

An Introduction to the BYU Student Society for Ancient Studies

The need for an organization like the BYU Student Society for Ancient Studies has plagued the university for many years. Although at various times over the past few decades ambitious students have attempted to facilitate student involvement in the field of ancient studies at BYU by developing similar organizations, the incessant predicament of obtaining sponsorship and achieving academic validity has led to the discontinuation of each of these past attempts. Last year (Fall 2000) Thomas Spackman and Jason Coombs took the first salient steps in an effort to overcome these polemical issues by forming the BYU Ancient Studies Club, an official university club, under the guidance of BYUSA. These two students set an outstanding precedent upon which we have continued to build by regularly inviting BYU professors to speak on a certain topic of expertise to a general audience of students. Last April, the BYU Ancient Studies Club held a meeting to elect new officers. The election lasted less than a minute since only two students, Davin Anderson (President) and John Robison (Vice-President), attended the meeting.

Over the intervening summer months, Robert Hunt (Secretary), Carli Anderson (Treasurer), and Bradley Ross (Historian) were welcomed into the club presidency, while the overall vision for the club was likewise expanded to include biweekly professor lectures and biweekly student forums. Near the beginning of the 2001 fall semester, the organization discovered the enthusiastic Matthew Grey (Publication Manager) and his innovative perspective to launch a semi-annual student publication entitled *Studia Antiqua: The Journal of the Student Society for Ancient Studies*. As more and more students and faculty members embraced the idea of a journal geared toward scholarly student papers apropos the ancient world, the time had come to find a new permanent home to sponsor the

organization for years to come, a home that would augment the academic validity of our efforts. We found what we were searching for in October of 2001 under S. Kent Brown, Director of Ancient Studies at BYU. As a newly organized departmental club, we promptly changed the name of the organization to the BYU Student Society for Ancient Studies.

In response to the new name, some have asked whether only an elite group of “society” members may take part in the activities sponsored by the organization. This is a valid inquiry, but let it be known that the Society is still the same organization, offering the same services to all who have any sort of inclining toward the study of the ancient world. In short, the professor lectures, student forums, and Journal provide a format through which students, university faculty, and the general public may obtain in-depth, semi-technical information concerning historical, philological, religious, archaeological, political, and cultural topics relating to the world of antiquity. Thus far, no insurmountable barriers have hindered our efforts because we represent an independent party seeking to bring together the wealth of knowledge available from various BYU departments such as History, Archeology, Classics, Near Eastern Studies, and Religion.

Although we have had much success, the Society is not yet satisfied, for we feel so much more can be done to help elevate the level of student scholarship in relation to ancient studies here at BYU. We are currently working on plans to further expand the services offered by the Society. If you have any questions or suggestions concerning the operations of the Society, especially if you desire to have an opportunity to present an original research paper at a student forum or publish such a paper in the Journal, please contact any member of the presidency. We thank you for your support of the Society and look forward to your continued involvement.

Davin Anderson
Society President