

Newsletter GIA

January – April 2015

From the GIA director Prof. Peter Attema

Before you GIA's spring newsletter packed with exciting items on the manifold activities of the members of the Groningen Institute of Archaeology employed with a range of (inter)national partners as well as students from the Groningen Department of Archaeology and elsewhere. The number of researchers at the Groningen Institute is still growing with three new PhD's, two of which appointed at the Arctic Centre and one in the chair group of Classical and Mediterranean Archaeology. Read up on their research ambitions after you have checked out the awards obtained by GIA members for new research projects and study travel! The Newsletter further highlights a number of publications and activities that testify to GIA's broad research interests and its active role in the organisation of international courses and conferences. While preparing the newsletter, GIA's secretary Sarah Willemsen is, besides her many other administrative tasks, also compiling the Annual Report in a new and glossy format featuring archaeological content with the dull facts and figures delegated to the website. The Annual Report new style will apart from highlighting research feats also pay attention to the ways in which we make our research useful for society at large. Although archaeology in many ways is deeply embedded in society, and I could cite many examples of this from recent work of GIA researchers, we are asked to be more explicit on this. No funding application without a paragraph on valorisation! As to applications, a number of (aspirant) GIA members are eagerly awaiting the final verdict on their research applications ranging from PhD positions to programmatic research. We wish them luck and congratulate those who won positions at the GIA. Finally I like to draw your attention to those courageous researchers who write or have written their PhD's largely self-funded and are facilitated by the GIA to work at the Institute. In doing so they greatly contribute or have contributed to GIA and we hold them in great esteem!



Awards

Corien Wiersma received the Michael Ventris Award for Mycenaean Studies. The Award will be used for the planned survey of the Mycenaean palatial town at Ayos Vasilios in Laconia, Greece.

Olivia Jones received a grant from The Institute of Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP) of \$4095 to cover the costs of AMS dating of human bone from 9 levels of a tholos tomb that she will use for her PhD.

Martijn van Leusen and *Peter Attema* receive € 750.000 to carry out an interdisciplinary research into the cultural and demographic effects of the giant Bronze Age eruption of the mount Vesuvius. Around 1995 BC, during the Early Bronze Age, a giant eruption of Mount Vesuvius buried a flourishing landscape of villages and fields in the plains to the north and east of the volcano under more than a meter of ash. Inhabitants of Campanian sites such as Nola ('the Bronze Age Pompeii') barely escaped with their lives. Italian archaeological research since the 1980s has already shown that the population of the Campanian plain did not fully recover for several centuries after this so-called 'Avellino Event', but no one has yet wondered where the substantial Early Bronze Age population of Campania could have sought refuge, or what impacts it would have had there. Peter Attema and Martijn van Leusen hypothesise that given the topography of central-southern Italy, the most likely refuge area will have been to the north, in the coastal zone of what is now South Lazio. Here, two wetland coastal plains – the Fondi basin and the Agro Pontino - could have provided the space and resources to absorb the fleeing population. The research team consisting of three postdoctoral researchers and two assistants, will be hosted at the Groningen Institute of Archaeology and the Archaeobotany department of the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University.



Household items left behind in the Bronze Age village of Nola after the inhabitants fled the Avellino eruption.

New PhD students

Margje de Jong from the Arctic Centre recently started her PhD. Her PhD focuses on how global and local anthropogenic effects influence the demography of the barnacle goose (*Branta leucopsis*) population on Spitsbergen. The Spitsbergen barnacle goose population has increased dramatically since the end of the 1940s, when the population was threatened to become extinct. This PhD project tries to understand how this has affected the geese and their role in the Arctic terrestrial food web. The main supervisor for this PhD project is Dr. Maarten Loonen.



Marjolein Admiraal recently started her PhD at the Arctic Centre under the main supervision of Prof. Dr. Peter Jordan. This PhD is funded by the Faculty of Arts and forms part of an international research collaboration that focuses on circumpolar hunter-gatherer technologies. External promoters are: Dr. Oliver Craig from the University of York, Dr. Rick Knecht from the University of Aberdeen and Dr. William Fitzhugh from the Smithsonian Institution: Arctic Studies Center in Washington D.C.



Her PhD title is: *Food technologies, maritime adaptations and climate change in the North Pacific*. Emphasis is on understanding the strategies used to process resources *after* the moment of capture. How and why did container technologies (e.g. stone bowls, pottery) evolve over time? Direct evidence of vessel function will be obtained by *organic residue analysis* and the results will improve current understandings of food-processing technologies used by circumpolar societies.

