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Authors

Schiffer, Michael Brian

Jazwa, Kyle A.

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Archaeology's Footprints in the Modern World

Michael Brian Schiffer,
Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2017,
336 pp., ISBN 9781607815334, \$26.95 (paper).

Reviewed by Kyle A. Jazwa
Department of Classical Studies,
Duke University, Durham, NC 27708

Archaeology's Footprints in the Modern World introduces the reader to the field of archaeology and its impact on modern society. The book is aimed at a general audience and presents a diversity of topics, themes, and cultural examples. Overall, this book is immensely approachable, both in the quality of the prose and its discussion of the specific case studies. In this respect, Schiffer's book is a success. However, the quantity and brevity of the case studies and the lack of in-depth, thematic discussions place it in an unhappy middle-ground between popular archaeology/history and university textbook, while never fully realizing either genre. Also detracting from the book is that it is geographically limited in its scope, with a decidedly American (North and South) preference that affords only occasional forays into the archaeology of Africa, Asia, Australia, and Oceania.

The book is clearly organized and offers equal treatment to each of its included themes. After a brief introduction that details the aims and scope of the book (xv-xxiv), Schiffer divides it into 14 thematical sections, or "footprints," each containing three case studies. The arrangement of these footprints proceeds from humanities-related topics (such as "Evaluating Myths, Sagas, and Legends"), to the social, and then to the hard sciences ("Managing Cultural Resources" to "Bolstering Biological Sciences"). The chapters included in the footprints typically represent individual case studies or excavations, but occasionally a chapter covers a broad topic with several supporting examples or an evolving narrative. "In the Beginning," for instance, describes the search for the "missing link" in human evolution and the discoveries of several early hominin remains. The footprints also include one- to two-page introductions that contextualize the themes and demonstrate the relationship between the underlying theme and the individual stories.

Without exception, each chapter is a pleasure to read and is broadly appealing. Schiffer is adept at framing each

chapter as a story with a problem-solving narrative or historical/biographical vignette that immediately captures the reader's attention. In "Advocating for Homeless People," for instance, Schiffer describes historical archaeologists' occasional interactions with the homeless population of their urban study areas in the introductory paragraphs. He then explains that one archaeologist, Larry J. Zimmerman, initiated an "archaeology of homelessness" to understand this lifestyle and apply the knowledge to social programs for improving the lives of homeless people. With this introduction, Schiffer establishes the fundamental framework for his discussion of the broader social impact of this archaeology in the remainder of the case study. Schiffer also avoids technical archaeological jargon and assumes no background in academic archaeology by the reader.

The organization of the book suggests that it is primarily intended as a university textbook for an introductory archaeology course. The 14 footprints conveniently correspond to the weeks in a typical American (U.S.) academic semester, while affording a week for course introduction and evaluation. The three case studies in each footprint also align with a common, weekly class schedule (three classes/week). In this respect, this book is ideally structured for a university course with only minimal organizational planning on the part of the instructor.

Despite the organizational benefits of the book, it suffers from several functional flaws that prevent it from serving as an outstanding textbook. Averaging five-pages apiece, the case studies are too short to support an entire class discussion alone. Although the thematic footprints offer opportunities to bring in outside readings and debate, many of the chapters are too narrow in focus to allow complementary readings for a full class. For instance, I would be hard-pressed to expand No. 36, "Microbiota of the Human Gut and Coprolites," into a 50-minute class discussion without encroaching on the other topics included in the footprint or becoming too technical for an introductory class. The chapters also lack discussion questions or other "guiding" materials for the student and instructor. Even more significant, the geographic diversity of book's case studies is far too limited. The majority discuss archaeological fieldwork or discoveries in North and Central America, and examples from Africa and Asia are particularly lacking. As an

introduction to archaeology, the book would be better served by highlighting archaeology's impact throughout the broader world.

If read as a popular archaeology book, *Archaeology's Footprints in the Modern World* also suffers due to the very organizational qualities that benefit it as a textbook. The sheer number of case studies is overwhelming and unnecessary for the casual reader. Many successful popular history and archaeology books limit the included case studies to permit more detail and narrative development. This approach might allow the author to delve more deeply into how archaeologists study material remains, as well as why. In this way, the text would better help the reader to “acquire a deeper understanding of

what we do” (xxiv). Moreover, longer chapters would allow for a more engaging reading experience, interrupted by fewer chapter and section (i.e., footprint) breaks.

Despite these shortcomings, *Archaeology's Footprints in the Modern World* is quite approachable and offers a diversity of fascinating case studies. Anyone, regardless of background, might enjoy this book and learn something from the rich selection of archaeological anecdotes. The book, therefore, is still a success because it fulfills its primary, stated goal—to demonstrate that “archaeology is as significant as it is cool” (xxiv). With all the case studies, Schiffer clearly shows the far-reaching impact of archaeology on the social, artistic, scientific, and technological culture of the modern world.



Formation Processes of Maritime Archaeological Landscapes

Alicia Caporaso, (ed.),
Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2017,
xii+220 pp., illustrations, index, ISBN 978-3-319-48786-1,
\$89.00 (paper).

Reviewed by James Moore

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management,
45600 Woodland Rd, Sterling, VA 20166

Though maritime archaeology is a comparatively young academic discipline, the scientific paradigms utilized to examine and integrate multiple site formation processes at specific sites or in broader geographic areas have rapidly evolved. An important concept that researchers should now consider is how maritime archaeological sites may be placed into the broader maritime cultural landscape, which represents the long-term interactions between humans, represented by historical records and cultural remains, and the natural environment, represented by its physical and chemical processes. *Formation Processes of Maritime Archaeological Landscapes*, edited by Alicia Caporaso, offers an excellent representation of the current diverse, and sometimes conflicting, perceptions of how archaeologists define or perceive such landscapes. The

book also fully conveys to the reader that further dialog is needed among archaeological researchers to reach a more coherent definition of a maritime cultural landscape and to establish more comprehensive and integrated historical research and environmental survey methodologies.

Caporaso is direct in stating that the concepts and definitions of landscapes are academically inconsistent and that landscape formation analyses are approached in a variety of ways. While maritime sites are adjoined or submerged by a body of water, their identity as being part of a landscape has often been traditionally conveyed as cultural resource deposits from a specific period of time, such as an economic center, settlement area, or shipwreck. Maritime cultural sites and their remaining artifacts co-evolve with the surrounding natural environment, and landscape formation analyses should consider variable temporal and spatial scales where humans or their remaining cultural material may be present in a given area. Additionally, all exterior natural forces acting on a respective geographic area should be integrated into an all-inclusive framework.

Each chapter in the book is structured as a separate peer-reviewed article discussing archaeological case studies conducted in a distinctive geographic area. While approximately half of the chapters concern sites that