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Newsletter of the Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.

www.marylandarcheology.org

Thawing reveals Norwegian 'Secret of the Ice'

By Sarah Cascone

Condensed from Artnet News, January 27, 2021

In November, archeologists from the Secret of the Ice project, part of Norway's Glacier Archaeology Program, discovered 68 arrows spanning a period of 6,000 years — a record for any frozen archeological site — on the Langfonne ice patch, an ancient Viking hunting ground.

A few months earlier, scientists announced discoveries that had been frozen in the rapidly melting Lendbreen ice patch, which was once part of a Viking trade route. Ice patches tend to preserve artifacts frozen inside them, but they grow and shrink with the seasons, allowing melt water to displace objects from where they were originally lost.

"We get angry reactions to our finds from climate science deniers all the time," Lars Pilø, the lead archeologist on the Secret of the Ice project, told Artnet News. "The whole idea that one can disprove the climate science behind global warming with archeological finds shows a stunning level of ignorance."

The newest arrows were the best preserved, while the oldest arrows had been displaced due to seasonal

Continued on page 5

(L) **A Goat Bit**. A wooden bit for a goat kid or lamb, radiocarbon-dated to the 11th Century AD. "It is a bit for young animals, mainly goat kids and lambs, to stop them from getting milk from their mothers. Identified by local elders, who used such bits (in juniper) until the 1930s.

(R) **A Birch Distaff**. "This distaff is made from birch and is 1,200 years old. Distaffs are tools used to hold the wool while it is being spun.

Upcoming events

March 6: ASM board meeting. Virtual. 9 a.m.

March 26: MAC conference. Online.

Volunteer opportunities (non-covid)

The following volunteer opportunities are open to CAT participants and other ASM members:

ASM Volunteer Lab, most Tuesdays: The lab in Crownsville. Contact Charlie Hall at charles.hall@maryland.gov or Louise Akerson at lakerson1@verizon.net It is currently working on cataloging artifacts form the Levering Coffee House Site, Baltimore (a mostly late 18th/early 19th Century site).

The Smithsonian Environmental Research Center seeks participants in its Citizen-Scientist Program in archeology and other environmental research programs in Edgewater. Field and lab work are conducted Wednesdays and on occasional Saturdays. Contact Jim Gibb at jamesggibb@verizon.net

Montgomery County for lab and field work volunteers, contact Heather Bouslag at 301 563 7530 or Heather.Bouslog@montgomeryparks.org

The Anne Arundel County Archaeology Program and the Lost Towns Project welcome volunteers in both field and lab at numerous sites. For diggers, the Linniston site on Gibson Island Fridays from 8 to 3. The lab will be open some weekdays at the Anne Arundel collection facility at 7409 Baltimore-Annapolis Blvd. in Glen Burnie. For more information email Drew Webster at volunteers@losttownsproject.org or call 410 222 1318.

Mount Calvert. Lab work and field work. 301 627 1286.

Jefferson Patterson Park invites volunteers to take part in its activities, including archeology, historical research and conservation. Contact 410 586 8554.

The Archaeological Institute of America provides an online listing of fieldwork opportunities worldwide. Call up www.archaeological.org/fieldwork to get started.

UPAG/Howard County Recs and Parks invites volunteers interested in processing collections and conducting historical research to contact Kelly Palich at Kpalich@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-0423.

CAT corner: For information on the CAT program, contact chair Kelly Palich at Kpalich@howardcountymd.gov or 410-313-0423.

Now on the web: Maryland history in four parts

This four-part webinar presentation recorded last November explores the peopling of the state of Maryland from the 1600s to the present day.

-- Henry Miller, Maryland Heritage Scholar of St Mary's City, gives an overview of 17th and 18th Century Colonial Maryland to the American Revolution period.

-- Maya Davis, researcher for Maryland State Archives, speaks to the African American experience of the enslaved and free Black population in Colonial times.

-- Nicholas Fesenden, director of Baltimore Immigration Museum, examines the migration history of Baltimore from 1830 to 1914. The city was the third largest point of entry, attracting people from Germany and Central and Eastern Europe.

-- Myat Lin, director of Maryland Office of Refugees and Asylees discusses the process involved in the entrance and resettlement of immigrants into Maryland over the past 50 years.

To view these presentations, visit https://youtu.be/M2qK8nK3PgQ

Indian fort located in southern Alaska

By Concepción de León

Condensed from the New York Times, January 28, 2021

Archeologists have discovered the spot in southeastern Alaska where an indigenous tribe built a wooden fort more than two centuries ago to resist Russian invaders.