Maria Rosaria Cinquegrana recently started her PhD at the department of Classical and Mediterranean Archaeology under the supervision of Prof.dr.P.A.J. Attema. Her project is titled “Sea salt. Special activity sites on the Etruscan coast between 1000-800 BC and the emergence of Central Italian urbanization: a case study from the Gulf of Follonica”. In recent times a dense network of special activity sites from Scarlino area on the Follonica Gulf (Tuscany), characterized by firing structures, basins for sea water evaporation, and great quantities of red-orange colored fragments of jars, demonstrates a functional similarity with the briquetage sites, related to the production of salt. By taking this area as a case study for an interdisciplinary research, data about the socio-economic impact of the exploitation of coastal resources will be obtained. The main goals of the research project are the reconstruction of the landscape where production activities took place, the exploitation of natural resources and the analysis of the relationship between specialized activities and proto-urban centers development, in the framework of the Etruscan civilization.



New publications

A personal book about the North Pole area

Louwrens Hacquebord has written a book on his experience and vision regarding the use of the polar areas titled “Wildernis, woongebied en wingewest, een geschiedenis van de poolgebieden” (Wilderness, residence and colony, a history of the polar areas).

The book is packed with information, illustrated by personal anecdotes collected during his many travels. We will use the book for educational purposes. You can watch [an interview](#) with Louwrens on his book in a book program by the VPRO.

Quote:

“How long ago was it that someone sang a song during the Eurovision Song Festival regarding the eskimos whose life was becoming more and more difficult because we only cared about the seals and not about the hunters that were put in a tight spot because of our efforts?

I remember the lack of understanding. We are inclined to think about the polar areas in a very simplified way. Or too romantic, or too blinded by the urge of exploitation.”

A Chilean Palm in 19th Century Vlissingen

The botanical analysis of a 19th century cesspit from the Dutch town of Vlissingen (province of Zeeland) resulted in a most remarkable find, namely a so-called Chilean wine palm (*Jubaea chilensis*). GIA student Yotti van Deun wrote a short paper on the find for PALMS, the journal of the international palm society.

Van Deun Y, Cappers RTJ, Schepers M, Maurer A (2015) A 19th Century Endocarp of the Chilean Wine Palm (*Jubaea chilensis*) in the Netherlands. *Palms* 59 (1):15-20

Seeds from dung

The last paper of Mans Schepers' dissertation has now been published in *Environmental Archaeology*. The experimental paper explores the relationship between dung (cattle and sheep) and standing vegetation through the feeding of hay cut from the field. The paper is co-authored by BIAX-botanist Henk van Haaster.



Sheep working on the experiment.

Schepers M, Van Haaster H (2015) Dung matters: An experimental study into the effectiveness of using dung from hay-fed livestock to reconstruct local vegetation. *Environ Archaeol* 20 (1):66-81

Stone Age Archaeology in the Port of Rotterdam

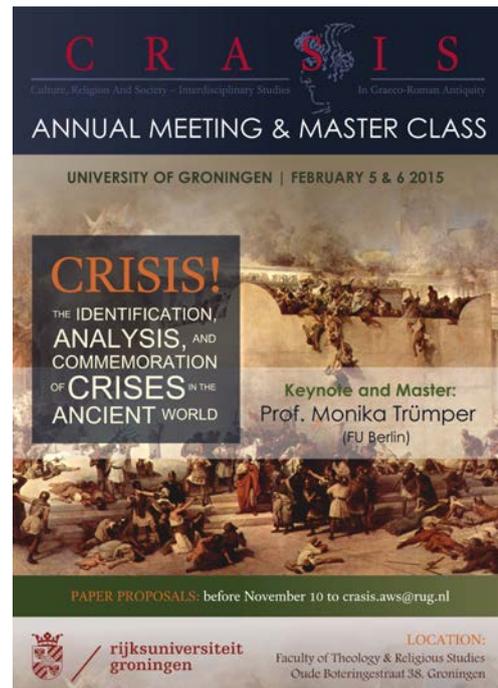
On the 5th of March the final report on the archaeological investigations of the Mesolithic site in the Port of Rotterdam was presented in the Schiecentrale, Rotterdam. The project involved the “mega-sampling” of an Early to Middle Mesolithic site at 20 metres below current sea level. It was for the very first time that remains of hunter-gatherer occupation at such depth could be investigated under controlled conditions thanks to the financial and technical support offered by the Port of Rotterdam (Havenbedrijf Rotterdam). The results of the interdisciplinary investigations, conducted by geologists, archaeobotanists, archaeozoologists, and archaeologists, are published in a 417 pages counting volume (edited by J.M. Moree and M.M. Sier; BOOR, Rotterdam). The extensive synthesis was written by Dr. Hans Peeters in collaboration with 11 specialists.



