

Shipman, Pat (2021). *Our Oldest Companions*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021. xii + 247 pages. \$25.95. Hardcover.

In recent years, there has been a lot of intriguing historical discussion about things that humans utilize in their everyday lives. Understanding the origins of these topics are not only interesting but help social scientists understand the context of these relationships and how society has continued to evolve because of these concepts. Tom Standage, for example, wrote a fascinating book entitled *A History of the World in Glasses*, explaining the history of alcohol and its impact on the world in a historical context. Books like Shipman's, and Standage's work, help to connect what we understand about the past to how we think about things currently in our world. These relationships help to define our society and how it has evolved to what we know today. When we can piece together these constructs from the past, we can tighten our understanding of how these concepts impact today's society. Pat Shipman's new book, *Our Oldest Companions*, focuses on the relationship between humans and dogs—and how this relationship came to be. This book takes an anthropological and sociological approach outlining what this means for our understanding of humans and dogs. Shipman's book focuses on this relationship in a global context.

Shipman starts the book explaining that many people have dogs as pets and the relationship between humans and dogs is particularly special. Shipman also notes the pet companionship industry highlighting the numerous items a dog owner can purchase for their dog. Shipman notes that throughout the world, people keep dogs as pets and explores how this very special relationship came to be—exploring in a prehistoric setting that anthropologists have come to understand. Shipman explains that not all animals and plants can be domesticated. She includes nuances that establish what some of these relationship characteristics might be. She also asks several important questions explaining what would be at the core of this relationship and

how it would help to promote how individuals expanded in society. Shipman explains that humans and dogs evolved together and not mutually exclusive of one another.

Our Oldest Companions discusses important anthropological evidence to establish where the first relationship between humans and dogs was likely to take place. Noting that there is little anthropological evidence of dogs in Australia, Shipman notes that this relationship was unlikely to start there—but explains there was likely a global phenomenon taking place between humankind and canines.

While the book focuses on the relationship between humans and dogs, the author ties in a number of important, intriguing points that focus on the notion of domestication and how global society evolved because of this important symbiotic relationship. The author focuses on migration patterns and numerous other important points that focus on geographic factors. More importantly, Shipman notes that dogs evolved because of this relationship, but human society did as well.

While this book is a fascinating read for any historian, it is more of an anthropologic and palaeontologic piece that works to fill in the gaps of what we understand about the relationship between humans and dogs. From a sociological perspective, the book is a fascinating read that explores the evolution of society and hints at the question: how would humans have evolved without dogs—and vice versa? This book would be a wonderful addition to any global sociology class, a graduate student interested in learning more about this relationship in an anthropological sense—and, for anyone interested in understanding more about this important relationship.

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References

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