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# Campus Spotlight: Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, with Columbia University

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*An introduction to our campus spotlight on **Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, with Columbia University.***

## **Archaeological treasures from the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* in Paris**

In two previous issues of *EuropeNow*, we reported on an exciting joint research and teaching project between Columbia University and the University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne, “Transatlantic Adventures: Parallel heritages, Humanities in action!,” dedicated to the Sorbonne and Columbia collections of antiquities gathered from the end of the nineteenth century at the Sorbonne in Paris and at Columbia University in New York. Beyond being part of an ongoing task aiming at achieving a complete inventory of these two universities’ collections, the project also compares the origin, development, and present state of their respective archaeological heritage. These collections recount the parallel histories of knowledge and scholarly traditions across two different national and academic settings, thus laying the foundations for a better understanding of the historical connections and divisions between European and American academic and public institutions.

In a previous issue of *EuropeNow*, we provided a summary overview of the project and its primary goals, highlighting the heritage of both universities. A two-session seminar held in New York and Paris in the spring and the fall of 2019 provided faculty members and graduate students from each university the opportunity to present to each other their respective university's collections and current research. The two-part seminar provided a forum for interdisciplinary exchange and first-hand exploration of the collections in question. In a later issue of the journal, we then offered a series of papers dedicated to Columbia's collections as part of a Campus spotlight, presenting the results of the research conducted in New York by Columbia doctoral students. We now present another series of studies by Paris students and scholars focusing on a few archaeological treasures from the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* in Paris, the century-old building hosting the Department of Art history and Archaeology at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. This Campus Spotlight presents a series of essays by scholars and doctoral students on various collections of the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* and on the manifold dimensions of their study and public dissemination. It also includes a syllabus that Alain Duploux, Alliance visiting Professor, created for his Columbia seminar on interpretive archaeology.

### **The university's collections of archaeology**

The gradual introduction of archaeology and art history courses at the Sorbonne from the late nineteenth century on went hand in hand with the creation of reference collections, regarded as an essential tool for teaching and research. Following the model of the *Lehrapparat* defined in Berlin by Eduard Gerhard (Schnapp 2004), the first professors teaching those subjects sought to acquire a comprehensive pedagogical and scientific apparatus, which Alain Duploux addresses in his article on the creation of the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie*. As everywhere else in Europe, however, university collections in France came to be disregarded after WW2. A general lack of funds and qualified personnel, as well as the evolution of teaching methods and content, rendered the collections previously gathered with great care useless, leading to their neglect and sometimes irremediable losses. In Paris, the trend was amplified by the wide-ranging consequences of the May 1968 movement, with implications for the management of university property, whether buildings or collections. Most of the archaeological treasures of the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* thereupon fell into oblivion during the following decades. A new generation of scholars, however, is currently reversing this trend. As they have rediscovered the university's heritage, these scholars have made it the new focus of their research, involving students in the study and restoration of these collections simultaneously.

Many of the archaeology collections that the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne now manages—often in cooperation with the Sorbonne University, the other successor of the former University of Paris—have their roots in the historical collections gathered in the Sorbonne and transferred and enriched in the early 1930s at the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie*. We can mention in particular a Greek antiquities collection (fig. 1) (Duploux

& Asselineau 2016; Duplouy and Bruschini-Chaumet 2019), the remains of a plaster casts collection (about a hundred pieces that were not sent to Versailles in 1973, on which see Martinez 2009), a gilded bronze model of the ancient city of Rome[1] (fig. 2) (Arvanitis 2021), or a large collection of glass plates for projection (Duplouy 2021). Other reference collections were constituted more recently, often as a result of individual initiatives by various professors, acquisition opportunities, and research projects; this is the case for the collection of ancient Iranian seals impressions covered by Guido Antinori as part of this spotlight. The history of these collections is in fact unique, and the ways in which the items that make up each collection were acquired are very diverse, reflecting the institutional and sometimes personal relationships of their initiators. In order to tell the history of each collection, it is often necessary to carry out a piece-by-piece analysis, tracing the thread of archival documents and the indications present on the artefacts themselves, while delving into the biography of the scholars who created these documents.



Fig. 1 – The Greek antiquities collection in 2021. Photo Alain Duplouy.





Fig. 2 – Paul Bigot's gilded bronze model of the ancient city of Rome. 3D photogrammetric reconstruction by Cyrille Galinand.

Through the material history of the Sorbonne's heritage collections, it is also the intangible history of the university and the scientific and pedagogical practices of the discipline of archaeology that can be traced. For example, the collection of glass plates and slides can shed light on the content of past teaching, allowing us to gauge the innovative or conservative character of this teaching. The Paris collection of plaster casts of ancient sculptures reveals the scientific work of Charles Picard as written in his *Manuel d'archéologie grecque*, which focused on a history of Greek sculpture (1935-1966). The collection of Near Eastern seal-cylinder impressions plunges us into the heart of the scientific project of Henri Seyrig, Jean-Claude Gardin, and Jean Deshayes and allows us to trace the beginnings of computerized data processing in archaeology, as [Mariana Silva Porto and Mathilde Castéran demonstrate in their article on Jean Deshayes and the Cylinder Seal Project](#). Several of these collections are slowly being reintegrated into an active teaching of archaeology. Others still constitute hidden treasures, whose existence is unknown to students and sometimes even to more seasoned scholars. However, all of these collections deserve to be rediscovered, inventoried, protected, and restored, as they form a university heritage and tell a slice of a collective history.

All these tasks have been facilitated thanks to a newly established media center in the department of archaeology (*Pôle images et technologies numériques*) at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, which pursues among its missions the safeguarding and the study of the department's heritage collections, as well as their digital disclosure. In this spotlight, [Vincenzo Capozzoli engages in the creation and the development of the VERGILIUS portal](#)<sup>[2]</sup> and the way in which it aims at turning the heritage collections of the department

into a digital archive, that offers both a collaborative work platform for students and researchers and a virtual museum targeting the university community and the general public.

*Campus Spotlight: Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, with Columbia University*

- [“From the Sorbonne to the Institut d’Art et d’Archéologie” by Alain Duplouy.](#)
- [“The Cylinder Seal Project: Unveiling the Role of Jean Deshayes in French Mecanography” by Mariana Silva Porto and Mathilde Castéran](#)
- [“A Collection of Ancient Iranian Seal Impressions at the Institut d’Art et d’Archéologie” by Guido Antinori](#)
- [“Digital Management of the Archaeological Collections: The VERGILIUS Portal” by Vincenzo Capozzoli](#)
- [“Syllabus: Interpretive Archaeology: Historiography of the Ancient World” by Alain Duplouy.](#)

**Holger A. Klein** is the Lisa and Bernard Selz Professor of Medieval Art History at Columbia University. He was educated at the universities of Freiburg im Breisgau, Munich, London, and Bonn. His research focuses on Late Antique, Early Medieval, and Byzantine art and architecture, the cult of relics, history of collecting, and issues of cultural and artistic exchange.

**Alain Duplouy** is Reader in Greek archaeology at the University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne. He was Alliance Visiting Professor in Greek archaeology at Columbia University during the winter-spring semester in 2022. He has led archaeological fieldwork programs in Greece (Itanos) and Italy (Laos and Pietragalla) and has published extensively on elites and citizenship in archaic Greece, as well as on university heritage.

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[1] Some of the 3D models created by C. Galinand (head of *Pôle Images et technologies numériques*), referring to the different elements that make up the model, can already be viewed on the Department's Sketchfab account: <https://skfb.ly/oMllt>.

[2] <https://vergilius.pantheonsorbonne.fr>

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# From the Sorbonne to the Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie

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*This is part of our campus spotlight on Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, with Columbia University.*

Archaeology became institutionalized in French universities significantly later than in other European countries, especially Germany. The first chair of archaeology was established at the Sorbonne—and roughly at the same time at the University of Bordeaux—in 1876. The first incumbent was Georges Perrot who, despite the prestige of the position, quickly preferred to be entrusted as director of the *École normale supérieure*, from which he originated—and which still ranks higher in France than any university (on the *grandes écoles* in France, see Bourdieu 1996). Maxime Collignon, who previously had held the chair in Bordeaux, was then appointed as deputy professor in 1883 to replace him in Paris and became the formal holder of the Sorbonne chair of archaeology in 1900 until his death in 1917 (Bruneau 1992; Therrien 1998, 243–249). Collignon would have a most decisive influence on the creation of an effective chair of archaeology at the Sorbonne, not only in terms of teaching and scientific production, but also in terms of facilities and available instruments. Faced with the absence of a French tradition and despite the existence of the *École française d'Athènes* since 1846—the French advanced school for archaeology in Greece, of which he was a member—it was to Germany that

Collignon turned to define a model for teaching archaeology in France. He undertook a mission across German universities in the early 1880s and on his return wrote a report for the Minister of Public Instruction, which he summarized in a paper, "The teaching of classical archaeology and the cast collections in German universities" (Collignon 1882). Three German particularities had caught his attention: (a) courses were based on collections of figurative monuments, real or reproduced; (b) in addition to the *lectio magistralis*, the students were invited to actively engage in the field through practical work on objects to be described and analyzed; and (c) a chair of archaeology had to be provided with a collection of plaster casts and antiquities. For Collignon, these characteristics logically had to be implemented at the Sorbonne. His subsequent efforts were gradually supported by Henry Lemonnier, who soon held the first chair of art history created at the University of Paris in 1893.

The time coincided with the construction of the new Sorbonne, built by architect Henri-Paul Nénot between 1884 and 1901. While Perrot had complained about his work environment in the old premises dating back to the time of Richelieu, Collignon was largely responsible for setting up an archaeology department in the new Sorbonne buildings, including a cast museum, a library, and what he called an "Archaeology Room" (fig. 1), similar to the facilities he had seen in German universities. In a paper explaining how the teaching of archaeology was organized at the Sorbonne, Collignon noted that

Real progress was made when it was possible to outfit an 'Archaeology Room' at the Sorbonne, in the wing reserved for special institutes. This room, which is open to students, contains what can be called the *apparatus* of the course, books with plates, photographs and a library which is still too small. Students can also find a collection of small casts and a modest series of original objects (Collignon 1899, 196, translation by author).



