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Editorial

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As I'm about to see many of you in Rome at this year's annual meeting, I'm particularly chuffed to notice a distinctly Mediterranean aspect to the articles included in this issue of the *European Journal of Archaeology*. Since becoming general editor in 2019, I have prioritized broadening the scope of the *EJA*'s publishing remit, working with CUP, the EAA executive, and the editorial team to welcome in and nurture authors working on topics *EJA* didn't historically publish with frequency. I am so pleased to see that strategy succeeding, and I hope this expansive view of European archaeology better reflects EAA's broad and diverse membership. This issue includes six research articles and four book reviews, bringing us from prehistory to the discipline's recent history.

This issue starts with Beck and colleagues' close examination of the occupation and use of ditched enclosures in late third to second millennium Iberia. They focus on the reasonably small site of Los Melgarejos, where five concentric ditches and three rings of palisades enclosed about twenty dwellings and hundreds of underground structures, many used for funerary rites. Beck and colleagues study the mortuary practices and human remains from Los Melgarejos and find little to distinguish these from similar practices and deposits at much larger and more extensive enclosures. People interred at both smaller and larger sites had similar diets and lifeways, and regular encounters between the living and dead were common. Beck and colleagues encourage us to consider that the scale of these sites, even the very large ones, may have been incidental to their function.

Meyer brings us to Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Cyprus, where he re-evaluates the evidence for political and social continuity in later prehistory. He surveys a range of archaeological and textual data from the second to the first millennia BC, and contrasts how these have been interpreted by a range of Cypriot scholars. He argues that ideologically inflected arguments about continuity or discontinuity from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age make it harder to look at the complexities of the Cypriot archaeological record and understand the smaller-scale social and political processes that shaped these longer-term trends.

Returning to mainland Europe, Donev looks into the phenomenon of so-called 'princely burials' in the Balkans during the mid first millennium BC, and asks how we should interpret these in light of changing understandings of social structure and hierarchy. In this region, a 'princely burial' consists of a single interment with relatively wealthier grave goods, including luxury objects and exogenous materials; but they form a clear spectrum with less wealthy and more common funerary sites and are not always easily distinguished from these. Donev argues that these funerary rites emerged from a tension between more individualizing and more communal social values, and relatively

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richer burials may reflect not an established elite, but the removal of wealth from circulation that would otherwise unbalance a more equitable living society.

Moving west, Scopacasa explores the evidence for urbanism in pre-Roman Samnium, during the late first millennium BC. Historically, archaeologists and historians have believed the Romans introduced urbanism into this region from 50 BC. Scopacasa synthesizes decades of excavation data from the fortified Samnite site Monte Vairano to suggest instead that this site, and likely others too, had a complex socio-economic profile but slightly different socio-political organization from other early urban sites in the ancient Mediterranean. In particular, he notes the much flatter social hierarchy, with luxuries and other exotica accessible to outlying and more rural households. This manuscript makes a great argument that top-down models of social organization can just as easily obfuscate unexpected data as explain historical trajectories.

Shifting into the Roman period, Martínez Jiménez and colleagues apply experimental techniques to the manufacture of *opus signinum*, a water-resistant lime mortar mix used within major water infrastructure, such as aqueducts. They worked alongside master builders and closely followed classical recipes for mortars—including the use of genuine Roman ceramics building material sourced from the excavation of a Roman kiln. Their analysis focussed especially on water usage within the Roman construction industry, a topic rarely addressed in classical texts. Ultimately, they draw our attention to both the circulation of expertise and technical knowledge implied by even the humblest building material, as well as the many uses of water in the Roman city.

Moving north, Willmott and colleagues present the remarkable Scremby Cup, a late Roman vessel likely made in the second or third century AD and found in an early medieval grave dated to the sixth century. They combine careful scientific analysis of the cup itself, detailed observations from the excavation of the funerary context, and a wider discussion of the reuse of Roman-period objects to build an understanding of its shifting value and function. Willmott and colleagues argue that the cup was likely scavenged from a nearby Roman burial, and that its early medieval use as a container to hold pig fat may indicate its use in medical contexts.

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