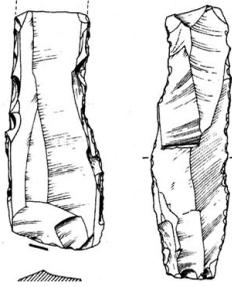


Book reviews

RYAN J. RABETT. *Human adaptation in the Asian Palaeolithic: hominin dispersal and behaviour during the Late Quaternary*. xii+372 pages, 73 illustrations, 10 tables. 2012. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-01-107-01829-7 hardback £65 & \$99.



Good books on the Palaeolithic of Asia are hard to find. Thankfully, Ryan Rabett has produced a quality volume that synthesises important information about human occupation history in a poorly known region of the world.

At first glance, the title of this book promises to provide the reader with detailed information about the long history of hominin adaptations in Asia as a whole. Yet, many areas of Asia are only cursorily summarised (perhaps not surprising given that Asia covers 30 per cent of the world's total land surface area), and the evidence for Lower and Middle Pleistocene occupations is only thinly reviewed (again, perhaps unsurprising given that the span of human history ranges back nearly two million years). The practical reality behind the title of the book is that the majority of this work is dedicated to the last 40 000 years of human occupation history in Asia, with a particular focus on Southeast Asia.

In the introductory chapter, Rabett lays out three important propositions to be explored in the book. The first proposition is “that modern human behaviour is evolutionarily emergent rather than attained” (p. 6). Connected to this, Rabett argues that it is likely that hominins experienced “strong external selective pressures prior to the Holocene and stronger internal selection pressures thereafter” (p. 6). These are certainly important avenues of research that should appeal to any scholar interested in the degree to which human populations were shaped by, or interacted with, their environments. Though Rabett makes the logical conclusion that ‘modern human behaviour’ is not the exclusive domain of our own species, correctly indicating that evidence points to regional differences in hominin behaviour, there is little in

this book that documents the adaptive and cultural variations in early hominins. While one can also generally agree with Rabett that climate change likely played a significant role in conditioning early hominin responses and adaptations on a regional level, little information on behaviour is provided in Chapter 3 (on Lower and Middle Pleistocene hominins) which allows investigators to evaluate the degree to which hominins were able to actively construct and modify their physical and social niches to improve their chances of survival. This problem, in part, is likely related to the quality of information currently obtainable from early Pleistocene sites in Asia.

The degree to which external and internal selective forces acted on humans is more firmly treated in Chapters 6 and 7, which entail detailed treatments of the Southeast Asian record in the Last Termination (i.e. 22 000–11 700 cal BP) and the Early Holocene. Chapter 6 is a masterful discussion of regional climate, human genetics and technological change, the latter forming the majority of the chapter. Technologies made from bone, lithic and shell are examined in great detail across Sunda. Most impressive is the compilation of information on bone technology (bone points and a variety of shaped implements), which shows significant temporal and geographical variation. Review of lithic technologies across Sunda reveals the range of formal and informal tool types used (e.g. projectile points, tanged blades, scrapers, pebble tools). This technological information nicely sets up Chapter 7, which examines variations in subsistence strategies. Here faunal assemblages from three principal areas are examined: the Niah Caves (Borneo), the Hang Boi Cave (Vietnam) and the caves of Gua Sagu and Gua Tenggek (Malaysia). Tropical subsistence strategies are shown to incorporate an incredible array of vertebrate and invertebrate species that vary in the degree to which they were incorporated into the dietary economy of foraging populations. This new formulation then allows Rabett to examine the degree to which external and internal forces operated on prehistoric cultures. In the concluding chapter of the book (Chapter 8), Rabett suggests that Pleistocene human adaptations are mostly a response to climatic and ecological instability, whereas in the Holocene, the explosion of diversity across cultural groups emerges out of the adoption of different adaptive and social strategies.

Rabett's second proposition is that "the increasing pace of climatic instability was a premier driver in hominin dispersive and adaptive trajectories since at least the last inter-glacial" (p. 6). Chapter 5 takes up the question of the initial dispersal of *Homo sapiens* across Asia, examining environmental, genetic and archaeological evidence from north-eastern Africa to Southeast Asia. The 'Southern Route Hypothesis' is examined relative to climatic trends and a novel compilation of environmental and archaeological evidence across South Asia, Sundaland, Wallacea, Sahul and western Melanesia. Though regional differences in chronology, material culture and adaptations are revealed, the quality of the data forces Rabett to conclude that "[a]lthough there is good reason to believe that climatic and environmental instability of the Late Pleistocene are strongly linked to regional developments in hominin behavioural adaptations, there is not yet sufficient chronological resolution to confidently match archaeological trends to environmental ones" (p. 140). A richer data-set is presented on the relationship between climate and dispersals in Chapter 6, where late- to post-glacial environmental changes are examined relative to genetic, technological and subsistence trends. The picture that emerges from archaeological research, and genetic studies, is that the adaptive and demographic history of Southeast Asia is intricate and complex—in part, likely tied to the effects of flooding of the Sunda Shelf after the Last Termination.

Finally, the third proposition of the book is that "regionalism in *H. sapiens* behaviour developed to a significant degree through the demographic and acclimation processes of colonising new or remodelled environments under these conditions of climatic caprice" (p. 6). The point here is that evolutionary trajectories of cultural behaviours across Asia must be understood in regional and local contexts, thus allowing archaeologists to decipher the numerous ways in which humans responded to climatic instability and their transformed environments. Rabett effectively demonstrates temporal and spatial variations in behaviour across Southeast Asia, thereby highlighting the need to compare and contrast regional cultural responses across Asia.

The concluding chapter (Chapter 8) nicely summarises the three main propositions made in the book, but it also expands upon them in a thoughtful conceptual model that centres on the underlying factors to be considered in understanding colonisation and re-colonisation events. The record of population

change in Southeast Asia is examined under four descriptive phases: transference (the initial exploitation of a new environment), diversification (the way in which a colonising population settles and adapts to a new setting), innovation (the relations between innovative behaviour and demography) and divergence (the evolution of existing knowledge domains into more locally pertinent ones).

In sum, this book is an excellent new contribution on the Late Pleistocene history of Southeast Asia. The book challenges archaeologists to think about how their regional records developed in response to external and internal influences, ultimately leading to, as Rabett aptly puts it, "a Pleistocene 'explosion' of new life ways" (p. 290).

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RUTH TRINGHAM & MIRJANA STEVANOVIĆ (ed.). *Last house on the hill: BACH area reports from Çatalhöyük, Turkey* (Monumenta Archaeologica 27). xxvii+594 pages, numerous b&w illustrations and tables. 2012. Los Angeles (CA): Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press; 978-1-931745-66-6 hardback \$76.



Edited by Tringham and Stevanović, this volume by the Berkeley Archaeologists @ Çatalhöyük (BACH) provides a valuable and detailed

account of the excavation of a single building from occupation to abandonment. As well as providing an interpretation of the house, the volume reveals much about methodology and excavation processes. Focusing on the principle of archaeological interpretation from the bottom up, the volume provides the reader with real insight into the benefits of a small-scale focus and provides justification for the detailed, analytical processes, and the pay-offs of the slow, meticulous approach which is characteristic of post-1990s Çatalhöyük excavations.

The main focus of the excavation was an entire house, Building 3, dating to c. 7000 BC. This building was contained entirely within the BACH excavation area, enabling a focus on architecture and the life-history of the house, its occupants and its immediate vicinity (including spaces 87–89 to the south). Rather than simply thinking of a whole 'house' or 'building horizon', the project explored continuity

and transformation of occupation, including repeated actions and the embedding of memories through daily and long-term activities.

The book is divided into easily navigable sections and, while it is a hefty publication, the approach of combining all the specialist reports and synthesis into a single volume works well. The publication is also available as an e-book which many users will undoubtedly find even easier to navigate (and transport!), with additional routes of data investigation, for instance, via links between photographic entries. There are numerous images included in the publication, which are generally of an exceptionally high quality (although some images may be considered surplus to requirement, e.g. a photograph of one of the digital cameras used on site). Data are presented clearly, although in places further information would aid understanding: for example, the excellent representation of change through time in Fig. 4.3 would have been clearer if accompanied by a key to the numbered features.

The context is clearly set out in Part 1 which deals with strategies of research, analysis and interpretation. This, in part, revisits the general Çatalhöyük strategy, along with variations in methods adopted by the BACH team; for instance, their decisions on digital recording, and their distinctive excavation strategy, which involved occasional deviation from single-context to simultaneous multiple-context excavation, enabling greater contextual understanding of particular features. The authors recognise the problems caused for the flow of information to specialists and, refreshingly, demonstrate how new methods can be simultaneously disruptive but valuable.