Fig. 1 – The “Archaeology Room,” showing Collignon (second from left) teaching students through the manipulation of vases from the antiquities collection (Neurdein, Salle d’archéologie, undated. Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne, <https://nubis.univ-paris1.fr/ark:/15733/qbv>).

As Nénot’s Sorbonne had barely been completed, Collignon already complained about the cramped conditions within the new building, waiting for the day when the university would “find, outside the too narrow walls of the Sorbonne, a site large enough to house the collection” and calling for a generous donor to imitate the American philanthropists (Collignon 1899, 197–198). The project of an Institute of Art and Archaeology was mentioned as early as 1913 by the Rector Louis Liard, but the war would interrupt the project for a few years. In 1923, the Marquise Arconati-Visconti, a major patron of the University of Paris, bequeathed 3 million francs to the university in her will for the construction of such a structure. A plot of land next to the Luxembourg Gardens was donated by the State, and architect Paul Bigot won the competition for the construction of the new building. A former resident of the *Académie de France* in Rome, Paul Bigot did not build much, but his work is no less remarkable. For example, he was acclaimed for his monumental plaster model of the ancient city of Rome, which would find a place within the new institute in Paris. From 1924 to 1931 he built an astonishingly audacious building made of steel and concrete behind an envelope of red bricks mirroring Venetian architecture (Texier 2005). The new *Institut d’art et d’archéologie* arose on the corner of avenue de l’Observatoire and rue Michelet, originally intended to house three professors and a few hundred students (fig. 2).





Fig. 2 – The Institut d’art et d’archéologie. Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne | Shutterstock

When the building opened in 1932, the 400 or so students who were to attend courses in archaeology and art history were immersed in an atmosphere of erudition, which included not only the classrooms, but also, and even more so, a cast museum and exhibition galleries, various archaeological collections, a photo archive containing tens of thousands of prints and glass plates, and several research libraries, including the Jacques Doucet’s art and archaeology library. This library was then (and still is today) the largest in France in the field, although it is now housed in the former locale of the *Bibliothèque nationale*. These remarkable study conditions were accompanied by a cultural program—concerts were given every week in the large auditorium in the basement—and the institution came to enjoy an international influence. The course offering was widely distributed, while summer schools enabled professors based in Paris to attract American students and disseminate their knowledge across the Atlantic. In its conception, the *Institut d’art et d’archéologie* was not only a facility for teaching; according to the principles that led to its construction, it was to be a laboratory, a place for “science in the making.”

Despite being closed to the public during WW2, the *Institut d’art et d’archéologie* suffered some damage. From 1941 onwards, the building was practically abandoned, although various urgent interventions were carried out, notably on the roof. In the post-war period, teaching and research activities resumed according to unchanged principles, but the period was also marked with an overall lack of funding for the building’s maintenance and



an ever-growing population of students. Then came the events of May 1968. Amidst the student and social insurrection, the building and its collections suffered enormously: many plaster casts were vandalized or destroyed, while the walls of the institute were stained with graffiti when the students involved in the movement chose the building as a meeting place for its action committees, as shown in photographs taken by Jo Schnapp during the second half of May (fig. 3). Virtually besieged by the *Compagnies républicaines de sécurité* (CRS, a section of the French National Police responsible for crowd and riot control), the stained staircase and upper floor of the building, as if echoing the insurrectionary charge of the slogans deployed in the streets, showed another facet of the May 68 movement (see Lewino 2018, with Jo Schnapp's photos). Indeed, beyond the punctual material degradations, the splitting of the University of Paris into thirteen universities marked the real turning point in the teaching and scientific project of the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie*.

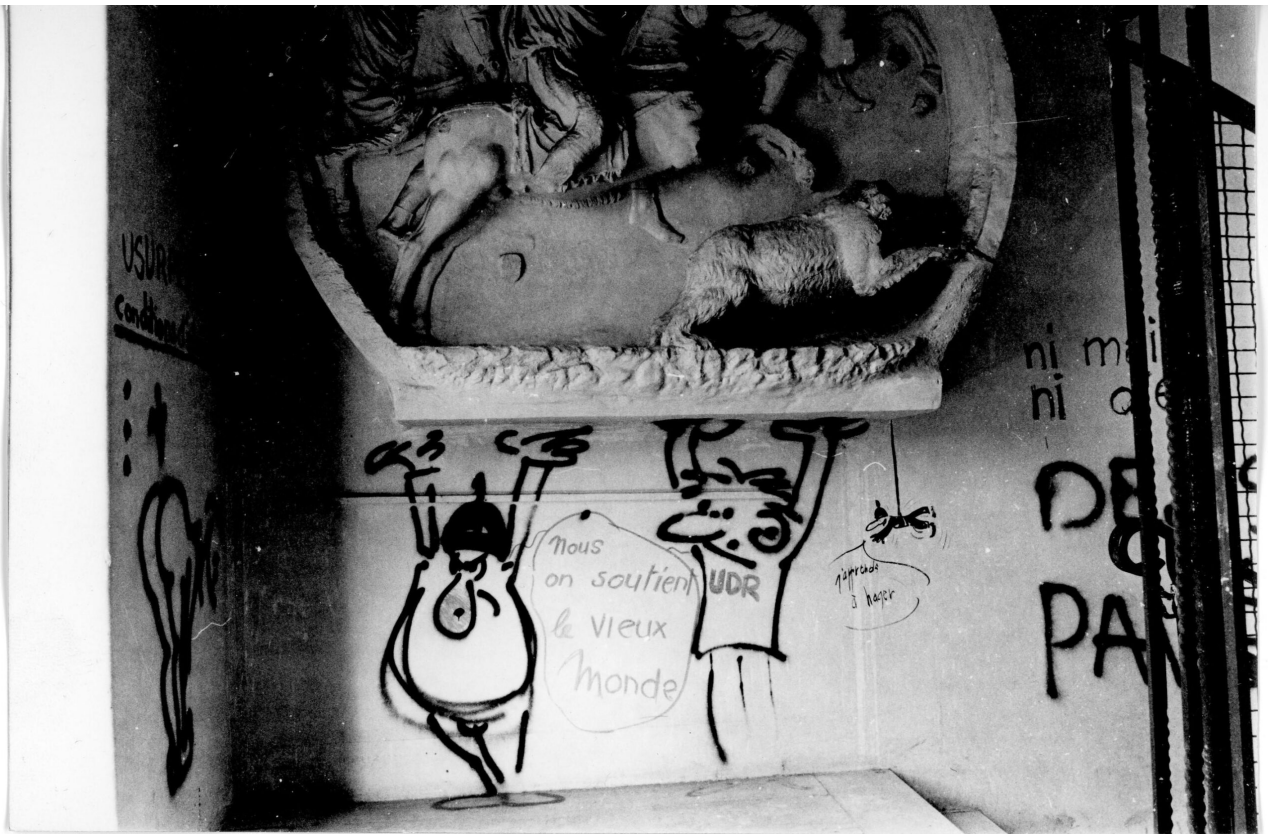


Fig. 3 – May 68 graffiti in the staircase of the Institut d'art et d'archéologie. Photo Jo Schnapp (<https://vergilius.pantheonsorbonne.fr/items/show/2241>).

The decree of March 21, 1970, establishing the universities of the Academy of Paris, distinguished between Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne and Paris IV Sorbonne. Instructors had to choose between the two new institutions, which became independent from one another. De facto, the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* of the University of Paris, whose architectural reality coincided until then with a research and teaching department dependent on the Sorbonne, ceased to exist. Two new university departments of art

history and archaeology were created on the ashes of the previous institute, one dependent on Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and the other on Paris IV Sorbonne. Moreover, in the early 1970s, the building itself underwent profound—and often unfortunate—modifications to cope with the student demographic pressure. The cast and exhibition galleries were dismantled (fig. 4). The need for space and the divorce between the two universities explain why approximately 330 plaster casts were sent to the *Petite Écurie* at Versailles in 1973, where they eventually became part of a plaster cast gallery administrated by the Louvre Museum (Martinez 2009). The dismantlement or the splitting of the teaching collections also meant that the educational project that had been achieved since the creation of the institute was ruined. From then on, each university carried out its own policy, generally with no concern for their common heritage. The listing of the building in the *Inventaire supplémentaire des Monuments historiques* in 1994 did not change the situation much, except that it further froze the building into the past; it was transformed into heritage, and it also increasingly became disconnected from pedagogical evolutions and institutional realities. For decades to come, the cohabitation between the two universities would be tense, especially regarding the management of the building, which quickly came to be considered nothing more than a physical space for teaching, while archaeological collections that previously made-up teaching were forgotten.



Fig. 4 – Dismantlement of the cast gallery, July 1973. By courtesy of the Musée du Louvre / AGER (service d'étude et de documentation).

Things have however progressively changed, for the better. As the archaeological collections are now rediscovered and studied, an architectural project jointly elaborated by both universities resulted in the awarding by the state in 2021 of a generous grant of 8 million euros for a major renovation project—to be supplemented by an equivalent figure contributed equally by the two universities. The completion of the renovation work is scheduled for the end of 2027, just in time to celebrate the building's centennial. While the details of the architectural program are currently being defined, it is to be hoped that the determination of decision-makers will enable the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* to once again become a place for science in the making.

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# The Cylinder Seal Project: Unveiling the Role of Jean Deshayes in French Mekanography

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Jean Deshayes was a respected scholar of Near Eastern archaeology, who played a central role in the establishment of the Department of Art History and Archaeology after the creation of the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in 1970. He worked on projects throughout the Near East and helped establish Near Eastern archaeology in French universities, first in Lyon and then in Paris, where he inaugurated the Chair of Near Eastern Studies. In Paris, he went on to become Director of the Department, implementing many changes, for example introducing new courses on methodology, fieldwork, and conservation. He also introduced a multidisciplinary approach, bringing elements of science, chemistry, and new technologies into the teaching of archaeology. His premature death in Tunisia in 1979 was a shock for the department and the field of Near Eastern studies more generally (Huot 1980).

