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Civilizations of the Ancient Near East (4 Volumes Set)

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#1760395 in Books Charles Scribner's Sons 1995-06-29 Original language: English PDF # 4 8.21 x 9.25 x 11.68l, #File Name: 0684192799648 pages | File size: 23.Mb

From Brand: Charles Scribner's Sons : Civilizations of the Ancient Near East (4 Volumes Set) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Civilizations of the Ancient Near East (4 Volumes Set):

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Roland A. Boucher A comprehensive review for the date of publication 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By noname Still a go-to source on the ANE.

This 4-vol. set examines the cultures of the ancient Near East from the Bronze Age (3200 B.C.E.) to the Hellenistic era (325 B.C.E) and describes the archaeology and the history of each subregion. Languages, religious life, governments, peace and war, commerce and agriculture, and the visual and performing arts are covered. The set explores an area ranging from North Africa to Central Asia, and treats Syro-Palestine, Mesopotamia, Iran/Persia, Anatolia (modern-day Turkey), the Arabian Peninsula, and the island cultures of the Mediterranean.

From Booklist This set is intended to be a "coherent, comprehensive, and imaginative treatment of the ancient Near East" for students and faculty at secondary schools, colleges, and universities. It consists of 189 articles arranged in 11 parts, with access tools that enable it to function as a reference work of sorts. The set was planned as a companion to Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean (Scribner, 1988), which has a similar format. Like the earlier set,

Civilizations of the Ancient Near East is based on impeccable and innovative scholarship. Its editorial board members and contributors are from academic institutions, museums, and research centers recognized for scholarship in Near Eastern studies (the University of Pennsylvania, the Yale Babylonian Collection, the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, the Oriental Faculty of Oxford University). Editor-in-chief Sasson is professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Brief biographies of the contributors are included in the last volume of the set. The work includes the civilizations of Egypt, Syro-Palestine, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, the Arabian Peninsula, northeast Africa, and Aegean cultures such as Troy, Crete, and Rhodes. It spans the period from the invention of writing in the third millennium B.C. until the destruction of Persepolis by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. The scope of the work is flexible enough to allow for discussion of continuing traditions as well as articles on the influence of the ancient Near East on modern and contemporary culture. The 11 main parts include "Ancient Near East in Western Thought," "Environment," and "Religion and Science." Each section contains from 4 ("Population") to 48 ("History and Culture") essays. The essays bear a greater resemblance to chapters in a scholarly survey than to encyclopedia articles. They are readable, with references to ancient documents, primary sources, and current scholarship throughout. Many articles reflect recent scholarship on the role of women in ancient Near Eastern society and less-familiar topics such as artisans and craftspeople, cosmetics and grooming, and erotic art. Some articles contain tables, boxed sidebars, and reference sections, such as the glossary of textile terms included within "Textile Arts in Ancient Western Asia." The lack of brief entries may frustrate users looking for quick definitions. There are no concise articles on the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Trojan horse, or ziggurats, although information on these topics is included within broader articles. Each article is divided into titled sections that make it easy to scan. An index in the last volume leads readers to pertinent topics. For example, there is no separate article on mummification, but it is included as a titled section within "Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egyptian Thought," and the index identifies the page number. Although this arrangement does not make the set ideal for quick reference, it is a pedagogical tool: users will have an opportunity to discover the context of a topic. Each article concludes with a concise bibliography of books and articles, often in the form of a bibliographic essay. A "Cultural Table of Contents" and "Timeline of Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations" enhance access to the set. The "Cultural Table of Contents" is a grid with the names of cultures along the side and the topics of the 11 parts listed along the top. It makes it easy for users to identify, for example, the titles of articles on Egypt throughout the set or on specific subjects such as "Visual and Performing Arts." The set includes 612 black-and-white photos and line drawings, 46 maps, architectural plans, and graphs. The volumes' endpapers are maps of the entire region. The extent of illustration varies; for example, the article "Palaces and Temples in Canaan and Ancient Israel" includes no illustrations while a similar article, "Palaces and Temples in Ancient Mesopotamia," includes many. There is no similar reference work on the ancient Near East. Specialized encyclopedias and dictionaries such as *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Architecture* by Gwendolyn Leick (Routledge, 1988) may be more suitable for quick reference in these subject areas. For example, the entry house in the above-mentioned dictionary consists of six pages of concise description of houses in the various Near Eastern cultures, while the index entry house in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* leads the reader to portions of articles in 10 different places in the set. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* is a masterful, innovative work that belongs in most academic and large public libraries. Despite its limitations for reference, most libraries will want to place it in their reference collections because of the lack of any other comprehensive reference work on the ancient Near East.