Chapter 4 finally turns to the results. Building 3 was the only house at the time of excavation with preserved roof remains, contributing to analyses of household space. Excavation provided evidence of repeated daily routines and a clear differentiation in the use of household space. Activities within the south-west section of the house included food storage, preparation, cooking and other 'messy' activities, whereas the central and north-east sections were reserved for 'cleaner' activities of sleeping, sitting and for occasions such as burials, presumably with accompanying rituals, and potentially the marking of other life events. Changes in use over time included an increase in domestic furniture, the increasing division of space and changes in access to the building.

Parts 3 (Human-environment relations) and 4 (Changing materialities) comprise specialist reports. Communication between excavators and 'specialists'

(a term used hesitantly by the authors as it implies a hierarchy of expertise) were strengthened through site tours two to three times a week. The specialists' reports are exceptionally detailed, although some chapters are more interpretative than others. They contain discussions of some of the remarkable finds, including the burial of a juvenile dog (Chapter 7), bifacial obsidian and flint blades (Chapter 19), wall paintings (Chapter 23) and an unusual deposit of almost 800 clay balls (Chapter 18). Consideration of colour and aesthetics in the choice of building and decoration material is observed by Matthews (Chapter 7), and the excavators describe the mirroring and pairing of items reflected in special deposits, often marking closure events (Chapter 4); these often included parts of animals and worked bone; in one instance, a flint dagger with a worked-bone handle had been deposited with bucrania and a human skull (Chapter 15). The individual analyses of diet, storage, fauna, plant-use and other aspects of daily life are successfully brought together in Chapters 4, 6 and 26.

Detailed accounts are provided of the burial data (including six post-Neolithic burials in Chapter 14), with the decision to 'reflex' the drawings of burials providing a more vivid and realistic impression of people rather than bones: "the images are meant to evoke a response to the skeleton as a person rather than as bones alone" (p. 300).

In true Çatalhöyük form, the evidence provides engaging examples of the blurring of ritual and domestic life, with household activities taking place within the same building as life (and death) events. Perhaps one of the most enigmatic finds is the closure deposit of two skulls (actually crania, without their mandibles), carefully placed facing each other at right angles, with their foreheads just touching.

The final chapters in Part 5 add an exciting dimension to the volume. They include chapters on public engagement and perception of the site (Chapter 25), different ways of seeing (Chapter 24) and sensing (Chapter 25) life at Çatalhöyük, as well as experimental archaeologies of replica house construction (Chapter 22) and wall painting (Chapter 23), ending with a discussion of digital data (Chapter 26). The replica house (which included wall paintings) provides a new way of communicating the evidence, and enables a more immediate understanding of the archaeological evidence for visitors. Additionally, the reconstruction processes provided insights into building and decorating techniques.

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Chapters 24 (seeing present and past in Çatalhöyük) and 25 (sensing the place of Çatalhöyük) complement each other, using imaginative and engaging narrative. They are compelling and emotive to read, while providing valuable new research methodologies and outcomes, both practical (e.g. in terms of enabling the excavator to visualise their excavation), and in terms of offering a tangible and experiential engagement with complex archaeological data and processes, such as movement around the house, daily tasks, seasonal activities, or the use of fire. Tringham also provides an engaging account of excavation life, and on a light-hearted note, it is reassuring to see the same fond memories of ‘second breakfast’ that seem to unite those that work in the region—it really is the best meal of the day!

The volume is a comprehensive and detailed account which demonstrates the value of interpretative methodologies and is therefore of interest to any archaeologist concerned with excavation and interpretative techniques, as well as extremely valuable to students and academics interested in this particular region and period. Perhaps, however, the biggest challenge yet awaits—incorporating this excavation’s findings into the interpretations of the broader Çatalhöyük project.

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DAVID R. HARRIS. *Origins of agriculture in western Central Asia*. 304 pages, 86 colour and b&w illustrations, 30 tables. 2010. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; 978-1-934536-16-2 paperback \$65 & £42.50.



While the domestication of plants and animals in south-west Asia and the subsequent spread of agricultural economies to the Mediterranean and Continental Europe have been the focus of the scientific community for several decades, patterns of diffusion towards

the east have remained more elusive. Except for a small number of sites on the eastern fringe of the Fertile Crescent, in the Zagros Mountains, and on the plains of south-western Iran, frustratingly little is known about when, how and why agricultural economies first appeared on the Iranian plateau and in south-west Central Asia. Harris’s book constitutes a major contribution to this question, taking in a vast region stretching from the Caspian Sea to the piedmonts of the Hindu Kush, and the steppes of southern Kazakhstan to the edge of the Iranian plateau.

The core of the book, divided into five parts and 12 chapters, consists of the detailed presentation of results obtained from surveys and excavations conducted by British archaeologists, in collaboration with Russian and Turkmen colleagues, in southern Turkmenistan from 1989 to 1998. Some of the results have been previously published but this is the first time that all the results are gathered into a single volume. Moreover, they are set in a wide perspective extending the theme of the origins of agriculture to adjacent regions. While 14 scholars, all renowned specialists in their domains, have contributed to the book, the general framework, as well as the important introduction and conclusion are the work of Harris. The participation of several authors induces a degree of heterogeneity into the volume, though this is compensated by the overriding question of the Mesolithic–Neolithic transition and its implications for human societies and their environment.

The first part of the book (Parts I–III, Chapters 1–7) sets the scene for the fieldwork described in detail in Part IV. An introductory chapter on the current environment gives an overview of the geography, climate and biodiversity of western Central Asia, illustrated by clear maps and black-and-white and colour photographs. The environmental changes which have occurred during the Pleistocene and Holocene are reconstructed mainly through the palaeohydrology of the Caspian and Aral Seas and of palaeosols. This chapter is clearly written and very useful for understanding the wider environmental and climatic context of late Palaeolithic and early Neolithic settlement. The two following chapters (3 & 4), elaborated by Harris together with Limbrey and Heathcote respectively, concern the local environments of the study sites in southern and western Turkmenistan. In particular, the description of the topography, soils and sediments allows the

reader to situate the sites in the landscape and to understand some of the reasons for their location.

After setting the environmental context, Part II, co-authored with Coolidge, is dedicated to the history of archaeological research in Central Asia (Chapter 5) and a summary of current knowledge of Mesolithic and Neolithic cultures (Chapter 6). The task is not easy, especially considering the large time span (Palaeolithic to Early Chalcolithic) and the vast geographical area (including adjacent regions of Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Iran) under consideration. Moreover, most of the early literature is written in Russian and difficult to access, with few publications summarising the large amount of data obtained during the intensive period of Soviet research before and after the Second World War. Despite these difficulties, the chapter constitutes a welcome introduction to the topic, most useful for the non-specialist, in order to grasp the main stages of archaeological research and its results. Nevertheless, the specialist of Central Asian prehistory will notice parts of the story are missing. For example, the history of research mainly discusses fieldwork carried out by Russian, American, British and Italian teams, largely ignoring that undertaken by French missions in Central Asia since the early 1980s (and since the 1920s if Afghanistan is included). In the same manner, the archaeology of adjacent regions (Uzbekistan, Afghanistan) is only partially treated using a small selection of references.

The presentation of Palaeolithic sites and sequences in Chapter 6 is deliberately limited, as the text focuses on the following Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, but important issues concerning this period in Central Asia seem to have been missed and could at least have been mentioned (e.g. Neanderthal/*Sapiens*, Levallois techniques, the appearance of blade production).

The largest part of the book (Chapters 8–10) deals with the British multidisciplinary work in Turkmenistan with a focus on the excavation of the Neolithic settlement of Jeitun, the earliest known agricultural village in Central Asia, dated to around 6000 BC. The site is situated at the interface between the Kopetdag piedmont zone and the Karakum Desert in the southern part of the country. Prior to the British investigations (1989–1994), Russian archaeologists, in particular V.M. Masson, had conducted several seasons of excavation at Jeitun in the 1950s and early 1960s. During the time-period separating these two phases of excavations, field and laboratory techniques as well as research

objectives evolved, motivating the adoption of a quite different field strategy. Thus, while the earlier work prioritised the exposure of large areas of the settlement, the later investigations aimed at more detailed understanding of the chronology, economy and environment of the Neolithic community. This was obtained through small-scale, fine-grained excavation, radiocarbon dating by AMS, systematic recovery of plant and animal remains, and the study of geo- and micro-morphological features, both on- and off-site. The results of the various archaeological-environmental approaches, as well as those obtained by the study of architecture and artefacts, are somewhat unevenly developed. For example, the description of the excavated architectural remains (Gosden) and the analysis of charred plant remains (Charles & Bogaard) are detailed, while other sections, such as those dedicated to faunal remains (Dobney & Jacques) or pollen and off-site charcoal (Harris) are more succinct, partly due to the preservation of remains. The study of the knapped stone assemblage (Conolly) is based on a limited number of pieces and would moreover have benefited from more thorough treatment of technological aspects.