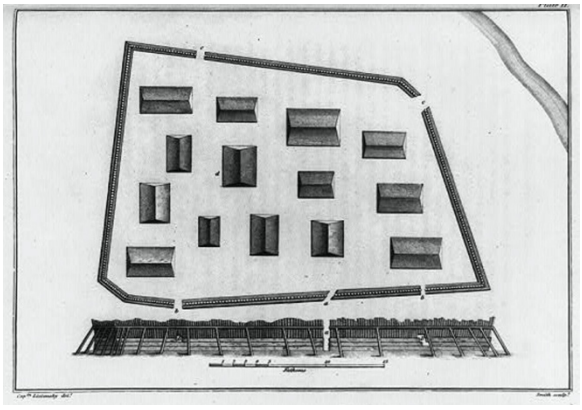
The fort was built by the Tlingit people in Sitka, which is on Baranof Island and part of what is now known as the Alaska Panhandle, to defend themselves in the Battle of 1804, according to the National Park Service website.

"It's a pivotal historical event in the history of the region, but it's also now, in our time, an important symbol to Tlingit people," said Thomas Urban, a research scientist at Cornell University and an author of a study, published on Monday in the journal Antiquity. "It's a sacred place."

But the precise location of the fort — which was torn down by the Russians shortly after they won the battle — had long eluded archeologists, who had previously found only clues and traces of it.

Now, the large-scale survey, conducted in fall 2019 by Urban and Brinnen Carter, an archeologist at the National Park Service, discovered electromagnetic anomalies that revealed the fort's perimeter and matched the shape and dimensions recorded by the Russians in the 19th Century, Urban said.

"Something is different underground where the fort was," he said. "It may be that they would have had to have had a ditch and wood. The ground is compacted differently, so there's some physical property that's different around the perimeter of the fort."



The Tlingit built the fort, called Shís'gi Noow, which means sapling fort in the Tlingit language, in a strategic location at the mouth of the Indian River, adjacent to shallow tidelands "to prevent the Russians from moving their ship-based artillery near the fort's walls, effectively neutralizing its military advantage," according to the Park Service's website.

The Tlingit had successfully defeated Russian invaders in 1802, which severely affected the Russians' fur trade business and stronghold in Alaska. In 1804 the Russians won the battle and occupied Alaska until 1867, when it sold its territory to the United States.

Before dismantling the fort, the Russians created a detailed sketch and recorded the fort's dimensions, which Urban said matched what he and Carter had found. The story of the battle has also been passed down in oral history by the Tlingit people.

Urban said that finding the location of the fort would give the Tlingit people a physical place in which to connect to their history.

Archeologist wouldn't reveal site, is killed

Condensed from DW, February 11, 2021

Syrian state media reported recently that authorities may have found the remains of Khaled al-Asaad, an archeologist who was beheaded by "Islamic State" (IS) militants in 2015, when he was 82. Asaad had served as the head of the antiquities department of the ancient city of Palmyra, staying there and undertaking research work for over 40 years. "I am from Palmyra and I will stay here even if they kill me," Asaad is reported to have said after IS occupied Palmyra.

Known as "an oasis in the Syrian desert," the city was first mentioned in the 1st and 2d centuries BC. In 2015, IS militants destroyed large parts of the UNESCO World Heritage Site for being "anti-Islamic." Khaled al-Asaad was killed because he refused to divulge the location of antique objects that he had helped excavate.

Cultural artifacts and historical symbols contribute to a group or a country's collective identity, making the practice of archeology a sensitive issue — and at times a dangerous one for heritage workers, as al-Asaad's murder in Syria shows.

Similar to Palmyra, symbolic historical monuments often become a target for groups asserting their dominance or challenging the status quo. For example, in 2001, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan blew up two monumental statues of the Buddha in Bamiyan, saying they were idolatrous.

In 1992, right-wing Hindu extremists in India demolished the Babri Masjid, a 16th-Century mosque in Ayodhya that in turn had been built upon an ancient Hindu temple.

Even during times of peace, governments keep a tight leash on who can access archeological sites and which sites get priority in research. "Government agencies in the countries in which archeologists work must grant permission to conduct fieldwork (or withhold it)," Susan Pollock, a professor of archeology at the Free University in Berlin, told DW.

This was the case in Syria even before the uprising against President Bashar Assad began in March 2011, leading to widespread and violent conflict.

"I would say the main challenge before the war was the accessibility to sites and archeological materials. The government had a tight grip on excavation permits," Lubna Omar explained. The Syrian archeologist had tried to work in national projects, but was constantly denied permission.

