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- Φεβρουάριος 2025 -

**Above the cloud with its shadow is the star with
its light. Above all things reverence thyself.**
(Pythagoras)

Newsletter of the Hellenic Society of Archaeometry

- February 2025 -

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ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΑ - CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS

31ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS (EAA), BELGRADE, *SESSION #133 INTERTWINED THROUGH SPACE AND TIME: ARTEFACT USE AND REUSE ACROSS CULTURAL CONTEXTS (THEME 1: ON ARTEFACTS AND BEYOND.)

Please see the call for papers for the 31st Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) in Belgrade, *Session #133 Intertwined through Space and Time: Artefact Use and Reuse across Cultural Contexts (Theme 1: On Artefacts and Beyond.) Submissions on any artefacts related to the reuse of found objects from any period, Bronze Age through Iron Age and beyond are welcome. Please note the deadline for submission is *February 6, 2025*.

*Artefacts often reveal the entanglement of different cultures. Imitating motifs or appropriating technologies are some ways in which one society may lay claim to another's material language. Such transfers from one creative source to another may still evoke their significance to the people from whom they were borrowed but, recontextualized, may also communicate the realities of their new cultural home. The movement of actual objects and their reuse across time and space raise different issues. Do the new "owners" regard the alien item as exotica or do they attempt to modify it in some way to make its original meaning resonant with their social values and expectations? What do the choices they make in the process of integrating the item into its new cultural home reveal about the new content of the object and its reality and its cultural entanglement? If they do not alter it what strategies do they employ to render it understandable or do they emphasize its novelty? If the object is not moved physically but remains in situ until, perhaps centuries later, a quite different culture discovers and reuses it, what is the result of this chronological shift? Can we detect their understanding of what might be an otherwise unintelligible object? These questions raise not just formal considerations but ontological as well. What is the reality of this reused item? What consequences does the cultural reframing impose on the meaning of the object? What impact can such transformations have on their material language? We seek papers from any chronological period or geographical location that explore these questions. While we encourage submissions that focus on a single object we also welcome papers that consider multiple objects or entire deposits of artefacts.

Keywords: Ontology, Entanglement, Artefact *Session organisers*:

Emily Miller Bonney, CSU Fullerton George Prew National Museums Scotland Info & Registration : EAA2025 Home <https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA2025/Home/EAA2025/Home.aspx?hkey=4c634aa7-5bba-469d-824d-bfed5667f3aa> (<https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA2025/>)

Thanks,

Emily Millrt Bonney

Professor of Liberal Studies California State University Fullertonebonney@fullerton.edu



11TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE BEGINNINGS OF USE OF METALS AND ALLOYS (BUMA XI), SEPTEMBER 24-28, 2025, QUANZHOU, CHINA

Dear colleagues,

Happy New Year! Sorry for cross-posting. It is our great pleasure to announce that the 11th International Conference on the Beginnings of Use of Metals and Alloys conference (BUMA XI) will take place on September 24-28, 2025 and be host in Quanzhou city, Fujian province, which has recently been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage City for its historical role as an “emporium of the world in Song-Yuan China”.

The conference will be an in-person event and the venue will be at Quanzhou in Fujian Province, China. A free mid-conference excursion will be organized to visit the newly excavated Xiacaopu iron smelting site near Quanzhou. It has yielded the almost complete chaîne opératoire of iron production in the 10th-12th century CE, and played a fundamental role in the trading network of Quanzhou. We hope this conference will provide a unique opportunity for scholars to present their research, exchange ideas, and network with colleagues across the globe.

The conference website will be launched very soon together with online submission and registration portals. The abstract submission and early bird registration deadline will be 31st May 2025. The registration fee will be 150 USD (100 USD for early bird registration), and students will get a 50% discount. The local organizing committee will establish a limited fund to assist international attendees facing financial constraints with their travel expenses.

The city of Quanzhou was the destination of merchants from all over the world 1000 years ago. We hope the participants of BUMA XI will also have an interesting journey and find a warm welcome in this medieval “world city” of China.

The Local Organizing Committee
BUMA Standing Committee

31ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS (EAA), BELGRADE, SESSION #146: MULTI- DISCIPLINARIAN METALWORK - COMBINING ARCHAOMETALLURGY WITH CULTURAL HISTORY

Dear friends and colleagues!

We would like to invite you to our archaeometallurgy-session at the upcoming EAA-conference! Our call for papers is open until 6 February 23:59 CET: https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA2025/Programme/Papers%20and%20Posters/EAA2025/Programme_tabs/Contributions.aspx?hkey=b7494f1c-68d2-4536-9c48-d846b0b66592

Session #146: MULTI-DISCIPLINARIAN METALWORK - COMBINING ARCHAOMETALLURGY WITH CULTURAL HISTORY

Archaeometallurgy is a multidisciplinary field, where researchers from different fields come together to answer a range of different questions related to ancient metalworking. While there are numerous ways to investigate metal objects, many breakthrough studies involve a combination of different approaches.

This session aims to illuminate how one can combine the metallurgical analysis of ancient objects with other investigation strategies, such as typological analyses or historical studies, to clarify the cultural significance of artefacts. Our particular focus lies on the interplay between different practices: Does the original idea for your study derive from a historical text, from typological sequencing or from some unexpected observation that you made when you were analysing the material composition of ancient objects, examining their technical aspects, mapping traces of wear and tear or when you were replicating something by experimental means? And, in what way does this original observation generate the need for a multi-approach that bridges different disciplines?

As the aim of the session is to provide instructive examples of the interplay between different means of investigation, our session welcomes papers concerning all time periods and regions. Furthermore, we encourage contributions from advanced students and young researchers.

ORGANISERS

Main organiser:

Neiß, Michael (Sweden)

Co-organisers:

Wärmländer, Sebastian (Sweden)

Zagorodnia, Olga (United Kingdom)

Grassi, Elisa Maria (Italy)

Mišo, Martin (Slovakia)

Keynote speakers:

Saage, Ragnar
Kmošek, Matěj

Please spread the word!

Best regards,
Elisa

Elisa Grassi, PhD
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INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM CONFERENCE **ON CLIMATE CHANGE, 9-11 APRIL 2025,** **VIENNA, AUSTRIA**

I forward this announcement of the International Museum Conference on Climate Change, on behalf of Dr. Pascal Querner who is not on this list.

Best,

Morten Ryhl-Svendsen
Royal Danish Academy

International Museum Conference on Climate Change
<https://www.museumclimate.org/>

Organizer of the conference: Pascal Querner (Chair), and the Naturhistorisches Museum Wien

Host of the conference: University of Applied Arts Vienna

Please register: <https://www.museumclimate.org/>
Regular fee: 450 €, inkl. organic three lunches, excursion and coffee breaks

Program:

8th April 2025:
Icebreaker at the Naturhistorische Museum Wien
Informal opening of the Exhibition on museum pests, IPM and climate change

Conference: 9.-11. April 2025

Locations of the conference:
University of Applied Arts
Vordere Zollamtsstraße 7
Vienna

Theme 1: Sustainable and Green Museums
Theme 2: New climate corridors to save energy
Theme 3: Modelling climate change and insect pests and fungi
Theme 4: Effects of outdoor climate change on indoor museum climate

Day 1:

9th April 2025: start 9:00

Harald Rieder (BOKU, Vienna)

“Climate change: understanding the forecast”

Stephan Simon, Carleton University, Ottawa (Canada)

“Museums in the climate crisis: climate control, energy responsibility and transformation towards carbon neutrality”

Michał Łukomski, Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles

“Environmentally responsible management of art collections”

Johanna Leisner, Fraunhofer Insitute, Brussels

„Research for the protection of Cultural Heritage - a European perspectives“

Morten Ryhl-Svendsen, Royal Danish Academy, Copenhagen

“Green or gray? Realizations after 20 years of Danish low-energy storage”

Dario Camuffo (online)

“30 years on microclimate investigation in museums and what we can use for standards for museum climate”

Oliver Kern, MUMOK, Vienna

„Adaptation during renovation Das Museum im Wandel – Durch die Sanierung zum Klimakorridor“.

Lorraine Finch

“Harnessing innovative energy-saving solutions to reduce consumption and promote green museums”

Tanja Kimmel, University of Applied Arts, Vienna

„Measuring What Matters: Carbon Footprinting as a Tool for Sustainable Museum Practices”

Nina Quabeck, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen,

“First-mover (dis)advantages: An account of relaxing environmental parameters at the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen“

Round table discussion

Conference Dinner 19:00

Day 2:

10th April 2025:

Peter Brimblecombe, University of Taiwan

“Modelling museum climate and insect pests”

Anna Fenlon, Natural History Museum, London

“Predicting museum pests with the help of climate data and AI”

Bill Landsberger, Rathgen Research Laboratory, Berlin

„The impact of temperature on the development, reproduction and damage potential of selected museum pest insects”

Paul Lankester (online), English Heritage, UK

„Climate Change Resilience in the heritage sector”

Reiner Pospischil, PMP-Biosolutions, Germany

“New pests in Europe - a challenge in the museum”

Katharina Derksen, Akademie of Arts, Vienna

“Fungal Biodiversity and Climate in Austrian Heritage Collections”

Katja Sterflinger, Akademie of Arts, Vienna

“As time goes by - on the ephemerality of historic and contemporary art under the influence of (micro)biology”

Lars Klemm

“New archive and storage buildings, architecture, engineering and preventive conservation”

Marie-Christine Pachler, Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna

„The Indoor Climate of Schönbrunn Palace: Current Studies and Approaches to Improve Climate Conditions and Air Quality”

Ralf Kilian, Fraunhofer Insitute, Sebastian Krück, Christian Kind

„Climate adaptation in the cultural sector - A pilot project with 20 cultural institutions in Germany“

Eric Breitung, Metropolitan Museum, New York

“Indoor Climate at the Metropolitan Museum”

Rasmus Bahnsen, Green Museum Academy, Association of Danish Museums

„Sustainable management of collections environment“

Day 3:

11th April 2025

Marija Milchin University of Applied Arts, Vienna

„Schutz für Naturstein im Außenbereich – präventive und invasive Maßnahmen“

Faranak Bahrololoumi, Sonja Fuernkranz and Angelika Polster (KHM)

„Did the closed museum period (such as in Covid-19 period or during renovation) and highly attended special exhibitions have an impact on indoor climate and pest quantity in museum exhibitions? A case study at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna“

Alfons Huber

"Aus Schaden wird man klug, oder "Prüft alles, das Gute aber behaltet" (1. Tess. 5;21)"

Jochen Käferhaus

"Restoring museums about every 20 years"

Helene Tello

"Pesticides in cultural assets – A neglected aspect"

Carolyn Hayles, Cardiff School of Art & Design

"Climate Adaptation Planning: Developing a Methodology for Evaluating Future Climate Change Impacts on Museum Environments and Their Collections"

Excursions

Please visit the site: <https://www.museumclimate.org/>

12TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
THE APPLICATION OF RAMAN
SPECTROSCOPY IN ART AND
ARCHAEOLOGY (RAA2025), 3-6 SEPTEMBER
2025, PISA, ITALY

Dear Colleagues,

we are very happy to announce that the abstract submission is now open for the 12th International Conference on the Application of Raman Spectroscopy in Art and Archaeology (RAA2025). The RAA2025 Conference will be hosted in Pisa (Italy) by the Italian National Research Council CNR, in collaboration the Dept. of Earth Sciences of the University of Florence, the Dept. of Civilizations and Forms of Knowledge of the University of Pisa and the Dept. of Chemistry and Industrial Chemistry of the University of Pisa.

