REVIEW ARTICLES

Encyclopedias "R" Us

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THE OXFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE NEAR EAST I–V, edited by *Eric M. Meyers*. Pp. 2,600, figs. 654, maps 13. Oxford University Press, New York 1996. $575. ISBN 0-19-506512-3.

Although Flaubert wrote that "stupidity consists in a desire to conclude," reaching a conclusion about the order of things must be one of the strongest of human cultural urges. Australian aboriginal hunter-gatherers and Inuit in the Arctic are famous for their ability to categorize their human and natural universes. The first Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets (and thus the first human writing system) included lists of people and things (H. Nissen, P. Damerow, and R. Englund, *Frühe Schriften und Techniken der Wirtschaftsverwaltung im alten Vorderen Orient: Informationsspeicherung und -verarbeitung vor 5000 Jahren*, Berlin 1990; translated as *Archaic Bookkeeping*, Chicago 1993). Although Mesopotamians went on to compose many kinds of lexical lists (M. Civil, "Lexicography," in S.J. Lieberman ed., *Sumerological Studies in Honor of Thorkild Jacobsen on His Seventieth Birthday, June 7, 1974* [Chicago 1976] 123–57), these classifications of words, terms, and grammatical explanations are not encyclopedias because they are not histories and discussions of their subjects, and there are no attempts to relate and cross-reference similar topics. Pliny the Elder is usually given credit for producing the first encyclopedia, his *Natural History*, in 37 volumes and 2,493 chapters, collected from 2,000 books written by 100 authors.

Subsequently, the urge to write encyclopedias has found numerous outlets. In western late antiquity, works attempting "instruction in the whole circle" of learning were compiled, and the number of encyclopedias grew in the Middle Ages. Encyclopedias also appeared in China beginning in the 14th century, and perhaps the largest of all encyclopedias, in 5,020 volumes, was prepared for a 16th-century emperor. Encyclopedias written in European vernaculars were undertaken in the 17th and 18th centuries, the great projects being Zedler's *Grosses vollständiges universal Lexicon* (64 volumes, 1750), the *Encyclopédie* (whose first volume appeared in 1751, and 21st volume in 1765), and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (the first 1771 edition in only three volumes; the third edition of 1797 in 18 volumes). The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, like the French and German encyclopedias, was enormously popular, going through 12 editions by 1920, when it was bought by Sears, Roebuck, and Co. (The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is now produced, as is genuine draft beer in a can, in the United States.) Many publishers of encyclopedias have made fortunes.

With the growth and compartmentalization of knowledge, the 20th century has seen the appearance of specialized encyclopedias, including, for example, the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* and the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. The first encyclopedia of archaeology seems to be the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, edited by Andrew Sherratt (Cambridge 1980). In this single volume, Sherratt intended to celebrate the maturity of archaeology as a discipline, whose progress "has produced striking advances in our understanding of global developments" (p. 9), and thus required a work of reference:

> Archaeology has come of age. While it began as a method of identifying places and objects already known from the historical record, it has become a powerful means of discovering new facts not only about the historical period but also about ages beyond the reach of written evidence. It is at last beginning to provide answers to some of the most fundamental questions about human origins and the development of human society. Dealing with the whole story of man's existence on Earth, it brings a fresh perspective to the study of past and present conditions (p. 9).

Archaeologists have now produced dictionaries (e.g., W. Bray, *Penguin Dictionary of Archaeology*, Harmondsworth 1972; 2nd ed. 1982) and companions (e.g., B. Fagan ed., *Oxford Companion to Archaeology*, Oxford 1996), and Near Eastern archaeologists and historians have issued, for instance, M. Avi-Yonah and E. Stern eds., *The Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Oxford 1977) and the encyclopedia-like *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (under the general editorship of J. Sasson [New York 1995]; see review by S. Morris, "*Ex Oriente* Books: Near Eastern Resources for Classicists," *AJA* 101 [1997] 149–53). While modern archaeologists have learned from Kuhn's and Foucault's critiques of positivism that the past is constructed, represented, and commodified in the present, booksellers have little problem in finding talented editors of encyclopedias, who are easily able to enlist contributors willing to summarize, codify, and wax authoritative about archaeology. I, for one, fully expect an announcement soon of *The Encyclopedia of Postprocessual Archaeology*.

