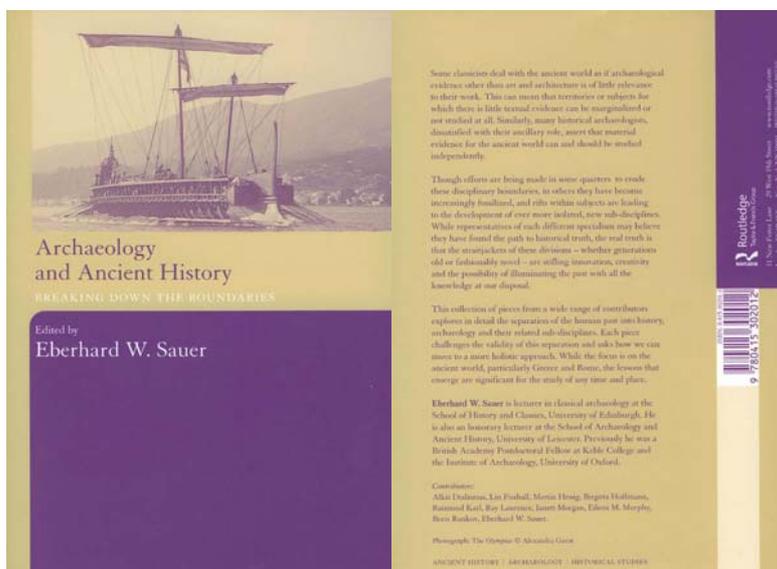


**Sauer, E.W. Ed. 2004. Archaeology and ancient history. Breaking down the boundaries. – London/New York, Routledge**

Book review by M.C. Kosian



This book is a collection of papers originally presented in a session of the Theoretical Archaeology Group Conference in Dublin in 2001, and entitled ‘Breaking down boundaries. The artificial archaeology–ancient history divide.’ Although the speakers represented a wide array of scientific disciplines and views, they all share the belief, according to Sauer, that a more fully integration of archaeological and historical evidence would be beneficial.

Sauer himself, of course, is no friend of boundaries, and therefore there are no geographic and chronological limits of the subjects: they range from Siberia to England, from Ireland to Greece, and chronologically from Late Bronze Age to Late Antiquity. Although there are no contributions on Africa or the Near East, this is only coincidental; no doubt Sauer would have welcomed the insights from these regions as equally relevant to the ancient world. Within the parameters, nine scholars (including Sauer himself), offer their experiences with the division of the various disciplines that study the past.

After the introduction by Sauer in two essays, the book is organised around three themes (and sections): Greece, Rome and neighbouring cultures. Although the division pointed out by the authors between archaeology and ancient history is vividly described, and rejected, the whole subject is quite alien for someone brought up and working in the Dutch academic tradition, where this division is far less of a reality and matter-of-course. This sharply contrasts with the situation in England and Germany; here, this topic is much discussed because the division between the two subjects is an everyday experience. Interestingly enough, in all papers the authors only observe this particularly academic division: sciences like anthropology and several applied physics like dendrochronology and 14C–dating are considered to be part of the archaeological *métier*. There is even a contribution from an osteoarchaeologist, a discipline combining (paleo)biology and archaeology. The gap between archaeology and ancient history appears more a relic of the academic history of the home–countries of the contributors than a true academic boundary. In the archaeological practice of The Netherlands, every kind of data necessary for the research at hand is employed, whether purely archaeological (material), historical (direct or indirect written sources), anthropological etc.. More or less the same is true for modern historical research.

For the non–English or non–German reader the arguments of the several papers and the conclusions by Sauer might seem something from the past, although the papers themselves are quite readable and interesting. For English or German scholars, I think, this book is a very good start for a more broadening view of their own academic discipline.

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