Despite the small size of the excavation at Jeitun, and the somewhat disappointing results from the other archaeological sites described (e.g. in the Sumbar and Chandyr valleys), the research efforts summarised in the book contribute substantially to our knowledge of the Neolithic period in western Central Asia, providing a wealth of new and solid data. The integrated application of specialist techniques—some, such as phytolith analysis, representing the first time they have been used in Central Asia—permits a holistic discussion on the environment, economy and lifestyle of an early Neolithic village situated at the ecotone between piedmont and desert. The results are summarised by Harris in the fifth and final part of the volume where Jeitun is placed in its local, regional and supra-regional context. Here, the author draws together the evidence in a rich synthesis where he discusses the essence of the Jeitun Culture and its relation to other contemporary Neolithic horizons.

The concluding chapter comes back to the fundamental question of the origins of agriculture in western Central Asia. Here, the author discusses various scenarios and, even though he concludes that crop cultivation and livestock herding were probably introduced into Central Asia from the eastern Fertile Crescent slightly before 6000 BC, he ultimately leaves

the question open and stresses the need to validate his hypothesis with new research.

In a period when western Central Asia and adjacent regions are attracting the renewed attention of a broad international community of archaeologists, *Origins of agriculture* constitutes a fundamental contribution, presenting novel data, as well as brilliantly setting the scene for future research.

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DUNCAN GARROW & CHRIS GOSDEN. *Technologies of enchantment? Exploring Celtic art: 400 BC to AD 100*. xx+376 pages, 106 illustrations, 9 tables. 2012. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 98-0-19-954806-4 hardback £80.



This welcome volume sheds light on the spectacular body of Celtic art from Britain. The definition of ‘the Celts’ as an ethnic entity,

however, is a notoriously thorny problem; it follows that the definition of what constitutes ‘Celtic art’ is equally, if not more, problematic.

The volume is the result of a major AHRC-funded project that aimed to examine and re-analyse all Celtic art objects from Britain. The first two chapters of the volume begin impressively with a discussion of the issues of reciprocity and reproduction pertinent to the exchange of metalwork in the later Iron Age and Romano-British period, and the question of ‘social ontologies’. These chapters position the discussion of Celtic art in relation to wider questions relating to the agentic and ontological character of materials. The second chapter firmly introduces the major influence on the project, the work of the anthropologist Alfred Gell (1998), and his agency-centred account of art. The volume’s title is derived from an early paper by Gell (1992).

These opening chapters offer a useful starting point for discussions relating to the ontological nature of materials in non-Western societies. I welcome these discussions and believe that it is critical that we move beyond the limited empirical horizons outlined by Enlightenment thinkers, a legacy to which we are heirs in the modern West. I am unconvinced, however, that Gell’s work provides the best starting point for these

discussions, as the secondary agency he accords to artworks ultimately retains the division between active subjects and inert materials that the authors seek to question (see Holbraad 2009 for wider discussion; also Henare *et al.* 2007; Ingold 2007); indeed Gosden (2001: 164) has previously recognised this point.

Gell (1992) argues that skill of manufacture helps to invest artworks with the ability to dazzle, his ‘technology of enchantment’. For this reason, Chapter 4 discusses the technologies of making as a way into prehistoric ‘technologies of enchantment’. This chapter had enormous potential to demonstrate how and why materials worked to invest crafted artefacts with aesthetic and sensory appeal. The discussion, however, offers a fairly conventional description of bronze- and iron-working with little real discussion of the potency of materials. Like much of Gell’s work, the account is one-sided; material forms are the result of “social or cosmological rules” that “lay behind the patterning of where things were made and thrown away” (p. 107). In other words, materials have little real agency, their manufacture is the result of social and cosmological belief. The ontological distinction that Garrow and Gosden sought to question in the opening chapters has therefore been retained in their analysis. This is a shame, as metals are some of the most potent and mutable of materials. One wonders if the potency, potentiality and changeable character of metals had been incorporated into the analysis of their manufacture, how this would have invested Garrow and Gosden’s account with a novel understanding of material ontologies in the Late Iron Age and Romano-British period (see Conneller 2011 for such an account of practices of making in Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Europe).

The following chapters (5–8) deal with empirical aspects of the evidence including a discussion of swords, torcs and coins, with specific chapters focusing on hoards, burials and settlement deposits. Each chapter provides a detailed analysis of the patterns of deposition associated with different classes of material. The burial chapter (7) has several useful summaries of particularly important depositional contexts, including Kirkburn, East Yorkshire; Mill Hill, Kent; and Baldock, Hertfordshire, while the settlement chapter (8) likewise discusses in detail key sites such as Gussage All Saints, Dorset; Bury Hill, Hampshire; and Newstead, Melrose, Scottish Borders. In each case, the authors ask how Celtic art objects function. Curiously we find in Chapter 6 that many artefacts are argued to metaphorically

represent community as objects “reinforced or created the social” (pp. 255–56). This argument is also developed in the concluding chapter. This point is especially peculiar as it seems to return us to the kind of semiotic approaches that Gell’s analysis of artworks sought to critique.

To conclude, this volume offers a useful summation of approaches to Celtic art in Britain. It is a shame that one of the signal triumphs of this project—the radiocarbon dating of Celtic art—received little discussion in the volume; it would have been good to reconsider the significance of this body of material in the light of what are remarkably tight chronological boundaries and in relation to the European Iron Age sequence. Strangely, while seeking to investigate the parameters of Celtic art, the authors have retained the traditional idea of ‘Celtic art’ as being solely associated with metalwork. It would have been interesting to examine how decoration works in comparison to decorated ‘craft’ objects of pottery, bone and antler. While this is, in many ways, a landmark analysis, I believe it to be ultimately flawed as it relies too heavily on Gell’s theoretical underpinnings. If the authors truly wished to investigate the ontological character of materials, they needed to have paid more attention to the sensory and material qualities of the artefacts, thereby placing materials at the centre of their analysis. By doing so the authors might have loosened the boundaries between metalwork and other decorated materials, and more fully realised their stated aim (p. 5) of understanding the impact of the decorative arts in Late Iron Age and Romano-British social relations. Ultimately, we are left with the impression that ‘Celtic art’ objects worked to reproduce prestige identities, a conclusion that does little to unseat traditional assumptions.

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MICHAEL GREENHALGH. *Constantinople to Córdoba: dismantling ancient architecture in the East, North Africa and Islamic Spain*. xxviii+510 pages, 91 illustrations. 2012. Leiden & Boston (MA): Brill; 978-90-04-21246-6 hardback €177 & \$242.



Constantinople to Córdoba is the direct continuation, in both subject and chronological terms, of Greenhalgh’s previous three books: *The survival of Roman antiquities in the Middle Ages* (1989); *Islam and marble from the origins to Saddam Hussein* (2006); and *Marble past and monumental present: building with antiquities in the medieval Mediterranean* (2009). The present book considers spolia from the medieval period into the nineteenth century, when mass tourism began (p. xvii). The work is based principally on the accounts of travellers, which are reproduced as endnotes in the original language. As made clear by the author (p. xiii) this is the only way to provide objective material for the reader, free from personal (mis)interpretation.

Greenhalgh states that this book is a “catalogue interweaved with a running commentary, detailing the various ways in which antiquities were dismantled, destroyed and reused” (p. xxiv). The book is, however, much more than this. It is an objective reflection on how different cultures interacted with their pasts. The book therefore addresses directly the three ‘antagonisms’ of ruins outlined by Simmel (1958):

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the persistence of the past into the present, the contradiction of intended meanings and current interpretations, and the embodiment of ideas in things. There are certainly some challenges for this project, as clearly stated by the author: for instance, the fact that trajectories followed by individual societies are too many and too diverse to offer any coherent pattern, or that archaeological losses cannot be quantified. In selecting sites, one of the key criteria was the absence of continuous occupation, and therefore the preservation of archaeological evidence. Lack of preservation is the reason that Greenhalgh omits Western Europe, apart from Islamic Spain (p. 2), from the book. One aspect quite explicitly absent is any attempt at a symbolic reading of the material, although occasionally the data offer some opportunity to reflect on this issue too.

