BLACKWELL STUDIES IN GLOBAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Series Editors: Lynn Meskell and Rosemary A. Joyce

Blackwell Studies in Global Archaeology is a series of contemporary texts, each carefully designed to meet the needs of archaeology instructors and students seeking volumes that treat key regional and thematic areas of archaeological study. Each volume in the series, compiled by its own editor, includes 12–15 newly commissioned articles by top scholars within the volume’s thematic, regional, or temporal area of focus.

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Blackwell Studies in Global Archaeology
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This series was conceived as a collection of books designed to cover central areas of undergraduate archaeological teaching. Each volume in the series, edited by experts in the area, includes newly commissioned articles written by archaeologists actively engaged in research. By commissioning new articles, the series combines one of the best features for readers, the presentation of multiple approaches to archaeology, with the virtues of a text conceived from the beginning as intended for a specific audience. While the model reader for the series is conceived of as an upper-division undergraduate, the inclusion in the volumes of researchers actively engaged in work today will also make these volumes valuable for more advanced researchers who want a rapid introduction to contemporary issues in specific sub-fields of global archaeology.

Each volume in the series will include an extensive introduction by the volume editor that will set the scene in terms of thematic or geographic focus. Individual volumes, and the series as a whole, exemplify a wide range of approaches in contemporary archaeology. The volumes uniformly engage with issues of contemporary interest, interweaving social, political, and ethical themes. We contend that it is no longer tenable to teach the archaeology of vast swaths of the globe without acknowledging the political implications of working in foreign countries and the responsibilities archaeologists incur by writing and presenting other people’s pasts. The volumes in this series will not sacrifice theoretical sophistication for accessibility. We are committed to the idea that usable teaching texts need not lack ambition.

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Lynn Meskell and Rosemary A. Joyce
The editors would like to thank a number of individuals who contributed directly to this book. Norman Yoffee read and commented on the manuscript at short notice. Stanley Kauffman of Binghamton University’s Educational Communications Center produced the maps in chapters 1 and 2. Lynn Meskell and Rosemary Joyce invited us to contribute a book to their series and offered encouragement throughout the project. Jane Huber and her assistants at Blackwell were unwaveringly enthusiastic and supportive. We wish especially to thank all of the authors for their contributions, from which we have learned much, and for their patience throughout the process of producing this book. Finally, we wish to acknowledge the continuing intellectual inspiration of our colleagues, especially Charles Cobb, Carmen Ferradas, Randall McGuire, and Ann Stahl, and students in the Anthropology Department at Binghamton. We recognize our intellectual indebtedness to many more people, both professional colleagues and friends from all walks of life, without whose input, whether intended or not, this book could not have been conceived in the way it was.
It is ever more common these days for archaeologists to acknowledge that their profession is a Western product that emerged, like so many other academic disciplines, in the context of the European Enlightenment. The fact that archaeology is now practiced throughout much of the world, not just by Westerners but by a growing cadre of indigenous professionals, is a result of colonialism and imperialism. Westerners made the study of the material remains of the past a tool in their own political ambitions and at the same time demonstrated its utility to their subjects in their own quests for independence and national identities (Trigger 1984; Kohl and Fawcett 1995).

Although its object of study is the past and the lives of dead people, archaeology is a social practice that is thoroughly embedded in the contemporary world. Archaeologists invariably work among and often directly with people who reside in the areas where their fieldwork is conducted. The structure of the discipline and of academia in general gives some people the rights to excavate, curate, and study archaeological remains, while others are consigned to roles as consumers of the interpretations thereby produced. The ways in which archaeologists interpret their findings owe much to current ideas about knowledge production within the profession, and these tend to privilege certain topics and approaches over others.

The theme of archaeology’s embeddedness in the contemporary world runs throughout the contributions to this book. A number of authors treat directly the connections between modern-day politics and the social context of archaeological practice. The choice of topics to include was itself very much a product of the current issues of concern in archaeology of the Middle East and the editors’ and authors’ readings and evaluations of them. In this way, like all books, the contents of this one are highly selective.

It perhaps needs little mention that any book on the archaeology of the Middle East, especially a single-volume work, cannot possibly pretend to be comprehensive. Our aims as editors have been threefold: to foreground the sociopolitical con-