



Press Release

Tübingen hosts new Competence Center for Archaeometry

State government, Helmut Fischer GmbH Institut für Elektronik und Messtechnik and Excellence Initiative sponsor interdisciplinary analysis of ancient materials



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From October 1, the University of Tübingen will be home to a new center specializing in archaeometry. The Competence Center Archaeometry - Baden-Wuerttemberg (CCA-BW) is jointly sponsored by the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research, and the Arts, Helmut Fischer GmbH Institut für Elektronik und Messtechnik and University of Tübingen funding from the government's Excellence Initiative, who together will provide 800,000 euros over three years. The new center arose from the Archaeometry section of Applied Mineralogy and will be headed by Tübingen mineralogists Dr. Christoph Berthold, Professor Klaus G. Nickel and Senior Professor Klaus Bente.

State minister of Science, Research, and the Arts Theresia Bauer welcomed the project, saying "This Center brings the latest materials science technology to historical and archaeological issues. The mobile analysis procedures being developed here will find practical applications, for instance in the building industry. This is an outstanding example of interdisciplinary research which the Ministry of Science, Research, and the Arts is proud to support."

The center will focus on examining archaeological artefacts, using various methods unique in the field of Archaeometry. The researchers will be able to obtain detailed information such as chemical and mineralogical composition, structure and texture of primarily ceramic materials. They will examine, for example, prehistoric sherds as an expression of neolithic evolution, as well as glazed ceramics of classical civilizations and the biomineral decorations of Celtic jewelry; they will also be able to certify whether supposedly historical finds are genuine or not.

The archaeometrists are able to identify the raw materials used in an object in order to trace the route along which it may have been traded, as well as the techniques used to make it, which may help us to better understand the deterioration of archaeological finds. This will enable them to draw

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conclusions about cultural and technical innovations throughout the development of society, and perhaps to improve on current restoration techniques.

The center will collaborate with its industrial partner, Helmut Fischer GmbH Institut für Elektronik und Messtechnik, to develop a mobile analysis unit which will enable the high-resolution, non-destructive, multi-method analysis of finds even in remote places. That will make it possible for archaeologists to carry out key analyses on the spot - a major advantage, particularly at excavations but also for collections and at historic and prehistoric monuments which cannot be moved. The center also aims to use its new methods for current materials science questions, such as in industrial process controls, the development of materials, and for analyzing damage. The center is interdisciplinary, expanding the role of Archaeometry among Tübingen's established archaeological disciplines, while building bridges to natural science disciplines such as Mineralogy, Physics and Chemistry.

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