

The [CCHRI](#) has had what can only be described as a banner year. With a conference, a training workshop and a colloquium, not to mention the publication of several articles in leading journals and the establishment of a book series, the last twelve months have been busy. The coming year will be just as exciting.

The 2019 Training Workshop

The CCHRI extended its efforts far beyond Princeton campus in 2019. We conducted an introductory workshop on 22-23 March 2019 in the methods of paleoclimatology (and related fields) for European colleagues – archaeologists and historians – at the [Princeton Athens Center](#), Greece. CCHRI core members and colleagues Chryssa Bourbou, Warren Eastwood, Jürg Luterbacher, Katerina Kouli and Elena Xoplaki led an impressive group of local scholars through the state-of-the-art methods and data in dendroclimatology, climate modeling, palynology, and paleopathology. Our intention with this training workshop, our fourth since 2015, was to introduce



humanists to the wealth of non-textual sources and methodologies that could further inform their work. In Athens, CCHRI members also presented a series of case study papers on interdisciplinary climate and disease history, which sought to exhibit some of the benefits and difficulties entailed in interweaving diverse lines of evidence.

The 2019 Conference

With the [Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History](#) at Jena, the initiative put on a truly interdisciplinary conference in mid-March 2019 on the theme of societal resilience to climate change, from prehistory to the Middle Ages. More than 30 archaeologists, historians, paleoclimatologists, paleogenomists and palynologists convened for a productive and jam-packed three-day meeting in March. From the climate adaptation of the Maya and the medieval Greenlanders, to the dating and effects of the Cypriatic Plague, to the integration of pathogen aDNA and pollen data into environmental history, this was a memorable event and the beginning of closer interaction between both institutions.

The 2019 Princeton Colloquium

Hot on the heels of our meetings in Jena and Athens, we held our fifth annual one-day colloquium on Princeton campus on 25 April 2019. This year, our focus was set on issues of climate and migration, both historical and present-day. We heard from modern historians and anthropologists, as well as archaeologists, historical linguists and environmental scientists. After an exciting day with eight intellectually challenging papers that took us from Central Africa (Kathryn de Luna) to the North Atlantic (Tom McGovern) to Central Asia (Nicola di Cosmo) to the Mexican-US border (Rosina Lozano) to Cambodia (Sarah Klassen), Alex de Sherbinin (Columbia) delivered a keynote lecture on the centrality of historical perspectives in models of future climate change-induced migration.

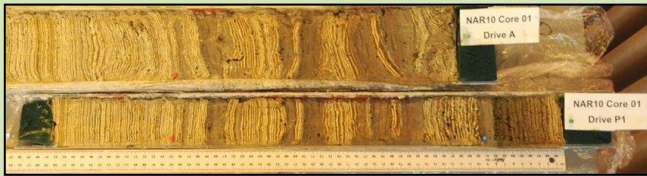


Publications

It was another good year for publications. In particular, CCHRI co-founder Lee Mordechai and Merle Eisenberg published a series of papers on the Justinianic Plague and the first plague pandemic (~541-750). Revisionist in nature, the papers, particularly those in [Past and Present](#) and the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#), attracted much attention. The latter, a broader CCHRI effort multidisciplinary team effort, was picked up by 35 news outlets and reported on in eight languages. Among other publications, the last year also saw the publication with Brill of

New Book Series!

The CCHRI is delighted to announce the launch of a new book series with Oxford University Press (NY). The series, titled *Interdisciplinary Studies in Premodern History and Environment*, is edited by John Haldon (Princeton), Adam Izdebski (Max-Planck-Institute for the Science of Human History, Jena), Lee Mordechai (Hebrew University, Jerusalem), Tim Newfield (Georgetown University), Arlene Rosen (University of Texas) and Erika Weiberg (Uppsala University). We plan to embrace single- and multi-author volumes that deal with a wide range of subjects that touch upon



the interactions between premodern societies and their environments. The books will be addressed to both humanities and social science as well as natural scientific readerships. While there has been a debate on the impact of climate and environmental stress on human social organization for many decades, only now, in the last decade or

Major New Funding

We are also delighted to announce that the *National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center* (SESYNC) in Annapolis, Maryland, has awarded the CCHRI funding for our 2020/21 project: *Past answers to current concerns: Historical cases of navigating socio-environmental stress*. While setting out to tackle questions of how environmental and climatic changes impacted human responses in the past and how societal perceptions of such changes affected behavioral patterns and explanatory rationalities in premodernity, we begin to pursue, with SESYNC's

Adam Izdebski's co-edited volume [Environment and society in the long Late Antiquity](#), an immensely useful collection of papers representing a number of disciplines. Several more publications are in the works. Also, look out for our [Justinianic Plague app](#) later in 2020!