Activities

Crisis

On February 5 and 6 CRASIS organised its fourth Annual Meeting and Master Class which revolved around the theme 'CRISIS! The Identification, Analysis and Commemoration of Crises in the Ancient World'. [CRASIS](#) (Culture, Religion and Society in Graeco-Roman Antiquity) is a collaboration between scholars of history, archaeology and religion at the University of Groningen. This year the main organisers of the event were our own Lidewijde de Jong and Tamara Dijkstra. Monika Trümper, professor of Classical Archaeology at the Freie Universität Berlin, featured as Master and Keynote Speaker.



On the first day of the conference 12 PhD and ReMa students from various universities in the Netherlands, Germany and the UK delivered papers of exceptional quality which provided for stimulating discussions under the guidance of professor Trümper.

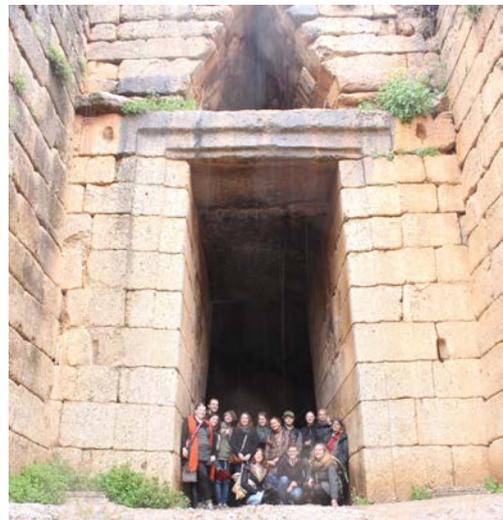
The second day of the conference featured an impressive gathering of international speakers, and attracted a large audience of academics and students from diverse backgrounds, all with a common interest in the ancient world. Professor Trümper delivered a powerful keynote lecture on the Morgantina (Sicily) excavations and their ramifications for the identification of early Roman crisis on the island. Thus came a fitting conclusion to a stimulating day filled with a great variety of perceptions on ancient crises, once again proving the theme of crisis a very effective one for inspiring new insights, even for well-documented historical episodes.

CRASIS would like to take the opportunity to thank the generous sponsors of this meeting: the research schools [ARCHON](#) and [OIKOS](#), the Centre for Religious Studies ([CRS](#)), the Groningen Institute for Archaeology ([GIA](#)) and the [Groningen Research Institute for the Study of Culture \(ICOG\)](#).

GIA-NIA Course: Death in the Greek World

From 22 March to 1 April the course 'Death in the Greek World' took place at the Netherlands Institute Athens, organized by Sofia Voutsaki, Eleni Panagiotopoulou, Tamara Dijkstra and Winfred van de Put. Eleven students from various universities in the Netherlands joined the 10-day course which was aimed at providing an in-depth study of various themes related to death in the Greek world, ranging from Neolithic burials in the Alepotrypa cave to Byzantine mortuary practices and from notions of afterlife in Plato to the Amphipolis tomb as a tool in current political issues.

A conference was held where various distinguished scholars from Greece talked about their research and projects and provided food for thought for the entire course. The rest of the program consisted of a mix of excursions, lectures and student presentations in Athens and beyond. To mention just a few of the activities: Dr. Jutta Stroszeck gave an excellent tour of the Kerameikos; at the First Cemetery of Athens we gazed upon Heinrich Schliemann's megalomaniac tomb; a rainy day was spent at Mycenae's famous grave circles and tholos tombs; and Michalis Gazis took the group to the relatively unknown Mycenaean sites of Portes and Voudeni in the interior of Achaia. Back in Athens, the beautiful lecture hall of the Archaeological Society was the setting for a lecture by Prof. Nadia Seremetakis, one of the foremost theoreticians on modern Greek anthropology. Dr. Stella Chrysoulaki allowed us a sneak peek in the depot of the archaeological excavations for the Peiraeus metro, and Dr. Giorgos Kavvadias shed light on the incredible collection of vases at the National Archaeological Museum.



Finding shelter from the rain under the entrance of the Treasury of Atreus, Mycenae's most impressive tholos tomb.

