

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The 5 Minute Archaeologist in the Southern Levant* by Cynthia Shafer-Elliott

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came from writing this book. It is a start for a subject hugely significant in human evolution, social and otherwise, that is too often neglected in accounts dealing with cultural histories simply because time-scales between cultural and planetary processes are so different. This book forces archaeologists to deal with that interaction and its repeated impacts.

It is the recurrence of tectonic activity that serves “as a dance of culture to a . . . rhythm, performed in such slow motion that individual humans can barely live long enough to hear consecutive beats.” That quote ends the book. Let us hope for an expanded and better-illustrated edition in the future.

***The 5 Minute Archaeologist in the Southern Levant.*  
Edited by Cynthia Shafer-Elliott.**

Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2016. Pp. v + 253. Paperback,  
\$20.95. ISBN 978-1-78179-502-6.

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This is a peculiar little book that I like very much. It consists of 56 short essays intended to be answers to questions that archaeologists might be asked about archaeology by the person sitting next to them on an airplane; hence the phrase “5 minute archaeologist.” The questions range widely, from basic ones about the purpose of archaeology (e.g., Chapter 2, “How Does Archaeology Help Us to Understand the Past?”), to archaeological methods (Chapter 15, “Why Sift and How Often?”), to epistemology and ethics (Chapter 56, “Is it Ethical to Excavate in Contested Areas?”). A few of the questions are oddly specific (Chapter 27, “How Do You Identify a Dirt Road?” or Chapter 32, “How Does Bayesian Statistics Help Pinpoint Dating?”), but the vast majority is on topics about which I have been asked at various times by non-archaeologists.

The book is divided into four sections: “Basics,” which covers general archaeological methods; “Artifacts, Architecture, and Dating,” which covers aspects of

analysis; “Types of Archaeology,” which is focused on theoretical perspectives and topical areas of interest; and “Ethical Issues,” which considers ethics but unfortunately misses some essential topics such as excavating human remains, working with descendant populations, and conducting research on unprovenienced artifacts.

As in any collection of essays, the quality varies, but there are no real duds in the book, and some of the essays are outstanding. For example, Aren Maeir’s essay “What is Archaeology?” provides an elegant overview of the purpose and practice of archaeology in less than three pages—it is a tour de force. Similarly, Sarah Kielt Costello creates a thorough answer to the question “What is Post-Processual Archaeology?” in three pages. Oren Borowski’s essay “Who Pays For All This?” is remarkably clear and comprehensive. Eric Welch in “What is a Phase and a Stratum?” provides an engaging introduction to what could have been an extremely dry topic, as does Tim Frank in his overview of taphonomy in “How Do You Identify an Artifact and How It was Used?” And there are other fine chapters in the book.

That covers what *The 5 Minute Archaeologist in the Southern Levant* is; now on to what the book is not. Foremost, it is not focused on the Southern Levant. Only two of the chapters (37 and 38) focus on issues that are truly unique to the Southern Levant, and only five others (3, 10, 25, 43, and 44) could be considered somewhat unique to Levantine archaeology. But the vast majority of the chapters focuses on topics, and even uses examples, that any archaeologist might be asked about. I think it was an unfortunate error to add “in the Southern Levant” to the title, as it makes it seem that the book is tightly focused when it is not. This is a book suited to anyone interested in archaeology anywhere in the world.

The book is also not a general introduction to archaeology, primarily because it lacks an overarching narrative or organization that would take a reader through the entire archaeological process of data recovery, analysis, and interpretation. Indeed quite a few of the chapters would assume some prior knowledge of archaeology (Chapter 22 “What is Primary vs. Secondary Use?”), and there are some important topics missing such as systematic recordkeeping and mapping. There is also considerable overlap between some of the chapters. In

short, the book is a collection of short essays and not a textbook.

I recommend *The 5 Minute Archaeologist in the Southern Levant* to anyone with a general interest in archaeology. Professionals and graduate students might find some fodder for the classroom, but will learn nothing new from the book. Undergraduates might find the book useful as a companion to a general text in archaeology. But *The 5 Minute Archaeologist in the Southern Levant* is really aimed at a general reader, and for that purpose it is an excellent resource.

***The Archaeology of Anatolia: Recent Discoveries (2011–2014) Volume I.* Edited by Sharon R. Steadman and Gregory McMahon.**

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015. Pp. xvi + 368. Hardback, £52.99 (\$109.95). ISBN 978-1-4438-7815-9. Sample available at: <http://www.cambridgescholars.com/download/sample/62821>.

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For archaeologists with interests in the eastern Mediterranean and the ancient Near East, publication of the first in what is promised to be a new series of volumes dedicated to making available the results of recent fieldwork is a promising event. In the introductory chapter we are told that volumes will appear in alternate years. The current editors, Sharon Steadman and Gregory McMahon, aim to hand over their role after two or three volumes. A list of chapters is given at the end of this review. Rather than comment on individual chapters, this review will first summarize and evaluate the contents, and then address the issue of how useful such a series might be as a way of rapid dissemination.

The geographic scope is Anatolia, which here is synonymous with the modern Turkish Republic, including chapters related to the Black Sea, the Mediterranean coast of Rough Cilicia, Turkish Thrace, and the Tigris River valley in the southeast, as well as the Anatolian

Plateau. In this first volume only the high eastern massif is unrepresented. This is a vast area over which it is surely impossible to provide equal coverage. Nevertheless the volume contains chapters that will be of interest to scholars working in Eurasia, eastern Europe, the Levant, and Greater Mesopotamia. Chronological span is from the later Neolithic to the medieval. Chapters two through ten report on excavations, eleven to fifteen on surveys. Thus the net is spread very wide, although five of the nine chapters on excavations are concerned with the Plateau. The choice of sites and surveys included reflects research based in the English-speaking world. While authors hail from a variety of institutions in Turkey, Europe, and the USA, all the projects reported on are foreign expeditions granted permits by the Turkish authorities. Of the excavations Barcın Höyük (Chapter 2) is Dutch, Uşaklı Höyük (Chapter 8) Italian, while one survey, the Burdur Plain, is Belgian, the rest being out of North America. Turkish, Austrian, German, Japanese, and other international research is absent. Some sites, such as the Phrygian capital of Gordion, are major sites subject to long-term investigation and management, others, for instance Çamlıbel Tarlası (Chapter 4), are small, in this case only about 50 x 50 metres with occupation restricted to Late Chalcolithic levels. This may be contrasted with reports on larger multi-period settlement mounds, or höyüks (Çadır, Kınık, Uşaklı). The importance of individual sites does not, however, have much bearing on the value of individual chapters for reasons discussed later in this review. Surveys are likewise diverse. Three of the surveys, the Lower Göksu, the Sinope region, and Yalburt Yalası, are broad in geographic and territorial coverage, while the survey of the Burdur plain (Chapter 13) focuses only on the Middle Chalcolithic period while the final survey chapter concerns the modest Late Roman and Byzantine city of Euchaita. In addition to this geographic distribution, the range of site types, scopes of surveys, chronological spans, and different levels of importance alluded to above, there are equally large variations in the approaches to this volume taken by the authors of individual chapters. Reasons for this, over and above those already mentioned, include the progress or completeness of research as well as