

comparatively limited engagement with some of the more conceptual dimensions leads, in my opinion, to a somewhat unfinished pedagogic experience.

On a practical note, the existence of a freely accessible online pdf version is noteworthy (available in the aforementioned github repository and here: <https://www.sfpublishing.com/books/agent-based-modeling-archaeology>). This matters especially for the excellent appendix on the use of colour-blind palettes, whose quality and importance are obviously lost in the grey-scale paperback used for this review.

All in all, this never intended to be and indeed is not the ultimate introduction to ABM in archaeology. This being said, this volume and its repository of models provide the companion of choice to

supplement and illustrate classes on ABM in archaeology and, thus, to teach this fundamental technique to a new generation of practitioners.

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Max D. Price. *Evolution of a Taboo: Pigs and People in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, 320 pp., b/w illustr., hbk, ISBN: 9780197543276)

In academic life, we are often expected to produce the greatest amount of high-quality data in the shortest amount of time possible. As a result, we write and read hundreds of scientific articles each year, but we rarely have the luxury of publishing, or even reading, a book. However, there are thousands of valuable reasons for giving ourselves a bit of time to sit down with a book—especially when it perfectly fits with our research interest. Reading scholarly books allows us to enjoy the flow of information and process data in our minds without frantically jumping from one article to another. I have been studying pig taboos for several years, as part of my zooarchaeological research on the Islamic period of the Mediterranean. I wish this book had been available during my PhD, when I was looking for such an insightful, informative, and well-written

overview of the evolution of one of the most famous taboos in history: the pork taboo.

The book is organized into ten chapters, which are discussed below. Chapter 1 is the beginning of our journey into the highly debated and controversial topic of prohibited pork. Over the past few decades, many anthropologists, historians, and archaeologists have addressed this topic in a variety of different ways. The author chooses to examine the pig taboo through a zooarchaeological lens, namely by studying pig remains found at various archaeological sites in the Near East, and by contextualizing them in a broader socioeconomic, cultural, and political framework.

In Chapter 2, Price outlines the research area chosen for the study of pig taboo: the Near East, a melting pot of

different cultural and religious traditions, beliefs, languages, and landscapes. Four subchapters on pig evolutionary history, its biology, domestication—which occurred twice, both in Mesopotamia (ca. 8000 BC) and in China (ca. 6500 BC)—and on intensive and extensive pig husbandry strategies follow. Pigs produce abundant, fat-rich meat, they have a versatile feeding strategy, and are a highly ‘renewable’ resource, having a shorter gestation period than sheep, goats, and cattle. Thus, it is not surprising that pork was, and still is, one of the most consumed meats in the world.

Chapter 3 begins with a detailed overview of the first interactions between *Sus* and humans in the Near East during the Palaeolithic. The overview continues until pig domestication, which took place in the Early and Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB). The hunting of wild boar was not very common in Palaeolithic sites. This may be due to the difficulty hunters had in hunting aggressive animals like wild boars. Something changed later in the Natufian period, when humans started to adopt more advanced methods—including the use of dogs—to hunt small games and ungulates. Further changes occurred during the Epipalaeolithic and Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA), when people began to live in permanent settlements and to practice horticulture. As the population grew and more resources were needed to feed it, people intensified the hunt for wild boars. During this time, the wild boar/human relationship changed with the former voluntarily being attracted to human settlements until their domestication.

Chapter 4 is about pig husbandry in the Near East during the Neolithic revolution. In comparison to sheep, goat and cattle, the adoption of pig husbandry in the Near East was slower and geographically uneven. A similar consideration is also

valid when the Near East is compared to Europe, where the spread of agriculture involved all the main domesticated animals at once. A variety of factors, including environmental (the need for well-watered areas) and cultural (pigs are less mobile than sheep and goats, thus being conceptually far from the lifestyles of the earlier hunters-gatherers), could lie behind such chronological and geographical discrepancies. During the Late Neolithic, farming techniques improved due to the impelling need for additional surpluses. Pig husbandry also intensified along with the use of pigs in feasting. By contrast to the earlier period where pigs were usually kept under a loose form of management, in the Late Neolithic pigs started to be more permanently confined into pens and fed on cereal grains. Zooarchaeological evidence, such as a reduction in tooth size and higher cases of dental hypoplasia, have attested that this gradual change in pig husbandry – from a more free-range to an intensive one – resulted in an overall reduction of pig facial size: a process that would continue for several millennia.

