened to people when their regime changed. Our ability to deduce this from material culture has increased notably over the last thirty years, and the story is partly one of how archaeology, bioarchaeology and especially biomolecular archaeology have kept pace with our ambitions and occasionally overtaken them. Although different kinds of archaeology (settlement, burial and monumentality for example) often report different attitudes and behaviors, these do occasionally converge. In the case of Britain, we see a changing emphasis on lordship, spirituality or wealth creation in different parts of the island from the fifth to the eleventh century. In Sicily, changes in regime are more thoroughly documented, and their applications also appear to have been ideologically driven. Here, however, we may be in a better position to distinguish the experiences of the 'people without history'— farmers, merchants and their families. Their lives seem to have run a different course, and moved at a different pace, from those of government, but in some fashion must nevertheless have been determinant.

About the speaker: Martin Carver was an officer in the British Army before practising as a freelance archaeologist for thirteen years and serving as professor of archaeology at the University of York for over two decades, retiring in 2008. A Fellow of the British Academy and the Society of Antiquaries, he was the editor of the journal *Antiquity* from 2002 until 2012. He has carried out fieldwork and research in Britain, Italy, France and Algeria, including the excavations of the major Pictish monastery at Portmahomack and the most recent round of Sutton Hoo digs and analyses. He currently is the director (with Alessandra Molinari and Girolamo Fiorentino) of the monumental *Sicily in Transition* project, which investigates the material, social, and economic history of the island from the seventh through thirteenth centuries CE. In addition to numerous excavation reports, he is the author of *Archaeological Investigation* (2009), *Making Archaeology Happen* (2011), *Sutton Hoo: Encounters with Early England* (2017), and *Formative Britain: An Archeology of Britain, Fifth to Eleventh Century CE* (2019).

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A seminar hosted for the benefit of our undergraduates and graduates, and intended as an interdisciplinary forum that engages with student research.

The questions to be introduced in this seminar are how and why the indications of wealth changed in England between the sixth to ninth century. The story line is broadly as follows: in sixth century Britain, people invested in their personal appearance, in weapons, brooches and especially in textiles. Similar attention was given to dressing their horses. The Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have the lion's share of the material, but the ethos appears to be shared with the Britons, Picts and Irish too, where wealth was reckoned in cattle and stored in cattle hides; but clothing was also a crucial signal. At the end of the seventh century, there was a gradual change in emphasis from apparel to treasure, as indicated by the Sutton Hoo burials, the Staffordshire Hoard and the late female furnished mound burials. In this same period, Christianity was redefined as an institution – in the north and west largely monastic, in the south and east largely episcopal- and wealth was also redefined in two ways: in the English areas, investment was in large buildings, grand farms and wheat as a cash crop; in the (more spiritual) Celtic areas in sculpture and illuminated books.

Coins were made and hoarded in the seventh century too (as gold), but only after the ninth century was the incipient nation monetized (in silver pennies). This may have been partly in response to the need to buy off the Vikings, and as a way of processing the large amount of bullion amassed during the Viking wars. In the tenth century most of the new towns created as forts over the area conquered by Wessex (=England) were provided with mints, to enable the crown to distribute wealth to friends, servants and enemies. Only in the eleventh century, as imported pottery finally returned to Britain, were these pennies able to serve a monetary economy.

As a coda, Professor Carver will raise some questions on 'personhood'. How far was wealth apportioned between men and women? How far was it measured by access to food? How far was it inherited? As well as the existing methods of osteology, archaeozoology and archaeobotany, new techniques such as stable isotope analysis and DNA are being mobilized to address these questions.

Co-sponsored by the Medieval History Graduate Workshop, the Medieval Studies Interdisciplinary Workshop, and the Harvard Numismatic Association

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Sardis, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, has been central to the story of antiquity and the emergence of coinage. As part of Alexander the Great's empire, the Seleucid kingdom, and later the Roman and the Byzantine empire, the city thrived as an important administrative and ecclesiastical center until its destruction in the early 7th century CE. Systematic excavations of the site since 1958 by Harvard and Cornell Universities, as well as a comprehensive research and publication program, have illuminated aspects of its landscape, built environment, social and religious topography, and material culture. Ongoing conservation and site development projects have begun to transform Sardis into an open-air archaeological museum. In this workshop, we will introduce participants to archaeological theory and praxis, focusing in particular upon the tools and techniques employed by the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis to uncover the city's rich past.

Space To register for the workshop and the shuttle bus to the Sardis Office in Harvard's Somerville Research Facility please visit [The View from the Trenches: Sardis and the Practice of Medieval Archaeology](#)

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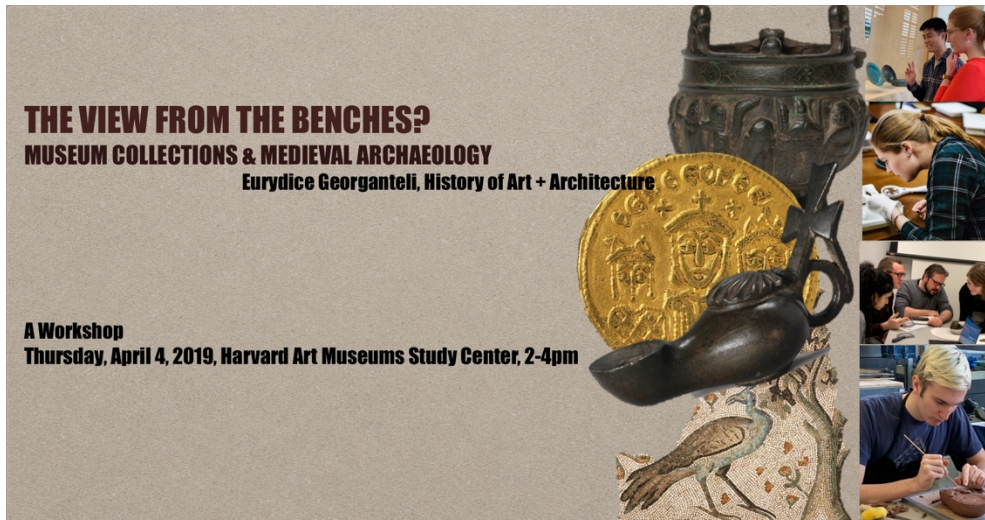
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The workshop will explore the role of museum artifacts in the study of medieval material culture. Can works of art that haven't been taken out of their archaeological context, and often collected and displayed on the basis of their aesthetic value, provide visitors and researchers the plausibility of an archaeological narrative? What is the significance of objects for the reconstruction of medieval technologies and designs, settlements and routes, economic practices and cultural encounters? Through a close-up study of select artifacts from the renowned medieval collections of the Harvard Art Museums, the workshop will offer participants the chance to reflect on the value and limitations of museum collections and archaeological finds as primary sources for the Middle Ages.

Workshop capped at 15 participants. To register, please visit [The View from the Benches? Museum Collections and Medieval Archaeology](#)

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