

Cultural Property Advisory Committee
U.S. Department of State
301 4th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20547

April 18, 2016

Dear Members of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee,

I strongly urge you to recommend renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the governments of the United States of America and the Hellenic Republic signed July 17, 2011 regarding the imposition of import restrictions on categories of archaeological materials. Support by the United States for the current MOU has been beneficial in several ways both for Greece and for the U.S. By recommending renewal of the MOU, you will ensure that the many effective steps that have been taken in recent years will continue to be built upon in the future.

My comments derive from my experience as a field archaeologist working on Greek, American, and Canadian projects in several different parts of Greece, as well as from my very recent experience working with a large team of Greek and Canadian archaeologists to curate *The Greeks: Agamemnon to Alexander the Great*, an international museum exhibition of Greek antiquities currently touring North America. In my capacity as Curator of Anthropology at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, I also have had the privilege of working with representatives of the Department of Homeland Security Office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in identifying objects that may have been looted and illegally transported into the United States through O'Hare International Airport.

I focus my comments here specifically upon those aspects of my personal experience that relate to Determination IV, and to Article II of the MOU, specifically those portions that relate to increasing international collaborative opportunities between our countries.

Since I was an undergraduate student, I have worked on several archaeological projects throughout the Peloponnese, in central Greece, and on the island of Euboea that were supported by the American School of Classical Studies and the Canadian Institute in Greece. Since 2010, my colleague Dr. Michael L. Galaty (Mississippi State University), and I have been working directly with a Greek archaeological team from the Ephorate of Paleoanthropology and Speleology led by Dr. Anastasia Papathanasiou under the direction of Dr. Giorgos Papathanassopoulos to explore the region around Diros Bay in the Mani Peninsula of the southern Peloponnese. The central focus of our work here is the important Neolithic site of Alepotrypa Cave, a site critical for our understanding of early agricultural populations in Europe.

Pursuant to Article II/4 of the 2011 MOU, a significant amount of our effort on The Diros Project has been dedicated to working with our Greek colleagues to create a comprehensive inventory of the materials that have been excavated from Alepotrypa Cave. Dr.

Papathanassopoulos initiated excavations at the cave in the early 1970s, but the results of this research have not been widely disseminated. Over the last six years, we have worked together to analyze and publish the tens of thousands of artifacts and human remains from the site. This research is changing our understanding of how early farmers in Europe lived their lives.

We also have worked to place Alepotrypa Cave into a broader regional framework by conducting a surface survey of Diros Bay. This is a concrete result of the impact of Article II/6 of the 2011 MOU, which encourages archaeological teams to conduct additional survey projects. Through our work we have documented archaeological sites that date from the Neolithic through the Ottoman periods in the region. These sites enhance and promote the national sites inventory and our knowledge of their location will help local communities and the Greek government to prevent looting in the years to come.

Our collaboration has led directly to increased interaction between researchers and students from the U.S. and Greece. During the course of our project, over 20 American and Canadian students were able to work side-by-side with our Greek colleagues. Some of these students, such as my doctoral advisee, Rebecca Seifried (University of Illinois at Chicago), went on to write their Ph.D. theses on Greek archaeology. I also served on the Masters committee for Ms. Katerina Psoma, who was a student at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and who is now my doctoral student at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Katerina was one of several Greek students who came to our project to receive hands-on training in the field from a grant we received from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. Another Greek student I met through our collaboration, Katerina Psimogiannou, also came to the U.S. for her doctoral studies under a grant from the Fulbright Foundation. These kinds of personal exchanges will have a long-standing impact on the nature of the relationships between Greek and American archaeologists.

In addition to my field-based experiences in Greece, I have had the privilege of co-organizing the exhibition *The Greeks: Agamemnon to Alexander the Great*. Drawing from the collections of 21 Greek museums, this extraordinary exhibition brought nearly 600 objects to four venues in North America, including the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and the National Geographic Museum in Washington D.C. This exhibition, which cannot be seen in Greece, takes visitors on a journey through 5,000 years of Greek history and culture. Many of the objects have never been displayed outside of Greece before, offering North American visitors a unique opportunity to come face-to-face with the ancient Greek world.

This exhibition was a direct result of Article 7 of the MOU. Thanks to the perseverance of Dr. Maria Vlazaki (General Secretary, Hellenic Ministry of Culture), who along with the support of a Greek scientific team shepherded the exhibition through the Greek administrative bureaucracy, we were able to secure the exhibition of these objects in North America for two years. During their two-year tour, nearly half a million people in North America have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view these extraordinary artifacts from the Greek past. I cannot emphasize enough what an astonishing achievement this exhibition has been; it demonstrates the true power of successful collaboration between Greece, the U.S., and Canada.

In closing, I urge you to recommend renewal of the MOU between Greece and the United States. The existing MOU has gone a long way towards protecting Greek cultural heritage, but more can

be done. While archaeological sites in Greece are more frequently being identified, recorded, and excavated during the course of development projects, many sites remain unpublished and the artifacts recovered from them sit unanalyzed in storerooms. Therefore, in addition to taking additional steps toward increasing collaboration between Greek and American scholars to identify and record archaeological sites through surveys, I also urge you to encourage the Greek archaeological service to build in funding for the analysis and publication of sites when they negotiate with corporations, individuals, or municipalities. Securing funding for analysis and publication at the initial stages of work will ensure that sites are analyzed and published, making them accessible to the rest of the world community.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the renewal of this important MOU. A recommendation in favor of its renewal will ensure the continued protection of Greek cultural heritage and the collaboration between U.S. and Greek scholars to conduct research together and develop exhibitions like *The Greeks* that will permit the citizens of the world to engage directly with the ancient history of western civilization.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'W.A. Parkinson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

William A. Parkinson, Ph.D.
Associate Curator of Anthropology
Field Museum of Natural History