and beyond was not a stable environment. Choices by actors within Greek *poleis* were not formulated only within a framework of *polis*-institutions. The reach and eventual collapse of the Achaemenid Empire and the growth of the Macedonian Kingdom were factors that destabilized the world of the Greek *polis*. The persistence of the Greek *polis* can be understood not only by virtue of its internal structures, or institutions, but by re-assessing the *polis* in relation to the other external powers that dominated much of the wider political economy that shaped the eastern Mediterranean in the fifth and fourth centuries. The (small-)scale of the Greek *polis* was important: as a unit of social organization it was a structure that could readily be absorbed without complete deformation into other large polities. The generational capacity of the *polis* to produce economic growth cannot therefore be easily disentangled from the nexus of the wider Mediterranean world. If the *polis* experienced growth, then reasons for a more buoyant economy may not, nor need not, have been the result of actions by the *polis* but could readily be associated with other forces beyond the city. The wider social context in which *poleis* operated demands further investigation.

There is a danger that this book will serve non-specialists as a handy go-to study of the economies of the ancient Greek city. And there is a risk that many readers of this JOURNAL will assume that the data, and the author, can resist arguments of a granular nature that seek to underline contradictory spans of negative growth (p. 338, n. 14). There is an even greater concern among ancient historians that Ober's identification of "political conditions" will go unchallenged. This review has drawn out three main issues related to arguments made for economic growth in the *polis*, its presence or absence elsewhere in the Mediterranean and beyond in the first millennium BCE, and the discussion of causality and the identification of "dispersed authority" as the central factor. Ober's treatment of the Greek *polis* is highly selective and fails to stress the broader political context for understanding its economic growth. A constructivist political economy approach may in fact offer a fruitful alternative. *Rise and Fall* ignores the wider contingent factors of the political economy of the greater Mediterranean world, and beyond, within which the development of the political economy of the Greek *poleis* must be located.

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The Making of the Ancient Greek Economy. Institutions, Markets, and Growth in the City-states. By Alain Cresson and translated by Steven Rendall. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016. Pp. xxvi, 620. $45.00, cloth.
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This book is undoubtedly the most important study of the ancient Greek economy to date. One important feature is that it gives not only an excellent overview on economic theory and its application to the ancient economies, but also exemplifies the implications of theory on nearly every page. Bresson professes to be inspired by "neo-institutional economics," which allows him "to move beyond the old debates between primitivists and modernists or substantivists and formalists" (p. 27). A second strong point is that the economy of ancient Greece is studied in the context of economic history from the ancient world to modern times, as is apparent in the discussion of major issues such as market performance, growth, energy, transport costs, storage, and the importance of state intervention. A third strong point is that a broad view is based on meticulous study of detail, on in-depth study of literary and archaeological sources. In sum an exemplary book.

In dealing with the Greek world, one should not think of the modern nation state of Greece alone but also the world of the Greek city-states all over the Mediterranean, from the Black Sea and the west coast of Asia Minor (now Turkey) to Southern France, Spain, and North Africa (Libya). Bresson sees the Mediterranean world of the second half of the first millennium BC as an historically exceptional and fascinating network of city-states (including non-Greek city-states such as Carthage and Rome), mainly governed as republics and thus contrasted with the large kingdoms in the East such as the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian empires. Bresson's main concern is the Greek world of the "classical period" (i.e., c. 500–330 BC) with emphasis on Athens from which stems the greater part of our evidence, but the preceding "Archaic" period and the succeeding "Hellenistic period," when Alexander the Great had conquered the Persian Empire, is also well treated.

After the introductory chapter (I. The Economy of Ancient Greece: A Conceptual Framework), the book is divided into two sections: "Structures and Production" and "Market and Trade." The first section contains chapters on the basics and the constraints of the ancient Greek economy, such as climate, geography, and demography (Ch. II), energy and transport costs (Ch. III), the organization of the Greek city-state (Ch. IV), agricultural and nonagricultural production (Chs. V–VII), and the possibilities of and limits to growth (Ch. VIII). The second section discusses the working and performance of the market, domestic (Ch. IX) and international (Chs. XIII and XIV), and the role of institutions and the state: the organization of domestic exchange on the *agora* (Ch. IX), of international trade on the *emporion* (Ch. XII), the role of money (especially the role of coinage versus the use of bare silver as was usual in the Near East), and credit (Ch. X), and finally the question if the Mediterranean can be seen as an international trade network operating as a free market (Chs. XIII and XIV and with a final evaluation in Ch. XV).

Bresson is fascinated by the world of the Greek city-state (his neo-institutional inspiration). He glorifies the Greek city-state as a self-governing entity, which was not ruled by one man (a king), but by the community of its free citizens, who owned the means of production (mainly land, but also factories and shops) and were free to make their own decisions on what to till and what to trade. Thanks to the international network of the Greek cities, there was a lively trade which saw to it that deficits in one place could be corrected by surpluses elsewhere and international trade could lead to a period of substantial economic growth, especially in the city-state of Athens in the classical period. In this he depicts a contrast with the world of the Near East (pp. 103–107). Although Bresson declares that the concept of "Oriental despotism" is now totally discredited, his treatment of the Near East is still much based on this model, in which the king owns all the land as private property, roams off surpluses from the land and redistributes these among favorites, soldiers and officers. In such a constellation trade and market can hardly flourish.

