Practical Archaeobotany: report

Early farming in the NW Levant: Critically assess the plant remain assemblage from Neolithic Ras Shamra (NW Syria).

Using knowledge and interpretive skills developed during the term analyse and interpret the archaeobotanical dataset from Neolithic and Chalcolithic deposits at the site of Ras Shamra situated in Syria on the eastern Mediterranean coast. Details of the nature of the archaeological site and contexts sampled are provided.

van Zeist, W. &. Bakker-Heeres, 1984 Archaeobotanical studies in the Levant 2. Neolithic and Halaf Levels at Ras Shamra. *Paleohistoria*, 26, pp. 151-170

Make sure to use the broader literature from the tutorial reading lists in order to explore and contextualise the potential and limitations of this particular dataset as evidence of past plant use and husbandry. The report should be written in the form of a research article following the author guidelines for any well-known environmental archaeology journal (e.g., Journal of Environmental Archaeology).

Some topics to consider

TOPIC	QUESTION
Preservation	Assess sampling, preservation and recovery of the plant remains
Taphonomy	formation of the archaeobotanical record – crops, weeds, & dung
Crop selection & consumption	what crops are likely to have been grown/consumed?
Wild plant food selection	what wild plants are likely to have been gathered/consumed?
Crop processinng	how crops were processed/stored?
Wild plant food processing	processing/storage of wild plants?
Crop growing conndditions	how crops were grown? Water , fertiliser, weeding, etc.
Archaeobotanical issues	what are the limitations of the available dataset and the original report

Bibliography

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Moffet, L. 2003. Wild and cultivated food plants and the evidence for crop processing activities at Arjoune. *In* P.J. Parr (ed). *Excavations at Arjoune, Syria*, BAR International Series 1134. Oxford. 241-249.

Background literature is available in the handbook (general archaeobotanical reading/background, tutorial reading) and in the project background reading list. Floras and other botanical reference works may be useful (to get common names of taxa, to consider habitat classifications, potential uses and so on). Relevant floras include: the Flora of Iraq and the Flora of Turkey. This website provides a bibliography of archaeobotanical sites in the region: https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~nmiller0/biblio.html