

World Archaeoprimateology

Interconnections of Humans and Nonhuman Primates in the Past

Archaeoprimateology intertwines archaeology and primatology to understand the ancient liminal relationships between humans and nonhuman primates. During the last decade, novel studies have boosted this discipline. This edited volume is the first compendium of archaeoprimateological studies ever produced. Written by a culturally diverse group of scholars, with multiple theoretical views and methodological perspectives, it includes new zooarchaeological examinations and material culture evaluations, as well as innovative uses of oral and written sources. Themes discussed comprise the survey of past primates as pets, symbolic mediators, prey, iconographic references, or living commodities. The book covers different regions of the world, from the Americas to Asia, along with studies from Africa and Europe. Temporally, the chapters explore the human–nonhuman primate interface from deep in time to more recent historical times, examining both extinct and extant primate taxa. This anthology of archaeoprimateological studies will be of interest to archaeologists, primatologists, anthropologists, art historians, paleontologists, conservationists, zoologists, historical ecologists, philologists, and ethnobiologists.

Bernardo Urbani is Associate Researcher at the Center for Anthropology of the Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research, Caracas, Venezuela, and an elected member of the Global Young Academy. Recently, he was selected as a fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Leibniz Institute for Primate Research/German Primate Center, Göttingen, Germany. He has received the Martha J. Galante Award of the International Primatological Society and the Early Career Achievement Award of the American Society of Primatologists.

Dionisios Youlatos is Professor of Vertebrate Zoology in the School of Biology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. He has done field and laboratory research on both extant and extinct primates and other mammals in South America, Europe, East Africa, and South East Asia. His research has been financially supported by both national and international funding. He is the author of more than a hundred articles and book chapters on the ecology, behavior, anatomy, and evolution of mammals.

Andrzej T. Antczak is Associate Professor in Caribbean Archaeology in the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, and Senior Researcher at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV-KNAW) in Leiden, the Netherlands. He is co-curator at the Unit of Archaeological Studies, Simón Bolívar University, Caracas, Venezuela, and recently served as chair of the Department of World Archaeology at Leiden University.

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Interconnections of Humans and Nonhuman Primates in the Past

Edited by

BERNARDO URBANI

Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research

DIONISIOS YOULATOS

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

ANDRZEJ T. ANT CZAK

Leiden University



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B.U.: To Ana María and Lucía, to my family and students, to the past and present primates. . .

D.Y.: To my late mother Ioanna, to Evangelos Sr. and Jr., and to Alexandra, who patiently supported me.

A.T.A.: With love to Marlena, Konrad and Valeria, and Oliver and Nynke; to all colleagues and students on both sides of the ocean.

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Contributors

Gamini Adikari

Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Aleksa K. Alaica

Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

Noel Amano

Department of Archaeology, Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, Jena, Germany

Tharaka Ananda

Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

Tomoko Anezaki

Gunma Museum of Natural History, Tomioka, Japan

Andrzej T. Antczak

Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University & the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden, the Netherlands

M. Magdalena Antczak

The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden, the Netherlands & Unit of Archaeological Studies, Simón Bolívar University, Caracas, Venezuela

Shaw Badenhorst

Evolutionary Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Massimo Bardi

Department of Behavioral Neuroscience, Randolph-Macon College, Ashfield, Virginia, USA

Lydia Bashford

Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

Douglas Brandon-Jones

Independent Researcher, Australia

Rubén Cabrera-Castro

Teotihuacan Archaeological Zone, National Institute of Anthropology and History, San Juan Teotihuacán, Mexico

Nicole R. Cannarozzi

Department of Natural History, Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville, USA

Lisabeth A. Carlson

SEARCH, Inc., Newberry, Florida, USA

Olivia A. de Carvalho

Department of Archaeology, Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil

Roger H. Colten

Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University. New Haven, Connecticut, USA

Raymond Corbey

Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, the Netherlands

Raymundo A. C. F. Dijkhoff

Scientific Department, National Archaeological Museum Aruba, Oranjestad, Aruba

Kitty F. Emery

Department of Natural History, Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville, USA

Susan M. Ford

Department of Anthropology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA

Jorge Gamboa

School of Archaeology, Santiago Antunez Mayolo National University, Huaraz, Peru

Debora R. Gilles

Corrientes Biological Station, Centro de Ecología Aplicada del Litoral, CECOAL-CONICET, Argentina

Laurie R. Godfrey

Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA

Jaap Goudsmit

Department of Epidemiology, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Songtao Guo

Shaanxi Key Laboratory for Animal Conservation, College of Life Sciences, Northwest University, Xi'an, China & Institute of Wetland and Grassland, Shaanxi Academy of Forestry, Xi'an, China

Gang He

Shaanxi Key Laboratory for Animal Conservation, College of Life Sciences, Northwest University, Xi'an, China & Institute of Wetland and Grassland, Shaanxi Academy of Forestry, Xi'an, China

Hitomi Hongo

School of Advanced Science, Graduate University for Advanced Studies, Hayama, Kanagawa, Japan

xiv List of Contributors

Rong Hou

Shaanxi Key Laboratory for Animal Conservation, College of Life Sciences, Northwest University, Xi'an, China

