The Black Sea Fish and Mollusca Project: A New Digital Zooarchaeological Resource

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Abstract

The Black Sea Fish and Mollusca Project is a virtual museum that employs Omeka, an open source web-publishing platform. The digital resource will showcase a physical comparative collection of fish skeletons and mollusc shells from the Black Sea coastal regions of Bulgaria, Turkey, Romania, Ukraine, Russia and Georgia. This unique project aims to provide hi-res images and scans of the specimens, as well as feature online topical exhibitions related to seafood studies and identity, environment, maritime adaptations, fish migration and the development of fishing economies in this region. This digital resource, which will be publicly launched in April 2013, will improve the way archaeologists analyze such faunal remains on archaeological projects when physical specimens are not available to reference. Overall it will serve as an online educational destination for all major topics related to Black Sea fish and mollusca.

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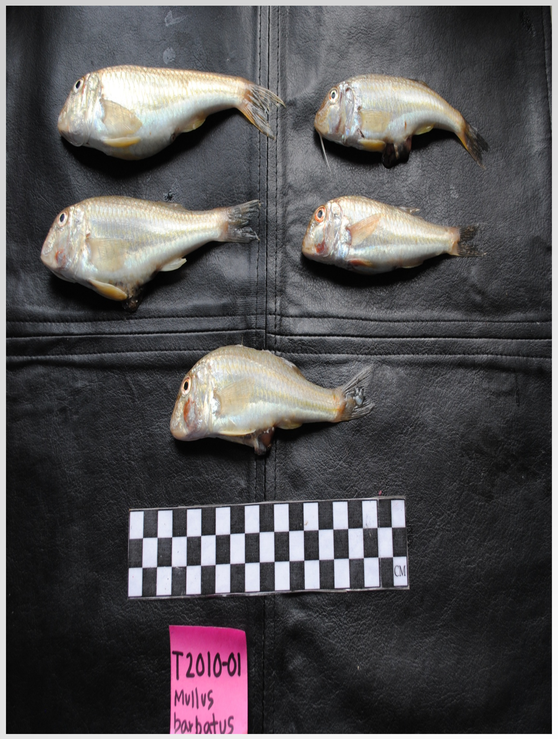

Figure 1: Mullus barbatus (Red Mullet) collected in Sinop, Turkey. Photo Credit: A. Santangelo

Figure 2: Mytilidae (mussels) from Varna, Bulgaria. Photo Credit: A. Santangelo

Figure 3: Mullus barbatus (Red Mullet) osteological elements. Scan Credit: A. Santangelo and A. Locker

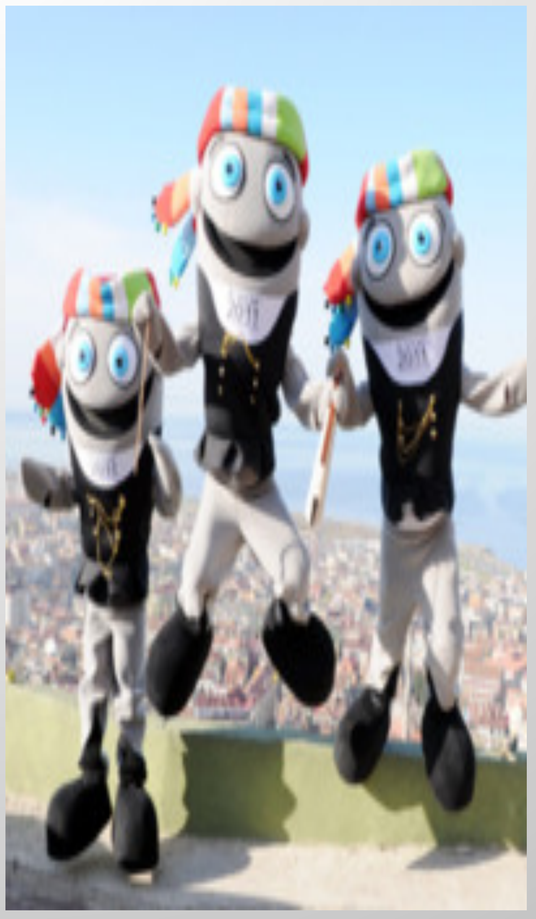

Figure 4: Maskot Hamsi
Photo Credit: Trabzon2011.org

Process and Objectives

As of 2012, specimens have been collected from Varna, Bulgaria and Sinop, Turkey. A strategy is in place to collect specimens from coastal areas of Ukraine, Romania, Russia and Georgia within the next two years. The Omeka website currently uses a "Seasons" theme, organizing fish species by their seasonality, and over forty specialized fish bone element item types have been created. The theme will be modified further to ensure that one would be able to search and compare specimen elements with the greatest ease across multiple variables.

Once the hi-res image and one dimensional scan phase is completed, the project will incorporate 3-D scanning technology for virtual specimen models and digital computer microscope generated images of fish scales. Ultimately, when the website design is completed researchers will be able to contribute to the virtual museum, by submitting their own images and scans via an online tool.

A digital exhibition titled *The Hamsi* (the Turkish common name for Black Sea anchovy) has been established and will be completed by the end of 2013. This exhibition, the first of many planned exhibitions, currently features a collection of hamsi fish images from a variety of Black Sea Turkish pop culture outlets.

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