

New Frontiers in Archaeology

Proceedings of the Cambridge Annual Student Archaeology Conference 2019

Edited by

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New Frontiers in Archaeology

Kyra Kaercher¹ and Monique Arntz²

Introduction

This volume is the result of the Cambridge Annual Student Archaeology Conference (CASA) 2019, held at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research from September 13–15, 2019. CASA developed out of the Annual Student Archaeology Conference, first held in 2013, which was formed by students at Cambridge, Oxford, Durham and York. In 2017, Cambridge became the home of the conference and the name was changed accordingly. The conference was developed to give students (from undergraduate to PhD candidates) in archaeology and related fields the chance to present their research to a broad audience. The conference is organised by the committee (located in Cambridge) choosing various session topics (submitted by students from around the world) that fit within a broad theme. Each session then accepted up to six papers.

The Theme for the 2019 CASA Conference

In formulating the theme for the 2019 conference, the committee discussed various large topics, which made us realise to what extent our discipline is affected by large-scale, global issues. A few of us work in Western Asia and are unable to return to sites since the Arab Spring in 2010 and subsequent civil wars (i.e. Syria and Yemen) as well as the advent of ISIS (Casana 2013; Cunliffe 2012; Harmanşah 2015; Kopanias *et al.* 2015; Marchant 2011). With governments cutting funding for grants and projects of an archaeological nature, financing large excavations is becoming harder, and so is increasing student participation in these excavations (Boytner 2012; Killick and Goldberg 2009; Schlanger *et al.* 2010). Lastly, the election of right-wing politicians and subsequent policy-making around the world has had various effects on archaeology; i.e. Brexit (Gardner and Harrison 2017; Spanjer 2017), United States/Mexico border wall and North Dakota pipeline (Braun 2018; Diaz 2019; Lakhani 2019) and politicisation of heritage (al-Houdalieh and Tawafsha 2017; Niklasson and Hølleland 2018).

This has meant that archaeologists have had to adapt and one can see this reflected in the several ways, including the increased use of ‘legacy data’ and a shift to, previously, understudied regions. To bring these diverse issues together we decided on the topic of ‘New Frontiers in Archaeology’. We imagined this conference to include topics such as new geographical areas of research, using museum collections and legacy data, new ways to teach archaeology and new scientific or theoretic paradigms. We were pleasantly surprised at the diversity of the sessions and papers that were presented (see below). From hunting and gathering in the Neolithic to the return of artefacts to Turkey, the papers showed a great variety in both geography and chronology. Discussions revolved around access to data, the role of excavation in today’s archaeology, the role of local communities in archaeological interpretation and how we can ask new questions of old data.

Sessions and Papers

Our keynote speaker, Professor Joanita Vroom from the University of Leiden, the Netherlands brought all these diverse issues together. Her talk, ‘Most Exciting Times: What Happened in the Eastern Mediterranean After Antiquity’, discussed issues such as ceramic analysis, ancient foodways, experimental archaeology, using data from museum collections and asking new questions of legacy

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data. Using interdisciplinary methods, she was able to show not only ceramic change, but also the change in foodways during the Byzantine and early Islamic periods. Lastly, she discussed the use of museum collections and experimental archaeology in teaching students about archaeology at Leiden.

We held seven sessions, including 38 papers with participants from a variety of countries including Armenia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Denmark, England, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United States. This volume presents 18 papers arranged in the six sessions with the two posters in their thematic sessions.

‘Strength in Numbers: Combining Old Datasets to Explore New Questions’, led by Lucy Timbrell (University of Cambridge), had four papers, all of which are published in this volume. This session set out to explore using legacy data to answer new questions. The use of open-access data is a way for students to answer broad, often interdisciplinary questions without having to go to the field to collect the data themselves. This can also lead to re-analysis of large datasets, often updated with new results. The papers in this section focus on hunting in the Neolithic and the role of wild mammals (Rainsford-Betts), the use of reflexive diaries at Çatalhöyük (Sandoval), re-analysis of multiple internment burials (Palmer) and challenges to mortuary archaeology in the Southern Levant (Mura). These papers bring to light the amount and scope of data that has been collected in the past, the biases that must be overcome to use that data and the larger questions that can be answered by combining this data into workable formats.

