
E DITORIAL

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The *European Journal of Archaeology* starts off the new millennium as it means to continue – with a suite of highly innovative papers emphasizing diversity rather than particular shared themes. If there is a single overarching theme, it is the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to what may begin life as a specifically *archaeological* problem. Three of the articles touch on curiously neglected aspects of our subject – food and drink, childbirth, and light and shade. The remaining two articles focus on landscape and settlement and the relationship between archaeology and archaeological science. The issue is rounded off with an expanded Reviews Section, introduced by a reviews editorial written by Peter Biehl and Alexander Gramsch.

To begin at the beginning is to start with birth – self-evidently an event of great social importance. Although women are slowly becoming more visible in accounts of the past, with even children making appearances, the event linking them most closely has hitherto been ignored. Elisabeth Beausang makes a start in correcting this imbalance, which archaeology shares with anthropology and philosophy. Using anthropology and medical studies, Beausang takes a gender-inclusive approach, accepting the potential roles of men in the birthing event and in parenting, a term preferred to mothering. She discusses whether or not skeletons with so-called parturition scars can be assumed to have been mothers and outlines a praxis-based definition of mothering. Echoing the anthropological question, ‘where have all the menstrual huts gone?’, Beausang seeks to identify birthing places, birthing practices, birth-related objects and places for post-parturition cleansing. Her discussion of the assemblage from the Kissonerga Chalcolithic pit emphasizes the actual use of the objects in birthing events rather than just their symbolic associations with fertility. This article opens up a new field of enquiry which will doubtless broaden interpretative possibilities for any archaeologist open to a gendered reading of the past.

It is a standard joke to propose experimental archaeology as a solution to research problems connected to eating and drinking – some may say a way of life – but it is rare to find an archaeologist who does just that. Jacqui Wood’s contribution combines experimental work with information from ethnography, folklore, Classical and historical sources to discover ways of interpreting archaeological remains. While the rancid smell of a tub of Irish bog butter may not titillate the palette, the descriptions of the cooking of joints of pork and beef and the preparation of a 5-kg king carp are guaranteed to stimulate the taste buds of all non-vegetarian/vegan readers. Wood’s experimental programmes at her home base in Cornwall, as well as at Biskupin (Poland) and Lago di Ledro (Italy), reveal new approaches to the interpretation of material culture, whether stone-lined pits, piles of fire-cracked stones (cooking or birth-related?), pot-boilers, the uses of alluvial clay, the salting of fish, the brewing of beer or the

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storage of dairy products. Wood makes the beginnings of a case for regional tastes in food and drink in different parts of Europe – a notion which, it may be thought, conditions of preservation render hard to follow through. But Wood's point is that it is not only on wetland sites that remains of cooking are preserved, provided that excavators are open to the culinary possibilities of the evidence.

At the time of the year of publication of this issue, thoughts of long dark nights and a shortage of sun and light may be prominent in the minds of those in the Northern Hemisphere. Yet Northern winters have their particular meteorological and astronomical interests, as demonstrated in the article by Emília Pásztor and her colleagues, who use this evidence and data from the Norse sagas to illuminate the significance of a Viking road in east central Sweden. There has been a re-discovery of the importance of cosmologies for the layout and orientation of many prehistoric and early historic monuments, a recent trend replacing the earlier and over-hasty liaison between archaeologists and astronomers. In this article, Pásztor and her colleagues integrate a phenomenological approach to landscape with reconstructions of the changing conditions of light and shadow on the Viking road of Rösaring, demonstrating how the road alignment exploits the effects of the summer moon, the winter sun and Milky Way and even winter rainbows. The extrapolation of the road alignment to the Norse shrine to Freyr, the god of bright light, at Old Uppsala, on the distant side of Lake Mälaren, is an imaginative interpretation linking the site to its wider cosmological and landscape context.

Not so far from Lake Mälaren, but a good deal earlier, is the study region of Agneta Åkerlund, who examines the ways in which different interrelated communities of foragers on the mainland and the archipelago of east central Sweden construct their own cultural worlds using landscape features and cultural resources appropriate to the task. An outstanding aspect of this article is the reconstruction of the changing coastlines of the archipelago using recent shore displacement models based upon dated changes in diatom types in marine sediments. The author resists the temptation to construct an essentializing, structuralist explanation, although binary oppositions abound – land/sea, wild/domestic, quartz/flint, male zone/female zone, and so on. Instead, both fishermen and farmers draw upon the varied materials of the landscape in different but often overlapping ways to produce a coherent lifestyle which defeats traditional concepts such as culture. A point of detail is the way in which piles of white quartz form landscape markers reminiscent of Middle Holocene practices recently identified on the Isle of Man by Tim Darvill. In general, two key notions underpin the construction of contrasting cultural identities: the stronger resistance of fishermen to cultural innovations and the gendered division of lifeways (females on shore, males at sea).

The fifth article challenges the scientific community to relate better to the theoretical and social concerns of other archaeologists and to accept that scientific results are most useful when integrated into culturally meaningful interpretations. Bernard Knapp summarizes the 1990s debate over the contribution of lead isotope analysis (LIA) to the understanding of the Mediterranean Bronze Age metals trade. The advantage of LIA is the unequivocal exclusion of certain ore bodies as a source of lead; the problems concern overlapping signals from different ore bodies, unknown ore sources and the likelihood of pooling and/or recycling of metals. Knapp emphasizes the strong archaeological evidence for the recycling of metals, attributable to the intensification of economic activity throughout the Bronze Age and the increasing commodification of metals. The value of LIA is correspondingly reduced to the extent that recycling is demonstrable. Instead, we may focus on the Late Bronze Age as a period defined not only by shared artifacts but also by a shared material resource. This notion is related to Tim Taylor's recent work on the re-melting of metals as a wholly new means of reproducing objects – a major alternative to the fragmentation and re-use of fired clay.