

# Introduction to Innovative Approaches to Archaeology

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The major purpose of this volume is not that of supporting any specific archaeological scholarship or sub-discipline (e.g., prehistoric, Aegean). Nor it emphasises one strand of archaeological thinking over another. For us, the importance was not merely that of portraying innovative approaches ascribed to one or more of the various strands of thinking in archaeology (e.g., cognitive, post-processual, postcolonial). As we highlight below, with its diversity in contributions this volume strives to present the increasing significance that our discipline plays in continually challenging theories, methods, and frameworks within and beyond archaeology. This volume is an attempt to avoid considering archaeology “a series of divergent and self-referencing regional schools with cumulatively self-reinforcing, archaeological education systems and with regionally esteemed bodies of archaeological theory” (Clarke 1973, 7). The papers that follow this introduction challenge the self-referencing and self-reinforcing boundaries produced in decades of studies in our discipline. They provide a cross-historical and geographical approach to discussions on archaeology disentangled by specific historical or geographical clusters. Therefore, the volume emphasises the potential that archaeology has of understanding its peculiar dataset and produce innovative approaches: modes of thinking with and about the variety of material things and ecofacts (i.e., animal bones, seeds) from the (near) past.

In line with the above, the aim of the GAO 2020 conference for the scholars involved was twofold. First, questioning the fictional barriers between *archaeologies*. Second, showing how archaeology is innovative, porous, and capable of developing fully fledged approaches to answering new and old research questions. Essentially, the conference aimed to transform archaeologists from “observant participator(s)” to active agents that analyse the material world without imposing physical or conceptual “b/orders” (Hicks and Mallet 2019, 85). With such commitment to de-localise the territories of our discipline, the three-days conference resulted in a great variety of contributions, not all of which made it into this volume. The papers focus on re-examining artefacts, interpreting past practices through experimental archaeology, bridging past and present of places and museum collections, and exploring new paradigms in maritime archaeology. Some of these concentrated more

on developing new ways of thinking human and non-human relationships, playing with the archaeological scales of analysis and landscapes, and challenging established views on issues of cognition seemingly outside the scopes of archaeology. This wide variety of approaches presented at the conference encouraged the preparation of these proceedings.

## Volume Organisation

This volume contains the proceedings of the GAO 2020 arranged into three thematic sessions that emerged as the most significant during the conference and in the following debates. These sections are devoted to specific methodological and theoretical approaches instead of emphasising sub-disciplines, archaeological periods, or geographical areas. Albeit several papers would have fit in different sections, it was decided to reflect the core themes sought for the conference.

The first section is titled *Investigating Materiality and Material Interactions*. The first five articles engage with less anthropocentric perspectives on material culture. Three of these contributions develop on Material Engagement Theory (MET; Malafouris 2013, 2019) and Process archaeology (Gosden and Malafouris 2015). Paul March and Frédéric Vallée-Tourangeau’s paper present an experimental study that explores the multi-sensorial capacities that a jōmon flame-style pot exerts on contemporary people when following with the eyes its complex morphology. The article by Catherine O’Brien challenges the meaning of ‘wellbeing’ via the observation of students’ bodily interactions with museum objects. Ivy Notterpek entwines the concept of *material perspectivism* with MET and semiotic theory, thereby addressing the very meaning of notions of agency, personhood, and materiality in the European Upper Palaeolithic. Molly Masterson explores plant-human relationships to understand how plants influence and were influenced by humans over time. Justine Diemke closes this section by presenting a novel perspective on the Greek lynothorax; one that brings visual and literary sources together in the experimental (re) making of this armour type.

The two articles in the second section, *The Archaeologies of Colonial Encounters*, contribute with different

approaches to studying the cultural dynamics that shape the worldwide phenomenon of colonialism (Gosden 2004; Dietler 2010; Stein 2005; Van Dommelen 2012). The study of morphological and technological characteristics of making traditions in the past is central in shedding light on debates about cultural interaction and exchange, as Sara Barbazán Domínguez and Hugo Lozano Hermida show with their study of early Roman Imperial pottery productions in Galicia (Spain). The second paper of this section, by Günce Pelin Öçgüden, suggests an innovative analytical methodology to interpret the how and why behind the presence of a group of 18<sup>th</sup> century ship graffiti found in the women's section of the İzmir mosque (Turkey).

The third section on *Ancient Landscapes and Matters of Scaling* brings together two sessions, which partially overlapped during online discussions: new approaches to study landscapes and analyses on multiple geographical scales of human-nonhuman interaction. Thus, the articles included here consider the relationship between geographical space, chronological time, and the implications of interactions among things and people in different environments. The article by Jonathan Lim and Gonzalo Linares Matás illustrates how landscape, natural resources, cultural beliefs are all important factors that can inform the study of past and present communities. With an investigation on the relationship between landscape and funerary areas during the Iron Age (9th – 5th century BC), Elena Scarsella brings us to Abruzzo (Italy) to shed light on the temporal and spatial dynamics that brought to the emergence of a Central-Italian *koinè*. Stefano Ruzza's innovative contribution engages with both the agency of the physical environment and settlement patterns, thereby offering a new narrative of the geopolitical changes occurred in the late 12th century BC in Bronze Age Laconia (Greece). Ioannis Nakas examines the relationship between ancient Mediterranean harbours with ship traffic by adopting a novel methodology that brings together an ethnography of marine practices centred with the direct observation of contemporary ships and harbours. In exploring the Greeks' ideas of unknown lands populated by half-men and half-dog creatures, kings, and saints, the last contribution of this volume by Giuseppe Delia shows that not all landscape studies need contemporary mathematical maps.

## References

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