

TEA

The
European Archaeologist

The newsletter of EAA members for EAA members
Issue 87 - Winter 2026





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The views expressed are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent official EAA policy.

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Cover

Transient Eternity: The Tomb of Dexileos in the Age of Climate Change

Taken in February 2021, this image shows the burial ground of the Lysanias family from the Demos Thorikos, located in the Kerameikos district of Athens, Greece. At the centre stands the equestrian monument of Dexileos, a young Athenian who died in the Corinthian War in 394 BC. The classical funerary stele commemorates not only the virtues of an idealised citizen, but also reflects the self-image of Attic polis society.

The archaeological relevance of the site is multifaceted. The Kerameikos was both a necropolis and an important access point to the city – situated along the Sacred Way and Kerameikos Street. The tomb reliefs there provide essential insights into the social structure, artistic development and political symbolism of the Classical period. However, this silent testimony to ancient memorial culture is facing new challenges today.

Like many open-air sites around the world, the Kerameikos is increasingly exposed to the effects of climate change, with extreme weather conditions, increased humidity and biological weathering threatening the sensitive marble surfaces. Air pollution, increased tourism and changing microclimates in urban areas also endanger the long-term preservation of archaeological monuments – not only in Greece. This photograph documents an important monument and raises the question of our responsibility: how can we preserve our material heritage in the face changing climatic conditions? While modernity has often attempted to preserve the past through museums or conservation measures, global environmental changes are forcing us to reconsider our approach to cultural heritage preservation. Thus, the monument to Dexileos, which once glorified the values of a bygone era, becomes a symbol of an urgent new narrative: the protection of memory in the face of a changing planet.

Franziska Lehmann

Independent

Do you have something that you would like to contribute to TEA?

We welcome a range of contributions including:

- Letters to the editors
- Opinion or Debate pieces
- Insights
- Short reports
- Project overview articles
- Object biographies
- Book reviews
- Announcements (jobs, field schools, publications, funding opportunities, etc.)
- Meet a Member for *TEA* (suggest someone for us to feature)
- Proposals for *TEA*'s next cover image (enter the TEA Photojournalism competition)
- Something else? Send us an idea!

Please contact *TEA* editors at: tea@e-a-a.org

Calendar for EAA Members

January – April 2026

1 January	Beginning of the 2026 EAA membership
January	Call for nominations to the EAA election circulated to Members
January	Call for nominations to the European Heritage Prize circulated to Members
January	Call for nominations to the Oscar Montelius Foundation (OMF) Early Career Achievement Prize (ECAP) circulated to Members
28 January	Payment deadline (registration and membership fee) for all session organisers
29 January	Final list of sessions and session organisers for the 32 nd EAA Annual Meeting in Athens, Greece, available
2 February	110 th Executive Board meeting
2 February	Call for volunteers opens
5 February	Deadline for paper submissions
27 February	Call for volunteers closes
27 February	Deadline for EAA Book Prize nominations
9 March	Partial deadline to apply for EAA financial support to EAA Communities
31 March 2026	Early Bird membership fee deadline
30 March	Deadline for nominations of election candidates by Members
30 March 2026	Deadline for notification of acceptance / rejection to contribution authors
1 April	Deadline for submissions to TEA winter issue
3 - 6 April 2026	Easter - EAA Secretariat closed
6 April	Call for grant applications ends
16 April	Announcement of grants allocation
29 April 2026	Payment deadline for first authors of accepted contributions & session speakers
29 April	Deadline for registration cancellation without handling fee
April – May	Call for nominations to the EAA Student Award circulated to the Members

In Case You Missed It...

Joana Valdez-Tullett

EAA Social Media Editor



[Tracking wild potato across the Southwest USA](#)

[Technological innovations and hafted technology in China ~160–72,000 years ago](#)



[Far-reaching hunter-gatherer networks during the Last Glacial Maximum in Western Europe](#)

[Hand stencil in Indonesia is now the oldest known rock art](#)



[Contemporary archaeological perspectives on intersectional inequality in a welfare state in twentieth-century Finland](#)

[The significance of Medieval burials in a Neolithic monument \(Spain\)](#)



[Occurrences of Persian glazeware in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia](#)

[Palaeolithic Art found in Moravian Karst cave challenges view of early European art](#)



All images in “In Case You Missed It” are from Flaticon, specifically by artists Freepik (potato, axe, trilithon, desert and cave art), Flat Icons (hunter gatherers), BZZRINCANTATION (hand stencils) and frdmn (Finnish flag).

Report

EAA 2025 Annual Evaluation Survey

Executive Summary

- The evaluation survey of the 31st EAA Belgrade Virtual Annual Meeting (AM; 2–6 September 2025) and selected membership matters took place between 13 - 30 November 2025. Altogether 394 EAA Members responded fully or partially.
- Most respondents had permanent academic employment (30.43%) or were students (33.25%); 10% were employed in the heritage sector.
- Most respondents came from the UK, Germany, Spain and Italy (together 36.5%).
- Altogether 27% of respondents did not attend the Belgrade Virtual Annual Meeting, mostly due to lack of time or interest in an online conference.
- Almost half (45%) of respondents who attended the AM did so covering their costs from their personal budget, while 28% of respondents had their costs funded by their employer; 18% of respondents relied on grants.
- Most respondents (61%) found the AM extension from Tuesday to Saturday useful.
- Attendance to sessions was largely limited to the respondent's own session or 1 – 2 other sessions (50%); only 14% of respondents participated in more than 6 sessions.
- Overall academic content was seen as good; too many parallel and often thematically overlapping sessions was still one of the most common complaints.
- Many felt that EAA Executive Board decisions undermined academic freedom, and overshadowed the scientific programme.
- The online European Archaeology Fair was only visited by 9% of respondents; discounts on books or services offered might increase Fair attendance.
- Altogether 69% of respondents were satisfied with the practical communication leading up to the AM, considering it clear and effective. Communication during the AM on part of EAA leadership regarding political issues was widely seen as chaotic, authoritarian, anti-democratic, and ethically unacceptable.
- Altogether 66% of respondents considered the technical organisation of the AM good or perfect, although experiences were mixed and respondents brought up some technical problems they experienced.
- The vast majority of respondents praised volunteers and staff as excellent, professional, friendly, efficient, and supportive.
- Most respondents (60%) prefer hybrid format for future AMs to improve inclusivity for researchers who cannot travel. However, 37% of respondents argue for onsite-only AMs to avoid technical problems impacting on sessions flow and discussion quality.
- Many respondents expressed criticism of inconsistent, last-minute, and opaque decisions regarding Israeli institutional affiliation, and condemned attempts of censorship and undue burden on volunteers. Respondents called for the restoration of trust, democratic governance, and meaningful dialogue.

- Some respondents commented that they will only attend the 2026 AM if there is appropriate reflection on the events in August – September 2025 and a credible pathway forward.

Introduction

The evaluation survey of the 31st EAA Belgrade Virtual Annual Meeting (AM; 2–6 September 2025) and selected membership matters took place between 13 - 30 November 2025. Altogether 364 EAA Members responded in the 2025 evaluation survey in full; further 30 respondents started the survey but dropped out before completing it, and other 34 individuals viewed the survey but did not answer any question. The average time spent completing the survey was 9 minutes.

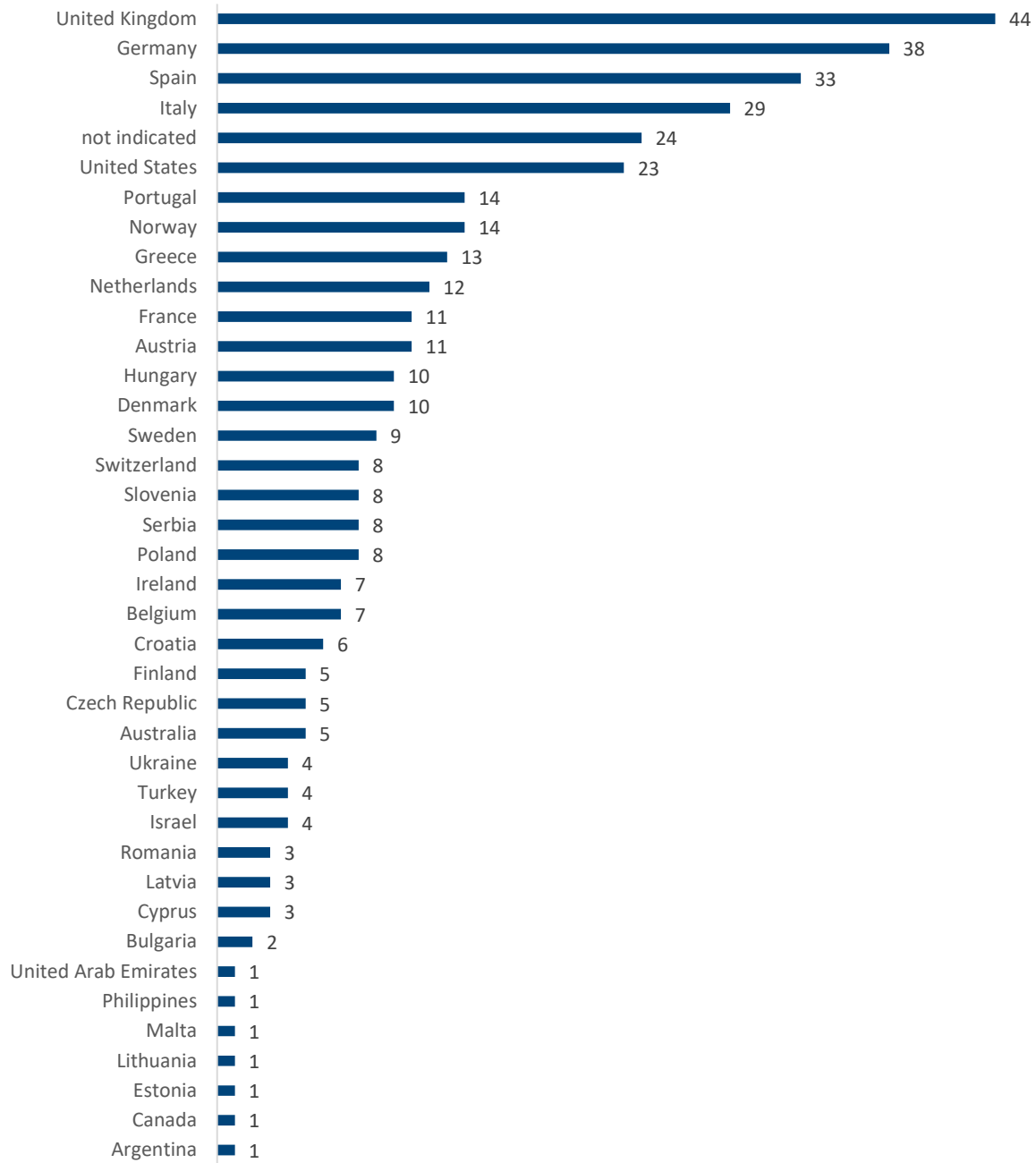
What is your current career stage / work situation?

391 responses

BA Student	4	1.02%
MA Student	7	1.79%
PhD Researcher	55	14.07%
Postdoctoral Researcher	64	16.37%
Temporary Position as Principal Investigator	14	3.58%
Temporary employment in contract/commercial archaeology	3	0.77%
Temporary employment in the heritage sector	4	1.02%
Permanent academic employment	119	30.43%
Permanent employment in contract/commercial archaeology	16	4.09%
Permanent employment in the heritage sector	39	9.97%
Other permanent employment	9	2.3%
Freelancer	18	4.6%
Retired	28	7.16%
Unemployed	4	1.02%
Other	7	1.79%

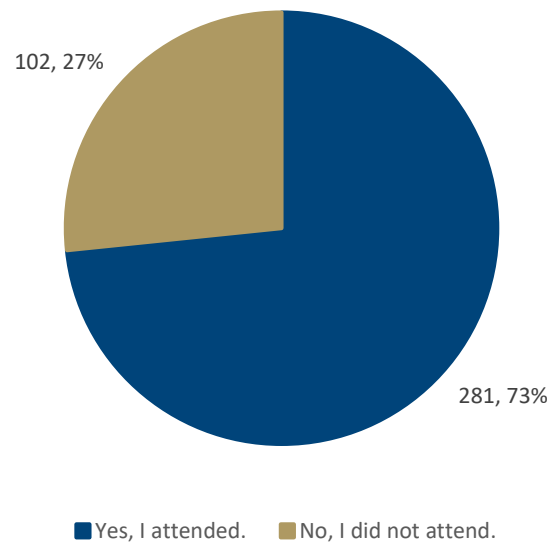
What is the country where you work, study or reside (rather than your nationality)?

392 respondents



Did you attend the 31st EAA Belgrade Virtual Annual Meeting?

383 responses

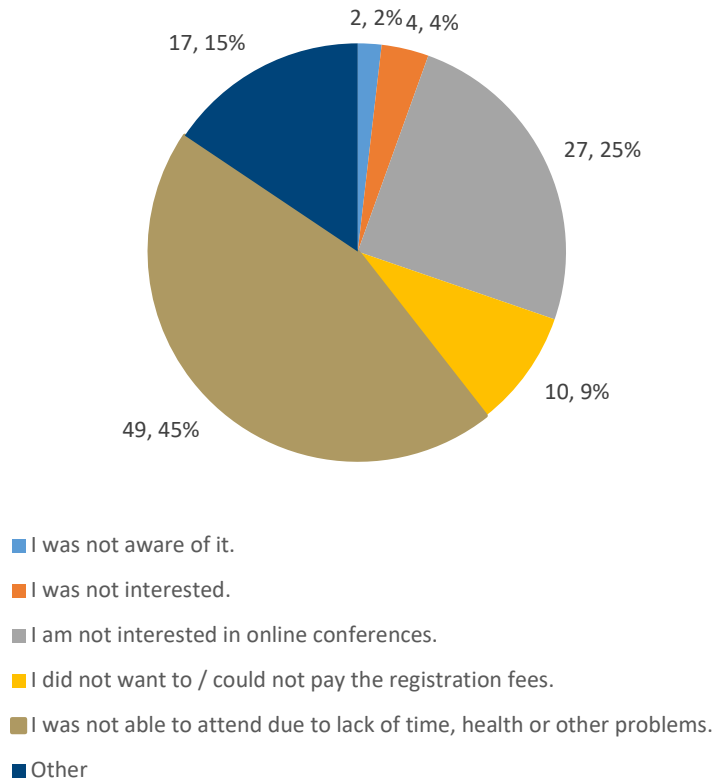


Why did you not attend the 31st EAA Belgrade Virtual Annual Meeting?

109 responses

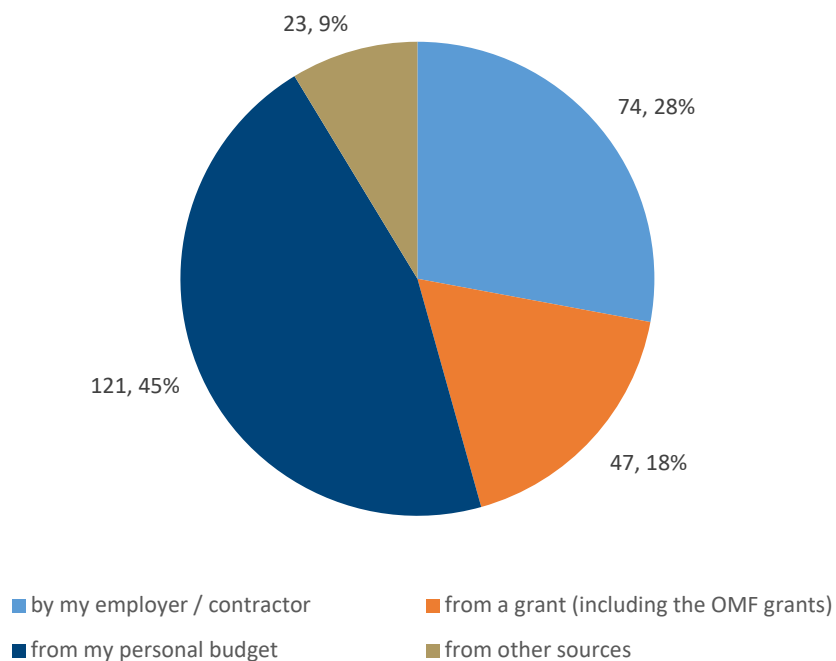
Most of the respondents did not attend due to lack of time or interest in an online conference.

10 respondents could not pay the registration fees.



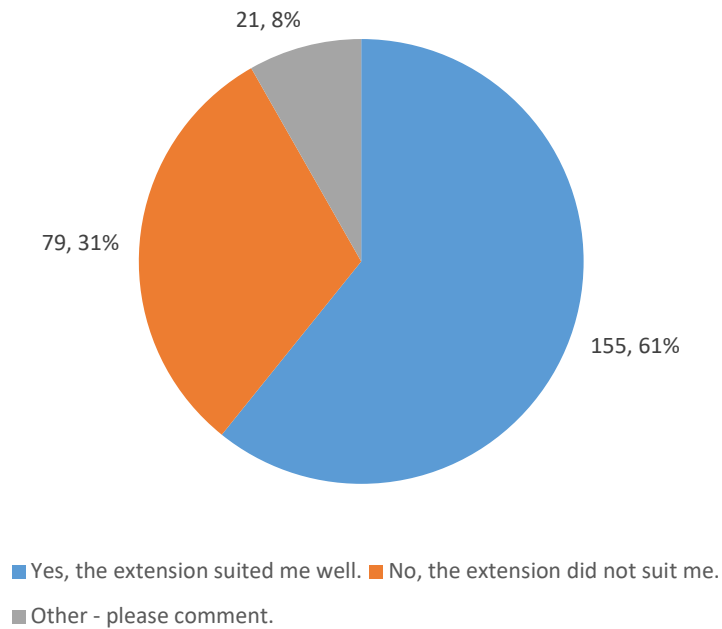
My 31st EAA Annual Meeting registration fee was covered (tick all that apply):

265 responses



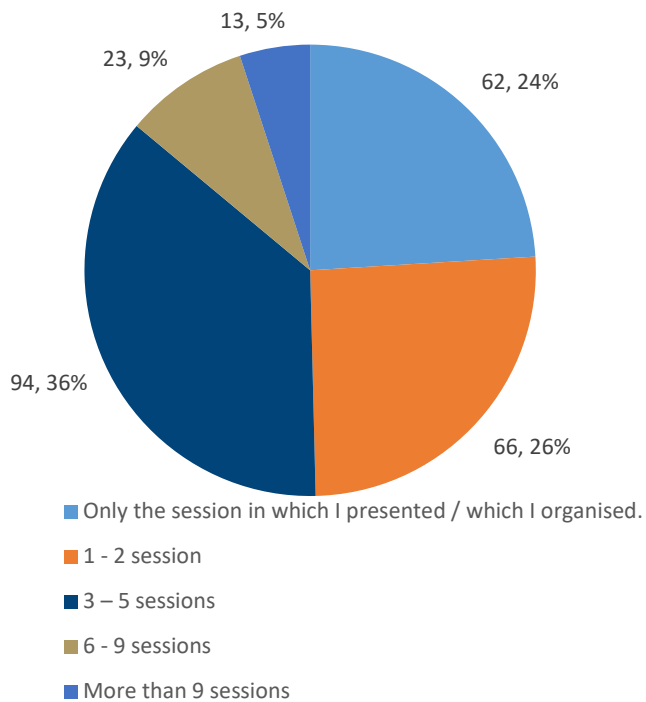
6. Did you find the extension of the 31st EAA Annual Meeting useful (sessions at recent Annual Meetings were held Thursday - Saturday, this year it was Tuesday afternoon - Saturday)?

255 respondents



How many sessions did you attend online?

258 respondents



8. Please share your feedback on the academic programme of the 31st Annual Meeting, including its overall focus, the quality of the academic content, and how the sessions were structured and scheduled.

190 respondents

Overall academic content was seen as good, even though quality was uneven across sessions, which many considered normal for a conference of this size.

Some respondents felt the programme was too broad, repetitive, or unfocused, while others praised the breadth, interdisciplinarity, and global scope, including beyond Europe.

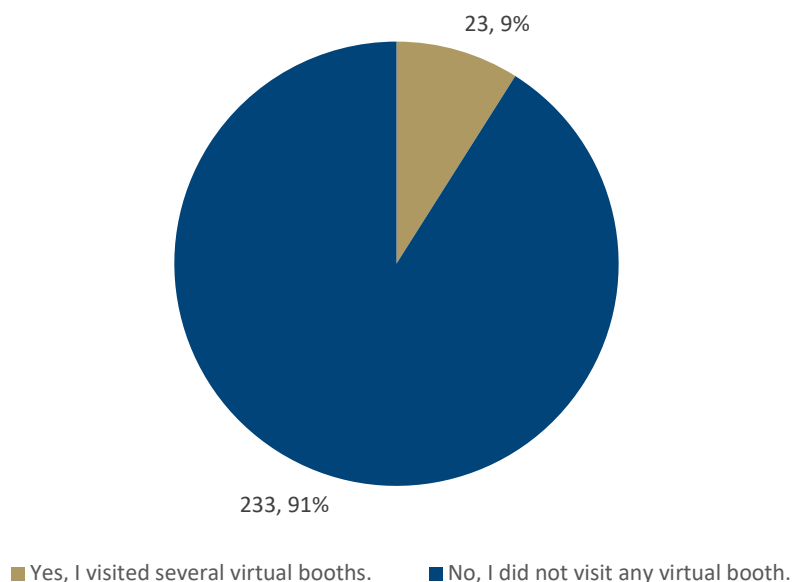
Too many parallel sessions was still one of the most common complaints, including overlapping of thematically similar sessions.

Given the circumstances, the online delivery was technically adequate; however, the dominant sentiment was that online conferences are inferior (reduced engagement, lack of discussion, poor networking, and difficulty balancing work responsibilities).

Many felt that EAA Executive Board decisions undermined academic freedom, and overshadowed the scientific programme.

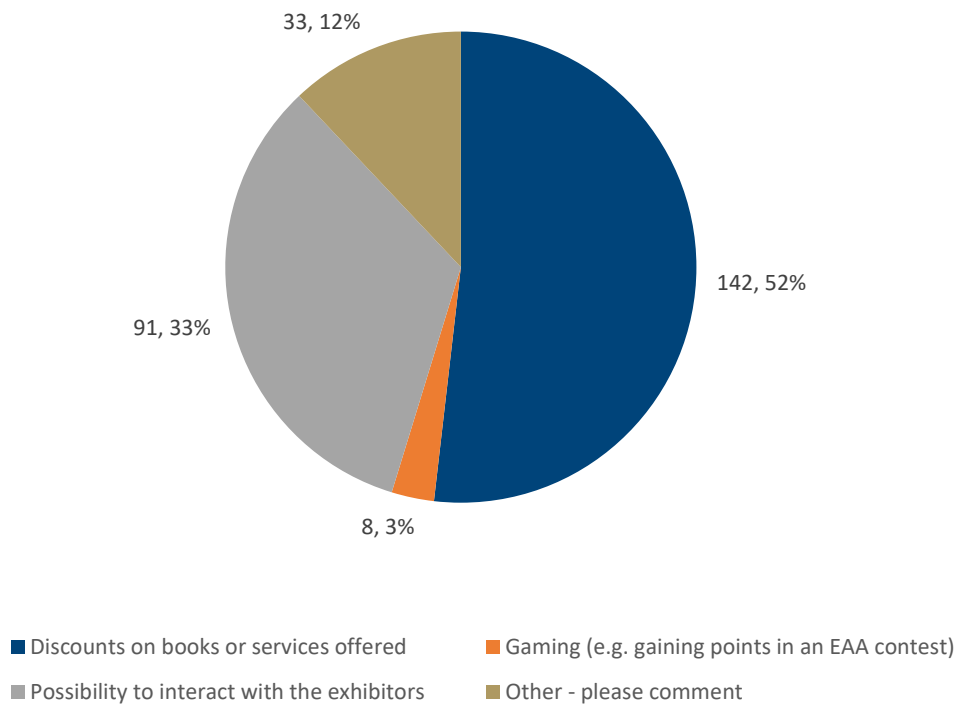
Did you visit the 31st EAA Annual Meeting European Archaeology Fair?

256 responses



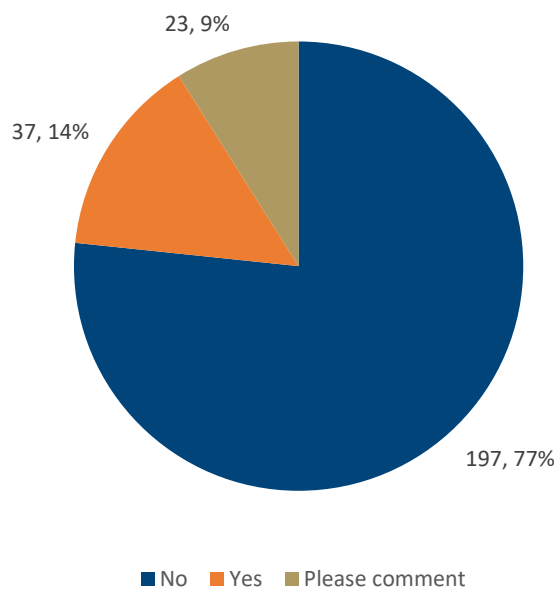
Please tick the reason that brings, or would most likely bring you, to visit the online profile of the European Archaeology Fair exhibitors (tick all that apply):

274 responses



I experienced safety issues while attending the 31st EAA Annual Meeting online.

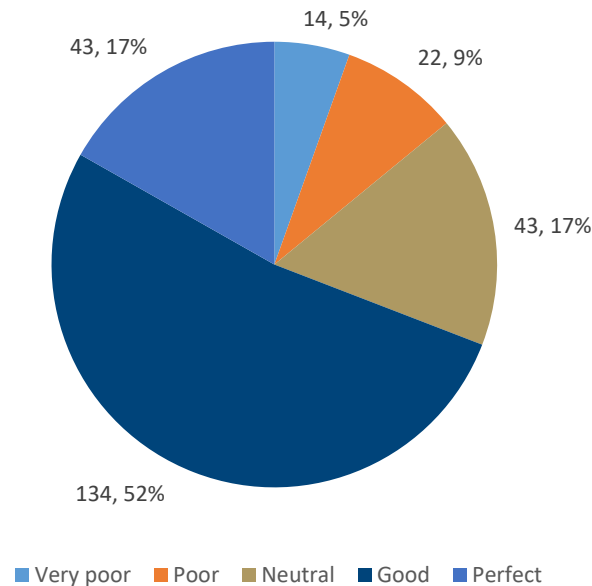
257 responses



Respondents perceived institutional pressure and censorship which made them feel unsafe.

How would you rate the clarity, timing, and usefulness of the practical information about the Annual Meeting (e.g. how to prepare, how to participate, conference logistics, programme access via website/emails) emailed to you?

