

the dependence of the whole of this territory on the Laz”, adding that “the short-lived ‘dependence’ (in the second quarter of the VIth century) of the Apsilians and Abazgians on Lazika was organised by Byzantium in its own interests, and that this design quickly flopped” (see “Caucasian Perspectives”, edited by G. Hewitt for Lincom Europa, 1992, pp. 261). In the 780s Leon II, potentate of Abkhazia, “seized Abkhazia and Egrisi [= Mingrelia and Imereti(a) – Reviewer] as far as the Likhi Mountains” (“Kartlis Tskhovreba”), the whole area, incorporating most of modern W. Georgia, becoming known as Abkhazia (in Georgian “apxazeti”). In 975 the accession of Bagrat’ III united, through dynastic inheritance, this Kingdom of Abkhazia and the Iberian Kingdom of Kartli in the united mediaeval Kingdom of Georgia (“apxazeti” remaining as a synonym for “sakartvelo” = “Georgia” until this state fell apart in the wake of the Mongol incursions).

As for the suggestion (p. 7) that Abkhazia was subordinated to the Mtskheta See from the ninth century, here again is Voronov: “[T]here is no concrete source of any kind to support the supposition that the Abkhazian Church abandoned its subservience to Constantinople either in the IXth or Xth century . . . The period under discussion [IXth–XIth centuries] on the Black Sea coast is characterised by the strengthening of the ideological and political expansion of the Byzantine empire in the direction of the Bulgarians, Russians and North Caucasian Alans. At the start of the Xth century in the West Caucasus is formed the Alan Mitropolate, itself subordinate to Constantinople, and it is merger with this which is certainly more logical for the Abkhazian Church. At the end of the Xth and beginning of the XIth centuries the Alan Mitropolate pretended to dominion over the ecclesiastical centres even on the south coast of the Black Sea (Kerasunt), which would hardly have been possible under conditions whereby the intervening ecclesiastical centres in Abkhazia proper were not themselves subordinate to it. The Mitropolate of Alania retains its place in the lists of the Constantinople Patriarchate until the end of the XIIth century when the archbishoprics in the environs of Trebizond (Sotiriupolis) were again formally subordinated to the Alan archbishop. The gradual expulsion of Byzantine clerics from Alania and the parallel weakening (under the influence of the Mongol invasion) of the Catholicosate in Mtskheta led to the appearance of the Abkhazian Autocephalous Catholicosate (with its centre in Pitsunda), which continued its existence from the middle of the XIIIth to the middle of the XVIIth century” (*ibid.*, pp. 262–3).

Finally, Georgia did not exist as a single entity in 1801 when only the central and eastern kingdoms were annexed by Tsarist Russia (p. 14) – the western provinces (along with Abkhazia) fell under Russian “protection” at various dates later in the century.

It is sad that a more objective history could not have been composed as introduction to volume and series.

GEORGE HEWITT

DICTIONARY OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST. Edited by PIOTR BIENKOWSKI and ALAN MILLARD. pp. x, 342. London, British Museum Press, 2000.

A plethora of encyclopaedias and dictionaries of the ancient Near East have appeared in recent years. Generally they fall into three categories: first, there are the monumentally large library encyclopaedias such as *Civilizations of the ancient Near East*,¹ the *Oxford encyclopaedia of archaeology in the Near East*,² and the *Anchor Bible dictionary*.³ At the other extreme of affordability are websites such *History Today*'s

¹ J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the ancient Near East*, 4 vols. (New York, 1995).

² E. Meyers (ed.), *The Oxford encyclopaedia of archaeology in the Near East*, 5 vols. (Oxford and New York, 1997).

