PART IV

ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES
ANCIENT IMMIGRANTS: ARCHAEOLOGY 
AND MARITIME MIGRATIONS

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Our African Exodus was the greatest of all human journeys, a global endeavor that took our ancestors over every conceivable obstacle thrown up by nature…. It is a testimony to human resilience and resourcefulness that we overcame these hurdles in a few dozen millennia, leaving only a handful of ocean islands and the polar caps unconquered until recent times.2

Introduction

From early hominid movements out of Africa to the global diasporas of the last few centuries, migrations have played a fundamental role in human history. The spread of humans out of Africa into the previously unoccupied continents of Eurasia, Australia, and the Americas, then to other regions (the Pacific Islands, Iceland, Greenland, etc.), had major cultural and ecological impacts around the world. Ancient civilizations emerged, were challenged, and sometimes collapsed due to migrations and their far-ranging consequences. In some cases, the diseases or domesticates that accompanied migrating humans into their new homelands were responsible for some of the most devastating effects. Ultimately, the outcomes these societies engineered depended on a variety of factors, including the effectiveness of their leaders and the responses crafted to address societal challenges.

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2 Stringer and McKie 1997:149.