As part of a study on the heritage of the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and of the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* in particular, we explored several archives that were left in the department by scholars who worked at the institution in the past. This archival material included documents Deshayes stored in a cardboard box that had never been closely examined since. These documents relate to a “*Projet Cylindre*” and outline the scholar’s involvement in the *Oriental Cylinder Seal Project* during his stay at the French Archaeological Institute in Beirut in the mid-late 1950s. This project, led by Jean-Claude Gardin, constitutes an early example of mecanographical analysis in archaeology. Though Deshayes is known less for this latter work than for his subsequent scientific production, the Paris 1 archive shows he played a crucial part in the early stages of the *Oriental Cylinder Seal Project*. The archive in question consists of one box containing eight folders of Deshayes’s papers, all of them relating to the *Oriental Cylinder Seal Project*. They reveal his continued interest in the topic in the 1960s, as well as his friendship with Gardin. This interest and friendship would last beyond Deshayes’s direct involvement with the project.

### **The origins of the *Oriental Cylinder Seal Project***

The *Oriental Cylinder Seal Project* began at the French Archaeological Institute in Beirut under the directorship of Henri Seyrig, who acted as a friend and mentor to both Deshayes and Gardin. The two met in Beirut, where Deshayes had conducted research for the CNRS since 1952 and would continue to work until 1961. It was also there that Gardin developed what was to become his quantitative, mecanographical approach to archaeological data (Gardin 1996). Several articles have been written in recent years on Gardin and his very early experiments with quantitative, computer-based archaeology as well as on the reasons why this approach was not taken up by other scientists at the time (see for example Moscati 2013; Ludovico and Camiz 2015; Dallas 2016; Plutniak 2017; Ludovico 2018, and Gardin 1996 & 2002). His work stemmed from a desire to use linguistic analysis and new, computer-based technology to analyze, structure, and facilitate access to what he saw as an increasing amount of disparate data produced by archaeologists. With Seyrig’s backing, a mission was established by the CNRS in 1955 (Moscati 2013, 8), and by 1956 Gardin had come to Beirut to work on a first database to be created on perforated cards (Plutniak 2017, 19). It was to be an inventory of bronze and copper tools emanating from the Balkans to the Indus and dating from the fourth to the second millennium BC; the new inventory was based on an inventory Deshayes had created earlier for his PhD thesis (published as Deshayes and Christophe 1964, reviewed and summarized in Bordaz 1966). Many of the analytical elements that would find their way into Seyrig’s mecanographical approach were already present in Deshayes’s work; indeed, noting the absence of data regarding Bronze Age tools in the Eastern Mediterranean region, the latter had already gathered his own data and found a way to analyze them (Leroi-Gourhan 1962).

Gardin went on to work on several similar projects, on topics ranging from pottery to Greek coins, always in collaboration with an array of colleagues and specialists. He created a methodology and theorized his approach, but his main interest, in line with his background in linguistics, was in the creation of a “code” that would allow the data to be organized and accessed (Gardin 1966, 160-1). It is as a result of Gardin’s collaboration with Deshayes that the *Cylinder Seal Project* was created, with Seyrig’s support and encouragement. In fact, Gardin attributes the idea of using cylinder seals for this new project to Seyrig (Gardin 1975, 8). Other early contributors to the project include Thomas Beram, a member of the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut*, and Edith Porada, a leading authority on ancient cylinder seals and a professor of ancient Near Eastern art history and archaeology at Columbia University.

The work that was started in Beirut resulted, under Gardin’s leadership, in the creation of the *Centre d’Analyse Documentaire pour l’Archéologie* (CADA, founded in 1957), a CNRS center dedicated to mecanographic studies. The richest evidence retracing this period is to be found in the documents relating to the CADA in the *Archéologie de l’Asie centrale* archives at the Maison des sciences de l’homme mondes in Nanterre, where all the documents relating to CADA were sent when the CADA closed in the 1980s. A study of these documents, especially those pertaining to the early years of the CADA, was published in 2013 (Moscati 2013).

### **The stages of the project seen through the Paris 1 archives**

To create a database on the Oriental cylinder seals, the project’s participants decided to limit its scope to include only those seals that had already been the subject of publications. They chose to exclude, however, seals already catalogued in well-known outlets or in reports about sites that were particularly known for their seal collections, as these seals were easy to locate. The aim of the project was thus to facilitate access to what project leaders called the “diaspora” of reports about seals, i.e., those reports published in disparate journal articles and hard to find site reports (Digard 1975, 19). This approach would provide raw data for the project. Moreover, in order to make the archive searchable and therefore accessible, Gardin created a “code,” which he established using Deshayes’s expertise on seals, to translate various aspects of the seals’ imagery and provenance. Deshayes’s role in the creation of the code is well documented in the Paris 1 archive, which provides access to not only the correspondence between the two men—which shows that Gardin submitted potential changes to be made to the code to Deshayes—but also to notes regarding the code itself. These notes were presumably written by Deshayes, but a second, yet unidentified handwriting can also be noticed. Along with other documents already digitized, the notes can today be found on the VERGILIUS portal,[1] the department’s digital repository (see Capozzoli in this spotlight).

The code for the *Oriental Cylinder Seal Project* went through various versions, several full copies of which can be found in the archives in Nanterre. By 1957, the general architecture of the code seemed to have been established (Gardin 1975, 8:



“L’architecturale général du Code trouva dès 1957 la forme qui est aujourd’hui la sienne”). Deshayes’s Paris 1 archive contains two incomplete versions of the code. Neither version is dated, but one of them is clearly anterior, as it contains hand-drawn corrections and additions (fig. 1), which appear in printed form in the later version. It is difficult to know for certain if the drawings are Deshayes’s own. It is also worth noting that in the letters to Deshayes mentioned above, Gardin still discusses changes to the code as late as 1959, suggesting he was still working on it in the early 1960s, ahead of the publication of the work.

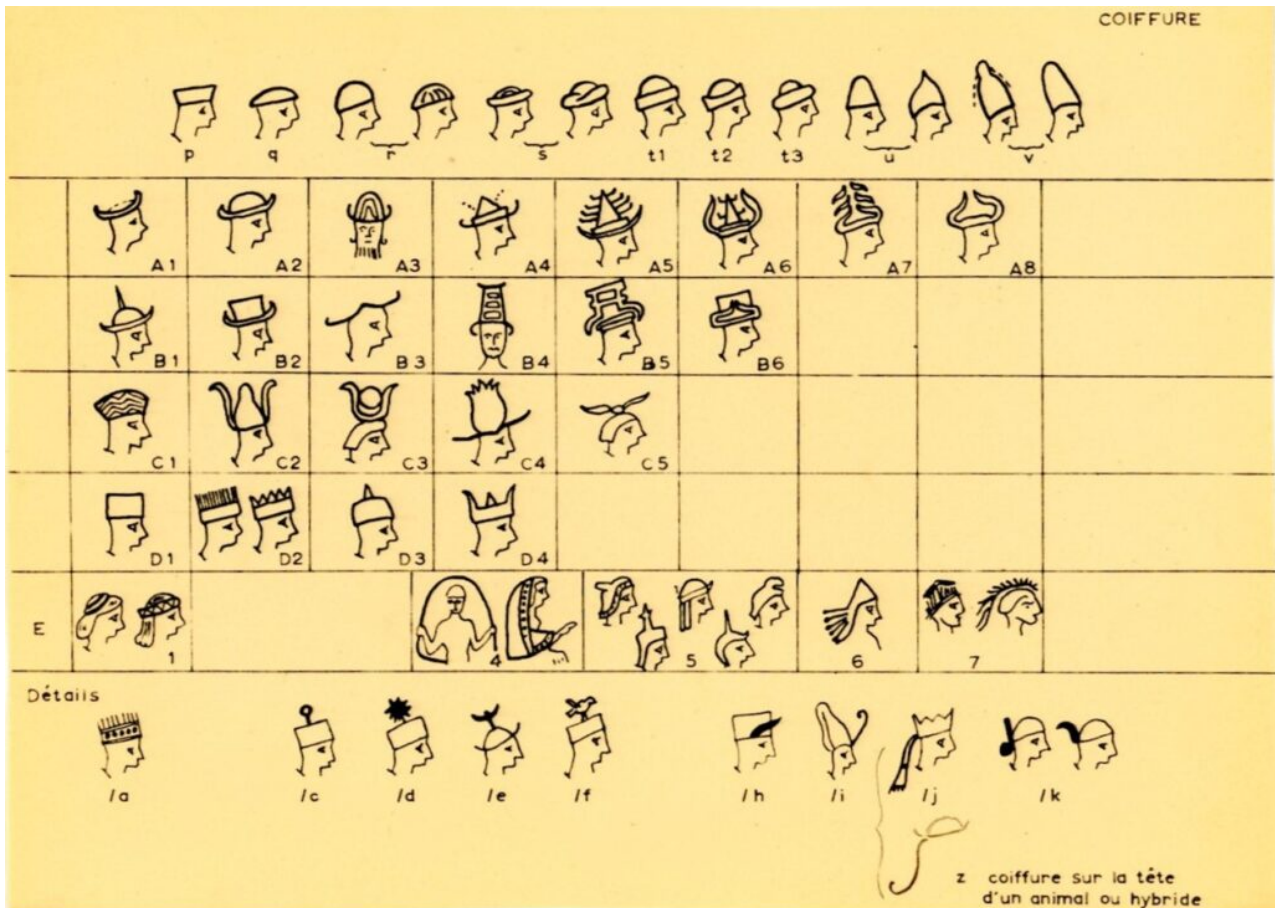


Fig. 1 –Early version of the code with penciled corrections (before 1957)  
<https://vergilius.pantheonsorbonne.fr/items/show/2399>

Both the work leading up to publication and the involvement of Françoise Digard, who would eventually edit the volumes, are also mentioned in the letters, making clear that she played a key role in the project from an early stage and was closely involved in the analysis of the cylinders. In his letter from January 1959, for example, Gardin mentions that Digard was about to visit Deshayes so they could together go over the changes that Gardin and Digard had just made to the code after Edith Porada published approximately 1,200 seals. He writes that

Françoise is very clear minded, consistent, and rigorous, and I think you will enjoy working with her. She has been attending Labat's courses on the Akkadian language for several months now, so that within three to four years she will be able to review the inscriptions on the cylinders with a good measure of critical analysis.