256 responses



Please share any comments or suggestions if you think our practical communication (before and during the Annual Meeting) could be improved for future conferences:

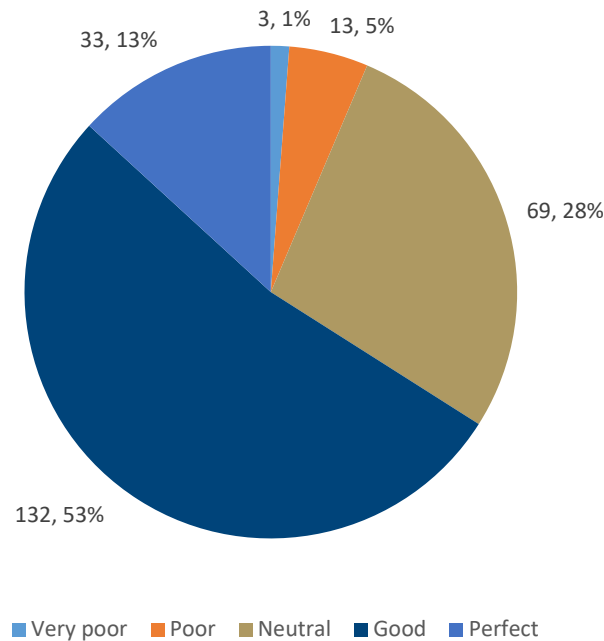
139 responses

Routine and logistical communication prior to the AM was overall rated as clear and effective.

Communication during the AM on part of EAA leadership regarding political issues was widely seen as chaotic, authoritarian, anti-democratic, and ethically unacceptable.

Please rate the technical organisation of the 31st EAA Annual Meeting (conference mobile app and web platform):

250 responses



Please comment on the technical organisation of the 31st EAA Annual Meeting (conference mobile app and web platform):

140 responses

Experiences were mixed: many participants reported that the mobile app and web platform worked well, while others experienced persistent technical problems.

The most frequent technical problems included:

Difficulties logging in; some users were logged into the wrong profile.

Slow response times

Poor or no support for Firefox, Safari, and iPad

Formatting and misaligned buttons in some browsers

“My Agenda” and calendar features frequently failed to work.

Starring items often did not add them to agendas or enable filtering.

Cancelled or moved sessions not updated promptly within the platform.

Please comment on the support provided during the 31st EAA Annual Meeting (volunteers and EAA staff):

162 responses

The vast majority of respondents praised volunteers and staff as excellent, professional, friendly, efficient, and supportive.

Many respondents commented that volunteers were placed in an unacceptable and vulnerable position by EAA leadership.

Please comment on any aspect of the 31st EAA Annual Meeting not covered by the above.

140 responses

Many respondents expressed criticism of inconsistent, last-minute, and opaque decisions regarding Israeli institutional affiliation; some perceived double standards compared to the EAA's response to Russia/Ukraine.

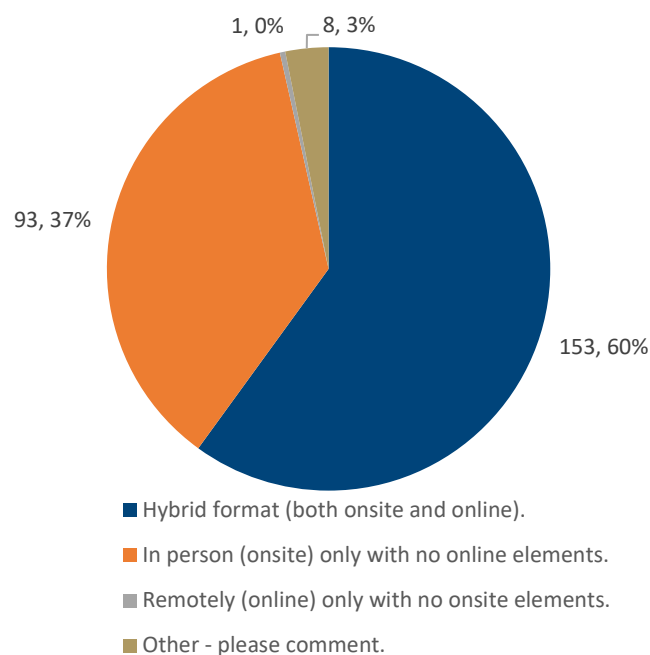
Respondents condemned attempts of censorship and opposed volunteers being instructed to police speech.

Some stated they will not renew membership or participate further without systemic change.

Many viewed the meeting as a disgrace and one of the worst crises in EAA history.

In what format should future EAA Annual Meetings be held?

255 responses



Please comment on your preference of future EAA Annual Meetings format:

166 responses

In-person meetings are seen as irreplaceable for networking, informal discussions, collaboration, and community-building.

Many support hybrid access to improve inclusivity for researchers with limited funding, early-career scholars, those with caregiving responsibilities, disabilities, health issues, visa restrictions, or living in conflict zones, and participants in the field or with teaching commitments.

However, hybrid format is criticised for technical problems (sound, connectivity, delays), increased stress for organisers and session chairs, and for disrupting session flow and discussion quality.

Is there any feature, currently not present at EAA Annual Meetings, that you would recommend implementing?

124 responses

Respondents called for the restoration of trust, democratic governance, and meaningful dialogue.

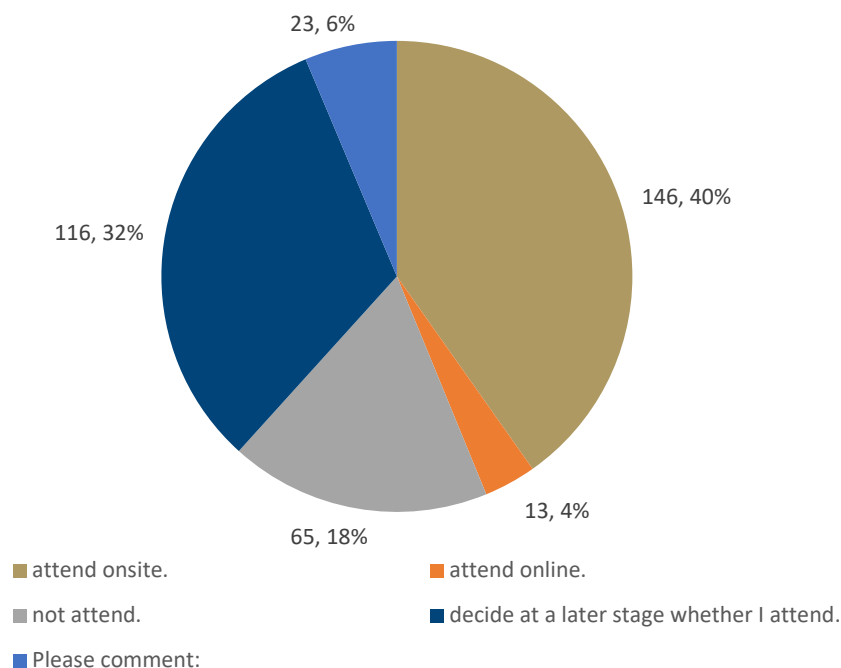
Some respondents requested designated spaces / sessions / other forums for debate and Exchange, incl. political discussion, or more time and better scheduling of discussion at AMBMs.

Greater visibility and integration of EAA Communities, incl. free “Communities booths”, was proposed.

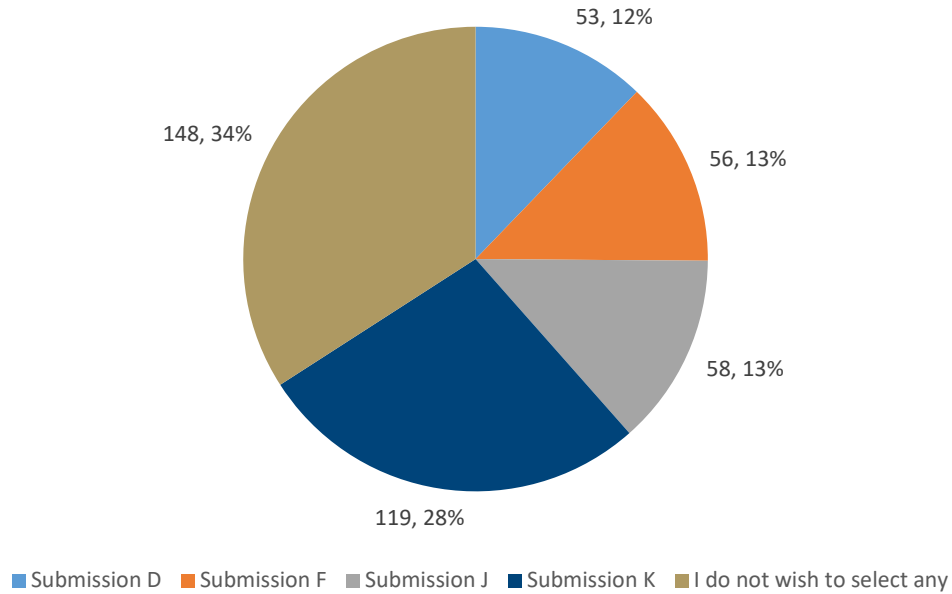
The 32nd EAA Annual Meeting will take place on 26 - 29 August 2026 in Athens, Greece; the same EAA Annual Meeting registration fees will apply to both onsite and online attendees. I plan to...

363 responses

Some respondents commented that they will only attend the 2026 AM if there is appropriate reflection on the events in August – September 2025 and a credible pathway forward.



The European Archaeologist (the EAA’s newsletter) has been running a photojournalism competition, the theme of which is: “Present Pasts & Past Presents”. Which of the following images best reflect this theme (select up to three; view the images by clicking on the individual options)?



Report of 2025 Officers for 2026 Special Meeting

Report compiled by Eszter Bánffy (President), Sally Foster (Secretary), and Ariane Ballmer (Vice-President), 9 December 2025, for 9 January 2026 EAA Special Meeting

Context

1. The President, Secretary and Vice-President have compiled this report because we are the current Officers of the EAA who held office in 2025. We were continuously present on site in Belgrade throughout the Annual Meeting (AM), working and cooperating throughout on EAA business.¹ We are specifically singled out by ‘concerned_eaa’ for removal from our posts.
2. This summary Report offers context and some commentary, including with specific reference to three topics: question of Israeli affiliations; implications for Russian and Belarusian affiliations at AMs; handling of Archaeologists Against Apartheid (AAA) and others’ planned and announced disruptions at the Belgrade AM. We have also produced a separate Timeline for reference.
3. This Report and the Timeline will silently rectify some key errors, misconceptions and misrepresentations in the ‘Reader’s Digest’ (authorship unknown), widely circulated after the Belgrade AM. The ‘Reader’s Digest’ specifically targets the President *ad hominem*. We regret to note that some of the misleading information in the ‘Reader’s Digest’, also referred to by individuals on Social Media and by the Black Trowel Collective, can only have origins with one or several fellow Executive Board (ExB) member/s (who, past or present, is unknown).
4. By way of context, the ExB is required to take strategic and issue-based decisions. This is undertaken on behalf of the whole EAA (just the Annual Members Business Meeting (AMBM), the ExB and the President have the mandate to take such decisions). EAA staff take operational decisions related to daily and procedural matters.²
5. As a rule, the EAA does not engage in politics and public affairs if not directly related to our field. ‘We can communicate clear EAA positions in relation to ethical topics linked to our fields of activity as well as to topics that potentially affect our discipline and/or Members. Such statements shall be rooted within the presidency and the Executive Board of the EAA’.³
6. We apologise that in general the EAA has not been able to communicate each aspect of its work in relation to some of the events in the Timeline. A phenomenal amount has happened in the very short period since 22 August 2025, which is when the ExB made its initial decision about Israeli affiliations being removed from AM participants. This not only fell in the summer period but also at the busiest period in the EAA year, as Secretariat and ExB prepared for the AM.
7. For context, it may be helpful to recall that the EAA operates with seven paid Secretariat staff (most part-time) and nine ExB members who serve entirely on a voluntary basis. The workload and responsibility can be overwhelming. In Belgrade, only a limited number of staff and ExB members were physically present on site for individual reasons, which placed considerable constraints on capacity. The personal toll on the Officers present on site in Belgrade was

¹ In terms of ExB business, two of the other six ExB Officers and Members were also present in Belgrade for the 1 Sep ExB meeting, one for the 2 Sep Opening Ceremony, two for the 5 Sep AMBM. The fourth officer, the Treasurer, resigned on 3 September.

² EAA Handbook 3.2 Guideline on the EAA process of information flow and decision-making.

³ EAA Communication Strategy, section on Ethics.

consequently considerable, not least when hostile social media activity and content, often targeting the President, was added to the equation.

Israeli affiliations

8. The ExB took what we believe was a necessary decision on 1 September 2025 when it revisited and voted (by majority, i.e. standard practice) to reverse the decision it had taken on 22 August to remove Israeli affiliations from conference participants. Those who sought to revisit the decision and subsequently changed their vote did so on the basis of individual reflection, newly acquired information, and input from Advisory Committees.
9. We share in common that we do not think that a decision on the relationship of EAA to Gaza-Israel politics should be taken in isolation from a reconsideration of the wider implications for the EAA about its policies and practices in relation to global events. It is for this reason that we support the root-and-branch review enshrined in the Roadmap, as endorsed by Members in the October 2025 *per rollam* voting.
10. We also believe that the ExB meeting called at short notice for 22 August, prompted by a call from some ordinary ExB members, resulted in a rushed decision, under extraordinary pressure, that was not sufficiently strategic, or indeed fully informed. Furthermore, at that stage the reports from the three Advisory Committees and Statutory Committee, who we had consulted only days before, were still pending. We acknowledge that the ExB taking a decision on affiliations before receiving these reports represented a procedural shortcoming. However, the ExB took relevant advice into consideration at their 1 September ExB Meeting, and will take all of the advice into account when reviewing a potential fourth version of the existing EAA Statement on threats to archaeology and archaeologists arising from the Israel/Gaza crisis.⁴
11. It is not normal ExB practice to share confidential information about who voted what way or the reasons that they did so. None of the people who reversed their initial vote in the second round of voting (i.e. those who had first voted in favour of removing Israeli affiliations and then agreed to reverse the decision) indicated that they had been intimidated by the protest letters or pressured by the President. At least two of them explicitly stated this during the 1 September meeting. They explained—both at that meeting and already previously by email—that their reconsideration was based on the fact that important background information and considerations of due diligence had been lacking at the time of the initial vote, and that their original decision had been influenced primarily by time pressure.

Implications for Russian and Belarusian affiliations

10. A challenging factor in the ExB's decision has of course been the prior decision about Russian and Belarusian affiliations. The ExB recognised this dilemma in its discussions on both 22 August and 1 September 2025, noting this would need further consideration. The ExB appreciated that its decision on Israel risked appearing contradictory even if, among other things, the contexts were different.
11. It is against this background that we Officers support the need for the approach to Russian and Belarusian colleagues to be revisited during the forthcoming Roadmap review. The existence of this practice, the EAA's first foray in this regard, does not mean it should automatically be applied

⁴ See <https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA/About/Statements.aspx>

elsewhere. Current global politics, and their relationship to Europe, invite wider reflection on the nature and content of EAA Statutes, policy and practice. We also believe that it is timely to consider the pros and cons of the merits of removing affiliations, and whether alternative, more individualised checks, are not more appropriate.

12. EAA AM organisation is extremely complex and timing for each element is honed by years of Secretariat experience. Organisation for Athens 2026 is well advanced, meaning that EAA meantime continues its existing practice for Russian and Belarusian affiliations.

Handling of planned AAA disruptions at Belgrade AM

13. We were the only people present on the ground in Belgrade on 2 September (bar one ExB member present for the Opening Ceremony) and 3 September. This is when urgent actions were taken in response to the AAA's planned disruption. We are accountable for our actions.
14. With the benefit of hindsight, we realise that we could have expressed our accountability and apologies more clearly, particularly in our communications with the local Belgrade team, session organisers and volunteers.
15. Extremely busy and handling exceptionally high numbers of enquiries, email traffic, and new issues arising, we had not appreciated the implications of an email circulated by AAA. The President and the ExB are responsible for both academic content and Safe Space Policy during AMs. Wanting only to prevent disruption to the EAA's academic programme and to safeguard the Safe Space Policy — the specific political context being immaterial — we issued a well-intended directive to session organisers and volunteers. This was a rushed and hasty action that we recognise was not sufficiently thought through and hence caused confusion and dismay. That includes the responsibility placed on volunteers, who managed the IT in each session.
16. Naturally, it was not our intention to curb freedom of speech. However, our action has been received in this way, and it is understandable how this impression could have arisen. Our action was insensitive especially given the Serbian political context including the ongoing student protests, and the local student body being a source of many of our volunteers. The pressure we were under at the time shaped our inadequate communications, for which we sincerely apologise to everyone.

Looking forward

17. As Officers, the key learning point for us is that the EAA's ExB needs external advice on how it handles unexpected crises or matters needing immediate or urgent decision-making. The way forward must be pragmatic, recognising that all ExB members are geographically dispersed and that individually they need to accommodate onerous and demanding voluntary EAA duties around paid employment. Managing expectations for Members is a necessary corollary of this.
18. We must also express our profound concern for the immediate and long-term future of the EAA if its governance becomes driven by a single issue, let alone a political one. We have noted, since at least 2025, both explicit and implicit tendencies to position the ExB as a space for advancing particular political agendas. For instance, we are aware that prospective 2025 ExB candidates were individually approached by one or several unknown individuals for their positions on Israel–Gaza in the run-up to the ExB elections. We believe that holistic perspectives with respective experience and skill sets are what the EAA needs in its governing body.

19. Our concern also stems from genuine care for the governance and conduct of the EAA, and for the implications this has for our Secretariat.
20. The EAA is a highly diverse community that depends on the inclusion of all voices. We firmly hope that members will move forward in a spirit of trust, constructive engagement, and peaceful, healing dialogue.

Statement

Appeal and Anti-Harassment Committee

In the aftermath of the Belgrade EAA meeting the AAHC was inundated with complaints from members, many of which involved several individuals and all of which were complex and required sensitive handling. Ordinarily the AAHC meets 3-4 times a year; we have met four times already since September, including the Special Meeting called for January 9, 2026 and expect to meet at least twice before the end of February. Coordinating the schedules of seven busy people, including the representative of the EAA Secretariat, has been challenging and we ask our fellow members to be patient as we work through the case backlog. Our decisions and the actions resulting from those decisions may not always be publicly visible but that does not mean that we are not busy in the background.

A number of complaints were largely focused on procedural issues related to the handling of the directives issued to session organisers and volunteers at the Belgrade meeting. We ask members to remember that we do not set policy or make decisions about legal issues—our primary function is to protect members from harassment, assault, bullying and intimidation (HABI). However, the confusion caused by the conflicting guidelines sent to presenters, organisers and volunteers created an environment that many members experienced as hostile or threatening. As a result, the AAHC compiled the procedural complaints into a report to the Executive Board with recommendations for establishing procedures to avoid such a situation in the future.

We would like to draw members' attention to several important points regarding the scope of the AAHC's remit to manage expectations so some of the procedural complaints can be directed elsewhere and individual complaints can be made in a way that allows us to deal with them more expeditiously.

- 1) Anonymous and third-party complaints without supporting evidence of HABI directed by one EAA member against another will not be considered.
- 2) Corroborating evidence is necessary because the person against whom the complaint is directed will not have the opportunity to confront their accuser. The procedure for appealing a decision by the AAHC is clearly spelled out in the online guidelines.
- 3) We are not a tribunal – our main function is to protect vulnerable members, not punish transgressors. That said, if necessary, we will move to impose the maximum penalty against individuals who refuse to accept the decision of the committee with regard to a complaint brought against them.
- 4) The AAHC does not support any particular political agenda; the opinions of individual members on current issues are not relevant when determining whether a member has been subjected to HABI.
- 5) We have made an effort to ensure that our deliberations and decisions are entirely independent of any other EAA governing body or committee. That has allowed us to focus on ensuring that every

member, irrespective of their rank or professional life stage, has an equal expectation of being treated fairly. At the same time, members who abuse their position and engage in threatening or intimidating behaviour because they assume their status will protect them will receive no special consideration. We take this responsibility seriously and hope that our fellow EAA members will respect the difficult job that we have been asked to do.

Chat with EAA Official over TEA

Peter Tóth



Institution: Masaryk University, Czech Republic

Position in the EAA: Executive board member, elected 2025

EAA Member since: 2011

Image courtesy of P. Tóth

TEA: How do you see archaeology changing in the future?

P. Tóth: Archaeology is undergoing rapid transformation. Through intensive inter- and multidisciplinary collaboration, it produces new kinds of knowledge that have the potential to change how we look at ourselves and shape our future steps. With this comes significant social responsibility, as this knowledge must reach diverse audiences. Society expects archaeology to preserve our shared cultural heritage and, through knowledge of past societies, contribute to solutions for future global challenges.

TEA: What/How does archaeology contribute to society at large?

P. Tóth: Archaeology contributes by safeguarding our shared cultural heritage and making it accessible. By studying how past societies navigated crises and challenges, archaeology provides evidence-based insights that can shape policy decisions and help address contemporary global problems and support sustainable development goals.

TEA: What is the biggest issue facing archaeology today?

P. Tóth: Archaeology faces a critical challenge in our post-truth era. When misinformation spreads rapidly through social media and anyone can present their own narrative as fact, we have a responsibility to be beacons of evidence-based truth. Archaeological findings can be misinterpreted or deliberately misused for political gains: to construct false nationalist narratives or manipulate cultural memory. Moreover, heritage sites themselves face destruction when they contradict certain ideologies. As archaeologists, we must actively combat misinformation and protect both physical cultural heritage and the integrity of archaeological interpretations.



At left: Tóth making photographing by drone at the site of Těšetice-Kyjovice, Czech Republic. Photo courtesy of P. Tóth.

TEA: What is the one piece of gear that you can't live without in the field?

P. Tóth: Definitely my smartphone. I use it for positioning, as a compass, level, camera... and of course, to play music during field surveys!



TEA: If you could go back in time, would you go? Where and when?

P. Tóth: As a researcher studying the Neolithic and the process of Neolithisation, I would love to travel to Göbekli Tepe in Turkey around 11,600 years ago. It would be fascinating to witness the purpose of these monumental structures and observe what activities the Pre-Pottery Neolithic hunter-gatherers conducted there, especially to understand whether this was primarily a ritual center or just a part of early settled life.

Image above: P. Tóth excavating a beautiful Iron Age pot from Těšetice-Kyjovice, Czech Republic. Image courtesy of P. Tóth.

TEA: If you could see only the future or only the past, which would you choose, and why?

P. Tóth: I would love to see how the discipline will evolve in 50, 100, or 200 years... and what methods and equipment future archaeologists will use. It would be fascinating to see how the miniaturization processes we experience today (like smaller but more powerful chips) will affect radiocarbon dating, aDNA research and stable isotope analysis.

TEA: Some people say that culture (broadly speaking) is a luxury. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

P. Tóth: I strongly disagree. Culture is not a luxury; it surrounds us everywhere and it is fundamental to being human. The way we speak, what we wear, how we cook, what we listen to, read, or watch... Everything reflects culture. As archaeologists, we know that even the simplest artefacts reflect cultural choices and values. Culture is universal, not an elite privilege.

At right: Tóth discussing stratigraphy with students during a summer school at Těšetice-Kyjovice, Czech Republic. Photo courtesy of P. Tóth.



Meet a Member over TEA

Marianne Moen



Institution: Museum of Culture and History, Oslo (Norway)

Nationality: Norwegian

At left: Image courtesy of M. Moen

TEA: Why do you do archaeology/How did you decide to do it?

M. Moen: That's a question I think I have to answer in two parts! I do archaeology because I love it, both because I believe it is important and because it's the most fun thing I can imagine doing for a living. It is *important* because through archaeology we can expand our understanding of human societies, and through that challenge assumptions and expectations both for the past and the future. In that way, archaeology can (try to) make the world a better place. It is *fun* because the possibilities are endless in terms of what we can imagine and the methods we can choose to work with.

The funny thing is that I chose archaeology almost by chance. I was young, archaeology sounded suitably romantic and exciting, though I also considered several other disciplines at the time. It grew on me from there.



At right: Moen in her office. Image courtesy of M. Moen.

TEA: What/How does archaeology contribute to society at large?

M. Moen: As a discipline about the shared past, I think it contributes in a multitude of ways. Archaeology not only records and preserves tangible heritage, but also helps to uphold stories of shared pasts. That comes with quite a bit of responsibility to do it well, but also endless opportunities to make a positive difference for the world we live in now.



Above: A snapshot of Moen on television doing a BBC interview. Image courtesy of M. Moen

TEA: What archaeology literature are you reading right now?

M. Moen: Lots of things simultaneously and therefore probably nothing in enough depth! On my desk at the moment are a couple of lovely new book by colleagues at the Museum of Cultural History, Oslo (Norway) on Norwegian archaeology, a bunch of articles from various editorial tasks and a very long list of books I keep meaning to find time to read. On top of the pile right now is the excellent *The Hidden Lives of Viking Women* edited by Michèle Hayeur Smith and Alex Sanmark, that I need to devote some time to.

TEA: Describe your workspace in five words or less

M. Moen: Incredibly messy, but very nice!

TEA: What is your best/worst/funniest/oddest archaeology story?

M. Moen: There's a fair few to choose from, but I'll chose one that only embarrasses myself: Once upon a time, I was a young undergrad in a foreign country (I'm Norwegian; I did my undergrad I Scotland). My English was pretty decent, and I managed to follow most lectures and tutorials without much difficulty. One thing that started to bother me though as the first term went on, was all the talk of carved seals. Bear in mind that being from Norway, hearing 'seal' and thinking of marine mammals is fairly logical. Anyway, I couldn't quite figure out why seal-carving seemed so popular in ancient civilisations. Both cruel and also very puzzling. It wasn't until the spring term that it finally clicked... when we were given handouts with images of cylinder seals (I realise this is also a story that reveals my age, as this was in the time before PowerPoint presentations were commonly used in lectures). Anyways, as language mix-ups go, I still find this one funny. All those poor seals!

TEA: If you could go back in time, would you go? Where and when?

M. Moen: I really wouldn't! Unless I had a time machine and could hop and skip through time as and when I pleased. I'm afraid I'm unequipped for life without modern conveniences.

TEA: Any advice to new archaeologists just starting out?

M. Moen: Expect the unexpected! Take the chances that are offered and go through doors when they open. Archaeology is rarely a good bet for a stable career, but it is a great deal of fun and can take you to very unexpected but rewarding places.

TEA: What, in your opinion, is the role of a museum today? How has this changed?

M. Moen: Museums inhabit a changing, but incredibly important role today in my opinion. Evolving from collections of curiosities, including antiquities, museums now hold the responsibility to curate and preserve material culture, as well as researching and disseminating that knowledge. Museums thereby curate heritage, and can help shape the heritage discourse. They can influence what people know about the past and how they understand it. This makes for a complex and multifaceted role; working in museums is incredibly rewarding as a result.



Image above: Moving the Oseberg ship, a project in which Moen participated in September 2025. Image courtesy of Moen.

Letters to the Editors

****Editors' Note: of the total of fourteen Letters to the Editors which were submitted, three were subsequently withdrawn. These withdrawals were due to the ExB's decisions to delay the release of TEA 87 and to not allow for anonymous Letters to the Editor. As the possibility of anonymous Letters to the Editor had been requested by Members and was eventually recommended as a course of action by the AAHC after their review of the situation, we (Sam Reiter and Matthew Walsh) resigned our editorship of TEA in February 2026.***

We regret that not all contributions could be included due to the decision to not allow for anonymity. We feel that this goes against the nature of the Safe Space policy. The sad reality is that some persons do not benefit from the same job security and working environments as do others. It is a shame that they should be silenced, and also a shame that we will not get to read what they wrote.

