

What did the early Celts drink? Meanings and functions of imported Mediterranean vessels in Early Iron Age Central Europe.

International Conference, Weltenburg Monastery, 28th April to 1st May 2017

Bronze Age beer making in a wine territory? Archaeobotanical evidence from Greece

Soultana Maria Valamoti, School of History and Archaeology, Aristotle University of Greece

Wine as a diachronic element of religious, ritual, healing and culinary traditions, has been the alcoholic drink associated with prehistoric societies of the Aegean and closely linked with ancient Greek civilisation, the cult of Dionysos and the symposium. Artefactual evidence, archaeobotanical remains and chemical analyses indicate wine making in the Neolithic, while Linear B texts make clear references to wine and Dionysos. Different wine types, wine-drinking and wine trade are frequently mentioned in ancient literary sources. In this regional and cultural context, beer is hardly ever considered in archaeological discourse and for historic periods it is a drink of foreigners, despite the availability of cereal grains. Recent and old archaeobotanical evidence indicates beer making during the end of the 3rd millennium B.C. and the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. in mainland Greece. The finds consist of sprouted grains of cereals, wheat and barley as well as ground cereal fragments that could correspond to ground malt. This pre-Celtic 'beer' in wine territory, allows an exploration of alcoholic drinks and identities in Southeastern Europe, currently investigated within ERC funded project PLANTCULT (Grant Agreement No 682529, Consolidator Grant 2016-2021), aided by scanning electron microscopy, experimental replication and residue analyses.