This quote suggests that Deshayes did not know Digard well at that time. However, the fact that she worked closely with Gardin on the code continued to be mentioned in later letters. It is most likely that she is the unidentified author of the above-mentioned notes about the code, as the handwriting does not match that of Deshayes or Gardin.

Once the code established, the next phase in the process involved identifying the seals to be included in the study and conducting bibliographical research. It is here that this archive is particularly revealing, as it includes lists of publications, many of which show that items have been crossed out or added; other lists include seals that had been photographed or that needed to be photographed. It appears clearly that Deshayes had undertaken the bulk of the bibliographic work as he sought the seals to be included in the project. As Gardin mentioned, "the ungrateful task of collecting the materials fell mainly to J. Deshayes, who for many months had to go through several hundreds of monographs and periodicals at the French Archaeological Institute in Beirut, searching for the 'Diaspora' cylinders" (Gardin 1975, 8). In addition to the lists of publications to be included in the database, the collection includes Deshayes's reading notes on various volumes. Other sets of documents in the archives account for the ways in which the code should be used; one file contains a few of the forms that Deshayes filled about individual seals to classify them according to the code, and another file contains a limited photo archive.

One archival file is intriguing: it contains a series of lists of Iranian cylinder seals written by Deshayes on official letterhead from the Iranian Ministry of Culture, dating from a time during which the Shah was in power (fig. 2). These lists include the measurements of and the materials used for a number of seals. Judging by the sequence numbers on the lists, the seals seem to correspond to a collection of 495 modern Iranian cylinder seal impressions, which Deshayes also left in the department (see Antinori in this spotlight). It is difficult to establish exactly how these lists relate to the rest of the documents in the archive and to the project as a whole. The seals listed might be seals Deshayes had access to during a trip to Iran, where he worked on the site of Tureng Tepe from 1960 until his death. He might have intended to include these seals in the final project and made the impressions so they could be photographed for the catalogue. Some but not all impressions can be identified based on photos appearing in later publications, and it appears that several seals were not published during Deshayes's lifetime. Since the focus of the "Oriental Cylinder Seal Project" was on published seals the inclusion of this specific file in the Paris 1 archives remains somewhat mysterious. As Antinori points out in this spotlight, the main issue regarding the relationship between the seal impressions and the Paris 1 archives is the total absence of any publication on the subject by Deshayes. Nor do we know why these lists were written on official letterhead stationery, given that they were clearly personal notes. Further research into the seal imprints and the documents present in the file might clarify this anomaly.



وزارت فرهنگ

اداره .....  
شماره .....  
تاریخ .....  
پیوست .....

Bout 3 (n° 155)

3a.	L: 1,5 ; d: 1,2	for 1;	two ?	pour vos deux
3b	L: 1,95 ; d: 1,45	"	"	pour vos deux
3c	L: 1,8 ; d: 1,2	"	two or 2 etc;	un seul Name
3d	L: 3,3 ; d: 1,2	"	"	un seul qui s'écrit d Name
3e	L: 2,2 ; d: 1,25	"	"	pour fin de
3f	L: 2,15 ; d: 1,45 d: 1,35	for 1-3 (for 1-3)	"	un seul à deux cells.
3g	L: 4,55 ; d: 2,1 or 1,9	for 1; but others	"	un seul; recte
3h	L: 5,35 ; d: 1,45	"	"	pour fin de
3i	L: 2,25 ; d: 0,8	"	"	pour un seul de
3j	L: 2,75 ; d: 1	"	"	<del>un seul</del> or
3k	L: 2,5 ; d: 1,35 or 1,15	for 3	"	un seul un
3l	L: 1,75 ; d: 0,9	for 1	"	"
3m	L: 2,65 ; d: 1	"	"	"
3n	L: 1,5 ; d: 1,15 or 1,05	for 1, un seul d'usage	"	un seul fin de
3o	L: 1,6 ; d: 1,35	"	"	pour fin de
3p	L: 3,7 ; d: 1	"	"	un seul
3q	L: 1,65 ; d: 1	"	"	un seul Name
3r	L: 2,9 ; d: 1,15	"	"	un seul
3s	L: 1,75 ; d: 1	"	"	un seul Name
3t	L: un 1,8 ; d: 1,2	"	"	pour fin de
3u	L: 1 ; d: 0,8	"	"	un seul fin

Fig. 2 – Jean Deshayes, list of Iranian cylinder seals written on official letterhead from the Iranian Ministry of Culture

Finally, the last and perhaps most interesting category of documents in the archival file relates to the continued work of the CADA and to the correspondence between Gardin and Deshayes. In this file, there are five letters written by Gardin and addressed to Deshayes between 1959 and 1965, all of which have been published on VERGILIUS. As mentioned above these letters mainly concern the code and later changes that Gardin submitted to Deshayes before making them. Also present in the archive are several reports of minutes of CADA meetings that took place between 1964 and 1966 and that were sent by Gardin to Deshayes to keep him abreast of changes to the project. These minutes include, for example, discussions about which publications should or should not be included in the project. In a 1965 letter, Gardin mentions that Deshayes had just become a member of the CADA committee. However, a handwritten note at the top of a CADA document detailing the state of the project in 1966 shows that the report was sent to Deshayes by Gardin, suggesting that by that time Deshayes was no longer participating directly in the project. In fact, by 1958, Digard had taken over Deshayes's responsibilities in the project (Gardin 1975, 8). However, the fact that Gardin submitted changes to the project to Deshayes after that date suggests that the latter continued to be seen very much as an expert, a friend, and someone who still had a say in the future of the project. By this point, Deshayes had left Beirut and was working in Lyon—where he taught from 1961 to 1968—and it is worth noting that although the last document in the file relates to 1966, Deshayes took the documents with him when he moved to Paris in 1968. They were still stored in the department when he died in 1979, four years after the publication of the project.

The final publication, the *Répertoire analytique des cylindres orientaux: publiés dans des sources bibliographiques éparses (sur ordinateur)* emerged in 1975, edited by Digard. A booklet promoting the publication, today kept at the CADA archives in Nanterre, gives us an indication of the final numbers of seals included in the project:

The corpus includes ca. 4,000 cylinders located “in scattered bibliographical sources,” essentially periodicals and other serial publications, scanned as much as possible from the inception year to 1960 (about 160 titles), and monographs of various kinds (excavation reports, etc., ca. 150 titles), excluding the major catalogues.

The final output was composed of three volumes. The first, *Principles and Results*, includes 198 fac-similes of computer printouts, the second the code, and the third a commentary. A series of cards containing information on each seal are also included. Owners of the published volumes could request a copy of the file, to be provided to them on magnetic tapes.

***The Cylinder Seals Project* and the archive today: communication and potential uses**



In studying the departmental archive, priority was given to understanding and re-contextualizing it. The archive had already been divided into folders by Deshayes. Because the archive had been organized by Deshayes himself and was logical, his organization was retained in the uploading of content onto the VERGILIUS digital portal. For the most part, we also used the title of each file as presumably labeled by Deshayes, even when there were uncertainties about the meaning. The next step was to digitize and transcribe the letters, as it was thought that they would give the most valuable insight into the project, Deshayes' role, and his relationship with Gardin. The second priority pertained to the CADA documents, the notes relating to the code, and the part of the code showing how it had evolved over time. Eventually, the digitization of the whole code as it existed at the time might be helpful, as we could compare it to the final version published in 1975. Deshayes's bibliography to be included in the project is also a compelling, if more specialized, aspect of his work, which might appeal to anyone wanting to explore the history of the project and Deshayes's work in more detail.

A larger question regarding the legacy of this project emerges. As previously mentioned, there has been a recent surge in interest in Gardin's work and the potential lessons of his mecanographical projects. Newer, updated attempts at similar projects are underway, and researchers are fully aware of these lessons (see for example, Ludovico 2018). One of these lessons is the obvious issue of technology and how to create a database that is going to remain usable and relevant. When Digard's publication appeared in 1975, the original perforated cards, which could be used without any additional technology by simply stacking them and identifying where the perforations matched, had been transposed to microfilm for ease of use, a move that seemed logical at the time but that today makes access much harder. The Paris 1 archives do not contain any of the original perforated cards (although at least one version of these cards can be found in Nanterre), but it does contain the lists of texts from which the cards are drawn. The additional information concerning the discussions on the code itself and how it evolved over time could also be of interest in re-establishing the history of the project and to engage in a more detailed discussion of the methodology used. Further research into the topic, through the Paris 1 archives, can therefore only be beneficial.

Finally, it is interesting to see that Gardin himself broke down the process of creating the code into four stages, which Moscati described (2013, 11). Each stage requires a decreasing amount of specialization:

- Stage 1: establish an analytical code according to which the descriptions will be made;
- Stage 2: write the descriptions according to the code;
- Stage 3: create the perforated index cards and the cards to be included in the corresponding catalogue; and
- Stage 4: possibly make duplicates of the cards to disseminate parts or all of the files.

The second stage necessitates, as Moscati notes, knowledge of the materials, but not necessarily the *tournure d'esprit* required for the first stage, i.e., the element dearest to Gardin. Clearly, Gardin approached his role—that of breaking down the images into a code—as the crucial stage in the process, and the archive reveals the degree to which the breakdown entailed cooperating with Deshayes. The archive also highlights Deshayes' role in the second, less theoretical—although perhaps more time-consuming—phase of the project. No less crucial was Digard's contribution; her work also deserves highlighting, even though there is less evidence of it in the Paris 1 archive. Finally, we would like to return to the reasons for which the code was not adopted or complemented by academics. Once central reason, of which Gardin was already aware, was that

The basic hurdle for the future use and expansion of the catalogue, the value of which is evident from a methodological and practical point of view, was the unlikely availability of scholars willing to dedicate their own time and energies to a project that would not provide them with a personally fruitful outcome (Ludovico 2018, 88).

The Paris 1 archive illustrates this latter point perfectly, as it sheds light on the time-consuming work that lies behind the construction of projects such as the *Oriental Cylinder Seal Project*. It is telling that despite Deshayes's otherwise illustrious career, his name is rarely mentioned in discussions on the legacy of that project and other contemporary projects.