‘Past and Future-Lifestyle and Inequality’, led by Sabrina Ki (Durham University) and Helena Muñoz-Mojado (Leiden University), hosted four papers, two of which are published in this volume, as well as one poster presentation which is also published here. This session questioned the focus of archaeology on ‘elite’ and ‘male’ perspectives (i.e. monumental buildings, funerary chambers, acropolises) instead of focusing on local people, rural areas, female narratives and/or overlooked forms of material culture. This focus gives us a limited insight into the past, and the session organisers thus argue for adding new approaches to get a broader understanding of past lifeways. The papers range from the role of cognition in mobiliary art in the Magdalenian (Hardman), to hazelnut gathering practices in Mesolithic Sweden (Solfeldt), to spindle whorls and textile activity in 6th century BCE Spain (Rosell Garrido). All these papers aim to refocus attention on little studied, but very important, aspects of past lifeways, from gender relations to cognitive processes. In this way, each of these studies provides a more well-rounded understanding of the past.

‘Animal Human interactions in the Past: Becoming, Making Relating’, was led by Izzy Wisher (Durham University) and Kevin Kay (University of Cambridge). It included five papers, four of which are published in this volume, and one poster presentation which is also published here. The goal of this session was to refocus theoretical approaches to animal-human interactions; shifting focus away from humans and instead focusing on animals and material culture in order to better understand the negotiation of animal-ness and human-ness. This section’s papers range from hunting strategies in the Middle Palaeolithic (Priestley), the role of dogs during the Viking Age (Cousen), horses in ancient Thrace (Nikoloa), La Tène animal depictions in England and Wales (Ellis) and the origins of dragons in Medieval Christian depictions (Delia). All these papers show how animals have played an active role in the past, and how they need to be studied as active agents in shaping past lifeways.

‘Public Archaeology in the Light of Global Politics: New Challenges and Opportunities’, led by Nancy Maria Antoineta Braga Bomentre (Independent Scholar), Caitlin Jacobson (University of Aberdeen) and Maria Uvarova (University of Cambridge) had five papers, two of which are published in this volume. This session focused on new paradigms and methodologies used to communicate archaeology to the public, working with indigenous communities, issues of globalisation and post-colonialism, and lastly,

looking at issues of repatriation and the antiquities market. These were all brought together as issues archaeologists face currently. The two papers published are about the repatriation of the Gypsy Girl Mosaic of Zeugma from the United States to Turkey (Dağlier) and surfing in Hawai'i as not only part of a cultural identity, but as a way of undermining Western colonialism (Tonge). Both of these papers discuss the importance of considering local traditions and knowledge to better interpret past lifeways.

'New Frontiers in the Archaeology of Buildings', led by Xosé L. Hermoso-Buxan (University College London) had six papers, three of which are published here. This session focused on the myriad ways in which buildings can inform on past lifeways, from the spaces they occupy, to the materials used in their construction and the way people used buildings. There is a bilateral relationship between how people create the built environment, and how those environments influence aspects of our culture. The papers focus on new interpretations of desert kites (Shakhmuradyan), so called special rural settlements in Germany (Zabolotnii) and the conservation and restoration of fort towers in La Rioja (Martínez-Espinosa). All these papers demonstrate the importance of the study of buildings not only as material culture, but as a way to analyse human behaviour in the past.

Finally, 'New Frontiers in Archaeological Sciences: Trowel-Blazing at its Cutting Edge', led by Ruairidh Macleod (University of Cambridge/University of Copenhagen), had five papers, none of which are published in this volume. Included here is a comprehensive overview of the topic by Macleod. This session focused on new techniques being used to ask a variety of questions about the past. With Ruairidh's specialisation in biosciences, many of the papers dealt with biomolecular studies of the past. Ruairidh sums up the present status of scientific analysis in archaeology and where he sees the field going in the future in his introduction to the session (this volume). From the biomolecular records of bees in the beeswax of manuscripts to reconstructing smells of oases to analysing dog coprolites this session touched on many aspects of scientific research being used in archaeology today. These papers all demonstrated the broad spectrum of scientific research today and the possibilities it offers to archaeology in the future.

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