The book adopts a thematic approach, considering the different typologies of architectural reuse: changing townscapes, road-networks, water supply and leisure (e.g. baths), temples, theatres, city walls and rural villas, which were often transformed into settlements in the medieval period, at least in the West.

These themes are divided into three sections: 'Medieval landscape and its features' looks specifically at the wider landscape of urban and rural settlements and their connectivity through roads and ports. This section also contains an important analysis of quarries, which went out of use by the fourth century in the West, continuing until the sixth in the East (Sodini 2000). The cessation of quarrying is significant because many settlements consequently became stone quarries themselves, resulting in the physical relocation of decorated stone elements, on one hand, for recycling (with or without re-cutting in local marble workshops) and, on the other, for burning in lime kilns (pp. 55–60). The practice of burning marble elements (including statuary) for lime is well-recorded; it occurred as recently as 1860 in Crete (p. 59). Archaeologically, however, it is difficult to establish chronologies for these lime-burning activities and this remains a problem which limits our understanding of the dissolution of Roman towns. This section of the book is probably that of most interest for archaeologists working on the transformation of classical cities through to the present.

The second section of the book considers the physical destruction of the landscape and recycling. In particular, it examines the deconstruction of Roman monuments such as temples, porticoes and

colonnades in order to build churches, as well as wealthy private houses. Here, the discussion occasionally raises more complex issues, beyond the purely economic ones discussed in the previous section. It includes, for example, sections such as 'Recycling from churches: Moslem revenge or triumphalism?'; the ideological issues are discussed in terms of Christian symbols in Muslim monuments (through a case study of Mecca and Jerusalem, pp. 279–81) and the Muslim tradition reinterpreted in Christian contexts (through the conversions that took place after the 'Reconquista' in Spain, p. 278).

The third and final section of the book concerns the modern period, focusing on travelling and the creation of museum collections. The analysis considers both individuals and the broader political context of the colonial period. Particularly important and innovative in this respect are the sections focusing on the French invasion of Algeria and its use of the Roman past. For example, the French army excavated and reconstructed Roman archaeological sites, in particular fortresses of the province's Roman legion (*Legio III Augusta*), most famously at Lambaesis. Similarly, Roman triumphal arches became symbols of the French reconquest of North Africa (Dondin-Payre 1991, 1998; Oulebsir 2004).

Greenhalgh's book takes a broad-ranging approach: the archaeological evidence for changing post-classical urban forms and economic organisation in the medieval period, and the concept of heritage, its maintenance (or lack of), its use and reuse, and its societal value. The result offers a unique dataset that will be of significance for scholars working on diverse aspects of archaeology, medieval tradition and cultural heritage. The book is a thorough and intelligent analysis of the varied attitudes towards, and fate of, spolia in medieval and modern times—a work of invaluable significance. It also contains a comprehensive and impressive thematic bibliography.

Perhaps one of the clearest themes to emerge from this study is the marked difference between settlement development in East and West, so different as to have had a substantial impact on the evolution of the landscape. As Greenhalgh observes (p. 421) for Europe we have tended to talk about *the* transformation of the Roman world, while in the East, where monuments have survived much longer and the phenomenon of reuse and recycling continues more evidently into modern times, the story becomes more complex and difficult to characterise in such a uniform way. He goes

on to suggest (p. 423) that perhaps examining the trajectories of ancient monuments in the Eastern world in more recent times can provide some insight into what happened to the same types of monuments in medieval Europe—an insightful suggestion to take forward with future research.

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D. BLAIR GIBSON. *From chieftdom to state in early Ireland*. 341 pages, 81 b&w illustrations, 26 maps, 15 tables. 2012. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-107-01563-0 hardback £65.



The title of this handsomely produced book will have specialists in the archaeology and history of proto-historic and (early) medieval Ireland salivating, but those

who shell out the hefty sum of £65 (or €77 if they

live in the eurozone) without prior inspection will be sorely disappointed at yet another monograph with a title that promises more than is—or can be—delivered. This is a book about the archaeology and history of one county, Clare, halfway down Ireland's western seaboard, and for the most part is not even a study of the whole of that county. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a book devoted to a *purported* transition from 'chieftdom' to 'state' in Clare—the title alludes to a hypothesis rather than established fact—but a sub-title should have been added by the publisher for clarity for cash-starved academics.

Readers on the eastern side of the Atlantic will probably feel that the book needed a sub-title for scholarly accuracy too. Its author, D. Blair Gibson, an archaeologist who teaches anthropology in California, is firmly of the American processual tradition, and so is content to hop around the world and cross both cultural and chronological boundaries for truths about 'primitive' and 'complex' societies which might inform the creation of a grand narrative that clamps later prehistoric Clare to later medieval Clare. It is easy with such an intellectual worldview to see Clare as the quintessence of 'Gaelic' Ireland, and to that extent the book's title is not problematical and will not be so regarded by consumers of American anthropological-archaeological literature, but on this side of the pond the grand narratives which processual archaeology facilitates are less warmly received, and few would believe that a model developed for Clare could explain the island as a whole. If Gibson pulls up very slightly short of making so sweeping an assertion in his text, the back-cover blurb—"[t]his book tracks the development of social complexity in Ireland from the late prehistoric period into the Middle Ages"—more than compensates.

Irish archaeologists at least will anticipate a book on Clare, knowing that Gibson has spent many years working in and thinking about the Burren, and they will welcome this work as the summation of a project with started life with, as he tells us in his preface, a visit more than 30 years ago to one of the Burren's greatest archaeological sites, Cahercommaun, the cliff-edge fort excavated by Hugh O'Neill Hencken in 1934. Cahercommaun dominates the first half of the book, the half that brings us to Brian Bóroimhe (or Bóruma, or simply Bóru) and the era of power-plays between very powerful regional kings. In this first half, Gibson sets out the theoretical underpinnings of his chieftdom-to-state thesis, explains the field-survey

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methodologies by which he attempted to capture the extent of the first millennium territories, and presents a chronology of forts (and, by extension, a chronology of settlement) from AD 550–1450.

His defence of the ‘chiefdom’ as an appropriate conceptualisation of early political-territorial social coherence is very strong; Irish readers should not dismiss this as an Americanism—I am anticipating a reaction, perhaps unfairly!—but engage with what he is attempting to do, and recognise its roots in Colin Renfrew’s important work of the 1970s. Much less strong is his suggested chronology of settlement contemporary with his purported chiefdoms (Chapter 5). Fabric analysis of unmortared stone forts may tell us more about the predilection of individual builders (and the quality of limestone they could prise from the karst pavements) than it does about the passage of time. Moreover, the suite of radiocarbon dates is too few in number and comes from too limited a series of sites. In fairness, Gibson sets out his arguments carefully, so others with a liking for regression analysis and seriation may be convinced, but my ‘I-doubt-this’ needle shot straight into the red zone long before I reached Table 5.6, his tabulated summary of the early medieval chronology.

Gibson’s account of his attempts to reconstruct the ancient territorial polities by collecting macro- and micro-scale field-data reminds us of how processual archaeology is nothing if not pathologically optimistic; territories are conceptual spaces, and many would hold the view that we should have no expectation that their boundaries are detectable by walking outwards from their cores, mapping enclosures and other features, but that is precisely the approach taken here. He has certainly generated a lot of very valuable landscape data, and Burren specialists must surely be in his debt, but one has to judge its value to territorial reconstruction as severely limited. And the physical difficulties experienced by what he describes as his field ‘crews’—now, that’s an Americanism!—were as they should have been predicted: the Burren can be inhospitable, and the crews were never likely to retrieve data when walls disappeared into thickets, even armed as they were with machetes. Reconstructions of territories are presented here, and they are sensible and not unconvincing, but they depend far more on Gibson’s use of historical-geographical techniques (such as working backward from later sources) than on his archaeological data.

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The second half of the book brings us from the ninth and tenth centuries up to the end of the Middle Ages, and brings us into the lowlands of southern Clare, and brings us into the lowlands of southern Clare, a geographical reorientation that startles briefly before the Burren reappears. The archaeological content is actually very slight here; Gibson’s arguments about the ‘primitive Irish state’ and its development through to the seventeenth century are built on historical sources. The cross-disciplinary perspective is important, though inevitably readers of the first half of the book will find it difficult to evaluate the content of the second half and *vice versa*. I found the omission of Luke McNerney’s work on later Clare, its families and land-holding systems, somewhat surprising. His work is germane to Gibson’s interests.

