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Editorial

Catherine J. Frieman

General Editor
Australian National University
Email: *catherine.frieman@anu.edu.au*

I'm writing this editorial with some mixed emotions. As I announced at the EAA meeting in Rome in September, this will be my last year editing the *EJA*. I started as Deputy Editor at the Glasgow meeting in 2015, was made General Editor in Bern in 2019, and next September in Belgrade will be my last annual meeting in charge. EAA is currently advertising for a new General Editor, and I'm excited to see who gets appointed and what vision they have for the journal. I think I've done a pretty good job these last 10 years – certainly, I've built on the strong foundation left to me by my predecessor Robin Skeates (now over at *Antiquity*); and I'm particularly proud of the editorial team and editorial board I've built up around me. They'll mostly all be staying on, so whoever replaces me will have wonderful colleagues from the get-go. Another thing that makes me proud: this is also the first issue of the newly fully Open Access *EJA*. The EAA executive and the editorial team, along with our publishers Cambridge University Press, have been headed towards this for nearly my whole term as editor and I'm beyond pleased that we have achieved it.

This issue begins with Thompson and colleagues' analysis of a cache of curated cranial bones dated to the 6th millennium BC from the site of Masseria Candelaro, a Neolithic ditched village in southern Italy. They combine osteological and taphonomic analysis with radiocarbon dating and isotopic studies to develop a biography of the cache of crania in order to query the idea of 'ancestors'. They argue that the crania saw considerable handling, perhaps over as much as two hundred years, before being deposited together and decommissioned, becoming, in the authors' terminology "ex-ancestors". The careful scientific delineation of an extended process of post-mortuary activation of human remains, set within a considered theoretical framework, makes this a rich contribution to our knowledge of the complex and locally contingent funerary and post-funerary practices of the European Neolithic.

Continuing with the scientific analysis of human remains, Gaydarska and colleagues present the results of AMS radiocarbon dating, stable isotope analysis, and FRUITS dietary modelling of people buried in the fifth millennium BC Varna cemetery complex. Their data suggest that just under half of the individuals interred at Varna shared a diet, but that diet did not seem to correlate with the amount or type of grave goods interred alongside them. They propose that the different foodways visible in the funerary population might indicate that the Varna cemeteries were important ritual centres for people living across the wider region, rather than being the local burying place for people living in its immediate vicinity.

Shifting to Iberia, Lillios and colleagues turn our attention to the famous Late Neolithic and Copper Age engraved slate plaques. They develop a quantitative analysis of a database

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of nearly 2000 stone plaques to identify patterns in design elements of the plaques' motifs, and to put these into dialogue with features of the funerary monuments within which the plaques were deposited. Although the authors aim to evaluate the hypothesis that the plaques were genealogical records of specific deceased individuals or significant lineage groups, the data themselves are of great interest even if this particular model may not convince all readers.

Moving east, Crist and Abdullayev investigate the origins and spread of the game of fifty-eight holes. Variations of this tally game are found throughout western Asia and Egypt from around 2000 BC. Crist and Abdullayev identify several versions of the game boards pecked on stones, in rockshelters, and, in one case, incorporated into the stone platform of a kurgan on the Abşeron Peninsula in Azerbaijan. These, they argue, testify to the extensive mobility of people and ideas between Anatolia, Mesopotamia and the Caucasus, as well as a possible Mesopotamian origin for the game. Archaeogaming typically refers to archaeological work on and with digital games, but this sort of analog archaeogaming also offers us new and important insights into people, society, and their long-distance interactions in the past.

Meyer and Riede bring us to the Medieval and Early Modern Atlantic to compare children's material culture in Greenland, between Norse settler and Inuit communities. They find Inuit children had access to greater numbers and varieties of toys, with growing numbers and diversity of play objects from AD 1200 to 1800. The authors interpret these results through an evolutionary lens, and suggest that the differences might indicate the cultivation in childhood of a greater level of neural plasticity and innovativeness within Inuit communities than the Norse settlers developed, hence why the latter were less able to adapt to the challenges of the Little Ice Age. Mathilde Vestergaard Meyer won the EAA student award in 2023 for an earlier version of this essay, and we are proud to publish it here.

In the final research article in this issue, Pope and Davies analyse the post-WWII life and work of the eminent archaeologist Peggy Piggott (later Guido). Through a chronological overview of her major excavations, methodological contributions, collaborations, and public-facing work, they present incontrovertible evidence that Guido should be ranked among the most important and impactful of twentieth-century British archaeologists. Of considerable importance, they set Guido's biography in the context of changing gender politics in British archaeology during the twentieth century and explore how these continue to shape our understanding of the field's development.

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