Editorial

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Danish Journal of Archaeology welcomes all archaeological contributions of relevance to the Scandinavian, Baltic and North Atlantic regions. Such a broad scope naturally results in very diverse topics, but we observe some underlying trends in this year's volume, which we believe also reflect current trends within archaeological research on a global scale. Organic materials are woefully underrepresented in the archaeological record, but several contributions investigate exceptional finds of wood, birch tar, animal hides and bone using multidisciplinary methodologies. These range from more traditional archaeological methods to both established and cutting-edge scientific methods, such as ZooMS, ATR-FTIR and radiocarbon wiggle matching. This successfully demonstrates that even the smallest sample has immense potential if we analyse it using the right methods. It also coincides with another trend, involving increasing interdisciplinarity and growing numbers of collaborations from several countries contributing to individual research projects.

The Scandinavian research landscape is vast and complicated, and the relevant information does not always end up with the relevant people, so that research projects miss out on important potential insights. The Danish Journal of Archaeology has decided to facilitate the sharing of knowledge by launching a new *Current Research* platform, where researchers are invited to share short notifications about their current projects with a wider, professional audience. It will be possible to make submissions from January 2025 via the homepage and we hope you will all support the initiative, and help create a project gallery with an updated overview of ongoing research.

The current volume of Danish Journal of Archaeology involves a diverse array of topics, ranging from contributions from international and interdisciplinary science-orientated research to considerations on current excavation practices, which are highly relevant in relation to the new Danish museum reform and ongoing discussions about the possible privatisation of Danish excavation practice. We will briefly introduce you to this volume's exciting papers here in chronological order.

The first of four research articles concerns the hafting of Neolithic leisters using birch tar. Between 2012 and 2022, extensive excavations took place in the Sylthom Fjord area in the southernmost part of the Danish island of Lolland, prior to the construction of the Fehmarn Belt tunnel connecting Lolland with the German island of Fehmarn. These very fruitful excavations keep adding new, valuable details and insights to our understanding of the local and regional developments at the Mesolithic-Neolithic transition and later. In this volume, we are happy to publish two fascinating studies that came out of the excavations and which both result from the extraordinarily good preservation of organic material at many of the sites. Pieces of birch tar are among the organic residues that have been recorded in the excavations in southern Lolland. Chewed tar has already revealed genomic details of one of Sylthom's now famous Early Neolithic inhabitants, nicknamed 'Lola', although as demonstrated by Tabea Joanna Koch and colleagues, birch tar played a previously unknown but important role in composite fishing tools. In their article on Neolithic leister hafting at Sylthom, the interdisciplinary and international team of authors successfully identify the performance of birch tar in aquatic environments, noting its adhesive and waterproofing properties.

The fruitful results of joint interdisciplinary efforts are also evident in the research article written by Jesper Olsen and colleagues, in which they present the in situ preserved Middle Neolithic trackway from Kastbjerg Å in eastern Jutland, Denmark. This significant wooden feature came to light together with a series of other well-preserved prehistoric and early historic trackways revealed during excavation campaigns undertaken by Museum East Jutland in 2015-2017. Thanks to high-precision dating they were able to date the trackway to 2911±5 BC using the wiggle match method, making it the oldest

solid-built Neolithic trackway in Denmark. The interesting results provide new insights into the area's transport and communication routes facilitating the movement of wagons or carts and/or livestock.

Apart from in the exceptional conditions recorded at the sites mentioned above, organic materials are rarely preserved among archaeological remains. Danish wetland deposits, however, include a rich material of fur skin capes from the Early Iron Age, which were analysed by René Larsen et al. with the aim of identifying tanning substances and evaluating the condition of the material. The ATR-FTIR and GC-MS analyses, combined with visual examination using both light microscopy and the naked eye, showed the different processing of the capes, including stretching, tanning and other methods.

When did Viking Age Aarhus become a town of supra-regional importance? Did this happen early in the 8th and 9th century, or did it not occur until later in the 10th century, or not until the Middle Ages? With Moesgaard Museum announcing its intention to build a Viking Museum in the centre of the city to promote the importance of Aarhus as a Viking Age town, as a node in the network of Southern Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age, this research article by Jette Linaa contributes to current public discourse. As only a small part of Viking Age Aarhus has been excavated and little space is available for further excavations in the future, Linaa has looked at old excavations, examining some 16,000 finds to get answers. Using a method which measures the density of finds per m^3, Aarhus is compared to important contemporary sites, such as Haithabu, Ribe and Kaupang as well as local, rural sites. Based on the density as well of the nature of finds, the evidence leads to the conclusion that Aarhus was more like local, emerging townships, such as Odense and Aalborg, rather than a key player in a larger network of emporia, despite its location between Haithabu in northern Germany and Kaupang in Norway. The results thus undermine the arguments for building a new Viking museum in the centre of Aarhus.

In a debate article, Simon Kjær Nielsen and Johan Sandvang Larsen advocate adopting a responsive approach in field archaeology. The method of constantly evaluating is already practised, but the authors argue that the documentation of the prioritisation should also be systematically registered, in order to make the excavation process as transparent as possible.

In the first of two brief pieces, Daniel Groß and his international and interdisciplinary team of co-authors update us on the status of domestic animals from the Fehmarn Project. In their article 'Denmark's not-so-oldest sheep' the authors present new important and updated identifications of the so far oldest presumed ovicaprids using ZooMS analyses. These updated analyses enable the research group to demonstrate the important point that there are significant risks of misidentification using bone morphology alone when attempting to identify sheep and goat husbandry.

Another method of analysing archaeological objects is experimental archaeology, as presented by Henriette Lyngstrøm and her colleagues. This involves T-shaped wooden spades found in wetlands in Mid-Jutland – a find type associated with both surprisingly high-quality timber and careful and thorough manufacture. The experiments both shed light on the production of the spades and their efficiency. The authors conclude that the T-shaped spades were specialised tools, made from carefully selected oak, but are relatively easy to produce and well-suited for digging peat.

We hope you will enjoy this volume!
The editorial team