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[1] <https://vergilius.pantheonsorbonne.fr/collections/show/378>

Photo: Shutterstock | Basra, Iraq | Sumerian clay cuneiform tablets and cylindrical stamps.

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# A Collection of Ancient Iranian Seal Impressions at the Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie

[europeanjournal.org/2023/11/20/a-collection-of-ancient-iranian-seal-impressions-at-the-institut-dart-et-darcheologie/](https://europeanjournal.org/2023/11/20/a-collection-of-ancient-iranian-seal-impressions-at-the-institut-dart-et-darcheologie/)



This is part of our campus spotlight on [Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, with Columbia University.](#)

A collection of ancient Iranian seal impressions (*Corpus des empreintes des sceaux de l'Iran ancien*—CESIA) has been preserved at the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. It was gathered in the 1960s by Jean Deshayes as part of the work of a French *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS) research team, the *Centre d'analyse documentaire en archéologie* (CADA), which was active in Paris, Marseille, and Beirut until the 1980s. Due to the untimely passing of Deshayes in 1979, his collection had fallen into oblivion for decades until it was recently rediscovered. Since 2017, it has been the object of renewed attention (Antinori 2018). The collection was reorganized and inventoried in a new database and is now kept in a dedicated cabinet, while related archives are being studied. As explained by Mariana Silva Porto and Mathilde Castéran in this spotlight, the archives allow to strictly relate

Deshayes to the larger *Cylinder Seal Project*, despite the fact that he never published on the subject. It is not sure, however, how this collection of (mainly) unpublished cylinder seal impressions is connected to the *Cylinder Seal Project*, as the latter focused on published material only.

Today, the collection is made of 486 modern clay impressions and 495 hand-written cards with photos and their corresponding negative films. Each impression may be associated with a card since a code appears on both—the code consisting of a combination of a number and a letter—although this coding system does present some inconsistencies and variations. In fact, the system seems to have been changed during the data-recording process. Approximately half of the items in the collection were marked with a number followed by an ascending letter (e.g., 1, 1a, 1b, 1c, etc.), resulting in 239 entries ranging from no.1 to no.15. From no.16 on, the marking on the items shows only a sequence of numbers. However, there are significant exceptions (for instance, no.60 includes letters a to f) and gaps, the most remarkable of which being a gap between no.365 and no.986—the last number Deshayes included in his inventory. This unclear organization has led to various interrogations, which have been left without definitive answers. Considering both the seal impressions and the cards, I proceeded to create a new inventory of the whole collection, using ascending numbers from 1 to 495. The new data inventory was designed to be as close as possible to the sequence set up by Deshayes.

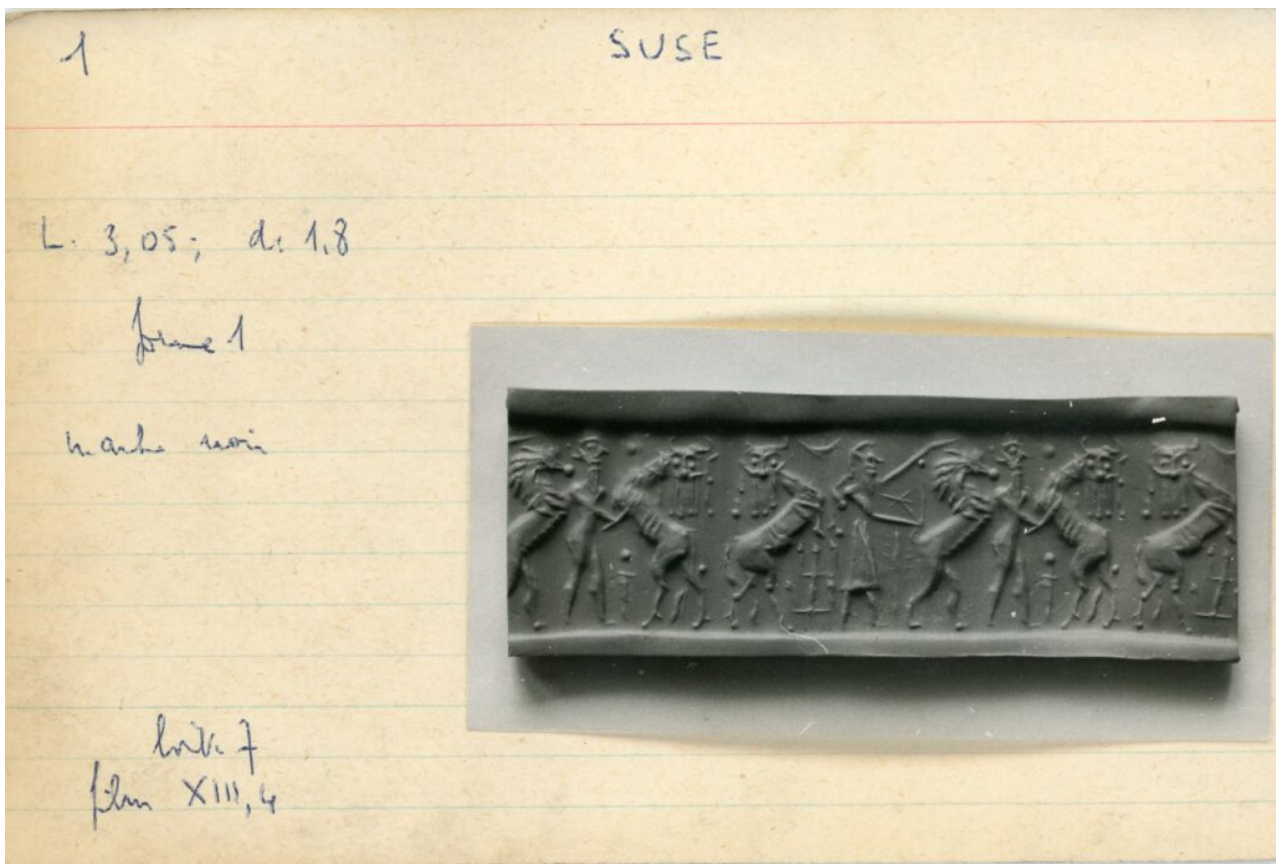


Fig. 1 – Deshayes's card no. 1.

My analysis of the seal collection started with a recovery of the data recorded on the descriptive cards and their integration into a new inventory. Each card bears significant information related to each seal from which an impression was made (fig. 1). Beside featuring the inventory number in the upper left corner, each card refers to the site of provenance (with some important exception), the dimensions (expressed in centimeters), the shape, and the material of the original seal. In the lower left corner, archival information is noted, with the number of the box in which the impression was stored and the reference of the negative film. A photo of the modern impression fills the right side of the card.

The storage of archaeological data in computer databases and their retrieval from such databases are now basic components of modern archaeological research. However, in the 1950s, such endeavor was groundbreaking. In reorganizing Deshayes's collection of seal impressions, I thus decided to develop a relational database that includes all relevant features pertaining to the pieces of the collection, from material data (size, shape, and form) to intangible data (iconography of the engraved designs). Since the original *Cylinder Seal Project* focused on iconography, I also wanted to pay special attention to the recording and analyzing of the iconographic features of these pieces. Of course, an extensive inventory could have been easily achieved using a simple and standardized spreadsheet, but I opted for a more elaborate system. FileMaker Pro software offers an efficient tool to create, without any specific programming skill, a structurally complex relational database that includes a great number of tables while keeping a user-friendly layout. This new CESIA database (fig. 2) was made available online thanks to the French Huma-Num portal.[1]



Fig. 2 – The new CESIA database on Huma-Num.

Defining and managing tables and relationships was the core concept used during the data-modelling phase; it was the most demanding task in the process of reorganizing Deshayes's collection. Entity-Relationships Diagrams (ERDs) are the easiest and most direct way to visualize a database structure. They make it easier to reflect on the nature of each table and to identify how each table relates to other tables. Since one of the main goals of this study was to describe the iconographic repertoire of our collection, a primary objective was to correctly transcribe that repertoire into the structure of the database. However, the idea of creating a single table to describe the entire iconographic repertoire was promptly dismissed. Instead, inspired by the principles of Jean-Claude Gardin's code, the seals' iconography was divided into various distinct iconographic categories. This reconfiguration led to the transformation of the database model from a single field into several individual tables. As a result of this process, twelve core iconographic entities were identified, leading to the creation of an equal number of tables and relationships between the main table of the seal impressions and each iconographic entity. In the end, 38 out of the 64 tables included in the database are dedicated to the description of the collection's iconographic repertoire.

The new database lists the seal impressions. It is stored at the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* and offers an analysis of the main iconographic entities represented in the collection:

1. Human characters (i.e., men, women, "stick figures," and undefined people): among 143 impressions, the record shows human characters appearing alone on 54 of them; 22 impressions show human in the company of hybrid characters ; 67 show humans represented with animals; and only 7 impressions show humans alongside ornamental patterns.
2. Hybrid characters (imaginary creatures such as bull-men and bird-men) are identified in 26 impressions, of which 22 feature hybrid creatures associated with humans, while only 1 impression includes animals.
3. Animal characters (including 18 different types of animals) appear on 133 impressions, 65 of which feature animals alone. Ornaments appear in 15 impressions that also represent animals; among these 15, 4 impressions associate animals with humans.
4. Ornamental and abstract patterns are divided into 22 simple geometric entities (lines, arcs, lozenges, zigzags, ellipsoidal almonds, etc.) and identified 189 times on 122 impressions, of which 107 are engraved with abstract and geometric patterns only.

The archives associated with the collection firmly establish the Iranian origin of all the seal impressions (see Silva Porto and Castéran in this spotlight). Unfortunately, on Deshayes' cards, references to the seals' provenance are quite fragmentary: only 217 impressions bear the mention of a specific site, and 13 of them bear the mention "Delfan," which, rather than designating a site, is a generic description for one of the eleven counties of the Luristan province of Iran. Overall, only seven sites are recorded in the



descriptive cards, all located in western Iran: Susa (162 records), Surkh Dum (24), Delfan (13), Persepolis (12), Tepe Giyan (3), Tepe Hissar (3), and Tepe Sialk (1). The distribution of the sites also seems to reflect the information accessible to Deshayes when he gathered his collection, confirming that the work was conducted no later than the early 1960s. His collection especially lacks items from more recent excavations such as Tepe Yahya and Tell-I Malyan.