In Chapter 5 Price discusses the Bronze Age period in the Near East. During this period, there were considerable socio-economic and political changes, and the relationship between people and pigs was also remarkably dynamic. It was at this time that pigs lost their status as a source of wealth and, as a result, political institutions had little interest in raising pigs. In parallel, the ritual significance of pigs also changed to the point that they started to be banned from some temples and rituals. Although pig husbandry found its place in the informal economy of some urban cities in Mesopotamia, it was virtually abandoned in the Levant and Western Syria. It was the combination of all these factors—more of an economic rather than an environmental nature—that enabled the

emergence of the well-known pig taboo in the Iron Age period.

After providing an anthropological introduction to the word taboo, its social implications, and its universality, Chapter 6 discusses the various (and well-known) theories behind the onset of pig taboo. All Biblical, health related (*Trichinella spiralis*), religious, ecological, political, economic, ethnic, and finally chicken theories on pig taboo are examined in depth by the author without finding a satisfactory answer. In fact, none of the pig taboo theories provide a full explanation (or at least one that is sufficient) for why the pig taboo developed in the first place, as well as the conditions that led to the growth of the pig taboo. To conclude, the origin of pork taboo cannot be explained by focusing only on one of the above-mentioned hypotheses. On the contrary, the pig taboo should be considered the result of different factors, which may have varied in parallel with different historical, cultural, and environmental conditions.

In Chapter 7, the author discusses the Iron Age period in the Near East. This is the period in which European pig lineages replaced those of local pigs, which had been dominant since the Neolithic. The Iron Age is also the time when the pig taboo seems to take hold among the Israelite communities. In the Iron Age, zooarchaeological evidence attests that pork did not significantly contribute to Israelites' food practices. Yet, such a paucity—at least in the early Iron Age—does not appear to symbolize a deliberate rejection of pork consumption; instead, it seems an unconscious continuation of previous food practices, which mostly relied on ruminant products. After the Israelites came into contact with the Palestinians, who settled along the southern coast of the southern Levant and ate pork (though not so much in the countryside), the ban on pork became stronger and more firmly

ingrained in their culture. As food moves beyond biological needs, it is likely that the prohibition of eating pork represented an ethical marker for Israelites to culturally separate themselves from the Palestinians. However, as the author consistently states, boundaries between people and cultures are always dynamic and osmotic, making reality much more complex than it appears.

In Chapter 8, a similar cultural and food-reflected antagonism to that previously discussed between Israelites and Palestinians characterizes the relation between the Jews and their Greek/Roman overlords during the Classical period. It is well known that Greeks and Romans were pork eaters; they considered pig as an extremely versatile and productive animal to the point that the Roman authorities tried to regulate its market. Beyond its value as food, pig also played a prominent role in Greek and Roman rituals. The introduction and spread of Greek and Roman culture and settlements in the Near East led to an increase in pig husbandry. In the context of Christian expansion and, in parallel, of pig husbandry spreading, Jewish pig taboo became more rooted and embedded in Jews' everyday life. The prohibition of pork consumption became the taboo *par excellence* separating Jews from Christians.

Chapter 9 introduces us to the Islamic period in the Near East, for which zooarchaeological data are extremely scarce. The few faunal data show an overall decline of pig relative incidence, but not a complete abandonment of pig consumption; this is especially valid for Byzantine/Christian areas and settlements such as those in Anatolia and in Egypt. The only exception to this trend is Mesopotamia and Iran where pig husbandry was completely discarded. The author then moves into the modern period from the Zabbaleen in Cairo raising pigs

and contributing to the informal economy of the city, to the more formal pig economy in Israel.

