

study” approach, there is also little chance to delve deeply into finer textures of “life” in specific cities. In particular, the agency and lifeways of the people who inhabited ancient cities, so richly documented in some cases, rarely come to the fore. Additionally, Woolf rightly observes that although approximately two-thirds of the population in the Mediterranean in Classical antiquity did not live in cities, the proximity of cities necessarily transformed the lives and livelihoods of rural dwellers, but their role in this network is left largely unexplored along with the relationship of city and hinterland. As a result, the perspective at times reverts to the traditional focus on the political and monumental aspects of the ancient city, but Woolf’s treatment is always lively, challenging, and full of interesting insights.

Less true to its title, the book does not explore the “death” of ancient cities systematically. Indeed, a basic assumption of Woolf’s approach is that the disaggregation of settlements is the natural state of Mediterranean ecology, and therefore the contraction of urban settlements or return to village life requires no particular explanation. Yet, just as Woolf has rightly emphasized in the case of the rise of cities, their eclipse or decline was also due to various causes and took on a multitude of forms. Here, the archaeological evidence can be particularly eloquent in the dismantling, reuse, transformation, and destruction of urban monuments and infrastructure in late antiquity. Woolf brings aspects of this process out in vivid detail, pointing the way to a burgeoning area of study.

Woolf’s learned and impressive investigation signals the flourishing state of current research on ancient urbanism and the insights that new methodologies have brought to established fields in ancient history. It makes for interesting reading alongside Monica Smith’s new (and very different) book, *Cities: The First Thousand Years* (2019). Both, written by distinguished scholars in very different disciplines, show the potential for high-level, cross-cultural comparative work on ancient cities.

*Multispecies Archaeology*. SUZANNE E. PILAAR BIRCH, editor. 2018. Routledge, London. xiv + 376 pp. \$250.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-13889-898-1. \$52.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-36758-085-8. \$52.95 (e-book), ISBN 978-1-31570-770-9.

Reviewed by Nerissa Russell, Cornell University

What is multispecies archaeology? Is it what environmental archaeologists have been doing all along? A specifically ecological approach to environmental archaeology? If so, is it based in a scientific

understanding of ecology or the currently emerging humanistic one? These are among the questions raised by this important and intriguing book, whose various chapters exemplify all these approaches and collectively serve as a document of the states of the art. Perhaps it is too early to resolve such questions, and indeed these tensions were already present in the founding statement on multispecies ethnography (Kirksey and Helmreich, *Cultural Anthropology* 25:545–576, 2010), the approach that inspired multispecies archaeology.

Suzanne Pilaar Birch’s introduction outlines these varied interpretations of multispecies archaeology and sets them in the larger context of multispecies, posthumanist, and ecological approaches in other disciplines. She argues that the essence of multispecies archaeology is decentering humans, treating them as one species among many. This approach is shared by many but not all contributors. Following the introduction, 20 chapters are divided into four sections, each including what could be crudely designated as scientific and humanistic approaches. Case studies cover much of the world and span the Late Pleistocene to the present. Most chapters treat relationships among humans and animals; although other organisms are sometimes incorporated or the focus placed on the landscape, none prioritize human–plant relations. I wish I had space to engage with each of the chapters, because all raise points worth discussing and debating, and each chapter presents interesting material.

Part I, “Living in the Anthropocene,” contains the most contributions from nonarchaeologists. Many scholars, including some of those here, frame a multispecies/posthumanist approach as a moral imperative in a time of anthropogenic environmental catastrophe. Consequently, it is not surprising that the Anthropocene is invoked in many of the other chapters as well. Some of the authors note the irony that the Anthropocene concept explicitly centers human agency, whereas the remedy for the Anthropocene crisis is argued to be decentering it, dissolving boundaries between nature and culture.

Part II, “Multispecies Ecology of the Built Environment,” focuses on anthropogenic environments at a variety of scales smaller than the Anthropocene. Here, too, human agency is centered as it creates niches for other species, even as it is decentered by emphasizing the agency of these other species in occupying these niches willingly (often without invitation) and working their own transformations of shared living spaces.