Xiduo Hou

Shaanxi Key Laboratory for Animal Conservation, College of Life Sciences, Northwest University, Xi'an, China

Michael A. Huffman

Wildlife Research Center, Kyoto University, Japan

Thomas Ingicco

Department of Prehistory, National Museum of Natural History & Department of Man and Environment, University of Perpignan, Paris, France

Xueping Ji

Kunming Natural History Museum of Zoology, Kunming Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Kunming, China

Nelum Kanthilatha

Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

William F. Keegan

Department of Natural History, Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville, USA

Martin M. Kowalewski

Corrientes Biological Station, Centro de Ecología Aplicada del Litoral, CECOAL-CONICET, Argentina

Michelle J. LeFebvre

Department of Natural History, Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville, USA

Baoguo Li

Northwest University, Xi'an, China & International Centre of Biodiversity and Primate Conservation Centre, Dali University, Dali, Yunnan, China

Anne-Marie Moigne

Department of Prehistory, National Museum of Natural History & Department of Man and Environment, University of Perpignan, Paris, France

Charmalie A. D. Nahallage

Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Gandodawila, Sri Lanka

Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu

South African National Parks, Pretoria, South Africa and Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Dennis C. Nieweg

Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, the Netherlands

Yuichiro Nishioka

Museum of Natural and Environmental History, Shizuoka, Japan

Ruliang Pan

Shaanxi Key Laboratory for Animal Conservation, College of Life Sciences, Northwest University, Xi'an, China, International Centre of Biodiversity and Primate Conservation Centre, Dali University, Yunnan, & School of Human Sciences and Centre for Evolutionary Biology, The University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia

Edithe Pereira

Section of Archaeology, Emilio Goeldi Museum, Belém, Brazil

Nimal Perera

Central Cultural Fund of Sri Lanka & Department of Philosophical and History Inquiry, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The University of Sydney, Australia

Roberta R. Pinto

Laboratory and Museum of Archaeology, Catholic University of Pernambuco, Brazil

Albérico N. de Queiroz

Department of Archaeology, Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil

R. Florencia Quijano

Corrientes Biological Station, Centro de Ecología Aplicada del Litoral, CECOAL-CONICET, Argentina

Damián Ruíz-Ramoni

Regional Center for Scientific Research and Technological Transfer of Anillaco, CONICET, La Rioja, Argentina

Anne-Marie Sémah

Department of Prehistory, National Museum of Natural History & Department of Man and Environment, University of Perpignan, Paris, France

François Sémah

Department of Prehistory, National Museum of Natural History & Department of Man and Environment, University of Perpignan, Paris, France

Carlos Serrano-Sánchez

Institute of Anthropological Research, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico

Truman Simanjuntak

Indonesian Baptist Theological College, Semarang, Indonesia

José de Sousa e Silva Júnior

Department of Zoology, Emilio Goeldi Museum, Belém, Brazil

xvi **List of Contributors**

Katherine E. South

Department of Language & Cultural Studies, Anthropology, and Sociology, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, USA

Jan Štefka

Institute of Parasitology, Biology Centre, Czech Academy of Sciences & Faculty of Science, University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice, Czech Republic

Marcos Such-Gutiérrez

Department of Classical Philology, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain

Masanaru Takai

The Kyoto University Museum, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan

Bernardo Urbani

Center for Anthropology, Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research, Caracas, Venezuela

Raúl Valadez-Azúa

Institute of Anthropological Research, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico

Alexandra A. E. van der Geer

Department of Geology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Zografos, Greece & Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, the Netherlands

Natalie Vasey

Department of Anthropology, Portland State University, Oregon, USA

Marco Vespa

Department of Classical Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Thomas A. Wake

Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles, USA & Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Panama City, Panama

Haitao Wang

Shaanxi Key Laboratory for Animal Conservation, College of Life Sciences, Northwest University, Xi'an, China

Dionisios Youlatos

Department of Zoology, School of Biology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

He Zhang

Shaanxi Key Laboratory for Animal Conservation, College of Life Sciences, Northwest University, Xi'an, China

Foreword

The last few decades have witnessed a surge of interest in human–animal relations under headers such as Human–Animal Studies, Animal Studies, and Animal Ethics. Symptomatic was the founding of a slew of new journals, for example, *Anthrozoös* (1987), *Society & Animals* (1993), *Humanimalia* (2008), *Animal Studies Journal* (2011), *Relations: Beyond Anthropocentrism* (2012), and *Politics and Animals* (2014).

Most of these journals are associated with new learned societies, websites, conferences, research, and teaching programs. Such convergent initiatives were intent on moving beyond strictly life-sciences perspectives, stressing humanities and human science approaches instead, in an effort to overcome narrow anthropocentric paradigms in all fields of knowledge, such as, ecology, economics, ethnography, ethics, and philosophy. The appearance of the present volume, devoted to the archaeology of human–nonhuman primate interfaces and interdependencies, fits this broad development. As such it is certainly timely; perhaps even, being a first, it is a bit overdue.

