

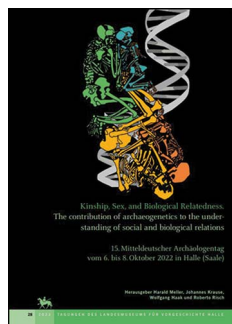
pedagogical value lies not least in providing a better understanding of the deeply rooted human quest for mobility.

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HARALD MELLER, JOHANNES KRAUSE, WOLFGANG HAAK & ROBERTO RISCH (ed.). 2023. *Kinship, sex, and biological relatedness: the contribution of archaeogenetics to the understanding of social and biological relations* (Tagungen des Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte Halle 28). Langenweißbach: Beier & Beran; 978-3-948618-66-7 hardback €59.



There must be few engaged in archaeology who are not now familiar—even in the most cursory fashion—with the outpouring of contributions on ancient DNA that have appeared over the past decade, and certainly since the appearance of David Reich’s popular introduction to the subject (Reich 2018). These contributions have provoked a range of reactions, not only scientific but also political and ethical (e.g Hakenbeck 2019; Blakey 2020). Without question, the analysis of ancient DNA has the potential to make significant contributions to the *study of archaeology*. However, some of the more hyperbolic statements that this development has elicited—regarding ‘revolutions’ and ‘fundamental transformations’ to our

subject—are factually questionable, and very much hang on the straw-man critiques of past paradigms and practitioners that we might wish to throw in front of the train of technical progress.

While Kristian Kristiansen (2022: 18–19) has defined a ‘two cultures’ problem—contrasting humanistic and scientific archaeologies—with regards to this mixed reception, other tensions are also apparent. For example, whether one views the tempo and mode of our archaeological entities to be uniquely archaeological (cf. Clarke 1968: 13–15), or considers the archaeological record more akin to the ethnographic present but with ‘stuff’ missing. This tension has equally coloured how ancient DNA studies have been received, especially where the focus has been on large-scale historical processes and utilised ‘archaeological cultures’ as the most relevant unit of comparative analysis. All this matters precisely because, given the contributory potential of ancient DNA, most archaeologists will likely come to the subject with some inherent ‘baggage’ regarding what we might hope for, and expect from, its contribution. The book under review here goes some way in offering an alternative to the mostly macro-scale normative culture model employed thus far, changing the scale of inquiry and expanding the field of interest.

The volume presents the proceedings of the 15th meeting of the *Mitteldescher Archäologentag* (Archaeological conference of Central Germany), held in October 2022, at the Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte in Halle (Saale), Germany. The intended goal of the meeting was to reflect critically on the still-developing field of archaeogenetics, in light of the increasing number of studies devoted to biological kinship. Of the original 41 presentations made, the proceedings include 23 of these and two new contributions. The Introduction is in both English and German, and 21 chapters are written in English, with the corresponding abstract in German, and four chapters are in German with English abstracts. All figure captions are in English and German. Production values are extremely high, and the volume is well illustrated, with full-colour figures and photographs.

Excluding the Introduction, the contributions are divided into five thematic sections. The first two general themes have chapters divided into 'Interdisciplinary reflections' and 'Methods' (each with five contributions). These are followed by three case-study sections, arranged according to Stone (six chapters), Bronze (five chapters) and Iron Ages (three chapters). Eleven of the contributions contain actual substantive case studies, comprising analysis and discussion of archaeogenetic data, including all of the Stone, four of Bronze and one of the Iron Age chapters. Of these, most concern research undertaken within Central Europe, with a small number of further studies extending the range of coverage to Spain, France and Türkiye. The remainder of the contributions discuss methodological and theoretical issues pertaining to the study of ancient DNA itself, as well as the concept of kinship, by researchers in each of the three fields represented, those being genetics, anthropology and archaeology, respectively. The focus of many of these latter contributions are supported by examples and case studies, though these are not detailed.

The original meeting came at an important time, as contributions in archaeogenetics began to move beyond comparison with macro-scale archaeological entities (i.e. archaeological cultures), with the development of statistical methods capable of investigating micro-scale biological relatedness, under the rubric of 'kinship'. Co-eval with these developments was a growing consensus that kinship processes need not, however, be restricted to biological relatedness, as discussed in this journal by Joanne Brück (2021) and colleagues. The Introduction addresses these issues in a remarkably partisan way, though the well-polished façade of complementary positions does occasionally slip to reveal deep-rooted contradictions. Nonetheless, the Introduction serves as an excellent summation of the nascent field at this point.

As with all conference volumes, the individual contributions are diverse. The excellent Introduction by Roberto Risch *et al.* (Chapter 1) does a thorough job of reviewing these. So much so, however, that one is left with the impression that the concept of kinship, ranging from biological relatedness to relativist concept, is so at odds with itself that the casual reader might wish to be highly selective with what follows. This essential tension is on full view in the first section, with critical and theoretical insights offered from the respective disciplinary partners in genetics, archaeology and anthropology. Along with the Introduction, all contributions of the first section 'Interdisciplinary reflections' (Chapters 2–6) should be essential reading in the field.

