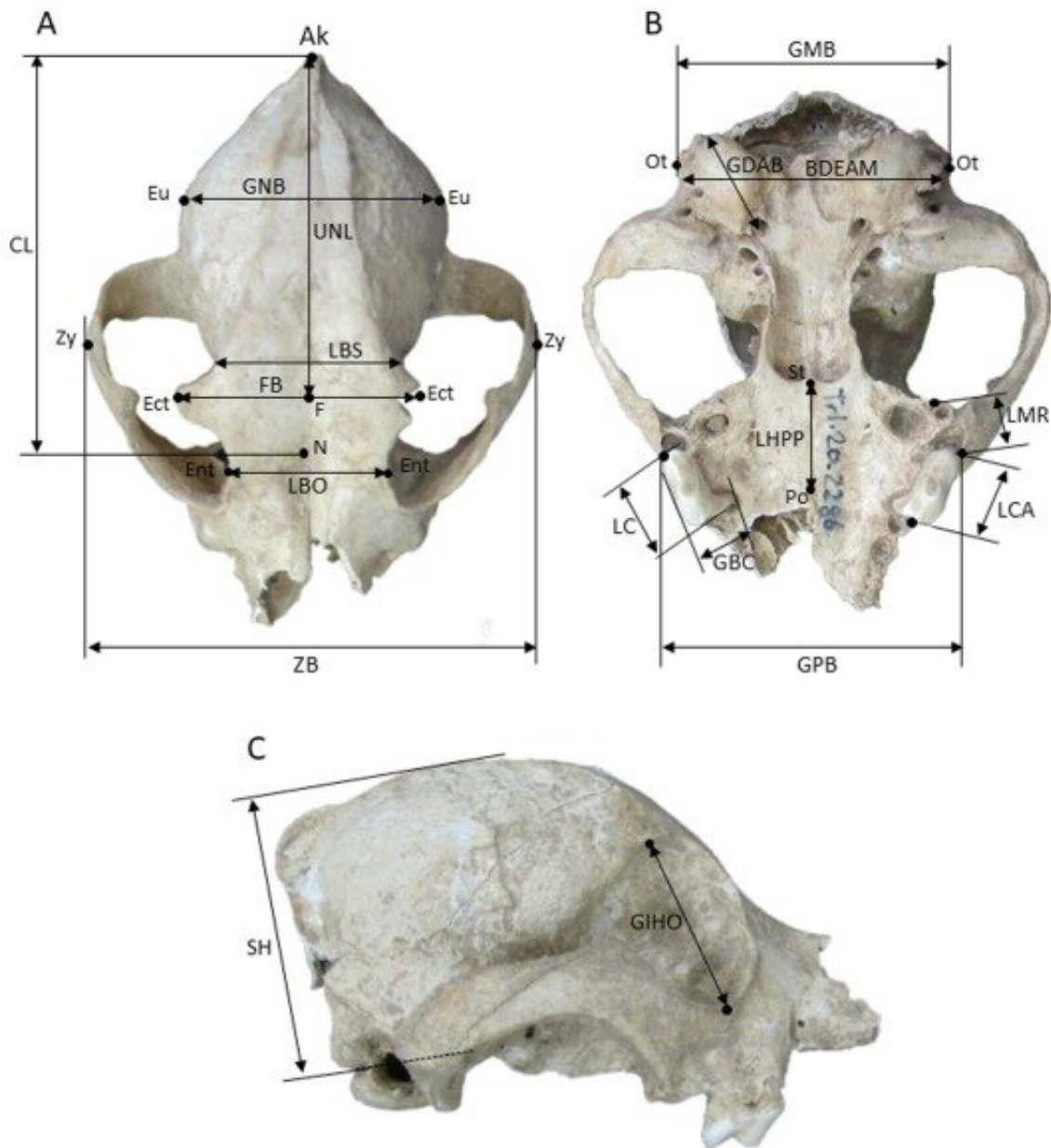


# Early Romans may have been the first to breed flat-faced dogs

April 14 2023, by Bob Yirka



Credit: *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* (2023). DOI: 10.1016/j.jasrep.2023.103969

A team of osteoarchaeologists, archaeologists and veterinarian scientists from Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Atatürk University, University of Environmental and Life Sciences, ul. Kozuchowska, has found evidence of early Romans breeding dogs with flat faces. In their study, reported in *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*, the group examined the remains of a dog found in a tomb in what was once a city called Tralleis, in what is now modern Turkey.

The dog remains were found at a [dig site](#) in Aydın back in 2007, but were considered too delicate for study at the time—they were put in safe storage instead. In 2021, the team on this new effort retrieved the bones and began a slow study of the bones to learn more about the dog.

Though the specimen was not complete, the research team was still able to determine that it was a dog and that it had been treated well. Many dog remains have been found from Roman times, and because most were used as work animals, most were not well treated. The team identified the dog as a brachycephalic breed, a group that includes flat-faced dogs such as boxers, pugs and chow chows. The find was unique; only one other brachycephalic breed had ever been found before from a place in the Roman Empire, and that was in the ruins of Pompeii. It also marks the oldest known find of a brachycephalic anywhere, suggesting the Romans may have been the first to [breed](#) flat-faced dogs.

The research team was also able to deduce the dog's general size and found it to be smaller than they had expected. Carbon dating revealed it to be from between 1,942 and 2,118 years ago. Also, study of its teeth showed that it had barely made it to adulthood before dying. The team

also compared the skull with several modern dog breeds and found it looked mostly like a French bulldog.

The researchers noted that the dog had been buried close to a human, who, they suggest, was likely its owner. This, they further suggest, indicates that the dog was likely killed and buried when its master died so that the two could be buried together.

**More information:** Vedat ONAR et al, Skull of a brachycephalic dog unearthed in the ancient city of Tralleis, Türkiye, *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jasrep.2023.103969](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2023.103969)

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