

## Germes implicated in fall of great ancient civilizations, bone analysis shows

Thousands of years ago, across the Eastern Mediterranean, multiple Bronze Age civilizations took a distinct turn for the worse at around the same time.

The [Old Kingdom of Egypt](#) and the [Akkadian Empire](#) both collapsed, and there was a [widespread societal crisis](#) across the Ancient Near East and the Aegean, manifesting as declining populations, destruction, reduced trade, and significant cultural changes.

As usual, fingers have been pointed at [climate change](#) and shifting allegiances. But [scientists have just found a new culprit in some old bones](#).

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In remains excavated from an ancient burial site on Crete, in a cave called Hagios Charalambos, a team led by archaeogeneticist Gunnar Neumann of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany found genetic evidence of bacteria responsible for two of history's most significant diseases – [typhoid fever](#) and [plague](#).

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"While it is unlikely that *Y. pestis* or *S. enterica* were the sole culprits responsible for the societal changes observed in the Mediterranean at the end of the 3rd millennium BCE," [the researchers wrote in their paper](#), "we propose that, given the [ancient] DNA evidence presented here, infectious diseases should be considered as an additional contributing factor; possibly in an interplay with climate and migration, which has been previously suggested."

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