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Editorial

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Welcome to the second issue of the *European Journal of Archaeology* (*EJA*) for 2018. Here, we present five new articles (ranging from ancient DNA studies to chronological issues to material culture studies), followed by nine book reviews. Below, we summarize and comment on these contributions.

Martin Furholt reviews the impact of recent human aDNA studies on our understanding of third millennium BC Europe. He points out that new genetic data are often interpreted in a manner that recalls aspects of traditional culture-historical archaeology, including questionable claims of large and homogeneous archaeological culture groups (e.g. Bell Beakers, Corded Ware and Yamnaya) and 'massive migrations'. Furholt, instead, calls for more subtle interpretations, informed by social theories of human mobility and migration. Comments on his article are provided by aDNA specialists Wolfgang Haak and Eva Fernández-Domínguez and by European prehistorians Daniela Hofmann and Marc Vander Linden. Haak's response highlights his primarily biologically- and statistically-informed perspective on gene flow and genetic ancestry, whereas the three other commentators generally welcome Furholt's critique. Some of the lessons to be learnt from this exercise are: that the study of aDNA continues to be a fast-moving field; that we must all acknowledge the limitations of archaeogenetic data; and that constructive dialogue between archaeological theorists and geneticists, which brings together the social as well as the biological dimensions of population history, dramatically enhances our capacity to formulate and test more sophisticated hypotheses.

Gonzalo Aranda Jiménez and colleagues present the results of their radiocarbon dating and Bayesian modelling programme, designed to shed light on the origins and development of the megalithic cemetery of El Barranquete in south-eastern Spain. Their dataset comprises 45 dated samples, the majority of human bone, from four tombs. These data suggest that the cemetery was used over an unexpectedly long period of time, between the late fourth millennium cal BC and the last centuries of the second millennium cal BC. They propose that megalithic mortuary practices continued, first, from the Copper Age into the Early Bronze Age (arguably as part of a social strategy involving adherence to, by then, very old mortuary practices and resistance to social differentiation), and then, after a short hiatus around 1500 cal BC coinciding with the disappearance of the Argaric culture, on into the Late Bronze Age. The data also reveal that each tomb had a complex and distinctive biography. It will be interesting to see how these results compare to those emerging from the megalithic site of Valencina de la Concepción and other Iberian funerary complexes.

In a comparable study, 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. Here, ongoing excavations have revealed a complex sequence of monumental buildings within a massive walled

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enclosure. Based on the Bayesian modelling of 46 radiocarbon determinations, they propose that ceremonial houses were in use here by the 30th 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-25th and 23rd 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.

Following in the footsteps of a previous *EJA* paper which critically reviewed the palynological evidence for the earliest agriculture in Finland (Lahtinen & Rowley-Conwy, 2013), Mindaugas Grikpėdis and Giedre Motuzaite Matuzeviciute challenge the evidential basis for the established view that crop cultivation in Lithuania began during the Neolithic. Instead, they argue that a directly dated grain of barley from the Bronze Age settlement of Kvietiniai currently comprises the earliest reliable evidence of a domesticated plant species being present in the eastern Baltic. Although this debate is far from over, it does have interesting implications for the endurance of fishing, hunting and gathering in this ecologically rich region, and their eventual disruption by the climatic and environmental changes of the Sub-Boreal.

Sam Cleymans and Peter Talloen's artefact study sheds new light on the chronology, use and value of eleven cross-shaped pendants found in a Middle Byzantine (eleventh to thirteenth centuries AD) church graveyard in the city of Sagalassos in south-western Turkey. These small metal artefacts were found especially with young children, and are plausibly interpreted by the authors within this particular Christian context as apotropaic amulets, intended to protect their wearers against evil during life and death. It would now be interesting to position such insights within the wider political, religious and visual context of the second florescence of the Byzantine Empire.

In our reviews section, we begin with praise for what appears to be a fascinating book on the life and work of the renowned Russian archaeologist, Leo S. Klejn. There follow eloquent endorsements of new books dealing with three of the staples of archaeological research: food, zooarchaeology, and material culture. A wide-ranging book on socio-economic inequalities is also applauded, whereas an edited volume dedicated to Tim Ingold's 25-year-old concept of 'taskscapes' receives a more critical response. The following three reviews then comment on more regionally and chronologically-specific, but still important, topics of European significance covering: the Middle Palaeolithic of the north-western European plain, mortuary practice at the famous Mesolithic/Early Neolithic site of Lepinski Vir, and Roman tower structures in the Portuguese region of Alentejo.

If you are interested in submitting an article on any aspect of European archaeology, or have recently published a book that you would like us to review, do please get in touch with a member of our editorial team or visit us on https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-archaeology

Reference

Lahtinen, M. and Rowley-Conwy, P. 2013. Early Farming in Finland: Was There Cultivation before the Iron Age (500 BC)? *European Journal of Archaeology*, 16(4): 660–84. <https://doi.org/10.1179/1461957113Y.000000000040>

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