SCOPE OF THE VOLUMES

No encyclopedia could wish for a better editor than Eric Meyers or be better organized than this one. The encyclopedia project was first considered in 1988 under the auspices of the American Schools of Oriental Research and intended to be a "Handbook of Biblical Archaeology." As Meyers notes, it still maintains this core. The geographical scope of the encyclopedia, however, expanded from Syria/Palestine/Israel/Jordan/Canaan/the southern Levant—or, simply, "Region X," as I have called it (N. Yoffee, "Conclusion: A Mass in Celebration of the Conference," in T.E. Levy ed., *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* [London 1995] 542)—to include Mesopotamia (that is, Iraq), Arabia, Persia (that is, Iran), Egypt, Cyprus, and the Aegean islands. The entries range in time from prehistory through the Byzantine period, and include some Islamic archaeology,

as well. Proceeding from its core of biblical archaeology and with pious reference to the ancestral specter of W.F. Albright, Meyers declares that a leitmotiv of the volume is to explore the relations between historical and archaeological data. Thus, there is an article on "Historical Archaeology" (by David Jamieson-Drake) that ranges beyond Near Eastern concerns. The article on "Biblical Archaeology" (by William Dever) considers the possibilities and problems of biblical archaeology as historical archaeology, while the article on "New Archaeology" (by Alexander Joffe) provides a counterpoint (see below).

Of the 1,100 articles by 560 contributors from two dozen countries, 481 are on sites: in Palestine (Israel and the West Bank, mainly) there are 164, in Syria 64, in "Transjordan" 74; Mesopotamia is represented by 43 sites, Anatolia by 35, Cyprus and the Aegean by 15, Persia by 22, the Arabian peninsula by 27, Egypt by only 30, North Africa and "Semitic East Africa" by 7. The authors include scholars of these regions as well as foreign archaeologists, since one goal of the encyclopedia is to promote an understanding across national borders and archaeological traditions.

CONTENTS OF THE ENCYCLOPEDIA

The "Synoptic Outline of the Contents" at the end of volume 5 provides the best point of entry to the encyclopedia. The major sections are 1) Lands and Peoples; 2) Writing, Language, and Texts; 3) Material Culture; 4) Archaeological Methods; and 5) History of Archaeology. There is also a 90-page index (each page having three columns) that contains detailed references to topics discussed in the articles, and a "Directory of Contributors" that lists the articles written by each, which can lead those already acquainted with the ancient Near East to topics.

The largest section in "Lands and Peoples" is of course on Region X, and includes overviews of archaeology in Palestine, Syria, and Transjordan by Ofer Bar-Yosef (prehistory), Joffe (Bronze Age), Amihai Mazar (Iron Age), David Graf (Persian through Roman times), Dennis E. Groh (Byzantine period), and Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Islamic times). A section of peoples, polities, and events in Region X includes articles on Aramaeans (Edward M. Cook), Eblaites (Gary Rendsburg), Israelites (Volkmar Fritz), Philistines (Trude Dothan), late Philistines (Seymour Gitin), and Samaritans (Reinhard Pummer). Subregions and sites include the following: in Palestine, Arad (for the Bronze Age, Ornet Ilan and Ruth Amiran, and for the Iron Age, Ze'ev Herzog), Ashkelon (David Schloen), Carmel caves (Bar-Yosef), Hazor (Amnon Ben-Tor), and Jerusalem (Dan Bahat); in Syria there are articles on the sites of Alalakh (Diana Stein), Brak (Glenn Schwartz), Damascus (Wayne Pitard), Mari (Jean-Claude Magueron), and Ugarit (Marguerite Yon); in Transjordan sites include Bab edh-Dhra' (R. Thomas Schaub), Beidha (Brian Byrd), and Limes Arabicus (S. Thomas Parker).

In the section on Mesopotamia, overviews are on prehistoric and ancient Mesopotamia (Hans Nissen), Mesopotamia from Alexander to the rise of Islam (St. John Simpson), and in the Islamic period (Alastair Northedge). Peoples and polities include Akkadians (Benjamin Foster), Amorites (Giorgio Buccellati), Assyrians (A. Kirk Grayson), Babylonians (Evelyn Klengel-Brandt), Kassites (Stein), and Sumerians (Piotr Michalowski). Subregions and sites include Akkade (Harvey Weiss), Babylon (Klengel-Brandt), Jarmo (Patty Jo Watson), Ur (Susan Pollock), and Uruk-Warka (Rainer Michael Boehmer).