To submit your abstract for the RAA2025 conference, please use the abstract template available on the conference website

(<https://www.raa2025.it/abstract-and-publication-guidelines/>) and follow the provided submission guidelines. Abstracts must be submitted through the RAA2025 online system via the registration form on the conference webpage (<https://www.raa2025.it/registration-form>).

Please note that all abstracts should be submitted before 31th March 2025. This submission deadline is definitive, and no extension is foreseen after this date. Abstracts received after this deadline will not be considered. The official language of the RAA2025 conference is English.

* Abstract submission is not an official registration. All presenting authors must be fully registered by 15 July 2025 (<https://www.raa2025.it/registration>).

Information about the general schedule for the Raman Spectroscopy Training School and the RAA2025 conference is already available on the official website. Additionally, you can find a detailed daily program of social activities designed to help you relax and socialize while enjoying your time in Pisa. The detailed program for the training school will be available soon, while the scientific program will be released at the end of June.

We look forward to welcoming you to Pisa!

On behalf of the organizing committee of the 12th International Conference on the Application of Raman Spectroscopy in Art and Archaeology (RAA2025).

The Chairs of RAA2025

Dr. Simona Raneri, University of Florence & Dr. Stefano Legnaioli, CNR Italy

**31ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS
(EAA), BELGRADE, SESSION #110
MEASURING TIME AND OPEN-
MINDEDNESS: INTERPRETING
RADIOCARBON DATA THAT DOES NOT
MEET OUR EXPECTATIONS BUT MIGHT
CHANGE OUR PERSPECTIVES**

Dear all,

This session #110 invites archeologists and radiocarbon researchers interested and have example studies showing the effect radiocarbon results have on data interpretation. The EAA25 conference will be held in a hybrid format.

See the link to find the session.

https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA2025/Programme/Sessions/EAA2025/Programme_tabs/Sessions.aspx?hkey=92a38a18-2bb0-4f61-aabe-8f3dc688fbd5

Theme 5. Finding the way! Archaeological sciences and opening new research perspectives

Session #110 Measuring time and open-mindedness: Interpreting radiocarbon data that does not meet our expectations but might change our perspectives.

Best wishes,

Irka

Content

Radiocarbon dating has become a standard method used to determine the absolute age of artifacts and features. In archaeology, the method is often used to confirm or refine an estimated chronology that was built up on archaeological and/or historical data. However, in some cases the ¹⁴C results do not meet those estimations. What to do with the results that have let us down, or surprised us? Sometimes they are ignored on an assumption that the radiocarbon method failed. However, the method cannot fail and there is always a reason for unexpected and surprising radiocarbon ages. Thus, those ¹⁴C data can be accepted as a challenge and lead to further research. In this way, further research can progress sample selection, documentation and laboratory procedures. If, on the other hand, the procedures are correct, the confirmed ¹⁴C ages require explanation and understanding; therefore, the unexpected results must inspire researchers to a new

way of thinking about the archaeological artifact/ feature under investigation and open a new perspective.

This session aims to bring together case studies, in which radiocarbon dating provided unpredicted results and researchers took them as a challenge to further investigation. Thus, it will focus on positive examples, when those results brought a shift in methodology, opened a new research perspective or even changed the up-to-date paradigms. Invited are papers presenting radiocarbon dating of common types of materials, like wood, animal, or human bones, and especially welcomed papers based on dating of materials such as mortar, pollen concentrates from sediments, and other less frequently dated material. Accepted are contributions dealing with all periods from prehistory to the present. The goal of this session is to bring inspiration and discussion on how to approach and interpret data that, at first glance, does not match our research, and take advantage of them.

Please visit the site: https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA2025/Programme/Sessions/EAA2025/Programme_tabs/Sessions.aspx?hkey=92a38a18-2bb0-4f61-aabe-8f3dc688fbd5

**31ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS
(EAA), BELGRADE, SESSION: #183: SILVER
IN THE COPPER, BRONZE, AND EARLY
IRON AGES (C. 4000–600 BCE) ACROSS
EUROPE, THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND
WESTERN ASIA**

Dear friends and colleagues!

We would like to invite you to our silver-session at the upcoming EAA conference! The [call for papers](#) is open until 6 February 2025

Session: #183: Silver in the Copper, Bronze, and Early Iron Ages (c. 4000–600 BCE) across Europe, the Mediterranean, and Western Asia

Silver is a captivating material, valued since the Chalcolithic period for its rare, moon-like shine. Early on, it was used to produce jewellery and other decorative objects, sometimes alloyed with copper or gold. Repeatedly cast into rings and fragmented pieces (hack-silver) in the 3rd and 2nd millennia, silver likely functioned as a store of value and currency in Mesopotamia, gradually spreading to Anatolia and the Southern Levant. However, despite its appeal, silver's appearance and applications varied significantly across Europe, the Mediterranean, and Western Asia. In some regions, silver is appreciated as jewellery in elite burials, as seen for example in the Yamnaya culture in Southeast Europe and the Pontic-Caspian steppe and the El Argar culture in Iberia. In other regions, it frequently appears not only in graves but also in hoards, such as in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Southern Levant. However, there are also areas—like Central Europe from the Middle Bronze Age until the Latène period—where silver is notably scarce. This raises important questions: What accounts for these regional differences in the occurrence and use of silver? How did silver evolve as a store of value and currency in certain areas? What were its sources, and did the regional distribution of natural deposits shape its role?

This session will explore these questions from multiple perspectives, including chronology, distribution, composition, function, and origin. By examining silver across different regions and contexts, we aim to uncover the factors behind its varied roles and evolving significance throughout early Western Eurasian history.

We will be happy to accept relevant papers

Sincerely,

Tzilla Eshel, School of Archaeology and Maritime Cultures, University of Haifa (Israel)
teshel@haifa.ac.il

Lorenz Rahmstorf, Seminar für Ur- und Frühgeschichte, University of Göttingen
(Germany) lorenz.rahmstorf@uni-goettingen.de
Francis Albarede, Ecole Normale Supérieure (LGL-TPE; France) falbarede@gmail.com

**31ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS
(EAA), *SESSION WOODS AND
WOODCRAFT: NEW INSIGHTS FROM
ARCHAEOBOTANY, ARCHAEOLOGY,
EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY, EDNA,
LINGUISTIC, 3-6 SEPTEMBER BELGRADE**

Session organized by Gersande Eschenbrenner Diemer (University of Jaén- Medjehu Project) and Rachele Pierini (University of Copenhagen)

Ancient wood remains have largely disappeared from the archaeological record, except in climates like Egypt or in specific environments that favour preservation (like waterlogged bogs, lakeside settlements, or through processes like petrification and charring). These contexts provide excellent opportunities for the study of ancient woods and wooden artifacts, otherwise scarce, especially in protohistoric societies where written records of technical processes and wood names are absent or ambiguous and hard to trace geographically and historically.

Interdisciplinary approaches have therefore become essential to study ancient woods and woodcraft. Advances in fields like archaeobotany, experimental archaeology, and environmental DNA (eDNA) are expanding the tools available for researchers, enabling them to cross-check data and glean new insights into the materials, methods, words, and environments associated with ancient woods and woodworking traditions.

Wood and woodcraft studies have flourished as of late and are now at the core of a wide array of interdisciplinary projects on past societies. As such, this session aims to bring together research on ancient woods, woodcraft, and wooden items, from a comprehensive perspective encompassing presentations of new results and the current state-of-the-art, new methods and possibilities, new technologies and explorative analyses.

We warmly welcome papers addressing wood species, woodcraft technologies and techniques, wood and woodcraft terminology, as well as wood and wooden items uses in contexts like furniture, rituals, ships, funerary, etc. Further angles include (but are not limited to) synthetic studies as well as case studies on wood species and woodcraft processes, special categories like wooden miniature furniture, socio-economic background of wooden items production, the interaction between human beings and wooden items in sacred or private spaces, woodcraft tools, human modifications of wood species, big data in ancient wood research, multidisciplinary research projects in ancient wood and woodcraft, experimental archaeology approaches, integrating data from different disciplines into interpretations and narratives. <https://tinyurl.com/55xa7ykv>

Please submit your proposal to the link below: <https://submissions.e-a-a.org/ea2025/login>

IKUWA 8, SESSION D1: TAKE A DEEP BREATH. UNDERWATER CULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN, OOSTENDE, BELGIUM, 13-17 OCTOBER, 2025, CALL FOR PAPERS

Organizers: Emilio Rodríguez-Álvarez (University of Salamanca) and Mari Yamasaki (PCMA-University of Warsaw/Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz)

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: 15 MARCH 2025.

The exploration of the Mediterranean depths is not a recent endeavour. Humans have been diving beneath the surface of the sea since Prehistory. Sponge and coral harvesters are known from antiquity, and there are even attestations of freedivers involved in naval war operations. Likewise, diving may have complemented the activity of fishermen and mollusc gatherers, while harbour builders may have required underwater expertise and painters and poets borrowed underwater imagery for their art. Then why is the archaeological research on human engagement with the underwater spaces so sparse on this topic?

