

Special
Colloquium

The Enigma of Dating the Volcanic Eruption of Santorini



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Santorini is a Greek island in the Aegean Sea, which during the Late Bronze Age some 3500 years ago was the site of a cataclysmal volcanic eruption. Since this represents a distinct time beacon, the exact date of the eruption is of great interest for establishing an absolute chronology in the Eastern Mediterranean. Great strides have been made with various methods of both archaeology and natural sciences to arrive at a consistent date. Although an approximate date somewhere between 1700 and 1500 BC is well accepted, there exists a persistent discrepancy of about 100 years between the exact date determined by archaeological reasoning and the one resulting from various scientific methods. In the present talk, some of the scientific methods will be discussed including neutron activation of volcanic ash, ^{14}C dating of various objects, and evidence of volcanic signals in ice cores, caves and tree rings. While the evidence of a correct (older) date by ^{14}C measurements is mounting, it seems very difficult for archaeologists to adjust their supposedly well established (younger) date to the scientific result.

Monday

November 28

4:00 P.M.

Rm 123 NSH

Refreshments
in Rm 123 NSH
@ 3:30 pm