This extensive study of pig taboo in the Near East appropriately concludes in the final chapter (Chapter 10). Price wisely decides to summarize in short paragraphs the immense amount of information he provided in the previous chapters, and especially the most critical passages of the modalities through which taboos come to be and the different theories that have been proposed so far. Rather than a single occurrence or reason, the emergence of the pig taboo is attributed to a combination of factors, events, and internal and external forces that shaped, and still shape, this living and evolving concept.

Writing about the history of the pig taboo in the Near East is not an easy task. In dealing with the topic, academics often encounter difficulties of oversimplification and generalization. However, Price manages to overcome all these challenges admirably. He carefully distinguishes the prohibition of pork between chronological periods, social/religious groups, geographical regions, and countries of the Near East (and beyond). The author is aware that the pig taboo was, and still is, a dynamic concept with various socio-economic, cultural, religious, and political shifts and changes. In his control of a range of primary sources, Price's experience and training as a scientific disseminator of zooarchaeological, archaeological, historical, and anthropological data is evident. Price's book has perhaps the greatest merit of freeing the history of the pig taboo from the tyranny of strict explanations and theories.

The book has a few weaknesses, such as the sporadic use of summarizing graphs and tables to illustrate changes in pig incidence over time. This is because sometimes too many zooarchaeological data from different sites collide at once, making

it difficult to follow in detail. Another minor weakness is the insufficient use of biometrical data/analysis for corroborating the taxonomic identification of pig remains at the analysed sites. Separating domestic pig from its wild ancestor, the wild boar, on the basis of morphological traits is not an easy task. In this regard, biometry has proven to be a valuable tool (Albarella et al., 2006; Albarella et al., 2009; Rowley-Conwy et al., 2012; Slim et al., 2020). However, I am not sure how many of the faunal reports and articles Price analysed in his book included raw biometrical data. The lack of raw biometrical data often represents a challenge for zooarchaeology, and I feel that this is something that we should discuss and address more often.

The value of Price's book to zooarchaeologists, archaeologists, historians, and anthropologists is unquestionable, making it a worthy addition to any library. There is no doubt that this book will make its way into a variety of university-level syllabi, and that it will be used by scholars studying the complex but mesmerizing evolution of the pig taboo in human societies.

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Reviewing the Classics

Manfred K.H. Eggert. *Prähistorische Archäologie: Konzepte und Methoden* (Tübingen & Basel: a. Francke, 2001, 4th Edition 2012, xvii and 412pp., 82 figs., pbk, ISBN:3-8252-2092-3)

This introductory textbook has had a profound influence on German speaking archaeology. Since its first publication more than twenty years ago in 2001, several generations of archaeology students have referred to it as their first, or one of their first archaeology reads. A colleague recently stated that, as a teacher, she suffered greatly from the book's impact, as she perennially had to deal with her students' fundamental pessimism towards the possibilities of archaeological interpretation, a notion she traces back to Eggert's strong focus on source criticism—and scepticism—towards the use of anthropological analogies in archaeology. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the book significantly widened the view on what prehistoric archaeology is, should, and can be for many German speaking students, especially by introducing them to a much wider range of international, especially anglophone, perspectives than had been regularly taught at German archaeology departments. Before Eggert's book, we were told to read the introductory text by Hans-Jürgen Eggers

(unfortunately a very similar name, but not related to Manfred Eggert) from 1959, which conserved a wildly outdated and Germanocentric view of archaeology all through the 1990s. Yet, the influence of Eggers' *Einführung in die Vorgeschichte* remains strong in Eggert's 2001 book. Indeed, as it was probably written in order to replace that old textbook, large parts are dedicated to updating or critiquing several of the central parts of Eggers' sections on classification, typology, and chronology. This is largely correct and useful but at times has the effect of giving these topics more space than they might actually deserve. Nonetheless, such focus does well represent the specifically German tradition of prehistoric archaeology as a first and foremost empirical, data-driven discipline. It is primarily about what our sources are and how to describe and classify, date and order them, and then secondarily about the possibilities to draw inductive inferences from the evidence.

Eggert's book devotes a lot of space to historiography, for example a whole chapter (Ch. 3) is focused on the