In the Anatolian section the overviews are on prehistory (Ronald Gorny), ancient Anatolia (Ann Gunter), from Alexander to the rise of Islam (Jane Ayer Scott), and the Islamic period (Rudi Lindner). Peoples and polities include Hittites (Harry Hoffner) and Hurrians (Stein); subregions and sites include Aphrodisias (R.R.R. Smith), Boğazköy (Hans Güterbock), Çatal Hüyük (Ian Todd), Constantinople (Helen Saradi), Gordion (Mary Voigt), and Uluburun (Cemal Pulak and George F. Bass).

The section on Cyprus and the Aegean islands contains overviews on the Aegean islands (A. Bernard Knapp), Crete (Philip Betancourt), and Cyprus (J.D. Muhly); peoples and polities are only Minoans (J. Alexander MacGillivray); subregions and sites include Enkomi (Jacques Lagarce), Idalion (Pamela Gaber), and Kition (Yon).

The section on Persia contains overviews on prehistory (Frank Hole), ancient Persia (C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky), from Alexander to the rise of Islam (Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis), and on the Islamic period (Rosen-Ayalon). Peoples and polities include Elamites (Robert Henrickson), Medes (T. Cuyler Young, Jr., who also writes on Persians), Parthians and Sasanians (E.J. Keall), and Scythians (Jan Bouzek).

The Arabian peninsula is surveyed in prehistory (Daniel T. Potts), before Islam (Peter J. Parr), and in Islamic times (Abdul Rahman T. al-Ansary). Peoples and polities include Bahrain and Dilmun (Potts), Oman (Juris Zarins), and Yemen (David Warburton).

Egypt is covered with a section on prehistory (Fred Wendorf and Angela E. Close), predynastic (Peter Lacovarra), dynastic (James M. Weinstein), and post-dynastic times (Robert Steven Bianchi), and the Islamic period (George Scanlon). Peoples and polities are only Hyksos (Weinstein). Subregions and sites include Abydos (Diana Craig Patch), Alexandria (Birger A. Pearson), Amarna (Betsy Bryan), Dab'a (Manfred Bietak), Elephantine (Werner Kaiser), and Naqada (Patricia V. Podzorski).

Small sections are on North Africa (liberally defined), which is discussed by Joseph A. Greene; peoples and places include Malta (D.H. Trump) and Sardinia (Robert J. Rowland, Jr.); subregions and sites include Carthage (Colin M. Wells) and Leptis Magna (G.B.D. Jones). Semitic East Africa is the subject of articles on peoples and polities, including Axum (Marilyn E. Heldman), Ethiopia (Ephraim Isaac), and Nubia (Zahi Hawass). The section on subregions and sites includes an article on Meroë by David O'Connor. Major empires includes the 'Abbasid (Alistair Northedge), Alexandrian (Pearson), Byzantine (Helen Saradi), and Roman (David L. Kennedy).

The second major section on "Writing, Language, and Texts" includes a first subsection on language families and languages. There are 25 informative articles that survey the grammar and syntax of the major languages of the various regions; there are also articles on Indo-European (Gernot Windfuhr) and Semitic (Gene B. Gragg). The second subsection of inscriptions and texts contains surveys of biblical literature (with several subdivisions) and on Alalakh texts (Edward L. Greenstein), Ebla texts (Alfonso Archi), Fakhariyah Aramaic texts (Pierre Bordreuil), Oxyrhynchus papyri (Terry Wilfong), and the Temple Scroll

(Michael O. Wise). The third subsection on writing and literacy includes articles on the alphabet (Dennis Pardee), literacy (Aaron Demsky), and scribes and scribal traditions (Peter T. Daniels).

The third major section on "Material Culture" contains some of the most informative articles in the encyclopedia. Under the subsection on subsistence, trade, and technology there is a 23-page set of articles (carrying through the various regions and time periods) on "building materials and techniques" (with articles by Herzog, G.R.H. Wright, and D. Fairchild Ruggles). Under the subsection on "built structures" there is a 20-page set of articles on "house" (in Mesopotamia by Elizabeth Stone, Syria-Palestine by John Holladay, Jr., with profuse illustrations, and in Egypt by Felix Arnold). In the subsection on "artifacts and technologies," the set of articles on bone, ivory, and shell (by Paula Wapnish, Harold Liebowitz, St. John Simpson, and Anna Contadini) is 15 pages long; the set of articles on ceramics (by Gloria London, James Armstrong, William Dever, Ephraim Stern, John W. Hayes, James Sauer, and Jodi Magness) is 29 pages; the lithics articles (by Steven Rosen and Yorke Rowan) cover 13 pages in length; metals (with articles by Muhly and Eric Lapp) require 20 pages. These various sets of articles begin with an overview on typology, then proceed through places and periods.

