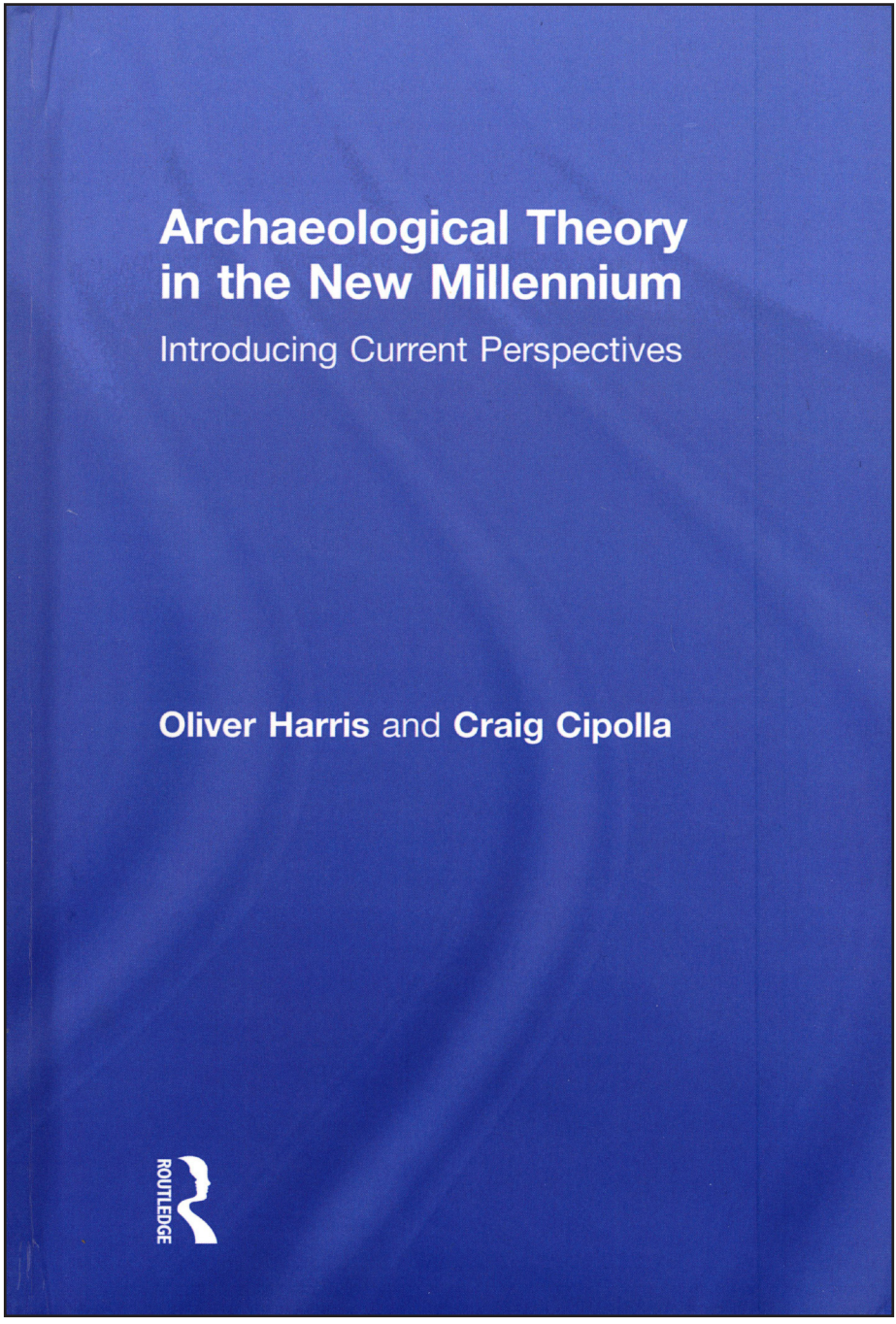

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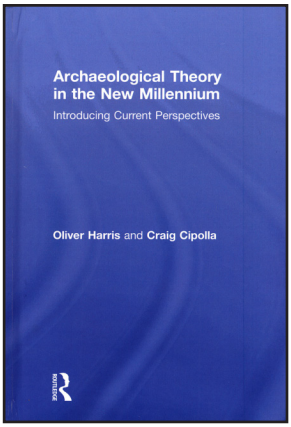

Archaeological Theory in the New Millennium: Introducing Current Perspectives

Oliver J. T. Harris and Craig N. Cipolla. Routledge Press, London, 2017. xvi+238 pp., 32 figures, 32 boxes, references, index. $149.95 (Hardback), $44.95 (Paperback), $40.46 (eBook).

