

Preface

Over the last few decades, zooarchaeology has seen a veritable explosion in interest and an exponential increase in the volume of academic production within the field. Yet, alongside these advances, less reassuring patterns have emerged. While the discipline has theoretically become more accessible, new barriers have emerged. On one hand, a push for democratisation within archaeology and zooarchaeology has been facilitated by modern communication technologies, the relative freedom of movement and the spirit of international cooperation that is ingrained in organisations such as the International Council for ArchaeoZoology (ICAZ), enabling the development of a global community beyond the boundaries of the rich western countries that traditionally held the monopoly on the forefront of archaeological research. On the other hand, the global higher education sector is undergoing a profound change, precipitated by shifting political priorities, austerity-driven policies, and the devaluation of disciplines perceived as lacking immediate economic utility. Although we refrain from commenting on any particular event, we believe that these constraints on academic practice pose a significant threat to the integrity and sustainability of academia and the values of the PZAF network.

Additionally, zooarchaeology has been increasingly leaning on the application of expensive analytical techniques (e.g. stable isotope analysis, palaeoproteomics, aDNA). While the increased availability and refinement of these methods represent excellent progress, allowing us to answer important questions in ways that were unthinkable a few decades ago, we must consider a few important critical aspects. The high economic costs and asymmetric distribution of training opportunities and lab facilities often represent an insurmountable wall for researchers coming from less affluent countries or socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, this has led to a generalised devaluation of traditional approaches to zooarchaeology, which alone are not sufficient to win research funding any more, even if at the service of interesting research questions that do not necessarily warrant the use of cutting-edge analytical techniques. Furthermore, this new source of inequality intersects with the increasingly restricted and competitive academic jobs market and the already unbearable burden put on scholars to obtain competitive grants and quantify their research impact.

In this context, students and early career researchers face increasingly hard challenges to their career development and scientific activities. This volume serves as a celebration of these authors by showcasing the brilliant research they have been able to conduct, often with little resources and substantial personal sacrifice. It includes case studies presented at the meetings of the *Postgraduate ZooArchaeology Forum* (PZAF) held in 2018 (Palermo, Italy) and 2023 (Zagreb, Croatia) and serves as the publication for their proceedings.

PZAF has grown steadily and now enjoys international recognition, with delegates originating from all over Europe and beyond. For many students and early-career researchers, it represents their first experience of interaction, exchange of information and mutual learning with their counterparts from different countries. PZAF provides the opportunity for students to be exposed to different research traditions and approaches and fosters academic networking among the wider community of upcoming zooarchaeologists. In October 2017 PZAF became an ICAZ (International Council for ArchaeoZoology) Affiliated Group, further benefiting from the support of the international zooarchaeology community.

The 7th PZAF meeting was held in Palermo, Italy (27–29 June, 2018). The event took place at the Palazzo Ajutamicristo, a historic venue in Palermo. The conference hosted over 60 participants and 4 guest speakers from 17 countries across Europe and beyond, with 35 oral and 17 poster presentations. The organisers of the conference Veronica Aniceti, Matteo Bormetti, and Mauro Rizzetto, were all studying at the University of Sheffield (UK) at the time and after participating at PZAF 2017 in Toruń (Poland) they decided to take the opportunity to bring PZAF “home” to promote its international spirit among Italian students.

The 10th PZAF meeting was held at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Croatia (24–26 May, 2023). It was organised by Antonela Barbir, Maja Grgurić Srzentić, Magdalena Kolenc, Kim Korpes, Ana Škreblin, Goran Tomac and Lia Vidas, who were all postgraduate students working at different scientific and/or higher education institutions in Croatia at the time and were led by the same goal of introducing the zooarchaeological discipline to wider archaeological community in the country. The meeting featured 34 participants from 15 countries, who presented their research through oral presentations, posters and keynote talks.

Zooarchaeology is a relatively young discipline in Italy (it has fully matured there only in the last 30 years) and has developed even more recently in Croatia. Accordingly, the number of zooarchaeologists in these countries has only recently started to grow, with few and unevenly distributed research groups across both countries. Therefore, hosting the conferences was a unique opportunity to promote the discipline to colleagues and especially younger students, many of whom had never had the chance to hear about different research questions, methods and scientific developments in this field, as well as possible interpretations that can be obtained through it. Additionally, the conference in Zagreb benefitted from the improvement of the global medical safety conditions after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented many similar events from happening live, and it was again possible to organise an in-person meeting, perhaps one of the first

ones in several years in this field. Being able to socialise inside and outside the conference hall symbolised a much-anticipated return to what conferences provide: a medium for scientists of all ages to promote their work, but also to build their network of professional relationships and friendships for the future.

