

Greek History

Free labour constitutes the largest black hole in ancient Greek economic and social history. The New Institutional Economics approaches that are currently so influential in Greek economic history focus on growth and transaction costs, but have largely ignored labour; it is not accidental that Bresson's monumental synthesis of ancient Greek economies has no chapter devoted to the issue.¹ This is what makes the volume edited by Edmund Stewart, Edward Harris, and David Lewis on skilled labour and professionalism in ancient societies such an important contribution.² The thirteen chapters explore three major issues. The first concerns the processes through which the division of labour and specialization created distinctions between unskilled and skilled labour. The second theme focuses on the major advantages that treasured skills offered to those individuals and groups that possessed them, and the ways in which individuals and states recruited and bargained with skilled labourers. The third is the extent to which it is possible to use the concept of professionalization to describe the process by which some ancient occupations came to constitute professions. The volume examines various case studies: while in some instances it is possible to describe such forms of skilled labour as professions (doctors, sculptors, musicians, actors), in other areas (athletes, soldiers) such a label is highly misleading. Particularly valuable in this respect is the exploration of the impact of various factors and processes on the extent of professionalization of different occupations.

Hellenocentrism constitutes one of the cardinal sins of ancient Greek history, from its inception as a discipline until the present; taking seriously the wider Mediterranean and Near Eastern contexts of Greek history is one of the most important desiderata of scholarship in the twenty-first century. One of the major ways for achieving this aim is through detailed studies that give access to historians trained in Greek and Latin to other corpora of evidence. Christopher Tuplin and John Ma have edited three superb volumes that present the fascinating dossier relating to Aršāma, the Persian satrap of Egypt in the second half of the fifth century BCE. The first volume focuses on the written sources of the dossier.³ The central element consists of fourteen letters written in Aramaic, composed by Aršāma and other Persian dignitaries and addressed to various agents of Aršāma, primarily concerning estate and labour management in Egypt. These letters are edited and translated and accompanied by a detailed word-by-word commentary. In addition, the volume includes a second dossier of documents in Egyptian that mention Aršāma, and a third dossier of Akkadian cuneiform documents which concern the management of Aršāma's estates in Babylonia. The second volume focuses on the material side of Aršāma's dossier, examining the eight bullae and seals associated with the dossier;⁴ but it also explores the amazing fact that the seal of Aršāma

¹ A. Bresson, *The Making of the Ancient Greek Economy. Institutions, Markets, and Growth in the City-States* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, 2016).

² *Skilled Labour and Professionalism in Ancient Greece and Rome*. Edited by Edmund Stewart, Edward Harris, and David Lewis. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xviii + 393. 21 illustrations. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-1-108-83947-1.

³ *Aršāma and His World. The Bodleian Letters in Context. Volume I. The Bodleian Letters*. Edited by Christopher J. Tuplin and John Ma. Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xxvi + 447. 53 figures. Hardback £100, ISBN: 978-0-19-968764-0.

⁴ *Aršāma and His World. The Bodleian Letters in Context. Volume II. Bullae and Seals*. Edited by Christopher J. Tuplin and John Ma. Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents. Oxford, Oxford

is also found in the dossier of documents discovered in the Persian capital of Persepolis and already employed in the first half of the fifth century BCE. The third volume offers a collection of studies that aim to contextualize the various dossiers.⁵

Aršāma's world is an impressive window into the multicultural world of the Achaemenid Empire: he was a member of the Iranian ethno-class, possessing estates in both Egypt and Babylonia which were run by agents using a variety of scripts and languages, ruling a multi-ethnic province, and intervening in the conflicts between Egyptians and Jews. Greek historians and archaeologists can profit immensely from these detailed studies that explore the operations of written communication and social etiquette in addressing equals and inferiors, compatriots and foreigners; the employment of a sculptor by a Persian grandee and the material culture of seals in the classical eastern Mediterranean; the deep entanglement between the metal resources of the Greek world and the metal-hungry Near East; the processes of commercial exchange; communication between the Judaeon diaspora in Egypt and its *metropoleis* in Jerusalem and Samaria. These volumes are based on an impressive cross-disciplinary collaboration between specialists in Greek, Egyptian, Aramaic, Jewish, Babylonian, and Iranian studies; one can only dream that one day they will be required reading in all graduate programmes in ancient history. For the time being, it is worth registering one important misgiving: given the ubiquitous presence of slaves and other labourers in the various Aršāma dossiers, it is unfortunate that none of the volumes has a chapter devoted to slavery and labour. A new non-ethnocentric history of the ancient Mediterranean will be impossible without slavery and labour at centre-stage.