After war broke out between President Bashar Assad's forces and armed groups, researching ancient ruins became practically impossible and dangerous, Omar told DW.

Pollock, who worked as an archeologist in Iraq when the country was at war with Iran in the 1980s, says archeologists working in conflict zones often face logistical issues related to safety — both theirs and that of their team. "As outsiders, we rarely have sufficient insights into the inner workings of conflicts as well as to up-to-the-minute information," she added.

Pollock believes Asaad's death raises an ethical question: "Is it appropriate to pursue archeological research in the context of ongoing violent conflict? If so, where are the limits?"

In Syria, archeology faces an uncertain future. Heritage workers have stopped working and many, like Omar, have had to flee the country. The ones who still live in Syria must cope with war on a daily basis, as well as dwindling prospects of earning a livelihood.

Omar's predicament is understandable: Practicing archeology means staying on location — like Asaad did until he died. In Omar's case, for better or for worse, that has not been possible at all.

"As for after the war, I am not able to use my skills nor my knowledge. I left Syria in 2012, and I haven't been back since then!" she said.

"Since I moved to the U.S. in 2016, I am unable to travel, first, because of Donald Trump's travel ban and now, because I don't have a valid passport. I have no chance to renew it while I am in the U.S. In short, I am trapped, and my research is sadly dead."

Thawing reveals Norwegian 'Secret of the Ice'

Continued from first page

melting over the millennia and were heavily damaged from exposure to the elements.

The ice patch, which first formed around 5,600 BC, currently measures just 30 percent of the area it covered 30 years ago and 10 percent of its size during the Little Ice Age that ended in the mid 1800s. As melting accelerates, archeologists are in a race against time to recover artifacts as they are freed from the ice, before they dry out and rapidly begin to deteriorate.

We spoke to Pilø about some of the most interesting artifacts recovered from the ice in recent years, how Vikings used the items, and what they tell us about the mountain pass and the people who traveled over it.

(L) The Lendbreen Tunic. Dates to the year 300, is the oldest piece of clothing ever found in Norway. "The tunic is made from wool, which was spun and woven. It survived because it has been inside the ice for most of time since it was lost. Clothing is also known from glaciated mountain passes in the Alps. One reason they were left there could be hypothermia. When people are freezing to death, they become very warm in the final stage, which can lead to undressing — a paradoxical behavior."

(R) *A Kitchen Whisk.* A wooden whisk, radiocarbon-dated to the 11th Century. "The whisk is a kitchen utensil used for stirring [foods like] porridge…. Such whisks are still made today, but they are usually not pointed, so this artifact may have been used secondarily for another purpose, perhaps as a tent peg."

(L) ***A* complete tinderbox**. "The tinderbox contained a wooden stick and small bits of resin-filled wood. It is not dated or analyzed yet. It is probably an accidental loss, since it is complete. We think that it is likely to date to the Viking Age or the Medieval Period (500 to 1000 years old), but it could also be younger — or older."

(R) ***A* Horse Snowshoe**."Horse snowshoes are known from historical sources. However, to our knowledge, this is the first horse snowshoe found on an archeological site.

Williamsburg dig finds likely human remains

By Michael E. Ruane

Condensed from the Washington Post, February 24, 2021

Human remains have been discovered in an archeological dig at the site of a historic African American church in Colonial Williamsburg, experts announced Monday.

A worn upper front tooth and what is probably a finger bone were unearthed during excavation at the site of the old First Baptist Church, one of the oldest such churches in the country and the earliest African American church in Williamsburg, experts said.

The remains were found in what was left from an excavation at the site in the 1950s and probably came from a grave that was inadvertently disturbed in that process, experts said.

The current dig has located what appear to be two graves. Archeologists believe there may be more. The grave shafts have not yet been explored, but descendants of the church's earliest members said they want the archeology to continue to try to learn who the deceased were, and honor them.

The church was organized in 1776 and had buildings on the site in 1855, perhaps as early as 1818. Colonial Williamsburg bought the old church and tore it down in 1955. A new church funded by the sale was built about eight blocks away in 1956. The original site was paved over in 1965.

The remains were discovered this month, Jack Gary, Colonial Williamsburg's director of archeology, said Monday.

Community member Donald Hill asked whether the experts knew when the graves were dug.

One way to tell would be "to excavate down to the remains themselves and see what materials are inside the grave shafts," Gary said. "Looking at things like coffin hardware, the handles that are on coffins, they can give us dates."

"Looking at, also, any clothing remains on the individual could give us a potential date for when they were buried," he said.

