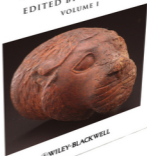


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Preface

Near Eastern archaeology is an expanding field. Although non-specialists may be forgiven for thinking that two Gulf wars, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the Soviet invasion and subsequent Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, or the Iranian Revolution must have slowed the production of knowledge about the archaeology and early history of this part of the world, this is only true up to a point. Revolutions, wars, embargoes, and diplomatic crises have always had an impact on the course of ancient Near Eastern research, but never have they stopped it entirely. In the mid-19th century the Crimean War temporarily brought a halt to fieldwork in Assyria, and the wars of the 20th and early 21st century have had a similar effect. But fieldwork is not essential for the appearance of new laboratory analyses or basic publications of already excavated material, any more than it is for the re-evaluation of old hypotheses or the generation of new ones. The sheer number of scholars engaged today in some aspect of Near Eastern archaeology is greater than ever, as is the annual output of books and articles in scholarly journals, and a quick look at the bibliography of these two volumes should dispel any notion of a slowing in the production of scholarship on ancient Near Eastern archaeology in recent years. Indeed, the explosion of knowledge and its diversity are perhaps the prime justifications for bringing out the present work.

Diversity takes many forms. It is obvious, from a quick look through the table of contents, that Near Eastern archaeology is characterized by a staggering diversity of subject matter and specializations; this *Companion* has been designed to reflect the enormous variety of Near Eastern archaeological scholarship by providing as comprehensive an overview as possible of the ancient Near East from the end of the last Ice Age to Late Antiquity. When this project was first conceived, a plan was drawn up that effectively covered the entire Near East, from the eastern Mediterranean to the Iranian Plateau, with chapters covering all the major chronological periods and many of the most important individual cultures. Although