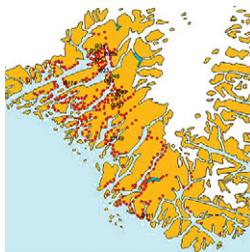
Does this book convince in its general arguments? On the whole, it does, warts and all (and it is the archaeology in and around Chapter 5 that carries the most warts). It certainly contributes to our developing knowledge of social and territorial recalibrations at the end of the first millennium. Whether this is best understood as a transition from ‘chiefdom’ to ‘state’ is a trickier issue, but it is a good model, a good way of thinking, and for that at least the fruit of Gibson’s many years in Clare deserves the attention of serious scholars of first millennium Ireland.

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JETTE ARNEBORG, JAN HEINEMEIER & NIELS LYNNERUP. *Greenland Isotope Project: diet in Norse Greenland AD 1000–AD 1450* (JONA Special Volume 3). 2012. Steuben (ME): Journal of the North Atlantic; ISSN 1935-1984 ebook.



The Greenland Isotope Project provides a long-term perspective on Norse adaptation and dietary economy from carbon and nitrogen isotope analyses of human and animal bone collagen. Multiple factors contribute to the uniqueness of this isotopic study including the arctic to subarctic climate, the contrast in subsistence economies between the Thule and Norse populations, and the limited availability of plant food resources and

multiple factors contribute to the uniqueness of this isotopic study including the arctic to subarctic climate, the contrast in subsistence economies between the Thule and Norse populations, and the limited availability of plant food resources and

concomitant reliance on animal protein (and fat) for metabolic energy. The researchers have taken the limitations and opportunities provided by this combination of factors and produced a fascinating study of dietary change and adaptation in the context of the Norse colonisation and settlement of Greenland.

The first chapter is an informative introduction to the Norse settlement of Greenland and detailed descriptions of the sampled sites and their archaeological context. Chapter 2 presents the isotopic measurements of the hunted wild animals of Greenland. These results mostly correspond to expectations, but the patterning and variation of these isotopic values highlight the necessity of developing isotopic food web data-sets for interpretations of human dietary isotope data. Chapter 3 presents the results of the dietary study of the Greenlandic Thule culture, which is not only interesting in its own right but also essential for assessing Greenlandic Norse diet, as the Thule data provide a direct estimate of isotope signals from a population whose diet is entirely focused on wild animal resources. Chapter 4 provides an assessment of the isotopic results presented in the previous chapter through comparative analyses of the isotopic, zooarchaeological and artefactual data-sets. Despite the limitations and complexities of comparing these highly disparate datasets, they are generally in very good agreement but vary to some extent in terms of the relative importance of different dietary components for some regions and sites. Chapter 5 presents the isotope food web of the domestic animals raised by the Greenland Norse. The isotope results indicate clear differences between certain species and relatively homogenous isotope values within species, albeit with some minor exceptions. More importantly, the isotope food web data obtained from the domestic and wild animals permit quantitative estimations of the relative contributions of terrestrial *versus* marine food sources to Norse diets.

Chapter 6 presents the results of the isotope analyses of the diet of the Greenland Norse themselves, the primary focus of the overall project. Some of the most informative conclusions are: that the Norse diet overall included roughly similar proportions of hunted and domestic animal food sources; that the Eastern settlement was somewhat more marine-focused than the Western settlement; and that there were large dietary differences between individuals that were unrelated to either sex or age. One example

of a clear dietary distinction was evident amongst individuals suspected to have been first-generation migrants to Greenland. These dietary differences are of great interest to archaeological migration studies in general because they highlight the possibility that certain individuals may be identifiable as immigrants based on their distinctive dietary isotope signals.

Chapter 7 not only summarises the archaeological interpretations and implications of all of the isotope results but also incorporates other lines of evidence, particularly radiocarbon dates from human skeletal samples, to provide a detailed discussion of Greenlandic Norse dietary patterns. In terms of temporal variation in dietary economy, several interesting patterns were identified. The consideration of chronological data indicated that many of the earliest samples also had the most terrestrial-based diets in the overall data-set and that the apparent regional differences in diet between the Eastern and Western settlements were more likely to be the result of a temporal shift towards greater reliance on marine resources over time. In terms of a larger regional perspective, the overall human isotope dataset from the Greenlandic Norse indicates a more diverse diet relative to contemporaneous populations from Northern Europe but that this variation was reduced over time.

This work is an excellent example of how integrated isotope studies can shed new light on questions of dietary adaptations, permit quantitative dietary reconstructions, and allow for dietary investigations at the scale of individuals. A few of the more notable strengths of this study include the large scale of the isotope data-set, not only in terms of the number of samples but also the wide range of different regions, sites, and time periods; the explicit focus on food web reconstructions, as only through isotopic assessment of potential food resources is it possible to make fine-grained, quantitative assessments of human diet; the incorporation of multiple lines of evidence and the clear attempt at maintaining a balance between under- and over-interpretation of the available data; and the careful attention to the possible relationship between differential origins and diets, as these potential links are understudied aspects of isotope research in general. A few questions and problems raised by this study remain unresolved. For example, the authors make the reasonable assumption that plant foods did not substantially contribute to Greenlandic Norse diet and thus these are not assessed in this study. Carbon isotopes in bone apatite have been shown to be

reflective of whole diet, in contrast to collagen which is primarily reflective of dietary protein. Therefore, the consumption of plant foods (or lack thereof) can in principle be tested via carbon isotope analysis of bioapatite. Additionally, there is clearly a problem with the estimated nitrogen value of the terrestrial dietary end-member, and the authors provide several possible hypotheses to explain this anomaly. Resolving this issue is important not only for quantification of the relative contributions of different dietary sources but also for addressing possible Norse adaptations. In addition, in principle it should be possible to further investigate the origins of the proposed immigrants via multiple isotope analyses (e.g. strontium, oxygen) of their dental enamel.

In summary, this work will be of great value to those interested in detailed explorations of the dynamics of migration, adaptation and dietary change or comparative human ecology more generally. These topics and themes are of broader significance than just the North Atlantic region or isotope studies of diet and are relevant to a wide array of other archaeological contexts.

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JAMES H. BARRETT (ed.). *Being an islander: production and identity at Quoygreu, Orkney, AD 900–1600*. xiv+366 pages, 157 colour and b&w illustrations, 44 tables. 2012. Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research; 978-1-902937-61-8 hardback £56.



In his preface, James Barrett explains that in 2008 he was faced with the choice of writing up the excavations at Quoygreu or producing a thematic text on economic production and insular

identity. With the pressures of the Research Evaluation Framework (REF), this tension will be familiar to many in UK academic life; in the end Barrett chose to try to do both in one volume. How far has he succeeded?

Firstly, let us consider the excavation report. The farmstead at Quoygreu was founded in the Viking

Age as part of settlement expansion on the island of Westray, Orkney, not far from the better-known Norse cemetery at Pierowall. It consists of two settlement mounds: one on the shoreline and the second c. 50m inland; each comprised superimposed buildings and middens. The immediate landscape includes a landing place, a rocky foreshore (where the occupants could have gathered shellfish and seaweed), cultivated infields (for barley, oats and flax), meadows for fodder, and hill grazing. The site was excavated under the auspices of the Viking Age Transitions Project from 1997–2005; the length of its occupation—from AD 900–1600—gives the site its particular importance.

Much of this volume is a standard excavation report, following the usual format. The stratigraphic sequence is presented first and justified in detail. Later robbing evidently made this a complex excavation, and dating of Orcadian Norse sites is notoriously difficult given the paucity of datable finds. Nonetheless, the development of the site is presented in terms of four main phases, and reconstruction drawings help us to visualise how the farm would have appeared in each. Phase 1, the early Viking Age, is represented by midden deposits only; it was unclear to me whether identification of contemporary structures was prevented by consolidation and presentation of the later structures for Historic Scotland, or whether there was simply no trace. The first excavated structure is assigned to Phase 2 and dated to the eleventh or twelfth centuries: it comprised a small building near the shore, contemporary with the inland farm mound. In Phase 3 it was superseded by a larger three-room structure built over it c. 1200, which became the focus of settlement for the next 200 years. Finally, in Phase 4, a fourth room was added c. 1400, but retained the existing central dwelling space until the farm was demolished in the sixteenth century.

