

Interactions introduction

The very beginnings of the idea on a scientific workshop entitled ‘Yamnaya Interactions’ go back to the year 2017. In that year, the French-based UISPP (*Union Internationale des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques*) announced its 18th Congress to take place in Paris during 4–9 June. Having already successfully collaborated on the EAA session ‘Transitions to the Bronze Age’ in The Hague in 2010 (HEYD – KULCSÁR – SZEVERÉNYI 2013), two of the editors, Volker Heyd and Gabriella Kulcsár, agreed to make another attempt in organising a session together, this time dedicated to the Yamnaya phenomenon, its importance only recently having sharply risen by the publication of two ancient DNA papers in *Nature* (ALLENTOFT *et al.* 2015; HAAK *et al.* 2015). Potential speakers were rapidly recruited and it turned out the idea of a session on Yamnaya in June in Paris was quite popular among contacted scholars. A session proposal was thus submitted. What happened then was – after a first acceptance and longer period of silence – a series of mishaps, mishandlings and misunderstandings by the organisers, which made the session idea collapsing soon, followed by apologies from the organisers to us and us to our already listed speakers. In the end, the session could not take place.

However, a good idea never dies and tides soon turned into another direction. In 2018, the ERC Advanced Project “The Yamnaya Impact on Prehistoric Europe – YMPACT” was granted as was its move to Helsinki confirmed soon afterwards. Bianca Preda-Bălănică joined the editing team and we began seriously planning the resurrection of the session from October 2018, now as a fully funded international workshop to take place on 25–26 April 2019, only four months after the official start of the YMPACT Project. A location was rapidly found thanks to the activities of several wonderful colleagues: The large lecture hall space of the Helsinki Collegium of Advanced Studies in Helsinki’s city centre, very close to Archaeology’s own premises at the University, offered perfect conditions for lecturing, listening, discussing, gathering over a coffee or a lunch plate, and in networking. Poster and abstracts booklet (can be found here: https://www2.helsinki.fi/sites/default/files/atoms/files/yi_abstract_book.pdf) were assembled soon thereafter.

As with the UISPP session before, the workshop was intended to be organised by invitation only to make sure only latest research by the leading specialists on the topic of Yamnaya and 3rd millennium BC archaeology is represented. It was also decided purely on archaeological grounds that no geneticists or linguists being directly invited to contribute, although some archaeologists included results of both palaeogenetics and linguistics in their presentations. In doing so, two Yamnaya Interactions pathways were followed: A southern route, focusing in the regions west of the Black Sea, into the Balkans, Transylvania, Carpathian Basin, and Transdanubia; and a northern route, starting northwest of the Black Sea, pursuing the Yamnaya–Globular Amphora and Yamnaya–Corded Ware interactions, and following them deep into Central and Northeastern Europe. This way, the workshop aimed to provide as versatile and comprehensive as possible an overview of 3rd millennium BC transformations in Europe.

Overall, the workshop brought together scholars from 12 countries of Southeastern, Central, and Northern Europe giving altogether 15 presentations (initially 16 presentations were scheduled, however, David Anthony was unfortunately unable to attend) in two sessions, each covering a day. Each speaker was allocated 45 minutes that could be filled according to their own will, either 30 minutes presentations and 15 minutes of discussion, or even speaking for up to 40 minutes. The lectures were presented in pairs, followed by either coffee or lunch breaks thus allowing many discussions to informally take place. However, no final discussion was scheduled at either the end of the first or the second day.

Apart from the invited speakers and Helsinki archaeology colleagues in attendance, researchers from other countries found their way to Finland to follow the conference. Niels Nørkjær Johannsen

Yamnaya Interactions

University of Helsinki, Collegium Common Room, 25th–26th April 2019

Our workshop goes back to the original Yamnaya westwards expansion from c. 3000 BCE, and intends to explore and assess their interactions with contemporary societies; from direct exchanges to indirect cultural, societal, economic and ideological transmissions across half of the European Continent. It will be following two pathways: A southern route focussing on the regions west of the Black Sea, i.e. Balkans, Transylvania, Carpathian Basin and Transdanubia; and a northern route, starting northwest of the Black Sea and pursuing the Yamnaya – Globular Amphora – Corded Ware interactions, and following them deep into central and northern Europe.

