

Part 2: Welding a New Approach to the Study of Ancient Metals

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Preface

A session was dedicated at the 23rd Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeology in Maastricht (30th August - 3rd September 2017) to the discussion of the role of archaeometallurgy in the wider framework of archaeology with a particular emphasis on aspects of the interpretation of analytical data and communication between researchers of different academic traditions and how this affects interpretation. METALLA 24.2 (2018) presents the second series of papers presented at this session, papers ranging from traditional archaeometallurgical studies to multi-disciplinary studies and meta-level discussions concerning education, identity and strategy.

Session Abstract

Two communities have emerged in archaeometallurgy: the archaeologists, largely educated in the humanities, and the material scientists. Killick (2015; Pearce, 2016) has illustrated the non-communication and mutual lack of interest in the debates between the two traditions, one focused on the social and symbolic aspects of metalwork, the other interested in techniques of analysis and chemical and mineralogical processes. This session aims to build bridges the two approaches, encouraging collaborative research goals, and thereby to fuse the two in a new understanding.

Archaeometallurgists have their own conferences and journals, so that archaeometallurgical articles rarely appear in mainstream journals, and sessions at general archaeological congresses, like the EAA, are often dominated by discussion of technique rather than the contribution of archaeometric data to the resolving specific archaeological problems.

Such sessions are often deserted by the generalist archaeologists who are not interested in technical problems. Cultural archaeologists are also to blame for this situation, especially because too few really have the specific skills (especially statistical) to use archaeometallurgical data, or an understanding of what specific analytical techniques can and crucially cannot tell us.

We welcome papers from either tradition, that attempt to bridge the divide by discussing the problems inherent in combining the traditions or that interpret archaeological data within a framework of archaeological data and hypotheses.

References

- Killick, D., 2015. Archaeometallurgy as Archaeology. In: A. Hauptmann and D. Modarressi-Tehrani, eds. 2015. *Archaeometallurgy in Europe III. Der Anschnitt, Beiheft*, 26. Bochum: Deutsches Bergbau-Museum. pp.295-300.
- Pearce, M., 2016. Archaeology and archaeometallurgy: some unresolved areas in the interpretation of analytical data. *STAR*, 2(1), pp.46-53.