The excavation featured an extensive environmental sampling programme to facilitate systematic recovery of shells, bones, botanical macrofossils and sediments. In total, 1354 flotation samples and 610 coarse sieving samples were taken, producing 52.5kg of fish bone; over 86 000 fish bones were examined. The fish remains fit the typical North Sea pattern of intensive and extensive fishing from the eleventh to thirteenth/fourteenth centuries, followed by a shift to moderate fishing of inshore species in the later Middle Ages. The mammal bone assemblage is dominated by domestic species—sheep/goat and cattle, as well as some pigs. Some horses were eaten, and occasional

sea mammals; sea birds were also seasonally exploited, for meat, feathers and eggs. The artefacts are covered via individual chapters on stone, bone and antler, metal, ceramics and glass. The finds are presented and illustrated in full and each chapter features its own discussion. Clearly this was a major team effort, and the contribution of the finds specialists and excavators is fulsomely acknowledged.

Barrett 'tops and tails' this fairly standard but important report with introductory and concluding chapters which focus on the dialectic of isolation and interconnectedness, and consideration of how far Quoygrew was locked into wider economic trends of boom and bust. He dismisses world systems theory with its outdated core-periphery models as inappropriate and neo-colonial. He looks instead to post-colonial theory and network analysis. He emphasises the role of individual site case studies in meta-narratives and reminds us that the majority of people in the Viking Age were rural, although the archaeological emphasis has been on urban centres. He makes the case for studying the ebb and flow of long-range connection and ethnic identity at one farm on Orkney as a means of revising our broader understanding of economic and social trends. For Barrett there is an explicit emphasis on economic production rather than consumption, and the importance of a surplus of fish as a driver of socio-economic change.

Barrett's narrative tells of the construction of a 'Scandinavian diaspora community' in Viking Age Orkney. Quoygrew was probably founded as one household with a multifocal settlement, and later became a tenant farm of a large estate, but could have been so from the start. The first phase is marked by changes to the Orcadian way of life with greater use of maritime resources, and imported stone artefacts from Norway. This self-consciously Norse culture continues into the eleventh to thirteenth centuries when Quoygrew is aceramic, despite local pottery being used in contemporary sites in Caithness. These are the boom years and Quoygrew thrives just as much as the more densely populated urban centres of Europe. Barrett postulates more intensive fishing and agricultural production accompanied by demographic growth. He is less sure that fishing supported a major export trade as well, although he argues that imported goods point to it, possibly via major nodes in Kirkwall and Bergen. The boom is followed by economic collapse in the thirteenth century, predating the major plagues to the south,

with a decline of fishing, greater reliance on small-scale arable agriculture and reduction in external connections. This is accompanied by cultural change; by 1400 the house would no longer have been recognisable as a Norse hall, and was remodelled based on the medieval architecture of England. This decline is also linked to the end of the political dominance of the Norse Earls of Orkney and the decline, in the face of Scottish and Norwegian royal power, of the 'pirate fisherman' who farmed in the summer and went raiding in the spring and autumn.

The result of Barrett's choice is certainly a very attractively produced excavation monograph, and synthetic chapters which should be read widely, although these risk not getting the broader exposure they deserve. Whilst the excavation data provides the basis for the interpretation, more general readers may feel swamped by masses of printed and often tabular detail. At the risk of peddling a personal hobbyhorse, I wonder if alternative models might provide better options and whether a more synthetic journal article supported by digital supplementary material might not have served both needs more effectively, but this is nit-picking. Barrett should be complimented for bringing a major fieldwork project to timely publication, for a masterly historical narrative of Orkney, and for giving us food for thought on the importance of rural excavations and economic data in our understanding of the key driving forces in Viking and medieval worlds.

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STEPHEN RIPPON. *Making sense of an historic landscape*. xviii+396 pages, 108 b&w & colour illustrations, 27 tables. 2012. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-953378-7 hardback £80.



This book deals with the fascinating question of how cultural landscapes are formed over the long term, and why neighbouring regions can have quite different characteristics. These questions are addressed through a case-study of the Blackdown Hills in south-west England, the area where the three counties of Devon, Somerset

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and Dorset meet. The author lays out his agenda in the introduction: in addition to exploring the development of landscape character, he aims to break down unhelpful disciplinary boundaries, “to go beyond the traditional focus of landscape archaeologists and historical geographers” (p. 4) by exploring aspects like the perception of past landscapes, and to illustrate, explain and discuss the research process “rather than simply presenting the results of this work as a *fait accompli*” (p. 315).

The author begins by highlighting some of the long recognised differences in landscape character on either side of these hills, for example the dispersed settlement patterns to the west compared to the nucleated villages to the east. He sets out to examine a series of related questions through chapters that can be grouped roughly under the themes of landscape character (Chapters 2–7), ancient territories (Chapters 8–10) and environmental data (Chapters 11–13). Each of these sections deals with overlapping periods that are progressively further back in time, though other relationships between the material they consider are not always made clear (e.g. why early medieval administration should affect later landscape character). Chapter 14 argues that the differences in landscape character on either side of the Blackdown Hills may stretch back into later prehistory.

This overall argument is made successfully: there are distinctive differences in landscape character between Devon and the counties to the east, and these differences have developed over the long term. The book’s success in achieving its other aims is more mixed. It does integrate data gathered from various sub-disciplines effectively, especially in the later chapters on palaeoecology and palaeoeconomy, where the author presents an original synthesis for much of south-west England. The value of this section could be further increased by online publication of the supporting database so that it is accessible for detailed scrutiny. Research from other disciplines is less securely integrated; for example, the historical evidence for land-use only gets five pages as a “rapid assessment of some easily accessible documentary sources” (p. 220). Similarly, despite much research on the perception of landscapes over the last decade by cultural geographers and landscape scholars, little attempt is made to engage with the experience of people who lived in the Blackdowns in the past. Aside from a single page on folklore, Chapter 3 briefly summarises past perception of landscape using only

the (external) views of early modern topographers and the author’s own ‘drive-through surveys’.

Another stated aim—to explain the research process—is not helped by the rapid surveys which are a feature of the book. Many chapters would have benefited from greater engagement with the fascinating material under discussion, including those on vernacular architecture, landscape character, settlement patterns and documentary history. Here, in the present review, some words will be focused on the use of historic landscape character (HLC) since the reviewer’s earlier work on Devon receives particular attention (pp. 55, 111, 117, 318, 343). Analysis and criticism of this work is both necessary and welcome. The verdict, however, that the Devon HLC project was mistaken to suggest there could once have been extensive strip fields in Devon, is based on just nine lines of analysis (p. 145) and maps of one small valley (Figs. 7.4–5). In place of detailed critique and substantive examples to illustrate his argument, the author proffers an alternative morphological characterisation, despite stated caveats about what it signifies (p. 128), and presents some very contentious assertions, for example that much of the enclosed farming landscape in Devon dates back to the early medieval period (p. 129) though, to date, there is no firm evidence to support this idea. Another observation concerns Rippon’s declaration that the results of the Devon and Somerset county HLCs, sponsored by English Heritage, cannot be compared, necessitating the creation of his own version (pp. 55–56); this suggests he did not consult the Devon HLC methodology (available online) or the original database (available in Devon County Council’s Historic Environment Record) which make clear that the Devon HLC data were structured so that they can be presented in *exactly* the same way as the Somerset data. Indeed, it is curious that the author makes no reference to the Devon HER, since this resource provides the most extensive database for the cultural heritage of the Blackdown Hills, including elements that have contributed significantly to landscape character, for example the Roman and later iron-working industries.

Given the high cover price, the production quality of this volume is disappointing. There are only 10 colour illustrations, bunched together in the middle of the book; nine of the maps here lack north arrows. Typographical mistakes are fairly frequent (with examples on the first page, and in the first caption) and the bibliography needed further editing

(Aileen Fox and Alan Fox appear under the same entry; Harold Fox has various sets of initials).

Despite these problems, there is no doubt that this book will have lasting value as a starting point for work on this landscape region. The author is entirely right to promote the value of an integrated landscape characterisation method that draws on many different sources. Those interested in the past landscapes of south-west England must hope that he will continue to invest his considerable skills in the landscape history of the Blackdown Hills, and follow up many of the intriguing lines of enquiry he has embarked upon in this volume.

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PHILIPPE BEAUJARD. *Les mondes de l'océan Indien. Tome 2: l'océan Indien, au coeur des globalisations de l'Ancien Monde (7^e–15^e siècle)*. 799 pages, 105 colour and b&w illustrations. 2012. Paris: Armand Colin; 978-2-200-27709-3 hardback €65.