Bresson's book is an update of an earlier French edition in two volumes (2006 and 2007) and he consulted newer studies, but he did not really internalize these, as he himself admits (p. xxv). Such is the case with the fundamental and innovative work on the economy of Babylonia in the first millennium BC by Michael Jursa and his research team in Vienna, of which the 1,000 pp. volume *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010) is the most important. From this book he could have learned that in spite of the fact that the king and the palaces were large landowners, Babylonia was a market economy (Jursa defines it as a "commercialisation model") (*ibid.* pp. 16, 42ff and 783 ff., which differs from Cresson's "command economy" (p. 107)). Even temples were not self-sufficient, but produced for the market (some specialized in grain, others in dates, others in wool) and bought grain on the market. Workers on the public works of the kings were increasingly paid in silver and less in kind and their wages increased with the demand for labor. It is not true that income from taxes stayed idle in the treasuries (p. 107), but c. 90 percent was recirculated into the economy (see, my "The 'Silverization' of the Economy of the Achaemenid and Seleukid Empires and Early Modern China." In *The Economies of Hellenistic Societies, Third to First Centuries,* edited by Zosia H. Archibald, John K. Davies, and Vincent Gabrielsen, 404. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Cresson stresses that the tax pressure in Mesopotamia and Egypt was much higher than in most of the Greek city-states (pp. 102–105), but he does not take into account that agricultural production was much higher in the riverine valleys, in Greece roughly estimated at 250–300 kg. p. ha. (p. 169), in Mesopotamia 1,071 kg. p. ha (Jursa et al. 2010: 49). Cresson assumes that free citizens in the Near East did not exist, as he quotes Greek authors who claim that only one person was free in the Persian empire: the king; as if this Greek prejudice is evidence (p. 226). He also assumes that the Greek world had a sophisticated legal system entailing a concept of (private) ownership, which supposedly was lacking in the Near East (p. 225). Babylonian legal documents, however, exhibit an elaborate system of laws and fixed contractual forms of all kinds of transaction, such as on sale, lease, loan, and others.

To be sure, there is a difference in the economies of the Near Eastern empires and Greece. These differences are indeed in the presence of great organizations like temples and palaces and also in scale. Huge cities like Babylon, Nineveh, and Uruk did not exist in the Greek world, the gap between rich and poor was probably bigger in the Near East (and it grew in the Hellenistic and Roman empires as it grows in the present United States and the European Union), and market economies existed there, though they functioned and performed differently, as they function differently in different societies at all times (see many examples discussed in *A History of Market Performance from Ancient Babylonia to the Modern World,* edited by R.J. van der Spek, Bas van Leeuwen, and Jan Luiten van Zanden. London, New York: Routledge). Actually Bresson mentions an aspect of Athens' prosperity which is much more important than the model of the city-state, that is, the availability of the silver mines at Laurion in Attica (pp. 60–61, 194, 347, 370–74, 416, 419). This enabled the Athenians to finance the huge imports of grain form the Black Sea to feed its population and employ investment in buildings and ships. The creation of new money for investment is an important lesson for finding modern responses to crisis. It sobering to note that after a book-long eulogy on the free city-states with their international network, Bresson concludes that the city-states created important legal and political constraints to free trade, as the prohibition of exports in many places. And one should be aware of the fact that Athens was itself core of a (small) empire, the Delian league, from which it roamed off tributes, that were invested

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in ships, and in this it did not differ much from the "oriental" empires. Finally, it is not true that "the Greeks" liquidated the Persian Empire, which was in fact master of Greece in the fourth century, but it was the Macedonian monarchy of Alexander the Great that first subjected the Greek world and then conquered the Persian Empire.

My critical remarks, it will be clear, do not diminish my deep admiration for this groundbreaking work, recommended to all economic historians who want to broaden their horizon.

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The Great Divergence Reconsidered: Europe, India, and the Rise to Global Economic Power. By Roman Studer. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. 231. \$80.65–101.96, hardcover; \$28.99, paper; \$82.00, kindle.
doi: 10.1017/S0022050717000389

State, Economy, and the Great Divergence: Great Britain and China, 1680s–1850s. By Peer Vries. London: Bloomsbury. Pp. 504. \$148.00, hardcover; \$39.95, paper; \$18.14, eTextbook.
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Economic success, like any other, has a thousand fathers: many schools of thought want to claim it as support for their preferred theory of long-run growth. The debate that ensues is then usually informative, in that we learn a great deal about the economies involved, but it is rarely conclusive. This is because the variables involved—capital accumulation, increases in productivity, better governance, etc.—influence each other and it is difficult to distinguish cause and effect. Also, real-world economies do not map neatly into any theoretical model, so every contender can find some evidence for his or her case. The "East Asian Miracle" is a good example of this. For some scholars, the rapid growth of Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea in the late twentieth century was evidence that the Neo-classical Counter-Revolution's critique of excessive state intervention was correct; that growth was launched by removing the heavy hand of the state. Others argued the state <u>had</u> been extensively involved in economic activity, but that this intervention had been effective and judicious. The debate continues to this day. The "Washington Consensus" of the 1990s, which advocated limited government as a key element of development strategy, has largely broken down, and it is not clear what will replace it.

If we cannot agree on the primary causes of growth in four East Asian economies over the last few decades, how much harder it will be to understand the causes of economic transformations that happened (or did not) a few hundred years ago, in economies spanning continents, in an era for which economic statistics are scarce compared to the present-day. This is the fate of the debate on the Great Divergence, an expression coined by Kenneth Pomeranz to describe the parting of ways, in terms of economic growth and standard of living, between Western Europe and other parts of the world, including China and India. Is it an exercise in futility to try to identify "primary causes" when societies differed in so many fundamental ways—in behaviors, in social, family, and state structures, and in technological capacity? Perhaps we can