Day 1 - Session 1 The Southern Route of Interactions

David Anthony, USA
Bianca Preda, Finland
Volker Heyd, Finland
Stefan Alexandrov, Bulgaria
Alin Frînculeasa, Romania
Florin Gogâltan, Romania
Lorenc Bejko, Albania
Gabriella Kulcsár, Hungary
János Dani, Hungary
Jozef Bátor, Slovakia

Day 2 - Session 2 The Northern Route of Interactions

Kristian Kristiansen, Sweden
Johannes Müller, Germany
Marzena Szmyt, Poland
Martin Furholt, Norway
Piotr Włodarczak, Poland
Aivar Kriiska, Estonia
Kerkko Nordqvist, Finland
Elke Kaiser, Germany
Michal Ernée, Czech Republic
Jaroslav Peška, Czech Republic

Day 1 - Session 1: The Southern Route of Interactions

9:00 – 9:15 Welcoming by Volker Heyd (& Bianca Preda, Kerkko Nordqvist)

9:15 – 10:00 David Anthony
The genetic and cultural origins of the Yamnaya culture in the Eneolithic (5th millennium BC) Volga steppes

10:00 – 10:45 Bianca Preda & Volker Heyd
The Yamnaya impact on southeastern Europe

10:45 – 11:15 Coffee break

11:15 – 12:00 Stefan Alexandrov
4th - 3rd millennium BC barrow graves between Danube river and Rhodope mountains

12:00 – 12:45 Alin Frînculeasa
Burial mounds in the Lower Danube region – from the international to the local and the other way round

12:45 – 14:00 Lunch break

14:00 – 14:45 Florin Gogâltan
Transylvania. Within or outside of the Yamnaya world

14:45 – 15:30 Lorenc Bejko
Interactions in the Albanian Early Bronze Age: evidence for Yamnaya connection?

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 16:45 Gabriella Kulcsár & János Dani
Yamnaya interactions in the Carpathian Basin

16:45 – 17:30 Jozef Bátor
Penetration of the Yamnaya culture into North-Carpathian region: preliminary knowledge

Day 2 - Session 2: The Northern Route of Interactions

9:00 – 9:45 Kristian Kristiansen
Pandemics, migrations, genes, culture and genocide: towards a new Eurasian prehistory that we may not like

9:45 – 10:30 Johannes Müller
Yamnaya, Globular Amphorae and Corded Ware identities

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 – 11:45 Marzena Szmyt
Yamnaya and Globular Amphora culture relationships: facts and gaps

11:45 – 12:30 Martin Furholt
Re-integrating archaeology into the 3rd millennium BC migration debate. How outdated concepts and classification blur the aDNA results

12:30 – 13:45 Lunch break

13:45 – 14:30 Piotr Włodarczak
Eastern impulses in cultural and demographic change during the ending southeastern Polish Eneolithic

14:30 – 15:15 Aivar Kriiska & Kerkko Nordqvist
Wagon trails through the bogs? Corded Ware interactions in the eastern Baltic Sea region

15:15 – 15:45 Coffee break

15:45 – 16:30 Elke Kaiser
Interactions between Eastern European steppe and Central Europe in the 3rd millennium BC – an archaeological perspective

16:30 – 17:15 Michal Ernée & Jaroslav Peška
The early Corded Ware horizon in the Czech Republic: cases from Bohemia and Moravia





from Aarhus University, Denmark, was one of them and we thank him for his interest in coming and discussing with us. We also like to emphasise here Yoan Diekmann and Jens Blöcher from the Institute of Organismic and Molecular Evolutionary Biology, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany, being a partner in the YMPACT project, as well as Martin Trautmann and Maxime Brami who both ended up contributing to the volume. Mark Thomas from University College London, UK, also joined as a partner in the project (because he had missed YMPACT's Ice-Breaker two months earlier). He turned out to be the only geneticist and was vividly contributing to the discussions.