A similar step in the right direction is the sourcebook edited by Erik Jensen on the Graeco-Persian Wars.⁶ Greek historians usually study Graeco-Persian interactions from the prism of Greek literary sources; this becomes effectively obligatory for investigating military events in the Aegean, as Persian sources are effectively silent on such issues. Jensen offers a valuable introduction to the Graeco-Persian conflicts, which attempts to contextualize them within the wider geopolitical structure of the Persian Empire and its priorities. The collection of translated sources does a good job of balancing Greek literary sources with documentary sources from the Persian Empire in Akkadian, Elamite, Aramaic, Egyptian, and Old Persian. The various sources offer a multicultural perspective on the organization of the empire and the imperial ideology, as well as on the various stages of Persian expansion, the Graeco-Persian wars between 499 and 479 BCE, and a short overview of the period up to the King's Peace in 387 BCE. The best part of the sourcebook is the juxtaposition between Greek and non-Greek sources: for example, Herodotus's story of Cambyses killing the Apis bull with the

University Press, 2020. Pp. xxii + 319. 165 figures, 9 plates, 2 charts, 4 tables. Hardback £100, ISBN: 978-0-19-886070-9.

⁵ *Aršāma and His World. The Bodleian Letters in Context. Volume III. Aršāma's World.* Edited by Christopher J. Tuplin and John Ma. Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xvi + 514. 1 figure, 15 tables. Hardback £125, ISBN: 978-0-19-886071-6.

⁶ *The Greco-Persian Wars. A Short History with Documents.* By Erik Jensen. Passages: Key Moments in History. Indianapolis, IN, and Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 2021. Pp. xx + 212. Hardback £44.99, ISBN: 978-1-62466-955-2; paperback £16.99, ISBN: 978-1-62466-954-5.

hieroglyphic inscription of the burial of the Apis bull under the tutelage of Cambyses. On the other hand, the collection would have gained by the inclusion of sources such as the customs' register from Elephantine, or the inscriptions in which Egyptian rebel kings honour the leaders of the Samian contingent of the Athenian expedition against the Persians. Jensen's translations from Greek are reliable but not flawless, but the origins of translations from other languages are not always clearly identified.

This review has a rich crop of books on ancient Athens, making excellent use of archaeology, numismatics, epigraphy, and literary texts. Jessica Paga focuses on developments between the reforms of Cleisthenes in 508 BCE and the Persian conquest of 480 BCE.⁷ The book offers an overview of monumental building in Athens and Attica within these three decades and the extent to which these monuments can shed light on the character and development of the new state and political regime that emerged in Athens during this period. Paga discusses all extant public monuments, divided into four separate sections: the Acropolis, the Agora, the Athenian *asty* (the city itself), and the various Athenian demes. This is a highly readable synthesis which will form the background for all future exploration of the period; the discussion of the demes is particularly valuable. In the course of her discussion, Paga presents plausible arguments for dating various chronologically uncertain monuments within this period (e.g. the fortification and Telesterion at Eleusis, early constructions on the Pnyx, etc.). She documents the sheer volume of monumental buildings constructed within a short period, and offers calculations of the cost and labour required for this architectural programme. She is on weaker ground when it comes to explaining the motives behind this huge increase of public building and the choices between where to build and what – and what *not* to build (for instance, in regard to the Olympieion). The book would have gained by taking into account the extent to which archaic Athens was particularly conservative in public building compared to contemporary Greek cities, as well as by offering a comparative examination of other large-scale building programmes in the Greek world. Future works can build on Paga's synthesis to move further in this direction.