Among many other archaeological collections at the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie*, the collection of ancient Iranian seal impressions not only offers the students of the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne direct access to a large corpus of Oriental iconography but also allows them to be trained in the creation of relational databases, following a traditional computing approach to archaeology that goes back to the mid-twentieth century and is inscribed in the direct lineage of some of the most famous representatives of French archaeology.

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[1] <https://fms.db.huma-num.fr/fmi/webd/CESIA>

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# The Digital Management of Archaeological Collections: The VERGILIUS Portal

[europeanjournal.org/2023/11/20/the-digital-management-of-archaeological-collections-the-vergilius-portal/](https://europeanjournal.org/2023/11/20/the-digital-management-of-archaeological-collections-the-vergilius-portal/)



*This is part of our campus spotlight on **Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, with Columbia University.***

Over the last few years, the various collections of the Department of Art History and Archeology at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne have been at the center of a project aiming at establishing an inventory of, studying, and disclosing the department's cultural heritage. The *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* is home to various heritage collections that include a model of ancient Rome, pottery sherds from the ancient Near East, Greek antiquities, flintstones from prehistoric sites in France, movie reels (the third largest collection in France), thousands of slides and old photographs, and the personal archives of various scholars who have become part of the history of the department.

The new media center—the *Pôle images et technologies numériques* (PITN)—has been tasked with the digital management of the department's heritage collections, among other duties. The PITN was created in 2015 under the impulse of Alain Duplouy, then Chair of the department, whose ambition was to place images and digital technologies at the heart of teaching art history and archaeology. At the center, scholars and students would find the technological resources necessary to develop projects involving the production and sharing of multimedia contents. Although engaged in archaeology and art history curricula, students at the Department of Art History and Archaeology often lack any kind

of IT capacity. Despite the availability of various courses in GIS, databases, CAD, and 3D, students still need to develop various skills to engage in the humanities' digital turn. The PITN was established primarily with that objective in mind.

From the beginning of the project, practical choices have been made to establish a user-friendly architecture to digitally manage our cultural heritage collections. Two core tools have been selected, which, for technical reasons operate separately: Omeka Classic, an open-source content management system (CMS), and FileMaker, a proprietary database management system (DBMS). The idea was to encourage students to focus on the collections and their content, rather than on technology. Very often, indeed, the choice of a complex digital solution not only makes humanities scholars dependent on computer specialists, but it also prevents these scholars from understanding the logic and rules behind the production of knowledge in a digital environment. Moreover, the critical condition of the departmental collections did not primarily require an IT staff, but only a curator with an interest in information technologies.

### **Managing two collections: old photographs and pottery sherds from the ancient Near East**

The largest collection kept at the Department of Art History and Archaeology consists of a great number of slides and photographs—the result of the teaching that has taken place since the creation of the first chair of archaeology at the Sorbonne in 1876, more than a century ago. The collection includes two main categories of images: pictures taken from books and faculty's personal photographs. Although scanning slides or reproductions of photos from books that remain available at the university's libraries would have been useless, we nonetheless engaged in a global inventory of these images to identify the main topics represented in a century of teaching archaeology at the university and to understand the teaching methods in use within the department before the advent of digital technologies. The faculty's personal slides are of greater interest, as they often constitute original images of archaeological sites, which may have undergone changes since first excavated, due to progress in excavations techniques, the development of mass tourism, or the destruction of sites and monuments (especially by ISIS in the Near East). The department holds, for example, a large series of slides that once belonged to Ernest Will (1913-1997), who joined the University of Paris as a Greek language and literature professor (1963–1970) and became a professor of art history and archaeology at the *Institut d'art et d'archéologie* upon its creation in 1970 and until 1982. Will had traveled extensively between the 1930s and the 1970s across the Mediterranean area, leaving the university with an impressive number of photographs.<sup>[1]</sup> Through his pictures, it is possible to visit Sicily, travel along the Nile River in the 1950s, or discover elements of Syrian cultural heritage. Following a precise protocol (fig. 1), we completed the inventory, digitization, and referencing of large parts of his collection before uploading the images on our online digital portal, VERGILIUS, based on OMEKA Classic.<sup>[2]</sup> Special attention

was given to providing a wide array of metadata. Notably, we used two open-source software—XnView and Geosetter—to fill in the textual and geographic metadata embedded in each image file.

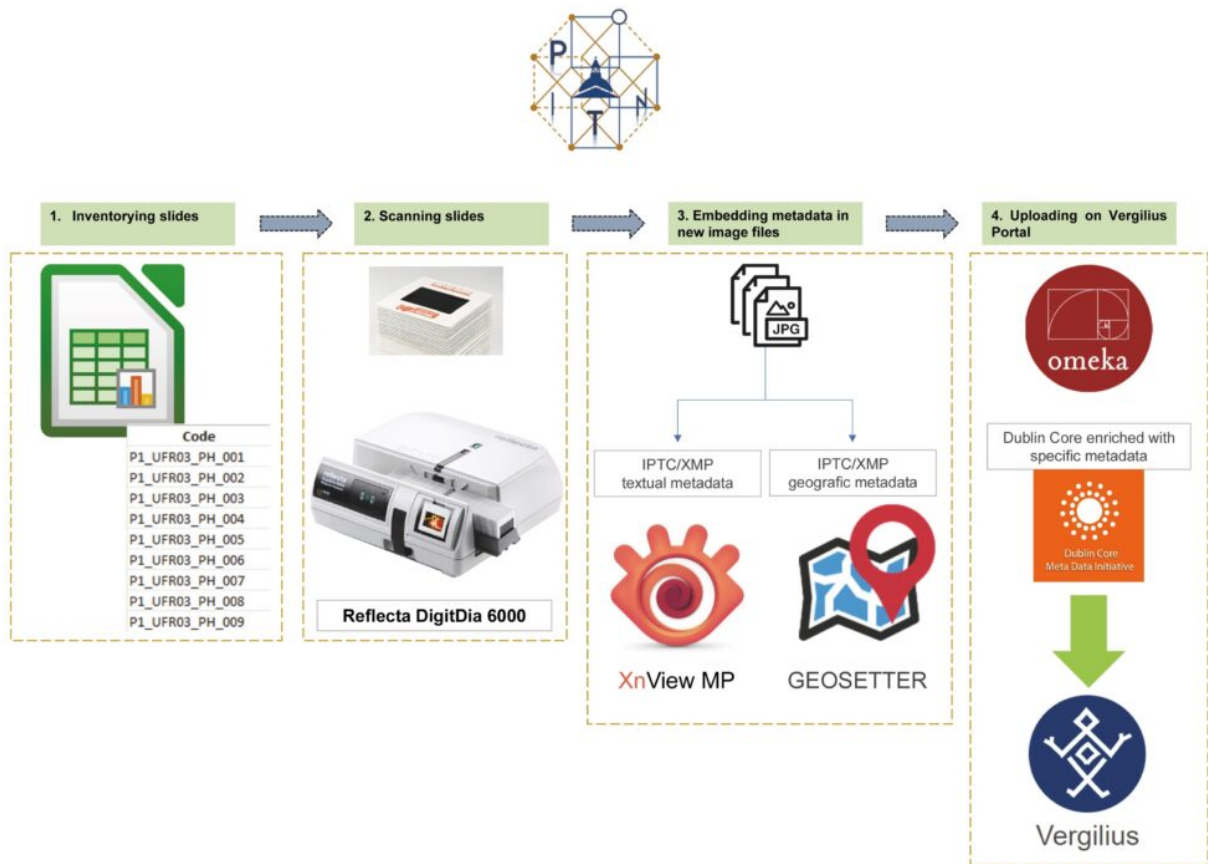


Fig. 1 – General overview of the workflow.

The department has also kept a large collection of nearly 2,000 pottery sherds from the Near East since the foundation of the University Paris 1 in 1970. The collection includes pottery collected on the field by university professors during their travels and visits to archaeological sites, a common practice in the past. Another series of sherds comes from Tureng Tepe, a Neolithic and Chalcolithic archaeological site in northeastern Iran that Jean Deshayes excavated. Many other pieces come from Mesopotamia (Tepe Hissar, Tepe Hissar, Tepe Sialk, Asmar, Suze, and Larsa) but also from Arabia (Hili and Qalaat Al Bahrain). From a chronological point of view, most of the sherds date back to the Neolithic period and the Bronze Age. The collection was designed to serve as a reference and teaching tool for Paris 1 students, as it illustrates both Near East pottery styles and techniques of pottery production.

