

Human, animal and environmental interactions: Interpreting Neolithic farming communities through scientific ethnoarchaeology

This lecture presents the application of new and innovative multiple methods and ethnoarchaeology to answer questions about Neolithic farming villages in Jordan and the Zagros Mountains of Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan from about 11,700 to 7,800 years ago. Common methods to investigate the development of these early farming villages rely on the interpretation of archaeological contexts and their associated material culture. However, we can go one step further and incorporate scientific microscopic techniques in combination with modern ethnoarchaeology to gain further insights.

Dr Sarah Elliott is an environmental archaeologist and current CBRL Visiting Fellow at the British Institute in Amman. She completed her PhD at the University of Reading investigating early animal management in Iraq and Iran through the identification of animal penning and microscopic signatures of dung in Neolithic villages. She holds an MSc in Geoarchaeology and a BA in Ancient History and Archaeology, also from the University of Reading. In 2014-15 she worked as a Research Assistant on the INEA Project (Identifying activity areas in Neolithic sites through Ethnographic Analysis of phytoliths and geochemical residues) co-directed by Bournemouth University and CBRL Amman. The aim of the project was to integrate ethnographic investigation of recently abandoned settlements with phytolith and geochemical methods to identify activity areas and construction materials within Neolithic settlements. During her CBRL fellowship she has been developing a modern dung reference collection as well as continuing her research interest in historic Jordanian villages.