In short, the course had a very full, but deeply enjoyable, program, incorporating archaeology and archaeological science with history, ancient literature, epigraphy and anthropology. The organizers hope to be able to present a sequel in 2016.



The so-called 'Warrior Tomb' at Voudeni still contains the skeletons of five individuals who were buried with impressive bronze weaponry.



Dr. Kavvadias discusses the recurring themes of mourning and the visit to the grave in the iconography of white ground lekythoi in the National Archaeological Museum.

Coring in Ulrum (5-6 March 2015)

As part of the project ‘Terpen- en wierdenland: een verhaal in ontwikkeling’, manual corings were carried out by Mans Schepers and local enthusiasts in the terp village of Ulrum (province of Groningen). The aim of the project was to determine the thickness of the ‘terp layer’ throughout Ulrum. A remarkable find were sods on a depth of over 2 meter, a feature rarely encountered (or recognized) in coring.



Sods visible in a soil coring in Ulrum

Field surveys in Firdgum (22 January; 19-20 March 2015)

As part of the project ‘Terpen- en wierdenland: een verhaal in ontwikkeling’, two survey projects were carried out in the surroundings of the terp village of Firdgum (province of Friesland). The January survey targeted a field north of the present village, where no terp was located. The survey yielded very little material. The March survey targeted a field west of the village, in which two terps were known to be located. As was expected, considerably more material was collected from this field.



Pingsdorf sherd (ca. 900-1200 AD) on the field west of Firdgum

Kick-off meeting ‘Terpen- en wierdenland: een verhaal in ontwikkeling’ (12 March 2015)

Although the project has been going on for several months now, the official kick-off of the project ‘Terpen- en wierdenland: een verhaal in ontwikkeling’ took place on the 12th of March in Museum Wierdenland in Ezinge. Professor Gilles de Langen gave an introduction in the GIA-contribution to the project. Mans Schepers showed some finds from the field research already carried out (see elsewhere in this newsletter). The meeting was well-attended by press and politicians, as well as representatives of the villages included in the project.

Zooarchaeology Bootcamp

US student Christine Mikeska joined Groningen archaeology BA student Francesca Slim in March to prepare for fieldwork in Turkey this summer. Francesca and Christine will be in charge of the faunal work at Kaymakci excavations this summer, a Bronze Age fortified town in western Turkey. In the US, Christine studies zooarchaeology in Boston University and Harvard.

“I don’t think I’ve ever learned so much in such a short amount of time... My experience was immensely enhanced by the GIA’s extensive and easily accessible archaeozoological collection... The collection is one of the most

extensive that I've ever seen and it's easily the most accessible collection with which I've ever worked. I was also impressed with the collection's more unusual specimens, such as bone ice-skates and megafaunal remains, the first of which I was not even aware existed. Additionally, I was shown the Institute's artifact collection, which was incredibly exciting for me as it would be for any archaeology student. I am currently taking a course on ancient warfare and was thus especially surprised and excited to see the collection's Naue II swords," wrote Christine upon getting back home after what she called a "zooarch bootcamp".



Francesca and Christine examining a sheep/goat mandible in order to estimate its age-at-death.

Large polar expedition organised by the Arctic Centre

The Arctic Centre and the Willem Barentsz Poolinstituut will organise an expedition to a remote wilderness at Spitsbergen, the island Edgeøya. Sixty scientists and a number of journalists and politicians will revisit the place where Dutch ecological research has been performed between 1968 and 1988. Since then, hardly any data have been collected, but the area has strongly altered as a result of global warming. We have tried to obtain the yearly academic prize for this research, but unfortunately, we came second. At present NWO is the most important funding body and we will be able to continue our plans. Read more on the [website](#).



Piet Oosterveld was present during the entire period between 1968 and 1988. This picture shows him on the roof of the hut, in the middle of a collection of reindeer jaw bones, which are still in the possession of the Arctic Centre. Piet will join the team again in 2015 and as such he retains an overview of a period of 47 years of change.

The 'Bone attic' (by Esther Scheele)

One of the more curious and awe inspiring places at the GIA is the 'bone attic' where the archaeozoological reference collection and bone material from excavations are kept. Over the decades lots of interesting and odd things found their way up to the attic. The material from recent excavations is neatly boxed up and marked, but there is also material from all over the world, stretching back into the 1920's. Doing inventory of this material has been especially interesting. One box contains a random collection of mammal bones of unknown provenance, another one a collection of very tactile bone tools, whereas the next one holds two mummified rats and a note: 'found under floorboard during renovation'. Someone apparently thought it a good idea to box them up and put them in a drawer.

