EXARC JOURNAL 2025/2
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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Book Review: Experimentelle Archäologie in Europa, Jahrbuch 2024

Persistent Identifier: https://exarc.net/ark:/88735/10794

EXARC Journal Issue 2025/2 | **Publication Date:** 2025-08-06

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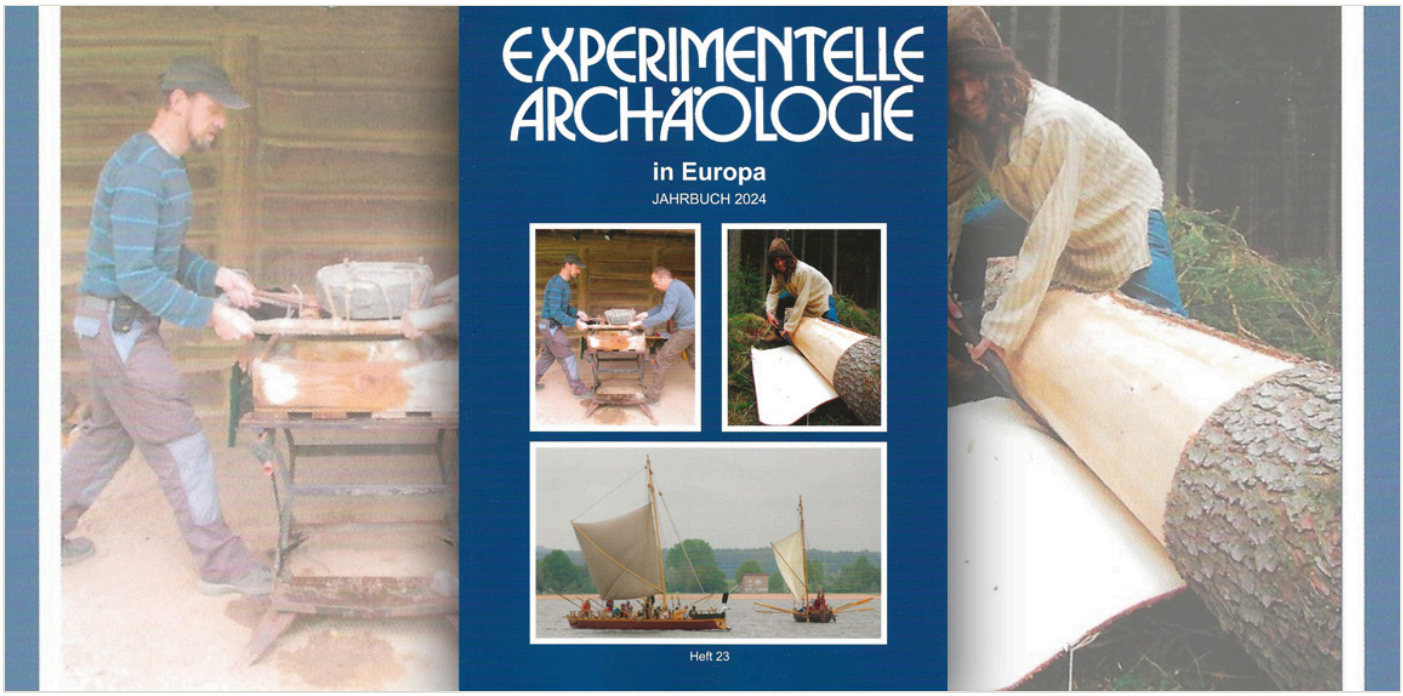

The periodical is published by Gunter Schöbel and the *European Association for the Advancement of Archaeology by Experiment e. V.* (Europäische Vereinigung zur Förderung der Experimentellen Archäologie) EXAR in collaboration with the Pfahlbaummuseum Unteruhldingen.

In 2023 EXAR once again hosted their annual conference, this time from 5th until 8th October 2023 at the Experimentalarchäologischen Freilichtlabor Lauresham in Lorsch (Germany) and

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was attended by more 90 participants. It was the 20th edition of this conference.

The Jahrbuch 2024 contains as before essays from lectures held at the 2023 conference and was presented at the 2024 conference. This edition is marked as a Festschrift for Gunter Schöbel for his 65th birthday. It, therefore, contains after the preface (p. 8) a dedication to the work of Prof. Dr. Schöbel (pp.9-10). As usual, you can find the annual report (pp. 191-194) and the author guidelines (pp. 195-197) at the back of this volume.

This periodical consists of 12 essays, divided into the usual sections Experiment und Versuch (Experiment and Testing, pp. 13-70), Rekonstruierende Archäologie (Reconstructional Archaeology, pp. 73-113), and Vermittlung und Theorie (Education and Theory, pp. 155-187). A new section: EXAR-Projekt (EXAR Project, pp. 117-151) was added this time. As mentioned by U. Weller in the preface, EXAR Project is a funding program that was launched to finance the analyses required for experiments.

Two projects are presented in this section of EXAR Project: The first is about trying to find the right technique to grind flint axe heads so that they show the same characteristic traces as original axe heads from the Neolithic period (W. Hein, M. Lund, K. Martens, M. Müller, M. Savu, *Flint schleifen - Teil 1: die Beilklingen*, pp. 117-136). The authors noticed that not much has been published about grinding stones. With the help of a geologist they asked for a stone analysis of original Neolithic grinding stones in order to execute their experiments with grinding stones matching that analysis. The second essay in this section (S. de Zilva, J. Engelman, *Das Konzept "Ziehen" in der Vorgeschichte*, pp. 137-151) looks at what materials, other than iron, could have been used as a drawing plate for wires in prehistory. Materials used for the tests were hardwood, bovine bone, and antler.

