

Introduction

Five years into the making, including a pandemic that completely changed our lives in many, many ways, we are glad to finally publish the Proceedings of the XIVth ASWA Working Group International meeting.

Between the 3rd and 7th of June, the Autonomous University of Barcelona was the main venue for the XIVth ASWA[AA] working group meeting. We want to acknowledge the support of the Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya, Agència Catalana de Patrimoni, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and GRAMPO research group, who contributed to the organisation of the meeting.

We had the pleasure of listening to two outstanding introductory lectures. Professor Joris Peters delighted us with the findings at Göbekli tepe with his talk “Outstanding and enigmatic: perspectives on the early Neolithic site of Göbekli tepe (SE Turkey)”. The next day, we enjoyed Professor Louis Chaix’s talk on the archaeozoological research at Kerma with his talk “Cattle, sheep, goats and dogs: companions for the Death (Kerma Sudan, 2500–2000 BC).”

A wide range of archaeozoology research topics was presented in 63 oral communications and 13 poster

presentations, covering an ample chronological range from the Natufian to Medieval times, providing a good picture of current archaeozoological research in Southwest Asia and Adjacent Regions. Delegates representing 26 countries from Asia (Armenia, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Japan), Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom), America (Canada, United States) and Australia attended the conference. Undergraduate and graduate, master and PhD students, and young and consolidated researchers reaching up to 170 names from more than 80 different universities, research groups, and institutions showcased the most recent advances in archaeozoology in Southwest Asia (SWA). Then and there, most communications focused on the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, while the most discussed topics were all-time classics of animal domestication and the development of husbandry practices. At the same time, a wide range of analytical techniques and methodologies, including stable isotopes, aDNA, dental microwear, geometric morphometrics, bone microstructure and biomechanics, were integrated with archaeozoological and ethnoarchaeozoological works to address questions such as the economic value of



Figure 0.1. Last ASWA members standing on Friday, 6th of June, in front of the meeting venue.

animals, food history, paleoclimate reconstructions or the distinction of similar species. The image below, albeit with a few missing faces, showcases the broad participation to the meeting in Barcelona and offers testimony to the constant growth of the ASWA Working Group.

Now, fourteen papers have been contributed to this volume, providing a broad chronological coverage, starting from the Neolithic until the Late Roman and Medieval periods, with the greatest number of contributions dwelling around the Bronze Age. This might be a result of the current (meaning when this volume started forming) state of research and the topics integrated into the different chronological frameworks. In this sense, works on sites of older chronologies largely depended, and still do to a certain degree, on old excavation sites. This means that most of these works focused on specialised analyses (e.g. isotopes, aDNA, morphometrics, biomechanics, etc.), which, for better or for worse, tend to target “Impact factor” journals, are absent from this volume. While there might be other underlying factors, including research presented that had already been published, as a result of a pure stratigraphic disposition, until new Neolithic and Paleolithic levels are found and excavated or old excavations are revisited, we might find ourselves with a lack of base studies on these older chronologies.

Archaeozoological studies are at the core of the contributions that form this volume. We believe this is also one of the strengths of the ASWA volumes, which provide a space to publish relevant groundwork that so often doesn't seem to have a spot on the ‘impact’ publications. Notwithstanding, it is also important to recognise that since the very beginning, archaeozoology researchers of Southwest Asian sites have done an excellent job of keeping the archaeozoological studies relevant and up to date. And that is something to congratulate and be proud of, only wishing for it to be even better in the future.

The selected contributions in this volume are mostly the text version of the outstanding presentations we could see in Barcelona. But it includes some other new contributions you can also look forward to.

Considering the content of the different contributions, primarily rooted in the anatomical and taxonomical identification of archaeozoological remains but very varied in the region studied, chronology and materials, we decided to present them in chronological order.

The volume starts with the Neolithic of Marawah Island, showcasing the evidence of an economy focused on the exploitation and consumption of marine resources, including seashells, fish, marine turtles, and marine mammals such as dugongs and dolphins, at site MR11. This is not only some of the earliest dated evidence of marine resource exploitation in the Arabian Gulf, as stated by the authors Kevin Lidour, Mark Jonathan Beech and Noura Hamed Al Hameli, but also a reminder of the importance of marine resources in many past societies.

Selena Vitezović's paper on the Kostolac-Coţofeni Eneolithic bone industry follows. The author presents an interesting selection of small bone industry assemblages from the sites of Bujanj-Novo Selo, Klokočevac-Kulmja Škjobuluj and Hisar, providing some insights into raw materials, manufacture, typology and use.

