

## **Abstracts of lectures given at the Fourth Dutch Symposium of the Ancient Near East, Leiden, The Netherlands, March 27th, 2010**

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### **Dr. Jesper Eidem**

#### *A Fortress on the Sajour, Syria – Qala'at Halwanji*

The lecture presents the recent archaeological investigations at the EB-MB hill site of Qala'at Halwanji, located on the Sajour River in Northern Syria. Series of sondages 2008-9 have revealed extremely well-preserved ruins of an MB II (18th cent. BC) settlement, and the finds are discussed in historical context. The project is a joint Syrian-Danish-Dutch effort, and directed by the lecturer.

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### **Dr. Karel Innemée**

#### *Monastic archaeology at Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt*

In the middle of the 4th century AD hermits, according to tradition, following in the footsteps of Saint Macarius settled in the region of Wadi al-Natrun, west of the Nile delta. Here semi-anchorite communities gradually developed into monasteries. In the past 15 years archaeologists from Leiden University have excavated the site of Deir al-Baramus, which is commonly believed to be the first one established by Macarius. In the summer of 2009 and January 2010 a survey has been undertaken in the surroundings of St. Macarius monastery, close to the spot where Macarius is believed to have resided in his final years. It has emerged that there are significant differences in the built environment of both complexes. In this paper Karel Innemée will present an overview of the developments of the monasteries in the Wadi al-Natrun on the basis of newly obtained data from the survey.

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### **Dr. Jorrit Kelder**

#### *Royal gift exchange between Mycenae and Egypt, Olives as “greeting gifts” in the LBA eastern Mediterranean*

Contacts between Egypt and the Aegean during the Late Bronze Age, especially focusing on the relation between Minoan Crete and New Kingdom Egypt have been the subject of much study. The relation between the Greek (Mycenaean) mainland and Egypt generally is regarded as a more elusive topic, and most scholars seem to consider contact between the two a matter of irregular exchange, probably not even a direct exchange, but via middlemen (on Cyprus, in the Levant etc.). In this paper, data on the import of Mycenaean stirrup jars –generally regarded as containers for olive oil- in Egypt and the presence of the olive (oil) in Egypt are presented. Both archaeological and paleobotanical data are examined. The aim of the paper is to stimulate new thought on the possibility that contact, or rather, exchange, between Egypt and the Greek mainland was more than an irregular phenomenon and was instead highly organized, involving the active engagement of the ruling elite at Mycenae and the Pharaonic court. At the same time, it will be demonstrated that olives or olive oil were of importance in this Late Bronze Age interstate contact.

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**Lidewij Radix, MA***On the road to Tell Sabi Abyad, Syria – A strontium isotope study*

Strontium isotope ratios are increasingly successfully used to make a distinction between local and non-local individuals that are recovered from archaeological burials. This lecture presents the recent strontium isotope studies on the human teeth of the sample population of Tell Sabi Abyad, Syria.

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**Dr. Laurens Thissen***The land of milk and honey? Approaching dietary preferences of Late Neolithic communities in NW Anatolia*

Recent work by Richard Evershed and colleagues published in *Nature* in 2008 concerning residue analysis on ancient potsherds has provided clear evidence for milk processing and dairying in Anatolia and SE Europe in the Neolithic. Good results were especially acquired from ceramic samples taken from late 7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC sites in NW Anatolia (Fikirtepe, Pendik, Aşağı Pınar). The investigation also suggestively links the dominance of cattle in the bone assemblages of these sites to the use of milk.

Building on this pioneering work, a new research project (Thissen, Türkecul & Özbal) takes these primary results to the level of the pottery assemblages themselves. Integrating the residue analysis with ceramic studies, we regard sampling specific vessel categories on residues as an important step into assessing pottery function and meaning in prehistoric assemblages. This talk aims to present the first results of our research, and will focus on the NW Anatolian key area seen by Evershed as favorable in Neolithic milk processing.

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**Prof. dr. ir. Hans van der Plicht***Radiocarbon dating: chronological debates around the Mediterranean*

The <sup>14</sup>C dating method is of great importance for chronological studies, as it offers a yardstick for measuring past time by scientific means. Recent breakthroughs concern calibration of the <sup>14</sup>C timescale for the complete range of 50.000 years, and statistical analysis of series of dates increasing precision, thereby approaching "absolute dating".

The lecture will focus on recent chronological findings in the Near East and the Mediterranean at large. Here <sup>14</sup>C is still revolutionizing archaeological thinking, even challenging the traditionally established chronologies.

Radiocarbon dates from Israel, Carthago, Spain and Italy play a crucial role in the so-called "high or low chronology" debate for the Iron Age.

For the second millennium BC, it appears that "historical" chronologies need revision, from the <sup>14</sup>C point of view. A crucial chronological anchor is the Thera/Santorini event which is now precisely dated. For the Neolithic, a large unprecedented series of dates became available for Tell Sabi Abyad (Syria) possibly linking cultural events with climate change, in particular the so-called 8k2 event (c. 6200 BC).

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**Dr. Ben Haring***Workmen's Marks in the Theban Necropolis, Egypt: An Alternative to Writing*

The workmen who constructed and decorated the tombs in the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens during the Egyptian New Kingdom (ca. 1550-1070 BCE) applied personal or housemarks to their possessions, such as pottery and furniture. In addition, they left the marks as graffiti in the mountains surrounding their workspots and settlement (Deir el-Medina). These phenomena are not in themselves very special, since such marking systems are widely attested, in Ancient Egypt and outside. What does make the local marking system unique, however, is the fact that it was also used for the compilation of administrative records on ostraca. Such records were otherwise made in the cursive hieratic script, and thousands of these have survived. Along with these appear several hundred of ostraca with marks, which sometimes seem to overlap with the hieratic information, and in other cases appear to be complementary to it. What exactly did the workmen want with this pseudo script?

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**Dr. Marc Lebeau***Tell Beydar / Nabada, an Early Bronze Age City in the Syrian Jezirah. An Outline of the Latest Results.*

Tell Beydar, northeastern Syria, is located in the "Khabur Triangle", a sort of delta without sea formed by various tributaries of the Euphrates river. Known in the past as the ancient city of Nabada, Tell Beydar is a medium-size town, built on several terraces and protected by city walls and gates. The main occupation dates to the Third Millennium BC (ca. 2900-2100 BC). Very different from Lower Mesopotamia, where irrigation is essential, in NE Syria the annual rainfall allows for rain-fed agriculture, which was practiced on a vast scale in the plains surrounding the site. This was the period of the Sumerian city-states in the South and of king Sargon of Akkad (c. 2350 BC). This period also corresponds to the first golden age of Ebla, a period documented by the archives of kings Igrish-halab, Irkab-damu and Ishar-damu. The Syrian-European Mission at Tell Beydar started in 1992. The Syrian team is composed of scientists from the Directory General of Antiquities & Museums, whereas the European teams comprise scholars from the Universities of Brussels, Leuven, Venice, Madrid and Munich, coordinated by the European Centre for Upper Mesopotamian Studies (ECUMS). The paper presents the project and its results.

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