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All Roads Lead to Roads?

A New Book on the Archaeologies of Roads

While roads, routes, and paths are common features in our everyday lives, they are often traveled unnoticed as we move from place to place.

It turns out that archaeologists are not that different. Despite excavating monuments, cities, villages, farms, and battlefields, they rarely have placed roads the center of their work. It may be that they are just too utilitarian to be worthy of serious study. Or that roads, like rivers in Greek proverbs, are always changing and never the same from one moment to the next.

A new book edited by Leiden University’s Tuna Kalaycı titled *Archaeologies of Roads* aims to remedy some of these concerns by asking the question: what happens if we think of roads not only as a static archaeological object but as a dynamic and complex phenomenon?

This book brings together various international studies spanning diverse landscapes, places, and periods. The central premise of the book is to reveal the complexity of “the road”, be it a modern or an ancient one. The authors look at roads as not only containers for actions but also the actions themselves; roads are perpetual works in progress, continually shaping and being shaped by the world around them.

As an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Archaeology, Kalaycı muses: "The road transcends its physical form to become the embodiment of action, a realm where contradictions find resolutions or perils intertwine with possibilities. This edited volume, *Archaeologies of Roads*, hopes to shine new light on how we study roads, ancient or modern, and sometimes both at the same time."

Authors contribute with fifteen road studies around the world, ranging from Bronze Age Pontic–Caspian steppes to Roman Iberia and from Ottoman Anatolia to modern-day China. The book has three sections: routes, methods, and metaphors and constructing histories, reflecting the diversity in and of road studies. As the chapters interweave, they collectively challenge approaches to understanding roads and hopefully inspire readers to transcend conventional boundaries of identification, mapping, and dating of roads.

Bill Caraher, the publisher at the Digital Press at the University of North Dakota notes: "This book reveals the potential for world archaeology to produce new understanding both for the discipline of archaeology, and also for historians, geographers, urban planners, and contemporary communities. Making it available as a free open access download and a low-cost paperback ensures that it gets into as many hands as possible. I hope that they find it as intriguing and provocative as I have."

The book can be downloaded or purchased here: https://thedigitalpress.org/roads/

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