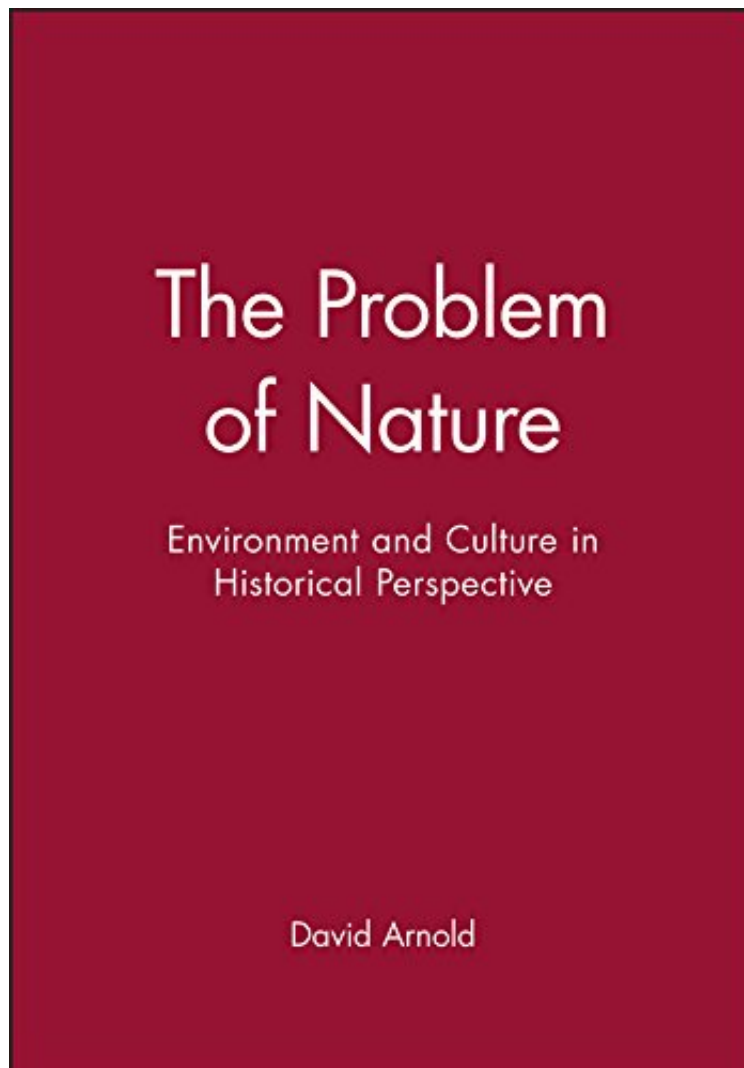


[Ebook pdf] The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion (New Perspectives on the Past)

The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion (New Perspectives on the Past)

David Arnold

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David Arnold : The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion (New Perspectives on the Past) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion (New Perspectives on the Past):

This book considers how nature - in both its biological and environmental manifestations - has been invoked as a dynamic force in human history. It shows how historians, philosophers, geographers, anthropologists and scientists have used ideas of nature to explain the evolution of cultures, to understand cultural difference, and to justify or condemn colonization, slavery and racial superiority. It examines the central part that ideas of environmental and biological determinism have played in theory, and describes how these ideas have served in different ways at different times as instruments of authority, identity and defiance. The book shows how powerful and problematic the invocation of nature can be.

From the Back Cover This book considers how nature - in both its biological and environmental manifestations - has been invoked as a dynamic force in human history. It shows how historians, philosophers, geographers, anthropologists and scientists have used ideas of nature to explain the evolution of cultures, to understand cultural difference, and to justify or condemn colonization, slavery and racial superiority. It examines the central part that ideas of environmental and biological determinism have played in theory, and describes how these ideas have served in different ways at different times as instruments of authority, identity and defiance. The book shows how powerful and problematic the invocation of nature can be. The Problem of Nature covers a whole cycle of environmental history and its interpretation, from the Black Death in the fourteenth century, the first European voyages of discovery and the opening of the American frontier through to the imperialism of the nineteenth century and the example of India under colonial rule. David Arnold shows how both the natural environment and ideas about nature have changed radically over the last five centuries. The author describes the profound influence that historical and social theory and the biological sciences have had upon each other. He shows how the outcomes of their interaction not only informed and shaped the European impact upon the world and on itself, but how crucial they are to American conceptions of the society and history of the United States. He provides provocative answers to the questions of what role the environment should have in the conceptualization of time and place; and of how far societies and their histories can be understood from the perspectives of natural and biological sciences.

About the Author David Arnold is Professor of South Asian History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. His previous books include *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change* and *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth Century India*.