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Bronze Age perfume 'discovered'

By Tabitha Morgan
BBC News, Nicosia

A team of Italian archaeologists working in Cyprus believes it has discovered the site of an ancient perfume factory from the Bronze Age.

The 4,000-year-old perfumery is thought to have manufactured fragrances for export across the Eastern Mediterranean.

The factory looks to have formed part of a complex of buildings - a sort of Bronze Age industrial estate.

It included an olive press, a winery and a copper smelting works.

Scientists have reconstituted 12 different perfumes from traces of scents found in dozens of clay bottles at the site.

So far, they have extracted essences of laurel, cinnamon and myrtle - all likely to have been derived from local plants, and then mixed with olive oil.

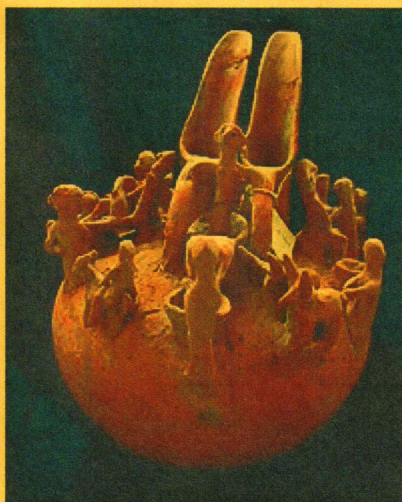
The scale of the site, and the presence of huge 500-litre oil-storage jars, suggests it was the centre of a prosperous export business.

It is thought that Crete may have been the ancient world's main market for Cyprus perfume.

Scented oils were used extensively for religious ceremonies and funerary rites and often commanded very high prices.

According to the Roman historian Pliny, Cyprus was the earliest source of some of the most popular perfumes in the ancient world.

Archaeologists believe that the earthquake which destroyed the complex also played a part in preserving many of its artefacts.



Scented oils commanded high prices in the ancient world



The factory is thought to have been part of a complex

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