³ J. N. Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York and London, 1992).

historical dictionary,⁴ The University of Chicago's *ABZU*,⁵ the "guide to resources for the study of the ancient Near East available on the internet" (marvellous if you know what you're looking for), as well as a frightening array of eccentric amateur sites. Finally, there are high-quality, one-volume, subject-specific reference works such as Black and Green's *Gods, demons, and symbols of ancient Mesopotamia*,⁶ or Gwendolyn Leick's dictionaries of architecture, mythology and ancient personages.⁷ Yet none of these entirely serves the needs of non-specialists – whether they are beginning students, scholars in related fields, or avid museum-goers – who require a reliable and affordable guide to the unfamiliar and difficult terrain that is the ancient Near East.

This new British Museum dictionary thus fills a big gap in the market. It is the first all-purpose one-volume reference work on the ancient Near East to appear in English for a very long time. "Dictionary", however, is rather a misnomer: affordable, accurate and up to date, its 350 pages contain over 500 substantial entries, with copious black and white illustrations and a good bibliography. The geographical, chronological, and topical spread is managed by multiple cross-disciplinary authorship: the two editors (an archaeologist and a philologist) commissioned eleven other scholars to write the articles outside their own special interests. The result is impressive: although the main focus is on the Levant and Mesopotamia (Iraq) from the Chalcolithic era to the Persian conquest (c. 5500–500 BC) the editors very sensibly decided against hard and fast cut-off points, so that the volume in fact spans the Palaeolithic to the Sasanian periods (c. 1,500,000 BC–650 AD), covering the region from western Turkey to Egypt to eastern Iran. There is a good balance between archaeological sites, artefact types, documentary evidence, and ancient personages human, mythical and divine. There are also a dozen or so entries on key nineteenth and twentieth century figures; but all but one (Kathleen Kenyon) are male and all but two halves (Hermann Hilprecht and Henry Rawlinson are archaeologists). Where are Gertrude Bell, Agatha Christie and the cuneiformists?

The dictionary entries are well cross-referenced, indeed almost irritatingly so: it seems that every single occurrence of each headword has been asterisked. There is also a detailed time-chart and a thorough index, which enables one to track down words and concepts that have not merited their own entries. The copious illustrations are a satisfying mix of the familiar and the new. They range from photographs of ancient Near Eastern objects in the British Museum's collections and elsewhere to aerial photos and plans of archaeological sites. The most disappointing of the visual features are the maps, which are not up to the usual BMP standards of clarity and detail. It is left to the reader to deduce that each site deserving of its own article in the dictionary is also to be found on one or other of the maps associated with the entries on geographical regions.

The only real howler, though, is the chart of month names on p. 63, which clearly has not been proofread. Given the large number of typographic errors, it is easiest to reproduce it here with corrected entries in bold and omitting the Hebrew and Arabic columns:

Modern	At Ur under the III dynasty of Ur (Sumerian language)	At Nippur under the III dynasty of Ur (Sumerian language)	Babylonia (Akkadian language)
March–April	š _u -kin-ku ₅	bara ₂ -zag-gar	nisannu
April–May	maš-da₃-gu₇	gu ₄ -si-sa ₂	ayaru

⁴ <http://www.historytoday.com>

⁵ <http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/ABZU/ABZU.HTML>

⁶ J. A. Black and A. Green, *Gods, demons, and symbols of ancient Mesopotamia: an illustrated dictionary* (London, 1998).

⁷ G. Leick, *Dictionary of ancient Near Eastern architecture* (London, 1988). G. Leick; *Dictionary of ancient Near Eastern mythology* (London, 1991); G. Leick, *Who's who in the Ancient Near East* (London, 1999).