Reviewed by Timothy R. Pauketat, Illinois State Archaeological Survey and Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.

If you believe that theory is something you can ignore; if you believe that it is hopelessly relativist, post-processualist or, worse, post-modernist; if you seek a relatively short, refreshingly clear, and historically insightful overview of archaeological theory—and by that I mean *social theory*—since the 1980s; or if you teach a course on archaeological theory, then you need to read, and have your students read, this book. I say this because *Archaeological Theory in the New Millennium* is an engaging, concise, and forward-looking survey of theory in the field today, written by Oliver J. T. Harris and Craig N. Cipolla, that correctly targets the upcoming generation of archaeologists.

The book begins by recognizing that all archaeology is infused with theory, even if some of us might prefer to ignore that infusion. Note that the word—theory—is singular, not plural, because theory, for these authors, is not a static thing or a series of static things. Thus, the book is not about *a* theory of climate change, *a* theory of social organization, or *a* theory of urbanism. Technically, those are not theories anyway, but models or constructs. Moreover, the positions taken in this book are not entirely right, totally wrong, or mutually exclusive. Rather, theory is a malleable realm that shapes "*the very kinds of questions* we ask in the first place" (p. 2, emphasis original), and rethinking it should be happening continually, leading us to ask newer, better questions and to obtain more appropriate if not also more accurate answers about the past.

In its 11 chapters, this book provides us with a new jumping off point to rethink our questions, starting with a stage-setting introduction on theory. That introduction soft pedals a theme that runs throughout the book: dualistic thinking (structure v. agency, mind v. body, culture v. nature) is theoretically counter-productive. The book ends with a final chapter that both rejects the commonplace assertion that theory changes via Kuhnian paradigm shifts (way too homogenizing for our authors) and places us in the middle of a conversation between the authors, who do not, as it turns out, always agree. In between are nine well-written chapters on the recent history of theory. These draw on popular and contemporary cultural references that all students will understand, and each chapter also features two or more boxes that highlight an archaeologist or social theorist. It's all very accessible.

Chapter 2 runs through the recent past's theoretical approaches and their prominent advocates, Lewis Binford and Ian Hodder in particular, noting that both processual and post-processual camps were flawed in their dualistic—which is to say "representational"—thinking. In many ways, the reader senses, we are way past the stale arguments that pitted

behavior/environment against ideology/cultural meaning and so, appropriately, the authors don't dwell on those old debates, but move quickly onto Chapter 3. That chapter throws us into the midst of the practice and agency theories of the 1990s, which morphed into discussions about identity and personhood in the early 2000s, the subject of Chapter 4, and then mutated into discussions of object agency and the biography of things, reviewed in Chapter 5.

Nowhere does heavy theoretical jargon bog down the reader, and nowhere do our authors simply reject alternative approaches out of hand. But Harris and Cipolla do critically evaluate these approaches, and point out the ways in which the various perspectives did not realize their potential, as with some phenomenological theorizing reviewed in Chapter 6. This chapter is almost—but not quite—the book's climax, reviewing materiality, memory, and entanglement. That said, the next chapter is a bit anti-climatic, if not a drag, getting the reader stuck in the mud of semiotics. But the pace is picked up again with Chapter 8's review of Actor-Network Theory and the New Materialisms, which is the real climax of the book. Here, the authors distinguish symmetrical archaeology, situated in a reading of Bruno Latour's works, from approaches based in the thinking of Gilles Deleuze, Karen Barad, Manual DeLanda, and Jane Bennett. The implications of the latter are carried into the subsequent Chapter 9 on post-humanist and sensorial theorizing in archaeology. Specifically, this chapter elevates the roles of plants and animals in human history, and should be of interest to many archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological specialists, or potential specialists, in eastern North America. The penultimate Chapter 10, on post-colonialism, is an interesting mash-up of anthropological approaches that seek to "decolonize" our understanding of past people with those focused on animism, where the "others" encountered by people are other-than-human beings.

Anthropocentrism, dualistic thinking, and representationalism are the big losers in this book, as they should be. The big winners?—New Materialism, and if you aren't sure what that is, or how different it is from older forms of materialism, then read this book. Harris and Cipolla might just change the way you think. That possibility alone amounts to high praise and sufficient reason to crack this book.