As usual, the section Experiment and Testing is the first in the book and contains, this year, four essays covering a wide array of topics. The first essay is about the usage of fish leather (E. Sikcan, H.J. Behnke, R. Förster, T. Borsoi-Klein, A. Loth, A. Juhr, *Aalhaut neu entdeckt - Untersuchungen der Möglichkeiten von Fischleder und Fischhäuten*, pp. 13-25) comparing eel skin to cowhide by measuring tensile strength, tear strength, thickness, and weight. The second essay looks at a Bronze Age settlement in Estonia and how they could have used the lost-wax casting technique without having used beeswax (U. Sperling, F. Trommer, *Bronzezeitliches Wachsausschmelzverfahren - auch ohne Bienenwachs?*, pp. 27-39). In past decades several experiments involving reconstructing different types of Roman ships have been carried out. The latest of those considered two types of boats which were tested travelling with oars and sails and the results are presented in an essay for this volume (B.

Dreyer, *Zwei römische Boote im Test unter Riemen und Segel*, pp. 41-54). The last essay in this section tries to find the best bead separator which could have been used from prehistoric times and whose traces correspond with finds of ancient glass beads (M. Siegmann, *Kaolin & Co. - Perlentrennmittel*, pp. 55-70).

The Reconstructional Archaeology section consists of three essays. The first one looks of the different methods of roof covering using spruce bark but also the harvest of the spruce bark (W.F.A. Lobisser, *Dachdeckungen mit Fichtenrinde - Ein wertvoller Rohstoff und seine potentiellen Anwendungsmöglichkeiten bei Pult- und Giebeldächern der Vergangenheit*, pp. 73-92). The second essay looks again at Bronze Age casting methods, this time taking a spearhead of the Killymaddy type as object of reconstruction and testing (I. Finkeldey, J. Harms, *Rekonstruktion und Versuch einer frühbronzezeitlichen Lanzengussform des Typs Killymaddy*, pp. 93-103). The third essay of this section jumps from the Bronze Age to the 14th century and looks at the mechanism of a padlock found at Tannenberg Castle, trying to reconstruct and facing issues of soldering the different components of the padlock together (J. Lotter, D. Usher, *Herstellung im Versuch sowie Funktion und Restaurierung eines hochmittelalterlichewn Sperrfederschlosses der Burg Tannenberg, Seeheim-Jugenheim*, pp. 105-113).

The last section, Education and Theory, contains three essays. The first one looks at the problems of restoring archaeological iron objects, focusing on how this was carried out in the 1980s, how this affected the appearance of the object, and what methods are used nowadays (A. Wilhelm, *Besondere Details und Verzierungen von Eisenobjekten - über die Problematik der Restaurierung von archäologischen Eisenobjekten*, pp. 155-167). Although several projects have been carried out that look into marching with Roman military equipment, a new attempt has been made by a group of enthusiastic living-historians. The second essay in this section describes their difficulties and looks at what could be improved to provide information for future projects (T. Rute, *Der Limesmarsch 2023 - ein Erfahrungsbericht*, pp. 169-178). The last essay in this section and in the book covers also the Roman Empire and looks at the requirements for wooden reconstructions along the limes, be it watchtowers, forts, or palisades (P. Mayer, Versuch der Rekonstruktion des für Errichtung und Unterhaltung des obergermanischen Limes aufgewendeten Bauholzes anhand von Modellrechnungen über einen Zeitraum von 30 Jahren, pp. 179-187).

The articles cover a wide span of historic periods, from the Neolithic to the 14th century, and reflect in their variety the vast field of experimental archaeology, with topics ranging from architecture to shipbuilding and a variety of crafts. Through this they show the diversity in knowledge of the members of EXAR. The majority of the articles are written in a way that allows you to follow the subject matter easily even if you do not know anything about it. Unfortunately, there were two articles which used specialized terminology without explaining it, for example the article on the eel skin mentions certain testing methods based on ISO

standards, and the article on the Roman boats uses nautical terms. For a book aiming to reach readers from different fields, those specialized terms should be explained. The article on the glass bead separators uses words mainly used in Switzerland and the south-west part of Germany and also uses colloquial language. For a publication that claims to be scientific, more attention should be paid to the language used to ensure that it meets this claim hence avoiding dialect words and using standard German instead. It should not use colloquial language. In this volume all articles were written in German with a short abstract in English at the beginning of each essay. As previously mentioned in the review of the 2023 yearbook, EXAR should encourage its members outside the D-A-CH region to contribute to this periodical to demonstrate that there is a broader field in which experimental archaeology takes places and it would be possible to reach more interested readers from outside German speaking countries if more articles were written in English.

Book information:

Schöbel, Gunter (ed.), 2024. *Experimentelle Archäologie in Europa, Jahrbuch 2024, Heft 23*, Unteruhldingen: Gunter Schöbel & Europäische Vereinigung zur Förderung der Experimentellen Archäologie e.V. European Association for the advancement of archaeology by experiment, ISBN: 978-3-944255-23-41

Keywords book
review
experimental archaeology
education

Country Germany

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