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Editorial

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Welcome to the first issue of the *European Journal of Archaeology* for 2021. I wish you all a happy new year and hope that 2021 brings us more happiness and fewer surprises than 2020 gifted us. Hopefully, this issue will provide a good start to the year! I would like to take this opportunity to welcome two new members of the editorial board: Gonca Dardeniz Arikan and Paul Johnson. Every journal operates somewhat differently; for the *EJA*, the editorial board plays an active and important role in reviewing submitted manuscripts and maintaining the quality of the journal. I quite literally could not produce this journal at the quality EAA members expect and deserve without the hard work and good spirits of the editorial board.

The six articles included in this issue are diverse in period, region and approach, ranging from statistical modelling of radiocarbon dates from Iberian megaliths to Late Antique villas to early medieval ornamentation in Scandinavia and the Baltic. This issue also includes reviews of six books, comprising big data approaches to the archaeological record and more fine-grained edited volumes that address major areas of interest, from agriculture to the archaeology of conflict.

The first paper in this issue is another piece of beautifully complex archaeological science from Iberia—a genre *EJA* has been lucky to showcase in recent years. In this instance, Aranda Jiménez and colleagues present the results of a radiocarbon dating program undertaken in *tholos*-type tombs in southeast Spain. The new chronologies of tomb use they are able to develop showcase the variety and heterogeneity of practice at these sites and allow the authors to argue that *tholoi* pre-dated adjacent settlements, rather than being contemporary with them. They emphasize the increasing complexity of a long-lived megalithic tradition during the Neolithic and argue that this cosmological diversity is a defining feature of the period.

Over the last two decades, the emergence of metalworking and the earliest European dispersal of metal objects have garnered considerable attention. Of particular interest has been that the Scandinavian archaeological record demonstrates an early uptake of metal objects in the mid fourth millennium BC, but no obvious trace of local metallurgy. Gebauer and colleagues offer intriguing evidence that some small-scale smelting may in fact have been carried out in Denmark during this period. They present a suite of analyses on a handful of small fragments of pottery from a Funnel Beaker layer sealed beneath a late fourth millennium long barrow. The results, they argue, suggest that the analyzed pieces represent fragments of a crucible and possible tuyère. This is exciting evidence of technological practice, but also a nice example of research that makes use of extant museum collections.

It is no secret that much of the material prehistoric archaeologists interpret is fragmented, but distinguishing between taphonomic and intentional breakage, not to mention

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interpreting the latter, is quite a challenge. In his contribution, Matthew Knight offers one approach to the breakage of Bronze Age metalwork, based on his extensive study of British materials. Knight proposes a damage ranking system to assess the intentionality of breakage and damage on Bronze Age metal objects and demonstrates its application on two broken bronze objects, a spearhead and a flat axe. This paper is an admirable attempt to generalize data gleaned from experimental research and make it useable for the wider archaeological community. Ultimately, of course, we will only be able to judge the utility of this system if other archaeologists are able to fruitfully apply it as Knight has.

Moving forwards in time, James Dodd explores the re-use of abandoned villa landscapes for funerary practices and the persistence of Roman sites into later periods. He suggests that these so-called transitional burials, small-scale funerary practices dating to the third to fifth centuries AD, rather than being *ad hoc* and haphazard, represent a widespread though brief phenomenon. He links this to earlier traditions, such as termination rituals conducted which buildings or sites were decommissioned, and suggests that the practice of reusing villa structures and landscapes was a considered choice by people living in a landscape under transformation.

Glørstad and Røstad take us on a deep dive into Viking disc-on-bow brooches, elaborate feminine ornaments that, while largely produced from the sixth to eighth centuries AD, remained in circulation well into the tenth century. They present a new typology and chronology of these beautiful ornaments, but also delve into their significance and explore the ways they operated as circulating heirlooms. In particular, they suggest that the brooches represented an idealized feminine social role strongly concerned with the curation of the past in the present. They link this to the control of power and competition between groups and social classes in the Norse world.

Finally, Gardeła and Kajkowski shift our attention to western Poland to study the material culture of the early medieval Western Slavic elites. They examine a range of decorated objects—from swords and personal ornaments to horse gear and amulet boxes—and argue that the zoomorphic motifs on this assemblage represent more than just indications of high status. Instead, they suggest that the motifs were part of a complex cosmological system that also served as material markers of identity and group cohesion among Piast elites. The mythology they elaborate is seductive, and it will be interesting to see if further research supports their hypotheses.

Our reviews section this issue is characteristically diverse, if somewhat shorter than usual due to the stress Covid has placed on many of our colleagues. In a long essay, Kerr develops a highly relevant review of two new edited volumes on heritage practice, linking the contributing authors' concerns to the current political and public health contexts. Vander Linden is somewhat sceptical about a new edited volume on early Neolithic farming, though he recognizes the strengths of its approach; and Buster is rather more positive concerning a a collection on conflict archaeology. Two important monographs—one on the chronology of megalith construction in Europe and the other concerning the very basis of archaeological hypothesis building and research—come in for considered and thought-provoking discussion.

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

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The Reviews team is also actively looking to increase the pool of potential book reviewers. If you would like to be considered to review for *EJA*, please e-mail Marta and Maria at ejareviews@e-a-a.org and ejaassistreviews@e-a-a.org with a brief list of your topics of interest and a short CV attached. Advanced postgraduate students as well as those who have completed their PhD are able to review for *EJA*. Proposals to review specific books are considered, provided that they are relevant to the *EJA*'s mission.

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