The workshop unfolded, after a brief welcoming and introduction by the organisers, with the session of the first day dedicated to Yamnaya migrations along the river Danube. The presentations were rich in displaying burial evidence and material culture of Yamnaya kurgans, especially from Bulgaria and Romania, highlighting dozens of new graves and related finds. From the very beginnings, these lectures triggered intense discussions that continued throughout the two conference days, mainly revolving around the cultural definition of Yamnaya, or simply the question of what is Yamnaya after all? These debates well reflected archaeological tensions between overwhelming burial customs information and little material culture evidence, spiced with the new ancient DNA finding of 'Yamnaya Ancestry' haunting everyone's mind. They left little room for the usual topics of chronology, periodisation and internal development to play any significant role. Nonetheless, lectures of the first day stressed how much progress Yamnaya research experienced in the last 10 years: 1) Dozens of new graves were published, and many more's plans, drawings and photos are still awaiting 'daylight' in articles and books; 2) from about a dozen radiocarbon dates available for the southeast European branch of Yamnaya in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Hungary some 10 years ago (HEYD 2011), and about 40-50 for a little more than five years ago (FRÎNCULEASA *et al.* 2015), to around an estimated 150 radiocarbon dates available nowadays, and rising; and 3) Yamnaya graves and related burials are now also known from more remote regions, representing no longer only the flatlands of Southeast Europe, but Albania and Slovakia, and perhaps Turkey. Despite these doubtless successes, many gaps still existing in archaeological records need to be underlined. Without these filled, a better overall understanding will never be achieved.

The topic of interactions only became prominent in the second day, with Globular Amphora and Corded Ware cultures entering the arena when the northern route of 'Yamnaya Ancestry' transmission

was put in the foreground in presentations and discussions. Here, a seemingly very different process unfolded some 5,000 years ago with Yamnaya kurgans and their graves rapidly disappearing from records when leaving behind the steppe/forest-steppe regions and entering the temperate woodlands of Central and Eastern Europe. Burial custom and material culture intrusions are nevertheless recognisable in much wider geographical extent and even become the dominant trait in the centuries after the transition from Funnel Beakers (TRB), Globular Amphora and Comb Wares to Corded Wares. Differences in the perception of interactions between southern and northern route are no doubt also linked to two completely different archaeological traditions within which these graves are currently studied: On the one hand, the cultural-historical paradigm which is still a deeply rooted approach in eastern and southeastern European archaeology while, on the other hand, western European processual approaches are constantly challenging it. Yet, and this is the big difference if our workshop would have been held some 10 years ago, the matter has somehow moved beyond this decade-long and unresolved dispute of archaeological schools and traditions, again partially due to archaeogenetics coming into play. In a kind of circuit, this leads us back to our starting point of how one can define an archaeological culture, Yamnaya particularly, at the age of genetics. We will come back to this question at the very end of this volume. Although more settled now in 2021 than in 2019, finding a common language between archaeologists and geneticists; finding a middle way between the broad-brushed genetic messages versus the more fine-scaled archaeological conclusions; and finding a consensus between those archaeologists in favour of the new biological data and those being more reluctant in seeing anything good in them, was a hot topic then, still is, and will be with us for a longer while.

Many debates of the then conference are well visible in the 20 contributions of the herewith presented ‘Yamnaya Interactions’ proceedings. Yamnaya definition, migrations, identity; and interactions with local societies and cultures in the late 4th and much of 3rd millennium BC Europe still dominate discussions and considerations. The addition of more and more genetic data, increasing dramatically every year, has not resolved these big questions. On the contrary, one gets the impression it has only complicated the overall picture. Their results are nevertheless in everyone’s mind and constantly influence our way of thinking about past events. As it was three years ago, we cannot just ignore them but will have to make our own peace in order to reconcile them with our archaeological records and interpretations.

