

ACS Mellon Foundation Faculty Renewal Grant: Final Report

**Nicolle Hirschfeld**

[nhirschf@trinity.edu](mailto:nhirschf@trinity.edu)

210.999.7125

Trinity University

Potmarks of Hala Sultan Tekke

May 2008 – May 2009

\$2250

1. This proposal requested funds to support preparation of a mixed-media publication of artifacts (potmarks) recovered during the excavations of Hala Sultan Tekke, a Cypriot port city that flourished in the latter half of the second millennium BCE. The proposed publication would consist of two parts: a printed monograph and a digitized searchable database.
2. Two factors necessitated a revision of the original goals. First, it became clear that creating the digital images and developing a web application for the database would be much more time consuming than originally planned. Second, the publisher of the series of which the printed section this project was to be a part died suddenly and unexpectedly on October 4, 2008. All pending publication plans, including this project, are currently (temporarily?) suspended. For these two reasons, I revised the original two-part goal and decided to focus only on publication of the web-based database.
3. A searchable database is now posted and available on the web:  
[http://www.trinity.edu/departments/classical\\_studies/NHHSTintro.htm](http://www.trinity.edu/departments/classical_studies/NHHSTintro.htm)  
This URL has also been included among the materials submitted for my tenure review.
4. One means of evaluation of this project is currently in progress; the URL has been submitted as part of my tenure portfolio to members of the external tenure review committee. After their comments have been received, I shall ask the chairman of my department to extract (with the permission of the reviewers, and taking whatever measures deemed necessary to preserve anonymity) their comments on specifically this project. I have also posted a request for feedback on the URL itself. There are no comments yet, but the publication was only recently posted (May 2009) and many of the scholars for whom this will be of specific interest are currently conducting fieldwork. I shall also be posting a call for comments in the next issue of the *CSA Newsletter: Computer Technologies for Archaeologists & Architectural Historians* (<http://csanet.org/newsletter/#masterindex>). I shall create an internal means of making all feedback accessible to any visitor to my website.
5. I would do three things differently. First, I would allot more time to digitizing the images. Second, I would allot more time to and frontload the investigation into

database format and web publication issues. I relied on the advice and time volunteered by one expert who in the end was not able to fulfill his good intentions (for reasons totally unrelated to this project). I should have arranged for several alternative sources for IT advice from the beginning. Third, it would have been best to have been in close communication with Trinity's ITS department about server availability and capabilities (especially with regard to firewall issues). As it stands now, I am forced to resort to and personally paying for space on a commercial server.

6. I have been discussing the progress and challenges of my digital publication especially with the three other archaeologists on campus: Jennifer Mathews (Sociology & Anthropology), Mark Garrison (Art History), and Chad Spigel (Religion). All are interested in the potential and difficulties and my experiences with publishing primary archaeological material digitally. I have also had long discussions with the colleagues in my writing group (Harry Wallace, Psychology; Kelly Lyons, Biology; Rubén Dupertuis, Religion; Andrew Kania, Philosophy). Digital publication of data is of direct professional interest for the first two, and all four are interested in the role of digital publications in the tenure process. This last question will surely be discussed by the members of the university committee and administration who will be evaluating my tenure dossier in the coming months.

7. The impact is yet to come. Most importantly, as discussed in the question above, my tenure application will provoke discussion of how to evaluate (for purposes of promotion and tenure) publication in non-traditional formats and forums. Second, the ITS department is being asked to reconsider server availability and guidelines.

8. No students were involved.

9. See #4.

10. The website is a preliminary publication. I plan also to complete a manuscript to be submitted for printed publication in the Hala Sultan Tekke series if the Åström publishing house revives. If not, I shall consider other venues, including possibly an entirely web-based publication.

11. I need to move the database from the commercial server to one supported by Trinity University or another academic institution. I shall publicize the existence of the database and call for technical advice in the *CSA Newsletter* (see #4). I shall finish the analytical discussion of the material in August. If the originally intended publishing house has revived, I will submit it there. If not, I will explore other options including peer-reviewed electronic publication venues.

12. \$2250 was requested and approved for "for hiring an assistant [Kristina Schlegel] to help determine which database format would be most appropriate to publication for an international audience, to convert the existing textual database (FileMaker Pro) accordingly, and to incorporate the hundreds of images. The final

text needs to be submitted in camera-ready format, and the same assistant would also help deal with these logistics.”

The budget turned out to be unrealistic in part because I had seriously underestimated the total number of images and the time it would take to produce, check, and correct them. In the end, Kristina Schlegel produced 884 images for incorporation into the database (some of which will also be used, eventually, in the printed publication). The images vary in complexity; a fair estimate of average time per image (including review and revisions) is 20 minutes. Ms. Schlegel received \$1800 in payment for creating the digital images, i.e. she was paid just over \$6/hour.

I also had misunderstood the technical expertise it would take to decide upon a web-format for the database. After many deliberations with Kristina and with other academics who have created web-based databases for presenting their data, I decided to hire a FileMaker Pro professional consultant, Neal Frank of Alamarck Technologies, to assist me. He was extremely generous in his billing and I was able to pay for most of his services with the remaining \$450 of the grant. I am paying for the cost of renting space on a commercial server out of pocket until I can (hopefully) convince the university to support this aspect of my publication, or find another venue.

13. *Potmarks of Hala Sultan Tekke* presents the potmarks (symbols incised or painted on handles, shoulders, and bases of vases) found during archaeological excavations of one of the major settlements of Late Bronze Age Cyprus (2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE) in the form of a web-based relational database:

[http://www.trinity.edu/departments/classical\\_studies/NHHSTintro.htm](http://www.trinity.edu/departments/classical_studies/NHHSTintro.htm)

Hala Sultan Tekke, an important entrepot at the nexus of trade routes, yielded a wide-ranging sample of the kinds of goods in circulation in the Late Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean, and the potmarks found here offer a microcosm of the marking systems used in both international and local exchange. Marking systems can be used to reconstruct channels and mechanisms of production, and distribution and exchange processes. They are also an important source of information for studies of literacy and the decipherment of writing systems on Bronze Age Cyprus. Thus, this database will be of interest to those who study ancient Cyprus, ancient economic systems, or linguistics. Publication of archaeological data in this format brings the benefits of digital technology to the study of ancient artifacts, allowing access to high-quality images and individual selection and manipulation of data.

Submitted to [mwhite@colleges.org](mailto:mwhite@colleges.org) (Mellon Faculty Renewal Initiative/ Associated Colleges of the South) on June 30, 2009 by Nicolle Hirschfeld.