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ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΤΗΣ ΔΑΝΙΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΘΗΝΑ
THE DANISH INSTITUTE AT ATHENS

The Danish Institute at Athens
is pleased to invite you to a lecture in English

“Water and urban resilience: Geoarchaeology of African early towns”

By

Assistant Professor Federica Sulas

Centre for Urban Network Evolutions (UrbNet), Aarhus University

Tuesday the 3rd of October at 19.00
in the auditorium of the Institute, Herefondos 14A, Plaka, Athens



The interplay between water and societies is a long-standing topic of archaeology, particularly within research on the rise and demise of past civilisations from the hydraulic engineering of Minoan cities to the water supply networks of early Roman towns. In Africa, water-stress and climate change have long been linked to the development of early urbanism. Previous studies have emphasised a linear, causal relation between rainfall patterns and urban dynamics: increased rainfall sustaining urban growth, prolonged low or failing rains leading to the collapse and abandonment. However, there is now increasing evidence that past urban societies developed different solutions to access, manage and deal with multiple forms of water. Drawing from recent and ongoing research, this lecture will employ a high-definition approach to discuss urban water systems at three early towns (1st–2nd mill. AD): Aksum in the northern Ethiopia, Unguja Ukuu on Zanzibar Island, and Great Zimbabwe on the Zimbabwe Plateau. These examples offer different trajectories of urban development in regions associated with chronic water stress in the past and today. By combing environmental proxies and archaeological records, the lecture will discuss the role of water in urban resilience and its relevance to contemporary debates on sustainable water systems.

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