Michael Blakey, director of the Institute for Historical Biology at William & Mary, said about 70 small bone fragments had been recovered from the site. In most cases it was not clear whether they were human or animal. "These are … unidentifiable, tiny fragments," he said.

In November, archeologists announced that they had found evidence of at least two graves, along with artifacts such as a fragment of an ink bottle, a porcelain piece of a doll's foot and a building foundation.

World's first big brewery found in Egypt

By Nick Lavars

Condensed from New Atlas, February 4, 2021

Beer is one of humankind's oldest prepared beverages, with artifacts and evidence of its production dating back thousands of years. Shedding further light on its long and storied history are new findings from archeologists working in Egypt who have uncovered the world's first industrial-scale brewery, which they believe was pumping out thousands of liters of beer for the ancient kings of the region.

In the past few years, we've seen archeologists make discoveries that have reshaped our understanding of beer's history, tracing its roots via 5,000-year-old vessels and funnels, and even recreating these ancient brews in the lab. One discovery in Israel unearthed evidence of beer production that was found to be around 13,000 years old, making it the oldest example that we know of.

The beer-making infrastructure uncovered recently in Abydos, one of ancient Egypt's oldest cities, doesn't quite date back that far, but does paint a picture of serious production in the area. The discovery is more than a century in the making, stemming from a 1912 dig in which archeologists found what appeared to be a set of eight grain kilns, arranged in a neat row, among other tombs and structures in the area dating back to 3100 to 2700 BCE.

In the meantime, artifacts from other sites in the area indicated that these kilns were used for beer production. So over the past few years, archeologists returned to the original site and continued excavating to unveil the full extent of this brewing operation and collecting samples for dating and analysis.

They now know that this facility would have been capable of producing more than 22,000 liters (5,800 gal) of beer at a time, an order of magnitude greater than anything else in operation during this time in ancient Egypt. Located in a sacred desert that was exclusively the domain of Egypt's early kings, the team says the facility served as an important part of royal expression during a critical time in the nation's history.

"We can now add to these better-known symbols of early royal power an industrial production site built on an unprecedented scale to support royal ritual at ancient Abydos," writes the University of Pennsylvania's Wendy Doyon, who took part in the North Abydos expedition.

Book review: Archeology on southern coast

Megadrought in the Carolinas: The Archaeology of Mississippian Collapse, Abandonment & Coalescence, *by John S. Cable, The University of Alabama Press, 2020, 260 pages, $65*

John S. Cable of the Palmetto Institute has gone where angels fear to tread (at least in recent years) by building a fairly convincing case that environmental changes, primarily multi-decadal droughts and possible epidemics (caused by droughts and subsequent wet periods) may have directly impacted the collapse of Mississippian chiefdoms of the South Appalachian Mississippian cultures in Georgia and South Carolina.

Hemorrhagic fevers (a domestic as opposed to a European imported illness) is one of his favorite epidemic possibilities. Cable further argues that "chiefdom recycling" may have played a role in destabilizing these polities although it is pretty clear that he views post-processual explanations as secondary.

The author spends the first 100 pages of 260 pages of text creating a chronological seriation model based on changes in pottery with initial emphasis on the changes in temper size and type. He then discusses changes in "features" on pots as opposed to "decorations."

Having a Ph.D. in statistics will be helpful in getting the sense and correctness of these 100 pages. The sections are full of words like "stochastic," which is a bit worrisome since it refers to phenomena that may have a random probability distribution that can be described statistically but not predicted. "Brainerd-Robinson Coefficients" play a large role in his analysis and many other methods besides.

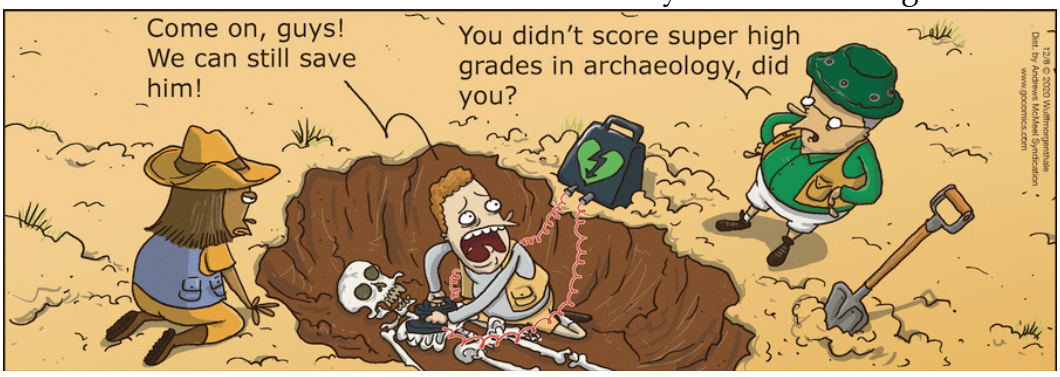
However, my concern with this has little to do with the statistical methodologies used (most of which I didn't understand). My concern is with the often modest size of pottery samples obtained from various sites and features; these being found often in STPs on sites or portions of sites that are being sampled.