Until recently, the long-standing reasoning was that we lacked evidence for such activities. However, the most recent re-evaluation of the material culture has shown evident underwater applications, and a cognitive-sensory approach to the visual and textual representations of underwater spaces has shown how many representations were indeed influenced by real-world diving experiences. In the last few years, a growing group of researchers is daring to take the plunge into this fascinating world, to look at the material, philological and artistic evidence from an aquatic perspective.

With this session, we invite the participation of all who are interested in the archaeology of freediving. We particularly welcome contributions that employ innovative theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of human engagement with the submarine depths.

You can select your preferred type of participation: a 20-minute presentation or a scientific poster. If you apply for a presentation and your abstract is not selected, you will automatically receive a place in the poster exhibition.

You can submit your abstract by using the online form: <https://form.vliz.be/nl/form/ikuwa8-call-for-abstracts>. The full list of sessions and the official webpage of the conference can be found here: <https://www.vliz.be/ikuwa8/>. Submissions should consist of a title and an abstract of 250-350 words, plus 5 to 7 keywords. You will be asked to select the session(s) your abstract belongs to: this is session D1.

ΘΕΣΕΙΣ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΣ/ΥΠΟΤΡΟΦΙΕΣ –
JOB VACANCIES/FELLOWSHIPS

RESEARCH ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE IN
HERITAGE SCIENCE (FIXED TERM)

Fixed-term: The funds for this post are available for 14 months in the first instance.

The McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research invites applications for a fixed-term Research Associate in Heritage Science. The post holder will work as part of the AHRC-funded project: "Small performances": investigating the typographic punches of John Baskerville (1707-75) through heritage science and practice-based research, led by Marcos Martín-Torres jointly with Co-Investigators Caroline Archer (Birmingham City University), Ann-Marie Carey (Birmingham City University) and Maciej Pawlikowski (Cambridge University Library).

This is a unique opportunity to join a leading team of archaeological and heritage scientists around the newly-refurbished Cambridge Heritage Science Hub (CHERISH). We seek a rigorous, creative and collaborative researcher who is keen to both benefit from, and contribute to, our critical mass.

The post holder is expected to work primarily at the McDonald Institute and the University Library in Cambridge but also including brief trips to Birmingham and other locations. Key responsibilities will include the geometric morphometric analysis of typographic punches and printed letters, in addition to contributions to engagement with craftspeople, typeface designers, and the broader public.

The Research Assistant/Associate in Heritage Science will lead on the 2D GMM analysis of letter outlines extracted from high-resolution photographs of the faces of typographic punches, and of relevant printed pages from Baskerville and other printers. They will assess and compare issues such as standardisation, print reproducibility, scaling methods, and variability in letter quality within and between books.

Appointment at Research Associate level is dependent on having a PhD (or equivalent experience). Those who have submitted but not yet received their PhD will be appointed at Research Assistant level, which will be amended to Research Associate once the PhD has been awarded.

Salary Ranges: Research Assistant £32,296 - £34,866 per annum and Research Associate: £36,924 - £45,163 per annum

The role holder is expected to possess some research experience with sufficient breadth and depth of specialist knowledge, including research methods and theoretical frameworks, to work within and enrich the research programme. The post is suitable for researchers with a background in materials science and metallurgy, archaeometallurgy, heritage science, or related disciplines, with an interest in past technologies, advanced imaging and the characterisation of small metal objects.

We particularly welcome applications from candidates from a BAME background for this vacancy as they are currently under-represented at this level in our department.

Click the 'Apply' button below to register an account with our recruitment system (if you have not already) and apply online.

If you have any questions about this vacancy or the application process, please contact Prof Marcos Martín-Torres (m.martinon-torres@arch.cam.ac.uk).

Please quote reference JC44680 on your application and in any correspondence about this vacancy.

The University actively supports equality, diversity and inclusion and encourages applications from all sections of society.

The University has a responsibility to ensure that all employees are eligible to live and work in the UK.

Please visit the site: <https://www.jobs.cam.ac.uk/job/49871/>

CALL FOR A FUNDED PHD OR POST-DOC SCHOLARSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA, ISRAEL

The [Metallurgy and Materials Lab](#) at the School of Archaeology and Maritime Cultures at the University of Haifa, Israel, invites **applications for:**

A one 3-year scientific position or a 2-year post-doc position

starting April 20th 2025 or as soon as possible thereafter. The project aims to evaluate the earliest use of scales, weights, and metal currency in the region. The candidate is expected to write a doctoral thesis (PhD) or publish papers (post-doc) during employment under the supervision of the PI in Haifa. The successful candidate will be part of the DFG Middle-East collaboration project titled “Elusive data? Weights and silver in the EBA-MBA southern Levant (Ancient Canaan)”, headed jointly by Dr. Tzilla Eshel, the School of Archaeology and Maritime Cultures, University of Haifa, and Prof. Dr. Lorenz Rahmstorf at the Seminar of Prehistory and Early History at the University of Göttingen

The project

During the mid 3rd millennium BC the use of silver as currency emerged in Mesopotamia in the form of fragmented silver coils and scrap exchanged for their weighed value. The southern Levant showed urbanized settlement patterns since the EBA II–III and was continually influenced by the surrounding material cultures during the Bronze Age. The project will investigate the source of the silver, and whether silver (and gold) were precisely measured by weight and scales in EBA and the earlier MBA in the southern Levant, as in the rest of the Near East. With the help of the Principal Investigators the candidate will sample and analyze silver items for typology, detailed chemical composition and isotopes. The candidate will investigate the implications for economic integration, interregional exchange and social organization in Southern Levantine societies. The twin project in Göttingen will focus on weights during the same period and apply analytical work and metrological analyses of potential weights in close collaboration with the Haifa team.

Requirements:

- Academic degree in (Bronze Age/Near Eastern) Archaeology, Archaeometallurgy or Geochemistry.
- Experience in working with metals and lab work
- Experience with XRF, ICP, ICP-MS – an advantage
- Proficiency in at least one programming language – an advantage
- Enrolment as a PhD/ post-doc student at the University of Haifa and compliance with the Bloom Graduate School requirements and guidelines

Soft skills

- Responsible and self-motivated nature
- Curiosity and critical thinking
- The ability to learn quickly and independently
- Strong teamwork abilities

Responsibilities

- Close cooperation with the project part in Göttingen (PhD and PI Prof. Dr. Lorenz Rahmstorf; weight metrology and economic complexity in the Southern Levant during the Early and Middle Bronze Ages)
- For PhD candidates: Lead a full segment of the project from design to finished doctorate thesis under the supervision of the PI in Haifa (Dr. Tzilla Eshel)
- Collect and organize archaeological metal artifacts
- Apply the established methodology with the help of the PI
- Participation as a co-author in the publication of scientific articles detailing methodology and results of the project in peer-reviewed journals
- Present and communicate the project in different venues

The successful candidate is expected to begin on April 20th 2025 or as soon as possible thereafter. The application must be written in English. Please send a detailed CV, list of publications (if applicable), a short cover letter detailing your motivation, documentation of qualifications (Master diploma, other certificates) and the contact information within **01.03.2025** to teshel@univ.haifa.ac.il.

Tzilla Eshel

Head of the Metallurgy and Materials Lab
School of Archaeology and Maritime Cultures
Zinman Institute of Archaeology
University of Haifa, P.O.B. 3338, Haifa 3103301, Israel

<https://haifa.academia.edu/TzillaEshel>
<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Tzilla-Eshel>
<https://sites.google.com/humanities.haifa.ac.il/metallurgy-materials-lab/home>



JACOB HIRSCH FELLOWSHIP

EXTENDED Deadline: February 15, 2025

Field of Study: Archaeology

Eligibility: U.S. or Israeli citizens who are either Ph.D. candidates writing their dissertations in archaeology, or early-career scholars (Ph.D. earned within the last five years) completing a project that requires a lengthy residence in Greece. Applicants can propose to use any of the School’s research facilities, as long as their research topic has an archaeological component.

Terms and Duration: Stipend of \$11,500 plus room and board in Loring Hall, and waiver of School fees. Meals, Monday through Friday, are provided at Loring Hall. The fellow is expected to be engaged full-time in the supported research from early September 2025 to late May 2026. Any concurrent employment requires the permission of the Director of the School. A final report is due at the end of the award period, and the ASCSA expects that copies of all publications that result from research conducted as a Fellow of the ASCSA acknowledge the support of the ASCSA and be contributed to the relevant library of the School.

Application: Submit an online application. An application consists of a curriculum vitae, and a detailed description of the project to be pursued in Greece (250-word abstract and a statement up to 1500 words in 12pt font, single spaced). Arrange for two letters of recommendation. Student applicants are required to submit scans of official academic transcripts as part of the online application.

[Link to online posting.](#)

Questions? Contact: application@ascsa.org

American School of Classical Studies at Athens

321 Wall Street

Princeton, NJ 08540-1515

[Email: programs@ascsa.org](mailto:programs@ascsa.org)

[Website: https://www.ascsa.edu.gr](https://www.ascsa.edu.gr)

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TENURE TRACK POSITION IN
ARCHAEOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF
ARCHAEOLOGY, BEN-GURION
UNIVERSITY, NEGEV (BEER SHEVA),
ISRAEL

Description: The Department of Archaeology at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (Beer Sheva) is recruiting a full-time faculty position in Archaeological Science. The successful candidate will lead innovative research and teaching in the Department of Archaeology, and will be expected to collaborate with Department members and administration, developing shared research initiatives and contributing to the collective academic goals of the Department. This position offers the opportunity to collaborate with the University's departments such as the Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research at Sde Boker, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, the Department of Materials Engineering or the Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology. The candidate will also cooperate with Ben-Gurion University's Goldman Sonnenfeldt School of Sustainability and Climate Change; with national organizations like the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Weizman Institute; and will develop international partnerships.

