

Take a deep breath. Underwater cultural landscapes of the ancient Mediterranean.

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Session Description

The exploration of the Mediterranean depths is not a recent endeavour. Humans have been diving beneath the surface of the sea since Prehistory. Sponge and coral harvesters are known from antiquity, and there are even attestations of freedivers involved in naval war operations. Likewise, diving may have complemented the activity of fishermen and mollusc gatherers, while harbour builders may have required underwater expertise and painters and poets borrowed underwater imagery for their art. Then why is the archaeological research on human engagement with the underwater spaces so sparse on this topic? Until recently, the long-standing reasoning was that we lacked evidence for such activities. However, the most recent re-evaluation of the material culture has shown evident underwater applications, and a cognitive-sensory approach to the visual and textual representations of underwater spaces has demonstrated how many representations were indeed influenced by real-world diving experiences. In the last few years, a growing group of researchers is daring to take the plunge into this fascinating world, to look at the material, philological and artistic evidence from an aquatic perspective.

With this session, we invite the participation of all who are interested in the archaeology of freediving. We particularly welcome contributions that employ innovative theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of human engagement with the submarine depths.

Keywords

Freediving Archaeology; Mediterranean; Sponge Divers