

*Abstract*

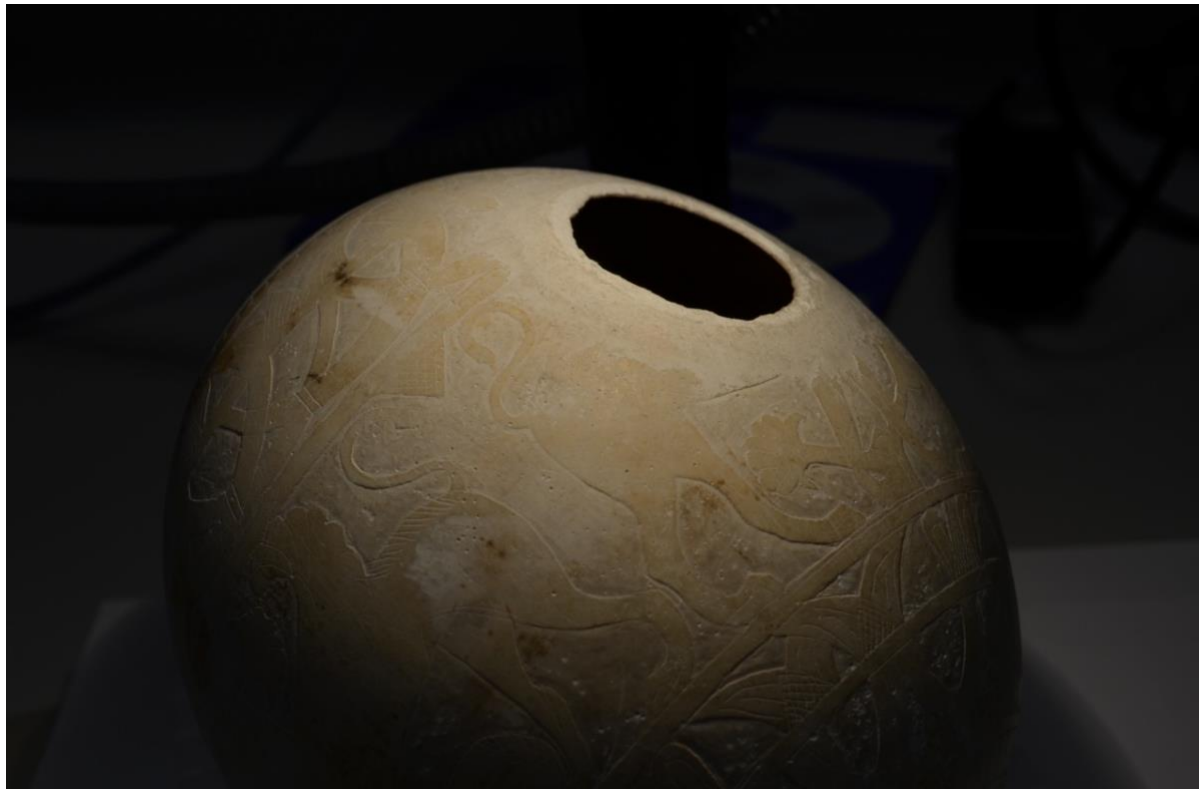
***Eggstraordinary Objects: ostrich eggs as luxury items in the ancient Mediterranean***

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Decorated ostrich eggs were traded as luxury items from the Middle East to the western Mediterranean during the second and first millennia BCE. The eggs were engraved, painted, and occasionally embellished with ivory, precious metals and faience fittings. While archaeologists note their presence as unusual vessels in funerary and dedicatory contexts, little is known about how or from where they were sourced, decorated and traded.

An ongoing project between researchers at Bristol University and the British Museum has established techniques to identify where the eggs originated and how they were decorated. This talk shares the results of our study, revealing the complexity of the production, trade, and economic and social values of luxury organic items between competing cultures of the ancient Mediterranean world.



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*Image: Decorated ostrich egg from the Isis tomb, Vulci, (Etruria), Italy*

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