This 580-page volume, the second in an intended series of three, asserts the importance of a variety of exchanges, and linkages between markets and political power, in the Indian Ocean realm in the pre-

1500 era. These were driven by the evolving Indian Ocean maritime spice trade and inclusive of the central Asian steppes Silk Road passageway, as the central space in an Afro-Eurasian world system, c. 600–1400. The book is notable for its detailed attention to the variety of Indian Ocean regions, including consideration of the latest archaeology, case studies and analytical synthesis. Its extensive bibliography is impressive, and provides a substantive base for serious scholarship. Specialists in one Indian Ocean region can fruitfully use this book as a single source to situate their nodal region within the wider networked space. The book benefits from its author's research credentials as a student of the eastern African coastline and its hinterlands, which have been inadequately considered in most of the past Indian Ocean literature. This is unusual in that

the author, an expert with a focus on Madagascar and Africa, includes that area to a greater extent than has previously been common while still preserving balance with the other regions and peoples involved; this enhances the reader's understanding of the varied and dynamic forces that helped to define the ebb and flow of Afro-Eurasian participation in Indian Ocean-based maritime trade.

The multi-volume project builds on the author's conception of four economic cycles, in most cases coincidental to political transitions that derive from periods of accumulation and decline, as defined by human initiatives but also by environmental, demographic and technological factors. While Volume 1 addressed the earlier evolution of humanity, centring on the Christian era to the sixth century AD (Period One), Volume 2 reconstructs three subsequent eras. Beaujard's Period Two, c. 500–900, considers the regional cores and peripheries of Tang China, the Pallava and Rastrakuta realms of India, and the Ummayyad, Abbasid and Byzantine domains of south-west Asia. Period Three, c. 900–1400, addresses Song and Yuan China, Chola south India and the Delhi Sultanate southern and northern regions of India (as the author perceives India to consist of "cells of a multi-centered heart", p. 542), and the Seljuk, Ilkkanate and Egyptian cores in the Middle East. Period Four in this volume focuses on the transitional fifteenth century (in contrast to the intended third volume of the set that will address the inclusive c. 1400–1800 era), and includes Ming China, Gujarat, Bengal, the Deccan and Vijayanagara (south) India; Egypt and the Ottoman and Safavid realms and their western Indian Ocean connections.

The author argues the essential role of these cores in stimulating a variety of commodity and ideational production and exchanges in and between adjacent and networked secondary regions, as for example coastal Africa and Southeast Asia, in "processes of coevolution" (p. 538). China is portrayed as the pivotal core throughout the three focal eras of Volume 2. Arguably, cyclical agrarian progress and contraction in China (and elsewhere) were the vital stimuli throughout the c. 500–1500 era. Agrarian progress and technological changes in particular supported population growth, which led to increased urbanism—notably the emergence of metropolises, which were agents of intensified relationships with internal and external regions and wider societal transformations. Variable divisions of labour emerged in these new 'connected societies' which, in turn,

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were critical to the 'agricultural state' developments. Highlighted technological changes and transfers in agriculture included the regular use of iron ploughs and, in the case of China, the widespread introduction of transplanted wet-rice agriculture during the Song era. Other major innovations that had marketing and societal consequence included the dyeing of textile warp threads—that was foundational to sophisticated weaving industries—porcelain, axial ship rudders, paper and printing. The author draws on 'hydraulic society' literature to link significant agricultural development to the construction of water reservoirs throughout the Indian Ocean realm, both as water sources and as guards against annual flooding, as these also dictated the increased need for regularised water system management. The book takes a Marxist historical track in arguing that the increasingly diversified potentials for widespread prosperity led to rising societal inequalities, variously driven by new 'cores of production' that were foundational to complex marketplace economics, and dictated supportive state and state bureaucratic management partnerships. Radical economic and societal changes also sustained new religious communities, which were the sources of new philosophical and religious doctrines (e.g. Neo-Confucianism, Bhakti Hinduism and Islam).

The book is notable for its attention to merchant diaspora and the multiple types of linkage of merchants with rulers, clerics and societal elite, as these relationships sustained the circulation of goods and services. The author highlights several maritime military expeditions by rulers to promote and protect their trading interests, though these links were not sustained or institutionalised. Downward regional spirals were set in motion by natural disasters and poor climatic conditions (i.e. the seventh and eighth centuries, the end of the tenth century and the early fourteenth century), as these non-human influences were critical factors in 'shaping' and determining the ebb and flow of Indian Ocean trade in each of the three periods, as were invasions, declines in urbanism due to increased internal dissent, social detachments and, above all, the over-extensions of empires. Administrative and military overhead in bad times brought higher taxes, reactive internal disturbance and resulting decentralisation.

In sum, this is a valuable book in its challenge to Eurocentrist historiography, in its sweeping study of the c. 600–1500 Indian Ocean-centred Afro-Eurasian networked system. The book is divided into three

sections: the first on the boom and bust cycles in the sixth to tenth centuries; the second from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, with a cyclical contraction during roughly the last 150 years of that cycle (though against this, note the prosperous India–Southeast Asia trade in the fourteenth century, notable for the era of Majapahit authority in Java and the strategic importance of the Straits of Melaka passageway); and the third addresses the fifteenth century. While the book is subtle in its presentation of details, its undercurrent is ultimately summarised on pages 537–46, which provides an overview of the book's systemic logic. This summary in itself is mandatory reading, as it raises significant issues relative to the current conceptualisation of pre-1500 Indian Ocean networking. The multi-volume set is a significant contribution to the field of Indian Ocean maritime history. It is accessible, provocative, benefits from high quality illustrations and graphics, and provides a window to the variety of sources and revisionist histories of the wider Indian Ocean realm.

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STÉPHEN ROSTAIN. *Islands in the rainforest. Landscape management in pre-Columbian Amazonia*. 277 pages, 70 b&w illustrations. 2013. Walnut Creek (CA): Left Coast; 978-1-59874-634-1 hardback \$89.



Long awaited by those who know Stéphane Rostain's research, the publication of *Islands in the rainforest* is an unquestionably important milestone in the recent scholarship on Amazonian

archaeology. This volume offers an insightful, erudite and well-integrated account of the archaeology of the Guianas, one that elaborates conclusively the position of this broad region as part of pre-Columbian Amazonia. Graced by Phillipe Descola's ethnological opening note, the volume consists of an introduction, five engaging chapters that convincingly build up the book's argument, and an epilogue that takes stock of broader issues in Amazonian studies. A small number of involuntary typos and gaffes, which might have been caught by the proof-readers of Left Coast Press, in no way affects the volume's merits.

The introduction succinctly sets out the book's research aims. First, it questions the premise that pre-Columbian Amazonian populations were non-sedentary, lacked food and lacked social hierarchies; next, it sets out in comparative perspective how agricultural techniques based on water management were used by pre-Columbian populations to colonise open landscapes, especially seasonally-flooded savannahs. The balance between these two strands—a critical appraisal of the ethnographic record and the presentation of evidence of pre-Columbian agricultural engineering—frames the broad outline of the book. Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive overview of different forms of landscape modification in pre-Columbian times, as well as a review of different agricultural techniques used in Amazonia today. The chapter is dotted with excellent information and pulls together some of the most intriguing case studies from a wide-ranging literature (albeit occasionally reporting received opinion instead of established fact, e.g. pre-Columbian cultivation of *terras pretas*). Chapter 2 prepares the stage for subsequent chapters by providing a geographical overview of the Guianas, that is, the broad region encompassing the Venezuelan Guayana region, the nation-states of Guyana and Suriname, the French overseas region known as Guyane (French Guiana), and the Brazilian states of Roraima and Amapá. Placed at the forefront of this review are questions about the landscape's suitability for human inhabitation, especially as seen from ethnographic and ethnohistorical evidence. The chapter, which then unpacks for the reader different aspects of pre-Columbian raised fields, eventually pops the question of whether the patterned landscape features observed in the savannah areas of the Guianas are natural phenomena or can be interpreted as pre-Columbian agricultural features. In line with this discussion, the chapter evaluates the case for the widespread distribution of 'cultural forests' (those that show anthropic influence on their species composition) in Amazonia. Noting that the region's pre-Columbian human populations were not homogeneously distributed in space or time, Rostain trims to size suggestions that much of the Amazon rainforest can be said to be a cultural product.