Few ancient historians take systematically into account the numismatic evidence, while most numismatists rarely address their work to non-specialist ancient historians; this is a major reason why the collaboration between an ancient historian and a numismatist can lead to fascinating outcomes. Lisa Kallet and John Kroll explore the fifth-century Athenian Empire from the point of view of the rich numismatic evidence.⁸ The book examines the entanglement between economics and politics: on the one hand, the huge expansion of Athenian silver output in the fifth century provided a handy form of international medium of storage and exchange, leading to the cessation of large-value coins among most Aegean mints. At the same time, the authors persuasively situate the Coinage and Weights and Standards decree in 414 BCE, as the Athenians reconceptualized the economic space of their empire and switched

⁷ *Building Democracy in Late Archaic Athens*. By Jessica Paga. New York, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xii + 347. 2 maps, 77 figures, 12 plates. Hardback £47.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-008357-1.

⁸ *The Athenian Empire. Using Coins as Sources*. By Lisa Kallet and John H. Kroll. Guides to the Coinage of the Ancient World. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xxviii + 173. 182 figures, 5 maps, 1 table. Hardback £54.99, ISBN: 978-1-107-01537-1; paperback £17.99, ISBN: 978-1-107-68670-0.

from tribute assessment to a tax on trade across the ports of the empire. Finally, the authors provide an excellent overview of the links between the events of the Peloponnesian War and their impact on coinage and coin output. This is a very rich book, and it deserves to be read with attention.

Peter Liddel has produced a major contribution to the study of Athenian politics and epigraphy. This is a two-volume work devoted to the Athenian public decrees of the fourth century BCE. The first volume is a massive collection of 245 public decrees attested by the literary sources, alongside another 90 probable decrees. Each entry includes the various relevant testimonia in the original and in translation, accompanied by a short introduction setting out the literary context of the sources, detailed commentary, and bibliography.⁹ Alongside the current republication of Athenian inscribed decrees in translation,¹⁰ scholars now have easy access to the full available evidence for the political processes of the Athenian assembly. One of the most fascinating findings of the comparison between the decrees attested in literary sources and those attested in epigraphic sources is that inscribed decrees are mostly concerned with honours, while literary-attested decrees deal with a wide variety of subjects. This comparison between different kinds of sources, also illustrated by the volume on Ptolemaic epigraphy mentioned below, will hopefully inspire further work. The second volume offers an overview of the literary and epigraphic evidence for Athenian decrees and their function in Athenian politics.¹¹ Liddel makes excellent use of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic and social capital and of the approaches inspired by historical institutionalism in order to explore how decrees simultaneously enacted the will of the people and offered prestige and power to the individuals involved with their promulgation. Equally fascinating is the exploration of the role of decrees in the processes of Athenian cultural memory: but alongside the local audiences of Athenian decrees, Liddel is careful to pay equal attention to the various non-Athenian audiences. The fourth-century focus of these two volumes is not merely the accident of the weight of the surviving evidence: Liddel situates the study of decrees within the changing history of the Athenian political system and Athenian geopolitical power in the altered circumstances of post-imperial times. This work will certainly shape the future development of the study of Athenian democracy and deserves careful reading.

References to the past in non-historiographical sources are often crucial for reconstructing the history of events; at the same time, they allow historians to explore the cultural memory of ancient societies. Guy Westwood's book takes into account these wider aims, but focuses on an essential precondition for the historical utilization of ancient references to the past: the proper understanding of the rhetoric employed by

⁹ *Decrees of Fourth-Century Athens (403/2–322/1 BC). Volume I. The Literary Evidence.* By Peter Liddel. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xii + 996. Hardback £110, ISBN: 978-1-107-18498-5.

¹⁰ Available at *Attic Inscriptions Online*, <<https://www.atticinscriptions.com/>>, accessed 17 November 2021.

