

example through discussion of the Roman-era development of the cities established as capitals by the *diadochi* in Asia Minor.

W.'s arguments in each chapter are built upon an impressive and extensive body of data. He applies innovative, interdisciplinary methodologies particularly to the examination of the economic underpinnings of urbanisation. The individual and collective impact of humans, institutions and events on urban development (what I take W. to mean by 'historical path dependency') tends to play a minor role in the analysis. This is perhaps to be expected in a book explicitly focused on the geography of urbanisation, but the absence from W.'s account of the cities of Roman Asia Minor of the individuals and groups who dwelt and traded in them, and who used their resources to embellish them, is nonetheless conspicuous.

On the whole, the book's main draw for scholars of Roman urbanisation is likely to be its explanation and application of promising methods for quantifying the development and operation of urban networks. Many of these methods should become more feasible as the published body of archaeological data for settlement in Asia Minor and other regions of the Roman world grows. Numerous well-produced data tables, photographs, maps and graphs provide effective accompaniment to the text throughout. The extensive bibliography and appendices of settlement data will be a valuable resource for further quantitative studies of urbanisation in Roman Asia Minor.

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LIDEWIJDE DE JONG, *THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF DEATH IN ROMAN SYRIA. BURIAL, COMMEMORATION, AND EMPIRE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp xv + 365, illus. ISBN 9781107131415. £80.

Lidewijde de Jong succeeds in presenting a concise picture of funerary practices, customs and beliefs in the Roman province of Syria. This was no easy task; archaeology in Syria and Lebanon followed different trajectories from the time of the early travellers, with the focus shifting from monumental tombs to the Bronze Age or prehistory. Early epigraphists often recorded funerary inscriptions separately from the monuments to which they belonged. Before the Second World War, excavators rarely cared to preserve skeletal remains. Sites were (and still are, unfortunately) often looted, with easily portable antiquities taken out of their original context. Despite the difficulties, de J. gathered information from over 200 sites and almost 2,000 tombs from Roman Syria. Of these, 517 tombs can be dated with certainty within the Roman period, classified in terms of form (for example, tower tomb or pit grave or sarcophagus) and located within the landscape. These 517 tombs formed the core of the study.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first looks at the spatial relationship between the settlement and the areas reserved for burials. There was a clear demarcation between the two, with cemeteries located outside the city walls, following pre-Roman customs. As cities grew, however, cemeteries sometimes had to be abandoned or even incorporated within them, though many were used for centuries. 'The construction of non-funerary architecture in the cemetery, and its roadside location, were mostly new features of the Roman period' (29). The next chapter examines the types of tomb known from Syria. It highlights the great diversity that existed in types and decoration, the co-existence of communal tombs alongside tombs for individuals and the existence of 'regional funerary styles' (59), while noting a general emphasis on 'visibility and monumentality' in the Roman period. The types, variety and quantity of funerary gifts are examined in the third chapter. Unlike tomb architecture and elaboration, grave goods seem to follow earlier, regional traditions. The fourth chapter examines how the identity of the deceased was expressed through portraits, inscriptions and the treatment of the body. Regional differences appear more pronounced here than in monumental tombs. The penultimate chapter is the most ambitious of all, as it tries to reconstruct funerary beliefs solely on the basis of the tombs and artefacts found in them, including human remains, since there is no relevant surviving literature.

The focus is on burial practices rather than beliefs in the afterlife, as one might expect from the chapter's title. Through the archaeological data, it is possible to see changes in commemorative practices in the Roman period. Each chapter clearly distinguishes between what was traditional and what was Roman in each case, while the final chapter offers a comparison between sites in Syria and across the Roman Empire. The book concludes with a postscript that identifies areas of further research, such as local identities in the Byzantine period, invites more emphasis on visual material culture and calls for the intensification of interdisciplinary research and for archival material to be utilised to its full potential.

A glance at the appendices will show how variable is our knowledge of Syrian tombs, which range from the well published to the barely mentioned. The strength and success of the book is in the synthesis of all these diverse data into a coherent whole that focuses on two big questions: first, how was the identity of the dead expressed by their families and communities; second, how does Roman Syria relate to the Roman Empire? Answering these questions makes it possible to draw some conclusions about the identity of the people of Roman Syria, as seen through the lens of funerary customs and beliefs. The image that emerges is of an area where local and 'Roman' culture intersected visibly, where traditions were followed but also discarded in response to empire-wide trends, and where particular circumstances (for example, violent or untimely deaths) caused people to deviate from established rituals in their treatment of the dead. De J. succeeds in demonstrating that material culture can express complex and diverse ideas about the body, a person's place within their family and community and the community's place within the Roman Empire. Roman Syrian identity as seen through the data was not static, but could change between sites or from period to period. Furthermore, her careful methodology can serve as an example of how to deal with disparate datasets and archival material.

The book is accompanied by online appendices that pull together all the information from the sites in a clear form. This is a particularly important and welcome addition to scholarship, especially since it makes information from sources published in different languages accessible in English.

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MARTIN STERRY and DAVID J. MATTINGLY (EDS), *URBANISATION AND STATE FORMATION IN THE ANCIENT SAHARA AND BEYOND* (Trans-Saharan archaeology series 3). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xxiv + 740, illus. ISBN 9781108494441. £135.

JOHN SCHEID and MICHEL ZINK (EDS), *LES SOCIÉTÉS TRIBALES EN AFRIQUE DU NORD* (IXe journée d'études nord-africaines). Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2019. Pp. 155, illus. ISBN 9782877543873. €25.

In range, content and aim, the epic-sized volume edited by Martin Sterry and David Mattingly displays a kinship with the proliferating 'companions' that now festoon our bookshelves. In effect, it is a handbook of the history, culture and economy of the ancient Sahara. The collection is the third in a projected four-volume series of the Trans-SAHARA project whose aim is to demonstrate much earlier and more extensive systems of Saharan connectivity in antiquity. The sixteen separate studies cover all geographic zones from the Nile to the Atlantic, from the Maghrib in the north to the Sudan in the south, from late prehistoric to early Islamic developments. As such, it extends and develops the picture in the detailed survey of the Sahara in antiquity offered by Mario Liverani at the turn of the millennium (*Studi Storici* 47 (2006), 1003–57). The project's aim is to establish that the Sahara was more intensely populated, developed and connected in the protohistoric times than it has been subsequently—although the reader must be cautioned that in the contributors' periodisation of history the 'protohistoric' extends as late as 650 C.E. (4). Covering the vast sand and rock sea of the Sahara, the first half of the volume concentrates on the early history of the oasis centres. The latter half offers a series of special case studies.