The fourth major subsection on "Archaeological Methods" includes articles on ethnoarchaeology (Charles Carter), neutron activation analysis (Joseph Yellen), stratigraphy (Holladay, Jr.), and survey (Thomas Levy). The fifth major section on "History of Archaeology" not only includes articles on the history of archaeology in the countries of the Near East (Syria by Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, Israel by Amihai Mazar, Jordan by James Sauer and Lloyd Wright, Mesopotamia by Roger Matthews, Persia by Robert Dyson, Jr., Anatolia by Jak Yakar, Egypt by Kent Weeks, Cyprus by Edgar Peltenburg, the Aegean islands by Muhly, and the Arabian peninsula by Potts) and on "organizations and institutions" such as the American Schools of Oriental Research (by Meyers) and the École biblique (by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor) but also on "theory and practice." These include biblical archaeology (Dever), ideology and archaeology (Neil Silberman, who also writes on the eugenic movement, and on nationalism and archaeology), and the New Archaeology (Joffe). The final subsection contains a listing of biographies with most of the likely dead white males and a very few females (e.g., Gertrud Caton-Thompson by James Sauer, Dorothy Garrod by Bar-Yosef, and Kathleen Kenyon by A.D. Tushingham).

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY, NEAR EASTERN ARCHAEOLOGY, AND ARCHAEOLOGY

By means of this lengthy summary, one gains a good impression of the high quality of the individual essays, the exhaustive list of sites covered in Region X and in those other regions that conquered, traded with, culturally influenced, and/or otherwise interacted intensively with Region X. Originally, of course, the study of most of these "other" regions in universities, as well as their interest to the public, was closely connected to the centrality of Bible studies in curricula devoted to religion, history, and literature and in public discourse. Today, as the study of the Hebrew Bible is confined to recondite university departments (and/or Departments of English), the position of archaeologists who study the region has become parlous, and this situation is explored implicitly in the very existence and structure of this encyclopedia.

Dever, who receives the palm for most articles written for the encyclopedia, captures the contradictions as well as pleasures of the field in his article on biblical archaeology. Dever traces the origins of biblical archaeology to the 19th century and the birth of literary-critical studies of the Bible, the concern with proving (or disproving) the historicity of the Bible, and the subsequent necessity that archaeologists choose sides in the debates. Although Dever himself was trained in the American tradition of Syro-Palestinian archaeology (as Albright preferred to call this field), which entailed learning the biblical text and in a Department of Near Eastern Studies, he has long argued that biblical archaeologists must first be professional archaeologists, expert in the techniques of recovery, analysis, and classification. An archaeologist of Region X could not simply be a biblical historian or theologian looking for data that would confirm his or her faith or, *mutatis mutandis*, discomfit the faithful.

In Europe (including the United Kingdom) the situation was naturally different, since European archaeologists interested in the lands of the Bible usually had developed considerable field skills in excavations in their own countries. By contrast, American biblical archaeologists were seldom trained in New World archaeological contexts. Dever, however, had earlier criticized European archaeologists as well in his insistence that biblical archaeologists should celebrate the revelations of the New Archaeology, which entails, among other things, an abandonment of history as a formal disciplinary umbrella for their activities, and he pleaded for their conversion to anthropology. This call was regarded with skepticism by many Middle Eastern archaeologists, since archaeology was part of the struggle to construct and understand their own history. It also involved a contradiction in the practical training of North American archaeologists and jeopardized their future on the job market. That is, biblical archaeologists needed to be trained in ancient languages and cultures of the Near East, and they normally enrolled in Near Eastern Studies departments to do so. Should students of biblical archaeology now be encouraged to receive their Ph.D. degrees from anthropology departments? Would anthropology departments, which employ most of the academic archaeologists in North America, consider hiring biblical archaeologists? Would the few departments of Near Eastern Studies that employ archaeologists hire an anthropologically trained biblical archaeologist? Is biblical archaeology at all compatible with an anthropological approach to archaeology?