¹¹ *Decrees of Fourth-Century Athens (403/2–322/1 BC). Volume II. Political and Cultural Perspectives.* By Peter Liddel. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. vi + 312. Hardback £74.99, ISBN: 978-1-107-18507-4.

ancient authors when referring to the past.¹² Westwood focuses on two Athenian orators, Demosthenes and Aeschines, and in fact on their political speeches; given the material available, this is a defensible choice. He examines the historical exempla employed by the two orators in order to best frame their arguments, explain the challenges lying ahead, attack their opponents, and present themselves in the best possible light. By far the best part of the book is the comparative examination of the uses of the past on the occasions when we have relevant speeches by both Demosthenes and Aeschines, in the debates on the Embassy and the Crown.

Ancient Athens is usually seen as synonymous with Athens in the archaic and classical periods. The greatest value of two recent books is that they take seriously the post-classical history of the city. The first work is Julia Shear's monumental synthesis on the Athenian festival of the Panathenaia.¹³ The book offers an exhaustive discussion of the myths concerning the Panathenaia, emphasizing the celebration of military victory; it stresses the various differences between the annual festival of the Little Panathenaia and the celebration of the Great Panathenaia every fourth year; and it describes the processions, sacrifices, gift offerings, and games that constituted the festival. While all studies of classical Athenian religion utilize evidence from later periods, the value of Shear's study lies in the emphasis she places on changes in the course of the thousand years of the attested history of the festival, linking it to changes in the political, social, and diplomatic history of Athens. An equally important strength is Shear's attempt to link the festival with the construction of Athenian identities. Informed by a large body of work on identities in the social sciences, she explores how the festival offered diverse opportunities for the performance of identities based on citizenship, residence, age, gender, and sub-*polis* group membership (demes, tribes, etc.). Finally, there is a particularly valuable focus on the Panathenaia as a means of linking Athens with the wider world: colonies, allied cities, other Greek cities, foreign residents, and visiting participants.

The second work is Ian Worthington's history of Athens from the battle of Chaironeia to the major rebuilding of Athens in the reign of Hadrian in the second century CE.¹⁴ The book largely consists of a narrative focusing on political, military, and diplomatic history, exploring how Athenians attempted to deal with their new status as a second-rate power, trying to juggle and balance between the various Macedonian rulers, Hellenistic states, and the Roman Empire and their different interests, while also exploring the impact of this new geopolitical setting on the internal politics of Athens and the multiple revolutions and political changes. While politics is the main subject, the volume also provides some space for social and cultural developments, exploring new institutions like the *ephebeia*, religious phenomena,

¹² *The Rhetoric of the Past in Demosthenes and Aeschines. Oratory, History, and Politics in Classical Athens.* By Guy Westwood. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. x + 413. Hardback £95, ISBN: 978-0-19-885703-7.

¹³ *Serving Athena. The Festival of the Panathenaia and the Construction of Athenian Identities.* By Julia L. Shear. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xxii + 532. 40 figures, 34 tables. Hardback £105, ISBN: 978-1-108-48527-2.

¹⁴ *Athens after Empire. A History from Alexander the Great to the Emperor Hadrian.* By Ian Worthington. New York, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xx + 402. 5 maps, 34 figures. Hardback £30.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-063398-1.

and building programmes. Worthington offers a good summary of the large amount of work in recent decades on Hellenistic and Roman Athens. The extent of the chronological coverage is also one of the key advantages of this volume: other existing narratives largely focus only on the Hellenistic period, usually ending with Sulla's sack of Athens in 86 BCE; but it is rather unfortunate that Worthington did not include at least the later second century CE, and the fascinating story of the Athens of Herodes Atticus.

