

Preface

In this volume of *British Archaeological Reports* (BAR), we offer a selection of case studies on the interface between linguistics and archaeology. These case studies were presented at the session ‘Archaeology and Language – the Future of Archaeo-Linguistic Studies’ at the XV Nordic Theoretical Archaeology Group (Nordic TAG) hosted by the Departments of Archaeology and Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Copenhagen in April 2015.

The concept leading to this session was conceived following a rather serendipitous cooperation between the two session organisers that had begun at Copenhagen University several years earlier (Iversen & Kroonen, 2015, 2017). Although being active in different fields, archaeology and linguistics, we found that the chronological and geographic scope of our independent research projects showed a considerable overlap, notably in the isolation and interpretation of the evidence for contact between hypothesized cultural and linguistic groups in Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Denmark (see Iversen and Kroonen 2015, 2017). It was the ensuing dialogue between our disciplines that inspired us to organize this meeting.

The main goal of the session was to present new and ongoing studies that combine aspects of archaeology and linguistics, theoretical perspectives on the field of archaeolinguistics and to encourage more new, worthwhile studies on archaeology and language. The questions we raised in this session focussed on the future of archaeolinguistic research, namely: What can we learn from each other? And what kind of research questions are particularly suitable for future integrated studies?

We, as the organisers of the session, were very happy with the great interest it attracted. It was the largest session at that year’s Nordic TAG with contributions covering large parts of the world and spanning many different time periods and topics (see below). In particular, we would like to thank the linguists and archaeologists who contributed to this volume, but we also like to thank the rest of the participants who presented their papers, as well as all of those who attended our session and participated in the discussions.

The session resulted in a number of contributions, which we have ordered according to geographic location. We set off in the Americas, following the metallurgical links between South America and West Mexico as studied by Kate Bellamy. We remain here to enjoy John S. Henderson and Kathryn M. Hudson’s study of the archaeolinguistics of Mesoamerica, then move on to North America with Anna Berge’s re-examination of the linguistic pre-history of the Aleut languages. Somewhere along the heavily urbanized Atlantic coast of the United States, we take off with Jeff Benjamin’s archaeology of air, landing in Europe to engage in an archaeolinguistic survey of the Helsinki archipelago. From here Johanna Nichols guides us to the east, tracing the spread of the Uralic languages along the ancient Fur Road. Finally, we turn back to Europe with Birgit Olsen’s inroads into the Indo-European terminology for wool and textiles in Italic. Here, we conclude our journey with Debora Moretti’s archaeolinguistic study of the North-Italian folklore concerning witchcraft.

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Rune Iversen (University of Copenhagen)
Guus Kroonen (Universities of Leiden and Copenhagen)

References

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