

pca

european journal of
postclassical archaeologies

Volume 5
May 2015



pca

european journal of
postclassicalarchaeologies

volume 5/2015

SAP Società Archeologica s.r.l.

Mantova 2015

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"Post-Classical Archaeologies" was approved on 2015-05-13 according to ERIH PLUS criteria for inclusion. Classified A by ANVUR (Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del sistema Universitario e della Ricerca).

DESIGN

Paolo Vedovetto

PUBLISHER

SAP Società Archeologica s.r.l.
Via Fienili 39/a, 46020 Quingentole, Mantova
www.archeologica.it

PRINTED BY

Tecnografica Rossi, Via I maggio, Sandrigo (VI)

Authorised by Mantua court no. 4/2011 of April 8, 2011

For subscription and all other information visit the web site www.postclassical.it

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EDITORIAL

The impact of natural disasters and climate change in different European regions as well as the resilience of medieval societies to their traumatic consequences is the subject of this issue of Post Classical Archaeologies. This is a particularly significant subject – especially if combined with more traditional areas of study – which is able to offer new data and lines of research within the complex study of agrarian landscapes, settlements and productive activities.

Natural hazards can have either an extreme but localised impact, as in the case of flooding and earthquakes, or a long duration, as in the case of climate change. In studying either case, it is essential to compare written sources, which recorded noteworthy phenomena, with archaeological and scientific data, in order to date and analyse them. For example, the impact of volcanic eruptions, studied by C. Kostick and F. Ludlow, was often exaggerated in literary sources and ancient people explained these as divine events. Natural proxy data, especially tree-rings and ice cores, can confirm and validate written sources. C. Artega uses the same comparison between written and archaeological sources to analyse tsunamis and earthquakes in the Iberian Peninsula and to identify their effects on architecture and archaeological deposits. Considered in the long term, the effects of flooding in some areas of Northern Italy were less traumatic (G.P. Brogiolo). Despite the accumulation of meters of alluvial detritus, only a few areas were abandoned as a consequence of floods, thanks to the extraordinary capacity of local people to bring the land back to its original appearance.

According to A. Volkmann, long-term climatic changes caused the abandonment, between 550 and 700, of the Oder region in Northern Germany. This conclusion contradicts recent optimistic continuity theories on the early Middle Ages. T.P. Newfield, author of the PCA young researcher award paper of this issue, highlights the role of climate in

the spread of epizootics, but hesitates to conclusively attribute the origin of the cattle plague of c. 940 to either a climatic crisis (volcanic eruptions of Eldja and Tianshi) or human migrations and conflicts (Arab campaigns into Byzantium and Magyar activities in Central and Western Europe). Repeated traumatic events, such as the wind-blown sand inundations that affected the British coasts during the Little Ice Age (1350-1859), created major problems in areas devoted to agriculture (P.J. Brown).

As a whole, these papers offer a significant sampling of themes relating to the changes triggered by natural events, and demonstrate the effectiveness of these approaches for the study of past ecosystems.

The "Beyond the theme" section presents many new studies from different European areas: an analysis of exchanges between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean in late antiquity (T. Lewit); a synthesis of the new data about Byzantine Cagliari (R. Martorelli); a reappraisal of the necropolis of the Portuguese villa of Torre de Palma (M. Wolfram); the study of a "marginal" landscape using remote sensing and archaeological prospection (A. De Guio et al.); and a presentation of the preliminary results of a multidisciplinary project focussed on the abandoned city of Tusculum not far from Rome (Diarte-Blasco et al.).

The "Dossier", produced with Gabriele Gattiglia as guest editor, presents two papers (by J.D. Richards, J. Winters and F. Anichini, G. Gattiglia) about Open Access and Open Data, a particularly important issue in archaeology (and, incidentally, the philosophy on which this journal is based). This theme is also linked to the social impact of Archaeology, already discussed in previous issues. This is also the main goal of the European project "MEMOLA- Mediterranean Mountainous Landscapes: an historical approach to cultural heritage based on traditional agrosystems", which is trying to save traditional farming, recorded by archaeology combined with land capability analysis in the different sample areas.

Debates regarding the eventual outcomes of our work as archaeologists should also be informed by more general theories, such as those discussed by M. Johnson in the "Retrospect" section about the concept of "culture" in Anglophone archaeology, a point central to every theoretical position within our discipline, which now needs to be re-addressed after the crisis of the post-processualist era.