Key Responsibilities:

- Conducting cutting-edge archaeological research in one or more of the following fields: archaeometry, geoarchaeology, archaeozoology, archaeomaterials, microarchaeology, ancient technologies, or experimental archaeology.
- Teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in archaeology and in one or more of the above-mentioned fields.
- Securing external funding from competitive grants.
- Developing collaborations with national and international research institutions.
- Supervising BA/MA/PhD students and Postdocs working on interdisciplinary research related to archaeology and archaeological sciences as mentioned above.
- Taking part in the department's study excavations and operating field laboratories for on-site analytical work during archaeological excavations.
- Conducting field trips with students of the department.

Deadline: Application Open Until: February 28, 2025

Basic Qualifications

- Ph.D. in Archaeology
- Professional expertise in archaeology and archaeological sciences such as archaeometry, geoarchaeology, archaeozoology, archaeomaterials, microarchaeology, ancient technologies, experimental archaeology and conservation sciences.
- Demonstrated excellence in research, with publications in leading academic journals.
- Previous experience in teaching and successful external research funding is an advantage.

- The candidate will be expected to collaborate closely and collegial with department members and administration, developing shared research initiatives with members of the department and contributing to the collective academic goals of the department.
- Experience in interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Commitment to innovative teaching and mentorship at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Minimum Number of References Required :

- For the rank of Lecturer: 3-4 References, at least 2 "independent" and at least 2 from institutions abroad.
- For the rank of Senior Lecturer: 4-5 References, at least 2 "independent" and at least 2 from institutions abroad.
- For the rank of Professor: 5-6 References, at least 4 "independent" and at least 3 from institutions abroad.

(Minimum Number of References Required: 3)

Note:

One of the letters should be from the candidate's supervisor (Ph.D.)

Contact Information

Prof. Gunnar Lehmann (gunnar@bgu.ac.il)

Equal Opportunity Employer Ben-Gurion University of the Negev is committed to fairness and diversity in recruiting new faculty members and actively encourages women, members of minority groups, and those with disabilities to apply. If you are a person with disabilities according to the definition in the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Law , 5758-1988: 'A person with a physical, mental or intellectual disability, including cognition, permanent or temporary, whose immature function is limited to one or more of the main areas of life' - you should point this out in the candidacy forms.

All further information and online information: https://bgu-academic-recruitment.my.site.com/Recruiters/VF_BGUPositions?Id=02iTc000009je2Y

ΑΝΑΚΟΙΝΩΣΕΙΣ - ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE MICHAEL VENTRIS AWARD FOR **MYCENAEAN STUDIES (2025)**

1st February deadline

The Michael Ventris Memorial Fund was founded in 1957 in appreciation of his contribution to the fields of Mycenaean civilization and architecture.

The Trustees of the Fund offer an annual award of up to £3,000 to a junior scholar for research into Mycenaean studies or kindred subjects: (1) Linear B and other Bronze Age scripts of the Aegean and Cyprus, and their historical and cultural connections and (2) all other aspects of the Bronze Age of the Aegean and Cyprus. It is intended that the Award should support a specific project, which may be part of a continuing programme of post-doctoral research. The Award is open to applicants from all countries who have completed their doctorate within the past eight years.

Applications are also accepted from postgraduate students who are about to complete their doctorate, although the Award is not intended to fund doctoral research per se.

Applicants should give particulars of their qualifications and academic record, and should outline the work they intend to pursue in the event of the Award being made to them, including projected costs. These costs should not normally include payments to third parties or the purchase of new equipment unless the applicant can justify these as essential to their research project. Applications should not exceed 6 single-sided pages (A4).

They should be submitted by email, ideally as a PDF attachment.

Applicants must also supply the names and addresses of two referees, and, at the same time, ask the referees to write independently in support of their application.

Applications and references must reach the Director (director.ics@sas.ac.uk) of Institute of Classical Studies, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU not later than 1 February 2025. The Michael Ventris Award for Mycenaean Studies (2025) | Institute of Classical Studies <https://ics.sas.ac.uk/awards/awards-prizes/michael-ventris-award-mycenaean-studies-2025>

The Award will be made by an Advisory Committee appointed by the Institute of Classical Studies. Payment will be in one single sum in April each year.

The Committee reserves the right to make no Award in any given year or to invite a scholar to hold the Award in a particular year. If sufficient money is available, the Committee may from time to time make small grants from the Fund. The successful Michael Ventris candidate will be required to submit a written report to the Advisory Committee on the work that the Award has enabled them to complete. They may be invited to make a public presentation of the results at the Institute of Classical Studies.

The fund remains open for contributions which may be sent to the following address:
Institute of Classical Studies, Senate House Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HU Cheques
should be made payable to the University of London.

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE: SCANNING ELECTRON MICROSCOPY AND MUONS ANALYSIS OF ANCIENT FAIENCE FROM NUBIA AND EGYPT, BY JULIET SPEDDING

The Department of Archaeology, Classics & Egyptology at the University of Liverpool would like to invite you to the next Ancient Technologies & Materials Seminar (ATMS) on Thursday 13th February at 5 pm (UK time), Room TBD. There will be time to chat with the speaker afterwards. This is a hybrid event so if you would like to join us online you can do so by signing up for the Zoom link: [Zoom Registration](#)

Scratching the Surface: Scanning Electron Microscopy and Muons Analysis of Ancient Faience from Nubia and Egypt
Juliet Spedding (University of Liverpool)

Abstract

Ancient faience was the first man-made non-clay ceramic, comprising of a silica core and a shiny glaze. Faience was fashioned into many different artefacts such as amulets, beads, vessels, and even architectural features. The history of faience production in Egypt stretches back 6000 years and extensive study has allowed for the identification of different glazing techniques employed by the ancient craftsmen. By comparison, the examination of faience found in Nubia (Ancient Sudan) is still underrepresented.

Traditionally, in order to study the technological methods of how ancient faience production destructive sampling of objects was necessary. Now, however, there may be an alternative that can provide new information without the need to destructively sample these ancient objects.

Here I will present the results of two analyses of ancient faience: the more traditional method using scanning electron microscopy on 30 samples of faience from Nubia, and the new application of depth-profiling through the use of muons. Both techniques have the potential to inform us on manufacturing choices, raw materials, and glazing techniques but it is hoped that the use of non-destructive muon analysis would permit more material held in collections around the world to be examined in order to further our understanding of this ancient, and sometimes, mysterious material.

Suggested Readings

Nicholson, Paul T., with Peltenburg, Edgar, 'Egyptian Faience', in Nicholson, Paul T., and Shaw, Ian (eds), *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 177-194.

Tite, M. S., Freestone, I. C., and Bimson, M., 'Egyptian Faience: An Investigation of the Methods of Production', *Archaeometry* Volume 25 (1983), 17-27.

Tite, M. S. & Shortland, A. J., *Production Technology of Faience and Related Early Vitreous Materials* (Oxford: School of Archaeology, 2008).

All welcome!

Liz & Ruth

Elizabeth Thomas
Archaeology PhD Researcher
Department of Archaeology, Classics & Egyptology
University of Liverpool
e.thomas4@liverpool.ac.uk
AHRC NWC-DTP funded

Recent publications:

Thomas, E. 2024. *Shining light on Egyptian mirrors: New scientific research into their metallurgy*. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 58, 104744
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2024.104744>

Thomas, E. and Gethin, P. 2024. *An adapted method for researching ancient Egyptian mirrors*. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 59, 104743
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2024.104743>

**16TH INTERNATIONAL GEOCHRONOLOGY
SUMMER SCHOOL: DATING TECHNIQUES
IN ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH, AUGUST
31 – SEPTEMBER 4, 2025, MORTERATSCH,
SWITZERLAND**

Dear all who are interested in geochronology,

Please see the message from the organizers of the IGSS in the Swiss Alps.

There is still time to apply and see the Morteratsch, a rapidly vanishing glacier.

Best wishes,

Irka

Dear colleagues,

it is our pleasure to announce the

16th International Geochronology Summer School: Dating techniques in environmental research

Date: **August 31 – September 4, 2025**

Location: **Morteratsch (Switzerland)**

Webinfo: <http://www.geo.uzh.ch/en/units/gch/geochronologysummerschool.html>

Topics to be covered in lectures, excursions and workshops include dating techniques such as numerical methods (radiocarbon, exposure dating with cosmogenic nuclides, OSL, ¹³⁷Cs, ²¹⁰Pb, etc.), dendrochronology, anthracology, archaeomagnetic dating, palaeolimnology, as well as relative methods like soil weathering and Schmidt-hammer technique.

List of Lecturers:

Holger Gärtner (WSL), Paolo Cherubini (WSL), Markus Egli (University of Zurich), Dmitry Tikhomirov (University of Zurich), Dennis Dahms (University of Northern Iowa), Irka Hajdas (ETH Zurich), Evdokia Tema (University of Torino), Elena Serra (University of Freiburg i.Br.), Nathalie Dubois (EAWAG) and others.

The Summer School is open to young researchers (PhD students and Post-Docs) worldwide.

Participation is competitive and will be limited to a maximum of 20.

The registration fee (800 CHF) includes accommodation (room sharing required), half board and lunch, field trips and teaching material.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: 30 April 2025

Registration: <http://www.geo.uzh.ch/en/units/gch/geochronologysummerschool/registration.html>

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ΝΕΕΣ ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ – NEW PUBLICATIONS

ISOTOPES AND FISH BONES IN THE BRONZE AGE AEGEAN: EXPANDING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF AQUATIC DIETS, BY DIMITRA MYLONA AND AURORA ALLSHOUSE

C. Tsouparopoulou, L. Recht (eds.), Human and Aquatic Beings: Interactions in and beyond the Eastern Mediterranean (3rd–1st Millennia BCE), Themes in Contemporary Archaeology,

Abstract

Isotopic analyses of human bones in a search for ancient individual and community-specific dietary habits are becoming increasingly common in Greek archaeology, highlighting dominant dietary items but also absent or under-consumed ones. Fish and marine molluscs fall in the latter category having been, in this region, largely undetected isotopically. At the same time, accumulated conventional zooarchaeological studies of fish bone and molluscan remains from sites of wide chronological and geographical distribution suggest a constant and, at places, intense consumption of aquatic foods. The two sets of data, isotopic and zooarchaeological, offer an apparently contradictory picture. This paper provides a critical review of the current state of research in the context of Prehistoric, mostly Bronze Age Aegean. Additionally, it explores possible ways to achieve nuanced, in-depth understanding of the exploitation of aquatic, mostly marine, food resources, combining the methodologies and findings of both approaches. It elaborates on certain methodological and interpretational issues, and it suggests possible directions for future research. The combined analysis of the available data suggests that both geographical and social factors may have affected fish consumption in the past. It becomes clear, however, that to be able to offer meaningful and secure evaluations in a time and site-specific manner, we need targeted, high quality excavation data that would provide the context of analysis. We would also need detailed publication of human and fish isotopic comparative data and fish and molluscan archaeological remains.

