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# Editorial

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Welcome to the fourth issue of the *European Journal of Archaeology* (*EJA*) for 2017. This comprises five standard articles, as well as our regular selection of book reviews.

Guillaume Robin draws upon ethnographic accounts of three traditional, small-scale societies in South-East Asia which display buffalo and mithun heads and horns on their houses and tombs to reinterpret the carved and painted bucrania found in Late Neolithic and Copper Age tombs in Sardinia. He suggests that these important motifs, rather than representing a bull-like divinity, were mobilized in ritual and social strategies as agents of display, commemoration, competition, magical propitiation, and protection. This offers a significant interpretative advance on old-fashioned approaches to the art of prehistoric Sardinia.

Nick Card and colleagues provide two complementary chronological models for the development of the special Late Neolithic site at Ness of Brodgar in the Orkney Islands off the north-east coast of Scotland, where ongoing excavations have revealed a complex sequence of monumental buildings within a massive walled enclosure. Based on the Bayesian modelling of 46 radiocarbon determinations, they propose that ceremonial houses were in use here by the 30$^{th}$ century cal BC, with the majority of the buildings being decommissioned after just a few centuries. The exception was the largest structure (10) which continued to be used for another three centuries until, somewhere between the mid-25$^{th}$ and 23$^{rd}$ centuries cal BC, the spectacular feasting remains of some 400 cattle were deposited around it, perhaps reflecting the radically changing world marked elsewhere by the appearance of Beaker pottery. The inevitable consequence of this painstaking chronological work is the need now to re-date other Late Neolithic sites in the Orkney archipelago.

Andy Valdez-Tullett presents a new model for the Bronze to Iron Age transition in Wiltshire in southern England. He argues that, with the demise of a Middle/Late Bronze Age system of social reproduction dominated by the long-distance exchange of valued bronzes, domestic animals instead became key drivers of social reproduction, and that investment in them was accompanied by changes in production, social interaction, and mobility, including an increase in transhumant pastoralism (and even the origins of hillforts). This is an interesting attempt to see the Bronze Age/Iron Age transition as something more than a technological change. However, in future work, it would be useful to compare the regionally specific trajectory of southern Britain to other areas of Europe.

Audronė Bliujienė and colleagues provide a new synthesis of horse remains found in the late second to seventh century AD human burials in Lithuania and south-west Latvia, and of associated mortuary practices and human-horse relations. A variety of patterns in the

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data are identified, including a common association between the deposition of whole or butchered horses and the graves of what are thought to be elite male warriors (accompanied by the most valuable grave goods, including weapons)—a pattern that also connects the largest stallions to the highest status individuals. Leaving aside the (plausible yet questionable) assumptions underpinning the ascription of gender and status to the buried individuals, the establishment of a robust, absolute chronology for this study is commendable.

Wim De Clercq and colleagues geologically source a group of distinctive cobbles found in the later medieval port landscape of Bruges to the coasts of the Baltic Sea and north-east England and interpret them as ballast jettisoned by Hanseatic merchants from large seagoing vessels at new trading outports such as Hoeke. They also hypothesize that Flemish sand was used as return ballast. In this way, their pioneering study successfully highlights the significance of ballast as an informative category of archaeological analysis.

In our reviews section, we begin with discussions of two philosophically-informed books: the first applying 'mereology' (the study of the relations between parts and wholes) to 'aggregates' of archaeological remains, the second exploring the 'scaffolding' used to hold archaeological arguments together. There follows a somewhat critical review of a new handbook of archaeological ceramic analysis. Next come two books that contribute to ongoing studies of human mobility and interaction. Mixed opinions are expressed on newly published research on the prehistoric archaeology of the Tyne-Forth region, Corded Ware coastal communities in the Netherlands, Balkan Bronze Age chronology, and death and burial in Iron Age Britain. We then end with a helpful overview of a volume celebrating the career of Ingvild Øye, a leading figure in medieval studies in Bergen and Norway.

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