We wish to express our gratitude to everyone that submitted a Letter, named or anonymously. Further, we offer our sincere thanks to those persons who chose to remain named in the Letters you find below.

Re: Crises and conflicts are not solved by partiality and bans, but by dialogue and the rule of law

From: Thomas Meier, Heidelberg University (Germany)

Dear Editors,

Last August, just a few days ahead of the Annual Meeting in virtual Belgrade, the EAA got into heavy turmoil, which still shakes the Association. It is a very severe crisis. But as in any crisis, it not only brings along threats but also opportunities for the future development of the EAA. I highly appreciate that the editors of EAA's newsletter *TEA* pick up this chance and give equal voices to many opinions uttered over the last months offering a stage for open dialogue on future directions and viewpoints – as different as they may be. Such a dialogue is at the very heart of what the EAA was and hopefully is – and will be.

I shall not go into the details of the events and high emotions among EAA Members. Let us recall some historical facts and humanitarian principles:

On 7 September 2023, Hamas fighters committed the most horrible pogrom since the Shoa, including mass murder of civilians, rape, abduction and taking of hostages, some of whom were kept for more than two years, and many of whom died by murder or rejection of appropriate medical care. For months and years, the population of Israel was under heavy attack by missiles from Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen and Iran. Hamas and Hezbollah negate the right of existence to the State of Israel – as the Iranian regime does – and call for the extirpation of all Jewish life worldwide. Further, Hamas and Hezbollah are using civilian populations as human shields. It is beyond any doubt that the pogrom, the

massacres, the abductions, the keeping of hostages and the abuse of civilians as human shields are most severe crimes against human rights, international law, and above all, against humanity.

It is beyond any doubt that the State of Israel has the right of military self-defence against these attacks.

No doubt, however, that this right to self-defence is also limited by international law and human rights, i.e. the Israeli government and army are obliged to safeguard and protect any and all civilians, regardless of ethnicity, age sex, religion or nationality to the greatest degree possible, to reduce the number of victims to the absolute minimum, to do their utmost to supply the population in the occupied parts of Gaza (as in the West Bank) with clean water, electricity, sufficient food, medical care, and education and also to guarantee civilian physical and psychological safety; this also applies to any prisoner of war. Any actions in breach of these international standards and/or which are suitable to extirpate or displace the population of Gaza or the West Bank or to deprive those groups of their possessions, country, identity and heritage are also clear and severe crimes against human rights, international law, and against humanity.

Facing so many severe and continuous crimes from all sides, the desire to pay back in kind may be understandable from an emotional perspective. However, international law is based on the principles of fundamental equality and the Rule of Law relative over any kind of violence. Of particular importance here is this: no violation of law justifies another violation of law. *There is no equality in injustice*. In short, one murder does not justify another murder in response. These are nothing other than two murders – no matter for what "good" or "just" reason they may be justified by the murderers. Also, history shows that conflicts cannot be settled by violence, destruction and surrender, but only by the standards of international law applying to every person and every country in the same way with the acknowledgement of each party's needs. Any kind of demonisation, hate, racism or illegal action promotes further murder, violence, grief and pain, and are crimes in themselves – always and everywhere. Violation of international law and human rights from whatever side does not solve problems – they deepen and prolong them and are, thus, problems in themselves.

What does this mean for the EAA?

In the face of grave violations of human rights and crimes against humanity, silent neutrality is not a viable position, as such silence would make EAA complicit in such crimes. But it is neither viable that the EAA becomes partial and takes one side over the other in these crimes. It is not up to the EAA to decide which side is committing less or more "justified" crimes. Where and with whom does one draw the line? Why not suspend other countries as well – which I do not advocate in any way! – particularly Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iran? In a wider context, what of Turkey, Hungary or any other country in the EU, what of the UK, or above all the US, whose government recently attacked Venezuela and kidnapped its president in obvious breach of international law? Do proponents of a ban on Israel equally promote a ban on US archaeological and academic institutions held liable for the imperialist and colonial politics of their government? How much violation is necessary to be banned by an association like the EAA? I believe that any such ban would be partial, discriminating, in many cases racist, and at least based on personal prejudice.

Fortunately, the EAA already installed guidelines for such a situation:

In March 2024, last updated in November the same year, the EAA issued its [statement on "Threats to Archaeology and Archaeologists arising from the Israel/Gaza crisis"](#), highlighting the obligation of institutions and combatants to comply with international heritage legislation and treaties. Such compliance is part of the EAA's statutes. Thus, it applies to any of its members, institutional or personal,

as well as to all its Communities. Critically, we may ask whether the EAA has so far done enough to enforce such compliance? Are there any consequences if Members are found to be in breach of international heritage legislation or treaties, not to speak of more severe crimes of war and violations of human rights? As much as undifferentiated and general bans are inappropriate (to say the least), the enforcement of members' personal responsibility would be a strong sign that the EAA's engagement with international law lies in more than words.

More generally, the Association adopted the [“Bern Statement on Archaeology and the Future of Democracy”](#) in 2019. Written in the face of threats illiberal autocracies bring to the European project of liberty and democracy, it provides general guidelines for further action and development of and within the EAA: The Association declares that it promotes “peaceful and stable societies, founded on respect for human rights, intellectual and academic freedom, democracy, cultural diversity and the rule of law”. While it acknowledges that all archaeological action is political – and thus politically responsible! – the EAA feels obliged to the academic principle of impartiality in the framework of the democratic values set out above. But what does this mean? Can, for example, the EAA and its Communities hold meetings at institutions which counteract its statutes by imposing unilateral bans on one or the other country, if such bans in consequence also apply to EAA members and participants in meetings?

Israel is a “flawed” democracy (rank 31 in the [Economist Democracy Index 2024](#)), in sharp contrast to Palestine (rank 112), Lebanon (rank 109) or Iran (rank 154), which are all classified as authoritarian regimes. This (still?) rather well functioning democracy is – not least – based on a high degree of academic freedom (rank 40 in the [Academic Freedom Index 2025](#)), which is more developed than in several countries of the EU (e.g. The Netherlands at rank 66), Switzerland (rank 55) and the UK (rank 64), not to speak of the US (rank 85). Such rankings are of limited reliability, but they clearly prove that at the time of writing Israeli academia must not be considered an extension or stooge of the Israeli government and cannot be held responsible for the actions of that government. Much more, Israeli universities are hubs of criticism and resistance against the far-right politics of Netanyahu and his coalition. And for this opposition, they are routinely exposed to intimidating threats by that government on occasion of free expression in favour of Palestinian rights, e.g. after student demonstrations commemorating the Nakba at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University; see [here](#) and [here](#)). Isolating Israeli universities by a ban is particularly destructive and downright politically stupid. Much more, our colleagues are in need of our support in a climate of threatened academic freedom, shrinking institutional autonomy and polarising verbal and physical violence!

Academic freedom, freedom of expression and dissemination *and* unconditional mutual respect – along with the broadest possible inclusion – are fundamental to the principle of impartiality. As the Bern statement says, such freedom “involves pointed language that clearly expresses singular positions and perspectives, but it does so with a fundamental respect – and, critically, it does so without denying the human rights of other people.”

Here it is, the opportunity in the actual crisis of the EAA: To speak out officially and loudly for the principles of democracy, including academic freedom and freedom of expression, Rule of Law, human rights and the protection of minorities; to (re-)establish a culture of dialogue among its members and beyond, to develop our ability to clearly express our positions, but never to lose respect towards our opponents, and to endure their divergent positions with full personal recognition and esteem.

Hopefully, this issue of *TEA* will be the start of such a conversation and of a new culture of debate in the EAA and beyond ...

Re: On the Impossibility of Maintaining Distance

From: Dimitrij Mlekuž Vrhovnik, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Dear Editors,

Archaeology is already always political, because its interpretations of the past shape identities, heritage, and claims to belonging, and can and are mobilised by states, institutions, and communities as tools of power, exclusion, or legitimation. But archaeology is political also because it speaks about the Other in order to sustain itself. It is a collective practice that studies the persistence, fracture, and failure of human ways of living together, while continuously organising, regulating, and disciplining social relations within its own community. How archaeologists live and work together is not external to knowledge production; it is constitutive of it.

However, the discipline operates within a discourse that separates knowledge from implication. Archaeology largely speaks from a knowledge-centred discourse in which fragile arrangements of human coexistence are analysed at a safe distance, while the speaking subject and the present social bonds remain shielded from exposure. This allows the past to function as an object of interpretation rather than as an interlocutor.

The Other of archaeology is often instrumentalised. Past societies, alterity, and violence are granted interpretive generosity precisely because they cannot answer back. They function as resources through which disciplinary authority, prestige, funding, and legitimacy are produced, rather than as relations that might place demands on the discipline itself.

This arrangement breaks down when distance collapses. The current predicament of war, genocide, and ecological collapse is no longer spatially, temporally, or morally remote. Trauma enters the same horizon as archaeological practice, not only as an object of analysis but as something lived, carried by colleagues, communities, and the fragile networks through which research is conducted. It disrupts the conditions under which objectivity and interpretive distance were once sustained. Distance once protected archaeological knowledge; its disappearance exposes the discipline to itself. The past can no longer absorb the shock of the present. A discipline devoted to the problem of living together must now confront the fact that humanity itself is in crisis, and that this crisis unsettles the very discursive conditions under which archaeological knowledge is produced.

If the world no longer allows distance, archaeology faces a choice: to either defend the discursive arrangements that once made knowledge comfortable, or to accept implication as a condition of thinking. This is the deadlock exposed by the events concerning the decisions the Executive Board against Israeli delegates, its opaque reversal, and silence on who pulled the strings. Further attempts to manage disagreement through executive overreach, democratic breakdown, intimidation, distancing, tone, bureaucratic euphemisms, procedural smokescreening and calls for an apolitical stance revealed not only a failure of morality, but an inability to confront what archaeology knows about itself once that knowledge ceased to concern a distant past.

What appears to be a community and disciplinary crisis is also an epistemic deadlock. The collapse of distance forces archaeology to confront its own position as a social practice among others. It can no longer rely on the past to absorb the shock of the present. Knowledge can no longer circulate without a subject. Operating under the illusion of distance, ignoring genocide, war and human suffering, becomes unbearable.

This is not an opening but an encounter, one that leaves no comfortable position intact. Archaeology may either defend the discursive arrangements that once rendered knowledge comfortable, those that confer prestige, status, power, and access to grants, or remain exposed to implication, antagonism, and reflexivity as conditions of thought. The latter offers no ethical closure and no reconciliation; it only refuses insulation. Yet it is the sole way to take the problem of living together seriously, both in the past and in the present.

Unbearable traumatic events, such as the genocide in Gaza, can no longer be safely held at a distance.

They are not external shocks to be acknowledged and set aside, but conditions that implicate archaeological practice itself. Violence, rupture, and loss are not elsewhere; they circulate through the same institutions, collaborations, classrooms, and professional communities in which archaeological knowledge is produced. To acknowledge this means allowing trauma to interrupt distance, neutrality, and procedural comfort. This demand was not sustained in Belgrade, where the Board's and the President's responses revealed the limits of the discipline's willingness to remain exposed.

The Real is no longer elsewhere and cannot be symbolised away. The failure to maintain distance is therefore not only a discursive failure, but a failure of leadership, of vision, and of understanding the role of the discipline in the present predicament. To refuse this implication is to refuse the moment itself. What is required is acknowledgment and acceptance: making space for the Other, for disagreement, for pain that cannot be proceduralized or managed away. Only through such exposure can any form of reconciliation or healing within the community become conceivable. The failure of leadership revealed here is, thus, not merely personal or administrative, but symptomatic of a larger inability to grasp what archaeology is being called to confront.

Only a change in leadership and a reconfiguration of the disciplinary community can meet the demands of the present.

Re: Silence is golden – On the EAA as a professional body

From: Christian Horn, University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

Dear Editors,

“Speech is silver, silence is golden” is a proverb likely of Arabic origin that made its way to Europe via Sephardic Jews. Therefore, it seems in some way an appropriate parable for the conundrum that the EAA board has gotten itself into with its ill-spirited decision to force scholars with Israeli affiliations to hide said affiliations at the recent EAA annual meeting in Belgrade. This short-sighted initiative would have invited a host of issues, for example, concerning academic ethical standards. One is simply openness, depriving others of the chance the knowledge of the context in which academic research was produced. Another is that funders often require acknowledgement, presumably Israeli funders would have also needed hiding, which may lead to serious consequences for the researchers involved.

While this decision that was driven by some radicals on the board was luckily withdrawn, the handling of the situation afterwards was a panicked one and not ideal. As I will argue in the following, the correct decision would have been to heed the proverb by avoiding the instigation of sanctions and statements that are outside the scope of a professional archaeological organisation. Unless, of course, EU regulations oblige this. To clarify, the situation of Russian and Belarussian scholars is not comparable to the one that the EAA created with regards to Israel. The EAA has to abide by [the EU suspension of collaboration with Russian and Belarussian scholars](#), and keeping their affiliations hidden is a work around to allow them participation. No similar official sanction exists against cooperating with Israel. Thus, there was no need to do anything, the whole messy situation could have been avoided, and I hope to explain why that is the case.

For transparency’s sake, I will disclose that I am a firm believer in Israel’s right to self-defence, and that I think that Palestinians would be better off fighting alongside the IDF against Hamas (and others) if they ever want to have an independent nation for themselves. However, I am not writing these lines to argue for these points. While my friends, most of whom are firmly against my stance, know that I happily discuss such issues, they also know that I almost exclusively do so in private. The reason for that is that such discussions have no place in a professional setting, because they are outside of our professional expertise. For example, my knowledge of Scandinavian rock art has no bearing on the recent Gaza War. The opposite is true as well, our discussions around this issue are irrelevant for, let’s say, the ceramic chronology of Central Italy or even debates around the use of cultural heritage in the colonial history of the British Museum.

Now, I am not saying that archaeology is apolitical; quite the opposite, in fact. Archaeology has a lot of important political commentary to give, for example on the protection of cultural heritage laws, repatriation, the colonial history of archaeology, or critiquing UNESCO (e.g. Meskell, 2018; Nilsson Stutz, 2013). In fact, even the use of archaeology for political purposes is an excellent topic and has been written about in accounts that are lauded by most sides of archaeologists’ political kaleidoscope (e.g. Greenberg and Hamilakis, 2022). Now, that does not mean that one must agree with all findings, conclusions, or interpretations. But that is precisely the point, because they are interpretations there is an inherent openness to the debate. We can permit alternative readings and discuss their merits critically against our professional expertise. Herein lies the difference to political debates like the recent Gaza War not to speak beyond that. Our profession is immaterial to this debate. Regardless of how well we think we are informed our opinions *as archaeologists* do not matter. As a comparison,

just imagine a roofer in Milan chiming in on the discussion around gang violence in Haiti, *because* they are a roofer. The same extends to the professional organisations either of roofers or of archaeologists.

There are other reasons to argue to keep political issues that extend beyond the professional scope of archaeology out of archaeological professional bodies. The agreement that we debate data and its interpretations critically provides common ground for a discussion in which we agree that alternative interpretations are possible. In short, although we may believe our interpretations are correct, we generally avoid insisting on truth claims. However, this is exactly what the debate around, for example the recent Gaza War, come down to. It is very difficult to permit an alternative interpretation between “Israel commits genocide” and “the genocide libel is Hamas or rather Iranian propaganda”. I want to make sure that I am correctly understood here, I am not blaming anyone for this, because I know that I have my own stance and that it falls firmly within one of these camps. In a sense, this is similar to the religious and, in many cases, atheistic convictions of many EAA members. For obvious reasons, these are not points of public, professional debate in the EAA and do not become the subject of proclamations other than on the issue of openness, i.e. in the anti-discrimination guiding principles.

Again, it is perfectly reasonable to have a vigorous debate as private citizens. However, making any such matters in which opposing opinions cannot coexist and in which professional expertise plays little to no role a central point of discussion, voting, or even public proclamations of a professional body, will split this body. I fear that this is not a matter of if, but it is inevitable. Of course, sometimes such splits are what needs to happen and can even be good. For example, in the early 2000s I was a part of the German Left when it splintered (especially its various Antifa groups) over left antisemitism and solidarity with Israel. This was good because it revitalised debates around antifascist theory and practice. However, a split of the EAA seems profoundly unhelpful for the profession of archaeology in Europe, because in the end we need platforms to discuss archaeological issues with one another. To conclude this, when we meet as private citizens for a drink after meetings and sessions, the gloves are off and we can have the most vigorous debates about everything. However, as professional archaeologists within the EAA and emanating from the organisation as on matters of personal religion *silence is golden*.

Acknowledgments

I thank the editors for opening *The European Archaeologist* as a discussion platform. Doing so alone shows the value of open debate without hiding anything in a free society imperfect as it may be. The views expressed are solely my own as are all errors.

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Re: Steer clear of BDS activism, and focus on tasks for which the EAA was intended

From: Joseph Maran, University of Heidelberg (Germany)

Dear Editors,

In August 2025, I was informed by Israeli colleagues who had intended to participate in the EAA Annual Meeting in Belgrade that they had been told by the EAA that they could not attend as representatives of their respective institutions. The reason given was because the EAA's Executive Board had decided to boycott Israeli institutions. As an archaeologist with strong personal and professional ties to people in Israel, and as a Jewish person, I was deeply dismayed that the Executive Board had yielded to the demands of activists from the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement by choosing to single out Israeli scholars and thereby discriminate against them. For this reason, I addressed an appeal to the EAA Executive Board, calling on it to reverse this decision. It did not surprise me that the EAA became the target of a campaign by the BDS movement, because, since its founding in 2005 by leftist and Islamist groups, the movement has sought to isolate and demonize Israel in academia and other spheres of society, with the ultimate aim of destroying the Jewish state.

The BDS movement follows in the tradition of the boycott initiated by Arab states even before the founding of the State of Israel. These states considered the establishment of a single, tiny Jewish state a scandal, but not the fact that all other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) states founded at about the same time acquired a clear Arab, Iranian, or Turkish identity with Islam as their main religion.

Since the 1940s, the anger against "Zionists" and Jews, fuelled by boycotts and incitement, has led to the expulsion of more than 800,000 Jewish people from the MENA countries, most of whom found refuge in Israel. The BDS movement also operates by stoking emotions, spreading lies and half-truths to incite anti-Israel sentiment and portray the state as the epitome of absolute evil. Terms like "genocide", "apartheid" or "colonialism" are stripped of their original meanings in order to forcibly apply them to the democratic country of Israel, which has a share of approximately 20% of eligible Arab citizens and is not a consequence of colonialism, but of the desire of Jews to live a life free of persecution in a land that had continuously formed the focus of Jewish diasporic memory and longing for the previous two millennia.

Israel was invaded on October 7, 2023, by Hamas, the Islamist group that at the time controlled the Gaza Strip. Fighters of Hamas and the groups allied with them committed acts of unspeakable cruelty, cold-bloodedly and with apparent glee, slaughtering defenceless people, from infants to the elderly, raping and murdering women *en masse*, and filming their [atrocities](#). The fighters kidnapped numerous people and held them hostage under inhumane conditions, murdering some of them, including small children.

Hamas has stated that it would carry out genocidal attacks like the one on October 7th over and over again, and it systematically prepared for the destruction of Israel in the years leading up to the attack, under the very eyes of UN agencies operating in Gaza. Hamas used materials intended for the population of Gaza to build a network of tunnels hundreds of kilometers long, causing extensive destruction in Gaza, including to archaeological sediments. Hamas has entrenched itself in these tunnels as well as in hospitals and schools, while deliberately leaving the civilian population unprotected on the surface in order to exert international pressure on Israel to end the offensive due

to mounting civilian casualties. With all this, Hamas has tried to make good on what it announced in its [1988 Charter](#): to destroy Israel and “to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine”. Hamas is a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which since its founding in the 1920s has been enthusiastic about German National Socialism and is thoroughly permeated by [hatred focused on Jews](#), as is expressed, among other things, in the reference to the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" in the Hamas Charter of 1988.

For Jews worldwide, October 7, 2023, evoked memories of the worst massacres of Jews in history. It was all the more shocking, then, that just two weeks after this date, an [open letter from "Classicists and Historians in Solidarity with the people of Palestine"](#) was circulated, already then accusing Israel of genocide and only mentioning the actions of Hamas in passing, describing them as "caused by an increasingly violent and nationalistic Israeli government." This is precisely the tone of the letters from BDS activists that were circulated on the occasion of the EAA Annual Meeting in Belgrade. These accusations create the impression that October 7, 2023, never happened. They throw around battle cries bereft of meaning like “apartheid” and “genocide” to demonize Israel.

After what happened on 7 October 2023, the EAA Executive Board felt unable to demonstrate solidarity with people in Israel by unequivocally denouncing the Hamas murderers. That is precisely why it is a bitter irony that the Executive Board in August 2025 originally decided to punish Israeli academic institutions, thereby allowing itself to be used as an amplifier of pure BDS propaganda. At a time when antisemitism in European universities reaches [post-war record levels](#), the EAA Executive Board thought it appropriate to discriminate against members of academic institutions of the Jewish state.

Instead of strengthening those forces in Israel and Palestine that are committed to peace, dialogue and understanding between Israeli and Palestinian people, the BDS movement deliberately polarizes and leaves a trail of discord and hatred wherever it initiates campaigns. The EAA would be well advised to steer clear of such activism and concentrate on the tasks for which it was established.

Re: In defence of radicalness and anarchism in European Archaeology

From: Guillermo Diaz de Liaño del Valle

Dear Editors,

I am writing in response to the events that occurred during the EAA Special Meeting of January the 9th. Among the many issues discussed during the meeting, which no doubt will have an impact on the stance – or lack thereof, with all its consequences – against the situation surrounding the ongoing genocide in Gaza, there are two particular topics on which I would like to briefly comment. I shall not comment on the events in Gaza, which I believe are not up for discussion. They have already been labelled as genocide by innumerable international institutions, including, among others, The United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Oxfam, and Doctors without Borders.

The first topic I wish to discuss is the malicious, unfounded, and rather simplistic accusations by certain individuals against the Black Trowel Collective (BTC) and Archaeologists Against Apartheid (AAA), and against anarchism and leftism in general. During the discussion phase of the Annual Meeting Business Meeting, certain Members of the EAA equated anarchism and “radical leftist activism” with chaos. This is a portrayal that can either be understood as malevolent, or which demonstrates an astounding lack of awareness and knowledge of foundational concepts in social theory. While I would not dare to choose between both options, suffice it to say that anarchism, among other left-wing social frameworks, has a remarkably rich history within archaeological theory. Very few competing paradigms have developed such sophisticated approaches to how power operates, state-development dynamics, and how inequality comes into being, as well as how human societies have resisted oppression and inequality. I can only encourage my European colleagues to pick up Pierre Clastres’ *Society Against the State* for a classic and enlightening read, or perhaps any number of the works of the late David Graeber.

In line with this, another remark that deserves further comment is the attempt to dismiss a set of motions, proposed by the EAA members that called for the Special Meeting, on the grounds that these were the product of ‘radical groups’ and ‘left-wing activism’. This characterisation seems to stem from their organisational anonymity, and their firm stand against genocide and the upholding of European and International Law. While the issue of anonymity might be worthy of discussion, the events during the meeting proved that anonymity, in this particular context, was sorely needed. This became evident during the same meeting, in which senior scholars who opposed the motion openly threatened and harassed their colleagues, on account of their political views, repeatedly calling for their names to be made public so they could face personal and professional repercussions. This call for retaliation suggested to immediately revoke individuals’ official positions within the EAA, as well as preventing any signatory of the petition from ever being eligible for one. Colleagues were singled out by name, threatened with being effectively banned from employment in Germany, and it was even suggested that, were the motions proposed to be discussed and voted on to pass, any Member of the EAA could be blacklisted and labelled as an antisemite in Germany, as would the Association as a whole. It does not require extraordinary analytical skills to understand that individual doxing and threatening of our colleagues’ professional careers are the most likely steps to follow within this process.

Delving into the accusations of leftist radicalness and activism, I can only wonder whether political ideologies, and particularly left-wing ones, are currently being policed within the EAA. As far as I am aware, belonging to anarchist collectives, or supporting a vision of society rooted in anarchism, constitutes part of the specifically protected civil rights and freedoms of all EU citizens as a protected class under freedom of thought, beliefs, and free association.

The flagrant violation of the EAA's Safe Space Policy at the Special Meeting, alongside the ongoing claims of censorship and suppression of freedom of speech within the current EAA's leadership is now dangerously closing in on legal frameworks pertaining to political suppression. The parallels with a similar situation in the USA are not lost on me, either. There, where something that started out as a blatantly ridiculous claim – the supposed connection between anti-fascism and terrorism – recently ceased being a far-fetched fear and has become an official legislative tool of oppression and tyranny. The irony is palpable. Europe itself has a long, rich and shameful history of persecuting left-wing ideas and beliefs, particularly those connected with anarchism. For instance, anarchist anti-fascists were mass executed and sent to German concentration camps such as Mauthausen. Even more recently, the fascist and blood-thirsty dictator Francisco Franco persecuted anarchists and anti-fascists well into the 1970s.

While I am tempted to further elaborate on the need for anarchism and radicalness in archaeology, numerous archaeologists have already done that, as any bibliographic search should demonstrate. Moreover, I shall refrain from elaborating further on this particular forum on ethical grounds: whether EAA Members hold an anarchist or other legally protected left-wing political ideology, or whether these guide their professional or personal lives, it is their own business. In any case, their professional association, the EAA, has a legal, ethical and moral duty to protect their rights against those who are willing to wield their power to punish, control and suppress the political beliefs of others.

And a corollary, in case this was not painfully clear by now: this should not be confused with a statement that discourages the political value and the structural importance of addressing politics within the EAA. As social researchers, it should be quite evident to everyone that politics are already an inherent part of all members' identities and professional activities. The conflation between activism and science, that I believe pervades these attacks, is a false dichotomy. And yet, if the EAA forces it upon us, at this hour, when so much is at stake, the answer is clear to me: I would rather be an activist who also does archaeology, than a socially disengaged scientist.

Re: Academic Boycotts, Double Standards, and the Erosion of Scholarly Integrity

From: Florian Klimscha, University of Göttingen (Germany)

Dear Editors,

In autumn 2025, an anonymously collected petition by “Archaeologists Against Apartheid” (AAA) and the BDS movement⁵ called for the exclusion of Israeli colleagues from the EAA Annual Meeting in Belgrade if they attended as members of their home institutions. Anyone familiar with academic life knows what this implies: without institutional affiliation, conference fees and travel costs are usually not covered. This was therefore a *de facto* ban on participation⁶.

Following protests by members and affected colleagues, the Executive Board reversed this decision in a subsequent vote. This is a normal and necessary process in any democratic organization. Nevertheless, the same lobby groups, joined by the anarchist group “The Black Trowel Collective”, responded by calling for disruption of the EAA itself. At this point, a troubling pattern became visible: pressure exerted by activists was labelled “democratic”, while objections raised by others were dismissed as “intimidation”, “threats” or “defamation”⁷. Those opposing the petition were met with open hostility, including explicit verbal abuse⁸.

