FoodMod-RGB: Modelling food plant trade in the Roman provinces of Gaul and Britannia (HORIZON-MSCA-2023-PF-01)

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Food is at once a universal necessity and subject to the particularities of environmental and socio-cultural setting. Examining trends in food consumption provides a means with which to detect shifts in past economies, and can greatly augment current understandings of the ways ancient populations interreacted with each other as well as their environments. This project will explore the diverse ways that Roman imperial occupation impacted provincial lifeways, as reflected in foodways, or more specifically, food plants. As food plants were a traded commodity, tracking their trade and transport allows important new light to be shed on economic connectivity, trade networks, as well as culturescapes and the intricate social dynamics that influence consumption patterns.

The focus will be on the Roman provinces of Britannia and Gaul, regions which are historically and geographically distinct, but also interconnected in terms of their proximity and necessary transport links. A large body of archaeobotanical data will be collated and entered into a relational database. Data analyses will look to methods from computational archaeology, employing underutilised techniques of advanced network analyses in order to model spatial and social distributions in food plants. In acquiring these new skills, the candidate will be able to combine such methods with existing expertise in large-scale, regional archaeobotanical studies.

Results will complement current knowledge on food plant trade by filling the essential gap

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that is the geographical centre of the European provinces, Gaul, as well as shedding new light on trade in the frontiers. Implications will be far-reaching, offering novel insight into socio-economic networks, as well as human-landscape relationships, and complex nature of cultural dynamics within imperial spheres. Such topics are not only of great relevance to the ancient world, but also to modern studies of food and the impacts of the global economy.

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