With Arati Deshpande-Mukherjee, Arpita Biswas and Ravindra S. Bisht's contribution, we jump to the “adjacent area” of Northwest India. The site of Dholavira provides a fantastic assemblage to depict the manufacturing processes and use of the very characteristic shell ladles of the Harappan culture.

Back to South-West Asia, Scott Rufolo brings us to the Early Bronze Age of the Middle Khabur with this first in-depth study of the faunal remains of Tell 'Atij, evaluating the economic role of the site and its connection with urbanism development during the Early Bronze Age in northern Mesopotamia.

Still in the Bronze Age but now in the Anatolian Peninsula, Giovanni Siracusano's work on Arslantepe tells us of the changing husbandry practices during the settling processes and stability and instability events that characterise the Early Bronze Age of Arslantepe.

Not so far off in the Anatolian Peninsula, Laurel A. Poolman and Kathryn R. Morgan introduce us to a woolly affair in the Middle Bronze Age levels of Zincirli Höyük. The analysis of the faunal remains suggests that the economy of the site capitalised on the exploitation of wool, linking the site to interregional trade networks while also making use of the available wild resources in the area.

The work contributed by Delphine Decruyenaere and colleagues brings us to the crossroads between Mesopotamia, southern Caucasus, eastern Anatolia and the Iranian Plateau, speaking about the changing animal economies between the Early and Late Bronze Age at the site of Aliabad, dominated by caprines and cattle, and the exploitation of milk, wool and labour-force, and the exploitation of a minor, but very interesting, component of wild animal resources.

Moving now to the Southern Levant, Jeremy A. Beller and Haskel J. Greenfield bring together a syncretic analysis of the butchering marks throughout the occupation of Tel Yarmuth, providing new insights into carcass processing procedures and food processing and distribution in an Early Bronze Age urban settlement.

Liora Kolska Horwitz and her colleagues have assembled an ample analysis of animal food provisioning in four New Kingdom sites along the military and administrative Egyptian route known as “The Ways of Horus”. The study proposes a very useful and interesting food provisioning model based on data from Roman military and administrative sites, as well as new insight into

the complementary nature of the economic strategies developed at these meat-provisioned sites.

On his turn, Marco Masseti debates horse domestication and selection around the artistic representations of horses in Bronze Age Egypt.

Laura Strolin, Michele Degli Esposti and Enrica Tagliamonte introduce us to the Iron Age on the southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. This work provides an in-depth study of the economic and symbolic value of gazelle remains at Salūt, including the fortress and surrounding settlement, and a review of different pieces of evidence of gazelle hunting methods that also provides a new understanding of gazelle rock-art depictions.

Back to the Anatolian Peninsula, Pam J. Crabtree and colleagues provide a first look into the faunal remains of a recently excavated Iron Age deposit from Niğde-Kınık Höyük, labelled by its singular characteristics as the disposal of a cult offering deposit.

The archaeozoological study of the mammal and bird remains recovered in the glaciis of the Hellenistic Jerusalem presented by Abra Spiciarich and Lidar Sapir-Hen brings forward the potentialities of through archaeozoological studies to understand processes beyond the animal composition of the assemblage. In this sense, their study provides information on subsistence strategies, food provisioning, and the construction techniques implemented.

Closing the volume, Katie Tardio's contribution with Sarah Adcock and Benjamin Arbuckle depicts the changes in animal exploitation strategies and species relevance between the Late Roman and Byzantine occupations of Çadır Höyük.

In conclusion, the publication of the Proceedings of the XIVth ASWA Working Group International meeting marks a long-awaited milestone. We once more extend our gratitude to all the participants and individuals and institutions involved in organizing this event, whose support was invaluable.

The meeting in Barcelona showcased the diversity and depth of archaeozoological research in Southwest Asia and Adjacent Regions, with contributions spanning a wide range of topics and methodologies. It was heartening to see such a vibrant exchange of ideas among delegates representing 26 countries from around the world, including scholars at various stages of their academic careers.

As we reflect on the achievements of this meeting and the contributions presented in this volume, it is evident that archaeozoology continues to play a crucial role in shaping our understanding of human-animal interactions throughout history. We commend the researchers whose tireless efforts have contributed to the advancement of this

field, and we look forward to further collaborations and discoveries in the future.

In closing, we hope that the Proceedings of the XIVth ASWA Working Group International meeting will serve as a valuable resource for scholars and enthusiasts alike, inspiring future generations to explore the rich tapestry of human-animal interactions in Southwest Asia and beyond.

The Organising committee,

Roger Alcàntara, Maria Saña, Carlos Tornero