May–June	zah _x -da-gu ₇	sig ₄ -ga	simānu
June–July	u ₅ -bi ₂ -gu ₇	šu-numun-na	du'uzu
July–August	ki-sig ₂ - ^d nin-a-zu	izi-NE-gar	abu
August–September	ezem- ^d nin-a-zu	kin-^dinana	ulūlu/elūlu
September–October	a ₂ -ki-ti	du ₆ -ku ₃	tašrītu
October–November	ezem-^{dv}sul-gi	^{gis} apin-du ₈ -a	arahsamna
November–December	ezem-^{dv}šu-^dsuen	gan-gan-e₃	kislīmu
December–January	ezem-mah	ab-ba-e ₃	ṭebētu (Ass. kanūnu)
January–February	ezem-an-na	ZIZ₂-a	šabātu
February–March	ezem ^d -me-ki-gal ₂	še-kin-ku ₅	addaru

Just as the enormous scope of this dictionary was beyond the abilities of the two editors to write alone, it is certainly beyond the competence of this one reviewer to evaluate it fully. And that thought prompts this question: is it really appropriate for publishers to persist in treating the ancient Near East as a monolithic cultural entity, implicitly interesting only as illustrative background to Old Testament or Classical Studies? I must stress that this is emphatically not the primary agenda of the Dictionary's editors. As they themselves acknowledge, "The ancient Near East was not a homogeneous area but a diverse collection of changing cultures" (p. IX). One could also add that the volume and complexity of the archaeological, artefactual, and textual evidence, especially for ancient Iraq, are unparalleled for the premodern world. In my own experience it is a struggle to do more than skim the surface of the ancient Near East in a 40-hour lecture series, but still textbooks are produced on the assumption that it can all be covered.⁸ Prehistoric and early Mesopotamia are well served by recent books from Nissen, Postgate, Pollock, and now Matthews, who between them offer an enjoyably varied array of approaches.⁹ Similarly the time-span from the Persian conquest to the coming of Islam is getting increasing attention – albeit with exploiting fully the potential of Mesopotamian cuneiform sources.¹⁰ But we are still lacking good coverage of "later Mesopotamia" – the period 1500–500 BC – or alternatively the great empires of Assyria and Babylonia. This is what publishers need to commission now: let us abandon "ancient Near East" as a primary conceptual tool and start to break it down into its constituent units, not only in our primary research but more importantly in our outreach writing too.

Sadly "the first half of history"¹¹ will not get the detailed attention it deserves overnight. Meanwhile the Dictionary is designed not as a course book but a reference work to support teaching or independent reading: a first port of call for essay bibliography, or to elucidate toponyms, royal names, and cultural concepts. In this it achieves its aims admirably, as several of my own first-year students this year can attest. It deserves to be on the bookshelves of all students and scholars of the pre-Islamic Middle East: roll on the paperback edition!

ELEANOR ROBSON

⁸ Most successfully, M. Roaf, *Cultural atlas of Mesopotamia and the ancient Near East* (New York, 1990); G. Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, 3rd ed. (Harmondsworth, 1992); A. Kuhrt, *The ancient Near East, c. 3000–330 BC* (London, 1995); and M. Van De Mieroop, *The ancient Mesopotamian city* (Oxford, 1997); rather less impressive is the recent spate of American "everyday life" books, e.g. D. C. Snell, *Life in the ancient Near East, 3100–332 BCE* (New Haven and London, 1997); K. R. Nemet-Nejat, *Daily life in ancient Mesopotamia* (Westport, 1998).

⁹ H. J. Nissen, *The early history of the ancient Near East, 9000–2000 BC* (Chicago, 1988); J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: society and economy at the dawn of history* (London, 1992); S. Pollock, *Ancient Mesopotamia: the Eden that never was* (Cambridge, 1999); R. J. Matthews, *The early prehistory of Mesopotamia: 500,000 to 4,500 BC* (Turnhout, 2000).

¹⁰ E.g. J. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia: from 550 BC to 650 AD* (London, 1996); J. Curtis (ed.), *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian period, conquest and imperialism, 539–331 BC* (London, 1997); J. Curtis (ed.), *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Parthian and Sasanian periods: rejection and revival, c. 238 BC–AD 642* (London, 2000).

¹¹ W. W. Hallo *apud* M. Van De Mieroop, *Cuneiform texts and the writing of history* (London, 1999),