PLANTCULT: Identifying the Food Cultures of Ancient Europe

Aims of the project

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Identifying the Plant-Food Cultures of Ancient Europe

Plant food processing and consumption

Nutritional, cultural, social and economic aspects of human societies
Plant food preparation and consumption

Major changes in human societies related to plant foods

Plant cultivation
Food storage – surplus
Alcohol, luxury food production
Permanent habitation
Emergence of elites
PLANTCULT: Identifying the Food Cultures of Ancient Europe

A project that integrates a suite of new methods to identify Plant Food Cultures of Ancient Europe, the specific ways in which plant foods contributed to identity formation and social change in prehistoric Europe.
Identifying culinary identities in the archeological plant food record

A. What were the plant ingredients used for and how were they transformed into meals (i.e. plant based foods)?

B. Why do specific food choices, in staples and special food substances like alcohol and oil, change over time?

C. How and when does culinary practice and food identity relate to the emergence of trans-egalitarian societies in the study region?

Methodological framework

PLANTCULT project attempts for the first time to approach plant food remains from a large area and time-span, dealing with a large dataset, integrating archaeological, ethnographic, experimental and textual evidence on plant foods
Study area

Culinary practice among early farming European communities

Aegean to Central Europe

Neolithic (7th millennium BC) to the Iron Age (1st millennium BC)
Plant foods, identity and social change

Elite emergence in prehistoric Europe

Beer cultures?
Sprouted barley grain (malt) from Hochdorf, Germany, 6th century BC

Wine cultures?
Grape pressings 5th millennium BC, Dikili Tash, northern Greece
Deciphering plant foods of prehistoric Europe

- **Archaeological**
  - Plant food remains
  - Grinding equipment
  - Cooking equipment
  - Archaeological context

- **Ethnographic**
  - Plant food remains
  - Grinding equipment
  - Cooking equipment

- **Experimental**
  - Plant food remains
  - Grinding equipment
  - Cooking equipment

- **Textual**
  - Plant food data base
Κατάλογος ειδών......

Δημητριακά Όσπρια
Φρούτα/καρποί Ελαιοδοτικά Αρωματικά/φαρμακευτικά

Triticum monococcum, T. cf. monococcum grain
T. monococcum, T. cf. monococcum glume bases
T. dicoccum, T. cf. dicoccum, T. dicoccum/spelta grain.
T. dicoccum, T. cf. dicoccum, T. dicoccum/spelta glume bases
New type, cf. new type glume bases
T. aestivum/durum grain
T. aestivum/durum rachis internodes
T. monococcum/dicoccum, T. cf. spelta, Triticum sp., Triticum dicoccum/aestivum/durum grain
T. monococcum/dicoccum , T. cf. spelta, T. monococcum/new type, T. dicoccum/new type,
T. monococcum/dicoccum/new type, indet. glume bases
Hordeum hulled assymmetric, hulled symmetric, hulled cf. symmetric, hulled, cf. hulled grains
Hordeum naked assymmetric, Hordeum naked symmetric, naked cf. symmetric, naked, cf. naked grains
Hordeum sp., Hordeum/Hordeum spontaneum grain
Hordeum 2-row rachis internodes, cf. 6-row rachis internodes
Hordeum 6-row, cf. 6-row rachis internodes
Hordeum 2-6 row rachis internodes, indet rachis internodes
Triticum/Hordeum,
Triticum/Secale/Hordeum grain
Triticum/Hordeum basal node
Panicum mileaceum

Vicia Faba,
Pisum sativum
Lathyrus sativus
V. ervilia,
Lens sp.

Linum usitatissimum
Quercus sp.
Vitis pips
cf. Vitis stalks
Rubus fruticosus,
Rubus sp.
Prunus dulcis
Malus/Pyrus/Sorbus pips
Malus/Pyrus/Sorbus fruit
Rosa sp.
Sambucus ebulus
Sambucus nigra,
Sambucus sp.
Cornus mas
Ficus carica
Pistacia cf. terebinthus
Pistacia sp.
Άλεση δημητριακών

Μεσημεριανή Τούμπα
2100-1900 π.Χ.

Θραύσματα δημητριακών

Προέκυψαν από άλεση

Αρχοντικό Γιαννιτσών
2100-1900 π.Χ.

Ηλεκτρονικό μικροσκόπιο σάρωσης επιφάνειας σπόρου
Μικροφωτογραφία, Λ. Παπαδοπούλου
Processing food technologies and associated food micro-remains: starch, phytoliths, food residues
Plant micro-remains team
Calla McNamee, Georgia Tsartsidou, Sophia Laparidou,

SAA 83rd Annual Meeting
Washington, DC
April 11 - 15, 2018

Experimental Archaeology as a Tool for Understanding Microbotanical Taphonomy
A data base of plant foods and food equipment

- Contextual associations
- Spatial distribution
- Temporal distribution

Culinary practice and identity

- Plant food introductions
- Innovation in culinary transformation
- Diversity
- Variability
- Continuity
- Differentiation

Does millet reach Bronze Age Europe with new cooking facilities?

Alcohol, cultural identity and status
Project data bases

Panos Tokmakides and Themis Roustanis
with the assistance of Denitsa Nenova
Project outreach

• Events for the public

• Short video, by Kostas Prokos and Nefeli Stevi (with the collaboration of Yannis Skopeteas, University of the Aegean)

• Documentary (in preparation)
Success Rate by Country of HI

Success rate (2007-2015)
ERC Project PLANTCULT

Team members


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Bulging

Bulging and shiny

Ground prior to charring

Barley, cooked, dried, milled

Boiled (?) in a liquid

Barley, cooked, dried, milled
From the Neolithic to the Iron Age:

wine pressings

Dikili Tash, 4300 B.C.

Karabournaki, 6th century B.C.
Greek Colonisation and the introduction of the olive in prehistoric Southeastern Europe
Thank you for your attention!!!

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