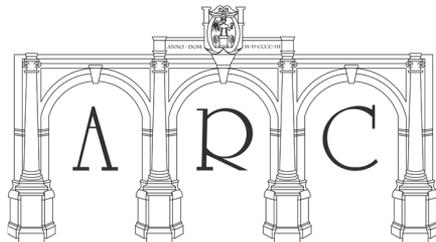


resilience & archaeology



*Edited by Sergio G. Russo
and Leah M. Brainerd*



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CONTENTS

Preface	I
Introduction: Resilience and its dissociative disorder from an archaeological perspective Sergio G. Russo and Leah M. Brainerd	1
Persistence in Neanderthal models Fulco Scherjon	29
Resilience and reversibility: Engaging with archaeological record formation to inform on past resilience Benjamin Davies, Matthew Douglass, Patricia C. Fanning and Simon J. Holdaway	51
Mobility as resilience capacity in northern Alpine Neolithic settlement communities Caroline Heitz, Martin Hinz, Julian Laabs and Albert Hafner	75
Towards a modified urban resilience model for archaeologists Christian S.L. Jørgensen	107
Digging deep: Exploring the role of social cohesion and farmer decision-making in the resilience of historical socio-ecological system Tabitha K. Kabora, Daryl Stump and John Wainwright	133
Social cohesion and resilience: The sensory experiences of death-related rituals at EBA Ebla Agata Calabrese	153
Detecting conceptual resilience: The Ancient Egyptian notion of judicial <i>sdm</i> ('hearing') over 1500 years Alexandre Loktionov	175

CONTENTS

Book Reviews

Edited by Victoria Pham 193

The quality of the archaeological record

By *Charles Perreault*

Reviewed by Daniel Fuks 195

Narratives of persistence: Indigenous negotiations of colonialism in Alta and Baja California

By *Lee M. Panich*

Reviewed by Caitlin Jacobson 203

Going forward by looking back: Archaeological perspectives on socio-ecological crisis, response, and collapse

Edited by Felix Riede and Payson Sheets

Reviewed by Miriam A.W. Rothenberg 209

Forthcoming issues 215

Cover art and issue design 218

Preface

It has been just over a year since we found ourselves clueless while facing the unforeseen outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It represented a deep traumatic change in our daily lives: we saw friends and colleagues suddenly leaving to return to their homes; we had to limit our social interactions; we had our research activities voided. What remains impressed in our memory is Cambridge emptying, thus leaving us with a sense of oppressive silence and uncertainty.

Amidst that situation, we approached the selection of the theme of this special issue last Spring. Which subject was both contemporary and, at the same time, applicable to the past? While intaking the news and social media, one recurring word drew our attention: resilience. We then started thinking about how this notion could have been used within archaeological research; how its mainstream meaning of ‘strength and ability to overcome stressing events’ has been interpreted.

During this process, we also realised that our journal was coming upon its 40th anniversary since its founding issue (Crawford and Moore 1981). It is hard to find a voluntary-based student-led journal like ours that has *survived* through time. Our ephemeral presence at the university, the variable transmission of accumulated know-how between generations of students, and the concerns with maintaining economic independence are all factors that may have jeopardised the continuity of such a project. And yet, here we are, at the publication of our 69th special issue in forty years of activity.

With resilience chosen as our ship, we began our journey with only the basic idea of what it meant. But soon, we discovered that not only is resilience a fashionable concept within academia, it is also one of the most controversial. The notion has various meanings and interpretations cross-disciplinarily, an ontological conundrum that generates confusion and tireless debates among scholars across fields. Only contemplating its small use in archaeology, there is still a wide diversity in the analytical techniques used and in the definition of proxies that may account for resilience. Certainly, this feeling of disorientation caused by the multitude of theoretical and methodological approaches

has hit us as well, so that since then, we have considered resilience studies as a disordered world, a chaotic research area characterised by multiple identities representing this concept.

It is with this sentiment of disorder and our willingness to tidy up such studies that we approached the making of this volume. Hence, this special issue aims at providing a broader, pluralist perspective on resilience. It does so by including human agency—therefore, with a focus on agent-based models and computational analyses—into discourses on past disturbances and post-stressor events. Moreover, it offers case studies that not only explore the effects of environmental hazards on past societies but also those of cultural change, for instance, through language and social practices. Thus, this volume wishes to move beyond determinist accounts of resilience and provide supplementary interdisciplinary perspectives for the investigation of past resilience.

We must acknowledge many people for their support in the publication of this volume. First, we would like to thank all our contributors for making this volume possible as well as the anonymous reviewers whose comments improved the quality of each paper. Considering the circumstances brought by COVID-19 during the time this volume was produced, we exceedingly appreciate the additional effort that all authors put in during their writing processes. We also thank all members of the ARC who contributed to the proofreading process as well as members who contribute with their efforts towards its continuity. Specifically, we would like to emphasise our gratitude to Victoria Pham, the Book Reviews Editor, for her commitment during the production of this ARC volume. In addition, we are very grateful to Dr Erik Gjesfeld for the support given throughout the editing process and to Glynnis Maynard for her comments on our introduction. Their insights were extremely valuable, and any inaccuracies remain our own. Finally, we thank Benjamin Mercier for his design of the cover and Simone Russo for his help in formatting the volume.

Cambridge, UK
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