After the Belgrade meeting, a new petition launched under the name “concernedeea” collected signatures to “discuss” a boycott of Israeli institutions and the conduct of the Executive Board⁹. Subsequently, and without the knowledge of at least some signatories, this initiative was reformulated into formal motions aiming to publicly condemn Israel, exclude Israeli institutions from the EAA, and remove the EAA President through a request supported by 10% of the membership.

The reality of the current war in the Middle East is far more complex than the simplified narrative presented by these initiatives. The Gaza war began after Hamas, a Palestinian terrorist¹⁰ organization and the current government of the Gaza Strip, committed the largest mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust, involving systematic rape, torture, and the taking of hundreds of civilian hostages. Hamas deliberately embedded its military infrastructure within civilian areas, including hospitals, schools and mosques, thereby accepting—and instrumentalizing—civilian suffering. Throughout the conflict, rockets continued to be fired at Israeli civilian targets.

These facts matter. They matter not to justify every action of the Israeli government, but because any serious discussion must begin with an acknowledgement of agency and responsibility on all sides.

⁵ <https://www.bdsmovement.net/news/european-association-archaeologists-welcoming-scholars-knowingly-participating-war-crime>

⁶ And in contrast to the ban put upon Russian and Belarussian colleagues, this was not a political decision by the EU, which the EAA has to accept, but a political initiative within a purely scientific organisation.

⁷ <https://blacktrowelcollective.wordpress.com/2025/09/02/btc-call-to-action-eea/>

⁸ E.g.: “Go f**k yourself.” Chat during the EAA BM [in response to Florian Klimscha’s verbal statement], 8:26pm. Another EAA member has on social media frequently referred to those supporting a more nuanced view or stating support for Israel as “pro-genocide fanatics” [5 Sept 2024] and claimed these EAA members “would have supported every genocidal campaign in the past” [6 Sept 2024].

⁹ Google Form “Call for a Special Meeting of the EAA”, 9.9.2025.

¹⁰ Hamas is classified as a terrorist organisation by all EU states, Australia, Canada, Ecuador, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Paraguay, the UK and the USA.

Notably, the Arab League itself condemned the Hamas attack and called for an end to its rule in a declaration on 30 July 2025¹¹. Several Arab states continue to normalize relations with Israel, while the EAA debates excluding Israeli scholars.

Excluding Israeli institutions would help no one in Gaza. It would, however, strengthen a terrorist organization that openly calls for the destruction of Israel and the killing of Jews, and it would silence precisely those voices within Israel that are most critical about its own government and which fight for a better future.

Since the founding of the EAA, numerous wars have been fought. Massive civilian casualties resulted from Western military interventions in the Middle East and Central Asia; today, a real genocide is unfolding in Sudan, while Iranian civilians are brutally repressed and murdered by their own government. None of these conflicts led to calls for the exclusion of archaeologists based on their institutional or national affiliation. The selective focus on Israel therefore demands explanation.

Antisemitism is one of the oldest forms of discrimination. This is well known to scholars of antiquity. Unlike racism, it often operates through projection, conspiracy and collective blame, and the alienation and Othering of Jews. In the current debate, familiar antisemitic patterns reappear: Israelis (who are mostly Jews) are accused of deliberately killing children, and held collectively responsible for all suffering in the region. Double standards are applied when Israel is singled out for practices tolerated or ignored when carried out by other democracies in armed conflict.

Anti-Zionist rhetoric frequently frames Israel as a settler-colonial state, erasing its complex social reality. Israel is a multi-ethnic society that includes *Mizrachim* Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, Holocaust survivors and their descendants, as well as Arab citizens who make up over 20% of the population and participate fully in academic life. Israeli universities are among the most diverse institutions in the world¹².

Why is this complexity ignored? Why is there no comparable condemnation of Hamas, a group that governs through terror, suppresses dissent, persecutes sexual minorities, and openly calls for the murder of Jews?

I leave the answer to the readers. My conclusion is that this debate has little to do with advancing peace or justice for Palestinians. Rather, it reflects a modern form of antisemitism that disguises itself as moral activism while undermining academic freedom and the foundational principles of the EAA.

I am convinced that many signatories of the petition do not share these implications and acted in good faith. I invite them to reconsider whether boycotting Israeli scholars serves the values of scholarship, dialogue and cooperation — or whether it merely deepens division while helping no one on the ground.

¹¹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/07/30/middleeast/arab-league-hamas-gaza-israel-intl> The declaration also called for Israel's retreat and a ceasefire and was supported by the EU and 17 other states.

¹² In Haifa, for instance, c. 40% of the students are Muslim, Christian and Druze Arabs and the university is directed by an Arab woman.

Re: Transparency or intimidation? On the release of personal data of signatories of the petition for the Special Meeting of 9 January 2026

From: José Cristóbal Carvajal López

Dear Editors,

I was shocked to learn that the EEA's Executive Board (ExB) released personal information on the signatories of the petition for the 9 January 2026 Special Meeting to the EAA Membership. This was in the form of two downloadable PDF lists of both current and former EAA Members and included both names and EEA ID numbers. The release was done quietly on 22 December 2025, without the explicit consent of signatories. I wrote to the ExB on the same day, expressing my serious concerns that the information may be very easily leaked beyond the EAA and used for phishing, doxing and blacklisting. I requested that the lists be taken down. Due to the holiday period, however, I only got a reply as late as 8 January 2026. As I expressed my dissatisfaction with that answer, I received a second reply on 3 February 2026. In their first reply, the ExB claims that the release of personal information "contributes to transparency within the association and allows Members to assess whether the statutory requirements for convening a Special Meeting have been met". In the second reply, the Secretary stated that the lists would be taken down after the per rollam of the Special Meeting concluded at the end of January. If this is done, the lists will have been available (and downloadable!) for 41 days. In both emails, the ExB explains that their legal advice had noted that the lists "may be shared internally" because the signatories had submitted the information voluntarily. In response to my concerns about misuse of data, they say that Members are subject to the EAA Statutes and Codes of Practice.

To be clear: the lists of names and EEA ID numbers in the form in which they were released are not particularly useful "to assess whether the statutory requirements for convening a Special Meeting have been met". Article IX.2 of the EAA Statutes is clear that a Special Meeting "shall be called by the President upon a receipt of a written request by ten per cent of the paid voting membership". Transparency would, therefore, require verification that the threshold of 10% has been met. But since there is no publicly available complete list of Members against which names and EEA IDs can be checked, it is not possible to use the information released for verification. It is especially concerning that one of the leaked lists was of former Members, who are obviously not part of the "paid voting membership", therefore making the release of their information useless *once again* for transparency purposes.

The question then is posed: why was such a release necessary if the verification simply cannot be done without the full list of Members? If the release of information was not useful for the purposes of transparency, does it meet the legal tests in data protection legislation?

The internal EAA Statutes do not mention any legal grounds for the sharing of identifiable personal information for the convening of a Special Meeting. In addition, in email communication with the EEA ExB, I have been told that their legal advice stated that the information "may be shared internally", but not that it *must* be shared. If the release of names and EEA ID numbers was not useful (to check the 10% threshold), nor necessary (for transparency or other legal purposes), then it follows that the EEA ExB chose to release the information for other reasons. Arguing that the names were submitted

voluntarily does not mean that there was any need to release them. To be sure, the sharing of this information was entrusted to ConcernedEAA (following relevant and specific consent procedures), on the basis that they would exclusively be shared with the EAA Secretariat and ExB to convene the Special Meeting. I have serious concerns about how this makes the EAA more transparent. It can potentially (and unnecessarily!) expose its Members to harm and intimidation by specific groups of individuals and organisations.

Regarding responsibility: individual Members are subject to the Statutes and Codes of Practice, yes, but it is the responsibility of the ExB to ensure that these are not breached. However, the ExB did nothing to prevent the verbal abuse of signatories in the form of threats and baseless accusations of antisemitism during the Special Meeting, and did not react when retaliation was demanded against them by specific Members. This incident is evidence for the real possibility of harm and intimidation against EEA Members. It could have been entirely preventable had the relevant information not been shared. The decision to do so is a shame and a breach of trust.

Dear reader, to conclude: please do not misrepresent my motives in writing this letter. I am not writing this text because I am upset that my name was released in the list of EAA current Members, or because I am part of the group of ConcernedEAA (in an individual capacity, representing no other employer, organisation or group I am a part of). I am neither wary nor afraid to defend my opinions under my name (which is why I am signing this letter openly). However, I can do that because I feel safe in my current position. There are many scholars who do not, and whose livelihoods depend on avoiding being unfairly targeted based on their political opinions, should they wish to act upon them. We must collectively support and uphold their right to safely participate in the association's processes without exposing them to the risk of the loss of their careers or professional opportunities. Unfortunately, it is clear that there are certain individuals among us who will actively and bitterly target scholars who take a principled stance against the genocide that Israel is committing in Palestine and against the structural racism that sees Palestinian lives as unworthy of compassion and support. I am sure that the day will come when many will feel ashamed of their current stand, and when everybody will be free to call on the genocide. However, until that day comes, Palestinians continue to be killed and it is our responsibility to speak up, but also ensure that others are also able to speak up. Do not let yourselves be intimidated.

Re: Untitled

From: Jadranka Verdonkschot, post-doctoral researcher at INCIPIT, CSIC (Spain)

Dear Editors,

The issue currently under discussion within the EAA community has become most controversial, although the available evidence leaves little room for ambiguity. Currently, the people of Palestinian territories are facing an unprecedented and ongoing display of state violence at the hands of the government of Israel. This violence is so grave that the [United Nations have declared it a genocide](#). Further data on [destruction specifically of cultural heritage is published by UNESCO](#). And just in case a true optimist might wonder why a boycott of Israeli affiliations is called for, and not that of Palestinian affiliations: rest assured by [UNICEF's report on Damage Assessment for Tertiary Education Institutions](#) that there is nothing left to boycott.

Let me reiterate that criticism of a government or its institutions is not criticism of a people, a culture, or a religion. Conflating these is a misunderstanding that has fuelled unacceptable accusations and even threats within our own community. The fact that Members within our association threaten other Members under the guise of suspecting an antisemitic agenda seems a tragically ironic turn of events in which the weight of the traumatic past positions some on the wrong side of another genocide.

Beyond generic threats of consequences to signatories of a simple petition for a Special Meeting and those expressing support for the #concernedea initiative (facilitated by the release of names and ID numbers in convenient PDF formats by the EAA Executive Board (ExB), but more on that later), there is a highly concerning official example too. Statements by representatives of state heritage institutions claiming that restricting Israeli institutional affiliations would render the EAA “illegal in Germany” play a thrilling game of fast and loose with the concept of legal accountability. Leaving this to circulate unchallenged creates fear and shuts down legitimate debate. The EAA would be “illegal” in Germany if it were found to be antisemitic. This is naturally a standard that is both appropriate and applicable to any organisation. It is, however, entirely unrelated to the present discussion. Where such conflation persists, it is the responsibility of the EAA to actively clarify the distinction and to position itself, thereby creating a precedent, rather than allowing such claims to be spread.

The EAA has positioned itself in geopolitical situations previously, notably in the case of Russia and Belarus, whose institutional affiliations remain restricted. Certainly, it remains to be seen whether the removal of institutions' affiliations is viable or sufficient in the current global context. We may indeed need to hold on to shared academic spaces in order to sustain dialogue and resist total polarisation. However, a clear and principled position is undebatable when state actions so clearly and fundamentally contradict the ethical foundations of our profession and our association.

The past months have been deeply concerning. Not only the events and actions surrounding the Belgrade Annual Meeting, but also the developments in the months thereafter. The recent publication of the names of petition signatories referred to earlier is a practice widely recognised as doxing. Regardless of intent, releasing such lists in a charged atmosphere exposes colleagues to harassment and professional retaliation. This undermines trust and violates the basic duty of care that a scholarly association owes its members.

The impression is that the course of the ExB has been dictated by a loud minority. The Special Meeting on the 9th of January has shown that there is a growing group of members who are speaking up against this. The name under which the Special Meeting was convened should not distract from its purpose; “#concernedeea” is simply the banner that can unite 56, 389 or even just a handful of archaeologists in demanding action in defence of the values shared by many. What matters is that many voices are calling out to an association they deeply care about.

Archaeology is inherently political. International scholarly associations are inherently political. We cannot pretend that our work exists outside the global realities that shape the lives, heritage, and survival of our communities. For this reason, we need an ExB capable of guiding the association through difficult times with transparency, coherency and a clear compass. This requires leadership. The events surrounding the 2025 AM, the lack of clear guidance, the publication of petition signatories, the tolerance of harassment and threats to professional careers have undermined confidence. We cannot continue on this path. We need to reaffirm that the EAA is a space for dialogue, not intimidation; for principled disagreement, not fear. This is the only way to face the challenges ahead.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful that I can express my perspective openly, supported by my colleagues and institutional context. Many colleagues do not have that same professional support, and I remain deeply concerned for those who feel unable to speak because of threats or harassment. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the co-editors of *TEA*, who chose to resign after this issue. Their commitment to dialogue and their willingness to navigate this charged debate deserve recognition.

Re: Save our EAA!

From: Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult Svend Hansen, Freie Universität Berlin (Germany)

Dear Editors,

Since the EAA was founded in 1994, there has been no conflict comparable to the one we experienced in the context of the boycott decision against Israeli archaeologists before the Annual Meeting (AM) in Belgrade. Fortunately, the Executive Board's fatal decision was revised just before the AM began. The many protests certainly contributed to this. That is a good sign. In a democratic society and in any democratic organisation, decisions can be revised. Fortunately, this was also the case in the EAA.

According to the definitions of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the decision to boycott our Israeli colleagues is anti-Semitic.¹³ One criterion for this is holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel. Therefore, the collective punishment of all Israeli archaeologists is illegal, at least in Germany and in some other European countries. If the EAA is to fulfil its mission in Europe, it cannot, of course, do so with illegal decisions. Corporate members in particular will have to ask themselves whether they can provide public funds to such an organisation.

Of course, the Executive Board's initial decision was not the result of lengthy discussions among its members, but rather a staged coup with little advance notice. It is also significant that this far-reaching decision was not immediately published prominently on the homepage.

When we look at reports from other scientific societies, we can see that a detailed script was written. This was also the case with the International Sociological Association (ISA).¹⁴ Behind this is the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) organisation. The BDS not only organises worldwide boycotts of Jewish scientists and artists, but also of companies such as Microsoft, Reebok and Carrefour, which allegedly cooperate too closely with the 'Zionist entity' (Israel). The attack against the EAA is also described in detail on the BDS homepage.¹⁵

In 2019, the German Bundestag passed a resolution against BDS activities by a large majority.¹⁶ It is not only the German Parliament that is outraged, but civil society as well. In May 2024, more than 8,000 academics signed a protest against the boycott of Israeli academics.¹⁷ It is, therefore, inconceivable that heritage conservators, museum directors or professors from Germany within the EAA could express solidarity with the BDS.

It is sometimes argued that there is also a boycott of Russian archaeologists. Yes, but this case is quite different. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European Union unanimously decided on a far-reaching boycott of Russia, stopping banking transactions, suspending flight connections and freezing the property of Russian oligarchs. This also included ending cooperation with all state organisations in

¹³ <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism> (27.11.25)

¹⁴ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung vom 4. September 2025

¹⁵ <https://bdsmovement.net/search?keywords=EAA> (27.11.25)

¹⁶ <https://www.bundestag.de/webarchiv/textarchiv/2019/kw20-de-bds-642892> (27.11.25)

¹⁷ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc8NcgnDj_3z50ykNNenGMCRTqWkw4naiCNaYxtWgwC_PPXH_Q/viewform (27.11.25)

the Russian Academy of Sciences, universities and museums in Russia. This boycott has also been confirmed in Germany by the Alliance of Science Organisations.¹⁸ There has never been and will never be such a boycott decision against Israel in Europe. I cannot imagine that the EAA would be the first and only European scientific organisation to call for a boycott of Israeli archaeology. It would undoubtedly mean the sudden death of the EAA.

For me, it is crucial that the EAA does not allow itself to be hijacked by the BDS or other activist groups. The EAA is not a stage for the political struggles of society. Outside the EAA, each individual Member can campaign for all kinds of issues as an archaeologist, such as peace, climate change, etc. There are plenty of institutions, parties and initiatives for that. Article II of the EAA's statutes—which defines the tasks of the EAA—includes point 9: “To promote friendship and peaceful cooperation among archaeologists”. I have not found any point that justifies boycotting a subgroup of archaeologists.

Since the EAA was founded, it has been possible to ignore the different political views of its members and instead focus on the common concerns of archaeology. Of course, public archaeology is political because it takes place in the political arena. However, it can only do so if it does not politicise itself as a party. Therefore, all responsible members should ensure that this remains the case in the future.

Postscript: After the *ad rollam* vote:

The vote *ad rollam* on the motions submitted by #concernedeea should not have taken place at all, given all the irregularities in the procedural process. Nevertheless, it did.

The Executive Board now has to decide whether this vote will be implemented. Everything else will depend on this decision.

At present, there are no official travel authorizations for employees of the German Archaeological Institute to attend the EAA meeting in Athens. I am sure that other German authorities will also refuse to grant official travel authorizations for a meeting whose sole purpose is to exclude Israeli archaeologists.

Many archaeologists are waiting for the Executive Board's decision before choosing whether to remain in the EAA or to withdraw their membership.

¹⁸ <https://www.allianz-der-wissenschaftsorganisationen.de/> (27.11.25)

Re: A perspective from inside the ExB

From: Bisserka Gaydarska, ExB Board Member

Dear Editors,

The EAA is in the midst of a crisis – perhaps the first major crisis in 30+ years and possibly an existential threat to its very existence. Members of the EAA deserve to know more about the role of the ExB (Executive Board) in this crisis. Perhaps many of you are wondering why no other member of the ExB spoke at the AMBM, apart from the President and the Secretary? Why there were no more resignations from the ExB in the aftermath of the Belgrade fiasco? And, why there have been no public statements from members of the ExB, when social media is circulating claims of bullying and intimidation? The answer to the first question is that we agreed with the President's suggestion to appear united during the AMBM for the sake of our Association – a commitment that I kept and bitterly regretted upon hearing what was presented at the meeting. The short answer to the other two questions is that I felt that public complaints can get you only so far, while more can be achieved by working for fairness, transparency and respect of diversity from within. But tacit, silent acceptance is no longer an option. Such a strategy was, is and will remain futile in the current situation. So, I present here a fragment of my own personal experience and perspective, and a brief assessment of the undemocratic nature of EAA governance (e.g., Officers cannot be unseated, Members cannot make a consequential complaint as the remit of AAHC is ill-defined and mired in confidentiality and procedural issues, Members do not have access to EAA social media, a differential between the duties and responsibilities of the Social Media Editor as defined in the handbook and what happens in practice, etc.).

Following the democratically taken decision to remove Israeli affiliations to participants in the Belgrade AM, the ExB and the Secretariat was inundated with messages. At least half of these were not from EAA members. Some could be qualified as threats and hate mail. Others were wagging fingers and giving patronising history lessons. Yet a third group were measured and concerned. But all were ill-informed and rash. Words like 'ban' and 'antisemitism' best capture the sins we were accused of, and for a decision we never took. Nobody was 'banned' and there was not a whiff of anti-Jewish sentiment. What will stay with me forever from this barrage of emails and the ill-tempered and excruciatingly painful ExB meeting on 01.09. when the decision about Israeli affiliations was overturned, is how quickly a concern for the loss of human life escalated into 'do you question the right of Israel to exist?'. I still wonder, how did we get here? Why are we even framing a possible debate in these terms? And what will torment me further is the explicit or more subtle notion, in some of these emails and the subsequent discussions in which I have participated, that some lives are more precious than others. Ever since the 'Black Lives Matter' movement and the right-wing push-back in the UK, I felt ashamed of the dehumanising nature of this 'debate'. Of course, all lives matter, but I never thought that we would hit rock bottom by comparing body counts to make a point.

Here are some facts on which I base my assessment of current procedural flaws in the EAA governance.

The message sent to session organisers on 02.09. to 'prevent disruption' was sent without consultation with the ExB. Despite our insistence, the names of those of us who did not agree with this decision were not taken off and as a result two members of the Board have resigned. At least one resignation letter and/or our distancing from what in effect was a gag order, were not allowed as posts on the EAA website or the organisation's social media platforms. The narrative of the events between the receipt of the AAA letter to the eve of the AMBM presented by the President was biased and

accounts for the views of some of the ExB members. It is however, now minuted as a true and accurate record of what has been said, and by implication of what has happened in the above-mentioned period. A few members of the ExB fought against these minutes, but were outvoted on procedural grounds. The Minutes were a partial record of what was said at the AMBM, but voices that have different recollections have been silenced.

This leads me to just a few examples of the lack of procedures for:

- questioning and/or overturning an ExB decision (this allowed the President to put pressure on the ExB to overturn the original vote)
- *ad hoc* decision-making by the membership on urgent matters of international significance (the ExB takes decisions on behalf of the membership between AMBMs and has the power to act (or not) upon requests sent to the ExB. The passiveness and slowness of the ExB in this respect has caused concerns in the past)
- grievances – to distance oneself from, or file a complaint about, decisions that were not made in consultation and have been recorded as being made in the name of the entire ExB. The AAHC has no power to impose any decision on the ExB. (In fact, there have been two recent occasions upon which the ExB's decisions have gone directly against AAHC recommendations).
- in what cases members of the ExB can/cannot post on the official EAA social media channels which will put the Social Media Editor in a position of making decisions rather than executing decisions
- no confidence vote available concerning the behaviour of ExB members.

In my years serving as an ExB member, I have often felt that there is more talk of democracy than democracy itself.

And finally, the personal toll of what has happened since 22.08. is very high. The personal betrayal from people I considered friends is far too painful to discuss publicly. I have lost friends and dear colleagues over a symbolic gesture of valuing life over the names of institutions. I have daily battles with my conscience – do I stand true to my principles of compassion, and against oppression and discrimination? Or do I stay loyal to the organisation which I love and believe in, but which is currently bitterly divided? These are choices I never thought I'd be facing. All this brings sleepless nights and attendant health issues, but this is nothing in comparison to the human suffering in Palestine.

Re: Letter addressed by the Institute of Heritage Sciences (INCIPIT-CSIC), Corporate Member of the EAA, to the Executive Board on January 8, 2026

From: Xosé-Lois Armada, Director INCIPIT-CSIC (Spain)

Dear Editors,

The Faculty of INCIPIT-CSIC (Institute of Heritage Sciences of the Spanish National Research Council, based in Santiago de Compostela) has released a [statement](#) about recent developments in the EAA, triggered by the events that unfolded following decisions adopted by the EAA Executive Board before, during, and after the 2025 Annual Meeting in Belgrade.

The statement expresses the consensus of all members of the INCIPIT Faculty, including those who are not archaeologists. In addition, it is endorsed by all archaeologists at INCIPIT, representing nearly half of the institute's staff.

Initially, our faculty responded to the abuse and verbal attacks suffered by members of INCIPIT who publicly expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian people during the Annual Meeting. Some of our colleagues suffered significant backlash from various individuals—either in person or through social media—that could reasonably be regarded as close to personal harassment. These reactions contravene the EAA's Safe Space Policy and were duly reported by the individuals affected to the appropriate EAA Committees.

The faculty and direction of INCIPIT can only stand firm with and support our fellows who experienced such harassment for exercising their freedom of speech and for engaging as social scientists in a mature reflection upon unjustifiable events and upon the highly debatable, and far from compassionate, response of the EAA presidency to these expressions.

Precisely for this reason, we believe that the course adopted by the EAA in recent months contradicts the trajectory of an organisation that we have always regarded as exemplary—an association whose meetings and initiatives we have consistently supported with alacrity, regardless of whether we fully shared all its positions.

We made this statement public on January 8th with our best will, to encourage constructive reflection, and we did so also because we believe debate enriches rather than impoverishes our associative life and culture; because we believe that these experiences also offer lessons that help us to improve; and because we are convinced that the EAA—now entering its fourth decade—must find, through collegial dialogue, the best ways to adapt to current changes and to align with a diverse and increasingly young membership. Many of the EAA's members are younger than the EAA is itself.

Project Overview

Itiner-e: a linked open gazetteer of ancient roads

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In November 2025 we published a data paper in *Scientific Data* (de Soto et al. 2025) that launched [Itiner-e.org](https://itiner-e.org)¹⁹: the first spatially detailed linked open gazetteer of roads of the Roman Empire. See Figure 1. It is the result of aggregating and digitizing published information about the location of Roman roads by a team of twenty scholars from across Europe and Turkey. Here we briefly summarise our approach and key findings; we discuss the gaps in our knowledge revealed by this work, and we argue that the future of this resource should be driven by a community.



Figure 1. Map of Roman roads contained in Itiner-e.org. Image © Itiner-e.org.

¹⁹ (accessed 10/12/2025)

Digitizing Roman roads

The topic of roads in the Roman Empire is one of the most iconic research areas in Roman studies, which encompass the structure and functioning of a network that affected the lives and mobility of millions, and spanned more than 30 modern countries across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The efforts by archaeologists, historians and passionate local communities from all these countries makes the study of Roman roads a particularly diverse field. Moreover, it is rather rich in exceptional sources, including: lists of stations and distances through the ancient world like the *Antonine Itineraries*, enigmatic material sources like the Vicarello cups or the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, thousands of milestones pinpointing locations with inscriptions describing major infrastructure investments, countless excavations in cities throughout the region, and surveys mapping entire landscapes. Nevertheless a spatially-detailed integration of the data from these sources regarding the locations of the Roman roads was missing.

Our team aimed to provide this missing resource in order to create a better understanding of the variability in our knowledge of the location of Roman roads. We conceived of this project as the aggregation and digitization of an extensive trove of published evidence, since no field research could cover such a vast area as that represented by the Roman Empire. However, we considered it necessary to first create a more detailed map of roads as a basis for informing future archaeological efforts to improve it.

The method consisted of road identification, followed by localization and then digitization. The approach was affected by regional methodological diversity given the variability of sources and collaborators in this vast research area (see ‘Regional overviews’ in de Soto et al. 2025). Past scholarship and historical sources guided the first phase of road identification. This concerned determining whether or not a road had actually connected two places at some point during the Roman period. We relied on existing atlases and regional compilations, surveys, milestone data and archaeological excavations. See Figure 2. Particularly valuable were the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Talbert 2000), [Tabula Imperii Romani](#) and [Tabula Imperii Byzantini](#). The *Barrington Atlas* was a mammoth undertaking by a large scholarly community to map the places and roads of the ancient world. Over the 25 years since its publication, it has stimulated and informed vast amounts of research within Roman studies. The *Barrington Atlas* formed the foundation of pioneering digital resources such as the [Pleiades](#) linked open data gazetteer of ancient places, and the digitizations of roads by the [Ancient World Mapping Centre](#) and [Mapping Past Societies](#).

While the *Barrington Atlas* was foundational as a resource, it also clarified where a new resource could make a valuable contribution. The *Barrington Atlas* includes the major roads that are well documented through itineraries and milestones. Although it also includes many secondary roads, this is done less uniformly and comprehensively throughout the empire. Moreover, the resolution of this atlas is either 1:1,000,000 or 1:500,000, meaning it was not designed to reflect roads that respect topography in high spatial detail. Our road identification work aimed in particular at including research that was either published in the 25 years since the publication of the *Barrington Atlas*, or otherwise omitted from it as well as published evidence of secondary roads. The latter includes country lanes, farm tracks and private roads. So far, the dataset does not include city streets, an obvious target for future growth.