When done with the methodologies and statistical "proofs" of the collapse of the chiefdoms in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, the author provides interesting thoughts on other facts that might be of more interest to those of us interested in the archeology of the mid-Atlantic coastal zone.

The effects of severe droughts on freshwater sources of shell fish and the risks involved in non-intensive agriculture are examples. Another is his interest in the creation and growth of confederacies as a better political model for mitigating drought and its effects on populations. In his lengthy discussion of the movement of peoples from the collapsed chiefdoms to places that were not as affected by drought, he provides insights concerning how incoming populations on the move "coalesce" with existing populations and polities.

If you are willing to get through the first 100 pages, the final 160 pages offer more than a few thought-provoking theories of importance to those interested in mid-Atlantic coastal cultures. **-- Claude Bowen**.

WuMo by Wulff and Morgenthaler



Chapter News

Check with your local chapter to see what activities will take place.

Central Chapter

All Meetings will be held on Zoom the third Tuesday of the Month. For more information and to be added to the Zoom list contact: Katharine Fernstrom at kwfappraising@gmail.com
March 16: Katherine Sterner, of Towson University, on differences told by stone tools, agriculture, and community at late prehistoric sites in Southern Wisconsin.

Charles County

Meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday (September–May). The next few will be virtual. Contact President Carol Cowherd at ccasm2010@gmail.com for Zoom access information. Website ccarchsoc.blogspot.com and Facebook @ccasm2010

Mid-Potomac

Until further notice, all Mid-Potomac Chapter Meetings will be by Zoom starting at 7 p.m., the talk at 7:30, the third Thursday of the month. Contact Don Housley at donhou704@earthlink.net or 301-424-8526. Chapter website: www.asmmidpotomac.org Email: asmmidpotomac@gmail.com
March 18: Don Barron, docent at the county's MOOseum, will speak on the history of dairy farming in Montgomery County and the history of the museum.
April 15: Ralph Buglass, chapter member, will speak on the book he wrote in conjunction with Peerless Rockville, *Rockville, Images of America.*
May 20: Lew Toulmin, chapter member, will speak on the recent and upcoming excavations at the medieval Lindisfarne island site off the northeast coast of England.

Monocacy

The chapter meets in the C. Burr Artz Library in Frederick the second Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. For more information, visit the chapter's web page at digfrederick.com or call 301-378-0212.

Northern Chesapeake

A business meeting at 7 is followed by the presentation at 7:30. Contact Dan Coates at 410- 273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net Website: http://sites.google.com/site/northernchesapeake

St. Mary's County

Meetings are the third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Joseph D. Carter State Office Building in the Russell Conference Room, Leonardtown. For information contact Chris Coogan at Clcoogan@smcm.edu

Upper Patuxent

Meetings the second Saturday or Sunday of the month, virtual or at the Heritage Program Office, 9944 Route 108, Ellicott City, unless otherwise noted. www.facebook.com/pages/Upper-Patuxent-Archaeology-Group/464236446964358 or www.upperpatuxentarchaeology.com or call Kelly Palich, 410 313 0423.

Western Maryland

Programs are the fourth Friday of the month, at 7:30 p.m. in the LaVale Library, unless noted. Contact Roy Brown, 301-724-7769. Email: wmdasm@yahoo.com Website: http://sites.google.com/site/wmdasm

The Archeological Society of Maryland Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization devoted to the study and conservation of Maryland archeology.

ASM members receive the monthly newsletter, ASM Ink, the biannual journal, MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY, reduced admission to ASM events and a 10-percent discount on items sold by the Society. Contact Membership Secretary Ethan Bean, 765-716-5282 or beans32@comcast.net for membership rates. For publication sales, not including newsletter or journal, contact Dan Coates at ASM publications, 716 Country Club Rd., Havre de Grace MD 20178-2104 or 410-273-9619 or dancoates@comcast.net

Submissions: Please send to Myron Beckenstein, 3126 Gracefield Rd., Apt 106, Silver Spring, MD. 20905 or 240-867-3662 or myronbeck@verizon.net