As a further continuity, our conference sessions of the two days remained intact and now form Part #2 and Part #3 of the volume, titled *Interactions south of the Carpathians and along the river Danube* and *Interactions north of the Carpathians and into the Corded Ware*, respectively. Having approximately the same number of chapters, both their sequences roughly follow the geography from east to west across the Continent. However a Part #1, called *Transformative dynamics of the fourth/third millennium BC*, had to be added. This is in parts due to some extra contributions, which did not fit either of the sessions, were included, like the two papers on Marija Gimbutas – and by the way, this year is the centenary of her birthday. But original contributions also changed course, partially guided by the debates during the workshop, partially influenced by later publications and new concepts, partially influenced by ancient DNA results, and we acknowledge and of course welcome these new ideas.

At the end of this long journey, two-and-a-half years after the then workshop, we will not forget to take the opportunity to express our gratefulness to all colleagues and friends who contributed to the success of the conference and the materialisation of this volume by offering us their support. Firstly, we would like to thank all the speakers of the workshop, now turned authors of this volume who sent their contributions to these proceedings in time. Particular credit goes to our colleague in archaeology at Helsinki, Elisabeth Holmqvist-Sipilä, then core fellow of the Helsinki Collegium of Advanced Studies, along with its director, Tuomas Forsberg, and admin staff, for giving us access to this wonderful lecture hall space for conferencing, discussing, and interacting. Kerkko Nordqvist was involved in various organisational

tasks of the workshop, as was Marja Ahola, who subsequently also wrote a review in Finnish language (<https://kalmistopiiri.fi/2019/05/27/international-workshop-yamnaya-interactions-25-26-4-2019-hautatutkimusta-eurooppalaiseen-tapaan/>), thus reaching out to a wider non-specialist audience. Taru Auranne, then project coordinator, handled flights and accommodation for the conference guests, and Wesa Perttola, another colleague in archaeology, helped us with transportation from the airport. The then Helsinki undergraduates Tia Niemelä (now M.A.), Alexander Suvorov and Tomi Kuljukka (both soon to be M.A.) offered their assistance in putting together all info materials in the days before the conference and in attending to the needs of the guests during conference days. Alexander Suvorov and Tomi Kuljukka were subsequently also taking part in the editing process of this volume by primary text corrections and checking for accuracy of references and literature. They, and Monique Horstmann, who also edited complete contributions, deserve our full gratitude. Finally, we would like to thank Erzsébet Jerem and Kyra Lyublyanovics from the Archaeolingua Foundation, Budapest, for their excellent final editing work and for making possible the first-rate printing of this volume. Particularly Kyra was always ready to answer questions on our part, but also pointed out discrepancies on her own. Only this quick exchange with the editors made it possible for the book to be published so speedily when other YMPACT project tasks were already looming.

This is the second volume of the monograph series ‘The Yamnaya Impact on Prehistoric Europe’ which deals with the testimonies of the Yamnaya people, their culture and legacy in Southeastern Europe and beyond. Following a material edition in Volume 1, we are pleased for this volume to be a publication of conference proceedings comprising scholarly articles around a major Yamnaya topic. It will be very welcome when this nice balance can be maintained in future YMPACT volumes.

A special dedication

A few months after the ‘Yamnaya Interactions’ workshop was held in Helsinki at the 25–26 April, 2019, Professor emeritus **Richard J. Harrison** turned 70 years old. Although invited, he was unfortunately unable to take part. His participation however unfolded in a very different way in that he agreed to take over the peer-reviewing of all contributions of this volume. The editors are immensely grateful for him having taken this role. But more importantly, many contributions and the book as a whole very much benefitted from his immense knowledge of prehistoric archaeology and his sharp mind. We would therefore dedicate this volume to him as a belated celebration present for his then 70th birthday.

Helsinki & Budapest, in August 2021

Volker Heyd, Gabriella Kulcsár & Bianca Preda-Bălănică
The Editors

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