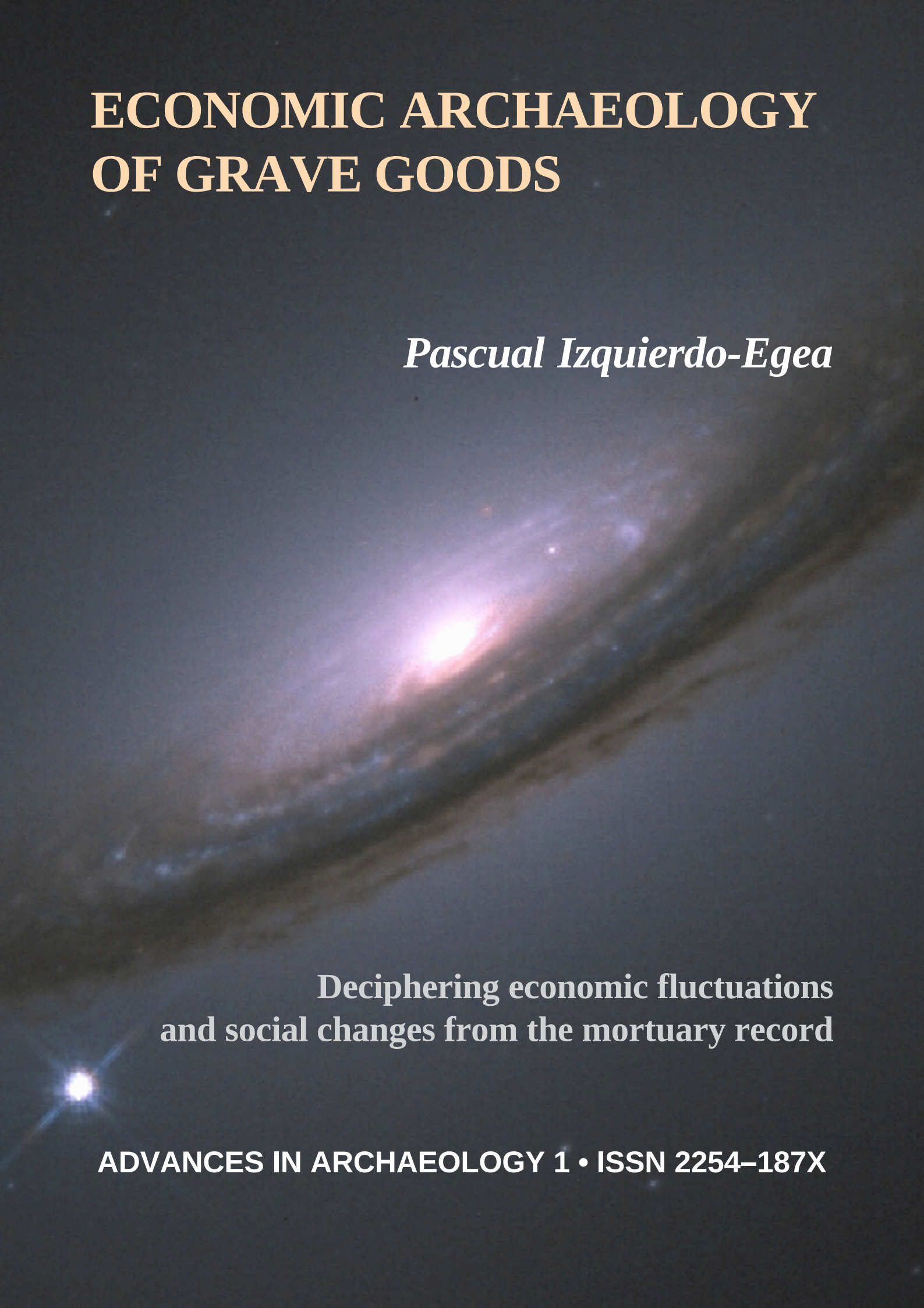
ECONOMIC ARCHAEOLOGY OF GRAVE GOODS

Pascual Izquierdo-Egea



Deciphering economic fluctuations and social changes from the mortuary record

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Cover (NASA, 2011): Supernova star on the outskirts of a spiral galaxy (public domain).

In memory of all who believed
that it is possible to have
a better world and
a fairer society.

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PREFACE

ALONG THE PAGES THAT MAKE UP THIS SHORT BOOK, I WILL first explain the theoretical foundations of mortuary archaeology. Then, I will discuss how the *contextual valuation method for grave goods* and the *archaeological theory of economic fluctuations* were developed. Finally, I will present some examples of its application in several ancient societies, such as the Iberian or Roman, to illustrate the fascinating subject of economic fluctuations and social changes in antiquity. In short, to facilitate reading, the book is divided in three main chapters and many sections.

The *contextual valuation method* is based on a statistical technique capable of deciphering and measuring the economic fluctuations and social changes recorded in burials. This makes possible the construction of a new subdiscipline named *economic archaeology of grave goods*, from which an *archaeology of economic fluctuations* derives.

I do not intend to update the voluminous literature generated by this issue but rather to explain how the methodology proposed here was born. The purpose

of this book is to show how I developed this method in order to make it available to any reader or researcher interested in knowing and applying it, taking advantage of its huge potential in the economic and social reconstruction of societies that buried their dead with grave goods. This is the aim and scope of this book. Moreover, I want to make clear that I am trying to do truly scientific archaeology using quantification to support my arguments. That is my goal.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Karen Olsen Bruhns, Prof. Joyce Marcus, Dr. Anabel Ford, Dr. Margaret Brown Vega, and Shannon Freire for reviewing my manuscript and suggesting changes that have improved it both in content and wording. Their assistance in correction the English has been invaluable. Without their aid, this book would never have seen the light.