Prehistoric humans had a thirst for craft beer and were brewing such beverages at least 5,000 years earlier than thought, say scientists who have found evidence of alcohol production in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Archeologists from the Stanford University in the U.S. and University of Haifa in Israel analysed three stone mortars from a 13,000-year old Natufian burial cave site in Israel.

Their analysis confirmed that these mortars were used for brewing of wheat/barley, as well as for food storage.

The study, published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*, suggests that beer brewing practices existed in the Eastern Mediterranean over five millennia before the earliest known evidence, discovered in northern China.

“Alcohol making and food storage were among the major technological innovations that eventually led to the development of civilisations in the world, and archaeological science is a powerful means to help reveal their origins and decode their contents,” said Li Liu, from Stanford University.

The earliest archaeological evidence for cereal-based beer brewing even before the advent of agriculture comes from the Natufians, semi-sedentary, foraging people, living in the Eastern Mediterranean between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic periods, following the last Ice Age.

The Natufians at Raqefet Cave collected locally available plants, stored malted seeds, and made beer as a part of their rituals.