



The Oxford Companion to Archaeology (Oxford Companions)

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When we think of archaeology, most of us think first of its many spectacular finds: the legendary city of Troy, Tutankhamun's golden tomb, the three-million-year-old footprints at Laetoli, the mile-high city at Machu Picchu, the cave paintings at Lascaux. But as marvelous as these discoveries are, the ultimate goal of archaeology, and of archaeologists, is something far more ambitious. Indeed, it is one of humanity's great quests: to recapture and understand our human past, across vast stretches of time, as it was lived in every corner of the globe. Now, in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology*, readers have a comprehensive and authoritative overview of this fascinating discipline, in a book that is itself a rare find, a treasure of up-to-date information on virtually every aspect of the field. The range of subjects covered here is breathtaking--everything from the domestication of the camel, to Egyptian hieroglyphics, to luminescence dating, to the Mayan calendar, to Koobi Fora and Olduvai Gorge. Readers will find extensive essays that illuminate the full history of archaeology--from the discovery of Herculaneum in 1783, to the recent finding of the "Ice Man" and the ancient city of Uruk--and engaging biographies of the great figures in the field, from Gertrude Bell, Paul Emile Botta, and Louis and Mary Leakey, to V. Gordon Childe, Li Chi, Heinrich Schliemann, and Max Uhle. The *Companion* offers extensive coverage of the methods used in archaeological research, revealing how archaeologists find sites (remote sensing, aerial photography, ground survey), how they map excavations and report findings, and how they analyze artifacts (radiocarbon dating, dendrochronology, stratigraphy, mortuary analysis). Of course, archaeology's great subject is humanity and human culture, and there are broad essays that examine human evolution--ranging from our early primate ancestors, to *Australopithecus* and *Cro-Magnon*, to *Homo Erectus* and Neanderthals--and explore the many general facets of culture, from art and architecture, to arms and armor, to beer and brewing, to astronomy and religion. And perhaps most important, the contributors provide insightful coverage of human culture as it has been expressed in every region of the world. Here entries range from broad overviews, to treatments of particular themes, to discussions of peoples, societies, and particular sites. Thus, anyone interested in North America would find articles that cover the continent from the Arctic to the Eastern woodlands to the Northwest Coast, that discuss the Iroquois and Algonquian

cultures, the hunters of the North American plains, and the Norse in North America, and that describe sites such as Mesa Verde, Meadowcraft Rockshelter, Serpent Mound, and Poverty Point. Likewise, the coverage of Europe runs from the Paleolithic period, to the Bronze and Iron Age, to the Post-Roman era, looks at peoples such as the Celts, the Germans, the Vikings, and the Slavs, and describes sites at Altamira, Pompeii, Stonehenge, Terra Amata, and dozens of other locales. The *Companion* offers equally thorough coverage of Africa, Europe, North America, Mesoamerica, South America, Asia, the Mediterranean, the Near East, Australia and the Pacific. And finally, the editors have included extensive cross-referencing and thorough indexing, enabling the reader to pursue topics of interest with ease; charts and maps providing additional information; and bibliographies after most entries directing readers to the best sources for further study.

Every Oxford Companion aspires to be the definitive overview of a field of study at a particular moment of time. This superb volume is no exception. Featuring 700 articles written by hundreds of respected scholars from all over the world, *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* provides authoritative, stimulating entries on everything from bog bodies, to underwater archaeology, to the Pyramids of Giza and the Valley of the Kings.



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**The Oxford Companion to Archaeology (Oxford Companions) From Oxford University Press
Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #794687 in Books
- Published on: 1996-12-05
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.88" h x 2.10" w x 9.69" l, 3.98 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 864 pages



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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Editor Fagan (Ancient Civilizations, Addison Wesley, 1996) is well known for his publications, which elucidate the development and character of archaeology. In this encyclopedic companion, Fagan has created an impressive work of approximately 700 entries. There is little to fault in its coverage of human fossils, historical sites, geographical areas, and the people, history, theory, and substance of archaeology. Some topics, however, lack a bibliography or receive skimpy coverage. A list of the entries, although lengthy, would have been helpful to the user, who must rely on the index to find a starting point. There are no references to the maps and tables from the relevant entries. Moreover, maps and tables are not numbered, and their order and purpose are not always apparent. Despite these minor faults, the work is authoritative, well written, and the only recent work of its kind. This companion fills a gap in the reference literature for archaeology and should be purchased for all reference collections. Joyce L. Ogburn, Old Dominion Univ. Lib., Norfolk, Va.

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From [Booklist](#)

Fagan demonstrates that archaeology's advance from hobby to science was recorded by practitioners who could write well. In this collection, he features pieces notable for their vividness in expressing, above all, that moment of Eureka! Often he refers to his selections as "classics," which few fascinated with the subject will dispute: finding the Lucy hominid, Tutankhamen's tomb, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and more. Fagan's knowledgeable comments on the excerpts contrast Victorian approaches to archaeology, criticized as looting fests dressed up as picnics, with later systematic excavation methods, in which the goal was less to find the king's gold than to find clues revealing the life of the surrounding society. But this editor's touch is unabashedly popular; as impresario he has booked some of the more entertaining acts in the biz. A strong supporting title for active archaeology collections. *Gilbert Taylor*

Review

"The volume is undoubtedly comprehensive in its coverage. It has entries that cover not only the expected topics, major sites, cultures, countries, and archaeologists, and key methods and techniques, but also much that is not found in most "encyclopaedic" books on archaeology....Backed up by 24 pages of close-set index, the volume provides a readily accessible source of information on just about anything archaeological that the reader might wish to pursue."--*AJA Book Reviews* "This is an important reference, an absolutely wonderful browsing book, and an extremely good starting point for those beginning to research almost any of the fascinating topics associated with archaeology."--Richard B. Lane, *Science Books & Films*

"Authoritative, well written, and the only recent work of its kind. This companion fills a gap in the reference literature for archaeology and should be purchased for all reference collections."--*Library Journal*

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