The study of ancient Macedonia has been transformed beyond recognition over the last four decades, as a result of the explosion of archaeological work in the area. Unfortunately, this has not been accompanied by overall syntheses which put these numerous material and epigraphic finds in a wider interpretative context. Miltiades Hatzopoulos, the doyen of Macedonian studies, offers precisely such a historiography of Macedonian scholarship alongside a historical synthesis, as part of a promising new series by De Gruyter.¹⁵ The book has three major themes. The first concerns the historical geography of Macedonia, structured around the expansion of the Macedonian state from the archaic to the Hellenistic period. Its most valuable contribution is the presentation of recent archaeological discoveries and their implications for reconstructing Macedonian expansion and local identities. The second theme is that of Macedonian identity, culture, and institutions. Hatzopoulos argues that linguistically, culturally, and institutionally Macedonia should be seen as a regional variant of the Greek world, stressing in particular the neglected role of Macedonian cities. The third theme concerns personalities, effectively focusing on scholarly controversies about Philip II, in particular the identification of the Vergina tombs. Although the general case made by Hatzopoulos is persuasive, there is a danger of effacing the particularities of Macedonia, in particular the important differences in its material culture and institutions in comparison to southern Greece, and the similarities with non-Greek societies like the Thracians. Future work will need to balance the two sides of the coin.

The nature of our documentation makes classical Greek history overwhelmingly geared towards Athens and Sparta; it is the epigraphic explosion of the Hellenistic period that makes it possible to study seriously the rest of the Greek world. Unfortunately, this aim has until now been largely unattainable, because local and regional syntheses are impossible without a serious engagement with local and regional manifestations of the epigraphic habit and its chronological development. The recent volume edited by Alan Bowman and Charles Crowther is a by-product of the compilation of the forthcoming *Corpus of Ptolemaic Inscriptions*; at the same time, it offers an excellent model of how to study the epigraphic habit of a particular area in a rich and stimulating way.¹⁶ The twelve chapters range widely, but largely focus on five major themes: the history of the epigraphic study of Hellenistic Egypt; the epigraphic habits of particular communities (the Greek cities, associations of soldiers, and private associations in the rural world); comparisons between the epigraphic evidence and the evidence of papyri;

¹⁵ *Ancient Macedonia*. By Miltiades B. Hatzopoulos. Trends in Classics – Key Perspectives on Classical Research 1. Berlin and Boston, MA, De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. xiv + 241. 1 map, 3 figures. Paperback £22.50, ISBN: 978-3-11-071864-5.

¹⁶ *The Epigraphy of Ptolemaic Egypt*. Edited by Alan Bowman and Charles Crowther. Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. xxviii + 353. 88 figures, 15 tables. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-885822-5.

the coexistence of Greek and Egyptian epigraphic and iconographic traditions on Ptolemaic inscriptions; and the features of particular corpora, like religious dedications, foundation deposits, and metrical inscriptions. This is an impressive volume, which should stand as a model for other regional studies of the epigraphic habit. My only misgiving is that, while it touches on multiple aspects of intercultural relations, the contributions have failed to engage with the wider scholarship on these issues over the last fifteen years.

Biographies of Hellenistic rulers which also function as introductions to wider issues of Hellenistic history are currently in vogue; this review includes two relevant volumes. The first is Christopher de Lisle's biography of Agathocles of Syracuse.¹⁷ The significance of Agathocles is that he bridges three pairs of subjects that have usually been examined separately: the classical and Hellenistic periods; the eastern and western Mediterranean; and tyrants and kings. De Lisle uses Agathocles persuasively as a case study that allows us to rethink these divisions. Apart from the book's value in re-examining the career of Agathocles, and in particular his coinage and monetary resources, I want to focus on two other important contributions. The first concerns the fact that Agathocles combined elements from the earlier tradition of Sicilian tyrants with the novel nexus of elements associated with Hellenistic kingship; examining the entanglement between these various elements is particularly illuminating. The second contribution is the structural study of the contexts and processes that shaped Agathocles' career: the Sicilian context and the crucial role of the movements of exiles; the geopolitical context of the Carthaginian Empire and its priorities; the Italian context of relationships between Greek colonies and non-Greek communities; and relationships with Aegean Greek *poleis* and Hellenistic monarchies. De Lisle persuasively shows how Agathocles simultaneously tried to keep a distance from and engage with non-Sicilian contexts and processes, and how his actions ultimately shaped the trajectory of the Mediterranean world.