One root of the new interest in (nonhuman) animals since the late twentieth century is the addition of the topic “species” to the 1970s triad race–class–gender as foci of research into stereotypes, inequality, and discrimination against various “others.” Another root is ethnozoology. This traditional subdiscipline of anthropology ethnographically addresses the broad variety of ways in which particular ethnolinguistic groups categorize and use animals around them – as prey, pets, symbols, for work, etc. At the dawn of the twenty-first century this was given a twist in multispecies ethnography. Instead of continuing, in too anthropocentric a manner, to see nonhuman animals as just part of the local ecological backdrop or as expressing human meanings, this approach stresses the subjectivity and agency of these animals, and the ways their lives are entangled with those of other species, including the human one.

The broader canvas against which the abovementioned developments – including archaeoprimateology as a burgeoning multidisciplinary field – can be situated was a shift in climate of opinion in the Western world, including academia. This shift has perhaps most clearly been visible in philosophy since the 1970s. The anthropocentrism of both the Christian metaphysical tradition and the humanistic “Modern,” that is, Enlightenment, discourse on politics and ethics was criticized by post-Modern, post-colonialist, post-humanist, and other approaches. The latter often took inspiration from French thinkers who were no longer under the sway of Immanuel Kant, that champion of the Enlightenment, but under the influence of, among others, Friedrich Nietzsche, the iconoclastic *Philosoph mit dem Hammer* (philosopher with a hammer) who secularized human primates by situating them in instead of above nature.

In a different but convergent way, human specialty assumptions were increasingly undermined by the ever-increasing influence of the sciences on public opinion. Evolutionary biology and cognitive neuroscience show how profoundly natural humans are as just another “unique” species, while the ecological disciplines address

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the daunting challenges of environmental sustainability in the Anthropocene, emphasizing interdependencies between humans and other species.

The present volume's editors, Andrzej Antczak (a colleague at Leiden University), Bernardo Urbani, and Dionisios Youlatos, asked me to contribute this foreword because as a philosopher I worked on the roots of this cluster of profound changes. I was also privileged to be able to closely follow ethno-/archaeozoological research by the Caribbean archaeology group of which Andrzej is part. The present volume on archaeoprimateology converges with a 2018 special issue of the journal *Environmental Archaeology* on archaeo-ornithology which for me, next to the present volume, was another exciting read. What Katrin Cost and Shumon Hussain, the editors of that issue, another first, write fully applies to the present volume as well: among other things, archaeology “offers a unique deep-historical perspective on the animal part in the human story and is capable of investigating human-animal dynamics on varying timescales – some available exclusively for archaeological analysis.”

The deep time perspective and the stress on interdependencies between humans and other species in these publications is of particular importance in the Anthropocene, the present era of unprecedented transformation of an entire planet by a single primate (*sic*) species to suit its own needs. The present volume also provides considerably more time depth to a series of multidisciplinary studies which, since the late 1990s and under the header “ethnoprimateology,” have explored the multifarious relations between indigenous peoples and alloprimates. Furthermore, multispecies studies also inspired a 2011 volume entitled *Ethnozooarchaeology* (edited by Umberto Albarella and Angela Trentacoste) which sets out to move faunal analysis in archaeology beyond the division of processual and post-processual approaches.

Finally, ethno- and archaeozoological studies on primates in particular also have epistemological relevance. The term “epistemology” is sometimes used in a rather loose manner, but here it refers not so much to the analysis of data itself but of the ways data is handled theoretically. Anthropology partly developed from, and arguably partly still is, European ethnozooology (Christian, secularized, and folk perceptions of and dealings with the animal world), in particular European ethnoprimateology (perceptions of and dealings with apes and monkeys). Consequently, anthropology as a discipline, here, in a reflexive manner, also ponders itself, its own roots, the cultural backgrounds of the ways it handles its data.

Here is what I mean. The history of primatology, primate taxonomy, and palaeo-anthropology since the eighteenth century shows how human primates which usually deemed themselves uniquely elevated above the rest of living nature, both cognitively and morally, had much trouble classifying themselves, their own “apish” ancestry, and other primates. Unlike, for example, birds, other primates in many cultural settings, including some studied in this volume, had a special position because they are so uncannily similar to humans. Other primates are thus categorially ambiguous with respect to the strong classificatory boundary between humans and (other) animals in western worldviews. Other primates were hard to classify, and as such often had a strong, usually either negative or positive, symbolic and moral load. They were often vilified and seen as grotesque, in particular in the European

tradition. Precisely this created problems when scholars of the day started to realize the close affinity of humans with other primates (Linnaeus) and, subsequently, their own “apish” ancestors (Darwin).

Therefore ethno-/archaeoprimatological research is of epistemological interest as well: it contributes to reflection on the anthropological disciplines as wrestling with their own roots in European anthropocentric perceptions of sovereign, privileged humans versus (extant or extinct) apish others. This too, next to reflection on the role of that anthropocentrism, and of one primate species in particular, in the coming about of the Anthropocene, is part of the promise of the present volume on archaeoprimatology as a burgeoning field of research.

Raymond Corbey

*Professor of Philosophy of Science and Anthropology,
Leiden University, the Netherlands*

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