Please visit the site: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-73643-8_2

THERA, THE AEGEAN, EGYPT, THE HYKSOS AND ANATOLIA: RETHINKING THE ORTHODOX SYNCHRONISATIONS AND HISTORIES, BY STURT W. MANNING

Long story short

The Minoan eruption of the Thera volcano has come to offer a pivotal event in the synchronization of Aegean and East Mediterranean civilizations. In relative (ceramic) terms the eruption occurred late in or around the end of the Late Minoan (LM) IA period. The date was traditionally placed around 1500 BCE, not from any specific evidence, but because some subsequent (late) LMIB objects were found in Egypt in contexts associated with Tuthmosis III, and, since his reign of almost 54 years was placed, give or take debates of up to 25 years, around the first half of the 15th century BCE, this led to a minimum date for the end of LMIA and Thera conveniently summarized as ca. 1500 BCE (Marinatos 1939; Warren 1984). This placed much of the LMIA period during the earlier New Kingdom. Radiocarbon dates from the 1970s onwards upset this position by suggesting an earlier date for Thera. This raised the prospect of an alternative cultural synchronisation for LMIA (and indeed MMIII-LMIA overall) with the Hyksos era (Second Intermediate Period, SIP): the Aegean high chronology (AHC). The AHC in turn would affect surrounding cultural groups and their dates in the Aegean and East Mediterranean, from Greece to Cyprus (Manning 1999). Much effort has gone into refining the radiocarbon situation. Since 2020 the options are an ‘earlier’ date maybe 1611 BCE (when a major Northern Hemisphere volcanic eruption is attested in ice-core evidence) or broadly around 1600 BCE (if, for example, the Thera eruption is not represented in the available ice-core evidence investigated so far), and a later date perhaps about 1561 BCE (when another major Northern Hemisphere volcanic eruption is attested in ice-core evidence) (Manning 2022; 2024a; 2024b; Pearson et al. 2022; 2023). Either of these dates basically places LMIA contemporary with the Hyksos/SIP (i.e. the point of the AHC critique starting in the 1980s: Kemp and Merrillees 1980; Betancourt 1987; Manning 1988). Overall, the general scope of debate or ‘dispute’ is much narrowed to around 50 years, versus the gap of over a century in scholarship a couple of decades ago. A re-analysis now of radiocarbon dates recently published on an olive shrub from Therasia likely killed by the Thera eruption (Pearson et al. 2023), bringing to bear an appropriate integration of the temporal constraints on these dates from both the growth sequences of the olive branches in question and the contextual circumstance of their common death event (the eruption) (Manning 2024b), along with analysis of the data and temporal sequence in the period between final human occupation and abandonment at Akrotiri on Thera through to the Thera volcanic eruption (Manning 2022; 2024a), suggest to the author that we can in fact more likely resolve the date of the Thera eruption around the earlier date of 1611 BCE (or more broadly around 1600 BCE).

In a paper published in JGA 8, Tiziano Fantuzzi, to the contrary, tries largely to argue against the AHC and in favour of a more traditional position – although in an almost inevitable contradiction Fantuzzi ends up favouring a date around 1561 BCE and thus effectively a position that is, in fact, compatible with the original AHC critique and so

against the traditional chronology. The present paper critically addresses the evidence and the Fantuzzi paper and lays out why the archaeological linkages do not contradict the AHC (and in fact likely support it) and shows how the radiocarbon evidence, appropriately analysed and integrated with the relevant known (prior) botanical-geological-archaeological sequence, defines a date for the Minoan eruption of Thera most likely ca.1611 BCE or broadly around 1600 BCE (with a date around 1561 BCE an unlikely but about the latest even possible alternative). Indeed, if the eruption was ca. 1561 BCE (or for that matter a later date as suggested by some, like 1525 BCE), we can observe that different radiocarbon measurements would be expected for the Therasia olive shrub samples – thus these suggested later Thera eruption dates are not supported by the currently available evidence. Hence, the New Palace Period of Crete likely begins (Middle Minoan, MM, IIIA) in the later 18th century BCE, MMIIIB and LMIA occupy the period through the end of the 17th century BCE (likely, and possibly into the earlier 16th century BCE), and (the long) LMIB period follows, ending in the earlier to mid-15th century BCE (and these dates in turn translate for linked contemporaries in mainland Greece, the Cyclades, Cyprus, etc.). The formation and flourish of New Palace Crete are thus associated with both the dynamic and transformative Hyksos/SIP era in the East Mediterranean (e.g. Mourad 2021) and the formative era leading to the creation of the Old Hittite Kingdom in Anatolia (e.g. Bryce 2005: 61-95; Weeden 2022: 537-550).

Please visit the site:

<https://www.archaeopress.com/Archaeopress/Products/9781803278933>

**HIGH-RESOLUTION ISOTOPE DIETARY
ANALYSIS OF MESOLITHIC AND
NEOLITHIC HUMANS FROM FRANCHTHI
CAVE, GREECE,
BY VALENTINA MARTINOIA, ANASTASIA
PAPATHANASIOU, SAHRA TALAMO,
REBECCA MACDONALD, MICHAEL P.
RICHARDS**

PLOS ONE, 2025

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0310834>

Abstract

Franchthi Cave, in the Greek Peloponnese, is a well-known Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic site, with several human burials. In many parts of Europe there is clear evidence from archaeological and isotopic studies for a diet change between the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods. This is especially the case in coastal contexts where there is often a shift from predominantly marine food diets in the Mesolithic to terrestrial (presumably domesticated) foods in the Neolithic. However, at Franchthi Cave previous isotope research did not show changes in diets between these two periods, and also showed relatively little input from marine foods in diets in either time period, despite the coastal location of the site and the presence of marine shellfish and fish, including tuna. High-resolution compound specific amino acid isotope analysis reported here from humans from the Lower Mesolithic and Middle Neolithic periods confirms the previous bulk isotope results in showing little or no consumption of marine foods in either time period. However, it is important to note that our isotopic sample does not come from episodes when tuna is abundant and therefore do not cover the whole range of known diets from the site. Conversely, in our sample there is some evidence of marine food consumption (likely seaweed) by sheep in the Neolithic period. We also report here five direct AMS radiocarbon dates for the five analyzed humans from the site.

Please visit the site:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0310834>

FROM WILD STANDS TO ORCHARDS: AN ARCHAEOBOTANICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE OLIVE TREE IN PREHISTORIC AEGEAN VEGETATION, BY MARIA NTINOU AND SOULTANA-MARIA VALAMOTI

Veget Hist Archaeobot (2025).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00334-024-01034-3>

Abstract

This study aims to use a rich, millennia-long anthracological dataset to observe the role of *Olea europaea* L. in the Early and Middle Holocene woody vegetation used by prehistoric groups in the circum-Aegean area. A synthesis of previous and new data obtained in the context of ERC project PlantCult, reflects variations in the distribution and abundance of *Olea* in the anthracological record and allows to assess the factors potentially responsible for these, i.e. changes in climatic conditions, subsistence strategies and/or socioeconomic organization. It is suggested by the present anthracological evidence that *Olea* would have been abundant in the vegetation cover in lowland areas of the Aegean during the Last Interglacial and would have probably survived the Pleniglacial in refugia of thermophilous taxa in southern locations and the islands. According to the anthracological data from Mesolithic and Early Neolithic sites on the islands and lowland coastal areas, *Olea* would have been sparse during the Early Holocene in the Aegean. The earliest presence of the taxon is recorded in 7th mill. bce contexts on the northern Aegean insular sites. In the following millennia, *Olea* remained infrequent in the study area even though sclerophyllous vegetation is well-documented. Anthracological evidence for high *Olea* values is testified in the second half of the 4th mill. bce in the central and southern Aegean. In the 3rd mill. bce, the simultaneous increase of *Olea* in the anthracological datasets from Early Bronze Age settlements on the islands and the circum-Aegean lowlands and the pollen record, suggests a shift of the economy to olive management and arboriculture, probably enhanced by sea-routes and exchange networks established already since the Final Neolithic.

Please visit the site: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00334-024-01034-3>

EΙΔΗΣΕΙΣ - NEWS RELEASE

ARCHEOLOGISTS DECIPHER 2,000-YEAR- OLD ARAMAIC INSCRIPTION IN ISRAEL - EXPERTS USE NEW SCANNING METHODS AND AI ANALYSIS TO INSCRIPTION FOUND ON SECOND TEMPLE ERA POTTERY SHARD MENTIONING 'ELEAZAR BAR GER'

Researchers have deciphered a 2,000-year-old Aramaic inscription on a pottery shard discovered at the Alexandrium Fortress (Sartaba) in the Jordan Valley. The text reads: “Eleazar bar Ger... from Beit Akiman.” Bar-Ilan University scholars analyzed and deciphered the inscription using advanced imaging technology developed by Jerusalem’s Azrieli College of Engineering.

The shard, excavated in the 1980s by the late Hebrew University archaeologists Prof. Yoram Tsafir and Yitzhak Magen but never fully published, is among 12 ostraca (inscribed pottery fragments) found at the site. These include texts in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, now under study by Prof. Esther Eshel from Bar-Ilan University and Prof. Haggai Misgav from the Hebrew University.

The Alexandrium Fortress, perched like an eagle’s nest atop Mount Sartaba overlooking the Jordan Valley, derives its name from the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus. A key Judean stronghold during the Second Temple period, it flourished in the first century BCE as a fortified palace for Hasmonean rulers and Herod the Great.

The site is noted as the burial place of the last Hasmonean royals, where Herod imprisoned the Hasmonean princess Mariamne and her mother Alexandra and as one of three fortresses where Herod hosted Marcus Agrippa (son-in-law of Roman Emperor Augustus) during his visit to Judea.

