

Introduction

This volume is intended as a basic reference work for students, scholars, and the general public alike. As a one-volume multisubject work on Near Eastern archaeology, focusing on the Levant, this Reader serves as the perfect companion reference textbook for college classes in archaeology, history, and biblical studies. Scholars in archaeology and ancillary fields will find its surveys of cultural periods and related topics by specialists to be immensely helpful as a ready resource for summaries of an area or special topic. And the general public should find its forthright, nontechnical presentation of materials to be a refreshingly comprehensible journey into what may sometimes be a slightly intimidating and highly technical area of study. To facilitate use of the volume, the 63 essays have been grouped into two broad categories. Part 1: Theory, Method, and Context includes methodology, techniques, writing and language, and material culture. Part 2: Cultural Phases and Associated Topics focuses on surveys of archaeological periods and related cultural and textual subjects.

The production of this reference work has a long history, which may be helpful for the reader to know. It began in 1992 with an invitation to William G. Dever to produce a one-volume encyclopedia on the archaeology of Syria–Palestine for a multivolume reference work on ancient Near Eastern archaeology, to be published by Garland Press in New York. Dever later forfeited his Garland assignment to become a section editor for the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (New York, 1997).

I inherited the original Garland assignment, drew up a list of over 400 entries, including field reports on major and minor sites, as well as specialized essays, all of which varied in length from 750 to 4,000 words. Originally, the intent was to invite native and foreign scholars working in Levantine Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan to contribute essays on their excavated sites as well as topical essays. The charge was to survey ancient Syria–Palestine from the Paleolithic Period to the Islamic Conquest. The series was to be distinctively by and for archaeologists and about archaeology as such, not archaeology as a subbranch of another discipline. This very ambitious plan, however, proved to be unfeasible for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the significant competition for the same contributors from both the massive Oxford Press four-volume project and the *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1993), with the inevitable resulting duplication of excavation reports.

When Garland canceled the project, I was left with many excellent manuscripts deserving of publication, but no publisher. With the help of Bill Dever, it was possible to salvage the project by recasting the encyclopedia into a Reader. The decision was made to eliminate all the individual-site essays—most of which

by now had been published in a similar form elsewhere—and to publish only the topical essays. Recognizing the wealth and scope of the material, Jim Eisenbraun agreed to take on the project. The result is the present volume, much of the summarized materials of which are available elsewhere only in very technical and often inaccessible publications.

Each entry in the Reader was commissioned, the authors being chosen for their acknowledged expertise on the subject as well as their ability to summarize and communicate clearly. The entries are brief, but all append bibliographies that will lead the reader to the basic data and to wider discussion. In 1998, when Eisenbraun took over the project, contributors were offered a chance to update their entries if they thought it necessary. Since that time there have been several new articles commissioned, and bibliographies have been updated by most authors.

Due to the shift from a comprehensive volume of encyclopedia articles on the archaeology of Syria–Palestine to a reader in Near Eastern archaeology, there obviously is an unevenness in the scope or length of the essays. For example, the separate articles for Syria and Palestine that were originally envisioned for various periods did not eventuate. Thus, although some of the entries on cultural phases span the broader area of Syria–Palestine (see the surveys by Clark and Coinman [Paleolithic] as well as Rollefson [Neolithic]), the remaining surveys for the most part concentrate on the southern Levant (Levy, Chalcolithic; Richard, Early Bronze Age; Ilan, Middle Bronze Age; Leonard, Late Bronze Age; Younker, Iron Age; Carter, Persian; and Berlin, Hellenistic).

Though our cultural phase surveys end with the Hellenistic period, there are a number of articles that address topics of interest in the later periods generally. Graf surveys classical texts and discusses the Nabateans; Butcher surveys the field of numismatics; Giles discusses the Samaritans; and three authors provide an in-depth study of Jewish art and synagogues (Hachlili, Fine, and Ma'oz). For the early Christian period, see the essays on churches (Patrich), mosaics (Piccirillo), and art (Galate).

For readers interested in the development or evolution of a topic through successive historical periods, there are a number of relevant essays. Dever's essay on chronology orients the reader to the cultural divisions generally accepted by the scholarly community from the Paleolithic through the Iron Age, although the reader may note differences among the various authors in this volume. G. R. H. Wright provides an excellent survey of architecture through the ages in Syria–Palestine, as Bloch-Smith does for tomb and funerary customs. Likewise, the essays on weapons and warfare, metalworking, jewelry, and scarabs by Philip, Muhly, Platt, and the late William A. Ward, respectively, discuss these subjects in chronological fashion. The history of the Negev by Haiman, Cline's piece on trade, Dever's "Religion and Cult," and Ackerman's two essays on women and goddesses also trace their important topics through multiple periods.

