

BIWEEKLY COLLOQUIUM

Semester topic “Challenging environment and social networking as drivers of change”

Monday, May 13th, 4:15 p.m.

“Does climate change really cause collapse? Insights from the Land, Water and Settlement and TwoRains projects”

Cameron Petrie (University of Cambridge)

In July 2018, the International Commission on Stratigraphy announced the first formal geological subdivision of the Holocene into three distinct subsections. Henceforth, the boundary between what is now to be called the Northgrippian Age (8,326 years ago to 4,200 years ago) and the Meghalayan Age (4,200 years ago to the present) was marked by an “abrupt and critical mega-drought and cooling . . . that resulted in the collapse of civilizations and human migrations in Egypt, Greece, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and the Yangtze River Valley” (ICS press release). While compelling, this announcement is not un-problematic, and has adherents and opponents in the disciplines of climate science and archaeology. Rather than providing an unequivocal answer, this announcement suggests that it is very timely to attempt serious (re-)consideration of the degree to which climate change - which is a complex process - was a “smoking’ gun” when it comes to explaining the demise and/or transformation of ancient societies. This presentation will attempt to take an objective stance in interpreting the available evidence for climate change at global and local scales, and human reaction and response to those processes, by examining the evidence from the Indus River Basin to explore the question “Does climate change really cause collapse?”

Venue: Leibnizstraße 1, Seminar Room 204