

The Aegean Sea, the Basin of Global Olive Cultivation

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With few exceptions, the theory that the olive tree was domesticated in the Middle East is stereotypically repeated in the world bibliography. However, since the discovery of the pre-Minoan autochthonous olive tree in Naxos about 20 years ago, of the "*Throumpolia Aigaiou*" cultivar, it emerges beyond any doubt that the domesticated olive tree has been cultivated since ancient times in the Aegean and the surrounding coasts. On the Naxos tree, a deeper investigation of the place of origin and domestication of the olive tree was carried out, which led to the formulation of a new proposal-theory that the domesticated olive tree began to be cultivated in the Aegean area. The strongest evidence, if not proof, of this proposition is based on two elements:

1. That approximately 6,000 years ago there were no domesticated olives in the Middle East. And because there are no large olive trees in the Middle East like the Naxos olive tree in the Middle East, but rather olive kernels from archaeological excavations, the evidentiary research was based on the ancient Middle Eastern kernels.

2. That approximately 6,000 years ago there were domesticated olives in the Aegean, and they were cultivated. And because not many ancient olive kernels of the same age as the Middle Eastern kernels have been found in the Aegean, the evidentiary research was based on the age-dating of the Naxos tree.

For the study of olive pits from the Middle East and beyond, a new methodology was developed to distinguish olive pits into wild - semi-wild and domesticated, and for the dating of the pre-Minoan tree of Naxos, a new algorithm for dating olive trees was developed, which takes into account, in addition to the dimensions of the olive trees, climatic factors such as temperatures and rainfall in the areas where the trees are located.

The combination of these two methods, a) the distinction of pits and b) the dating of olive trees leads to the unshakable conclusion that the Aegean region is the place where domesticated olives were first cultivated and not the Middle East, a fact that fundamentally overturns the history of olive cultivation.

Keywords: Olive cultivation; *Throumpolia Aigaiou*; Aegean region; domesticated olive; olive kernel; dating of olive tree.