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VOL. 1 (ROUTLEDGE HISTORY OF THE
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c. 3000–330 BC
Volume 1
AMÉLIE KUHRT



ROUTLEDGE HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

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Volume 1

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Review

'Simply brilliant, a credit to publisher and author alike. Beautifully produced, it proves that scholarship of a high order on a subject of considerable complexity, with massive accompanying bibliography and footnotes, is yet compatible with solid readability. These are two magisterial volumes, unmatched by anything available today in coverage, scholarship and judgement.' - Literary Review

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'A magnificent handbook to a vast sweep of history, from 3000BC to Alexander the Great.' - Mary Beard, *BBC History Magazine*

About the Author

Amelie Kuhrt is a Reader in Ancient History at University College London. She was co-organiser of the Achaemenid History Workshops (1983-1990). She has published a number of books on the ancient Near east, and is co-editor of *Images of Women in Antiquity* (Routledge 1993).

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The Ancient Near East embraces a vast geographical area, from the borders of Iran and Afghanistan in the east to the Levant and Anatolia, and from the Black Sea in the north to Egypt in the south. It was a region of enormous cultural, political and linguistic diversity.

In this authoritative new study, Amélie Kuhrt examines its history from the earliest written documents to the conquest of Alexander the Great, c.3000-330 BC. This work dispels many of the misapprehensions which have surrounded the study of the region. It provides a lucid, up-to-date narrative which takes into account the latest archaeological and textual discoveries and deals with the complex problems of interpretation and methodology.

The Ancient Near East is an essential text for all students of history of this region and a valuable introduction for students and scholars working in related subjects.

Winner of the AHO's 1997 James Henry Breasted Award.

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Most helpful customer reviews

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

Great author, terrible publisher

By Suppiluliuma I

For a work that approaches the \$100 mark, this 2-vol. set is a bit of a disappointment for the serious student of the Ancient Near East. On the one hand, Amelie Kuhrt's scholarship is absolutely outstanding. In my hours spent on the Internet searching for ANE textbooks, nothing out there rivals Kuhrt's comprehensive scholarship, particularly her attention to primary sources. She is honest about what her discipline knows, but also about what it doesn't know (by the way, Van de Mierop's survey of the ANE makes a nice companion volume to Kuhrt in its offering of alternatives to some of her views). On the other hand, however, the publisher has done a great disservice to Kuhrt's fine scholarship in its latest printing of the book. The copy I bought on Amazon was actually missing whole sections of pages (pp. 12-16 and 28-29, to be exact), not to mention a regularly recurring host of typographical errors throughout. Shame on Routledge for so carelessly printing a scholar's work that, in this case, certainly has no readily identifiable peers.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

A good overview with some drawbacks

By J. L. Harper

This is one of the best "comprehensive" introductions to the Ancient Near East (ANE), which attempts to cover all the major civilizations from Egypt through the fertile crescent to ancient Persia. Given the breadth of the subject matter, she does a fine job. As earlier reviewers point out certain subjects (especially Egypt, which you can supplement with Grimal's *A History of Ancient Egypt*, for instance) are somewhat skimpy, while others receive a reasonably good treatment. Kuhrt is especially good at interacting with the textual sources, which she always treats with scholarly detachment.

There are, however, two major flaws with this 2-volume work. The maps are absolutely ATROCIOUS. A number of them are so poorly reprinted (from whichever sources they were originally taken) that they are nearly illegible; moreover, they rarely point out the places or geographical regions under discussion. I would have expected the publisher either to locate better maps or to draw up a new set of maps. Much cheaper books have managed to do so.

The other flaw, in my estimation, is the actual publishing. The binding of this paperback is not nearly strong enough. Every copy I have ever seen of it (and it was a textbook in one of my classes) has developed a serious spine crack--even under the gentlest of use. Moreover, the paper used is the heavy, shiny, plastic-like paper often used for photographic plates. If the book were full color, I might understand the use of such paper, but since it is black-and-white I personally do not understand the choice of the publisher. Not only is the book disproportionately heavy, but one has to be extremely careful of lighting conditions when reading it in order to avoid glare on the text.

If your interest in the ANE is merely a passing curiosity, I agree with a former reviewer that this book is not for you. Nevertheless, it is a very useful introduction for those who are seriously contemplating scholarship in the ANE.

57 of 59 people found the following review helpful.

Not a book for everyone

By Dr. Thomas Carl

This comprehensive, 2-volume book about the Ancient Near East clearly has some outstanding points in its favor, but sadly also several serious drawbacks.

On the upside, there is not too much more you would want to know about the history of Anatolia or Mesopotamia in the timeframe covered, unless you are upper division college student in history or archeology. The book gives a painstaking account of all major sources, has an outstanding bibliography, and the author certainly went to great lengths to portray pro's and con's of various interpretations to points of contentions regarding the interpretation of historic evidence in general, and in particular while discussing specific sites, possible historical outlines of a region etc.

Be advised though, that the coverage of areas like Egypt, Eastern Iran or Afghanistan, to name a few, is by far not as substantial as that of the other two.

If, on the other hand, you are not a student in aforementioned subjects, or at least a very interested layperson with a previous solid foundation in the science, and simply want an overview of the regional history, this is not your book.

Among several things that will be unsatisfying for you are her endless enumeration of sources (incredibly boring, unless you actually have access to those), a constant jumping from region to region, which makes sense on the one hand, but is not exactly enhancing the readability for the casual reader.

Another very unsatisfying aspect, and maybe even one of the worst parts of the book, while having the general reader in mind at this point, but also to some extent to the more informed reader, are the maps. While there are quite a number of them, their quality is, to put it mildly, pitiful. Many don't name the real points of interest (as for example it would be nice to have the maps actually show the sites she discusses in the text that refers to them), they never show any regional boundaries, as to make clear for example where, when, who was in charge of what territory. Also don't hope for anything like a timeline, or other features that will help the lay reader to follow more easily the course of her presentation.

To sum it up, a book with good use for the serious student of the subject, while only of limited, if any, interest for the layperson.

If you have any further questions regarding this review or the subject in general, feel free to contact me.

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