

Neolithic and Bronze Age Studies in Europe

From material culture to territories

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edited by
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UISPP PROCEEDINGS SERIES VOLUME 13 – NEOLITHIC AND BRONZE AGE STUDIES IN EUROPE:
FROM MATERIAL CULTURE TO TERRITORIES

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Foreword to the XVIII UISPP Congress Proceedings

UISPP has a long history, originating in 1865 in the International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology (CIAAP). This organisation ran until 1931 when UISPP was founded in Bern. In 1955, UISPP became a member of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences, a non-governmental organisation within UNESCO.

UISPP has a structure of more than thirty scientific commissions which form a very representative network of worldwide specialists in prehistory and protohistory. The commissions cover all archaeological specialisms: historiography; archaeological methods and theory; material culture by period (Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age) and by continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, Pacific, America); palaeoenvironment and palaeoclimatology; archaeology in specific environments (mountain, desert, steppe, tropical); archaeometry; art and culture; technology and economy; biological anthropology; funerary archaeology; archaeology and society.

The UISPP XVIII World Congress of 2018 was hosted in Paris by the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne with the strong support of all French institutions related to archaeology. It featured 122 sessions, and over 1800 papers were delivered by scientists from almost 60 countries and from all continents.

The proceedings published in this series, but also in issues of specialised scientific journals, will remain as the most important legacy of the congress.

L'UISPP a une longue histoire, à partir de 1865, avec le Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistorique (C.I.A.A.P.), jusqu'en 1931, date de la Fondation à Berne de l'UISPP. En 1955, l'UISPP est devenu membre du Conseil International de philosophie et de Sciences humaines, associée à l'UNESCO. L'UISPP repose sur plus de trente commissions scientifiques qui représentent un réseau représentatif des spécialistes mondiaux de la préhistoire et de la protohistoire, couvrant toutes les spécialités de l'archéologie : historiographie, théorie et méthodes de l'archéologie ; Culture matérielle par période (Paléolithique, néolithique, âge du bronze, âge du fer) et par continents (Europe, Asie, Afrique, Pacifique, Amérique), paléoenvironnement et paléoclimatologie ; Archéologie dans des environnements spécifiques (montagne, désert, steppes, zone tropicale), archéométrie ; Art et culture ; Technologie et économie ; anthropologie biologique ; archéologie funéraire ; archéologie et sociétés.

Le XVIII^e Congrès mondial de l'UISPP en 2018, accueilli à Paris en France par l'université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne et avec le soutien de toutes les institutions françaises liées à l'archéologie, comportait 122 sessions, plus de 1800 communications de scientifiques venus de près de 60 pays et de tous les continents.

Les actes du congrès, édités par l'UISPP comme dans des numéros spéciaux de revues scientifiques spécialisées, constitueront un des résultats les plus importants du Congrès.

Marta Azarello
Secretary-General /
Secrétaire général UISPP

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Introduction to Neolithic and Bronze Age studies in Europe: from material culture to territories

Marie Besse, François Giligny

A large amount of papers have been proposed during the 18th UISPP Congress. It has become tradition to propose that some of them be presented in general sessions for each period, and one of these sessions was dedicated to the Neolithic and the Bronze age. Here we present eight papers related to this session, the majority concerning the Neolithic and one the Bronze age period.

Neolithic studies are promoted on behalf of the UISPP Commission 'Neolithic Civilizations of the Mediterranean and Europe' during the 18th Congress, and a large amount of communications have been proposed in many sessions.

In the first contribution, Alfonso Alday and his co-authors, 'Deconstructing the Neolithic: reflections from the Iberian Peninsula' discuss the Neolithization process of Iberia. It's an opportunity to come back to one of the most important debates of the Neolithic: the process of economic, social and symbolic changes involved with this period. The neolithization process is key to some of the most extraordinary changes in the relationship between man and his environment to the extent that it is now considered by some as an ecological disaster and the beginning of the Anthropocene. The intention of the authors is to deconstruct some concepts and to build another perception of the Neolithic in the Iberian peninsula. Two questions are discussed, animal domestication and village settling. The domestication itself is not always easy to demonstrate at its beginnings, when wild animal species equivalent are living in the same biotopes, as is the case for example for the Suidae or bovines, and where hybridization is possible. Some of them are present in Mesolithic contexts. Some technologies admitted as markers of the Neolithic are invented sometimes before the Neolithic, such as pottery vessels or polished axes. One of the points developed here is to consider the complexity of the phenomenon, which cannot be expressed with a single unique model, and to take into account the contribution of Mesolithic communities to the neolithization with regards to the colonization process.