The collection was first systematically inventoried through a complete photographic coverage. Then, a technological analysis of each sherd was produced through a standardized descriptive form that was filled by students. Finally, a relational database was elaborated to produce a digital atlas of pottery production technologies. We chose



FileMaker Pro, which allowed us to create a user-friendly and powerful tool in a few weeks and train students in the principles of relational databases. Thanks to *Huma-num*, the French national consortium for the digital humanities, the database is already accessible online to project managers and trainee students and partially accessible to the general public.[3] Once completed, it will be totally accessible to the general public and become a teaching and research tool for anybody interested in the issue of ceramic technology in the ancient Near East. To enrich the educational offer on the creation of relational databases in archaeology, I have also launched a YouTube channel related to my teachings, which is currently open to anyone interested in these topics.[4]

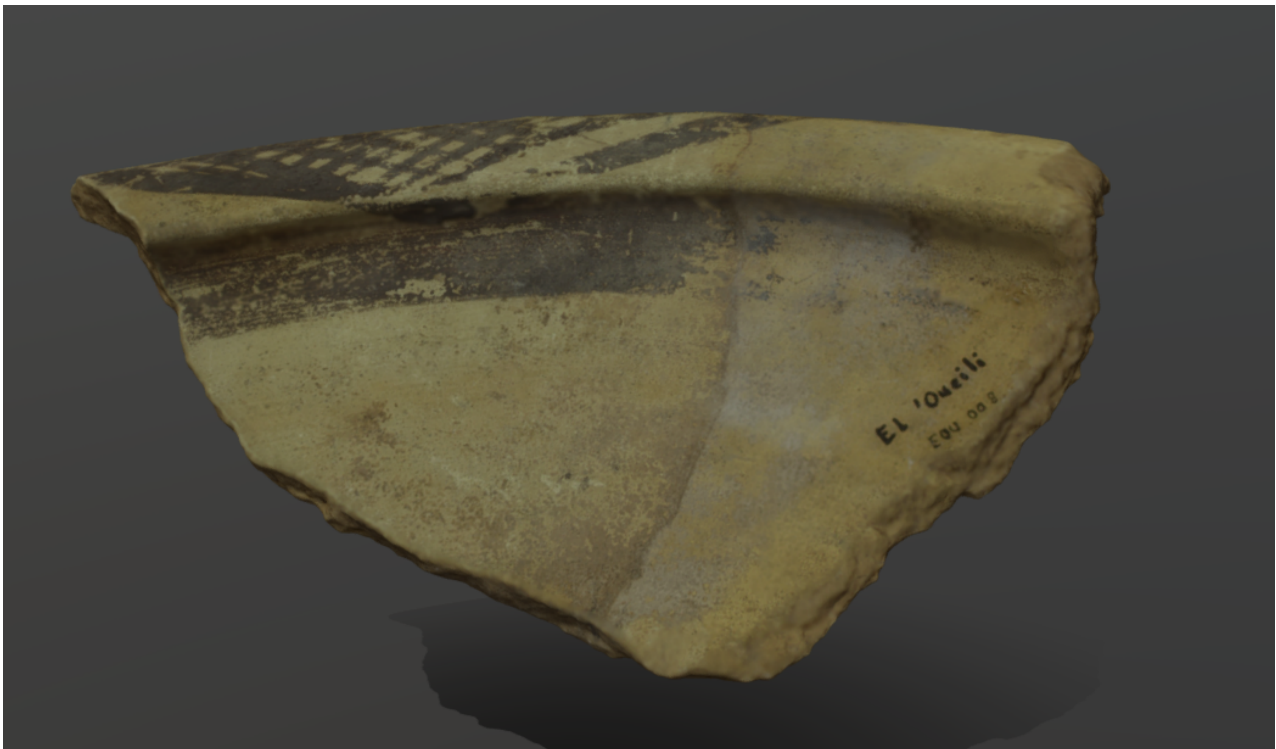


Fig. 2 – 3D photogrammetric model of a sherd from El Oueilli (Iraq)

The department's media center also produces 3D photogrammetric models of the sherds most interesting from a technological perspective (fig. 2). As a 3D process, photogrammetry is extremely affordable since the most expensive piece of equipment required is a simple camera. To elaborate our data, we use Agisoft Metashape for the first steps of the process (point and dense cloud), sometimes combining that software with the open-source software MeshLab for further modeling. Many of the 3D models have been made available on Sketchfab, a 3D modeling platform website repository.[5] The purpose of this operation is to develop a project combining the training of students with a wide unveiling of our collections.

### The VERGILIUS portal

In order to share our department's cultural heritage and reach a wide audience, we have progressively diffused part of these collections on a web portal called VERGILIUS.[6] The latter was first launched on Omeka Classic, a powerful content management system originally developed by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media. Omeka is a free, open-source CMS for online digital collections that has become standard in the cultural industry, as it has been used by many small museums and historical societies, but also in higher education institutions to teach curation. It is a user-friendly tool—no technical skills or special server are required—that is especially designed for the management of digital collections. It was already in use at the university to run the digital portal of the *Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne*. [7] Omeka uses the Dublin Core metadata standard, as many large libraries in France (such as the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*) or scientific search engines do (such as Isidore, a search assistant in the humanities and social sciences). [8]

After a few years of running on Omeka Classic, VERGILIUS has been moved to Omeka S. The transition to Omeka S has notably elevated the project's potential for integration and interconnectivity within the broader digital landscape. Omeka S employs ontologies, providing a structured and standardized vocabulary that enables our collections to be intricately linked, not only within our own database but also across the semantic web. This shift towards semantic web technologies means that our collections will be able to interact and connect with other collections, documents, archives, and resources across different platforms and institutions.

Practically, Omeka also manages users according to various levels of access: super-users can rightfully administer and manage the portal; administrators may access and modify all documents, collections, and tags; and contributors (i.e., students) have the right to add and edit the documents they have created. The collections created in VERGILIUS are strictly hierarchized, with sub-categories including one or more items—an item representing the primary entity in the Omeka architecture. Except for the archives of former scholars, the collections are ordered geographically. Each item is described according to a defined process, with specific metadata added to the standard Dublin Core. While involving students in the acquisition of digital skills that may eventually enhance their employability on the job market, the VERGILIUS project allows the Department of Art History and Archaeology to gradually promote its rich collections by making them widely available online.

In conclusion, shifting the focus onto the content of the collections rather than the technology itself—thus facilitating a deeper immersion in the study of cultural heritage—the VERGILIUS portal stands as an example of digital management for archaeological heritage, offering promising prospects for the future of research, education, and cultural preservation. It sheds light on the immense potential of digital technologies to transform our approach to cultural heritage, facilitating access, enriching education, and opening new avenues for the study and valorization of our shared history. Moving forward, inserting these collections into the semantic web through the ontologies proposed by Omeka S not only broadens access to these archaeological treasures but also raises new

questions about the ontological status of cultural heritage itself, potentially ushering a paradigmatic change. This shift will mark the beginning of a new chapter in the discourse around cultural heritage and its management, challenging traditional notions of ownership, locality, and the singularity of heritage items. But that is another story.

**Vincenzo Capozzoli** was the head of the media center (PITN) between 2015 and 2020. He is now Lecturer in digital archaeology at the University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne. He was educated at the universities of Potenza, Matera, Tübingen, Heidelberg, and San Marino and was a scholar at the Berlin cluster of excellence Topoi.

[1] In this context, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to François Villeneuve, a former professor of Roman archaeology of the Near East, for making this valuable collection available to me and for spending many hours with me to identify several images without legends.

[2] <https://vergilius.pantheonsorbonne.fr/search?query=ernest+will>

[3] <https://fm01.db.huma-num.fr/fmi/webd/TEchSSON>

[4] <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsXXdlwJGXienEZXyHloght2pwcTyhmq5&si=l87ZvKxnshfGxYs0>

[5] <https://sketchfab.com/Sorbonne-university-Paris1>

[6] <https://vergilius.pantheonsorbonne.fr>

[7] <https://nubis.univ-paris1.fr>

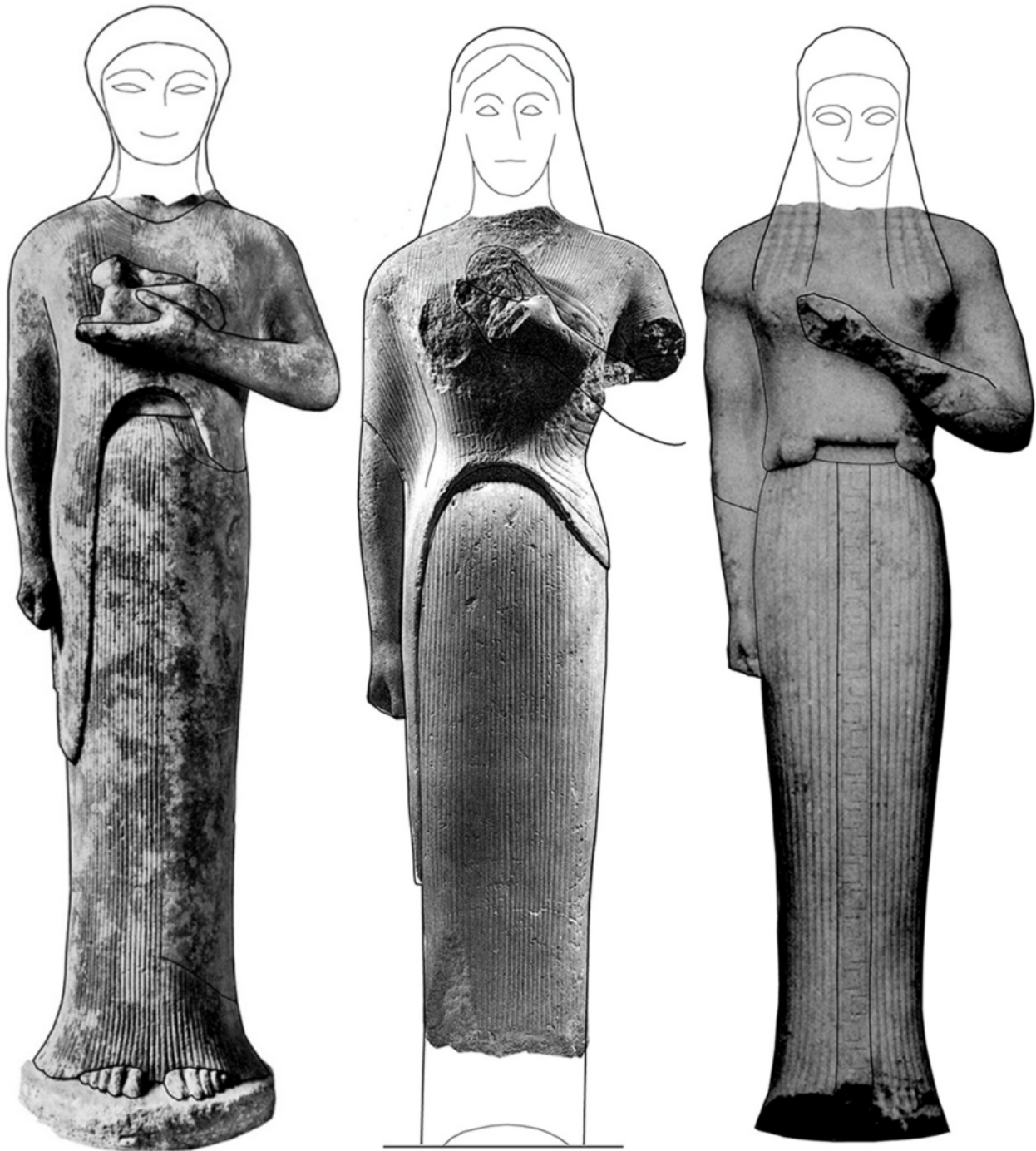
[8] <https://isidore.science>

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# Interpretive Archaeology: Historiography of the Ancient World

[europenowjournal.org/2023/11/20/interpretive-archaeology-historiography-of-the-ancient-world/](http://europenowjournal.org/2023/11/20/interpretive-archaeology-historiography-of-the-ancient-world/)



*This is part of our campus spotlight on Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, with Columbia University.*

This seminar was offered to University of Columbia students while I was the Alliance visiting professor there during the winter-spring semester of 2022. The objective of the seminar was to bring a historiographical dimension to the training of students enrolled in



archaeology and art history of the ancient world or Classics, by providing them with the keys to various readings of ancient Greek societies and their material culture and the way these have been constantly renewed since the nineteenth century. Through class discussions of ancient sources and modern texts, the seminar developed ways of identifying the interpretive models that have shaped classical scholarship up to now. The seminar offered the opportunity to discuss these models, be they complementary or conflicting, in order to move towards an ever more explicit reasoning on the interpretations of ancient sources and archaeological evidence.