The second relevant volume is Lise Hannestad's biography of Seleucus I, the founder of the Seleucid Empire.¹⁸ Half of the book consists of a biographical account of Seleucus' career, which starts rather strangely with Alexander's campaign in India, rather than offering a context for his early life in Macedonia. The biographical account is largely plausible, though it does not add much to existing biographies or to general accounts of the early Hellenistic period. The second half of the book is more promising, focusing on Seleucus' empire: a series of chapters explore imperial administration, the royal court, imperial ideology and propaganda, and the economy of the Seleucid realm; the archaeology of the colonies created in the early Seleucid period; and the material culture of the Seleucid Empire, primarily in Mesopotamia and Central Asia. The major problem, of course, is how to link the biographical half with the second half based on a very different historical temporality; the fact that a lot of the evidence in the second half also covers the successors of Seleucus makes the problem even more evident, but there is little direct discussion of the issue. Furthermore, although the description touches on many aspects of intercultural relations in the vast Seleucid

¹⁷ *Agathokles of Syracuse. Sicilian Tyrant and Hellenistic King*. By Christopher de Lisle. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xxiv + 366. 13 maps, 18 figures, 8 tables. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-886172-0.

¹⁸ *Nicator. Seleucus I and His Empire*. By Lise Hannestad. Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2020. Pp. 181. 36 figures. Hardback £30, ISBN: 978-87-7219-173-7.

Empire, there is hardly any engagement with the wider trends in the field, and the account is still based on abstract polarities such as Greek versus Oriental.

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Art and Archaeology

It's short and sweet this issue. In all, there are ten books to survey – tackled here in order of date received.

My first title in fact comprises two independent books. Within a section dedicated to Graeco-Roman art and archaeology, the subject may come as something of a surprise: the case study is not 'Greek' or 'Roman', nor does it derive from the extended Mediterranean. Rather, *From Memory to Marble* analyses the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, inaugurated in 1949. Elizabeth Rankin and Rolf Michael Schneider have delivered a pair of volumes almost as monumental as the installation they describe, the first examining the context, origin, and legacy of the building's frieze,¹ the second cataloguing its twenty-seven scenes.² One of the many remarkable aspects of these two books is that both have been made available as free downloads. But what really stands out in the analysis is the 'unconditional collaboration' (5) between an art historian and a classical archaeologist: on the one hand, the project showcases how a broader art-historical training can enrich the traditional sorts of questions posed by classical archaeology, especially when it comes to issues of pictorial narrative; on the other, it demonstrates what classical archaeological formalism can offer to contemporary art history, and indeed larger debates about cultural history and contemporary identity politics. The result will be essential reading for anyone concerned with the legacy of classical ideas and imagery in South Africa.

A second volume launches us squarely back into the classical world – or more properly into the 'late antiquity' of its title.³ Importantly, the book is also remarkable for its breadth of geographical reference, exploring the relationship between art and religion across Europe and Asia during the first millennium BC. Edited by Jaś Elsner, the anthology is the latest title to grow from the Leverhulme-sponsored 'Empires of Faith' project, familiar to many through the associated exhibition on *Imagining the*

¹ *From Memory to Marble. The Historical Frieze of the Voortrekker Monument. Part I: The Frieze.* By Elizabeth Rankin and Rolf Michael Schneider. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. xiv + 508. 382 colour illustrations. Hardback £136.50, ISBN: 978-3-11-061522-7.

² *From Memory to Marble. The Historical Frieze of the Voortrekker Monument. Part II: The Scenes.* By Elizabeth Rankin and Rolf Michael Schneider. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. xvi + 646. 400 colour illustrations. Hardback £136.50, ISBN: 978-3-11-061524-1.

³ *Empires of Faith in Late Antiquity. Histories of Art and Religion from India to Ireland.* Edited by Jaś Elsner. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xvi + 515. B/w illustrations, 16 colour plates. Hardback £105, ISBN: 978-1-108-56446-5.