After decades of proclaiming that biblical archaeology was dead, it came as a surprise to Dever and the Syro-Palestinian archaeologists that anthropology as a whole and anthropological archaeology in many of its parts was deciding that history/historical archaeology was now becoming a central part of their discipline. Here—gulp!—"biblical archaeology" obviously had much to offer, with its rich tradition of relying on textual sources. Striving to recapture the high moral ground, Dever ("Biblical Archaeology: Death and Rebirth?" in A. Biran and J. Aviram eds.,

Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990 [Jerusalem 1993] 706–22) now argues here that the aim of biblical archaeology reborn is to effect a "dialogue to achieve the proper relationship between [the] understanding and use of archaeology on the one hand, and [the] understanding of the issues in Biblical studies that are fitting subjects for archaeological illumination on the other" (318b). The many articles on material culture and artifact analysis in the encyclopedia reflect the editor's fundamental agreement with Dever's assessment that biblical archaeologists should return to history, but with renewed commitment to modern, technological archaeological analysis. But where does this leave biblical archaeology within the anthropological firmament? Does the archaeological study of the peoples and cultures of Region X offer any (theoretical) insights to anthropological archaeologists?

Joffe (who is a student of Dever's) moves this discussion forward in his article on the New Archaeology in which he is largely critical of the New Archaeology's contributions to archaeological and anthropological theory. He discusses briefly, but with the major actors portrayed, the nomothetic goals of the New Archaeology as "incomplete and antihumanist" (135b), its reliance on a species of environmental determinism to explain culture change as naive, and its interest in general systems theory, especially the "least-effort and least-cost principles, which to an extent rendered past decision makers into protocapitalist businessmen" (135a), as an anachronism. According to Joffe, the New Archaeology has had relatively little impact on Syro-Palestinian archaeology except at the methodological level, and he seems to envy Mesopotamian archaeologists the intellectual presence of Robert Adams, who influentially advocated "bridging the humanities and social sciences" (135a). For Joffe, the emphasis by New Archaeologists on detailed research designs and analytical techniques could never manage "to address highly abstract questions of 'evolution' and 'process' for the purposes of defining 'laws'" (136a–b). Archaeologists of Region X, having recently and fitfully borrowed concepts from the social evolutionary literature of the 1960s and 1970s, are only beginning to realize that their excellent archaeological data from excavations and especially from extensive surveys, and their historical controls on matters of contingency, interregional contact, and social and political struggle, have much to contribute to archaeological theory—if, that is, they are conversant with the discourse of archaeological theory.

This encyclopedia contains other articles on archaeological theory (in addition to Joffe's), for example, Silberman's essay on ideology and archaeology. Two aspects of the subject are explored: ideology as the study of ancient belief systems through material culture, and ideology as the ways in which modern belief systems are imposed on the reconstruction and representation of the past. The second theme is easily an important part of the archaeology of the ancient Near East, since racist views of the past and the use of archaeology to claim ownership of the past (and so to justify political agendas) are highly developed in the region. Archaeologists of the area are just beginning to appreciate that the meanings attached to artifacts in museums and to sites in the tourist industry often set the direction of research into ancient lifeways. Silberman explores the history of ideology as a construction of ancient societies, which sought to explain unequal power relations as natural and irresistible, and which is embedded in the plans of cities, the cultural constructions of landscapes, and material culture by means of which beliefs are manipulated and reproduced.

CONCLUSION

In sum, this encyclopedia can be read on several levels, if it will be read at all apart from its value as a quick reference to sites. (Presumably the encyclopedia is intended for libraries. But why is there no plan for a CD-ROM version that might be affordable for scholars and students, and why is there no on-line access? Perhaps the editor and press can still consider these options.) On the one hand, it is a stern directive to biblical archaeologists that they must become expert in archaeological method and theory. Why else include the extensive articles on, for example, survey and neutron-activation analysis? On the other hand, it is a plaintive advertisement to the larger archaeological community that biblical archaeologists are not a species apart from other archaeologists. The irony is, however, that the articles included on method and theory give precisely the impression that Near Eastern archaeologists need to catch up with their more professional brothers and sisters. Borges wrote that libraries are both illusions of knowledge and dramas of possibilities. If we can substitute the word "encyclopedia" for "library," no better description of this encyclopedia can be offered.

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