A new imaging method — combining hyperspectral photography, artificial intelligence and image fusion — enabled researchers to recover faded texts invisible to the naked eye. Prof. Eshel and Prof. Misgav noted that the name “Eleazar” — like other Hasmonean dynastic names (Judah, Jonathan, Simon, John) — was common among Jews in the late Second Temple-era Judea.

The term “bar Ger” (son of Ger) may indicate that Eleazar’s father was a convert (ger), akin to the name “bar Gira” found on a Jerusalem-area burial ossuary. Alternatively, it could be the beginning of a surname like “Geryon.”

The Talmud references a figure named “Judah ben Gerim” (Judah son of converts), who allegedly informed Romans about Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Some scholars suggest his name might have been “ben Geris,” similar to “Hillel ben Geris” mentioned in Bar Kokhba Revolt-era documents from the Judean Desert.

Dr. Doron Sar-Avi of Herzog Academic College, a co-researcher on the inscriptions, noted: “‘Beit Akiman,’ cited as Eleazar’s origin, was previously unknown. It may correspond to sites near Wadi Khamuniyya, west of Sartaba, where Second Temple-era villages were documented.”

Dr. Dvir Raviv, leading renewed excavations at Sartaba, added, “These 2,000-year-old inscriptions shed light on the site’s history as a royal fortress for the Hasmoneans and Herod. Ostraca with Jewish names and parallels to rebel-linked texts at Masada support the possibility of insurgent activity here during the Great Jewish Revolt.”

Benny Har-Even, head of the Archaeology Staff Officer Corps, said, “Resuming work at Sartaba-Alexandrium after 40 years is a historic moment. This inscription’s decipherment highlights the site’s immense potential. We anticipate further discoveries illuminating the Hasmonean-Herodian fortress and ancient Jewish settlement in the region.”

“This finding reaffirms the Jewish people’s unbroken bond with Israel,” Heritage Ministry Director-General Itay Granek added. “Eleazar’s name, etched on a shard at a key Hasmonean site, joins a chain of evidence attesting to continuous Jewish presence across the land—from the Jordan Valley to Jerusalem.”

Please visit the site: <https://www.ynetnews.com/travel/article/hknx2uruyg>

DNA ANALYSIS SHEDS LIGHT ON ANCIENT MINOAN MARRIAGE PRACTICES, BY NANA COUPEAU

A recent DNA analysis of ancient Minoan genomes show that the choice of marriage partners was determined by one's own kinship. First cousin marriages were not unusual to the Minoans of the Bronze Age.

A team of scientists from the Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology made the remarkable discovery. This was unveiled in an analysis of genomes from that time period in which close links were revealed.

“More than a thousand ancient genomes from different regions of the world have now been published,” Eirini Skourtanioti, the lead author of the research project stated. “But it seems that such a strict system of kin marriage did not exist anywhere else in the ancient world.”

The revelation that it was actively practiced in Ancient Minoan society was thus “a complete surprise to all of us and raises many questions”.

Kingship and Minoan Marriage Rules

Crete is the birthplace of Minoan society, a group of people with complex rituals and established rules for everything from animal sacrifices and funeral services to marriages.

The study on the genomes of people who lived in the Aegean during the Bronze Age is the focus of an article published in Nature Ecology & Evolution. Of particular interest was the DNA of the former inhabitants of a Mycenaean hamlet from the 16th century B.C.

The research team focused specifically on the remains found in a tomb in front of a house in a small townlet. This enabled them to construct a family tree with clear insight into the familial connections between the inhabitants.

“We wanted to have a look at how...people [were] buried together [when] genetically related,” Philipp Stockhammer, a professor of archeology, explained to CNN. Another goal in the specific study, according to Stockhammer, was to identify what we could “learn about the relevance of the genetic relativeness [and] the structure of the society”.

“We could see...that the three sons lived as adults in the house,” he said. “One of the marriage partners brought her sister and a child.”

What they stumbled upon when analyzing their genomes along with a hundred others was that the kinship between the family members was closer than modern marital practices would allow. Specifically speaking, that Ancient Minoans allowed first cousin marriages.

“People have thousands of ancestral genomes and there’s hardly any evidence [among] societies in the past of cousin-cousin marriage,” he said. “From a historical perspective, this really is astounding.”

Half of Ancient Minoan nuptials were with first cousins

Stockhammer offered a simple explanation for the occurrence that modern society might be deemed unhealthy as well as unsound.

One point he emphasized was that, in other parts of Europe during the Bronze Age, women migrated in order to marry in areas where resources were more plentiful. However, in Greece, “there’s not much space to grow things...”

“All of the driving force is to unite the land within the family,” he explained. “If you [look] at what people were growing, it was grapes and also olives for olive oil. But both grapes and olives might need...[one to] be at a certain place for decades. If you marry in your family, it means that you focus on staying in the same area.”

The fact that marrying within one’s own family was so predominant amongst Ancient Minoans on Crete was thus no coincidence. Rather, it was a means to an end.

“We can completely see the cousin to cousin marriage from the genomic evidence,” Stockhammer said. “It’s too many people to say it’s pure chance. I would say it was quite a strict practice.”

As for the scientific and historical significance of the latest revelations on Ancient Minoans unearthed by the research project, Stockhammer was quite clear.

“With this knowledge, we are basically forced to rethink the social organization in this period and societies that were behind these amazing works of art and architecture,” he said. “It’s a society where we have written records about palace administration. But we are now able to say something about the normal people.”

Please visit the site: <https://greekreporter.com/2025/01/25/ancient-minoan-marriage-rules-new-dna-analysis/> [Go there for pix]

A MARITIME LEGACY REBORN: GREECE'S NEW UNDERWATER ANTIQUITIES MUSEUM, BY DUNCAN HOWITT-MARSHALL

From ancient shipwrecks to treasures of the deep, Greece's much-anticipated National Museum of Underwater Antiquities will bring its rich maritime heritage to life.

In the historic heart of Piraeus, where the shimmering Aegean Sea meets the pulse of Greece's largest port, a bold cultural initiative is taking shape. The much-anticipated National Museum of Underwater Antiquities, **set to open in 2026**, is transforming the iconic SILO building – a towering grain warehouse built in 1936 – into a gateway to Greece's maritime past. Paired with a sleek new architectural addition, this museum will offer visitors an immersive journey into the depths of history, blending cutting-edge technology with ancient treasures retrieved from beneath the waves.

Culture Minister Lina Mendoni, a vocal advocate of the project, describes it as “a vision that has been decades in the making.” Supported by €93 million from the European Union's Recovery and Resilience Fund, the museum represents **Greece's largest cultural investment in recent years**. According to Mendoni, this initiative not only restores a symbol of industrial heritage but positions Piraeus as a world-class cultural destination.

Bound by the Sea

From ancient mariners navigating early Mediterranean trade routes to today's global shipping powerhouses, **Greece's cultural identity has always been inextricably linked to the sea**. Yet, despite its immense maritime heritage, Greece has long lacked a central institution to celebrate this legacy on a national scale. Smaller regional museums, though valuable, have only scratched the surface of the country's deep and diverse relationship with the water.

The National Museum of Underwater Antiquities seeks to bridge this gap. It will serve as a singular venue to **showcase the country's millennia-long connection to the sea** – a relationship that has profoundly shaped Greece's culture, economy, and influence on the world stage.

In a recent statement, Culture Minister Mendoni eloquently underscored this connection: “A vision that has been decades in the making is now entering its final phase of implementation. Greece's history, from prehistory to the present day, is intrinsically linked to the sea, shipping, and seafaring.” Visitors will be able to “dive into the past through exhibits featuring **submerged settlements, shipwrecks, ship replicas, hulls, cargoes, maps, and diagrams**,” she added.

A Design Rooted in Transformation

At the heart of the museum's transformation **lies the SILO building, a storied piece of industrial architecture** that once stood as a symbol of Greece's mid-20th-century economic development. Now, it is being restored to its former glory, with its distinctive

honeycomb structure preserved to honor its original design. This historic core will be complemented by a striking new facility, offering a seamless fusion of history and modernity.

The museum will span an impressive 26,380 square meters, of which 7,550 square meters will be dedicated to exhibitions – both permanent and temporary. In addition to gallery spaces, visitors can explore **a library, an auditorium, and interactive multimedia areas**. Amenities such as a gift shop, a café, and medical facilities will ensure a comfortable visit, while **state-of-the-art conservation laboratories** will allow archaeologists to preserve fragile artifacts recovered from the depths.

Among the museum’s standout features is the restoration of **the elevated conveyor belt that once carried grain to ships waiting at the docks**. Visitors will have the rare opportunity to walk along this historic structure, ascending to a height of 8.85 meters for sweeping views of Piraeus and the Aegean – a poignant reminder of Greece’s enduring ties to the sea.

Treasures of the Deep: Six Themes of Exploration

At the heart of the museum’s storytelling are six thoughtfully curated themes, **showcasing more than 2,500 exhibits**. Each “thematic axis” offers a unique perspective on Greece’s enduring connection to the sea. Visitors will embark on a journey that begins with **“The Sea, Environment, and Humanity,”** a powerful exploration of how the marine world has shaped cultures, economies, and ecosystems over the millennia. This opening theme emphasizes the profound interdependence between humanity and the sea, inviting reflection on both the opportunities and challenges this relationship has posed through history.

The narrative then dives into the fascinating world of **“Underwater Archaeology,”** a field that has revolutionized our understanding of the past. This section delves into the tools, techniques, and discoveries that have unlocked secrets hidden beneath the waves, from shipwrecks laden with ancient cargo to the remnants of settlements, submerged by rising sea levels and tectonic shift. Through **detailed displays and innovative digital reconstructions**, visitors will gain insight into the painstaking efforts required to recover and interpret these underwater treasures.

The journey continues with **“Time Capsules Beneath the Sea,”** a theme that brings history vividly to life through an extraordinary collection of artifacts. From intricately crafted amphorae and trade goods to **the remnants of ancient ship hulls**, these objects offer an intimate glimpse into the lives of those who once fought at sea or navigated the Mediterranean’s bustling trade routes.

In contrast, **“Fragmentary Approaches to the Past”** introduces a sense of mystery, inviting visitors to consider the gaps and unanswered questions that often accompany underwater archaeological finds. This theme challenges viewers to engage their imaginations as they ponder what lies beyond the fragments we’ve uncovered, creating an open-ended dialogue between history and speculation.

