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0521521564 - Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States, and Civilizations

Norman Yoffee

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Myths of the Archaic State

In this ground-breaking work, Norman Yoffee challenges prevailing myths underpinning our understanding of the evolution of the earliest cities, states, and civilizations. He counters the emphasis in traditional scholarship that the earliest states were large and despotically controlled and their evolution can be adequately modeled by ethnographic analogies. By illuminating the creation and changes in social roles – not simply of male leaders but also of slaves and soldiers, priests and priestesses, peasants and prostitutes, merchants and craftsmen – Yoffee depicts an evolutionary process centered on the concerns of everyday life. Drawing on evidence from ancient Mesopotamia as well as from Egypt, South Asia, China, Mesoamerica, and South America, the author explores the changes in human societies that created the world we live in. This book offers a bold new interpretation of social evolutionary theory, and as such it is essential reading for any student or scholar with an interest in the emergence of complex society.

NORMAN YOFFEE is Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Anthropology at the University of Michigan. His various publications include *Archaeological Theory: Who Sets the Agenda?* (co-editor with Andrew Sherratt, Cambridge University Press, 1993) and *The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations* (co-editor with George L. Cowgill, University of Arizona Press, 1988). He is editor of the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* and *Cambridge World Archaeology*.

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