Following this, the change in approach from a macro- to micro-scale mode of analysis for ancient DNA, and the methodological developments required to affect it, are deftly discussed

in the chapters by Torsten Günther (Chapter 8), Harald Ringbauer (Chapter 9) and Divyaratan Popli and colleagues (Chapter 10). However, any critical reflection on the hitherto employment of archaeological cultures in the study of ancient DNA (e.g. Riede *et al.* 2019), and the necessity or benefits of this shift in scale of attendant archaeological entities, is absent. Indeed, several of the contributions continue to employ a rather unreconstructed normative culture concept alongside discussions of micro-scale biological relatedness. This feels like a noticeable oversight. In light of the huge potential of archaeogenetics to the study of archaeology, never has the need for a thorough review of our systematics been more necessary. Despite the temptations of these technological marvels, we may find that: “[M]erely to add these new techniques to the existing structure of archaeology, like so many lean-to extensions of a shabby and already rambling edifice, is no solution to archaeological amorphism” (Clarke 1968: xiv).

The focus instead is solely on the concept of ‘kinship’, as discussed broadly within the fields of anthropology and archaeology, most directly in the contributions by Tatjana Thelen (Chapter 2), Katharina Rebay-Salisbury and colleagues (Chapter 20) and Joanna Brück (Chapter 22). This change in scale provides a basis for discussing such relationships as parenting, in theoretical, ethnographic and archaeological perspective, again in Chapters 2 and 20, as well as by Erdmute Alber (Chapter 3) and Sandra Pense and colleagues (Chapter 17). Of major significance, however, is the use of ancient DNA to discuss issues in palaeodemography, exemplified by the contributions concerning longevity of house structures, in the latter, and inter- and intra-site community relationships by Viktória Kiss and colleagues (Chapter 21) and Luka Papac and colleagues (Chapter 23). These are innovative and noteworthy contributions at this scale. The funerary record as a source of information about the past, however, is dealt with rather inconsistently in many of the contributions. With the exception of the excellent overview by Catherine Frieman (Chapter 4), little consideration is given to these as sites of structured deposition, creating what the latter refers to as “imperfect mirrors of living society” (p.46). Despite the issue of kinship equally relating to non-biological relations, it is disappointing—from an archaeological perspective—to see that only Frieman goes on to discuss the important concept of ‘kin-work’ (cf. Johnston 2020). Further subjects covered include the various pitfalls surrounding the study of ancestry, especially its public perception, by Aylwyn Scally (Chapter 6), an interesting rejoinder regarding the value of a morphological analysis of skeletons in kinship studies by Kurt Alt (Chapter 7) and a discussion on using data on biological relatedness as a means for more precise calibration of ¹⁴C dates by Ronny Friedrich and colleagues (Chapter 11).

In the Introduction, the editors position the volume as a nascent overview of the current field of archaeogenetics and its contributory potential to anthropological, archaeological and historical research, and in this it is entirely successful. Absences, oversights and contradictions—most of which stem from the disciplinary plurality of archaeology itself—are firmly on display. However, these need not be negatives, and might instead provide a keen sense that the future direction and contribution of archaeogenetics will be heavily influenced by changes in the developmental structure of archaeology itself, as much as they will be by further technical developments in the field of genetics: though a further ‘loss of innocence’

may yet be required on our part. On all disciplinary fronts, however, this volume is a good place to start.

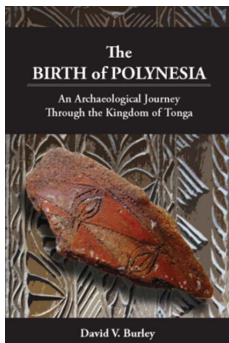
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DAVID V. BURLEY. 2023. *The birth of Polynesia: an archaeological journey through the Kingdom of Tonga*. Burnaby: Archaeology Press Simon Fraser University; 979-8-37847-48-2 hardback £39.49.



David Burley's 35 years of experience in researching and documenting Tonga's past are brought to life in this archaeological synthesis on what has long been regarded as the 'birthplace' of Polynesian culture. Written partly as an autobiography, the book blends fieldwork narrative and amusing anecdotes with scientific descriptions of Tonga's early period of human settlement. The data presented are derived mostly from archaeological materials, but also include relevant information from ethnography, historical linguistics, biological anthropology, genomics and environmental sciences. The period covered is from first settlement with the appearance of Lapita pottery through the Polynesian Plainware phase, a time when 'Ancestral

Polynesian' culture is argued to have emerged.

The amply illustrated volume is divided into eight chapters, with references conveniently placed at the conclusion of each. Burley's accessible style of writing begins with the