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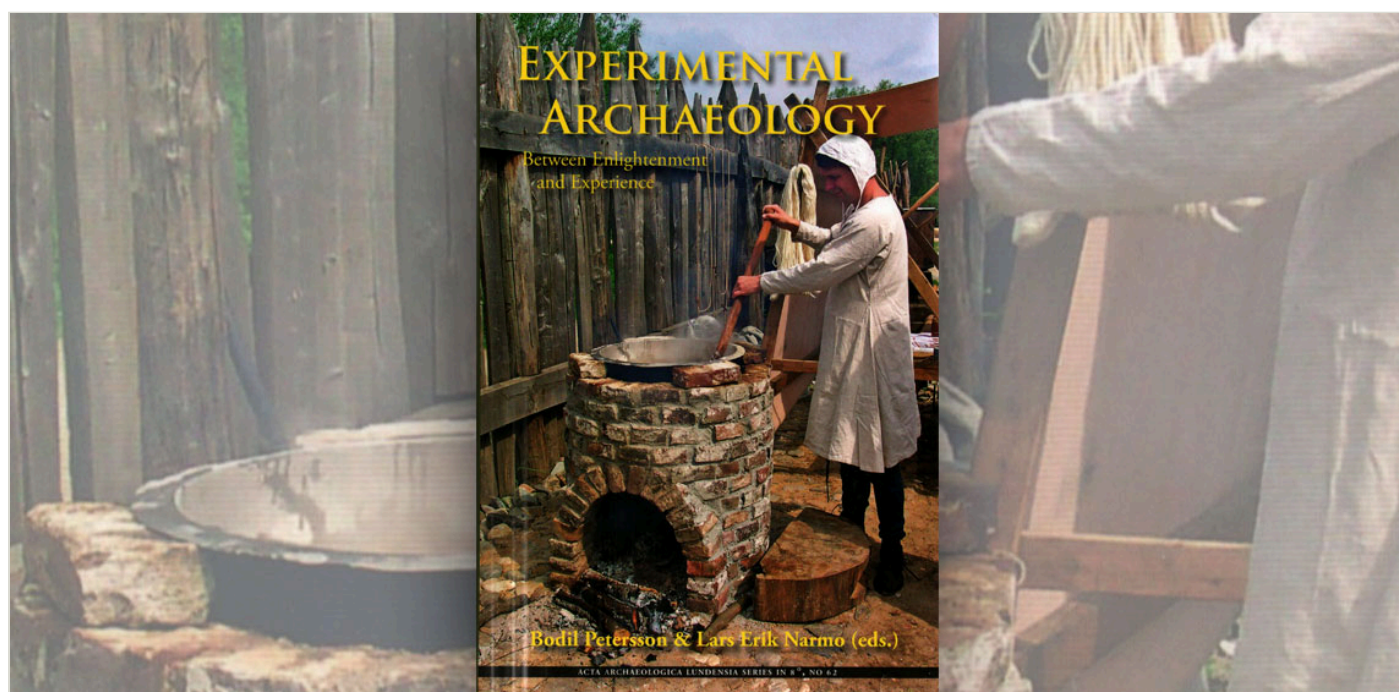
Book Review: Experimental Archaeology – Between Enlightenment and Experience by Petersson and Narmo

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This book developed from the project *Experimental Archaeology – Between Enlightenment and Experience*, which was composed of a series of regional meetings held in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. This hardbound publication contains quality illustrations and colour photographs; and the language revision has been done to a solid quality.



It is

encouraging that there is work such as this being conducted that addresses these issues, and that, perhaps most importantly, are being published, so that this dialogue and the development of theoretical aspects of experimental and experiential archaeology can continue and move beyond such dichotomies.

In the *Introduction* Bodil Petersson describes the context of the book and project, and how discussions concerning the theoretical aspects of experimental archaeology are from mainly a broadly European or British context. The aim of *Enlightenment and Experience* was to develop and present experimental archaeology from a Nordic perspective; and also to take into account the issues that so often surround experimental archaeology, such as a scientific versus humanistic approach, communication and differing methods and traditions. Much of the introduction is dedicated to discussing the three workshops that made up the project: Lofoten in 2008, and Lund and Copenhagen in 2009; and the contributions to the book.

The second chapter, *A Journey in Time*, by editors Bodil Petersson and Lars Erik Narmo, looks at the historical development and different directions that experimental archaeology is taking. They discuss the role of a hypo-deductive approach that is often intrinsic in experimental archaeology. Part of their goal is to encourage a more

humanistic experimental archaeology, and as part of this the authors discuss the current discussion that takes place between the definition of experiential and experiment; criticizing this 'dichotomy' and advocating for experimental archaeology that takes into account the human account and includes the actor. There is much to be said about developing a reflexive experimental archaeology: it can lead to the development of better hypotheses and recording and presentation of data. This chapter highlights the importance of developing rigorous experimental and experiential archaeology.

