

### **A Prickly Pear to Pick: The Deposits of *Lithospermum* in the Chalcolithic of NE Romania**

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Our paper aims at presenting and discussing the discovery of *Lithospermum officinale* (Gromwell) and *Lithospermum purpureo-coeruleum* (Purple Gromwell) seed deposits from several Cucuteni sites (NE Romania, Vth - IVth millennia CAL. B.C.): Izvoare-Piatra Neamț, Poduri-Dealul Ghindaru and Frumușica. The large number of seeds (in the thousands) in the deposits, the morphological alteration observed in some instances (perforation) and the aesthetically pleasing appearance, suggest, at a first glance, their use as purely decorative body adornments. However, an in-depth contextual analysis and especially their association with other types of artefacts (such as selected animal skeletal parts) allows us to explore different meanings of this category of archaeological finds. Acknowledgement: This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS –UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-ID-PCE-2011-3-0885.

### **The Flora on Minoan and Mycenaean Frescoes and Its Botanical Determination**

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This research will explore Minoan and Mycenaean flora on frescoes and their botanical determination. This subject was mainly dealt with in an in-depth study by Martin Möbius, who published in 1933 an article comparing representations with real plants. Since then only individual case studies were pursued. My study shows that in Minoan and Mycenaean iconography ca. 35 categories of plants can be distinguished, but scarcely on the species level. Some plants cannot be determined at all, while other representations combine features of many species. The study will illustrate individual plants and – as far as possible – their botanic models, with the seasons of their blossoming in Crete, on other islands in the Aegean and in mainland Greece. It will also discuss some specific colouring of flowers (whether the yellow saffron did exist or was only in the imagination of the painters). The last part of the study will discuss the question of choice of models for representation on various materials.

### **Paleobotanical Analysis of a Burial in Plan De Ayala Site, Durango, Mexico**

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In the Mesoamerican societies (part of Mexico and Central America) human burials were accompanied by various types of offerings according to the social and economic status of the deceased. These can range from flowers, some coins, food or a favorite outfit of the person concerned. At the state of Durango in Mexico after excavating many burials without visible offerings, which belonged to the chalchihuites culture of the Mesoamerican tradition, it became essential to undertake paleobotanical studies. Both macro- and micro-remains were studied to better understand how these societies treated their burials. In this work the results of these analyses are outlined, using burial in the Plan de Ayala site as a case study.

### **Ash Hill of Myrmekion as a Ritual Object**

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On the territory of several ancient cities of the northern Black Sea coast, there are archaeological complexes of thick ash hills that contain a wealth of artefacts and particularly ceramics. Their function is still a matter of debate. This research outlines the results of the excavation of one of the largest northern Black Sea coast ash hills, located at the central part of the ancient city of Myrmekion. Originally it was a hill about 7m high and 30m wide. Different data were synthesised on the quantity and quality of the mass material found during the excavation. Chronological markers were analysed and the timespan of the complex was defined as the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. On the grounds of the fact that some votive objects, such as fragments of terracotta figurines and vessels with devoting inscriptions, were found in the complex it was concluded that the ash hill of Myrmekion was a peculiar cult object, possibly the result of mixed religious practices and cults of ancient Greeks and the local agricultural population.

### **Ritual Use of Animals in the Precucuteni-Cucuteni Civilisation**

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Skeletal remains of animals discovered in possible ritual contexts are described in terms of their anatomy and symbolism. In the Chalcolithic sites of the Precucuteni-Cucuteni cultural complex (5050 and 3500 cal. B.C.) although the recovery of animal bones is rather limited, the animals seem to hold an important position in the religion of this ancient population. Zooarchaeological and archaeological studies highlight specific patterns in animal remains according to species, element and age representation, killing pattern, butchering, stratigraphic details, and association with other artefacts. Different categories of animals or animal parts found in archaeological contexts will be presented, which allow an association with ritual practices to be delineated: burial of complete animals in settlements (e.g. skeletons of pigs discovered in the Cucuteni level