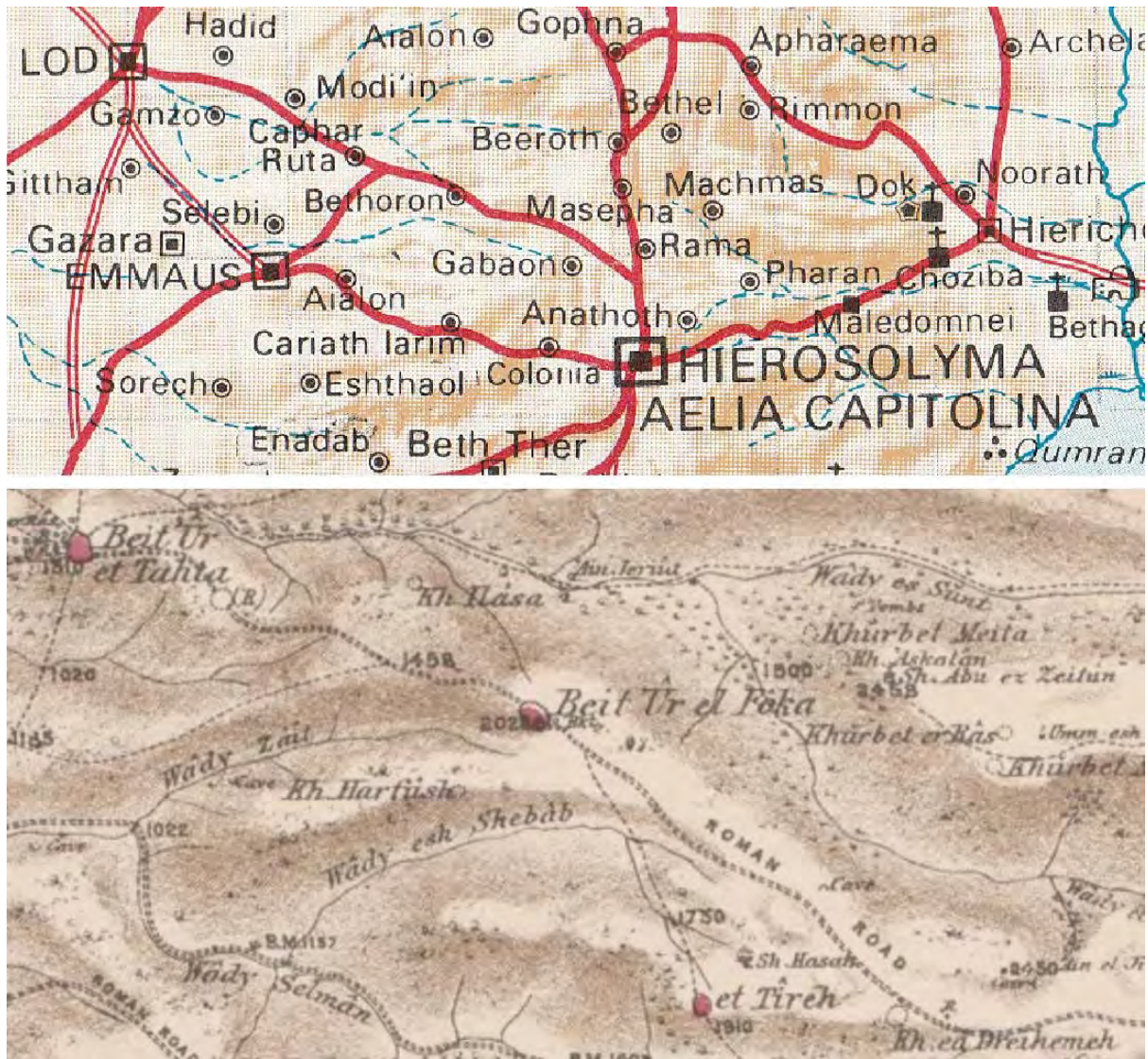


Figure 2. Example of the source material for the road identification phase. (Above) detail of a map sheet of the *Tabula Imperii Romani: Iudaea/Palaestina* showing Roman sites and roads. (Below) detail of a map sheet 17 of the *Survey of Western Palestine* identifying a Roman road.

The second phase aimed to locate the roads thusly identified within the landscape. This was done by comparing published information about locations with diverse remote sensing and mapping sources, including aerial photography and modern and historical topographic maps and satellite imagery. See Figure 3. Particularly valuable was the existence of open digital datasets providing the location of tens of thousands of ancient places (Pleiades) and over eight thousand milestones (Heřmánková et al. 2021). The spatial location of these sources was carefully checked and corrected and served as anchor points for the localization. This was followed by a third phase of manually digitizing the course of each road section informed by the localization. We aimed for a target resolution of 5-200 m, to obtain a data representation that respected the variability of the topography.

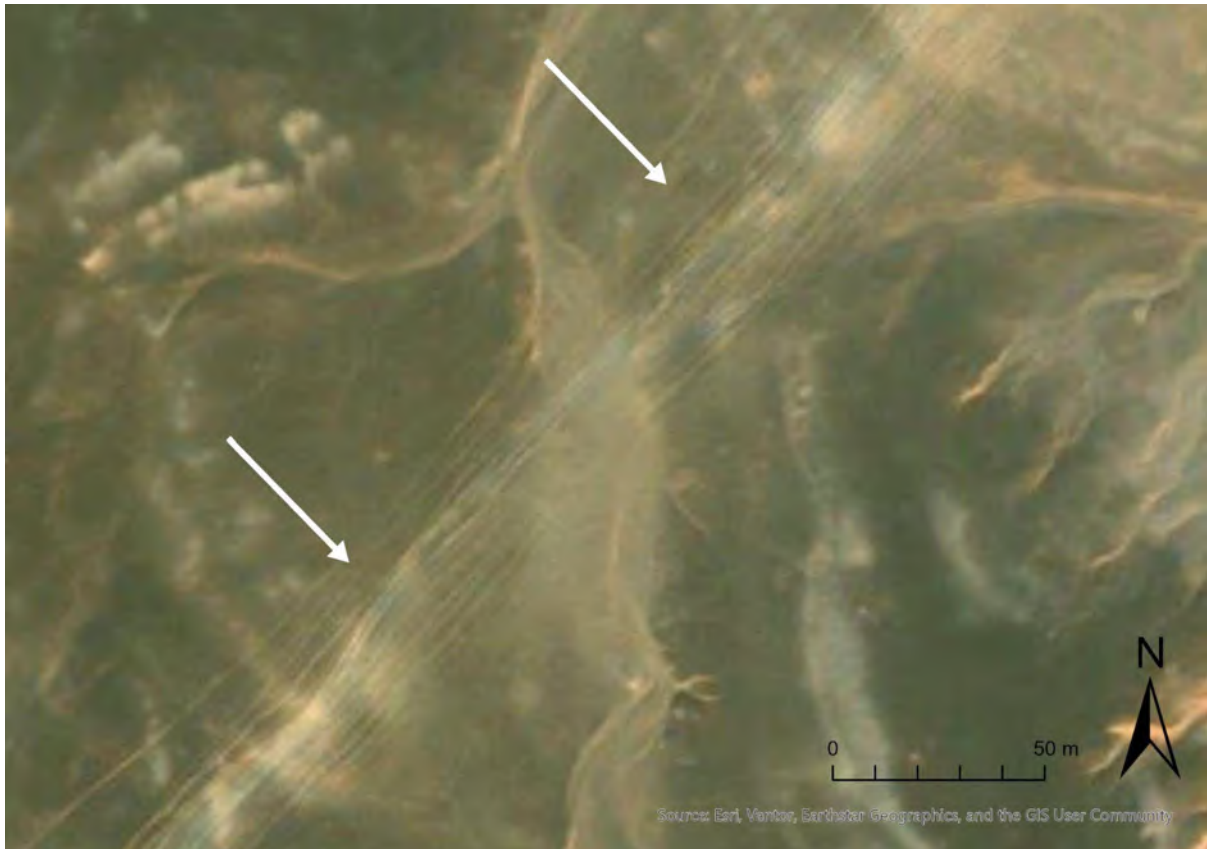


Figure 3. Modern satellite imagery (© Esri) showing caravan tracks in Egypt’s Western Desert on a route from Kharga Oasis to the Nile Valley, which has probably been in use since the Old Kingdom period.

Mapping data confidence

This process resulted in adding more roads at higher spatial resolution than previous Empire-wide aggregations. The database includes a total length of 299,171 km of roads (which is an increase of more than 100,000 km in comparison to the total length as reflected in the *Barrington Atlas*). But this major finding was also paired with a sobering realisation: the location of only 2.7% of this total road length is known with certainty. How can it be that we created a spatially detailed atlas where 97% of locations are uncertain?

It is crucial to emphasise that it is the precise location (rather than the identification that there was, in fact a road) that is uncertain, and *Itiner-e* is the first resource that enables the identification of this uncertainty. This is highly valuable as it enables targeting future work more precisely and evaluating the impact of uncertain knowledge on analytical results through sensitivity analyses. Moreover, this spatially detailed resource results in a road length estimate that is more reliable than digitization at a very coarse resolution that does not reflect topography. However, we argue it is crucial to be highly explicit about what we do not know, since we consider *Itiner-e* a growing resource (see discussion below). In this section we describe this locational uncertainty, and the ways in which *Itiner-e*’s data structure allows us to capture variability in our knowledge about Roman roads.

We specified location certainty using three categories: certain, conjectured, and hypothetical. We consider road locations certain if they could be identified within 50 m in mountainous areas and within 200 m in flatlands. The vast majority of road locations (89.8%) are considered informed conjecture:

these are identified Roman roads for which we know the location at a resolution coarser than 200 m. The remaining 7.3% concerns hypothetical roads, which refer to roads whose existence or location is hypothesised rather than known. This category is mostly used for desert tracks where the precise path is not necessarily marked by traces of infrastructure and multiple routes might have connected the same places.

The 2.7% certain road locations reflect about 8,000 km of roads. Most of these roads are still visible in the terrain in the form of paved sections or land divisions. See Figure 4. We can expect this number to grow slightly over time as Itiner-e will increasingly include more data with higher spatial accuracy from new excavations and/or surveys. However, the 2.7% proportion will likely decrease since roads are heritage features that are highly threatened by continued use, and long linear features are unlikely to ever be excavated at scale. By contrast, we can also expect higher increases in the other two types of road certainty categories: conjectured and hypothetical. Our new dataset reveals that there are hundreds of known landlocked places throughout the Roman Empire that were *not* connected, but which must have been reachable in some form or other.



Figure 4. A section of the *Via Nova Traiana* in Jordan. Image © Adam Pažout, with permission.

These findings reveal the need to document and visualise the variability in our confidence in the dataset. See Figure 5. This was done through a confidence map which expresses three aspects of the data, for each 0.5*0.5 degree (latitude * longitude) cell in this nearly 4,000,000 km² area: (1) the degree to which the coverage is representative expressed as the road density, (2) the degree to which the spatial resolution is representative expressed as vertex density, and (3) the degree to which we considered the sources to which we had access as reliable. In addition to the confidence map, we have the locational certainty categories previously mentioned and the observed discrepancy between road and site densities, together making for a rich description of our confidence.

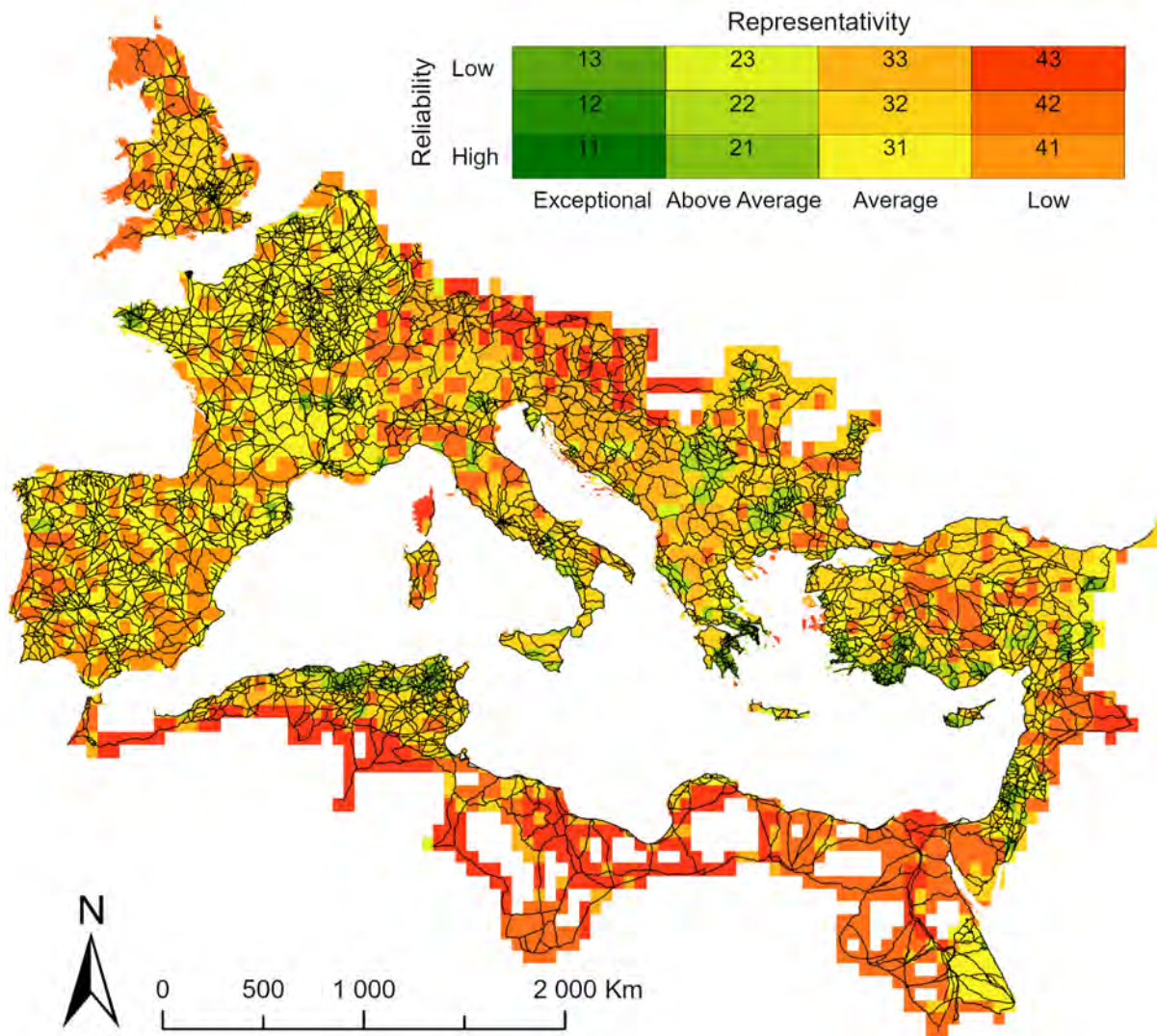


Figure 5. Confidence map of the Itiner-e dataset. Image © Adam Pažout; de Soto et al. 2025, Fig. 6c. (CC-BY-4.0).

A further challenge is the temporal uncertainty in the dataset, which has been revealed as a critical issue for the field of Roman roads studies in general. Comparable temporal information at an Empire-wide scale that allows creating snapshots of the road network per century does not currently exist. We certainly have temporal information on roads (i.e., from the many excavations of segments, milestones and literary sources), but this is only available for a fraction of the 300,000 km of roads so far identified. Moreover, roads tend to be reused. The temporal information we have access to often only reflects one or few phases of a road's use-life. The Romans occupied areas with existing road systems, which were incorporated and connected into the Roman imperial system. Those roads were sometimes refurbished, and often continued to be used beyond Roman times if the settlements they connected continued to be occupied. Our efforts focused on creating a picture of the state of roads dated between 300 BCE and 400 CE within the area defined by the boundaries of the Roman Empire in ca. 150 CE (excluding the temporary gains by the emperor Trajan). Refining the temporal resolution within this period at an empire-wide scale is a major challenge for the field.

A community-driven growing resource

Our aim with showcasing this variability in confidence was transparency and accountability. A line in an atlas conveys a false sense of certainty that in most cases is not entirely supported by evidence. We wanted to document this explicitly and thereby enable a community of contributors to do the same, such that our confidence in the data could grow as the dataset itself grows. That is also why it is crucial for our data structure to capture pieces of information about each road segment that enables replication and accountability (including the author who did the digitization) and the sources on which said digitalization was based. This structure enables the dataset to reflect a multiplicity of opinions in case observations are ambiguous or insufficient, and/or to enhance existing digitizations with new sources and shared authorship.

Itiner-e will be most valuable if it is carried by a community and explicitly linked in the growing constellation of open digital resources. This is where the next phase of Itiner-e is focussing. Our platform already has the tools built in to allow contributors to register and upload new data, supported by tutorials that explain how to do this, all the while also enabling editors to review the new contributions. Moreover, Itiner-e is already linked to Pleiades, the linked open gazetteer of ancient places, through which it is linked to numismatics and epigraphic gazetteers. We will build on this with regular workshops and more elaborate educational materials, to foster a wider community of contributors. The ultimate aim is for Itiner-e to remain a reliable place to check on our current and ever-increasing knowledge of the location of Roman roads. This will be invaluable for the protection of road heritage in this continental scale area, but also to inform predictive modelling and desk-based heritage assessments to inform development work.

Our confidence map further provides very concrete pointers as to where major gains in our knowledge of the location of Roman roads can be expected, which will be valuable for efforts to add more sources to it and for planning future survey and excavation work. We are committed to keeping Itiner-e an open and living resource carried by an international community, such that it can remain a valuable resource.

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Perspective

Beyond Teeth: What efforts to improve the resolution of isotopic analyses tell us about Open Science and statistical reform

Petra Vaiglova

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In a recent study, I led a team of biologists, archaeologists and geochemists in a quest to understand the social mechanisms that underpinned ritual feasting at the Early Neolithic site of Asiab in western Iran (Vaiglova et al., 2025). We used a technique that had been applied time and time again for probing seasonal mobility patterns of past animals: the analysis of sequential tooth enamel stable oxygen isotope values and strontium isotope ratios. But, the way we went about obtaining our measurements was very different from previous studies. Instead of removing powdered enamel from the surface of teeth at approximately 1mm-wide intervals (e.g., Balasse, 2002; Vaiglova et al., 2018), we used microscopic growth patterns inside the teeth to guide our analyses.

Using finely polished ground sections (see Figure 6), we measured the number and thickness of daily growth increments inside each wild boar tooth and used this information to analyse the isotopic composition at locations corresponding approximately to weekly-spaced intervals of enamel secretion. Because the daily rate of enamel secretion (in μm per day) decreases over the course of a tooth's formation, we adjusted the spacing between individual measurements so that they got progressively smaller across the tooth's growth trajectory. Although the chemical composition of enamel that is secreted along these daily growth increments is not frozen in time—it gets overprinted to a certain degree during the later phase of enamel maturation (Green et al., 2025)—this sampling strategy provided us with the highest possible temporal resolution of the incrementally forming enamel.

This approach for using the structure of teeth (histology) to guide *in situ* geochemical analyses had previously been applied to teeth belonging to humans and non-human primates (e.g., Green et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2018; Vaiglova et al., 2024). Our study was the first time it was adapted for analysing teeth from a zooarchaeological assemblage. The result was that it provided us with an unprecedented amount of detail: 165 stable oxygen isotope values and 107 strontium isotope ratios from just five wild boar teeth, representing subtle changes in the animals' water and food intake during the time of molar development. These intra-tooth sequences are less averaged than sequences obtained using drill holes that cut across unknown (and varying) amounts of daily growth increments. As a result, they provide closer approximations of the shape and amplitude of seasonal patterns of isotopic inputs.

The high-resolution sequences enabled us to propose that although Asiab was located in a landscape hospitable to wild boars, the animals that were used at the site for ritual feasting during the Early Neolithic were most likely sourced from distinct locations. Some of those locations were likely situated

at large distances from the site; possibly over 70 km away. What this implied on a human level for the organisation of the feasting activities was beautifully depicted in an illustration created by Kathryn Killackey (Figure 7).



Figure 6. Photograph showing the 50 µm thick ground sections extracted from the study teeth. Each tooth was sectioned at a location that was optimal for counting and measuring daily growth increments preserved inside the enamel. In the sample that is raised, the enamel region appears white, while the dentine appears beige. Photo credit: Nic Vevers, Australian National University Press Office. Used with permission.

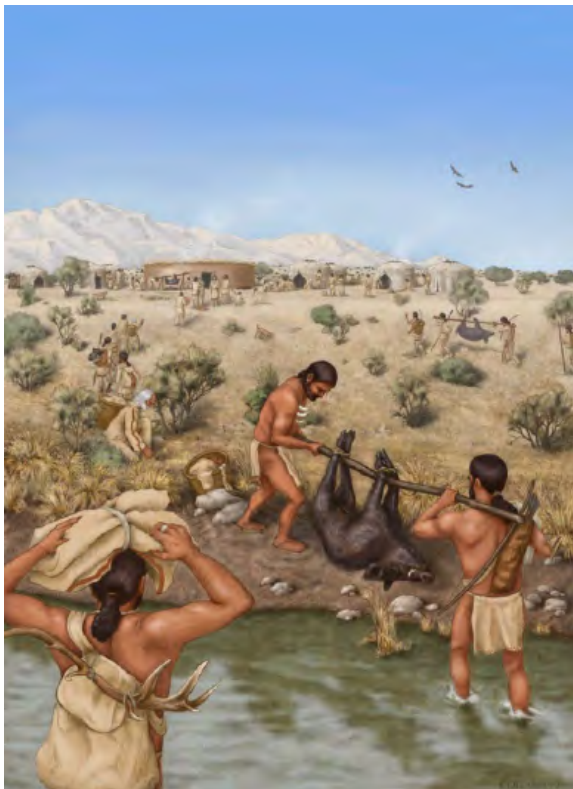


Figure 7. Artist Kathryn Killackey's depiction of the findings of our study. The illustration shows groups of people transporting wild boars to Asiab across the Zagros Mountains landscape, replete with archaeologically documented details such as the use of necklaces made of boar canines. See the last section in Vaiglova and Killackey (2025) for Kathryn's insights into the creative process that went into crafting such a complex and archaeologically detailed image. Used with permission.

The public response to our publication was exciting. The news of our findings was communicated across several media platforms, with our favourite headline written by Kristina Killgrove from LiveScience: “Archaeologists discover that parties 11,000 years ago were BYOB – Bring Your Own Boar”. The enthusiasm about the findings even spurred a meme based on The Simpsons that was shared on social media and which read “Come to Homer’s BBQ. The extra B is for Bring Your Own Boar.”

Against the backdrop of all this excitement, it is important to remember that the role of science is not to serve the scientist. It is an endeavour that should be repeated. Scientists thus have the responsibility to make their methods fully reproducible; especially when introducing cutting-edge techniques. The combination of methods we used (Figure 8) required lengthy procedures to section the teeth at the optimal locations, prepare ground sections that were thin enough to show the daily growth increments, count and measure the growth increments, and place the analytical spots for isotopic analyses at desired locations with micrometre accuracy. However, if we simply stated in our Methods that we used histological information to target geochemical analyses at ~weekly resolution without describing what the histological data look like and how it can be translated into a sampling strategy on the instrument used, others would not be able to independently reproduce our methods. For this reason, we went to extra lengths to create transparency in relation to the application of our methods.

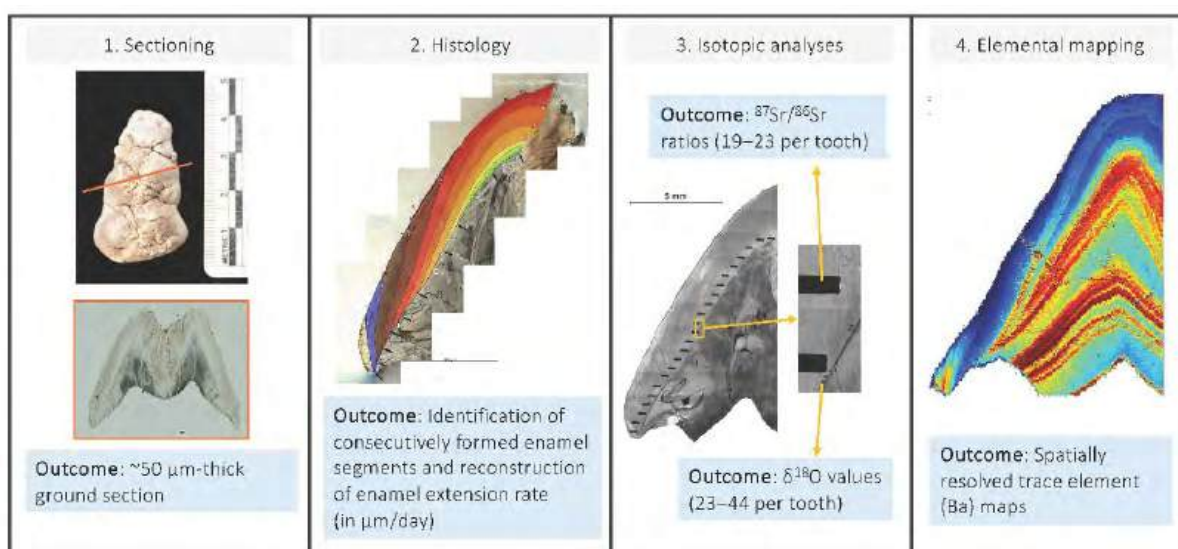


Figure 8. A schematic showing the sequence of methods we used to assess the provenance of wild boars recovered from a feasting deposit at Asiab. The placement of analytical spots for isotopic analyses (stable oxygen isotope values and strontium isotope ratios) discussed in this article is shown in panel 3. Reproduced from Vaiglova et al. (2025). Used with permission.

We provided all the raw histological data, accompanied by microscope images showing what the daily growth increments look like. For an example, see Figure 9. We supplied annotated images of each ground section and described how distinct enamel growth segments were used to calculate the histological measurements. See Figure 10. Because the growth increments are not visible on the camera inside the instrument used for isotopic analysis, we described how the enamel extension rate

and length of the enamel dentine junction within each growth segment could be used to determine placement of the analytical spots at the desired resolution. This had to take into account that the growth segments did not necessarily align with the end of a week, and an offset was thus needed to calculate where to place the first spot within each growth segment. To enable others to see where the analytical spots landed, we took microscope images of each ground section after the isotopic analyses were completed. Because the images were too large to submit as supplementary materials, we [uploaded them to the Open Science Framework](#).