As the narrative progresses, the museum shifts its focus outward to the broader community with **“Underwater Cultural Heritage Open to Society.”** Here, visitors are

encouraged to engage directly with Greece’s maritime legacy, bridging the divide between scholarly research and public appreciation. This section highlights the importance of accessibility, ensuring that maritime heritage is preserved and celebrated for future generations.

The sixth and final chapter of the journey, “**SILO and Piraeus: Intertwined Histories,**” brings the story full circle by grounding it in the museum’s physical and cultural context. This theme explores the industrial heritage of the SILO building and its significance to the port city of Piraeus, tying the past and present together in a seamless narrative of transformation and resilience.

Through these interconnected themes, the museum weaves **a rich tapestry of history, discovery, and reflection**, ensuring that every visitor – whether a casual tourist or a seasoned historian – will leave with a deeper appreciation for Greece’s unparalleled maritime heritage.

Immersive Storytelling Meets Accessibility

The visitor’s journey through the museum has been carefully designed for maximum impact. The historic SILO building will house the opening themes, where its industrial ambiance will evoke **the raw power of maritime trade and exploration**. From there, visitors will transition into the modern facility, which showcases the museum’s most extensive collections and technological innovations.

Interactive features, including **augmented reality applications and tactile displays**, will bring artifacts to life, making history accessible and engaging for diverse audiences, from casual tourists to academic scholars. The conveyor belt at the museum’s conclusion ties the experience together, inviting visitors to reflect on how **the past, present, and future of Greece’s maritime heritage remain intertwined**.

Inclusivity is a cornerstone of the museum’s mission. Universal accessibility is built into the design, with features such as **ramps, elevators, and spacious walkways** ensuring that individuals with mobility challenges can navigate with ease. For visitors with visual impairments, tactile exhibits and audio guides will provide enriching alternatives. Informational materials will also cater to **a range of learning levels**, ensuring that the museum is truly welcoming to all.

A Cultural Milestone for Greece

As construction progresses, the National Museum of Underwater Antiquities is already being hailed as a milestone for Greece’s cultural landscape. Following [approval from the Ministry of Culture](#), **work began in December 2023** with meticulous attention to preserving the SILO building’s structural integrity while seamlessly integrating it with contemporary architectural elements.

Minister Mendoni has expressed her belief that the museum will **elevate Piraeus to the ranks of top international cultural destinations**. Through its innovative design, engaging exhibits, and commitment to accessibility, the museum promises to deliver an unforgettable experience.

By 2026, the National Museum of Underwater Antiquities will stand not only as a testament to Greece’s maritime heritage but as a symbol of its dedication to **preserving the stories of the past for future generations**. Visitors will leave with a deeper appreciation for the enduring connection between Greece and the waters that have defined its history, its culture, and its identity.

Please visit the site: <https://www.greece-is.com/maritime-legacy-reborn-greeces-new-underwater-antiquities-museum/>

3,500-YEAR-OLD TOWN FOUND NEAR **ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT,** **BY CHRISTOPHER GOMEZ**

A town approximately 3,500 years old was discovered in Kom el-Negus, Egypt, located about 27 miles west of Alexandria.

Recent discoveries have challenged the prior assumption that the area was exclusively inhabited during the Hellenistic period. The research team, headed by Sylvain Dhennin, has uncovered evidence indicating that the settlement was occupied during multiple epochs, dating back to the New Kingdom of ancient Egypt. This land, situated between the Mediterranean Sea and Lake Mariout, is distinguished by its distinctive horseshoe-shaped terrain called a Kom.

The study published by Cambridge University Press reveals that despite the initial findings from 2013, which suggested the land was settled during the Hellenistic period, evidence now indicates that people had been living in the area for a much longer period.

“Although the site was supposedly founded in the Hellenistic period (332–31 BC), excavations at Kom el-Nugus/Plinthine have revealed a large town from the seventh century BC,” the researchers said in the paper.

The primary discovery was the identification of a New Kingdom settlement. A notable find included a jar cover inscribed with the name Meritaten, the daughter of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, suggesting the town was established during the 18th dynasty (1550–1292 BC). It is believed to have been centered on agricultural activities, with indications of wine production present.

“The recent discovery of a major New Kingdom (c. 1550–1069 BC) settlement at the site is contributing to the re-evaluation of the ancient history of northern Egypt,” wrote the researchers.

The archaeologists uncovered evidence indicating that the settlement underwent multiple reconstructions and remodels over time as various groups inhabited the area. Among the structures discovered were drainage systems designed to safeguard the foundation walls, as well as several buildings that likely served diverse purposes, including a centrally located temple.

The temple was built during the Hellenistic period when Kom el-Negus significantly transformed. Only its footprint currently remains in the bedrock. The team found that the Hellenistic settlers destroyed or repurposed what was there before from the New Kingdom settlement and earlier eras, although some of the components from the older structures remained intact.

“Several reused elements are the only remaining traces of New Kingdom stone monuments: a fragment of a stele with the cartouches of Seti II; several blocks from a temple dedicated by Ramses II; and fragments of private chapels from the Ramesside period (1292–1069 BC),” the researchers wrote in the study.

Please visit the site:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeL1BPx0_dNAYOrm3WDzTPgtpkrwpcToHfha8sil8s_8dxRsA/viewform [Go there for pix]

MYSTERIOUS MASK FROM PTOLEMAIS

In Libya's ancient city of Ptolemais on the Mediterranean coast, Polish archaeologists have uncovered a dwelling equipped with an advanced drinking water collection system, and a mysterious mask.

In 2023, archaeologists from Poland's University of Warsaw made their way back to Ptolemais following a thirteen-year break due to the Libyan civil war. This city, founded by the Ptolemaic dynasty, played a significant role from the 4th century BC until the Arab conquest in the 7th century AD. The study of urban structures was the main focus of this research season, and the results were unexpected.

During excavations in June 2024, archaeologists from the University of Warsaw revealed part of a residential complex in the ancient city of Ptolemais. The residence, dating to the late 2nd or early 3rd century CE, featured a sophisticated rainwater collection system including an impluvium that channeled water into underground cisterns.

Piotr Jaworski, head of the Polish Archaeological Mission to Ptolemais, explained that the heart of the eastern area of the house was a small peristyle, surrounded by a kitchen, a staircase, and a room with a mosaic.

A peristyle pool that collected rainwater and routed it to two subterranean cisterns was the centerpiece of the home's sophisticated water collection system. The house was rebuilt in the late Roman era after being damaged by earthquakes in the third century. Three stone containers at the entrance serve as proof of this and may have been used for offerings or taxes, according to researchers.

A human face carved in hydraulic mortar inside a cistern was among the most fascinating discoveries. The mask's origins are unclear due to its lack of distinguishable features, leading to a variety of interpretations. Similarities to carvings found in Libyan sanctuaries are noted by archaeologists, indicating potential local connections or influences. It is possible that the owner of the house or those involved in its creation were of Libyan origin, but this remains speculative.

Ptolemais, founded in the 3rd century BC, was an important cultural and religious center in Cyrenaica. This place attracts researchers, among others, because of its historical complexity. It most likely still holds many secrets.

With ongoing archaeological efforts, researchers aim to better understand the function of structures on the acropolis and uncover insights into life in ancient Ptolemais.

Please visit the site: <https://arkeonews.net/polish-archaeologists-uncover-a-historic-residence-and-mysterious-mask-in-libyas-ancient-city-ptolemais/> [Go there for pix]

WHAT DID PEOPLE EAT AND DRINK IN ROMAN PALESTINE? EXPLORING THE ANCIENT JEWISH DIET, BY MEGAN SAUTER

In a land flowing with milk and honey, what did people eat and drink in Roman Palestine? What kinds of food made up the ancient Jewish diet?

Susan Weingarten guides readers through a menu of the first millennium C.E. in her article “Biblical Archaeology 101: The Ancient Diet of Roman Palestine,” published in the March/April 2019 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Although it is difficult to reconstruct the diet of the average person in Palestine during the Roman and Late Antique periods, Weingarten, as both a food historian and an archaeologist, is well equipped for the task. Using archaeological remains and ancient texts, such as the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmuds, she pieces together the ancient Jewish diet.

This mosaic inscription quotes a passage from the Talmud, which details plants that can and cannot be grown during the sabbatical year. These plants, including vegetables, fruits, and pulses, were part of the ancient Jewish diet. Found on the floor of a Late Antique synagogue at Rehov, this inscription is now on display at the Israel Museum of Jerusalem. Photo: Davidbena/CC-by-SA-4.0.

A passage of the Mishnah details the minimum diet for a woman, who is separated from her husband: “Not less than two qabs of wheat or four qabs of barley [a week] ... He must also give her half a qab of pulse and half a log of oil and a qab of dried figs or a mina of fig-cake, and if he has none of these, he must give her other produce instead.” This passage shows that the ancient Jewish diet included grains, pulses (e.g., beans, peas, chickpeas, and lentils), oil, and figs. Weingarten explains that the quantities of food described here are small:

A qab (meaning “measure”) is equivalent to 4 logs, and 1 log equals the contents of six eggs. It should be clear from this that the half log of oil, for example, equivalent in the Mishnah to the contents of three eggs, is very little indeed. The calories in this diet would barely suffice, and the woman would have had to grind the flour and bake the bread herself.

From this passage, we also see that grains comprise the majority of the woman’s food. In fact, scholars estimate that bread made up 50–75 percent of the average person’s diet. It was the food staple of the ancient world.

People also ate fish in a variety of forms—fresh, dried, salted, and smoked. Meat itself was a rare luxury—so much so that meat found on the street was eaten. As Weingarten explains:

The Mishnah even discusses whether people need to look for the owner of goods found lying in the street, or whether finders could be keepers. It rules that unidentifiable goods, such as “scattered fruit, scattered money, cakes of figs, bakers’ loaves, strings of fish,

pieces of meat,” belong to the finder. In other words, people were sometimes so poor that they were prepared to eat meat picked up off the ground, which was unlikely to be fresh—but clearly too valuable to be thrown out.

Additionally, the ancient Jewish diet included locusts, eggs, vegetables, pulses, fruit, and olive oil. People would season their food with herbs and spices, such as dill (anise), cumin, and mustard.

