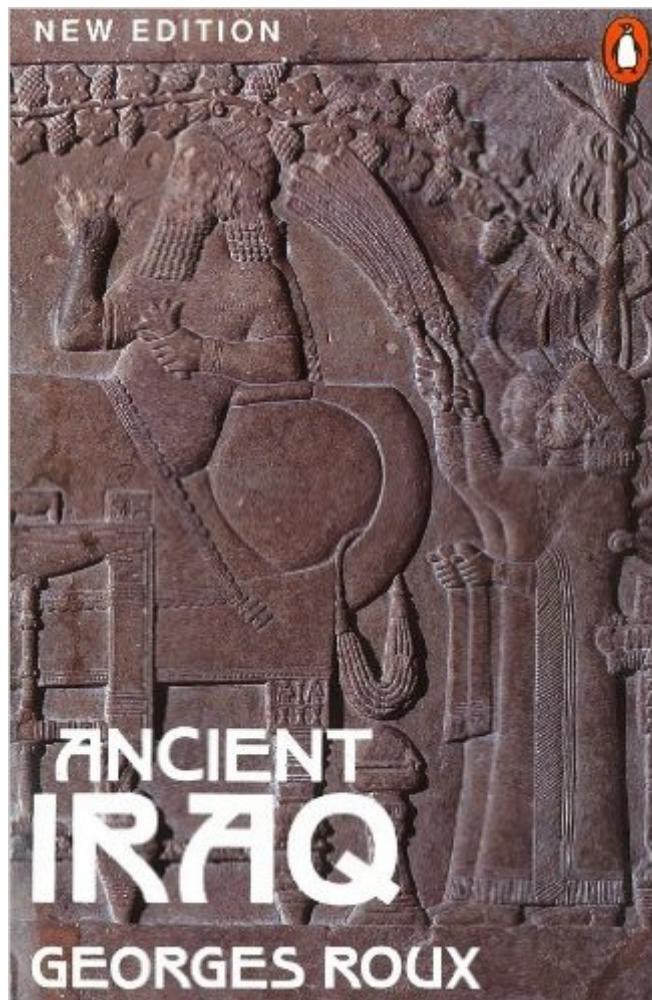


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Ancient Iraq: Third Edition (Penguin History)



Synopsis

Newly revised and containing information from recent excavations and discovered artifacts, Ancient Iraq covers the political, cultural, and socio-economic history from Mesopotamia days of prehistory to the Christian era.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Georges Roux stated that his goal in writing "Ancient Iraq" was to provide the layman reader with a cohesive introduction to the history of ancient Mesopotamia, incorporating archaeological and historical finds up to 1992. In this regard, I think Roux succeeded splendidly, and he did so by pointing out and explaining general patterns in Mesopotamian history. This book really breathes life into the ancients and allows the reader to see beyond the cold and lifeless sculptures and tablets. Although the book is full of interesting topics, what really struck me was how long the Sumerian culture managed to exist in some form or another despite the successive waves of foreign invaders. To survive 3000 years in such unstable conditions really demonstrates how sophisticated and influential Sumero-Akkadian culture was at that time. As the title suggests, "Ancient Iraq" deals primarily with ancient civilizations that resided within the confines of modern-day Iraq. As a result, the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians are given center stage, while other cultures in the Near East, such as the Egyptians, Hittites, and Persians are only briefly reviewed, despite their interaction with the Mesopotamians. Pictures, maps, and various timelines are also included in the book. Unfortunately, pictures of artifacts are either B&W photos or simple line drawings, and I felt this

presentation really failed to bring forth the beauty inherent in such objects. Many of the same photos are presented in color in another book ("The Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia"), and the difference is like night and day. Nevertheless, I should say that Roux's narrative does not suffer at all from this slight shortcoming, and most readers probably will not care about the visual aids.

Now in its 3rd edition, Ancient Iraq remains the most complete and readable overview of the history of this cradle of civilization. Interestingly, the word Iraq comes from the name of the Sumerian city state Uruk. There is now a village called Warka near the ruins of the ancient city. The introductory chapters explore the geographical setting, archaeological research and the paleo-, meso- and neolithic periods. Following on, the author discusses the Hassuna, Samarra, Halat, Ubaid, Uruk and Jemdat timeframes, and the ancient trade routes. Next up is the Sumerian civilization, with a study of its origin, religion, history and mythology. The story of Gilgamesh is covered here. There was a Semitic interlude and a final Sumerian renaissance before the torch of history passed to the Semites in the form of the Akkadians and later the Assyrians and Babylonians. The statesman and lawgiver Hammurabi is thoroughly dealt with. But other peoples played a part too, like the Hurrians, Mitannians and Kassites. Insofar as they impacted upon the history of the area, empires like the Hittite and the Egyptian are also considered. There are detailed narratives on the Assyrian empire, the Chaldean kings and the fall of Nineveh and later of Babylon. After this event, Mesopotamia ceased to be a seat of empire and passed from the Persians to the Greeks, the Parthians, the Sassanids and ultimately to the Arabs. In the Epilogue, we learn of the heritage of this civilization, such as enduring religious symbols like the Maltese cross, the tree of life and the crescent. Some words have come down to us, like "alcohol" (guhlu in Akkadian), "myrrh" (murru) and "naphta" (naptu), "abyss" (abzu in Sumerian).

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