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0521818370 - 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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[More information](#)

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CONTENTS

	<i>List of figures</i>	<i>page x</i>
	<i>List of tables</i>	<i>xiii</i>
	INTRODUCTION	1
1	THE EVOLUTION OF A FACTOID	4
	An introduction to social evolutionary mythology	5
	Types, rules, and factoids	6
	Neo-evolutionism evolving	8
	States and civilizations: beyond heuristics	15
2	DIMENSIONS OF POWER IN THE EARLIEST STATES	22
	The pursuit of the wily chiefdom	22
	Neo-evolutionism and new social evolutionary theory: back to the future	31
	The evolution of power and its distribution in the earliest states	33
	Dimensions of power in social evolutionary theory	34
	States as states of mind	38
	What neo-evolutionism cannot explain	41
3	THE MEANING OF CITIES IN THE EARLIEST STATES AND CIVILIZATIONS	42
	City-states and chimeras	44

viii	TABLE OF CONTENTS	
	Cities and states	45
	Mesopotamian city-states and Mesopotamian civilization	53
	Cities and city-states in social evolutionary perspective	59
4	WHEN COMPLEXITY WAS SIMPLIFIED	91
	Simplifying the path to power in early Chinese states	94
	Law and order in ancient Mesopotamia	100
	The context of Mesopotamian law	102
	The context and function of the code of Hammurabi	104
	The complexities of legal simplification: decision-making in Mesopotamia	109
5	IDENTITY AND AGENCY IN EARLY STATES: CASE STUDIES	113
	A peculiar institution in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia	116
	Imagining sex in an early state	121
	Conclusion: Encounters with women in early states	128
6	THE COLLAPSE OF ANCIENT STATES AND CIVILIZATIONS	131
	Theorizing collapse	132
	Neo-evolutionism and collapse	134
	Collapse as the drastic restructuring of social institutions	138
	The collapse of ancient Mesopotamian states and civilization	140
	The Old Akkadian state	142
	The Third Dynasty of Ur	144
	The Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian states	147
	The end of the cycle?	151
	Collapse as the mutation of social identity and suffocation of cultural memory	153
	The collapse of Mesopotamian civilization and its regeneration	159
7	SOCIAL EVOLUTIONARY TRAJECTORIES	161
	Evolutionary history of the Chaco “rituality”	162
	Non-normative thinking in social evolutionary theory	171
	Southwest and Southeast	173
	Towards a history of social evolutionary trajectories	177
8	NEW RULES OF THE GAME	180
	The game of archaeological neologisms	181
	The engineering of archaeological theory: mining and bridging	182

Cambridge University Press

0521818370 - Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States, and Civilizations

Norman Yoffee

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ix

	How archaeologists lost their innocence	183
	Levels of archaeological theory	185
	Sources of analogy in archaeological theory	188
	Analogy and the comparative method	192
9	ALTERED STATES: THE EVOLUTION OF HISTORY	196
	An essay on the evolution of Mesopotamian states and civilization	198
	Initial conditions and emergent properties	200
	Interaction and identity	204
	The formation of Mesopotamian civilization and Mesopotamian city-states	209
	Evolutionary histories of the earliest cities, states, and civilizations	228
	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	233
	<i>References</i>	236
	<i>Index</i>	268

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	Neo-evolutionist step-ladder model of stages	<i>page</i> 18
1.2	Myth of “our contemporary ancestors”	19
2.1	“Real” stratification	30
2.2	Hypothetical potential stratification	30
3.1	Earliest states and civilizations	63
3.2	Egypt	63
3.3	Hierakonpolis	64
3.4	Memphis (Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom)	65
3.5	Thebes	66
3.6	Amarna	66
3.7	Amarna – workmen’s village	67
3.8	Mesoamerica	68
3.9	Teotihuacan	68
3.10	Teotihuacan, urban growth	69
3.11	North China	70
3.12	Erlitou	70
3.13	Zhengzhou	71
3.14	Anyang	71
3.15	Indus Valley/Harappan sites	72
3.16	Mohenjo-Daro	73
3.17	Mohenjo-Daro – DK-G area	74
3.18	Harappa	74
3.19	North coast of Peru and Central Andes	75

Cambridge University Press

0521818370 - Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States, and Civilizations

Norman Yoffee

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LIST OF FIGURES

xi

3.20	Moche	76
3.21	Tiwanaku	76
3.22a	Wari	77
3.22b	Wari, aerial view	77
3.23	Wari, urban growth	78
3.24	Maya region	79
3.25	El Mirador	79
3.26a	Tikal, greater city	80
3.26b	Tikal, urban core	81
3.27	Copán	81
3.28	Selected Mesopotamian cities	82
3.29	Mesopotamian settlement pattern in the late Uruk period	82
3.30	Mesopotamian settlement pattern in the Early Dynastic II and III periods	83
3.31	Uruk	84
3.32	Nagar/Tell Brak	85
3.33	Kish	85
3.34	Lagash city-state	86
3.35	Comparison of some ancient cities	87
3.36	Comparison of some modern urban places on the scale of the earliest cities	88
	a. Amsterdam, 1936	
	b. Leiden, 1936	
	c. Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2003	
	d. University of Michigan, Central Campus, Ann Arbor	
	e. Hong Kong Island	
	f. New Orleans (Métropole de La Nouvelle Orléans, 1765)	
4.1	Chinese potters' marks	95
4.2	Mesopotamian tokens	95
4.3	Shang period bronze	97
4.4	Shang period oracle bone	99
4.5	Code of Hammurabi	105
7.1	Northern Southwest	163
7.2	Chaco, outliers, roads	164
7.3	Great house sites of Chaco Canyon	165
7.4	Shapes of great houses	166
7.5	Pueblo Bonito	166
7.6	Mississippian sites	175

Cambridge University Press

0521818370 - Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States, and Civilizations

Norman Yoffee

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

LIST OF FIGURES

7.7	Cahokia	176
7.8	Examples of some evolutionary trajectories discussed in the text	178
8.1	Structure of archaeological theory	187
8.2	Valley of Oaxaca	190
8.3	Monte Albán	191
9.1	Selected Mesopotamian sites from various periods	215
9.2	Selected early Holocene and Neolithic sites	215
9.3	Selected Hassuna and Samarra sites	216
9.4	Yarim Tepe I	216
9.5	Hassuna ceramics	217
9.6	Samarra ceramics	218
9.7	Tell es-Sawwan, levels III and IV	219
9.8	Selected Halaf sites	220
9.9	Halaf ceramics	220
9.10	Tell Arpachiyah burnt house	221
9.11	Eridu, temple VII	221
9.12	Tepe Gawra, acropolis, level XIII	222
9.13	Tell Madhhur house	222
9.14	Tell Abada village	223
9.15	Eanna precinct, Uruk	224
9.16	White temple, Anu ziggurat, Uruk	225
9.17	Beveled-rim bowls	225
9.18	Archaic tablet scribal exercises	226
9.19	Archaic tablet list of professions with later copies	226
9.20	Uruk expansion sites	227
9.21	Some southern Mesopotamian city-states in the early third millennium BC	227

Cambridge University Press

0521818370 - Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States, and Civilizations

Norman Yoffee

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LIST OF TABLES

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------------|
| 3.1 | Area and population size estimates of the earliest cities mentioned
in the text | <i>page 43</i> |
| 9.1 | Chronological table of selected periods in Mesopotamia | 199 |