so, has it been possible to involve natural scientists more fully in the discussion. This is a direct result of dramatic advances in the availability of relevant data, new analytical and interpretive methods, and new questions. Synthesizing these changes has enabled historians and archaeologists to pursue new research agendas and to deploy quantitative data provided by science in a way that was until recently impossible. The book series aims to promote a more nuanced and balanced collaborative approach to research into the complex interrelationships between human societies in the past and their environment, including both climate as well as disasters, such as earthquakes, and disease landscapes. The series will include analytical volumes that cover a single major theme, multi-author volumes that synthesize the results of recent research in specialist palaeoscientific or palaeoenvironmental subfields, as well as guides to the palaeosciences for the humanities and social sciences and to the ways in which archaeology, history and the natural sciences can work together. The first four volumes will appear in early 2021! If you have a proposal in mind, please get in touch!

support, the question of the degree to which a better historical understanding of these relationships can inform our response to contemporary problems of similar nature and magnitude, such as adapting to climate change. The project uses a series of rich historical case studies from the premodern Mediterranean and North Atlantic worlds to interrogate the linkages between different types of socio-environmental interaction over decadal and centennial scales. A series of three meetings of a 12-person team will begin in Fall 2020 in Annapolis, MD.

Looking Ahead, a 2020 Packed with Events

Busy months are ahead! On 9 March 2020, the CCHRI hosts Prof. Tom McGovern at Princeton. All are welcome to his talk, “Commerce, Collapse and Survival in Medieval Greenland and Iceland”, in 211 Dickinson Hall at 4:30.



Later in March, the CCHRI is travelling to Birmingham in the UK. The 53rd Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies has taken “[Nature and the Environment](#)” as its theme. Over the course of the meeting, 28-30 March 2020, core and affiliated members of the initiative will present interdisciplinary work and immediately following the event, on 30 March, the CCHRI will hold a half-day training workshop to local scholars in applying paleoclimatology and the environmental sciences to the study of the Byzantine past.

Then, on 6 May, the CCHRI will convene our sixth annual one-day colloquium at Princeton. The meeting, “Past Answers to Current Concerns: Collaborative Conceptual Modeling as an Approach to Understanding Historical Societal Resilience”, promises to take our research in stimulating novel directions. To expand our analytical tool-kit we are pursuing the application of Collaborative Conceptual Modeling (CCM), an approach that deploys quantitative data to help generate models of societal dynamics and principal-agent models. In combination with ‘qualitative scenario storylines’ (QSSs), a technique used to translate quantitative

modelling into real-world scenarios, we hope to apply these approaches to the adaptation of historical data about past societal responses and resilience to contemporary and future planning. This meeting engages specialists from the fields of history and archaeology as well as the field of risk assessment and future planning, including from the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, Cambridge and the US Army Corps of Engineers R & D Center.

At the Research Centre for Anatolian Civilisations, Koç University, the CCHRI will run its fifth introductory workshop examining the methods and data of the paleoclimate sciences. This workshop, open to all junior scholars (graduate students, postdocs and assistant professors), is scheduled for 7-8 September and aims to introduce junior scholars in the historical sciences – in this case in Turkey - to both the potential and the dangers entailed in deploying scientific data in historical and archaeological study. Speakers include both core members of CCHRI as well as a number of Turkish palaeo-science colleagues, and as with similar workshops.

Last but not least, we will be holding a colloquium at Georgetown University on 8-9 October 2020. For this event, focused on disease and the environment, global and late antique, we will be bringing archaeologists and historians together with disease ecologists, palaeoclimatologists, paleogenomists and paleopathologists.

We hope to meet you at our events!

The CCHRI has been running since early 2015, funded initially by the CCH (Center for Collaborative History) and PIIRS, and now by CCH, PEI (Princeton Environmental Institute) and several Princeton campus programs. Directed by John Haldon and with associate directors Lee Mordechai (Hebrew University) and Tim Newfield (Georgetown), the aims of the project are to bring together archaeologists, historians and palaeoenvironmental scientists in an endeavor to transcend disciplinary boundaries and examine the climate and environmental history of the eastern Mediterranean basin within a global comparative context over the period ca. 300 – ca. 1900 CE. The focus is on issues that have the largest potential for cross-disciplinary cooperation within the broader field of climate-history related study. At the same time, the initiative aims to provide concrete methodological and practical solutions to challenges that such collaboration involves. Our hope is to contribute to a transformation of the way historians look at the relationship between past societies and their environments. Our international team includes ecologists and risk-assessment specialists as well as historians, archaeologists and palaeoscientists, in light of the increasing attention we are paying to the ways in which historical data can be of use in finding solutions or approaches to contemporary issues relevant to the ways in which societies respond to environmental stress factors. We keep a record of our events and publications on our website. Please [check us out!](#)

As always, we would like to thank our sponsors at Princeton for their generous support for our activities: the Center for Collaborative History, Princeton Environmental Institute, the Humanities Council, Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, the Committee for the Study of Late Antiquity, the Program in the Ancient World, the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies, the Department of Near Eastern Studies M. Munir Ertegun Turkish Studies Foundation. We are also delighted to receive the support of SESYNC, the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, the MPI Departments of Archaeology and Paleo-Science & History Independent Research Group, and the Georgetown Health Initiative.