

Archaeological discoveries of 2023



1 PERU: New DNA analysis reveals that one-third of *Machu Picchu's* caretakers – skilled workers including craftspeople and priests – came from faraway Amazonia. This suggests that part of the Amazon was more fully integrated into the Inca Empire than previously thought

2 ITALY: The largest collection of ancient bronze statues ever found in Italy, among them the “*scrawny boy*” (right) – a Roman youth with apparent bone disease – is unearthed below the *San Casciano dei Bagni* bathhouse ruins in Tuscany. They shed light on how Romans and Etruscans viewed the connection between health, religion and spirituality



3 ISRAEL: Four extremely well-preserved swords – three still in their wooden scabbards – are discovered in a cave overlooking the Dead Sea. The weapons may have been hidden by Judean rebels after they were seized from the Roman army as booty



Panda's skull

4 MEXICO: A stone chest containing 15 figurines made by the *Mezcala* people between 500 BC and 600 AD is found in a layer of Mexico City's *Templo Mayor* dating to the reign of *Moctezuma I* (1440-69). The finds indicate that the Aztecs excavated the objects from Mezcala sites in the southwest of the country and placed them in the temple as ritual offerings

5 CHINA: The first complete skeleton of a giant panda to be found in a royal tomb is discovered among the remains of 400 sacrificial animals near the mausoleum of the Han dynasty emperor, *Wen* (180-157 BC). The find gives insights into royal burial rites going back more than 2,000 years

6 ZAMBIA: A pair of interlocking logs dating back nearly half a million years is believed to be the earliest known example of wooden architecture. The structure predates the appearance of the first modern humans by around 150,000 years



8 ITALY: The ruins of *Nero's Theatre* are discovered during renovation works at the *Palazzo della Rovere* in Rome. Emperor Nero (54-68 AD) is known for his love of drama and the performing arts, but the exact location of his theatre has been a mystery until now



7 EGYPT: A fragment of what researchers believe to be the world's first book, found in Egypt almost 2,300 years ago, is uncovered on a piece of papyrus, recycled as wrapping for a mummy. It records, in Greek letters, tax details on beer and oil – and pushes back the origins of bookbinding by centuries

