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ΜΩΜΟΣ XII MEETING OF PREHISTORIC RESEARCHERS
Debrecen 18-20 May 2022. Prehistoric foodways

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Due to the pandemic of the last two years, the next instalment of the ΜΩΜΟΣ conference to be held in Debrecen had to be postponed. Although the situation is still uncertain, we think that in 2022 the conference can already be organised with in-person attendance. The date of the conference will be 18-20 May 2022, and the title is ***"Prehistoric foodways"****, focusing on all aspects of prehistoric food.*

"Man ist, was man ißt" – You are what you eat, as the German saying goes, paraphrasing Ludwig Feuerbach's original sentence ("Der Mensch is, was er ißt.") from 1850 (in a review of Jacob Moleschott's book titled *Lehre des Nahrungsmittel. Für das Volk*). Although this saying exists in a number of languages, it is perhaps the German one which reflects best and most eloquently the truth and double meaning of this thought: that people are literally built from the material they consume as foodstuffs, and that the culture of food is one of the most basic aspects of a person's identity. This is why we chose "foodways" as the topic of the 2022 ΜΩΜΟΣ conference.

The concept of foodways includes all the activities, rules, contexts and meanings that surround the production, harvesting, storage, processing, cooking, serving and consumption of foodstuffs. Accordingly, numerous aspects of archaeological remains can be connected to food. Nature and culture meet in the concept of food: the consumption of food, nourishment, is indispensable for biological survival; at the same time it is necessary to create culture as well. The close relationship and interaction between people on one hand and animals and plants on the other can blur the border between the dichotomous definitions of nature and culture. Furthermore, numerous aspects of economy and ecology, society and culture meet around the concepts of food/nourishment/foodstuffs, and can all be examined through the methods of archaeology.

Since practices connected to foodways are all patterned sets of culturally constructed behaviours, they are amenable to scientific study. Although at first sight they – or at least some of them – may seem inaccessible for archaeological inquiry, there are numerous methods that enable their study. Based on these we would like to draw the conference participants' attention to the following topics:

The issue of food production and procurement has played a fundamental role in the chronological division of prehistory since Henry Lewis Morgan in the 19th century (savages/barbarians). The study of food production/acquisition, its economic and social aspects are important topics to this day, and they are

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extremely important factors when examining the economic and social organisation of prehistoric communities and their changes. The most important tools of the study of food production/procurement, which examine directly the remains of food sources themselves are archaeozoology and archaeobotany, the analysis, interpretation, and spatial and temporal comparison of floral and faunal remains from archaeological sites. Production/procurement can be examined through its tools from hunting weapons to tools that can be linked to different phases of crop production, which can be analysed from both a typological and a functional point of view. The context of these can also provide important data for the socio-economic organization of the given communities and possible control over food production. Numerous scientific studies can be performed on animal and plant remains (e.g. stable isotope, genetics) to help identify their origin, mobility, and ways of production or breeding.

The study of the environment and its impact on food production is closely related. Climatic and soil factors and their changes all play a role in the development and changes of various food production methods. Natural vegetation, wild plants and animals are also essential food sources in all periods of prehistory.

The storage of food can also be examined on the one hand through storage pits documented on excavations (presumably beehive-shaped, narrow-mouthed, coverable) and through storage vessels. Their structure, nature, capacity, spatial relationship with other features/houses/objects may be important, from which demographic factors, socio-economic inequalities, or even property relations can be inferred.

The processing phase can also be examined through the animal and plant remains themselves, their spatial distribution, and the traces of processing observed on them. Processing tools, such as grindstones, mortar, or various specialized utensils (for churning, curing, preservation, etc.) also provide information on this phase. Their formal-functional analysis and use-wear traces are also important sources of information, as are the microscopic residues left on the implements (e.g. phytoliths, starch granules).

The phase of food preparation/cooking can be examined from several perspectives. We can study the different hearths, stoves and ovens, which could have been used in different preparation processes, from a formal-functional point of view. The various types of cooking/preparation can also be identified on animal bones. The direct means of cooking are the cooking vessels (pottery and metal), which can be analysed not only from a formal-functional point of view, but patterns of use-wear traces, cracks, breakage, or sooting can also be examined. The former contents of the dishes can also be examined by chemical methods (lipids, proteins). In special cases, even food residues can be analysed directly.

The consumption phase can also be studied through several sources and from several perspectives. Ceramic tableware can be examined from a formal-functional point of view, as well as through traces of use-wear. Chemical methods can also produce important results in serving vessels, and organic residues can also be found on the ceramics used for consumption. An important source may be the study of human remains in this regard. Traditional anthropological studies can provide a number of diet-related information (e.g. malnutrition-related pathologies). Some types of stable isotopes (N, C, S) also provide information specifically on nutrition. Another new method is the biochemical analysis of dental calculus. Of particular note is the study of specific forms of consumption, including the identification, social role, and significance of feasts, ceremonial and ritual meals.

Finally, the methods of experimental archaeology can be used to examine virtually all phases of food preparation and consumption.