An excellent introduction to the history of writing and to language can be found in a series of essays on Semitic languages, writing, and scripts by Rendsburg and Millard. Text sources include Miller's treatment of the Bible, Matthews' essay

on the Amarna texts, and Graf's piece on classical texts, mentioned above. The essay on the relationship between the Bible and archaeology by Rast discusses the problems and controversies of text and artifact in the biblical lands. Very much related to text sources are the essays on religion and cult by Dever (mentioned above) and Canaanite religion by Nakhai.

I must confess to a bias toward the Early Bronze Age and, thus, besides my overview, separate essays on EB II Sinai by Beit-Arieh, on the analysis of models for understanding the end of the EBA by Long, and on a survey of the Dead Sea Plain by Rast round out the late fourth and third millennia B.C.E. For an introduction into specialized fields and allied sciences, as well as method and theory and new techniques, see the works on geography (Beitzel), roads (Dorsey), paleoenvironment (Rosen), archaeozoology (Wapnish and Hesse), paleoethnobotany (Wapnick), subsistence pastoralism (LaBianca), and subsistence agriculture (Hopkins); as well as Holladay's method and theory, Banning's two essays on surveys and computers, and Christopherson's GIS piece. Finally, see the specialized essays by London on ceramics, ethnography, and ethnicity, Wright on restoration, Carlson on nautical archaeology, Rollefson on prehistoric chipped stone technology, Tadmor on the Nahal Mishmar hoard, Davis on a history of biblical archaeology, and Matthews on "everyday life."

I have no doubt that this volume will be of unique value to all who are interested in the archaeology of Syria-Palestine, the Levant, "biblical archaeology," the archaeology of Israel, the archaeology of Jordan, or, as Dever so cogently suggests in the foreword, Near Eastern archaeology, with a specialization in X (the variety of terms used by scholars is readily apparent in this volume). I am pleased that he has used this Reader as a forum to elucidate and make explicit a tacitly agreed upon real problem in the field. Indeed, as a case in point, when Eisenbrauns accepted this project and asked for a title, it took a great deal of debate and discussion with a number of people to arrive at the conclusion that the only possibility was a version of *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader* or the *Archaeology of the Levant: A Reader*. The down side of the latter term, however, is its lack of recognition among the general public. I fully agree with Dever that, at this particular time period, the identification of one as a "Near Eastern archaeologist, specializing in X," is the only reasonable alternative to the politically-charged terminologies currently in use. Moreover, many of us have been calling ourselves Near Eastern archaeologists for some time now, preferring the distinction from the Far East in studies of antiquity, on the one hand, and from the "Middle East," in current political usage, on the other. Thus, we have decided on the title *Near Eastern Archaeology* for this Reader and note that its focus is primarily the Levant.

As these excellent contributions finally see the light of day, I am wont to say that I never thought it would actually happen! Of course, I owe a great deal of gratitude to William G. Dever for helping to bring this volume to fruition and for gracing the Reader with a thought-provoking foreword. He has been helpful in soliciting a number of additional essays since 1998 and, yes, in editing too. A special note of thanks goes to Jim Eisenbraun for recognizing the value of bringing

this project to publication and to Beverly McCoy, our editor at Eisenbrauns, who made the publication process amazingly smooth and easy.

This project began while I was at Drew University and has been completed now at Gannon University. I would like to acknowledge both for providing support to work on the volume. Drew University graduate students at the time, Linda Sue Galate and Carolyn Buss, are due a special note of thanks for their advice, help with editing, typing, and photo-copying! Of course, the Reader would never have come about had it not been for the original support from Garland Press in the early stages of the project, and I would like to acknowledge that. I would very much like to thank all of the participants from the earlier venture for their contributions and their willingness to remain patient after the news of the collapse of the encyclopedia project. My very real regret—and one of the most difficult things I have had to do—is that I had to return articles to colleagues who had conscientiously met their commitments to complete their assigned articles. My apologies go to those who spent much time and effort on this project to no publication end (some of whom wrote as many as 8 essays). Nevertheless, it is gratifying to bring the project to closure with these 63 excellent essays. The cover photo of the ancient mound of Beth-shan and the new Roman city at its base aptly reflects the breadth of this volume on Near Eastern Archaeology.

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