

PREFACE

This special volume of *Archaeologia Baltica* includes papers from a session organised for the annual meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists which took place in Oslo in September 2011. The theme of the session was ‘Life at the Frontier: The Ecological Signatures of Human Colonisation in the North’, and whilst a number of papers aimed to showcase the initial results and background of the Ecology of Crusading project (funded by the European Research Council, European Union Seventh Framework Programme [FP7/2007-2013] under grant agreement No. 263735; see www.ecologofcrusading.com), the aim of the session was to include a broader perspective on the environmental traces of human activity in frontier regions in the northern hemisphere.

The five papers included here which relate to this theme focus on the Baltic Sea region during the Medieval period. The region consisted of a series of zones which can be interpreted as shifting linguistic, religious and ethnic frontiers, and all were affected by different waves of colonisation in both the early and later Medieval periods. Each wave of colonisation resulted in a discernible impact on local natural resources and the landscape, which can be seen as cultural and ecological adaptation to the frontier environment. The papers include both regional surveys and site-specific case studies, starting with Brown and Pluskowski’s palynological review of vegetation change associated with colonisation in the 13th century eastern Baltic. Rannamäe and Valk’s case study of faunal exploitation in early and later Medieval Viljandi in Estonia, Makowiecki and Makowiecka’s comparative study of animal exploitation in two central places on the Slavic/Prussian frontier, a survey of butchery techniques associated with different meat processing at selected sites in the eastern Baltic by Seetah, Pluskowski, Makowiecki and Daugnora, and finally Lagerås’ survey of the palynological evidence for Medieval colonisation and abandonment in the south Swedish uplands.

Whilst these papers provide initial results or present pilot studies, they demonstrate that colonisation was not only associated with changing patterns of environmental exploitation – of adaptation – but also reflected stasis, with little or no discernible changes from the activities of the indigenous population. The reasons for this have yet to be explored in detail, but certain forms of enculturation as a means of adaptation to new surroundings may have played a strong role, even as new cultural forms of political and religious organisation were introduced by the incomers. This aspect of colonisation in the northern hemisphere – interactions between indigenous societies and incomers – has been investigated, particularly interactions between Saami and Norse communities in both the Viking Age and the later Medieval period, as well as the levels of segregation and multi-culturalism associated with the incoming German and Scandinavian groups confronting the indigenous Finno-Ugric and Baltic populations. However, responses to local environments at this time of cultural upheaval clearly represent an important, even fundamental, aspect that has yet to be explored in detail.

Volume 20 of *Archaeologia Baltica* is supplemented by two closely interrelated chapters, the first of which, Neolithic in Eastern Europe, includes review materials and study-related articles. One of them is ‘Neolithic Ukraine: A Review of Theoretical and Chronological Interpretations’ by Giedrė Motuzaitė Matuzevičiūtė, which reviews the latest research data on the process of Neolithisation in Ukraine. The article ‘Tubular Amber Beads from the Neolithic Settlement at Zvidze in the Lake Lubāns Wetlands’ by Ilze Biruta Loze, the famous amber researcher deals with the typology of amber beads discovered in the Zvidze settlement.

The chapter Prehistoric Material Studies in Laboratories at Klaipėda University is devoted to publishing the outcomes of research carried out in the Archaeological Material Research Laboratory at Klaipėda University.

In recent years, experimental-traceological studies of quadrangular bladelets discovered in the Katra I settlement of the Late Palaeolithic-Early Neolithic Age have been carried out at the laboratory. The article 'Rectangular Bladelets Discovered at the Katra I Settlement (in the Varėna District of Lithuania): A Functional Analysis' by Gvidas Slah presents experimental and traceological data on the use of wetland plants – reeds – in the daily life of Mesolithic-Early Neolithic communities: reeds were used for roofing, manufacturing household items, and footwear. As is witnessed by experimental research carried out in wetlands, a large part of the discovered embedded bladelets were used for reed cutting. The experiments and the traceological studies carried out in the laboratory explain the existence of tools with embedded blades in the Middle Neolithic-Late Neolithic periods, and their difference to the embedded bladelets intended for cutting grain from the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age periods.

The article by Marijus Grigaliūnas 'The first Paleolithic and Mesolithic Settlements in Aukštumala, Šilutė District, the Nemunas River Delta' deals with the only sites so far known from the Late Glacial and Early Holocene periods in the area of the lower reaches of Nemunas.

Article by G. Slah, 'Manufacturing Techniques of Flint Artefacts from Aukštumala Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Settlements and Traceological Studies of them', present the latest research from Aukštumala Palaeolithic and Mesolithic site, and the flint artefacts discovered there. The articles discuss the latest archaeological site surveys, the typology and chronology of the flint artefacts discovered there, technical details of tool manufacturing, and the traceology of flint artefacts.

Another contribution, by L. Daugnora, Salomėja Sovaitė, A. Vasks, and A. Girininkas, 'Zoo-Archaeological Material from the Padure (Beltes) Hill-Fort in Latvia: Butchering Techniques and the Composition of Species', based on data from the Bio-Archaeological Laboratory at Klaipėda University, discusses the zooarchaeological materials discovered in the Late Bronze and Late Iron Age cultural layers of the Padure (Beltes) hill-fort in Latvia, and presents exhaustive statistical and animal species studies, as well as the animal butchering techniques of these periods.

The Book Review chapter offers a discussion on Stone Age dating problems reflected in two recent publications by Lithuanian archaeologists. These are A. Butrimas' monograph *Donkalnis ir Spigino mezolito-neolito kapinynai. Seniausieji laidojimo paminklai Lietuvoje* (Donkalnis and Spiginas Mesolithic-Neolithic Cemeteries: The Oldest Burial Monuments in Lithuania), Vilnius, 2012, and an important article 'New ¹⁴C

dates of Neolithic and Early Metal Period Ceramics in Lithuania' in *Radiocarbon*, 2011, t. 53/4, pp.629-643, by G. Piličiauskas, M. Lavento, M. Oinonen and G. Grižas. This volume of *Archaeologia Baltica* also presents a review of the monograph by E. Jovaiša *Aisčiai. Kilmė* (The Aestians: The Origin) published at the end of 2012.

Archaeologia Baltica marks its 20th anniversary with this volume. From 1995 to 2002, the journal was published by the Lithuanian Institute of History. Since 2006, *Archaeologia Baltica* has been published by the Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology at Klaipėda University. The Anniversary issue presents list of articles published in volumes from 1 to 20 of the journal.

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