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15 December 2010

## UCT PhD thesis on shellfish is first of its kind for SA

### Oxygen isotope analysis sheds light on *Homo sapiens* winter diet in Middle Stone Age

PhD graduate Mariagrazia Galimberti will receive her doctorate in Archaeology (Faculty of Science) on Thursday, 16 December 2010, at 15h00 for the first study of its kind, undertaken in South Africa and on South African material. The study involved the reconstruction of the marine palaeoenvironment during the Middle Stone Age (300 000 to 30 000 years ago) – particularly the period between 115 000 and 50 000 years ago in South Africa – through the use of oxygen isotope analyses on two species of shellfish, *Turbo sarmaticus* and *Donax serra*.

The shellfish were recovered at two archaeological sites, Pinnacle Point and Klasies River. "Reconstructing the marine temperature as it was during the occupation of both the sites, I discovered that there is at times a discrepancy between the global record and the marine record on this [south] coast of South Africa," said Ms Galimberti.

"I also studied the season of exploitation of shellfish, which showed that they were mostly exploited in winter, shedding some light on behavioural patterns of *Homo sapiens* in South Africa. My PhD included a pilot study on sclerochronology on both modern and archaeological specimens, which involved the counting of growth increments in shellfish carbonates to identify growth patterns in different time periods."

Her proud parents, Rosarita and Mauro, have arrived in Cape Town from Italy for her graduation. Ms Galimberti did her undergraduate degree in Italy, at the University of Venice, obtaining a BA (equivalent to BA [Hons] in South Africa) in the preservation of cultural heritage. She then went to Oxford for her Master's and obtained an MSc in archaeological science at the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and History of Art.

She pays tribute to her supervisor, Professor Judith Sealy, who, she said, “has been incredibly good, helpful and extremely patient with me. She’s a great supervisor.”

At present she is working for the South African Heritage Resources Agency, and she plans one day to publish her work for her PhD. “But I am leaving a door open to get back to academia and research in archaeological science, possibly with a postdoc.”

**Caption for attached photo: UCT PhD graduate Mariagrazia Galimberti will receive her doctorate in Archaeology (Faculty of Science) on Thursday, 16 December 2010 for the first study of its kind, undertaken in South Africa, on two species of local shellfish, *Turbo sarmaticus* and *Donax serra***

***ENDS***

***December 2010 graduation timetable***

<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Special guests, awards, honorary degrees, etc.</b>
Thurs, 16 Dec, 10h00	Humanities 1	
Thurs, 16 Dec, 15h00	Science 1	<b>Fellowships:</b> Prof Timothy Egan
Fri, 17 Dec, 10h00	EBE 1	
Fri, 17 Dec, 15h00	Commerce 1	
Sat, 18 Dec, 09h00	Humanities 2	
Sat, 18 Dec, 14h00	Commerce 2	
Sat, 18 Dec, 18h00	EBE 2	
Mon, 20 Dec, 10h00	Commerce 3	
Mon, 20 Dec, 15h00	Humanities 3	Anthony Sher <b>[honorary]</b> Janet Suzman <b>[honorary]</b>
Tues, 21 Dec, 10h00	Law	Navi Pillay <b>[honorary]</b> Linda Chalker <b>[honorary]</b>
	Science 2	<b>Social Responsiveness Award:</b> Dr Hanna-Andrea Rother of the Center for Occupational Health Research
	Health Sciences 2	
Tues, 21 Dec, 15h00	Humanities 4	

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