Part III, “Agrarian Commitments toward an Archaeology of Symbiosis,” looks more specifically at the nature of multispecies interactions in agricultural settings, including the transition to agriculture (domestication). Laura Weyrich’s (Chapter 14) overview of the

changing human microbiome gives a sense of how the multispecies relationships within our bodies have changed in response to agricultural diets and other factors. The other chapters seek to render animal domestication and animal husbandry in a mutualistic light, and to decenter the origins of agriculture as the object of study.

The chapters in Part IV, “The Ecology of Movement,” use stable isotope analysis and other approaches to examine intersecting human and animal mobility. Four of five chapters deal with interactions with wild animals, but Oscar Aldred (Chapter 16) shows that a multispecies approach to mobility is equally applicable to livestock.

One of the more pervasive themes in the volume is the reduction or decentering of human agency in interpretation and an increased focus on nonhuman, mostly animal, agency. In my view, the authors have limited success in decentering humans—a daunting task for human scholars, especially in a discipline defined as studying the human past. Humans remain implicitly at the center as the scope of research is delimited by human interactions with other taxa. It is nevertheless productive to be reminded that humans are but one species among many going about their lives as best they can and entangled with each other—not just serving as resources. Pilaar Birch (Introduction) may be right that one of the greatest strengths of multispecies studies is providing a rubric that can bring disparate approaches and disciplines into conversation, even if they do not yet offer a coherent response to my opening question.

*Connecting Continents: Archaeology and History in the Indian Ocean World.* KRISH SEETAH, editor. 2018. Ohio University Press, Athens. viii + 419 pp. \$90.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-8214-2326-4.

Reviewed by Eréndira M. Quintana Morales, University of California, Santa Cruz

*Connecting Continents* provides a strong argument for undertaking interdisciplinary approaches to Indian Ocean studies through the lens of historical archaeology. This edited volume is the product of a workshop held at Stanford University in 2014 that brought together Indian Ocean scholars in the fields of archaeology, history, and art. The introduction by Krish Seetah (the volume editor) and Richard B. Allen lays a solid foundation to the volume by highlighting the value and potential of historical archaeology research about the Indian Ocean world. Seetah and Allen—whose combined expertise includes archaeology, history, and anthropology—highlight how integrating archaeological and historical

approaches can improve our understanding of the movements and contact between populations, the transformation and preservation of sociocultural life, the impact of colonialism on the environment, and the local and global impacts of shared material culture. In many of these examples, archaeology contributes evidence of the materiality of everyday life that provides social and cultural context associated with the broader patterns and scattered details of Indian Ocean interaction and experiences found in historical sources.

The 10 chapters that follow the introduction interweave the contributions of archaeologists, historians, and artists working across and within the region. Although most of the chapters are based primarily on archaeological research, they engage with interdisciplinary historical and archaeological approaches to varying degrees and together exhibit the incredible range of varied experiences across the Indian Ocean in multiple spatial and temporal dimensions. To highlight some examples, the chapters discuss island colonization (Edward Alpers; Atholl Anderson et al.), the spread of Islam (Mark Horton et al.), the materiality of colonial encounters (Paul Lane), forced and free labor migration (Allen), and the history of pearling (Alistair Paterson). Of particular note is the sole chapter written by artists, Diana Heise and Martin Mhando, exploring knowledge production, material culture, and heritage through two documentary films, each focused on the construction of an object with cultural and historical significance in the Indian Ocean: the *mtepe*, a traditional sailboat, and the *ravann*, a traditional drum. The final three chapters focus on ongoing research in Mauritius, including work led by Seetah and his colleagues at Stanford that forms part of the Mauritian Archaeology and Heritage Project.

Overall, this volume successfully underlines the significance of interdisciplinary approaches to Indian Ocean studies first by deliberating how historical archaeology is defined in this context and then by showcasing the richness of historical and archaeological evidence from this region in multiple chapters, as described above. Seetah provides a persuasive argument for the development of collaborative interdisciplinary research between historians and archaeologists that is centered around understanding Indian Ocean history, culture, and landscapes in connection to the modern world. This approach is best demonstrated in the last chapter, in which Seetah investigates the ecological impact of colonization on Mauritius. The goal of this research is to trace the spread of malaria through a combination of historical archives, bioarchaeology, paleoclimate proxies, and ancient DNA to model how human and environmental constraints—including those associated with disease control—impact disease spread.