There are countless cattle, sheep and horse remains among the archaeological material, but also more unique specimens. Such as the near complete aurochs skeleton that was found in the *terp* of Britsum (Fr.) in 1908. This is the most complete skeleton of this species that has been found in the Netherlands and was acquired by Van Giffen. Not only did he collect countless artefacts from the *terpen* area, he also acquired material from abroad, like the remains of cave bears and a cave hyena from Hungary. Due to connections with zoo's and museums the collection also contains non-indigenous animals, amongst which parrots and a platypus. The attic also yields non-archaeological finds, like a bird ring from the Safring project; apparently a Red knot travelled for over 9000 km, ending up in the archaeozoological reference collection.

All in all the 'bone attic' is a place of discoveries, new insights are gained, knowledge is shared, things that were lost get rediscovered and with the imposed new order will – hopefully – not get lost again.



Part of the Zooarchaeological reference collection

Archaeological exhibition in Groningen University Museum

In our new MA course *Archaeology Today* we focus on the societal relevance of archaeology for present-day societies. As part of this course a translation of scientific knowledge to relevant and interesting information for the general public has been carried out. Our MA students, their lecturers Daan Raemaekers and Sofia Voutsaki and staff members of the University Museum set up in the University Museum the exhibition *Hidden Stories. Why do archaeologists collect?* Each student had to select one object from the collections of the Groningen Institute of Archaeology, on which they first had to write a scientific essay. The next (and most

difficult) challenge was to seek the logical connections between the various objects and collections, and to create the thematic units around which the exhibition was organized. By means of the exhibition, the students had to provide an answer to the question *Why do archaeologists collect?* Their answer is: We collect in order to promote both research, i.e. to facilitate the study and analysis of artefacts, and education, i.e. to train our students to analyze archaeological artefacts, but also to translate scientific knowledge to a broader audience. Moreover, the last decades have seen a shift from collecting single or 'special' items to collecting complete assemblages because of the increased significance of contextual analysis.

The exhibition was an excellent opportunity to train our students, but also to make the collections and activities of our Institute more visible to the academic and local communities and to the local media. The Rector of the university, Elmer Sterken, opened the exhibition and was particularly impressed by our attempt to link education and research, by our use of academic heritage for projects with a societal relevance and by the successful cooperation between different university departments.

The exhibition is open until September 2015.



GIA in the news

The world's oldest redshank *Tringa cf. totanus* identified using GIA collection

Mr. Leen Hordijk of Brielle has been doing paleontological and geological research for the past 40 years. He manually drills boreholes exceeding 60 m (!) in depth on his own property and has assembled a very large collection of Early Pleistocene (ca. 2 million years old) to recent animal remains. A pilot study on one very well preserved humerus yielded a striking result: the world's oldest redshank!

The fossil bone, ca. 2 million years old, was compared by amateur paleontologist Bram Langeveld with material in the GIA zooarcheological reference collection, in collaboration with Dr. Wietske Prummel of the GIA. Due to its excellent state of preservation positive identification as a right humerus of redshank *Tringa cf. totanus* (L., 1758) was possible. Literature study subsequently showed this fossil to be the oldest known record of this meadow bird.

This fossil does not only add to our understanding of the faunas recovered from the boreholes, but also to our knowledge of the evolutionary history of this species, clearly demonstrating the importance of the GIA collections.

The find was recently presented to the general public in [Vroege Vogels](#) (TV show and Radio show).



Comparison of the fossil humerus (below; collection Leen Hordijk) with a recent common redshank humerus (top; collection GIA; length 45 mm).

Hot off the press

Peter Attema and Wim Jongman (Ancient History) have received a grant of €5000,- from the Faculty of Arts for the development of a project on “Big Data” in Humanities. Attema and Jongman plan to prepare project proposals that will generate funding for the integration of a number of large landscape archaeological datasets from surveys performed in the area around Rome. First of all, a workshop will be organised in September, focusing on three different projects; GIA’s own Pontine Region Project, the Suburbium Project of the Sapienza in Rome and the Tiber Valley Project of the British School in Rome. It is the aim of the workshop to let the project leaders and those researchers affiliated to the projects discuss the way in which the substantial datasets can be connected to each other in order to answer overarching questions regarding the development of the hinterland of ancient Rome at large in terms of economy and demography.