The paper proposed by Chiara Messina and co-authors concerns 'Faunal exploitation in an Early Neolithic site: the assemblage from Casa Gazza (Travo, Piacenza, Northern Italy)', a site attributed to the Vhò culture. In this area, the neolithization is quite old and the process goes back to the 7th millennium BC. Excavated in the 1980's, the site, situated on a bank of the river Trebbia, has delivered an assemblage of more than 7000 bone fragments and allowed for the determination of 1417 of them. The site shows an agricultural and livestock breeding economy. Domestic species are dominant (73%), and Ovis or Capra is the most popular domestic animal. Wild species are dominated by Cervidae and adult red deer hunting was frequent. Other species, such as pond tortoise, were also consumed as food. The site is part of an economy of meat resources similar to that of known sites in the region, with a majority domestic share supplemented by the consumption of deer.

Also illustrating the contribution of archaeozoological analyses, the paper by Svenja Höltkemeier and Susanne Friederich discuss the role of the animal in Neolithic symbolic manifestations in the Elbe-Saale area between 5500 and 2200 BC. These events are visible in causewayed enclosures, in the form of deposits of artifacts or animal and human funeral remains recorded. The enclosure of Salzmünde-Schiepzig (Saxony-Anhalt) played a major role for communities in the second half of the 4th millennium BC at the regional level. The economy of the meat resources is based mainly on cattle, the bone assemblage found in the enclosure ditches and the other structures is mostly

detritus with a significant amount of burned bone. Animal parts were also deposited in burials, as is observed in the Elbe-Saale region, with also practices of depositing bucrania, 'cattle burials', or skulls in graves showing the symbolic importance of domestic animals.

Antonietta Del Bove and her co-authors present data regarding Copper age human remains in central Italy, from the Spinosa Cave in Tuscany. The recent excavations have provided a sample of human remains for two occupation periods, Neolithic and Eneolithic, and are in secondary position and unfortunately in a poor state of preservation. The bioanthropological analysis of 45 individuals gives information about age and sex, and attest to the presence of both males and females.

The decomposition of the bodies without fire and with ancient fractures supports the hypothesis of a 'decaying' area in the cave, with remains taken outside and the mixing of bodies, as in a collective burial.

Spatula-idols are one symbolic manifestation found in funerary remains from the Neolithic in Northern Spain. The contribution of Javier Fernández-Eraso and José Antonio Mujika-Alustiza describes those forms in the Western Pyrenees and its archaeological context. Those idols are made from bones, ovicaprids tibia bone, exceptionally a human radius. The bones are decorated with geometric patterns and the morphology is modified to give an anthropomorphic resemblance. The idols are always found inside dolmens and are part of the grave goods. Radiocarbon dating of three idols from two different sites is many centuries older than those of the human bones and that must be explained, perhaps through the reuse of older funerary structures.

Another paper about figurines is presented by Elena Garrido Fernández and co-authors, concerning their rare occurrences in the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic of the Iberian Peninsula. One zoomorphic clay figurine has been found in a natural monument at Cueva del Agua but is incomplete. It represents the back or rear part of a quadruped animal, and is conserved as a fragment over eight centimetres in length. As such, the complete piece must have been quite big. In other contexts, bovines, suids, or hybrid animals are often found.

The role of symbolic territories is a question treated by the paper by Pilar Zapatero et al. In the Amblés valley, in central Iberia (province of Ávila), new sites with schematic art have been discovered. This art is engraved or painted on granite rocks in many different locations and represents geometric, zoomorphic or anthropomorphic figures. Their chronological attribution is uncertain, but excavations nearby have provided pottery dated from the end of the 5th/beginning and first half of the 4th millennium BC. The geographic localization of this representations is interpreted as marking landmarks of resources and symbolic appropriation, perhaps for itinerant pastoral communities.

Hélène Blitte's paper deals with Bronze age hoards in Europe. Starting from an inventory of hoards in five selected areas, more than 4000 hoards have been analyzed. The different deposition practices and hoard compositions are testimonies of the ritual and social structure of Bronze age societies. Similar characteristics refers to a common universe, like burying those into the ground at a low latitude and the frequency of axes, weapons and ornaments. Their complexity also appears to increase with time and late Bronze age hoards are the most complex ones. Regional specificities also do appear.