Since clean water was hard to come by, people would sometimes mix water and wine together. The natural antiseptic properties of the wine would kill some of the bacteria in the water, thereby making it safer to drink. However, not everyone had access to wine. Weingarten notes that in the Mishnaic passage prescribing food for a woman separated from her husband, “wine was not included in the minimum diet ... The Tosefta reports that a woman ‘has no claim for wine, for the wives of the poor do not drink wine.’” Accordingly, wine seems to have been a more common drink among the wealthy.

This summary briefly describes Weingarten’s reconstruction of the ancient Jewish diet. For the full culinary adventure, read Susan Weingarten’s article “Biblical Archaeology 101: The Ancient Diet of Roman Palestine” published in the March/April 2019 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review.

Please visit the site: <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/daily-life-and-practice/what-did-people-eat-and-drink-in-roman-palestine/>

TEN FASCINATING DISCOVERIES IN NEAR EASTERN AND MEDITERRANEAN ARCHAEOLOGY IN 2024, BY JESSICA NITSCHKE

Another year done and dusted! We've been sharing news stories about archaeological breakthroughs and discoveries all year. In case you missed any, here are some of the highlights (in no particular order).

1. Breakthrough in Radiocarbon Dating Leads to First Absolute Chronology of Iron Age Jerusalem

A team from the Weizmann Institute made a breakthrough in radiocarbon dating, with significant implications for our understanding of Jerusalem in the Iron Age. Working from 100 radiocarbon measurements of organic material from secure contexts, researchers were able to overcome the Hallstatt plateau, a phenomenon which previously made radiocarbon dating inaccurate during the 8th-5th centuries BCE. For the first time, they were able to create an absolute chronology of Iron Age Jerusalem, showing that the city was far larger and denser earlier than previously thought.

Read more on the Weizmann Institute site
Read the full study here (PNAS)

2. Egyptian Scribes Developed Osteoarthritis From Working Too Much

Researchers from the National Museum in Prague analyzed the skeletons of 69 men buried at a necropolis in Abusir, Egypt, dated to between 2700 BC and 2180 BC. Thirty of these were scribes, whose skeletons showed more degenerative joint changes indicative of osteoarthritis than non-scribes, in locations in their bodies that correspond to their sitting positions while carrying out their work.

Read more here (CNN)
Read the full study here (Scientific Reports)

3. Analysis of Mesopotamian Royal Portrait Reveals the Beginnings of Lost-wax Casting Technique

The term “lost-wax technique” often brings to mind Greek or Roman bronze statues, but Mesopotamians were using this method for their sculpture thousands of years earlier. A new study has revealed more detail about the development of the technique. A team from the Metropolitan Museum of Art used high-energy X-rays to do an in-depth technical examination of a bronze head dated to ca 2200 BCE from Mesopotamia (perhaps of ruler Rimush I of Akkad), revealing insights into the early development of hollow casting technology for life-size sculpture.

Read more here (LBV)
Read the full study here (Heritage Science)

4. A Rare, Eleventh-century Islamic Astrolabe with Both Arabic and Hebrew Discovered in Museum Collection

Dr. Federica Gigante from Cambridge University identified a rare (and beautiful) 11th-century Islamic astrolabe that had gone unnoticed in the collection of the Fondazione Museo Miniscalchi-Erizzo in Verona, Italy. Astrolabes were astronomical devices used to calculate distances and plot the position of the stars. Originally from Andalusia, this astrolabe is covered in Arabic and Hebrew inscriptions as well as western numerals. To quote Dr. Gigante, the object is “a powerful record of scientific exchange between Arabs, Jews, and Christians over hundreds of years.”

[Read more here \(University of Cambridge\)](#)

5. Oldest Wine in Liquid Form Discovered in Funerary Urn in Spain

A team from the Department of Organic Chemistry at the University of Cordoba analyzed some liquid inside a glass funerary urn that held the skeletal remains of an unknown man in a Roman-era tomb in Carmona. They determined that the liquid substance was in fact white wine — the earliest surviving wine in liquid form! Mineral salts in the liquid are consistent with white wines currently produced in the region, especially Montilla-Moriles wines.

[Read the press release here](#)

[Read the full study here \(Journal of Archaeological Science\)](#)

6. Discovery of a Large-Scale Early Farming Society at Oued Beht (Morocco)

The Oued Beht Archaeological Project in Morocco published their multidisciplinary research revealing the earliest and most extensive agricultural settlement in North Africa outside of the Nile Valley, dated to 3400 – 2900 BCE. With artifacts pointing to connections between the Maghreb and wider Mediterranean much earlier than previously recognized, their work is likely to transform our understanding about the development of agriculture in North Africa and the Mediterranean.

[Read more at The Conversation](#)

[Read the full study here \(Antiquity\)](#)

7. DNA Analysis Provides Surprising Insights into Ancient Pompeians

Researchers from the University of Florence, Harvard University, and Max Planck Institute in Leipzig extracted DNA from skeletal remains found in the famous Pompeian casts, which were made from the voids in the ash layer left behind by residents who perished in the lava flows. Their analysis not only changed earlier interpretations of the individuals’ relationships, it also showed that Pompeians derived their ancestry from recent immigrants from the eastern Mediterranean.

[Read more here \(LBV\)](#)

[Read the full study here \(Current Biology\)](#)

8. One of the World’s Oldest Churches Uncovered at Artaxata, Armenia

Researchers from the University of Münster and the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia have excavated the oldest known Christian church in Armenia and one of the oldest in the world, dated to ca. 350 CE via radiocarbon dating. Armenia became the first Christian state after its ruler, Tiridates III, was converted to the faith by Gregory the Illuminator in 301 CE. The building is octagonal shaped and stretches ca. 30 m in diameter, and was decorated by material imported from the Mediterranean.

Read more here (Smithsonian Magazine)

9. Hallucinogens Detected Inside a Bes Mug.

Researchers at the University of South Florida in collaboration with teams from University of Trieste and University of Milan investigated the organic residue of a tiny Bes mug (a ritual vessel in the shape of the Egyptian god Bes) held by the Tampa Museum of Art. They found traces of wild rue, Egyptian lotus, and a plant belonging to the cleome family, offering tantalizing clues into the use of psychotropic substances in ancient Egyptian ritual. The vessel has been dated to the 2nd century BCE.

Read more here (Artnet News)

Read the full study here (Scientific Reports)

10. The Phoenician Shipwreck Mazarrón II was Recovered Off the Coast of Murcia

Following years of planning, a specialized team from the University of Valencia successfully raised the Mazarrón II, a Phoenician shipwreck dated to the 7th century BCE. Discovered in 1994, the Mazarrón II is the most complete Phoenician shipwreck ever found. The team, which included collaborators from a number of different institutions in Spain, used a variety of cutting edge technologies in order to preserve the wreck (which was threatened by changes in the marine environment), including polyethylene resin molds for protecting the individual pieces during extraction.

Read more here (LBV)

Watch the video here (in Spanish)

Honorable Mention:

This isn't really a new discovery, nor newly published, but it is receiving considerably more attention this year than in the past, in part due to a new presentation of data at the 2024 ASOR Annual Meeting: evidence of the earliest known examples of alphabetic writing, from Umm el-Marra, Syria. Read about the history of this discovery here (Times of Israel).

Think our list is incomplete? Did we overlook something? Add your favorite discovery or breakthrough in the comments below!

Jessica Nitschke is Editor of The Ancient Near East Today and a Research Fellow at Stellenbosch University.

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CHILLING GRAFFITI FOUND IN AN ANCIENT GREEK PRISON, BY TASOS KOKKINIDIS

Graffiti, produced by an inmate of an ancient Roman prison in Corinth, Greece, had a chilling message for captors, an archaeologist revealed recently.

Some of the graffiti in the Greek language, which was found on the prison floor, renders a prayer for their captors for all to see: “Lord, make them die an awful death.”

Matthew Larsen, an archaeologist at the University of Copenhagen, who studied the ancient site, identified the site as a prison by comparing excavation records and examining the graffiti on the floor, concluding that the remains are 1,600 years old.

The site, first uncovered in 1901, contained jugs, lamps, and a small bathroom in what might have been a guard’s quarters.

Writing in the journal *Hesperia*, the journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Larsen reveals that all the etched words were found within the confines of the cracks on the floor.

This led him to the conclusion that the slabs hadn’t been moved to the site from previous use, meaning that all that graffiti marked onto the floor was done in place, while the site served as a prison.

Graffiti in the ancient prison of Greece

A reading of the Greek-written graffiti in the cracks of the floor shows whoever was locked up was not too happy about it.

The anguish is evident in the ancient graffiti authors’ writing. Some of the pleas read: “May the fortune of those who suffer in this lawless place prevail. Lord, do not show mercy on the one who threw us in here.”

Another etched plea says: “Godbearer, repay [punishment given by] Marinos, the one who threw us in here and made us spend winter.” Larsen surmises the winters were especially rough on the prisoners.

This particular prison is likely from a time the Roman Empire had control of Corinth. That didn’t lead to a healthy relationship between the Roman rulers and the Greek prisoners. Larsen told *Live Science* it exasperated the difficult existence in the prison. “You get a sense that they’re in a very dark space,” he said, “that they cannot be given a hearing.”

While life was dreary—and full of desire for vengeance—some prisoners were making the best of a bad situation. One inscription praised the “fortune of the beautiful girls who love the unmarried men” and other locations featured game boards that would have given

the prisoners something to do when not inscribing vindictive threats against those who put them in the cheerless confines.

In 146 BC, the Romans defeated the Corinthians at the Battle of Corinth. Taking this victory as a starting point, Rome soon controlled all of Greece. Declaring Corinth the capital of Roman Greece in 44 BC, Julius Caesar ordered his people to rebuild the city and its famous fountain.

Before the Roman conquest, there were no prisons as we know them today in ancient Greece. There were only temporary detention centers as criminals were either fined, exiled, or executed.

The concept of incarceration as a form of punishment wasn't as prevalent as it is in modern times. Instead, penalties focused more on retribution and deterrence rather than rehabilitation.

Please visit the site: <https://greekreporter.com/2025/01/01/graffiti-ancient-prison-greece>