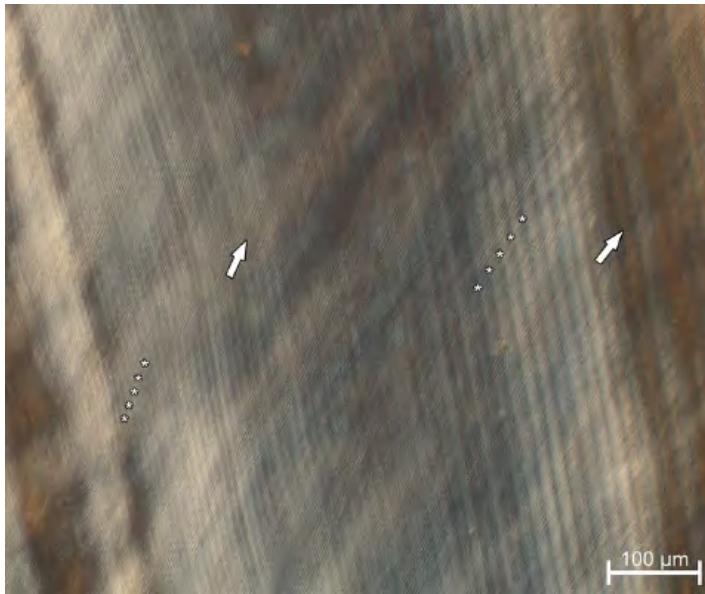


Figure 9. Microscope image of the internal enamel structure of a wild boar tooth (ASB402, upper third molar). Arrows indicate the direction of enamel prisms, asterisks mark daily growth increments (laminations). This image is reproduced from Supplementary Materials in Vaiglova et al. (2025). Used with permission.

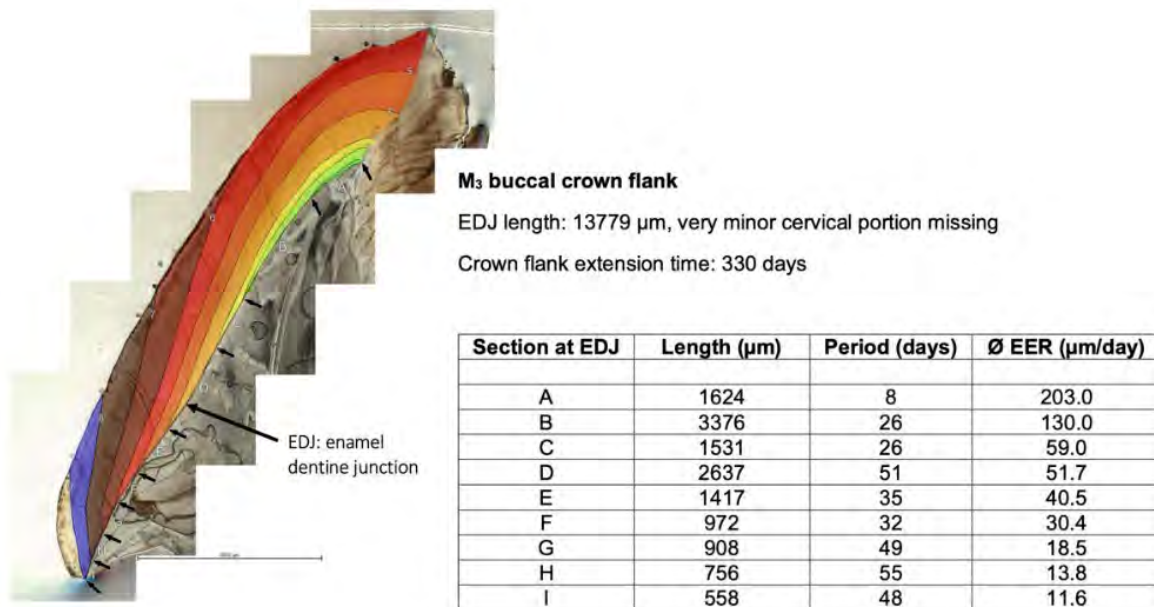


Figure 10. Annotated ground section from wild boar tooth ASB133 (lower third molar). The coloured regions overlaying the enamel portion of the ground section show distinct growth segments (labelled A through I) that were used for histological analysis. The Enamel Extension Rate (in μm per day) was calculated by dividing the length of the enamel dentine junction (in μm) by the number of days each growth segment took to form. In this tooth, we can see that the enamel extension rate decreases over

the course of the tooth's development. It starts with 203 μm of enamel deposited daily and ends with 11 μm of enamel deposited daily. Reproduced from Supplementary Materials Vaiglova et al. (2025). Used with permission.

Assessment of the reliability of each *in situ* stable oxygen isotope measurement required a certain level of subjectivity. This is because we were trying to place the analytical spots as close to the enamel dentine junction as possible without touching it. If it touched, the measurement would no longer reflect the composition of only the enamel. However, the visibility on the camera inside the instrument sometimes made it difficult to determine whether the 20 μm -wide analytical spots cleared the EDJ or not (for further discussion, see our behind-the-paper blog post on Nature Springer Research Communities, Vaiglova and Killackey, 2025). Overall, we determined that 13 analytical locations provided unreliable measurements. For full transparency, we created a Reproducibility Index that contains the images of every analytical spot taken on the camera inside the instrument; a total of 200 images. For an excerpt, see Figure 11; or access [the full Index](#) on the Open Science Framework. This way, anyone can re-assess our quality control decisions, re-do our analyses with the data points they deem reliable, and reproduce our published figures using the shared code if they wish.

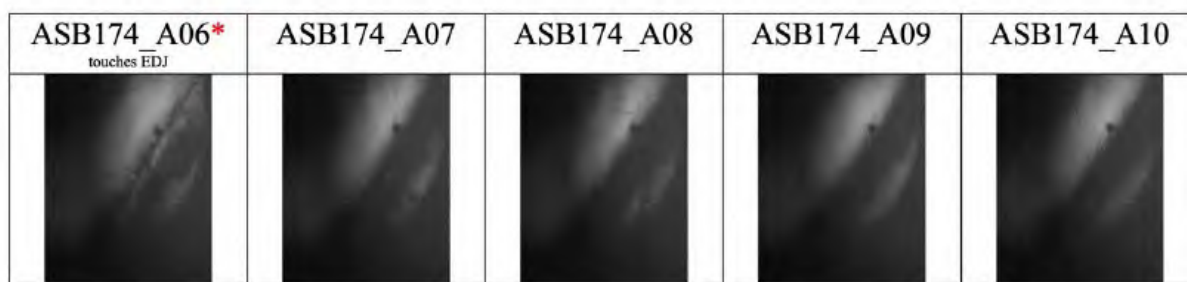


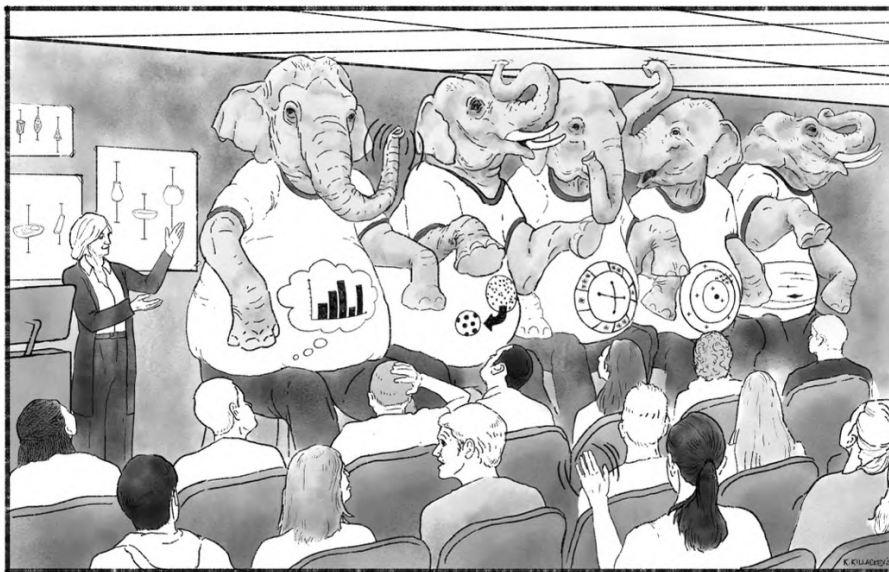
Figure 11. An excerpt from the Reproducibility Index created to catalogue all the analytical spots taken with a camera inside the Sensitive High Resolution Ion Microprobe (SHRIMP). The full document can be [downloaded from the Open Science Framework](#). In the images shown here, the enamel dentine junction (EDJ) appears as a thin line running from the upper right corner to the lower left corner. The analytical 'burn spot' is visible as a circle ($\varnothing 21\mu\text{m}$) in the upper right quadrant. Here, it was determined that sample A06 touched the EDJ and its composition was thus compromised. Reproduced from Supplementary Materials in Vaiglova et al. (2025). Used with permission.

However, achieving high-resolution measurements does not necessarily guarantee good science. Good science will always be constrained by the types of questions we ask and the approaches we use for analysing the results. A lot has been written about the importance of thoughtfully integrating statistical thinking into every step of the research cycle. I have summarised what I consider to be the most important advice in a paper on improving statistical training in archaeology (Vaiglova, 2025). In this paper, I suggest that a good place to start is to talk about five elephants in the room, five statistical concepts that we do not talk about enough. See Figure 12. A more concentrated effort to discuss these concepts in the classroom, in supervision meetings, in research workshops and during course design will not only make it easier to adapt good statistical practice. It will also shield us from falling victim to common misuses of statistical tools, particularly null hypothesis significance testing (NHST).

Professional statisticians have been warning us for decades that null hypothesis falsification—the approach that underlies statistical tests like t tests and analysis of variance, ANOVA—does not necessarily provide the information we may think it provides. Jacob Cohen, one of the most influential statisticians of the 20th century, wrote in this regard:

“What's wrong with NHST? Well, among many other things, it does not tell us what we want to know, and we so much want to know what we want to know that, out of desperation, we nevertheless believe that it does!” (Cohen, 1994, p. 997)

A critical problem with significance testing is not the use of p values per se. It is the misplaced use of deductive logic—if a hypothesis H predicts observation O , but observation O does not happen, H must be false—in a world where most of the phenomena we are interested in are not binary. Rejecting a null hypothesis should not have only one possible outcome (the presence of an effect) because any given hypothesis may correspond to more than one explanatory model. Conversely, any explanatory model may correspond to more than one hypothesis. For a thorough and easily digestible discussion on this topic, see Chapter 1 (or the related [YouTube lecture](#)) from Richard McElreath (2018). It is no surprise then that McElreath argues that “The greatest obstacle that I encounter among students and colleagues is the tacit belief that the proper objective of statistical inference is to test null hypotheses.” (McElreath 2018, p. 4)



“To improve statistical training in archaeology, we need to talk about five elephants in the room:

- 1) Statistical thinking should come first*
- 2) Descriptive and inferential statistics have different interpretative potential*
- 3) p values can be extremely variable*
- 4) Statistical precision is not the same thing as measurement precision*
- 5) Meta-analyses and forest plots are useful for synthesising previous research.”*

Figure 12. Graphical abstract that accompanies the publication ‘How can we improve statistical training in archaeology?’ (Vaiglova 2025). Drawing by Kathryn Killackey. The cartoon illustrates five statistical elephants in the room (statistical concepts we do not talk about enough). In the article, I argue that by shining a light on these elephants, we can both strengthen statistical training and avoid

falling victim to common misuses of statistical tools (particularly statistical tests). Used with permission.

One way to avoid following the commonly misused approach of null hypothesis falsification is to reframe dichotomous questions (e.g., *Did male burials contain more grave goods than female burials?*) as estimation questions (e.g., *To what extent did male and female burials differ?*) (Cumming, 2012; Vaiglova, 2025). Estimation thinking leads to more informative and contextualised insights than simple yes/no answers. It requires us to describe what the data (and the uncertainty around the data) tells us about the phenomenon of interest. Importantly, it leads us to consider how large an effect must be to be meaningful in a given research context. This is more informative than simply stating that there is a statistically significant difference between groups.

In our study of five wild boars, we wanted to assess whether the study animals all spent their developmental years in the same geographic region. We could have taken the measured isotopic sequences and ran a test to see if there is a statistically significant difference between the five individuals. But this would not have been very revealing. What we did instead was notice that one of the individuals (ASB449) exhibited lower stable oxygen isotope values ($\delta^{18}\text{O}$) compared to the other four individuals (ASB133–402). To assess whether this difference was meaningful enough to suggest that the animals originated from distinct locations, we calculated the difference between the $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ values of the two groups and expressed it along with the uncertainty around the difference. This way, our readers would not have to take our declaration of difference for granted. We wrote:

“the difference in $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ values between ASB449 and ASB133–402 is sufficiently large ((mean of ASB133–402, $n = 167$) – (mean of ASB449, $n = 88$) = 2.8‰, 95% CI [2.5, 3.1]) to indicate that the animals spent crown formation time in distinct regions” (Vaiglova et al., 2025, p. 4)

The 95% confidence interval (CI) around the difference told us that the phenomenon we were trying to quantify—the real difference between the $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ value of the two groups—was most likely captured by the interval 2.5 – 3.1 ‰. Even on the lower end of this interval, this difference is something we could interpret as meaningful.

Researchers do not have to explicitly state that they are using estimation thinking to do good research. The point is that providing estimates is more meaningful and informative than making declarations about whether a test passed an arbitrary threshold (like $p < 0.05$). While there are many approaches to statistical inference—and professional statisticians do not always agree on which approach(es) should be used—our best bet is to let the research context (rather than a black box) drive the interpretation. In this light, I like to think of the benefit of high-resolution isotopic analyses as more than an approach to collect better data. It’s an opportunity to ask better estimation questions!

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Research Overview

Archaeology of Emotions: Death, ritual and mourning women in Greece between past and present

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Introduction²⁰

Mourners depicted on Greek vases, particularly Geometric and Classical funerary vessels, present ritual lamentation through standardized gestures such as the tearing of hair, the beating of the head or chest, and the raising of arms. These gestures often distinguish gendered roles. Women are typically shown close to the corpse, displaying intense emotional expressions. Men, on the other hand, appear more distant, frequently organized in orderly processions that resemble a choral performance. The figures represented include close relatives and, in some cases, professional mourners. Scenes usually show the deceased laid on a bier, surrounded by mourners, and may include depictions of funeral processions, chariots, athletic games, or mythological references. Such imagery reflects deeply embedded funerary customs and served to comfort the living by situating individual death within a shared heroic or communal framework (Havelock, 1982) and more recently (Diogo de Souza and Kesser Barcellos Dias, 2018)).

Children are also often present, indicating their inclusion in mourning rituals and reinforcing the idea of death as a family and community concern. Lamentation was a controlled public performance that helped societies cope with loss, reinforced social hierarchies, and facilitated the transition of the deceased into collective memory and ancestorhood. Scholars reconstruct these practices by combining archaeological evidence (tombs, iconography, grave goods) with literary sources such as Homeric epic and Greek tragedy, often comparing these with modern ethnographic data ((Diogo de Souza and Kesser Barcellos Dias, 2018).

The primary stages of ancient Greek funerary ritual can be reconstructed from these iconographic and literary sources. These practices, which show remarkable continuity from prehistory through the Classical period and into modern times, include immediate actions after death—closing the eyes and

²⁰ This article is part of a larger project aimed at studying “gender stereotypes in Italy during the first Millennium BC”, funded by a residential grant appointed to Francesca Fulminante by the Hanse Wissenschaft Institute for Advanced studies, in 2022-23 and by the 2023 – 2024 British Academy /Leverhulme Small Research Grants Scheme, grant number SRG2324\241025, also received by Francesca Fulminante with extreme appreciation and gratitude. CHATGTP has been used to reduce the original text, which was a bit longer, and made it more readable. The intended original meaning of the author has been checked and maintained.

mouth, washing, anointing, shrouding the body, and in later periods placing an *obol* for Charon. Next, the body was laid out on a couch for viewing, often for one or two days, accompanied by female lamentation. Thereafter came the *ekphora* (the procession to the cemetery). This was typically held at dawn and involved both male and female mourners. Burial or interment followed, with the deposition of the body and grave offerings such as lekythoi pottery vessels or other objects. Post-burial rites included ritual cleansing to remove pollution (*miasma*) and subsequent mourning feasts ((Havelock, 1982) and more recently (Diogo de Souza and Kesser Barcellos Dias, 2018, Håland, 2014, Håland, 2017)).

Scholars generally agree on several interpretive points regarding these rituals. First, ritual pollution (*miasma*) may explain women's proximity to the corpse. Second, there may have been an understanding that shared suffering—frequently emphasized in tragedy—helped the living cope with loss by demonstrating that even heroes endured grief. Third, commemorative performance through ritual and imagery reinforced social structures and status, creating a cyclical, almost meta-theatrical system of remembrance. Greek mourning practices shaped identity, social order, and cultural continuity. Archaeological and literary evidence highlights the central role of women in these emotional, public expressions of grief and ancestor veneration, challenging later assumptions about “primitive” mourning (*ibid*).

This overview examines funerary rituals and prothesis scenes across time, comparing ancient practices with modern ones to illuminate gender roles and broader social dynamics.

Prehistoric Times: Bronze and Iron Age

As surviving Linear B tablets are largely administrative, written evidence for funerary lament in the Bronze Age is absent. However, material culture—especially *larnakes* (terracotta coffins) and funerary iconography—provides insight into Bronze Age death rituals. When combined with Iron Age pottery and Homeric descriptions, these sources offer a long-term perspective on continuity and change in Greek funerary practices.

The well-known *larnakes* from Tanagra (see for example Figure 13) (Late Helladic IIIA–B, ca. 1350–1250 BC) depict mourning scenes in which both men and women actively participate. Wailing male figures and officiating female figures suggest that women played key roles in managing grief, though lament was not exclusively female. The rich and complex Mycenaean shaft graves indicate elaborate beliefs about death and memory. Objects like *larnakes* and decorated vases functioned not merely as containers but as powerful mnemonic tools that shaped identity, emotion, and social status (Kramer-Hajos, 2015, Burke, 2008, Dakouri-Hild, 2021).

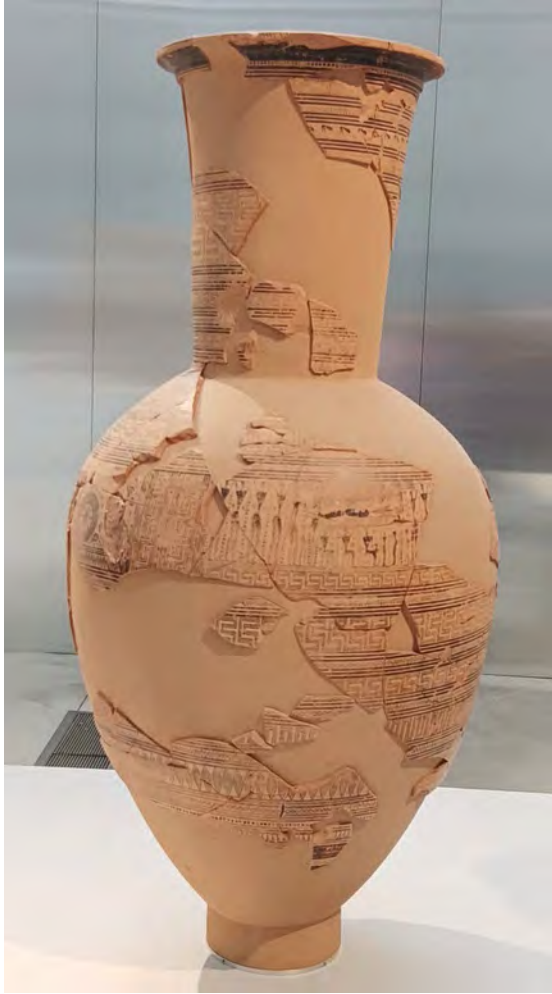
An important parallel to the Tanagra *larnakes* is the Early Cycladic II marble figurine head from Amorgos (ca. 2800–2300 BC), which bears red-painted striations on the cheek. These markings are widely interpreted as representations of ritual self-scratching during mourning. This evidence connects Bronze Age practices to later epic descriptions of women lamenting fallen heroes, suggesting deep-rooted traditions across the eastern Mediterranean. See Figure 14.



Figure 13. Tanagra *larnax* from Tomb 22. Side A. Late Helladic IIIA–B period, from circa 1350 to 1250 BC. Image © B. Burke, drawn by A. Richards, 2007 (Burke, 2008).



Figure 14. Early Cycladic II head of a statue from Amorgos (Keros-Syros culture), most probably from a funerary context, 2800-2300 BC here. Image from the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, courtesy of Richard Janssen. Image used after CC BY SA.



Iron Age evidence further confirms the continuity of women's involvement in funerary lament. The large Geometric amphorae from the Dipylon cemetery in Athens (ca. 760–750 BC) depict *prothesis* and *ekphora* scenes with schematic human figures. See for example Figures 15-16.

The initial stage of the funerary ritual was the *prothesis*, or laying out of the body, which typically took place within the household. In ancient Greece, women played a central role in this rite: they washed and clothed the deceased, anointed the body with oil, and arranged it on a bier or bed. The bier was commonly adorned with pillows and blankets, visually reinforcing the symbolic association between sleep and death. During this vigil, relatives and friends gathered to mourn the deceased and to pay their respects.

Figure 15. Amphora probably from a female burial of the cemetery of Dyphilon in Athens, Geometric Period, 760-750 BC, Louvre-Lens: Cat. A516. Photos by the author; image by CC BY SA.



Figure 16. Detail of *prothesis* from amphora shown in Figure 3. Photo by the author; image by CC BA SA.

Following the *prothesis*, the body was conveyed to the cemetery in a funeral procession known as the *ekphora*, which usually occurred just before dawn. The deceased was transported by chariot, cart, or on foot, functioning as the ancient equivalent of a modern funeral cortege. This public procession was often accompanied by musicians and performers, as depicted on several painted vases (for example, those in the Getty Museum; see Figure 17). In one such scene, a group of men follows the music of an *aulos* (flute) player, while on the opposite side a woman holding a wreath leads a line of women dancing hand in hand. Snakes—traditionally associated with death—are shown winding across the handles, shoulder, and rim of the vessel. Additional scenes depicting men in horse-drawn chariots and armed soldiers may represent ceremonial processions or funerary games held in honour of the deceased.



Figure 17. Attributed to the Philadelphia Painter (Greek (Attic)), painter Funerary Amphora with Scenes of Mourning, 720–700 B.C. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California, purchased in part with funds provided by the Villa Council, 2016.35 (from Belis, 2018). Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program, CC BY SA.

The vases themselves signified the final stage of the funerary process: the interment of the body. Both vessels originally functioned as grave markers within a cemetery, and their large scale and decorative programs underscore their role as funerary monuments. However, such elaborately decorated vases

were not accessible to all members of society. Instead, they were commissioned by wealthy families and placed at gravesites as visible indicators of elite status within the community. While amphorae are often associated with female burials and kraters with male burials, both types show mixed-gender mourning. Unlike the Bronze Age *larnakes*, late Geometric vases sometimes differentiate gender through posture and gesture: male mourners may appear with lowered arms, while female figures raise their hands to their heads ((Ahlberg, 1971) and recently (Belis, 2018)).

These practices established iconographic and ritual traditions that shaped later Greek funerary culture, linking the Mycenaean and Geometric periods to Classical antiquity and beyond.

Historical Times: Classical and Hellenistic Period

Particularly from Late Geometric IIb onward, vase painting became increasingly naturalistic. Artists added details such as facial features, hair, clothing, weapons, and differentiated gestures. Orientalizing elements (e.g., animal friezes, plastic decoration, and spiral motifs) introduced narrative complexity. These stylistic changes contributed to more expressive representations of funerary ritual. With the development of the black-figure technique in the seventh century BC, funerary imagery acquired new social meaning. The *prothesis* scene became more standardized, reflecting evolving social attitudes toward death and mourning.

Funerary practices continued into historical times, as evidenced by black- and red-figure vases and *pinakes* (flat, rectangular, painted slab of clay placed in a sanctuary or tomb) produced between the sixth and third centuries BC in Greece (mainly Attica, (Karoglou, 2010)) and exported in Magna Graecia and Etruria. Early *prothesis* scenes appear sporadically in the seventh century, followed by a more consistent production of grave plaques and *loutrophoroi* from the mid-sixth century onward. These are distinctive Ancient Greek ceramic or marble vessels, shaped like tall amphorae (two handles) or hydriae (three handles) with elongated necks, used for fetching water for a bride's ritual bath and for funerary rites, often symbolizing a missed marriage and placed as grave markers for the unmarried dead, decorated with scenes of weddings or mourning processions (Sabetai, 2009).

After Solon's funerary legislation, *prothesis* scenes were typically depicted on *pinakes* attached to tombs or on *loutrophoroi* used in bathing the dead and marking graves. The number of mourners depicted decreases, possibly reflecting legal restrictions or limited pictorial space. Gender segregation becomes more apparent: male mourners usually stand at a distance, often near the feet of the deceased, while female mourners cluster near the head, performing gestures of grief such as tearing hair or holding their heads (see for example Figure 18) (Diogo de Souza and Kesser Barcellos Dias, 2018).

Despite these changes, Archaic and Classical representations retain elements from earlier traditions, including raised arms and expressive lament. Innovations include white-ground *lekythoi* depicting women visiting tombs, emphasizing elite ideals of remembrance. *Loutrophoroi*, associated with both marriage and death, display increasingly individualized mourning scenes. Over time, male figures move closer to the deceased in some representations, occasionally adopting gestures previously associated with women (see for example Figure 19). This suggests a degree of fluidity in gendered expressions of grief. Overall, however, the reduced number of mourners and increased focus on family members point to a shift from public to more private funerary rituals, consistent with legal reforms and changing social norms (ibidem).



Figure 18. Pinax from Walters Art Museum 48.225. Drawing by Yannis Nakas (Diogo de Souza and Kesser Barcellos Dias, 2018); image by CC BY SA.



Figure 19. Detail of *loutrophoros* from Athens, National Museum 1542. Drawing by Yannis Nakas (Diogo de Souza and Kesser Barcellos Dias, 2018); image by CC BY SA.

Modern Times: Comparison

Ethnographic studies, particularly those by Evy Johanne Håland, demonstrate striking continuities between ancient and modern Greek death rituals. Emotions such as grief, love, and memory remain central, and offerings at tombs—whether ancient vases or modern photographs and cigarettes—serve similar mnemonic and relational functions.

Ancient Greek beliefs held that the psyche departed the body at death, continuing in a shadowy existence. Public funerals emphasized civic identity, while family tombs preserved personal memory. Modern Greek practices similarly blend public and private elements: tombs become sites of ongoing interaction, with offerings reflecting the deceased's personality and life.

Women continue to play a dominant role in caring for the dead and performing mourning rituals. See Figure 20. Laments, memorial services, and domestic rituals express intense emotions and reinforce familial and communal bonds. These practices define individual and collective identity, bridging ancient beliefs and modern social life (Håland, 2010, Håland, 2014, Håland, 2017).



Figure 20. A “female sphere” in a public space: the cemetery, a space controlled by women, Athens 1st cemetery a Saturday morning, winter 1991. Image after (Håland, 2010))

Conclusions

This long-term examination of Greek death rituals reveals both continuity and transformation across millennia. Mycenaean and Geometric funerals appear as largely public events involving participation of both genders, possibly including professional mourners. By the Classical period, funerals became more private and family-centered. Women assumed the primary responsibility for mourning and care of the body, while men adopted more restrained roles.

Scholarly work, particularly on gender and death ritual, highlights women's central yet often underestimated agency. Through preparation of the body, performance of laments, and management of memory, women exercised temporary but significant social power within a male-dominated

society. Ritual pollution, emotional excess, and gender norms shaped but did not diminish their importance (Stears, 2005).

