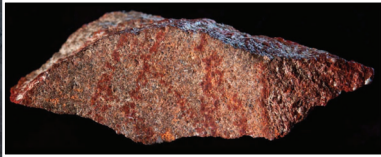


Archaeological discoveries of 2018

1. JORDAN – World's oldest bread

Charred remains of a flatbread baked in a stone fireplace about 14,000 years ago suggests people began making bread 4,000 years before the dawn of agriculture.

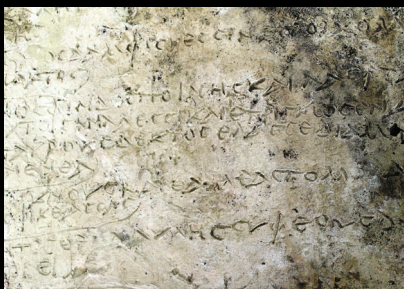
The flatbread, resembling pita bread, was made from wild cereals and tubers from an aquatic papyrus relative, ground into flour



2. SOUTH AFRICA – Oldest drawing

A small stone flake marked with intersecting lines of red ochre pigment around 73,000 years ago is thought to be the oldest-known example of human drawing.

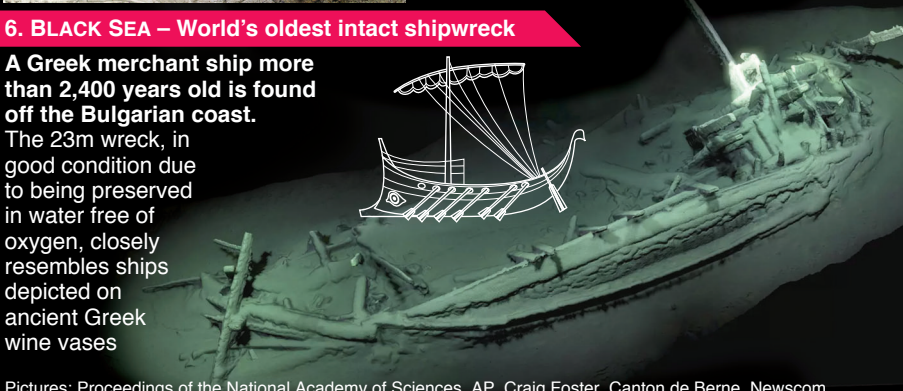
The design, found in South Africa's Blombos Cave, predates the previous oldest-known drawings by at least 30,000 years



6. BLACK SEA – World's oldest intact shipwreck

A Greek merchant ship more than 2,400 years old is found off the Bulgarian coast.

The 23m wreck, in good condition due to being preserved in water free of oxygen, closely resembles ships depicted on ancient Greek wine vases



3. EGYPT – Mummy secrets unveiled

A mummification workshop and adjoining burial shaft dating from between 664-404BC, discovered near the Saqqara necropolis south of Cairo, is providing a "goldmine of information" about the mummification process.

A gilded silver mask (above) – only the second such discovery ever made – is among hundreds of objects unearthed



4. SWITZERLAND – Enigmatic bronze hand

A bronze hand with gold cuff, found in the 3,500-year-old burial of a man near Lake Biel, is thought to be the earliest metal representation of a human body part ever found in Europe. The unusual artifact, which may have been part of a sceptre or statue, was fashioned in the mid-second millennium BC but nothing else like it is known from the period

5. GREECE – Oldest extract of *Odyssey*

A clay tablet unearthed near the ruined Temple of Zeus in ancient Olympia may be the oldest written record of *Homer's* epic tale ever found. The tablet, engraved with 13 verses of the poem relating the 10-year journey home of the hero *Odysseus* after the fall of Troy, has been dated to Roman times. Homer is thought to have composed the *Odyssey* in the late 8th Century BC



7. RUSSIA – Black Death ancestor decoded

DNA analysis of two 3,800-year-old skeletons, a man and a woman buried together in the Samara region, shows both were infected with *Yersinia pestis* when they died. The plague-causing bacterium, the oldest of its kind sequenced to date, is the ancestor of the strain that caused the Black Death and suggests that bubonic plague originated in the Bronze Age