While the successful organisation of both meetings is a commendable accomplishment in itself, we believe it represents one part of the whole process and that the publication of associated proceedings is the appropriate manner of recognising the efforts and achievements of the young researchers who presented their work at the meetings, as well as the spirit of international cooperation that has become synonymous with PZAF, ICAZ, and the wider field of zooarchaeology. It is with this last idea in mind that we decided to “join forces” and consolidate manuscripts from two separate events into a single volume. We feel honoured to have had the opportunity to play a minor part in publishing the excellent and interesting papers on the following pages.

The papers in this volume cover a wide spectrum of topics and studies conducted by the authors during recent years, and as such provide insight into different research methods and scientific protocols which are being applied throughout the world. One of the aims of the volume is to emphasise this global perspective, as the analysed material and the results obtained through the studies presented in the papers come from various geographical locations and time periods, which allows the observation of the contemporary overall state of research of this field of archaeology.

Sciacovelli, Cassano and Mastrocinque investigate animal remains in the southern area of the Egnazia forum (Apulia, Italy), suggesting ritual practices associated with Demeter’s cult, based on deposition patterns and species selection. Benkert and Rizzetto analyse the role of horses in Late Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon England, considering their economic and symbolic significance. Abatino and Antonites study faunal remains from Mutamba, a small settlement of the Mapungubwe period in South Africa, providing insights into local cultural practices and resource exploitation.

Prillo, De Grossi Mazzorin, and Minniti analyse elite diets in 13th-15th century Lecce, offering preliminary results from faunal remains at Charles V’s castle. Mladenović, Mladenović and Dmitrović examine Late Antique dietary habits in western Serbia through a case study from the Čačak – Gymnasium Courtyard site. Aleixo and Liberato investigate medieval animal resource use in Torres Novas, Portugal, within a Christian context. Marković and Jovičić present evidence from Viminacium, Serbia, discussing the evidence for the presence of a Roman tannery on-site. Young examines the role of marine molluscs in Iron Age Orkney, questioning whether their presence reflects feasting, subsistence strategies during periods of scarcity, or other cultural preferences.

Other studies provide regionally focused analyses or methodological insights. Sergi, De Grossi Mazzorin, and Sogliani examine faunal assemblages from the medieval castle of Rocca Montis Dragonis in southern Italy, highlighting the effect of the war economy on animal exploitation strategies. Bormetti and Maini investigate the animal economy of the hilltop site of Guardamonte, contextualising it within the continuity of prehistoric livestock husbandry practices and its cultural links across Iron Age northern Italy. Bigoraj’s work on Metsamor, Armenia, explores questions related to animal size and husbandry. Platania and Messina contribute new data on animal consumption in the North-Eastern Complex of Phaistos, Crete, shedding light on Minoan dietary practices with an innovative approach that combines bone and pottery taphonomy. Erauw challenges the long-standing underestimation of guinea pigs in pre-Hispanic Peru, arguing for their economic and ritual significance through a fresh assessment of zooarchaeological data.

Before leaving the readers to these diverse contributions, we would like to thank the colleagues who, after the successful organisation of the meetings were equally responsible for the subsequent publication of this volume: Maja Grgurić Srzentić (Department of Archaeology, University of Zadar), Magdalena Kolenc, Kim Korpes (both from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Zagreb), Ana Škrebilin (independent researcher). Their endless support, engagement during the 2023 conference and valuable input throughout the paper review process undoubtedly elevated the scientific quality of this publication.

Additionally, we wish to thank the organising committees of the 2017 PZAF meeting in Toruń (Mik Lisowski, Jan Wiejacki, Martyna Wiejacka and Ged Poland) and the 2021 PZAF meeting in Petnica (Dimitrije Marković and Teodora Mladenović), who provided immeasurable insight and encouragement to both organising committees prior to, during and after the organisation of the meetings in Palermo and Zagreb.

The editors would also like to express their gratitude to all the partners and sponsors, without whom the organisation of the conferences and this publication would not have been possible: the International Council for Archaeozoology (ICAZ), the Soprintendenza per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Palermo (Sicilia), the University of Sheffield (UK), BAR Publishing, Oxbow Books, the Associazione Italiana di Archeozoologia (AIAZ), Ludwig. guru, the Department of Archaeology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, the Department of Archaeology at the University of Zadar, the Institute of Archaeology in Zagreb, the Croatian Archaeological Society, the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, the Krapina Neanderthal Museum, the Zagreb Tourist Board, the Čazmatrans Promet L.L.C. and the Croatian Science Foundation.

The editors