The persistence of death cults in Greece reflects a broader Mediterranean emphasis on emotional expression and continuity between the living and the dead. Modern practices illuminate ancient ones, and vice versa, demonstrating how ritual, memory, and emotion remain fundamental to cultural identity. This enduring tradition exemplifies an “archaeology of emotions,” where material culture, ritual performance, and lived experience intertwine across time.

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Fieldwork Overview

Kani Shaie (Iraqi Kurdistan): New evidence for Late Chalcolithic monumental architecture and long-term occupation east of the Tigris: Results from the 2025 excavation season

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A long-term settlement in the Zagros Piedmont

Located in the Bazyan Valley, in the western piedmont of the Zagros Mountains (Sulaymaniyah Governorate, Iraqi Kurdistan), Kani Shaie occupies a strategic position between the Mesopotamian lowlands and the mountain corridors leading into the Zagros interior. See Figure 21. The site is a large multi-period tell, with a prominent upper mound 14 meters high, and low mounded area, reflecting a long and complex occupational history extending from the Chalcolithic of the 5th and 4th millennia to the late 1st millennium BC, with sporadic reuse in the Medieval period (cf. Renette et al., 2023; Ahmad & Renette, 2023).

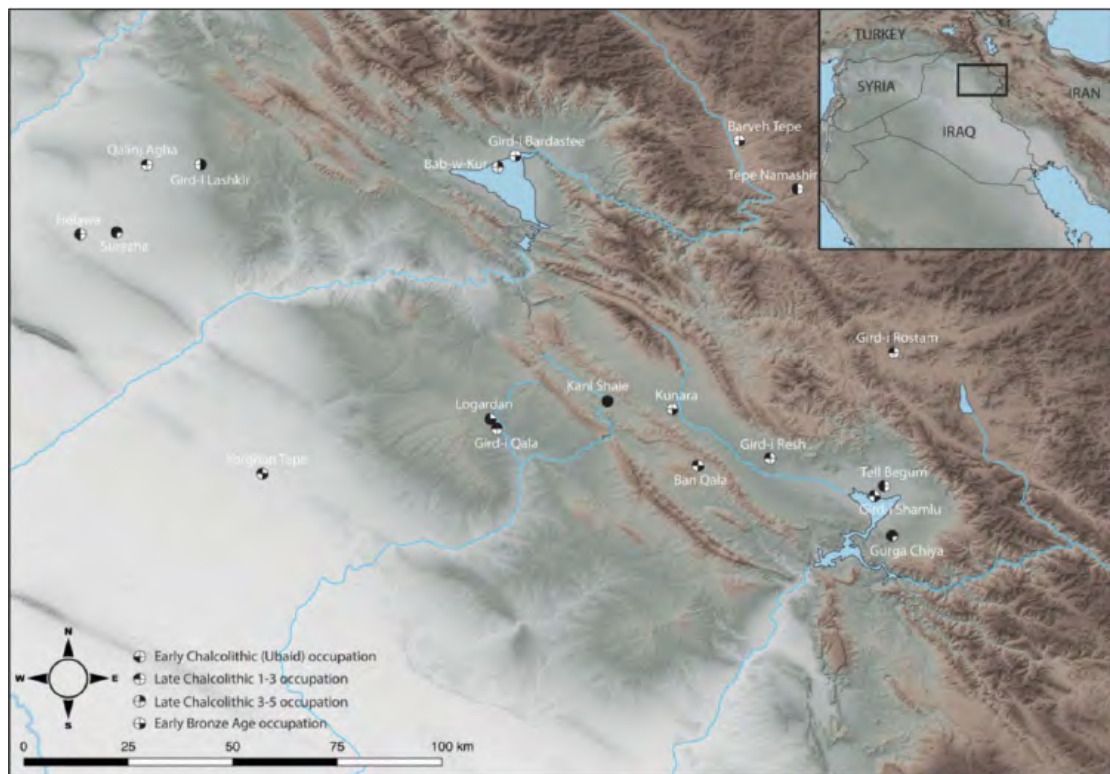


Figure 21. Location of Kani Shaie with selected other archaeological sites in the region. Map by S. Renette.

Excavations at Kani Shaie are part of a long-term research project between the University of Cambridge (UK) and the University of Coimbra (Portugal) aimed at reassessing models of social complexity, monumentality, and interregional interaction east of the Tigris during the later 4th and 3rd millennia BC. While these debates have traditionally focused on southern Mesopotamia and a limited number of ‘core’ sites, the Zagros Piedmont has increasingly emerged as a key region for understanding alternative trajectories of social organisation during the Late Chalcolithic and the Uruk period (Lewis, 2025).

The 2025 excavation season marked a turning point in this research. Building on earlier work in Area A, excavations succeeded in exposing substantial architectural remains dated to the Late Uruk (c. 3300–3100 BC) phase, including a monumental building with formal architectural features, associated with high-status material culture. At the same time, work in the lower town confirmed the long-term significance of the site through the Neo-Assyrian and Hellenistic–Parthian periods, highlighting Kani Shaie as a persistent place within regional settlement networks. Considering the site’s small size, the unexpected discoveries in both periods of high-quality administrative tools (cylinder seals), rare metal artefacts (including a bronze zebu-figurine), monumental architecture, and the absence of any residential dwellings, demand a reconsideration of the mantra in Mesopotamian archaeology that such places are the exclusive domain of urban elites.

This article presents the main results of the 2025 season, focusing on three interrelated themes: the exposure of a Late Chalcolithic monumental building in Area A, the evidence for continuity across the Uruk–Early Bronze Age transition, and the role of the lower town in later periods.



Figure 22. Drone View of Kani Shaie with main excavation areas. Photo by Daisy Brunt, KSAP.

Finding the Late Chalcolithic beneath the Early Bronze levels

Excavations in Area A (Figure 22), covering roughly 20% of the main mound during the 2025 season were designed to reach and expose the earliest occupational phases of the Early Bronze Age and transition to the Late Chalcolithic 5 period (ca. 3350–3100 BC), identified in previous campaigns (Renette et al., 2025). The strategy focused on linking earlier trenches (T4500 and T6500) and expanding excavation horizontally in order to clarify architectural layouts and stratigraphic relationships.

This approach proved successful and provided us with important results. Below a sequence of Early Bronze Age levels characterised by large-scale architectural remains—including grill-structures and associated storage installations—the excavations reached a well-preserved LC5 horizon, corresponding to the final phase of the Late Chalcolithic (LC) sequence. See Figure 23. This phase is represented by a substantial rectilinear building, exposed over a significant area (c. 12x6m). The layout of the building is characterized by a rectilinear plan articulated into a series of large rooms, with substantial walls generally 0.70–1.00 m thick. Overall, this suggests a coherent internal organisation. A recessed entrance with a niched façade forms a narrow, clearly formalised threshold, consistent with controlled movement between spaces and characteristic of monumental architecture elsewhere at other final LC/Uruk sites.

Within the excavated rooms, evidence of domestic activities are notably absent. Our excavations revealed no evidence for hearths, ovens, food preparation areas, or accumulations of household refuse. Given the relative absence of any domestic material at all, the evidence strongly suggests that the building was deliberately cleaned and emptied in antiquity, immediately prior to abandonment. Taken together, this evidence supports the interpretation of the building as a formal complex with a communal or institutional function.

The very limited quantities of material culture from this structure reinforce such an interpretation. The scant finds from this secure LC5 context include very small quantities of characteristically LC5 southern Mesopotamian ceramic forms (fragmentary storage vessels and bevelled rim bowls), alongside a finely carved cylinder seal and a small gold pendant, both recovered in stratigraphic association with the building's use-phase deposits. While neither object can be taken in isolation as definitive evidence for social hierarchy, their presence within this architectural context strongly suggests activities linked to administration, identity, or symbolic display.

In sum, in late 4th millennium Greater Mesopotamia, recessed, niche-facade thresholds of the kind found in this building at Kani Shaie form part of the architectural grammar of formal buildings, including complexes commonly highlighted as being of a ceremonial or cultic nature, where controlled access and spatial hierarchy were materially and architecturally emphasised (see Butterlin, 2018, pp. 353–405 for discussion of Uruk monumental architecture). The Kani Shaie LC5 building fits well within this broader tradition of regulated movement and formalised thresholds. At the same time, the excavated portion of the building has not yielded unequivocal ritual installations such as altars, offering benches, or wall niches, and the evidence therefore cautions against a strict identification as a 'temple'. Nevertheless, when considered together with the building's scale, coherent plan, and its position within the LC5 sequence, the architectural assemblage is consistent with a communal, official building, potentially combining both administrative and ceremonial dimensions. The recovery of

multiple clay wall cones in the vicinity of the entrance area of the monumental structure is also noteworthy, as these wall cones are well representative of other decorative repertoires most commonly associated with monumental late 4th millennium architecture elsewhere within Uruk period Mesopotamia.



Figure 23. Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age levels in Area A. Photo by Hugo Naccaro, KSAP.

Monumentality and the Uruk–EBA transition

Another significant outcome of the 2025 season concerns the nature of the transition from the Late Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age (EBA) at Kani Shaie. Rather than a sharp rupture or abandonment, the stratigraphic sequence from Area A points to a process of architectural reuse, transformation, and functional reconfiguration.

Stratigraphically above the LC5 building, the Early Bronze Age (c. 3100–2000 BC) sequence includes a distinctive feature that recurs across the area, a grill-structure generally interpreted as a specialised storage installation and known from a limited number of sites in Upper Mesopotamia and eastern Anatolia (Ławecka, 2019). At Kani Shaie, in the earliest EBA levels (Figure 23), the oldest grill-structure thus far excavated at the site appears to have been built partially against (perhaps even incorporating) the Uruk/LC5 remains. This suggests a deliberate engagement with pre-existing architecture, rather than a break with the past. The continuity and investment in monumental architecture (of whatever function) is noteworthy and has important implications. It challenges models that interpret the end of

the Uruk phenomenon as a sudden collapse followed by regional fragmentation. Additionally, the evidence from Kani Shaie supports a view of gradual transformation in which local communities adapted existing architectural spaces and social practices to new economic and political realities.

The continuity observed at Kani Shaie is not limited to settlement persistence alone, but also includes sustained investment in large-scale architecture. While the function of the LC5 building differs from that of the overlying EBA structures, both phases are marked by substantial construction efforts and a concern with formally organised space. Monumentality, in this sense does not disappear with the end of the Late Chalcolithic, but is redefined through changing architectural forms and uses. A clear expression of this is the construction of a massive curving enclosure wall along the eastern edge of the mound, preserved as a substantial mudbrick perimeter varying between c. 4-5 m in width. Its scale is significant and the wall demarcates a sizeable enclosed sector within which rooms and installations were organised, most plausibly in connection with storage and food production.

These observations have broader implications for how the Uruk–EBA transition is understood in the Zagros Piedmont. Models that emphasise abrupt collapse, demographic decline, or regional fragmentation at the end of the Uruk phenomenon do not easily mesh with the evidence from Kani Shaie. Instead, the sequence at the site supports an interpretation in which local communities negotiated wider economic and political shifts through adaptive strategies, reconfiguring existing architectural frameworks to meet new forms of organisation.



Figure 24. Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal found in Area D. Photo by KSAP.

The Lower Town: continuity beyond the prehistoric sequence

While Area A provided key insights into the pre- and proto-historic phases of Kani Shaie, excavations in the lower town (Area D / LT-1000) highlighted the site's importance in later historical periods. Work

in this area (Figure 2) documented a complex sequence spanning the Neo-Assyrian, post-Assyrian, and Hellenistic–Parthian periods, with substantial evidence for Middle Bronze Age activity here excavated via a deep sounding.

One of the most striking features uncovered was a carefully constructed well, dated to the Neo-Assyrian period. The well appears to have been deliberately filled and sealed, suggesting a ritualised closure rather than simple abandonment. Associated finds include a stamp seal made of Egyptian-blue frit (Figure 24) and a small bronze figurine representing a zebu, a domesticated humped cattle (*Bos indicus*) widely distributed across South and Southwest Asia and often associated with symbolic and economic value in ancient societies. Both objects carry clear symbolic connotations. Also found within were animal remains, possibly boars' skulls.

These discoveries underline the continued significance of Kani Shaie within regional landscapes during the 1st millennium BC. Rather than a marginal or episodic settlement, the site functioned as a persistent node, repeatedly reoccupied and reinterpreted across different political regimes.

Conclusion

The 2025 season at Kani Shaie highlights the value of long stratigraphic sequences in regions that have until recently been treated as peripheral to Mesopotamian narratives. By documenting well-preserved architectural phases and clear stratigraphic relationships east of the Tigris, the project adds robust empirical evidence to discussions of regional variability in the late 4th and early 3rd millennia BC, and helps to anchor these debates in excavated sequences rather than in broad cultural labels alone.

As reported above, the central element of this contribution is the 2025 exposure of a substantial Uruk/LC5 mudbrick building, a rare instance of late 4th millennium monumental architecture documented at this scale in the region. Kani Shaie also reinforces the importance of the Zagros Piedmont as an active zone of interaction and innovation. The architectural record suggests that communities in this setting were not merely recipients of lowland influences, but agents who selectively adopted, reworked, and recontextualised architectural and organisational practices in ways that responded to local landscapes, resources, and social logics. In that sense, the site offers a productive counterpoint to models that privilege a single “core” trajectory as it shows how comparable problems (such as structuring access, delimiting space, and organising production and storage) could be addressed through different architectural solutions across adjacent regions.

As analyses and publication proceed, Kani Shaie is now a key reference site for comparative work on the Zagros–Mesopotamia interface, linking building practice, stratigraphic continuity, and material culture into a more fine-grained account of change across the Uruk–EBA Horizon in Greater Mesopotamia.

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Project Overview

The AlUla Cultural Oasis Project (UCOP): Unraveling the History of Oases in Arabia

Julien Charbonnier and Yasmin Kanhoush

Archaïos

Oases are among the most fascinating and resilient human-made landscapes in the world. Nestled in the heart of arid regions, they have served as settlement points and vital hubs on caravan routes for millennia. These constructed landscapes have enabled sedentary life in desert environments. Despite their importance, our understanding of oases—particularly their spatial organization, evolution, and role in broader social and economic networks—remains limited. The AlUla Cultural Oasis Project (UCOP), conducted between 2019 and 2025, led by Julien Charbonnier and Yasmin Kanhoush aims to fill these gaps by exploring the al-‘Ulā Oasis in northwestern Saudi Arabia. See Figure 25. This project is the first of its kind to study a still-cultivated oasis in Arabia, offering a unique opportunity to understand how these landscapes have evolved over time.

UCOP is a collaborative effort led by Archaïos. It is funded and steered by the French Agency for AlUla Development (AFALULA) on behalf of the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU). The interdisciplinary project brings together archaeologists, geographers and architects. Fieldwork involved ten seasons of surveys and excavations which took place between 2019 and 2024.

The AlUla Cultural Oasis Project was designed to address two major blind spots in the archaeology of Arabian oases:

1. While much research has focused on pre-Islamic oases, the Islamic Period (from the 7th century AD onward) remains poorly documented. UCOP seeks to reconstruct the history of al-‘Ulā during this era, particularly from the 13th to the 19th centuries AD, a period known almost exclusively through travelers’ accounts and historical texts.
2. Previous studies have primarily examined oases through their agricultural and water systems, or as nodes within commercial networks. UCOP shifts the focus to the internal organization of oases, analyzing how land parcels, water distribution networks, domestic architecture, and circulation systems have shaped (and in turn been shaped by) social, economic, and environmental factors.

By adopting a spatial approach, UCOP treats the oasis not just as an agricultural unit but as a dynamic social and historical space. The project aims to document the oasis’s evolution, from its earliest settlements to its modern challenges.

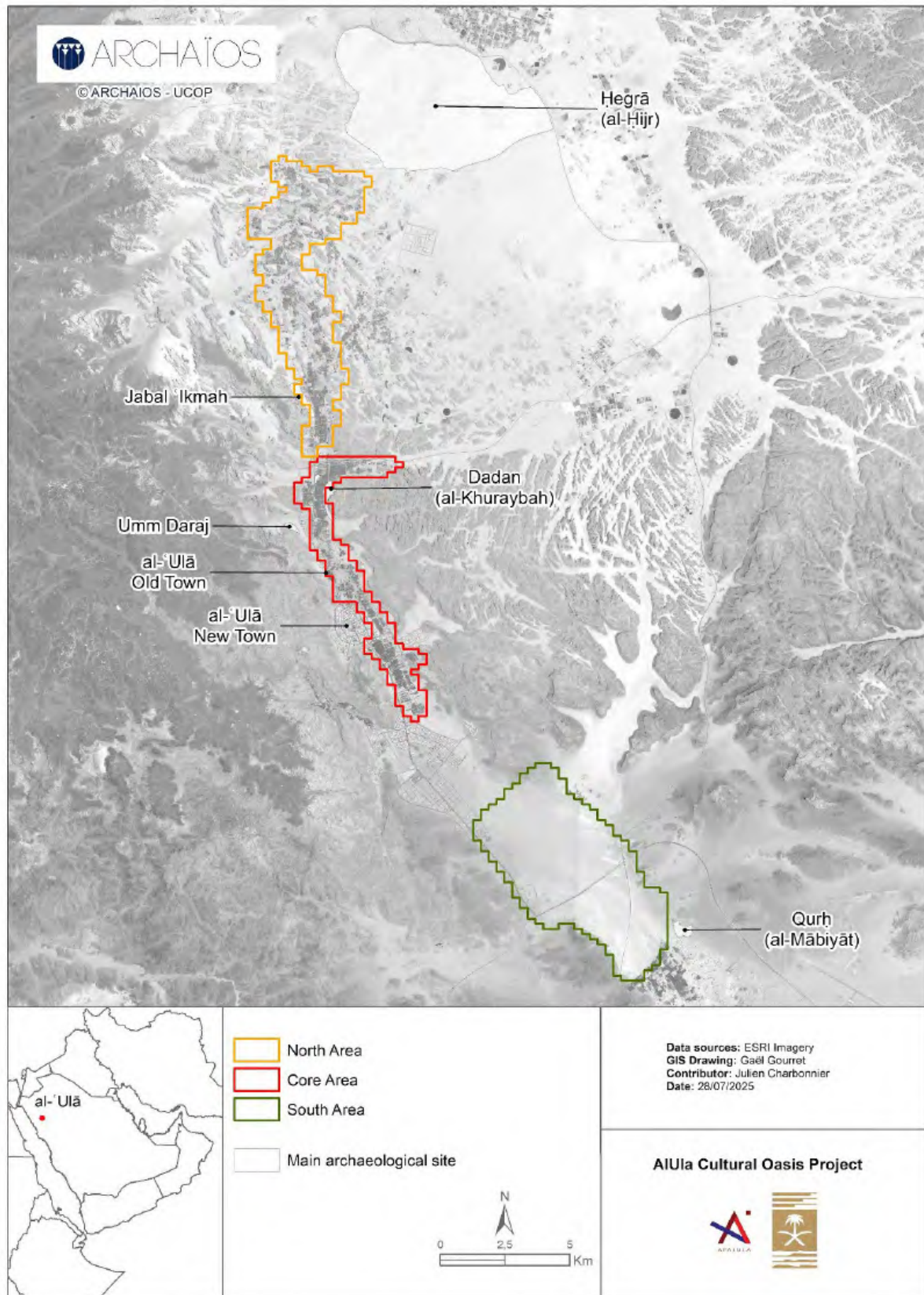


Figure 25. Location of the al-'Ulā Oasis and project study areas in the valley. Map ©Archaïos.

Study Area: The al-‘Ulā Valley (Saudi Arabia)

The al-‘Ulā Oasis is located in the northern Ḥijāz region of Saudi Arabia, approximately 280 km northwest of Medina and 240 km southeast of Tabuk. The oasis lies in a narrow valley which runs north-south and is surrounded by sandstone escarpments and basaltic plateaus. The valley’s elevation ranges from 650 to 770 meters above sea level. See Figure 26.



Figure 26. A: The al-‘Ulā Old Town nestled along the cliffs to the west of the valley. Image by J. Charbonnier; B: The palm grove and al-Jadīdah district seen from the Old Town. Image by S. Sepeau; C: Horticultural gardens in the historical core of the palm grove. Image by S. Sepeau; D: Plot returned to cultivation in the historical core of the palm grove. Image by S. Sepeau; ©Archaios.

The al-‘Ulā Valley has a long history as a crossroads for trade and pilgrimage. It was home to the ancient city of Dadan, a major political and economic center during the 1st millennium BC, and later to Madā’in Šāliḥ (ancient Ḥegrā), which flourished under the Nabataeans. During the Islamic Period, the valley became a key stopover on the Syrian pilgrimage route, connecting the Levant to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Town of al-‘Ulā became the main settlement of the valley after the abandonment of the city of al-Mābiyāt (ancient Qurḥ), during the 12th century AD. Despite its historical significance, the oasis’s internal organization and evolution during the Islamic Period have remained largely unexplored, until now.

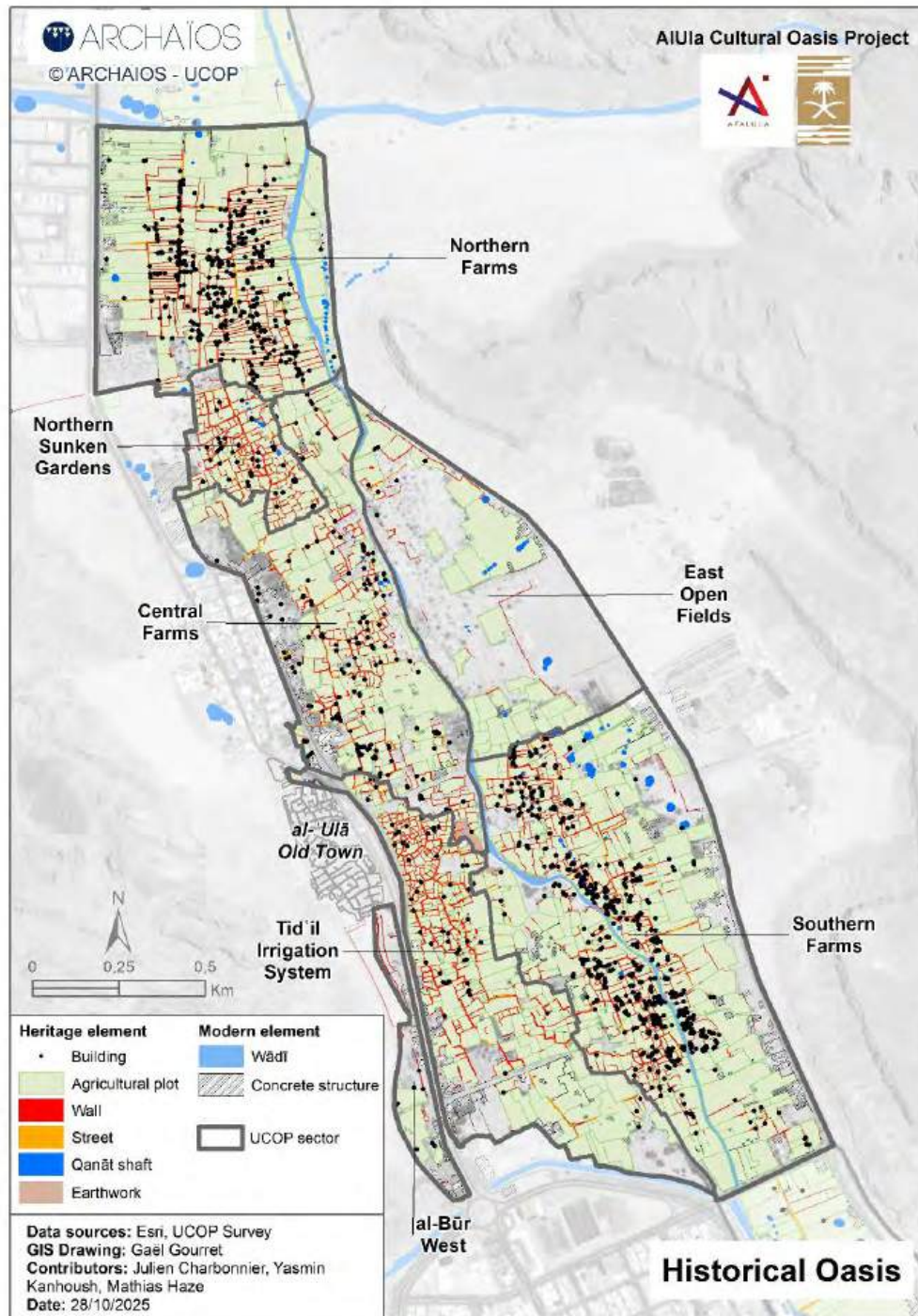


Figure 27. Archaeological map of the central part of al-'Ulā Oasis (core area of study). Map ©Archaïos.

A Multidisciplinary Approach

UCOP employed a multidisciplinary methodology to document and analyze the al-'Ulā Oasis:

- Pedestrian surveys: Systematic fieldwalking was done across 4,000 hectares of cultivated and abandoned agricultural plots to record archaeological structures, heritage features, and to collect material remains. This fieldwork resulted in the creation of the first detailed archaeological map of an oasis in Arabia. See Figure 27.

- Aerial and satellite imagery: Analysis of archived and modern imagery was used to track changes in the oasis's landscape over time, particularly since the 1960s.
- Building archaeology: The project undertook detailed recording of domestic and defensive structures, including perimeter walls, vernacular dwellings (Figure 28), and towers.
- Water systems: Analysis of water catchment (*qanats* and wells) as well as irrigation systems inside the palm grove (channels and water distributors) was also made.
- Material culture analysis: Studies of ceramics, glass, and tobacco pipes were undertaken to better understand trade networks, economic activities, and cultural exchanges.
- Spatial analysis: Survey data was integrated into a geodatabase to analyze parcel morphology, circulation networks and the distribution of artefacts across the palm grove.

