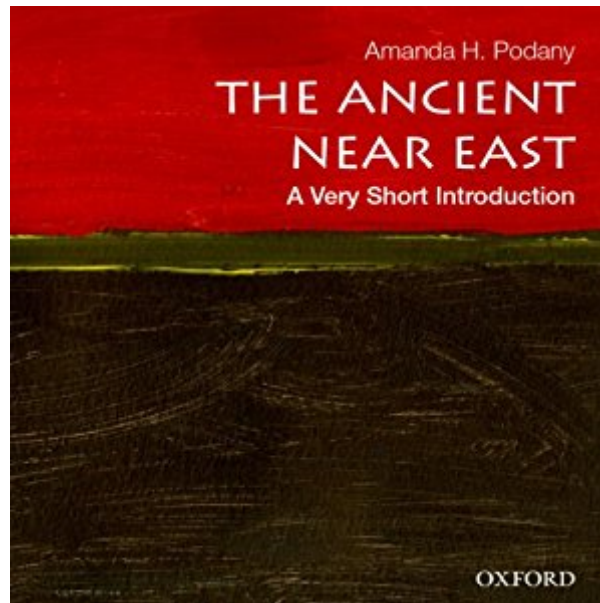




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Ancient Near East: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

The ancient Near East is known as the "cradle of civilization" - and for good reason. Mesopotamia, Syria, and Anatolia were home to an extraordinarily rich and successful culture. Indeed, it was a time and place of earth-shaking changes for humankind: The beginnings of writing and law, kingship and bureaucracy, diplomacy and state-sponsored warfare, mathematics and literature. This Very Short Introduction offers a fascinating account of this momentous time in human history. The three thousand years covered here - from around 3500 BCE, with the founding of the first Mesopotamian cities, to the conquest of the Near East by the Persian king Cyrus the Great in 539 BCE - represent a period of incredible innovation, from the invention of the wheel and the plow, to early achievements in astronomy, law, and diplomacy. As historian Amanda Podany explores this era, she overturns the popular image of the ancient world as a primitive, violent place. We discover that women had many rights and freedoms: They could own property, run businesses, and represent themselves in court. Diplomats traveled between the capital cities of major powers ensuring peace and friendship between the kings. Scribes and scholars studied the stars and could predict eclipses and the movements of the planets. Every chapter introduces the listener to a particular moment in ancient Near Eastern history, illuminating such aspects as trade, religion, diplomacy, law, warfare, kingship, and agriculture. Each discussion focuses on evidence provided in two or three cuneiform texts from that time. These documents, the cities in which they were found, the people and gods named in them, the events they recount or reflect, all provide vivid testimony of the era in which they were written.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I developed an interest in the ancient middle east as a college student over 4 decades ago. Now that I am retired I can read much more than when I was working. This book is an excellent overview and helped to bring me up-to-date with modern archeology and scholarship. This is not my first purchase from the Oxford U. Press' Very Short Introductions, which are perfect to overview [or review] a subject, or see if you want to go any deeper. With just about every volume my appetite for the latter has been whetted. Five stars for this volume and for the series!

Very good indeed. I especially like the focus on the lives of ordinary people rather than it being simply about battles and wars.

While the book tends to give less of a grand overview of the history of the Ancient Near East than I was expecting, it instead focused heavily on the people. The author provides many transcripts and letters, and in the end, I came away feeling more fulfilled knowing about everyone from kings to grumpy merchants than I would have felt knowing only a litany of dates and battles.

One can really get a good impression about the differences of the succeeding cultures of Mesopotamia from this short text. It is a great starting point which will give you a clear sense of location on the complex timeline of these remote and important peoples. A great read.

This book taught me so many things I had no idea about the near east! It's amazing what they don't teach you in class!

As advertised

It looked like a great book. The maps are unfortunately unreadable on Kindle. I can't understand how this happens. Does anyone review these Kindle books before publishing them?

Very interesting and the presentation is good. As described, it is a very short introduction to this subject.

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