

PROCESSING AND CONSUMPTION OF PULSES IN PREHISTORIC GREECE: ARCHAEOBOTANICAL, EXPERIMENTAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

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Key words: Prehistoric Greece, Lathyrus sativus, Vicia ervilia

The importance of pulses in the diets of Neolithic and Bronze Age communities of Greece has been emphasized by many authorities and supported by archaeobotanical evidence consisting of a significant contribution of pulse species found in rich, dense concentrations as stored crops. Their significance has led A. Sarpaki to talk of a Mediterranean 'tetrad', thus breaking the stereotypic 'triad' of cereals, wine and oil. Lentil, pea, grass pea and bitter vetch, with the addition in the Bronze Age of Celtic bean, Cyprus vetch and Spanish vetchling, provide the range of pulses used in prehistoric Greece. Pulses can be used as food, fodder or both and despite the toxicity of some, like grass pea and bitter vetch, ways for detoxifying them or for counteracting their toxicity are known from written sources, modern ethnographic accounts and food science research papers. This presentation brings together archaeobotanical evidence on pulses available from Greece, placing particular emphasis on recent finds of *Lathyrus sativus* and *Vicia ervilia* from Neolithic and Early Bronze Age sites. These finds provide the incentive for an in-depth investigation of their processing for food as well as their context of consumption in prehistoric Greece.

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