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## Unlocking the King's spice cabinet

Plant remains from a 15th century royal shipwreck in the Baltic Sea

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## A. UNLOCKING THE KING'S SPICE CABINET – PLANT REMAINS FROM A 15TH CENTURY ROYAL SHIPWRECK IN THE BALTIC SEA

**Abstract author(s):** Larsson, Mikael - Foley, Brendan (Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Lund University)

**Abstract format:** Poster

Underwater archaeobotany has recently recovered plant material from the wreck of a warship called Gribshunden, the flagship of King Hans of Denmark and Norway that sank close to the southern edge of Sweden more than 500 years ago. The exceptional environmental conditions of the Baltic Sea have preserved plant foods stored on the ship, including cereals, oilseeds, fruits, vegetables, spices, nuts and berries. Among these are plants species from far distant origins: saffron, peppercorn, clove, ginger, almond and grape. Despite the status of exotic foods and spices among the aristocracy in Scandinavia and around the Baltic Sea during the Middle Ages (AD 1050-1550), few of these foods have survived archaeologically, and much of our knowledge of the use of such foods are reliant on written sources. Taking this into account, the preservation of these plant foods from Gribshunden constitutes a valuable discovery.

Exotic food items are probably some of the most easily identifiable indicators of social context. From historical sources, we know that King Hans and his courtiers, noblemen, and soldiers, were travelling on Gribshunden, together with a squadron of ships to attend a June 1495 political summit in Sweden. Many of them never arrived, as the king's flagship sank after a fire broke out en route. The plants remains recovered from the wreck offer not only the unique possibility to contextualize the social environment in which such luxurious foods were consumed, but to link these food commodities to a travelling medieval king and a historical event.

While these discoveries will add relevance to research on medieval ships and provide insights to the use of luxury foods in medieval society, it also illustrates the potential of plant remains in underwater environments connected to wreck sites.

## B. PLANTBITES – A DATABASE FOR PLANT RESOURCES IN EARLY HUMAN ENVIRONMENTS

**Abstract author(s):** Bruch, Angela (ROCEEH Research Centre, Senckenberg Research Institute, Frankfurt/M) - Papikyan, Astghik (A.L. Takhtajyan Institute of Botany, Armenian Academy of Sciences, Yerevan) - Hahn, Karen (Institute for Ecology, Evolution and Diversity, Goethe University, Frankfurt/M) - Altolaguirre, Yul - Haidle, Miriam (ROCEEH Research Centre, Senckenberg Research Institute, Frankfurt/M)

**Abstract format:** Poster

Studies on possible plant food and its availability for different groups of early humans so far usually consider only a pre-selected set of plant species often based on the scarce archaeobotanical record. In contrast, the database PlantBITES is a tool to consider the full range of potentially available, dominant plant species in vegetation units. It serves assessing the amount and variety of obtainable food (and other) resources for early humans. Data collected in PlantBITES comprise information mainly on edibility and other uses of plants that occur in natural environments as well as their relevant botanical traits. Based on such records it is possible to analyze and quantify plant resources and their seasonal availability for humans in a given environment.

The availability of plant resources is considered taking into account not only natural aspects but also the different levels of cultural capacities necessary for the utilization of plants – as it is usually not included in ethnobotany. Cultural capacities of different hominin groups regarding the exploitation of plant resources change considerably through time with respect to the use of tools and fire, and especially the capability to process and store plant materials. Therefore, the PlantBITES database facilitates the evaluation of the relevance and impact of climate or other environmental changes as well as of cultural developments on the resource availability for early humans through time.

PlantBITES provides a range of applications for exploring the resource space of early humans. This will be highlighted by examples of exploring the database to quantify the spatial and seasonal availability of plant food resources for early Homo in the South of the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the availability of plant food resources in relation to changing cultural performances of early Homo in Southern Africa.

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## 375 THE SOCIETAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGES IN THE PAST – WHAT CAN HUNTER-GATHERER ARCHAEOLOGY CONTRIBUTE TO THE CURRENT DEBATE? [PAM]

**Theme:** 5. Climate Change and Socioenvironmental Perspectives

**Organisers:** Grimm, Sonja (CRC 1266 Scales of Transformation; ZBSA - Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology) - Nyland, Astrid (Museum of Archaeology, University of Stavanger) - Riede, Felix (School of Culture and Society, Aarhus University) - Wygal, Brian (Environmental Studies and Sciences, Adelphi University)

**Format:** Session with presentation of 6 slides in 6 minutes

The realities of climate change are with us: rising sea levels, melting glaciers, droughts, desertification, deforestation, changing storm tracks, and extreme weather events. Calls for socio-economic changes are getting louder, yet im-