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A COMPANION TO THE
**ANCIENT
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EDITED BY DANIEL SNELL



**A COMPANION
TO THE
ANCIENT NEAR EAST**

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Daniel C. Snell

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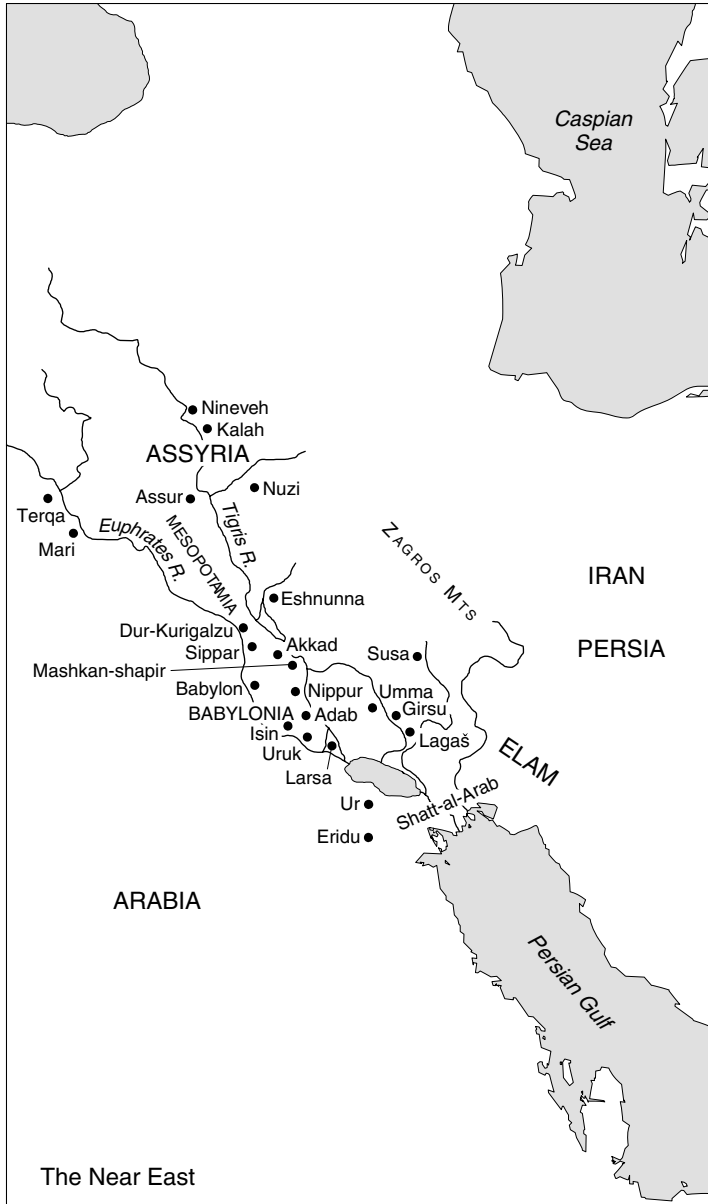
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DCS



Map 0.1 The Near East



Introduction

Daniel C. Snell

These essays stand alone and need no introduction, but it seems wise to clarify issues at the beginning in the form of responses to questions.

What is the Ancient Near East?

The term refers to the ancient area now called the Middle East in the languages of the area and of Europe; we mean the modern countries of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. The term Near East refers to proximity to Europe and is therefore Eurocentric; Western Asia would be preferable, and some of our essays use that term, but that phrase is not widely understood, and so we have kept to the old terminology.

Is Egypt included?

With the growth of studies of Mesopotamia, ancient Iraq and Syria, we are so specialized that the discipline does not necessarily include Egypt, and there are many fine introductory books on Egypt. Nonetheless we believe that many if not most introductory courses to the Ancient Near East do include Egypt, and that the general public definitely feels Egypt is part of the Ancient Near East. Hence we have included treatment of ancient Egypt where possible. In fact we have slighted it in contrast to the lands further to the east, and most of the experts writing here were trained in Mesopotamian studies, not Egyptian. A longer project would have resulted in a more balanced view, but I felt it was important to acknowledge the very close links between Egypt and the rest of the Ancient Near East, even if full justice could not be done to both sides.

Is the work a companion to a particular textbook?

Not really. It was commissioned by Blackwell, which was in the process of publishing Van De Mieroop's *A History of the Ancient Near East* (2004), but that book was

published after several essays had been completed, and the authors here have not necessarily reacted to it in their pieces. While we certainly conceived these essays as an amplification of a political history of the Ancient Near East, we hope that it will be found to be useful by undergraduates and beginning graduate students regardless of what else they may be reading.

What chronology will be used here?

Chronology, the study of the time periods, especially the absolute dates, from the Ancient Near East, is undergoing rethinking now, and we have decided not to impose uniformity in how authors deployed it. Most have resorted to the Middle Chronology, now perhaps in the course of being discredited. But this has been the standard chronology for many years, and if it is wrong by a hundred and more years, it at least affords comparison with other works. When we now pick up historical works on the Ancient Near East from the beginning of the twentieth century, we find ourselves somewhat disoriented by the suggested chronology, and yet one can make sense of what the authors then believed. We beg the indulgence of future readers and can assert that given what we now know, the chronology presented here is a responsible one that will allow the reader to understand at least the relative chronology of events. The chronology used is summarized in J. A. Brinkman's appendix to Oppenheim 1977 for Mesopotamia and Baines and Malek 2000: 36–37 for Egypt.

All the authors have striven, I believe, to present their field in a way that will be accessible to persons without previous exposure to it and in a way that will be useful to scholars fifty years hence. That is a high ambition, and only time will judge whether our efforts really bore the fruit for which we hoped. But I recall with pleasure the response of one of the essayists on seeing the range of topics proposed here; the scholar wrote, "To answer broad and stimulating questions like these is the reason most of us got into the field to begin with." We hope these essays will be as stimulating as the questions that provoked them, and that students and scholars will for a time at least begin here when they seek the ancient and modern meaning of the Ancient Near East.