A Time for Poets: Experimental Archaeology in Götiska Förbundet, by Pål Nicklasson, is perhaps one of the weaker chapters of the book. Nicklasson attempts to link the group Götiska Förbundet, a group of antiquarians and poets from the nineteenth century, with experimental archaeology. While no doubt the poets and antiquarians mentioned had an interest in experiencing the past, and often held it above their current 'modern' situation, such practices as described in the chapter seem to lack the interest in developing knowledge about past processes through experimental or experiential activities. Even a discussion of Sven Peter Bexell's hobby of erecting of standing stones covered in 'runes' fails to establish a link between these activities and actualistic experimentation.

EXARC features in the fourth chapter, *Experimental Activities: A European Perspective*, by Roeland Paardekooper. This chapter supplies a picture of the development of experimental archaeology within a European context and allows readers to compare such developments

with those discussed elsewhere in the book. Paardekooper discusses how experimental archaeology has the ability to be both scientific and humanistic. Importantly, the author also highlights the fact that there are several types of activities that follow under the umbrella of 'experimental archaeology' although they are not in fact experimental. This is nothing new to those associated with experimental and experiential archaeology, but important to remember as it can have an affect on how the methodology is perceived.

In *Experimenting with the Unknown* Tine Schenck acknowledges that even 'controlled' experiments can develop in ways the experimenter does not expect. Schenck deals with the theoretical aspects of knowledge development, experience and experiment. Here, control versus actualism is added to the list of dichotomies that affect experimental archaeology. Schenck discusses the issues that plague both controlled experiments and actualistic ones in theoretical terms. A case study involving birch-bark tar production is presented which has both controlled and actualistic aspects, and Schenck discusses the validity of results under different theoretical viewpoints: the hypo-deductive method, inductive reasoning and hermeneutics. Likewise, in the tenth chapter of the book, *The Unexpected*, by Lars Erik Narmo addresses the types of knowledge that can be gained through experience with experimental activities.

Other practical issues that affect experimental archaeology are discussed in *State or Status Quo? Experimental Archaeology in East Norwegian Stone Age Research* by Lotte Eigeland. While this chapter focuses on Stone Age research in Norway, the issues that Eigeland raises: lack of funds and academic research, often affect experimental archaeology regardless of topic or location. Eigeland also acknowledges that more work should be done to establish links with academic institutions and open-air centres. Again this is a problem that extends beyond Nordic boundaries.

Two of the chapters deal with experimental archaeology within a University context: *Teaching Experimental Archaeology at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark* by Henriette Lyngstrøm and *A View from the Inside: Experimental Archaeology at Uppsala University 1971-2008* by Kjell Knutsson. Lyngstrøm discusses the positive aspects of the University's relationship with Lejre, which includes providing a suitable place to conduct experiments. Knutsson discusses the history of experimental archaeology at Uppsala, for which both qualitative and quantitative examples of historic trends are discussed. Many edited volumes on experimental archaeology usually present individual work, or work within the context of open-air centres. While this is not lacking in the volume either, it is interesting to read how experimental archaeology is practiced at academic institutions, particularly over the long term.

Lejre is also the setting for several of the constructions discussed in *Under the Same Roof: Experimental Research and Interpretation with Examples from the Construction of House Models* by Marianne Rasmussen and *Working in the Borderland of Experimental Archaeology:*

On Theoretical Perspectives in Recent Experimental Work by Anna S. Beck. Rasmussen discusses how constructs can aid in the development of hypotheses and questions for research, and aid in public presentation. Beck presents three 'experiential leaning' experiments, focusing on the theoretical aspects of experimental archaeology as a research tool, especially as one that can help to develop questions and theories – a use that is mentioned in Rasmussen's and Schenck's (as well as others) chapters as well.

In *Doing Archaeological Experiments in an Ethnic Context: Experimental Archaeology or Experiential Actives*, Gørill Nilsen discusses the wider contextual issue that can affect experimental archaeology, which here is labelled as a sub-discipline instead of a methodology. Lars F. Stenvik also discusses working with local communities in *Experiments with Iron Production in Trøndelag*. While the issue of how archaeology, generally, can affect local and indigenous populations, especially in terms of how it is presented, it was interesting to read about the issues that arise when conducting experimental archaeology concerning the material culture of such groups.

Considering the long history of experiential and experimental archaeology in Nordic countries, to attempt to present a Nordic perspective in only one volume is quite an undertaking. The workshop portion of the *Enlightenment and Experience* project no doubt helped greatly in developing this goal. For English speakers interested in regional developments in experimental archaeology, but unable to read or access other publications within the region, this volume may be of interest and a good introduction.

Despite the broad topic and the limited room for presentation, this book includes chapters that address the typical 'science versus humanities' and 'experimental versus experiential' issues to attempt to establish and explore the validity of different type of activities on these spectrums. *Enlightenment and Experience* also reflects the fact that similar debates concerning experimental archaeology take place in most regions it is practiced. It is encouraging that there is work such as this being conducted that addresses these issues, and that, perhaps most importantly, are being published, so that this dialogue and the development of theoretical aspects of experimental and experiential archaeology can continue and move beyond such dichotomies.

Book information:

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