REVIEWS

Engaging Archaeology: 25 Case Studies in Research Practice. STEPHEN W. SILLIMAN, editor. 2018. Wiley, Hoboken, New Jersey. xxi + 252 pp. $98.75 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-119-24050-1. $36.25 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-119-24051-8.

Reviewed by Lynne G. Goldstein, Michigan State University (retired)

Research projects (archaeological or not) rarely go smoothly. Nonetheless, such projects are often described in publications in ways that ignore most of the problems experienced. Students may see published project descriptions as representing unattainable goals because they know their own projects are not so perfect.

This volume addresses an important question: "How did theory, method, region, place, material, politics, and circumstance actually play out in a given project" (p. 1)? The book is oriented toward students at all stages of training who are trying to design and conduct archaeological research. The 25 case studies represent a wide range in focus, time, and geography. Furthermore, not all chapter authors are in academia, which is important because archaeologists in other professional positions must also design and conduct research.

Not surprisingly, the quality across the 25 chapters varies, but each article clearly outlines the trials and tribulations of research. Students will learn and come to understand the kinds of problems that one may encounter in conducting archaeological research. In addition, the following qualities make the volume particularly strong:

(1) Each author writes in an informal and engaging way. Jargon is limited, although each of the projects is specifically tied to theory and broader archaeological practice.
(2) At the end of each chapter is a section called "Paired Reading," which highlights a traditional published paper on the project. Students can learn a great deal by focusing on these sets of readings.
(3) A long time ago, I was included in a similarly focused volume, but the biggest difference between that volume and this one is that so many of these projects highlight engagement with local communities and Indigenous groups. Discussions of issues associated with developing an *engaged* research project are not only critical but eye-opening for students.
(4) The volume is divided into three parts based on project scale: "Landscapes, Settlements, and Regions" (large scale); "Sites, Households, and Communities" (medium scale); and "Materials, Collections, and Analyses" (focused on an artifact class or collection type). Such organization makes it clear that archaeological projects are not always about survey and excavation.

My only negative comment concerns maps and figures. There are few maps or figures, and it would better place projects in context if there were more. In addition, several maps and figures are dark, making them extremely difficult to read. For example, Figure 1.1 is a world map showing locations of the 25 case studies. The map is so small and dark that it is almost impossible to see the labels for the projects.

Although I cannot discuss each article in a short review, I will highlight one article per section. In the section on large-scale projects, Uzma Rizvi outlines her decolonized approach working in collaboration with local stakeholders in India. She examines the political economy of third-millennium settlements of copper mining communities. One of the most useful lessons she learned was how to visit people and drink tea. Rizvi discovered that the process of drinking tea provides an efficient way to work in most of the world. Drinking tea is about respecting the person in front of you, as well as establishing reciprocity and social networks. Rizvi examines archaeological practice in a setting where it is definitely a postcolonial endeavor, and she notes that given archaeology's history, decolonization is critical everywhere.

In the section on medium-scale projects, Megan Perry discusses several different issues of project

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organization. Perry developed a bioarchaeology project at Petra in Jordan. Bioarchaeology represented a new methodological approach in Jordan, and her anthropologically informed research questions were in stark contrast to the traditional cultural-historical approach in the region. Not only did she lack access to certain data types, but bioarchaeology itself is regionally underdeveloped with little comparative data. Furthermore, in order to incorporate workers with specific training, she had to add people to the project. Perry subsequently discusses the problem of running a relatively large project in another country.

In the final section of this volume, Anna Agbe-Davies explains that her goal was to transform the way historical archaeologists analyze tobacco pipes. Her data represented legacy collections of locally made tobacco pipes in seventeenth-century English colonies of Chesapeake Bay. This particular section of the book makes me very happy because the case studies are focused on legacy collections or particular data types (for example, stone tools and animal bone). The last chapter, written by John Robb, provides advice to researchers, as well as a nice summary for the entire volume: "There is no royal road to getting a graduate degree or pursuing research in general. Creating new knowledge and learning to be a researcher involves blood, sweat, toil, and tears" (pp. 242–243).

Engaging Archaeology is very readable and entertaining, even for archaeological professionals. The target audience, however, is students at various stages of their careers, and these chapters will help them begin to understand the complexities of designing and carrying out archaeological research. They will also learn to appreciate the fact that miscalculations and errors are not inherently bad. We often learn more from our miscalculations than from those instances where all goes perfectly. I have no doubt that students will enjoy these tales.

Theory in the Pacific, the Pacific in Theory: Archaeological Perspectives. TIM THOMAS, editor. 2021. Routledge, London. xi + 335 pp. $160.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-138-30354-6. $44.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-138-30355-3. $44.95 (e-book), ISBN 978-0-203-73097-3.

Reviewed by John Edward Terrell, Field Museum of Natural History

Taken together as an edited collection, these 14 chapters by 17 authors will serve for years to come as a thoughtful and instructive record of the current turn in local archaeological scholarship in Melanesia and Polynesia. Future generations writing about the past and the history of science in this part of the world will find what is available here truly helpful.

Tim Thomas writes in his introduction that "theory in archaeology is the means by which we interpret or explain observations garnered from the archaeological record" (p. 2). As someone who has been writing about the Pacific for more than half a century, however, I have never seen the role of theory simply as a handmaiden for the interpretation or explanation of something called "the archaeological record."

Back in 1978, Jeffrey Clark and I proposed in "Archaeology in Oceania" (*Annual Review of Anthropology* 7:293–319) two alternative research strategies: (1) construct models plausibly accounting for what is already known about a particular historical problem that suggest how new archaeological research might narrow the field of possible explanations, or (2) model how new information could help us evaluate alternative explanations for what has happened in the past around the globe.

Notice that Clark and I used the word "explanation," not "interpretation." We acknowledged, however, that many archaeologists seemed to favor neither strategy. Instead, they

> accept the popular idea that the aim of archaeology is to write narrative histories of the past, i.e. "culture histories." In Oceania there seems to be a strong predilection for writing what may be called culture-historical scenarios that are often little more than "just-so" stories telling how X came to be X [Clark and Terrell 1978:300].

In his introduction, Thomas notes that geneticists today working with aDNA often seem unaware of the problematic history of theories about the peopling of the Pacific Islands, and that "archaeologists in the region have also only just begun to turn from mapping the origins of categorical populations to theorising the sociocultural processes by which people and things came to be distributed" (p. 24). Moreover, "master narratives" about the Pacific told by archaeologists, geneticists, and others have changed little despite decades of recent scholarship. As he writes, perhaps more often than not, "the story always ends up in the same place" (p. 25).

Although I agree with him, not all archaeologists in the Pacific today would. Nonetheless, archaeologists working elsewhere in the world—and particularly those who do not work on islands—have every right to ask, "Why should I care about the Pacific?"

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