

BOOK REVIEW

The Archaeology of Animals. Simon J.M. Davis. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987. Pp. 224.

As the title implies, this book has a very broad scope including most aspects of what has become known as the field of zooarchaeology or archaeozoology. It includes chapters on the methods that are employed in zooarchaeological research, the nature of the archaeological remains, analyses of the evidence of past environmental conditions and season of death of prey items, of prehistoric hunting, of the origin and development of domestic animals, and concludes with a case study of the changing uses of animals throughout the prehistory of Britain all of which is based on animal remains associated with archaeological sites. Thus, the book is organized in a chronological sequence using this framework to discuss the finds of many fascinating zooarchaeological studies. The geographic emphasis is Europe and the Near East but additional examples are drawn from around the world. The taxonomic emphasis is upon mammalian remains, but by no means, exclusively so.

Excellent examples were chosen to illustrate different topics throughout this book. These examples are both clearly described and very well illustrated with combinations of graphs and drawings of the organism or skeletal element, maps of distributions, photographs and drawings of animals and their parts. These all contribute to a most interesting book which clearly presents many of the best examples of zooarchaeological research and its full ramifications.

Any author covering such a broad field of inquiry must set some limits on the topics to be given prominence. Within the chronological framework the author has presented varied examples for as complete an understanding of the prehistoric uses of animals as possible. The one area that received less coverage is evidence of the fishing and shellfish gathering peoples and the related problem of integrating data from different animal classes.

The audience for this publication would be anyone interested in the history of the exploitation and domestication of animals. I believe it is especially designed for the student of zooarchaeology with particular interest in the prehistory of Europe and the Near East. It would also serve well as a basic text for the study of zooarchaeology with the addition of supplementary information appropriate for other regions of the world.

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