World's oldest glue used from prehistoric times till the days of the Gauls

November 13 2019

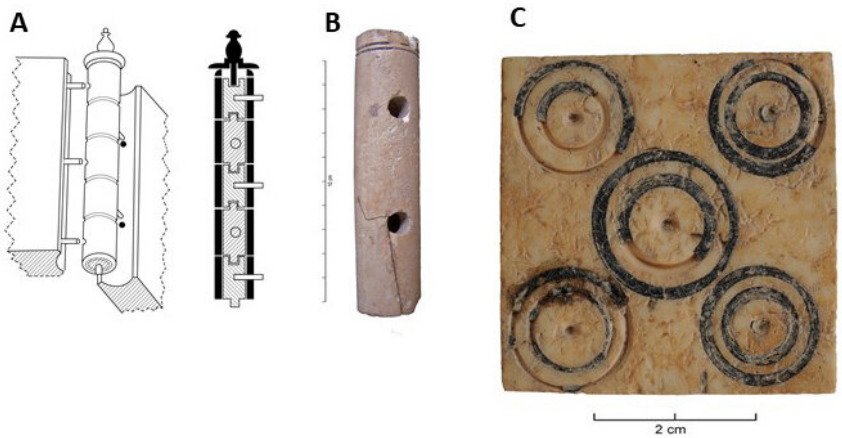

Figure 1. (A) Illustration of hinge (© S. Sorin, CNRS, CEPAM), based on Deschler-Erb 1998. (B) Hinge from Nice (Transfert Masséna; Alpes-Maritimes, sample MR6258). (C) Decorative plaque from Narbonne (sample MR6253). Credit: J.-D. Strich, CNRS, CEPAM, and I. Rodet-Belarbi, INRAP, CEPAM

Birch bark tar, the oldest glue in the world, was in use for at least 50,000 years, from the Palaeolithic Period up until the time of the Gauls. Made by heating birch bark, it served as an adhesive for hafting tools and decorating objects. Scientists mistakenly thought it had been abandoned in western Europe at the end of the Iron Age (800–25 BC) and replaced by conifer resins, around which a full-fledged industry developed during the Roman period.

But by studying artefacts that date back to the first six centuries AD through the lens of chemistry, archaeology, and textual analysis, researchers1 from the CNRS, Université Nice Sophia Antipolis / Université Côte d'Azur, and Inrap have discovered birch tar was being used right up to late antiquity, if not longer. The artefacts in question—found in a region where birch is scarce, thus raising the question of how it was procured—are testimony to the strength of tradition among the Gauls.

The scientists' findings are published in *Antiquity* (13 November 2019).

More information: Martine Regert et al. Birch-bark tar in the Roman world: the persistence of an ancient craft tradition?, *Antiquity* (2019). DOI: 10.15184/aqy.2019.167

Provided by CNRS

Citation: World's oldest glue used from prehistoric times till the days of the Gauls (2019, November 13) retrieved 4 May 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2019-11-world-oldest-prehistoric-days-gauls.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.