

Experimental Archaeology in Europe /Special Issue 1

A special anthology volume bringing 'the best of' from the 9 volumes of the European Association for the Advancement of Archaeology by Experiment's yearbook.

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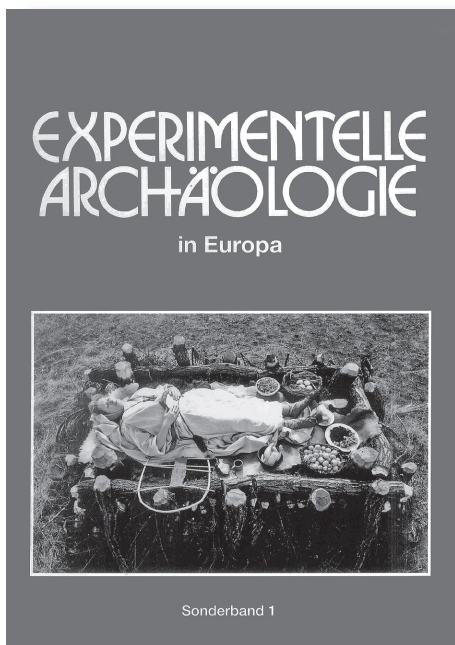
With this volume, the European Association for the Advancement of Archaeology by Experiment presents a first résumé of its history.

Founded in Germany as a small workgroup for the establishment of a travelling exhibition about Experimental Archaeology in 1990, the Association has since developed into a far-reaching network of international significance.

In terms of communication, the Association's publications played an important role from the beginning, regarding the European perspective and their concern to reach a broad audience from university student to interested layman.

The Association's yearbooks were published on a regular basis from 1990 to 2002 in nine omnibus volumes. Their declared aim was to provide an insight into the numerous developments, projects and discussions that were taking place in Experimental Archaeology at a time when this method had begun to strike firm roots in the scientific approach to prehistory. Contributors were recruited from different European countries and thus the loosely fitted relations joined into the establishment of a well organised society which holds annual meetings and plays a key role in international cooperation.

The present special volume clearly mirrors this spirit in its 350 pages. It offers a wide-ranging selection of articles from the Association's previous publications covering different areas and approaches to Experimental Archaeology embedded in a time frame from the Palaeolithic to the Middle Ages. The contribu-



tions include the subjects of building, agriculture, handicraft, weapons, clothing industry and burial customs. Since the heartland of the association is Germany, the articles are written in German but according to the introduction, an English translation is intended. At the start, reconstruction as one of the oldest and most established methods of Experimental archaeology is represented by Helmut Luley's innovative attempt of re-building and analysing a Neolithic house from the Rössener Culture in the German open air museum of Oerlinghausen. A contribution by well regarded ship-expert Detlev Ellmers reports the results of experiments undertaken on the basis of ship

finds and serves as an overview of German ship-archaeology and its possibilities.

Jánis Appals article relates to the reconstruction of an early medieval fortified lake settlement of Arais in Latvia, showing exemplarily the difficulties of setting up and maintaining an open air site on the foundations of archaeological data. Klaus Löcker and Johann Reschreiter introduce an attempt of reconstructing a Neolithic well from a "linear-bandkeramische" settlement in Germany.

A couple of articles deal with comprehending prehistoric handicraft and manufacturing.

The scale ranges from the reconstruction and testing of early Palaeolithic spear-throwers, through experiments in prehistoric archery, the fabrication and adornment of Terra Sigillata and early medieval antler combs to a simulation of a roman cremation ceremony. The wide-spread custom of the Bustum Graves from the Early Roman Period served as a role model for an elaborate sequence of experiments. Arne Lucke's pit firing and long term experiments with a reconstructed prehistoric kiln give clues concerning the shape of the kiln, the procedure of firing and its highest possible temperature.

Plarre's article on attempting to create a stock of an historical pig breed in the Museumsdorf Düppel near Berlin/Germany and Meurers-Balke's/Lüning's report about approaches towards early agriculture un-

dertaken by employees and students of the Department of Prehistory of the University of Cologne from 1978-1986 contribute to an understanding of rural economy in the Neolithic and the Middle Ages. The rare opportunity to gain an insight into the prehistoric use of organic material is reflected by two articles on the fabrication of "Ötzi's" grass-fibre shoes and a reconstruction of bast-strings and -ropes from the Iron Age salt-mines at Hallstatt/Austria.

A few contributions report the setting and results of chemical analysis as a relatively young method of Experimental Archaeology, namely the contributions by Andreas Kurzweil and Dieter Todtenhaupt about chemical techniques in the Middle Ages. Two authors from the Museum of Moesgaard in Denmark tell of their experience with prehistoric iron-smelting. The article by Zimmermann, Wagner and Kunnert deals with the potential influence on the micro-structure of bronze objects deriving from the material of the applied casting mould. Barbara Armbrusters shows the possibilities of ethnological comparison by regarding West-African metal-workshops as an example for establishing functional analogies for European prehistory.

A very important topic is responded to by a couple of contributions to the subject of theory and controversy. In spite of being in the public eye for a very long time, the issue of Experimental archaeology still rouses many questions and ambiguities among experts.

The need to set up clear standards and terminology for archaeological experiments

is reflected by Richter's long article – deriving from his master thesis – about the aims, methods and possible results of Experimental Archaeology. While Dirk Vorlauf reports the course of history and achievements of the association itself, Martin Schmidt criticises the frequently observable tendency to confuse Experimental Archaeology with educational purposes and thus depriving the procedure of its original purpose instead of working on adequate approaches towards public integration and involvement.

As a main criterion for selecting articles in the present anthology, the publishers chose outstanding scientific

relevance, accessibility and a broadly based spectrum of time and content.

Thus the many different contributions serve as examples of the numerous approaches and capabilities of Experimental Archaeology beyond single case studies and offer a wider context. A grouping into several topics as undertaken in this review might, however, have added to the clarity of the concept.

To sum up, the Association has achieved a critical dialogue with Experimental archaeology by not only offering a wide cross section of its competence and possibilities, but also by critical regard to its terms of operation and responsibilities.

European Association for the advancement of archaeology by experiment e.V. (ed.):

Experimentelle Archäologie in Europa, Sonderband 1.

Ausgewählte Beiträge zur Experimentellen Archäologie in Europa von 1990-2003. Isensee-Verlag 2006.

www.exar.org

Summary

Experimentelle Archäologie in Europa, Sonderband 1

Die Europäische Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Experimentellen Archäologie (EXAR) hat eine spezielle Aufsatz-Anthologie aus ihren zwischen 1990 bis 2002 herausgegebenen Büchern zusammengestellt. Als Hauptkriterien für die Auswahl der Artikel wählten die Herausgeber

die besondere wissenschaftliche Relevanz, die Erreichbarkeit sowie ein breit angelegtes Spektrum in Blick auf Zeit und Inhalt, so dass die verschiedenen Beiträge als Beispiele für verschiedene Forschungsansätze und Möglichkeiten der experimentellen Archäologie stehen können.

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EXAR, association européenne pour le progrès en archéologie par l'intermédiaire de l'expérimentation, a publié un choix d'articles qu'elle a effectué dans ses annuaires publiés entre 1990 et 2002. Les articles ont été considérés en fonction de leur apport scientifique, complexité, sujet et période traités afin de proposer un large spectre d'exemples de différentes approches et possibilités auxquelles l'archéologie expérimentale se prête.