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Introduced by Crafoord Prize winner Carl Woese, this volume combines reviews of the major developments in archaeal research over the past 10-15 years with more specialized articles dealing with important recent breakthroughs. Drawing on major themes presented at the June 2005 meeting held in Munich to honor the archaea pioneers Wolfram Zillig and Karl O. Stetter, the book provides a thorough survey of the field from its controversial beginnings to its ongoing expansion to include aspects of eukaryotic biology .

The editors have assembled articles from the premier researchers in this rapidly burgeoning field, including an account by Carl Woese of his original discovery of the Archaea (until 1990 termed archaeobacteria) and the initially mixed reactions of the scientific community. The review chapters and specialized articles address the emerging significance of the Archaea within a broader scientific and technological context, and include accounts of cutting-edge research developments. The book spans archaeal evolution, physiology, and molecular and cellular biology and will be an essential reference for both graduate students and researchers