

criticism must suffice: The dominant theme of the people-group concept in current evangelical mission literature and the challenge of the unreached people groups is hardly mentioned. Also, with regard to the relationship between different Christian churches and mission organizations and also between Christianity and other religions, viewpoints characteristic of the World Council of Churches tend to dominate.

The bibliographies at the end of each essay greatly enhance the value of the book, even though in some of the lists evangelical and Roman Catholic authors are underrepresented and more non-American literature should have been included.

In spite of these limitations in focus and scope of treatment, the book is extremely useful, not only as required reading for college students in introductory mission courses, but also for mission planners and all individuals who want a comprehensive picture of mission in the last decade of this century.

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REINDER BRUINSMA

Postgate, J. N. *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History*. London: Routledge Press, 1992. xxiii + 367 pp. \$65.

J. N. Postgate, a well-respected Assyriologist with a teaching appointment at Cambridge and also varied field experience in the Near East, has provided a distinctive and exhaustive tome on the development of the state in ancient Mesopotamia. Documenting the period from the third to the first half of the second millennia BC, the new approach refreshingly focuses on socioeconomic factors in the development of Mesopotamian culture rather than on more prevalent typological and historical sequences. Extrapolating from a vast pool of economic, legal, and commercial documents available from ancient Mesopotamia, as well as from less frequently available, but invaluable, historical accounts, Postgate leads the reader through the maze of textual and archaeological evidence by providing insightful and stimulating reflections with penetrating style and a persuasive manner.

The book's 16 chapters are grouped topically in four parts. Chapters on more common subjects like "Crops and Livestock" and "Domestic Economy" fit well under such larger categories as institutions, economics, and social order. These titles reemphasize the stress on a socioeconomic model for reconstructing the origin of civilization in Mesopotamia. While Postgate provides convenient references for further reading at the conclusion of each chapter, these references seem to indicate more his preference for certain authors than an exhaustive citation of primary and secondary sources. A few chapters seem poorly placed and structured. For example, to place chapter 14, "Religion and Politics," directly after chapters 7 and 8 on "The Temple" and "The Palace," would have enhanced the flow of thought and would have avoided the hiatus in the discussion of the duties of kingship, which discussion begins in one chapter and is not further developed until some one hundred pages later.

Every chapter contains a number of new theories. This makes for stimulating reading. In chapter 3, for example, the argument proposed by D. Schmandt-Besserat that writing developed through a complex system of clay tokens during the Uruk period is presented as though it were widely accepted. Unfortunately, the scholars who have severely criticized this hypothesis, particularly J. Oates and P. Michalowski, are not mentioned. Also, in the discussion on the nature of the countryside (chap. 4), Postgate does not mention that, due to the changing sociopolitical structure, villages of the urban period differ quantitatively from earlier preurban villages, as has been pointed out in S. Falconer's work in Jordan. Another, perhaps related, problem is Postgate's failure to note or recognize the apparent fluidity between the nomadic groups and the urban population as viewed from the dimorphic model of M. Rowton. Such disagreements are minor, however, and do not detract from the overall contribution of a book of this vast depth and magnitude.

Postgate writes in a fluent and captivating style that will prove attractive to any interested reader. Yet his originality and substantive coverage of the early period of Mesopotamian cultural development make this book at the same time an invaluable tool for specialists in Near Eastern archaeology, epigraphy, and historiography. Numerous primary texts which encompass legal, economic, commercial, and social subjects are reproduced throughout the volume, providing the reader with valuable insights into the rich diversity of the evidence available from this period. The repeated and wholesome emphasis on the relationship between the archaeological record and textual sources gives credit to the breadth of the writer's knowledge and encourages new archaeological research techniques, such as faunal analysis for the reconstruction of ancient food systems.

Numerous maps, chronological charts, and photographs contribute to the strength and cohesiveness of the individual chapters. The extensive bibliography indicates the need for a knowledge of French and German by the specialist. An index on subjects and modern authors is provided, although it might have been more useful to provide two separate indexes, one on subjects and another on authors.

All in all, *Ancient Mesopotamia* is a successful *tour de force*. It is a welcome addition to quality secondary literature on early Mesopotamian history. Not only does this work provide a largely up-to-date review of research, but unlike its predecessors, it presents a new synthesis by means of an approach heretofore unparalleled. This makes it a necessity on the reading list of any person seriously interested in the rise of culture and civilization in ancient Mesopotamia.

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Schoors, Antoon. *The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words: A Study of the Language of Qoheleth*. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 41. Leuven: Peeters, 1992. xiv + 260 pp. \$45.00.

The idiosyncratic nature of the language of Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) has long been recognized. Though the book has some points of contact with various