## Course description

As post-processual archaeologist Ian Hodder once argued, interpretations of past material cultures and societies rest partially on social and cultural contexts in the present. They depend on the cultural background of scholars, on their education and responses to current issues, but also on their academic influences. In this sense, archaeology might be considered as a social practice that is concerned with meanings and making sense of things. Beyond this approach to archaeology, which stems from post-processual thinking—and risks leading to absolute relativism—this seminar mostly emphasizes the value of historiography, that is of how scholars have studied a particular subject using specific sources, techniques, and theoretical approaches. As background models applied to the interpretation of material culture are not always explicitly referred to in the writings of archaeologists—nor even sometimes consciously integrated and applied—historiography has become a specific field of research, worthy of consideration when reading other scholars' works and evaluating them critically in relation to one's own beliefs—which also have to be made explicit and fully scrutinized.

Interpretive models applied by classical archaeologists to material culture have fluctuated greatly since the late nineteenth century. Models often reflect contemporary debates in classical historiography, implying more general ideas about social structure, economy, politics, etc., which sometimes also correspond to national trends. A very clear illustration of this implication is the debate on the nature of the Greek *polis*. According to British historian Oswyn Murray (1990), “To the Germans the *polis* can only be described in a handbook of constitutional law; the French *polis* is a form of Holy Communion; the English *polis* is a historical accident, while the American *polis* combines the practices of a Mafia convention with the principles of justice and individual freedom.” Taking Murray's description as a *fil rouge*, the seminar explores how past and current models have shaped discourse on the Greek city and its material culture. Two main themes are addressed during the semester through dedicated lectures, reading lists, class presentations, and group discussions:

- The cult of the dead: heroes, ancestors, and the ordinary dead
- Style and society: identity and community

These themes are further described as follows:

**(a) The cult of the dead: heroes, ancestors, and the ordinary dead:** Since the classical study of R. Hertz (1905-1906), we know that in every society there are interactions between the dead and the living. In ancient Greece, these interactions occurred through specific rituals. Death generates a disruption of the social and religious order, entailing the performance of various rituals to “normalize” the situation. Scholars have gradually established distinctions between the ordinary dead, family ancestors, and heroes. Whereas heroes are increasingly considered as gods—at least from a ritual perspective—“ancestors” are usually defined as “recently heroized deceased.” The category, which will be closely scrutinized throughout the seminar, appears as an interpretive “middle ground” between the ordinary dead and the heroes, mostly driven by kinship, lineage, and clan theories. Through the dedicated reading of milestone studies, we will investigate various aspects of the Greek cult of the dead and its links to the making of Greek communities.

**(b) Style and society: identity and community:** Style is widely recognized as a powerful interpretive tool in studying material culture in relation to society, as it conveys, through forms and patterns, consciously or not, a message about collective identity. Here, anthropological scholarship meets Classical archaeology. Since the late nineteenth century, the classification of pottery and sculpture has emphasized the political segmentation of the Greek world into *poleis*, identifying Athenian or Corinthian vase painting, Samian or Parian sculpture, etc. Through the reading of classical texts, we will investigate the historical value of styles in pre-Classical Greece, as a tool to identify political and social aspects of Greek communities.

## Course organization

The course is open to graduate students (as well as advanced undergraduate students) from the Art and Archaeology department and from the Classics department. It is also proposed as a graduate-level course to students from member schools of the Inter-University Doctoral Consortium (IUDC).

Beyond compulsory attendance, the seminar rests on active participation by students. Students are supposed to engage in class presentations of shared assignments. The final grade is based on class presentation (50%), participation in class discussions (20%), and a final research paper (30%) submitted during week FIFTEEN. Individual class presentations are based on teamwork, but the final research paper is strictly personal.

## Course material

Most texts required for the preparation of this class have been made available as pdf files on courseworks. Students are also asked to consult books at Columbia University's libraries.

### **Theme I: The cult of the dead: heroes, ancestors, and the ordinary dead (Weeks 6-8)**

1. N. Coldstream, "Hero-cults in the age of Homer," *JHS*96 (1976), 8–17.
2. Malkin, *Religion and colonization in ancient Greece*, Leiden, 1987, 189–266 ("The cult of the founder").
3. M. Antonaccio, "Contesting the past: Hero cult, tomb cult, and epic in early Greece," *AJA* 98 (1994), 389–410.
4. de Polignac, *Cults, territory and the origins of the Greek city-state*, Chicago, 1995, 128–149 ("The hero and the political: Elaboration of the city").
5. Mazarakis-Ainian, "Reflections on hero cults in Early Iron Age Greece," in R. Hägg (ed.), *Ancient Greek hero cult*, Stockholm, 1999, 9–36.
6. Whitley, "Too many ancestors," *Antiquity* 76 (2002), 119–126.
7. Ekroth, *The sacrificial rituals of Greek hero-cults in the Archaic to the early Hellenistic periods*, Liege, 2002, 303–341 ("The ritual pattern").

### **Theme II: Style and society: identity and community (Weeks 12-14)**

1. R. Sackett, "The meaning of style in archaeology: A general model," *American Antiquity* 42/3 (1977), 369–380.
2. Wiessner, "Style and social information in Kalahari San projectile points," *American Antiquity* 48/2 (1983), 253–276.
3. W. Conkey, "Experimenting with style in archaeology: Some historical and theoretical issues," in M.W. Conkey and C. Hastorf (eds), *The uses of style in archaeology*, Cambridge, 1990, 5–17.
4. N. Coldstream, "The meaning of the regional styles in the eighth century B.C.," in R. Hägg (ed.), *The Greek renaissance of the eighth century B.C.*, Athens, 1983, 17–25.
5. M. Snodgrass, "Centres of pottery production in Archaic Greece," in M.-C. Villanueva Puig *et al.* (eds), *Céramique et peinture grecques. Modes d'emploi*, Paris, 1999, 25–33.
6. Rolley, "L'espace ou le temps. Points de vue sur la sculpture grecque archaïque," *Formes* 2 (1978), 3–12.
7. Croissant, "Style et identité dans l'art grec archaïque," *Pallas* 73 (2007), 27–37.

### **Course schedule**

## Week ONE

Introduction to the seminar

No reading

## Week TWO

Historiography of the Greek city I: A glimpse into national trends

- Murray, "Cities of Reason," in O. Murray and S. Price (eds), *The Greek City from Homer to Alexander*, Oxford, 1990, 1-25.
- Optional: V. Azoulay and P. Ismard, "Les lieux du politique dans l'Athènes classique. Entre structures institutionnelles, idéologies civique et pratiques sociales," in P. Schmitt-Pantel and F. de Polignac (eds), *Athènes et le politique. Dans le sillage de Claude Mossé*, Paris, 2007, 271–309.

## Week THREE

Historiography of the Greek city II: The making of the Greek city: reason and competition

- -P. Vernant, *The origins of Greek thought*, Ithaca, 1982, 9–11 ("Introduction"), 49-68 ("The spiritual universe of the polis") & 130–132 ("Conclusion"). French original, *Les origines de la pensée grecque*, 1962.
- Murray, "History and reason in the ancient city," *PBSR* 59 (1991), 1–13.
- Nietzsche, "Homer's contest" (German original, *Homers Wettkampf*, 1872).

## Week FOUR

Historiography of the Greek city III: The making of the Greek city: performance and behaviors

- Weber, "The distribution of power within the political community: Class, status, party," in *Economy and Society* (ed. by G. Roth and C. Wittich), Berkeley, 1978, 926–939. German original, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 1921, 531–540.
- Duploux, "Citizenship as performance," in A. Duploux and R. Brock (eds), *Defining citizenship in archaic Greece*, Oxford, 2018, 249–274.

## Week FIVE

The cult of the dead—Introductory lecture: key sources and themes

No reading

**Week SIX**

The cult of the dead—Student presentation and class discussion (Part I)

**Week SEVEN**

The cult of the dead—Student presentation and class discussion (Part II)

**Week EIGHT**

The cult of the dead — Student presentation and class discussion (Part III)

**Week NINE**

The cult of the dead—Final lecture: A case study: The necropolis of Vari

No reading

**Week TEN**

Style and society—Introductory lecture: key sources and themes

No reading

**Week ELEVEN**

Style and society—Student presentation and class discussion (Part I)

**Week TWELVE**

Style and society—Student presentation and class discussion (Part II)

**Week THIRTEEN**



Style and society—Student presentation and class discussion (Part III)

## **Week FOURTEEN**

Style and society—Final lecture: Two case studies: Samos and Miletus

No reading

*Alain Duploux is reader in Greek archaeology at the University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne. He was Alliance Visiting Professor in Greek archaeology at Columbia University during the winter-spring semester 2022. He has led archaeological fieldwork programs in Greece (Itanos) and Italy (Laos and Pietragalla) and has published extensively on elites and citizenship in archaic Greece, as well as on university heritage.*

Image: A comparison between Samian, Naxian, and Parian styles for korai, sixth-century female representations. Drawing by Francis Croissant.

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