

DIGITAL LOOM WEIGHTS AT PRINIATIKOS PYRGOS

July 26, 2013 Frank Lynam Bronze Age, Day of Archaeology, Digital Archaeology, Excavation, Finds, Iron Age, Prehistory, Roman coastal promontory site, Excavation, Greece, Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies, Priniatikos Pyrgos



Priniatikos Pyrgos from the hills

Today is the last day of the season at Priniatikos Pyrgos, an archaeological project, which has been running in East Crete since 2005. Currently, it is operated under the auspices of the Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies at Athens but it began as an American/Greek project. Excavation at the Bronze Age to modern coastal promontory site ceased in 2010 and since 2011 the project members have returned to study the vast quantities of material and site recordings that were gathered during the 6 years of excavation.

My main role with the PP project over the years has been to handle its digital data record. I've grown up (archaeologically) at PP and so while I have always tried to approach my work here professionally, I also have a sentimental attachment to a lot of the material that I see make its way into the site's digital repository. Today has mainly been about ensuring that the digital work for the season is signed off on and committed in a way that we can continue to work with over the coming months in the off season. In many ways, this is one of the main reasons that people employ digital practice into their archaeological workflow: digital technologies allow for the continued interpretation of a site when the site is off limits in a physical sense. And when you are working with material from a site in a country that you are not a resident of then a strong digital data foundation becomes all the more compelling. The introduction of more novel and sometimes more innovative techniques such as the 3D capture of material and the maintenance of multi-dimensional datasets (spatiality, interpretation, quantitative) provide an increasingly engaging remote site working environment. I am currently doing a PhD in the area of digital data management (specifically on the topic of where big data, the semantic web and archaeology collide) so my time here aligns well with my work back home too.

Besides my digital responsibilities, this season I have also been asked to look at the project's loom weight collection. Now for someone like myself who tends to only handle the material record when I dig it out of the ground this was a great opportunity to experience the digital and material record through the eyes of an end-user. In the past, I have been perhaps prone to treating archaeological data too much as a generic data type and so to be put in a position where I needed to engage with the data as a means to an interpretive end was a very interesting and helpful experience. And it also added that bit of archaeological romanticism that for me at least is not often associated with the post-ex process.

Well, the final archive backups are on the go as I write this – they will probably run right through the night. This weekend will be one of goodbyes and my mind will have to turn to the lands of the north and normality. I've greatly enjoyed this season. I've gotten to excavate at a new site (at Petras a couple of weeks ago) and I have been able to engage for the first time in any sort of meaningful way with the post-ex material record. And over the last few weeks a couple of interesting ideas have occurred to me that I will bring back to my PhD research when I return to Dublin. All in all, another good day and summer season in archaeology!