Chapter 3 examines the Guianas' broad human history—from the terminal Pleistocene to European colonisation—in the broader context of Amazonia. While Rostain's reading of archaeological evidence for the first half of the Holocene occasionally

takes for granted suggestions that still require more robust demonstration (e.g. the Palaeoindian classification of the undated Sipaliwini complex; the early Holocene domestication of *Bactris gasipaes*; the systematic deliberate burning of interior savannahs), it is his analysis of the later Holocene that will leave no student of Amazonian archaeology indifferent. Here, Rostain reports unpublished studies of artefacts from museums, offers an authoritative and panoramic overview of some of the most important ceramic traditions of the lowlands, and elaborates the suggestion that the rise of larger and more complex populations in regions adjacent to cultivable floodplains resulted in the displacement of existing small-scale cultivators into the interfluvial regions that they inhabit today. The reader will also find in this chapter a neat summary of the main techniques of agricultural subsistence used in the Amazon basin.

For the reader now familiar with the branching paths that build up to Rostain's argument, it is Chapter 4 that offers the breath-taking view from a *tepuí* table-top. Here Rostain provides by far the most comprehensive overview in print of the cultural, historical and landscape dimensions of raised field agriculture in the coastal savannahs of the Guianas, drawing both on his own research in French Guiana and comparative and difficult-to-access data from Suriname. Like the whole book, it is carefully illustrated with excellent greyscale photographs, figures and maps (alas, some printed far too small). This chapter provides one of the most detailed archaeological analyses of pre-Columbian raised fields in lowland South America. It is also here where Rostain's in-depth knowledge of the archaeological sequence of the Guianas serves as the foundation for stimulating archaeological hypotheses. In particular, he offers an important and sophisticated set of archaeological inferences about the nature of settlement hierarchies in the Guianas, one that will no doubt inspire future research in the region. The chapter ends by reporting recent research on the plants cultivated in raised fields and cautious estimates of the population size they could have supported. Chapter 5 offers a second and unexpected summit. It revisits evidence for pre-Columbian raised fields from the comparative perspective of colonial period landscape management in the Guianas. Aside from strengthening the substantive case for considering raised field remnants as evidence for pre-Columbian engineering, the chapter is an excellent account of seldom noticed aspects of the colonial history of

Suriname and French Guiana; as Rostain contends, his narrative is a counterpoint to historiographies of the region marked by post-colonial shame. Consistent with its focus on recent times, this chapter provides a final summary of the results of recent interdisciplinary research into the particular factors that explain the preservation of pre-Columbian raised fields.

The concluding chapter summarises the argument of the book, highlighting that both romantic and infernal images of Amazonia must give way to the growing archaeological picture that the landscape was creatively modified for agricultural purposes, and adding empirical weight to arguments suggesting higher population densities existed prior to European colonisation. Rostain, an advocate of interdisciplinary research, reminds us that the empirical evidence for raised field agriculture in the coastal zone of the Guianas was met with widespread scepticism only 20 years ago. The publication of *Islands in the rainforest* offers his substantive case against this scepticism, one that provides a comprehensive account of the extent and characteristics of raised fields as well as an insightfully argued reconstruction of the historical trajectory of pre-Columbian village life in north-eastern South America. By virtue of extending Amazonian enquiry to encompass the Guianas—based on archaeological, ethnographic and geographical arguments—Rostain's book certainly deserves to feature as an essential reading for university courses on Amazonian archaeology. For those engaged in research in the tropical lowlands of South America, Rostain's book is no doubt a worthy addition to specialist libraries, to be placed either alongside classic works on pre-Columbian agricultural engineering, or among archaeological studies of the Orinoco, the Guianas and Marajó Island. Whether placed on one shelf or another, it is no exaggeration to state that the publication of this book constitutes a major leap forward in the field, one that conclusively demonstrates that agricultural engineering was a key aspect of pre-Columbian livelihoods in the flooding savannahs of north-eastern Amazonia.

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PATRICK V. KIRCH. *A shark going inland is my chief: the island civilization of ancient Hawai'i*. xvii+346 pages, 29 illustrations, 8 colour plates. 2012. Berkeley:

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Pacific archaeologists write books relatively seldomly, and of those who do, Patrick Kirch, with eight to his name, is by some distance the most productive. In the previous seven his approach has been

conventionally academic, but *A shark going inland* is deliberately different. Kirch describes it as “my effort to break out of the straitjacket of academic prose [in order to recount] a saga that deserves to be told in a manner acceptable to all who are interested” (p. xiii). Achieving broad acceptability, he suggests, requires combining two themes: his own research history and recollections, and native Hawaiian tradition: one an ‘outside’, the other an ‘inside’, perspective. This is an interesting approach, if self-indulgent, and it works quite well at a level that probably has considerable popular appeal.

The author weaves his personal anecdotes and the imagined journey of a colonising canoe into a leisurely chronicle of the development of Hawaiian archaeology that takes up the first two parts of the book. These cover the back-story of western Pacific origins and journeys and successive concerns for material culture typology, constructing a radiocarbon chronology, discovering the palaeoenvironment and understanding colonisation voyaging and settlement. Chapters on the early traditions and the development of Hawaiian agriculture and demography provide the link to the third part of the book. That is much denser, more theoretical and framed by the intricate history of the high chiefs and the eventual tragedies of European arrival. It discusses Kirch's contention that Hawai'i was a unique experiment in social evolution which produced, in prehistoric isolation, several archaic states. The emphasis given to this hypothesis, and the arresting title of the book (Hawaiian rulers were the sharks that devoured the land), suggests that the author is determined to fix his views, argued at scholarly length in Kirch (2010), in the public mind.

The text has an unusually narrow focus. In approaching his main theme Kirch chooses an orthodox path through Polynesian prehistory, largely

ignoring or dismissing alternative perspectives and conclusions. In discussing voyaging, Heyerdahl is characterised as a confused self-publicist, Sharp an amateur contrarian (pp. 59–60), and none of the subsequent and extensive critical commentary on the topic rates a mention. Instead, the traditionalist views and activities of the Polynesian Voyaging Society are elaborated enthusiastically and awarded Ernst Mayr's prize of "self-correcting science" (p. 63). In the matter of dating human arrival in eastern Polynesia, the author cites revised radiocarbon dates from one site, but airily ignores the two decades of argument inside and outside Hawai'i that actually compelled his recent conversion to a short chronology. On interaction between Tahiti and Hawai'i, an adze of Hawaiian basalt found in the Tuamotus is hailed twice as "incontrovertible evidence" of two-way voyaging (pp. 127, 129), despite Kirch (2008) conceding that the specimen lacks archaeological provenience. It seems that stripping away discursive qualification and dissent was thought a necessary route to readership acceptability.

In promoting the Hawaiian kingdoms as unique archaic states in Polynesia, it would have been useful to include comparative material from Tahiti and Tonga to show where, and by how much, the Hawaiian cases are distinctive. In addition, the case for treating Hawaiian traditions as patently historical narratives is not made sufficiently. There is only cursory mention of historiographical cautions about interpreting oral traditions, and that could be problematic. For example, the ruler lists are taken as generational and a 20-year interval is used to estimate a calendrical chronology from them. Modern research, however, shows that the mean generation interval, calculated from the mean age at parturition for females and the mean age at paternity for males, is about 30 years for subsistence farmers in small-scale societies. In this case the chronology would begin around AD 1100 rather than after 1300 and the genealogies would represent the full span of Hawaiian prehistory—as they do in my comparable research on Maori genealogy—calling into question much of the argument about how and when archaic states developed in Hawai'i.

For example, 'Umi and Pi'ilani are credited with creating the first Hawaiian kingdoms about the end of the sixteenth century, approximately a century after a dramatic demographic transition and at the peak of a period of sustained, dryland, agricultural expansion, both key features for explaining the political consolidation involved. But using a 30-year generation interval would place 'Umi and Pi'ilani near the end of the fifteenth century, before those processes—only just beginning—could have offered any benefit. Major changes in temple construction, here associated with royal power, would also have been a century in the future. Could kingship have coincided with the beginning of temple construction, or has regal status been accorded too soon in the generational sequences? Perhaps genealogies have been distorted by incorporation of regnal intervals, which tend to be shorter? Might the occurrence of important traditional events have been re-distributed in royal genealogies once all competing versions had been destroyed? Greater reassurance on these potential problems might have been offered.

Such concerns may not worry the intended readers of *A shark going inland*, even if they should, and it would be unfair to suggest that they detract substantially from the story being told or from the broad veracity of it in terms of current research findings. Kirch is a specialist in Hawaiian prehistory and an accomplished writer. His book is attractively produced and easily read. It deserves both critical attention and the broad readership for which it is intended.

References

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