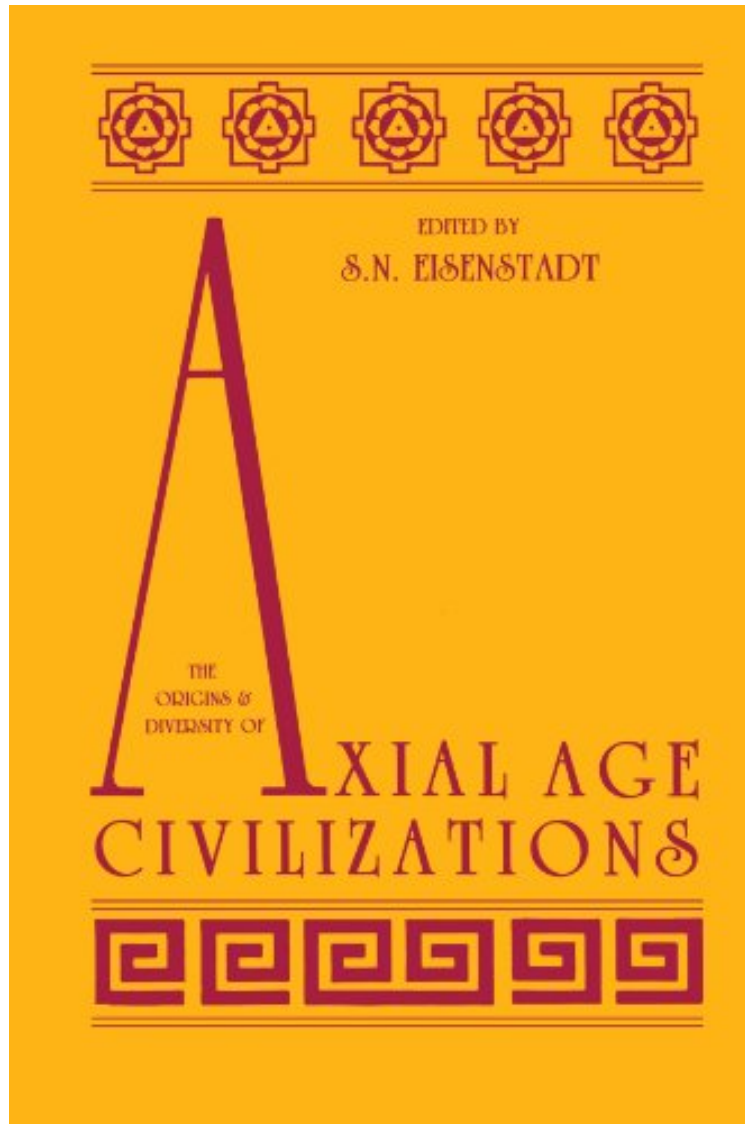


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17 of 42 people found the following review helpful. Synchronous emergence--Darwinism, the counterevidenceBy John C. LandonIn the age of the reign of Darwin it is little known that we have the spectacle of historical evolution in

our backyard, and that this evidence suits Darwin's thesis poorly. This is one of the key texts in the lore of the so-called 'Axial Age', the idea proposed by Karl Jaspers in his *Origin and Goal of History*. This series of essays is one of the lifeboats for this underappreciated research tradition, one all too liable to misinterpretation. The idea of the Axial Age and the data of history that it points to is one of the most important and thorniest questions of world history. What are we seeing? These essays are invaluable and attempt to grapple with the basic idea. One of the problems with Jaspers' approach to this data, which has been accumulating since the nineteenth century, is that the explanation lies in this period's unique or fundamental achievement of transcendence, in some sense or fashion. But this is not a property, as such, of this period. Then what is going on? It is one of the most difficult questions that can best be answered by extending the range of the data and seeing the Axial Age in its overall context, an idea difficult to pursue here. These essays are in all cases a fascinating addition to an as yet unsolved problem treated by this reviewer in material of his own.

This book presents a new and original analysis of the great ancient civilizations, focusing on the breakthroughs and their institutionalization in Greece, Israel, China, and India. The conditions under which these civilizations developed are systematically explored. For comparative purposes, the civilization of Assyria, where such a breakthrough did not take place is analyzed.

Attention is given to the transformation of modes of thought and symbolism. Special focus is brought to the development of the great religions and the perception of tension between the transcendental and mundane orders and between rulers and other elites. About the Author S. N. Eisenstadt is Rose Isaacs Professor of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.