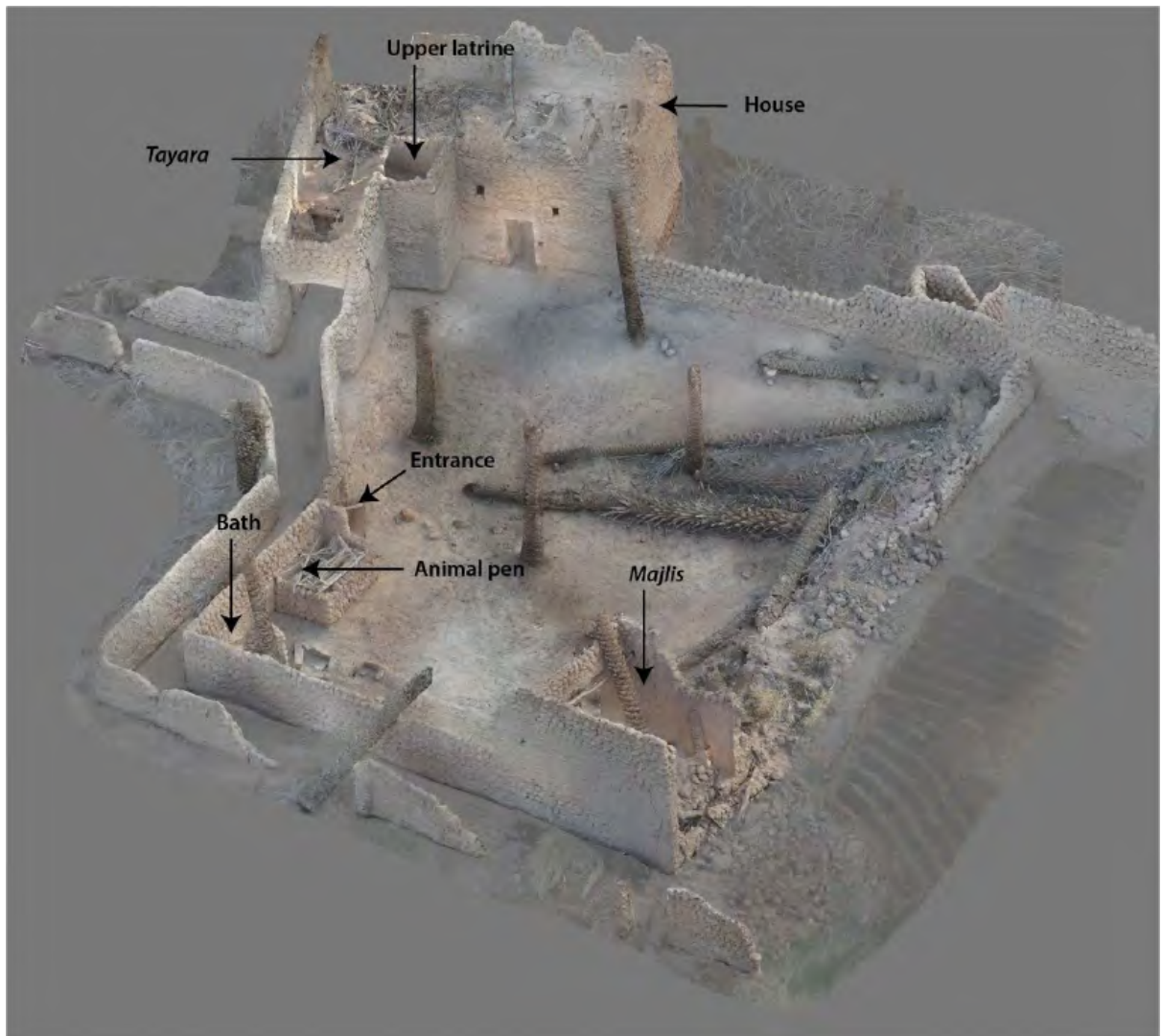


Figure 28. 3D view of an oasis farm, showing the layout of the buildings around the plot. Image ©Archaïos.

Why UCOP matters: Advancing oases studies

The AlUla Cultural Oasis Project demonstrates that al-‘Ulā was not a passive stopover on trade and pilgrimage routes. Rather, it was a complex socio-economic landscape throughout the Islamic and Ottoman periods.

UCOP’s multidisciplinary approach offers a holistic model for studying oases. By placing spatial organization at the core of analysis, the project significantly renews the archaeology of oases and offers a transferable methodological framework for future research on oasis landscapes in arid regions.

The results of the project are currently being published in a scientific monograph that will soon be submitted to a publishing house. This book presents a chronology of the oasis, from the Hegira to the present day. It shows that the oasis underwent constant redevelopment in response to particularly changing trade routes and successive political powers in the Middle East, whose influence was felt in spite of the region’s apparent isolation. The oasis has, thus, remained connected to long-distance trade networks extending as far as East Asia throughout its history (including between the 12th and the 19th century AD, a period that has been very poorly documented until now). Our work also demonstrates the role of the social organization of the population of the al-‘Ulā Oasis—which is divided into two main groups—in the spatial structuring of the palm grove, particularly in terms of the layout of circulation networks and the distribution of dwellings.

The project’s insights into traditional water management and land use also provide valuable lessons for modern sustainability efforts. It highlights the importance of sharing *qanat* water for the sustainability of the oasis. Conversely, the introduction of new pumping techniques in the mid-20th century (i.e., the diesel-powered pumps which were progressively replaced by drilled wells and electric submersible pumps) marked the transition from community-based and relatively sustainable groundwater management to their “mining exploitation” through individual installations. This has made it possible to significantly expand cultivated areas, but it also caused the rapid lowering of the water table, which led to the complete drying-out and abandonment of *qanats* in the 1970s-1980s. Our archaeological approach allows us to identify these changes on a fine scale, demonstrating the role of this discipline in understanding contemporary dynamics. By documenting how past communities thrived in arid environments, UCOP thus contributes to contemporary discussions on water conservation, climate adaptation, and heritage preservation. As climate change and water scarcity threaten oases worldwide, UCOP’s work is a reminder of the enduring importance of these landscapes, not just as historical sites, but as models of resilience and adaptation in some of the planet’s harshest environments.

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Conference Review

Fieldwalking: past, present..., and future? The Council for British Archaeology conference in Gratham, East Midlands (UK), September 24, 2025

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Considering the prominence of fieldwalking within the heritage community groups in England's Midlands region, it was not a total surprise that the topic of the East Midlands Council for British Archaeology (CBA) conference was fieldwalking then and now. This conference was organized by Mark Pearce (University of Nottingham), Daryl Garton (Ice Age Journeys) and David Ingham (Council for British Archaeology – East Midlands) at the Guildhall Arts Centre in Grantham on September 24. The conference got good advance press in *British Archaeology* magazine's September–October issue with a five-page spread (Pearce et al. 2025); in short, the overall message was the following: the rate at which fieldwalking is losing ground in professional archaeological practice is alarming.

Regardless of the advance press, as the conference fell in the middle of the week, it necessarily restricted the audience; at 58 I am no spring chicken, but I felt young among the grey heads. This sheds light on another problem: the rising median age of the average community group member. More lamentable was the lack of students, professional unit archaeologists, curators, consultants and English Heritage archaeologists. The organisers say they targeted professional archaeologists, but even scheduling during working hours did not increase the attendance. Is disinterest part of the problem?

The conference was opened by David Ingham and the topic was introduced by Mark Pearce. The first talk, entitled 'In the footsteps of Fox: reflections on fieldwalking by the Cambridge Archaeology Field Group since the 1970s' was given by Tom Midgley from the Cambridge Archaeology Field Group (and Oxford Archaeology East). See Figure 29. The group has walked a considerable number of parishes (mostly west and south of Cambridge) and collected a huge amount of material (mostly Post-Medieval, followed by Roman finds and knapped lithics). Midgley considered preservation bias, variation in walkers' skills and experience, collection bias with better quality earlier surveys, and the access to fields as possible areas which might distort distribution and density. He argued that the results are more meaningful when combined with geophysics, LiDAR, metal detecting and digging. Thus, he wondered if fieldwalking would become obsolete. However, he pointed to the social aspects of fieldwalking alongside its academic usefulness, but noted changing farming practices (direct drilling, less cultivation, new cropping patterns) and climate (too much or too little rain). Finally, he suggested that the most successful campaigns look for lithic scatters and juxtaposed its decline in use in commercial settings as against its usefulness as a means of introducing communities to archaeology.

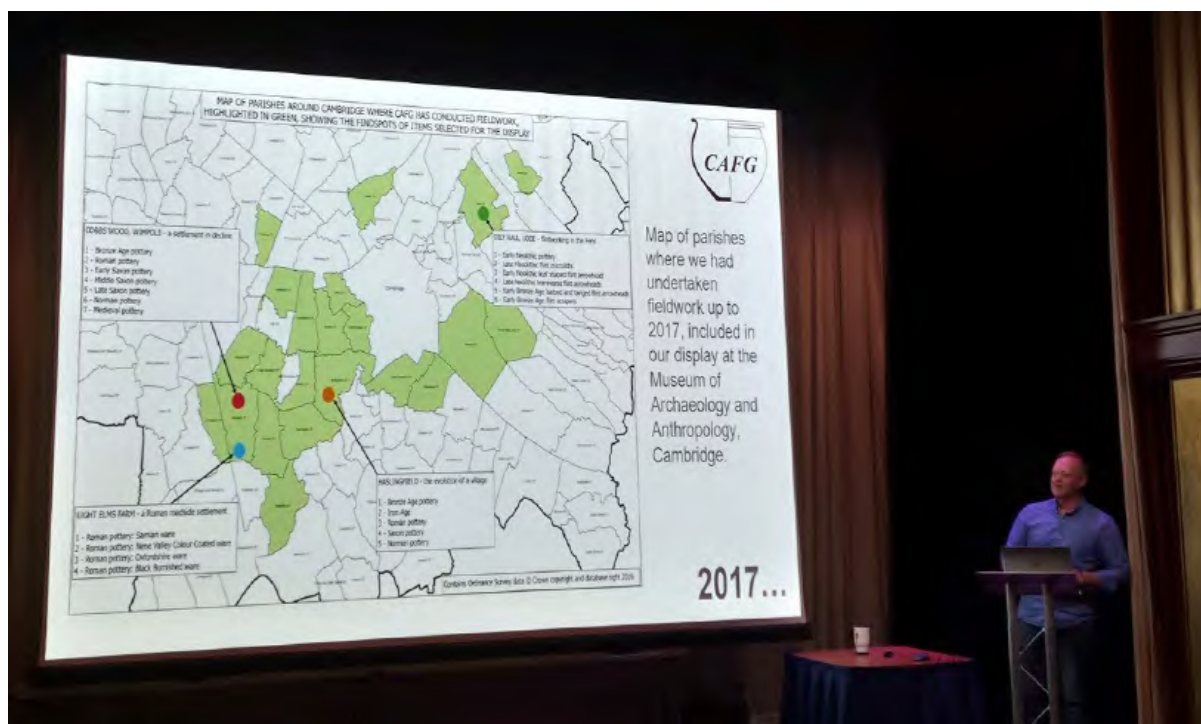


Figure 29. Tom Midgley from the Cambridge Archaeology Field Group (and Oxford Archaeology East) presenting. Photo by U. Rajala.

The second speaker was Yvonne Wolfram-Murray from Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) presenting 'Fieldwalking around towns along the A11, Norfolk'. She talked about several projects in a commercial setting in which she had been involved while assessing the A11 road corridor. The most interesting issue was the reluctance of some paid workers to do fieldwalking resulting in the need to re-walk certain fields. Said reluctance was due to preferences and issues such as height and back problems. She again pointed out that fieldwalking detects prehistoric flint scatters that would otherwise be missed in mitigation. MOLA had a few fieldwalking surveys between 2014 and 2017, but they were no longer prescribed as part of mitigation projects.

The final speaker before lunch was Peter Liddle from the Leicestershire Fieldworkers (formerly Leicestershire County Council), who talked about 'The Medbourne Project and the Leicestershire Fieldworkers'. He presented the activities that started after the completion of the 'Present State' archaeological survey of Leicestershire in the 1980s (Liddle 1982a; 1982b) and the setting up of the Medbourne Project in order to complete the picture of archaeology in the county and set a pilot for field groups. The project covered four parishes of which over 60 % was walked between 1981 and 1986 as a means of testing new methods – 'traverse and stint fieldwalking' – and new diary and recording sheets. The original survey was mostly walked by a professional survey team with input from community fieldwork group members. After the pilot, a series of community fieldwork groups were set up across Leicestershire; 24 have been active at one point or another with fields walked in every corner of the county. Currently, the Leicestershire Fieldworkers have over 400 members (but only five active groups), plus an extremely active and productive geophysics group with different teams for resistivity and magnetometry. The Fieldworkers also organize the Leicestershire and Rutland Festival of Archaeology. As a member of the Fieldworkers myself, I only hope that in order to celebrate the 50 years of the Fieldworkers in 2026, the material collected will be properly analysed and mapped.

The first talk after lunch was ‘The Bingham parish survey, Nottinghamshire’, presented by David Ingham representing Bingham Heritage Trails Association. He had not himself taken part in this fieldwalking, but had instead participated in the test pitting that was part of the survey. The Bingham project energized the whole town between 2001 and 2022 and resulted in a [website](#) which remains a core resource on the archaeology and history of Bingham. The town lies in the southern outskirts of the Roman town of *Margidunum* and the surveys have provided important information for the town planners. Ingham presented a series of GIS maps highlighting the history of the parish from the Stone Age to the modern period.

The talk ‘A Palaeolithic landscape at Farndon Fields, Newark-on-Trent’ was supposed to have been presented by Daryl Garton, but she was sadly ill. Ian Ross (also from Ice Age Journeys) presented the paper in her place. This extremely important project is related to the widening of A46 and the finding of Late Upper Palaeolithic flint scatters. The project showed how deep ploughing revealed the Upper Palaeolithic landscape visible over twenty years between 1989 and 2009. The project showed that current commercial practice – test pits and test stripping – completely failed to identify most of the evidence for Late Upper Palaeolithic activity at the site in direct contrast to the results obtained from fieldwalking.

Last but not least was ‘Exploring past landscapes: community archaeology in North Lincolnshire’ presented by Kevin Leahy from the Portable Antiquities Scheme, formerly of the North Lincolnshire Museum. This project encountered an Anglo-Saxon cemetery and excavated the burials in the entirety of the cemetery, the extent of which was defined by fieldwalking. This project was unusual, insofar as plough soil was removed by hand, thereby enabling the discovery of finds that would have otherwise been missed.



Figure 30. Panel for the roundtable discussion with Jonathan Last (Historic England; speaking), in the table from left to right: Michael Dawson (formerly RPS Archaeology and Heritage consultancy), Mark Pearce (chairing), Mark Landon (Hertfordshire County Council HER), Dan Phillips (Hertfordshire County Council), Kevin Leahy (Portable Antiquities Scheme) and Neil Redfern (Director of the Council for British Archaeology). Photo by U. Rajala.

After the talks (and tea break!), we had a roundtable discussion manned by Jonathan Last (Historic England), Dan Phillips (Hertfordshire County Council), Mark Landon (Hertfordshire County Council HER), Neil Redfern (Director of the Council for British Archaeology), Michael Dawson (formerly RPS Archaeology and Heritage consultancy) and Kevin Leahy (Portable Antiquities Scheme), and chaired by Mark Pearce. See Figure 30. The panel was visibly lacking a representative of commercial archaeology that could have been provided by the only female presenter present. I was told later that the organizers had gone to considerable lengths to get a female panel member, but none was available. Nevertheless, the panel discussed important things, such as the reasons for the decline of fieldwalking as a method.

The most articulate in this regard was Jonathan Last, who had prepared a PowerPoint on 'Lithics in the ploughzone' that touched upon the 'core' issues (so to speak!). He argued that fieldwalking has declined because people doubt the results due to the complexity of formation processes and that this in turn leads to difficulties in interpretation. Fieldwalking is, as a consequence, not included in developer-funded evaluation and detailed results are not retained in Historic Environment Records (HERs), the county-wide site registers. In addition, changes in cultivation practices hinder deployment. Thus, the proportion of fieldwalking in evaluation prior to development plummeted since 1990. Notwithstanding this, its importance in finding flint scatters is undisputed, as the Farndon project shows.

Of the other panellists, Neil Redfern pointed to the well-being that fieldwork projects and fieldwalking bring to communities as a source of gentle exercise and mental health. Dan Phillips emphasized the importance of fieldwalking as a methodology that can help reduce the carbon footprint of archaeology and mitigation work. He clearly saw its future as golden. Mark Landon stated that all data is biased and it is more important to create data and record it in the HER to be used, rather than to complicate matters further by e.g. excluding fieldwalking results. This was a much-needed statement of common sense and a very positive contribution.

The conference had also an exhibition space: there were stands from the Cambridge Archaeology Field Group with a selection of representative finds, from Ice Age Journeys with some flint work, representatives of metal detecting community, a book stall from the Leicestershire Fieldworkers and a representative of the Leicestershire Museum Service. The exhibition was a nice add-on and something to see during the breaks. It was also reassuring to see metal detectorists engaging with the archaeological community.

So, what did I get out of the day in the end? As a researcher affiliated with Stockholm University working on materials in central Italy, laments regarding the decline of the sherd size and the quality of collected material sounded familiar. Changes in agricultural practices also affect the possibility of seeing the soil surface and finds in the Mediterranean and access to the land is down to the landowners and their positivity (or the lack thereof). I personally used Liddle's (1985) 'traverse and stint' method in the field in the Nepi Survey Project north of Rome (see e.g. Mills and Rajala 2011) and found it useful. Later, I participated in fieldwalking in the Barkby fieldwork group in Leicestershire and witnessed first-hand the practice of field groups. The day was a celebration of the importance of community projects and of fieldwalking as a method. It gave nothing staggeringly new but offered good historical outlines of different projects and their results, reminded participants of the usefulness of the methodology and offered a glimmer of hope that fieldwalking could be the carbon neutral alternative for the archaeological world.

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Notice

In Some CoE-Member Countries the Situation of Civil Society Organisations is Quickly Deteriorating: Report from the Conference of International NGOs Autumn Session in Strasbourg

Sophie Hüglin & Nathan Schlanger

EAA Commissioners to the Conference of INGOs (CINGO) to the Council of Europe (CoE)

From 13-15 October 2025, the Conference of INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organisations - CINGO) held its hybrid [Autumn Session](#) in Strasbourg. The EAA has a participatory status at CINGO and has in the past been involved in drafting CoE Conventions relevant to archaeology, such as the [Valetta](#) (or Malta) and the [Landscape](#) (or Florence) Conventions. Currently, EAA experts are involved in the ratification process of the Nicosia convention on '[Offences Related to Cultural Property](#)'. Also, EAA has long contributed as an observer and expert body to the meetings and deliberations of the CoE "Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape" (CDCPP).

CINGOs' focal points in its Autumn Session were on the following topics:

- Coordination of different initiatives trying to strengthen civil society voices in the CoE;
- Increasing intimidation of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in several CoE Member States;
- Voting on several recommendations and declarations, especially also the one on Gaza. See Figures 31-32.



Figure 31. Representatives of International NGOs voting at the CINGO Autumn Session 2025 in Strasbourg. Screenshot by Sophie Hüglin.

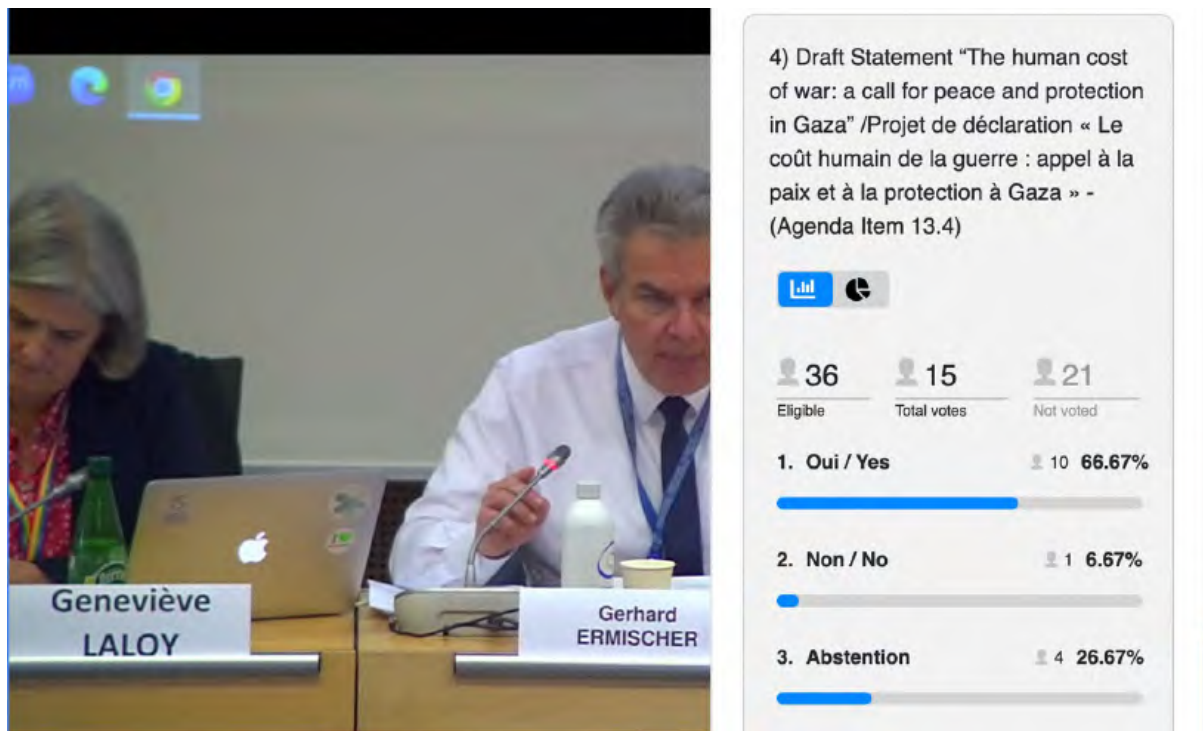


Figure 32. Gerhard Ermischer (centre) and Geneviève Laloy (left), the President and the Vice-President of the Conference of INGOs at the Council of Europe, as they add up the votes in the room and online during the hybrid Autumn Session 2025 in Strasbourg. Screenshot by Sophie Hüglin.

Ambassador Vebjørn Heines, Permanent Representative of Norway to the Council of Europe and Vice-Chair of Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDem) was invited to reported on the 2025 [Advocacy Training Programme](#). In cooperation with the Human Rights House Foundation and supported by Norway and Switzerland, 18 human rights defenders from 10 countries have received a six-month training and spent five days in Strasbourg to strengthen civil society voices at the CoE. While this was certainly very worthwhile for the people involved, it is also doubled the existing representation of civil society that is the CINGO. It will now be important to integrate and coordinate the interaction of civil societies with the different bodies of the CoE.

Especially in Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia and Turkey, the situation for civil society organisations and their members is deteriorating quickly. While pretending to act against money laundering or the prosecution of foreign agents, many of these states are legally suppressing these organisations or make it impossible to receive funding, neither from the EU nor from abroad. This has led for example to charities having to shut down their homes for people with disabilities or to members being questioned and prosecuted for visits to the CoE in Strasbourg. This is making it also impossible to receive representatives from these countries in the current CINGO session. What is especially appalling is that neither the CoE nor the EU have the necessary instruments to punish such breaches of basic rights and national legislation. So, it is often only through CINGO that international organisations with connections with the respective countries are trying to help through their structures and resources.

Trying to find the right wording for the declaration on “The human cost of war: a call for lasting peace and protection in Gaza” turned out to be difficult. With the peace plan for Gaza beginning to be implemented in October 2025 and the release of all 20 living Israeli hostages, the text needed factual updating. At the same time, the opinions on the situation differed so much that some CINGO members proposed to postpone the declaration. Nevertheless, it was decided for the vote, and the motion was carried with some votes against and quite a few abstentions. This confirms that this topic has a very divisive potential also outside of the EAA and that it will be increasingly difficult to unite the voices of civil society.

Apart from the CINGO Autumn Session, there were EAA experts participating as observers in the CoE's Nicosia Convention informal committee, known as the Aragon Group. Once there are ten ratifications (at present there are [seven](#)), a formal advisory group for the Convention will be established. Generously standing in at short notice for the EAA's official representative, Evelyne Godfrey gave an invited talk at the Nicosia Convention International Event on the fight against offences relating to cultural property in June 2024 in [Zaragoza](#), Spain. Marianne Mödinger and Evelyne Godfrey from the [EAA Illicit Trade Community](#) are planning to hold a session on the Nicosia Convention at the 2026 EAA Annual Meeting in Athens, Greece. In addition, they are organising an event on "Antiquities and the Art Market" in Corinth, Greece for Sunday 30 August 2026 after the Annual Meeting.

Although a stronger representation and voice of EAA experts in CINGO and CoE events is desirable, this proves difficult to reconcile with the voluntary nature of the engagement and the limited number of experts available. It thus turned out impossible for the EAA to participate in the [Ministerial Conference](#) marking the 25th Anniversary of the Council of Europe Landscape Convention, as well as in the Meeting of the Representatives of the States Parties and Observers, held on 27 and 28 October 2025 in Florence, Italy. It is simply difficult to respond to an invitation that comes four weeks ahead of the actual conference, especially with the advent of new restrictions on movement into the EU. Luckily, CINGO President Gerhard Ermischer, himself an archaeologist, will be there and able to be the EAA's voice and ears. As his second term slowly comes to an end, it will be necessary to think strategically about the EAA's future role in CINGO. CINGO will celebrate its 25th birthday in 2026, a good moment to look back and plan ahead.

Currently, the EAA is represented at CINGO by Sophie Hueglin and Nathan Schlanger. If EAA members or EAA communities would like to know more about CINGO or would like to get involved in one of [CINGOs' Committees](#) or activities, they are very welcome to contact us through the EAA Secretariat helpdesk@e-a-a.org.

Announcements

Stand for Election in 2026 – Help Shape the Future of the EAA

Peter Biehl, Matija Črešnar, Ileana Micarelli and Katharina Rebay-Salisbury

EAA Nomination Committee

The European Association of Archaeologists is built on the active engagement, expertise, and commitment of its members. In 2026, you have an opportunity to help guide the future direction of our Association by standing for election to the Executive Board or the Nomination Committee.

Serving in one of these roles is more than committee work — it is a chance to contribute directly to the governance, values, and strategic priorities of the EAA and to strengthen archaeology as a vibrant, democratic, and collaborative field across Europe and beyond.

The EAA deeply values democracy and the vital role of civil society. Our Association thrives when members step forward to represent the interests, voices, and needs of the community. Simply put: the EAA is **Your** association.

Why stand?

- Shape the future direction of the EAA
- Support transparent and democratic governance
- Contribute to the development of archaeological research, policies and collaboration
- Serve and represent our international community of members

How to get involved

Information about open positions and the election process is available in the Call for Nominations 2026.

Nomination deadline: 30 March 2026

Curious to learn more? Join one of our informal online information sessions:

- 16 February, 16:30 CET
- 2 March, 16:30 CET

Or simply reach out to us at NomCom@e-a-a.org — we're happy to answer questions or talk through what serving involves.

About the EAA

Founded in 1994, the European Association of Archaeologists has, over the years, brought together more than 17,700 members from 132 countries. Today, we serve 3,644 active members across 74 countries worldwide. The EAA promotes the development of archaeological research, fosters professional exchange and collaboration, and advocates for archaeology in the public sphere.

Standing as a candidate is a meaningful way to give back to our professional community and to support the democratic principles that underpin the EAA. We warmly encourage you to consider getting involved.

Aleksander Pluskowski's *The Black Cross*: A wide-ranging new history of the Baltic Crusades and their legacy

Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, crusading armies unleashed a relentless holy war against the last pagan societies in northern Europe, particularly in the Baltic Sea region. Led by Catholic rulers, churchmen, and, most importantly of all, the warrior monks of the Teutonic Order, they sought to expand Christendom through conquest and conversion. In the process they forged a new world with a profound legacy that resonates into the present.

Aleksander Pluskowski traces the broader story of the Baltic Crusades. Pluskowski explores how the construction of castles and towns, and the introduction of new languages, technology, monetary economies, and religion transformed the conquered societies. Moving through the years, we see how the history of the crusades was reinvented in the twentieth century to serve nationalist aims, including those of the Third Reich. This is a fascinating study that provides a fresh look at the impact of centuries of religious warfare across northern Europe.

To claim a 30% discount on this title, buy direct from the publisher via yalebooks.co.uk/book/9780300279061/the-black-cross/

Enter the following code in the online checkout: EAA26

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