

these case studies. Reanalysis of these artefacts has revealed that there are regional distinctions in the types of stone balls, and that each region represents a node of a wider network of practice. Ultimately, Meirion Jones and Díaz-Guardamino conclude that far from being symbols of power or prestige objects, carved stone balls were most likely didactic objects designed to practice the techniques of carving stone and were discarded or deposited or perhaps exchanged at various stages of production.

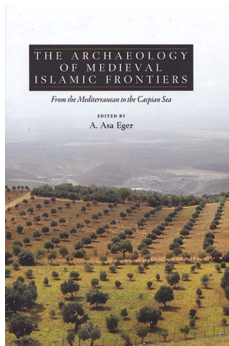
The themes that emerge from the volumes by Lewis-Williams and by Meirion Jones and Díaz-Guardamino are that the process of image-making is just that, a process, which may have been as important or more so than the product itself, and was often part of a relationship with the artefact that involved revisiting and changing it. Or in the case of the San rock art, engaging with the images in a temporal or liminal manner. Both volumes emphasise that the images may not be related simply to status or power, but rather may have had varied roles, for example as teaching tools. They also highlight the importance of the engagement of individuals with artefacts and images as part of a lived experience of an object and of image-making.

Borderline differences

A. ASA EGER (ed.). 2019. *The archaeology of medieval Islamic frontiers: from the Mediterranean to the Caspian Sea*. Louisville: University Press of Colorado; 978-1-60732-878-0 hardback \$58.

CRISTINA I. TICA & DEBRA L. MARTIN. 2019. *Bioarchaeology of frontiers and borderlands*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press; 978-1-6834-0084-4 hardback \$110.

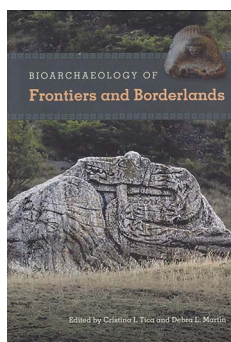
Our final two volumes take different approaches to the study of frontiers and borders. Both volumes explore the dynamics of identity formation on frontiers but approach the subject using different types of evidence. Asa Eger and his co-contributors problematise the core-periphery model to give borders and frontiers a central focus, and to reassess them in terms of religion, identity, economy, environment, demography and the intangible cognitive borders. Tica and Martin meanwhile use bioanthropological studies from a variety of sites to understand negotiated identity and contested power in frontier zones.



The archaeology of medieval Islamic frontiers uses eight case studies to investigate three areas. The frontiers explored in this volume are traditionally considered minor frontiers in that they are relatively poorly documented in historical sources, but they were frontiers nonetheless. They are the western frontier of the Mediterranean Sea and the Maghreb during the eighth to thirteenth centuries, the southern frontier between twelfth-century Egypt and Nubia, and the eastern frontier in the Caucasus region between the eighth and thirteenth centuries.

Ian Randall (Chapter 4) tackles the concept of the sea as a maritime frontier zone. Using mainly material evidence, supplemented by historical texts, he considers Crete, Cyprus and the islands of the Aegean to explore connectivity, insularity and isolation. The conclusion is that these islands were zones of interaction in which the inhabitants had “a unique relationship with space, distance, and the meaning attached to objects traveling from distant lands” (p. 95). In this way, the maritime frontier is a focus for the negotiation of identity. Karim Alizadeh investigates some of these negotiations in Chapter 7, which considers the borders of the Sasanian Empire and the Muslim Caliphate in the Caucasus. Alizadeh explores overlapping social and political borders as areas of interaction that include confrontation and cooperation. The results suggest that these boundaries were intended to restrict interaction, consolidate territory and reduce the permeability of boundaries.

In her chapter on medieval Armenia, Kathryn Franklin flips the subject around; rather than classifying the nature of the border that Armenia was part of during the tenth to thirteenth centuries, she considers how far “the ‘frontier-ness’ of Armenia was always a component within cosmographic projects, or material and historical strategies for understanding the world” (p. 195). Arguing that centres and peripheries are aspects of the imagined worlds created by their inhabitants, Franklin considers Armenia from the perspectives of both Western historical narrative and the Armenians themselves. She builds a convincing case that frontiers are first imagined and then constructed, and that the question we should be asking is “not ‘what kind of frontier’ but, ‘A frontier for whose world?’” (p. 215).



Continuing Franklin’s theme of imagined frontiers and Randall’s negotiation of identities, *Bioarchaeology of frontiers and borderlands* brings together 11 papers considering the bioarchaeology of a range of frontier areas. These are grouped under the themes of ‘The complexity and liminality of the frontier’, ‘Movement across borders’, ‘Adaptability and resilience on the frontier’, ‘Violence on the frontier’ and ‘Challenges and limitations of bioarchaeological methods and theory’, focusing variously on mobilities, the effect of frontier life on health and socio-economic status and the challenges faced by borderland populations.

The principle underpinning the volume is that borders are not stable or immutable, but subjective, negotiated and contested; that borders are contingent on political history and their meaning and function is determined by the people they separate. The aim of the volume is to “explore how people in the past might have maintained, created or manipulated their identity while living in a place of liminality” (p. 4); this is approached in a variety of ways. Christina I. Tica (Chapter 1) undertakes a comparative study to consider the differences in pathological conditions, trauma and general health between two contemporaneous populations in the region of the Roman frontier of Scythia Minor (modern Romania) during the third to sixth centuries AD. She compares skeletal evidence of frontier provincials living under Roman-Byzantine rule with those across the border in what would have been considered barbarian lands. The result is that while those in Roman territory enjoyed greater longevity, they experienced poorer health; those living north of the border, outside of Roman