



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The search for precious wood and its consequences in the ancient Near East

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Abstract

The Amanus and Lebanon Mountains were renowned for their precious wood, especially cedar. While ancient texts regularly refer to these wood resources, their exploitation and vegetation history are only fragmentarily known. Recent charcoal analysis from Qornet ed-Deir, Zincirli, and Kinet Höyük sheds new light on the exploitation history of Jebel Moussa of Mount Lebanon and the Amanus.

At Qornet ed-Deir, Middle Bronze Age charcoal remains attest to a former now gone cedar forest at Jebel Moussa (Mount Lebanon) that included (possibly) fir, juniper, and oak and that was later delineated by Emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD) as his forest domain. This cedar-fir forest had already undergone decline by the Byzantine (5th-6th century AD) and Medieval periods (12th-13th century AD).

At Zincirli, the inhabitants likely had local access to Amanus cedar and pine wood in the Middle Bronze and Iron Ages. However, at Kinet Höyük, so far, no cedar has been detected, though the investigations are still ongoing. A strong presence of pine in the Early Bronze to Iron Age indicates that the suggested trade of Amanus wood was focused on pine there.

The case-studies demonstrate the potential of anthracology to understand the occurrence and exploitation history of esteemed wood resources.

Keywords

cedar, pine, Mount Lebanon, Amanus, precious wood

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