



matter as expansive as landscapes, no one methodology can hope to singularly comprehend all their aspects; yet, when used in concert, they can provide an unbridled depth of understanding. While there remains work to be done, the volume represents a remarkable achievement and is a testament to the breadth and variety of research being performed across the landscapes of the ancient world. One can only wait in anticipation to see what new insights emerge from the next International Conference on Classical Antiquities.

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ASPECTS OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

FILONIK (J.), PLASTOW (C.), ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ (R.)
(edd.) *Citizenship in Antiquity. Civic Communities in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Pp. xxiv + 725, figs, ill., maps. London and New York: Routledge, 2023. Cased, £152, US\$200. ISBN: 978-0-367-68711-3.
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This book is a welcome and monumental contribution (including 49 chapters) to the origins of civic communities, their political expression through organised bodies of citizens and their capacity to build counter-powers that limit royal agency in some way. From this perspective, this excellent volume addresses fundamental issues about organising ancient societies through the lens of citizenship. It summarises research developed in diverse fields of scholarship, sometimes in regions far away from what is usually regarded as the cradle of civic life and citizen identity – the Greek *polis* and the Roman Republic – and in different periods, from the Iron Age to the Early Middle Ages. The volume can be interpreted as a particular expression of our present *Zeitgeist*, which is visible in recent scholarship. The Great Recession of 2008 and its aftermath inspired a broad set of investigations exploring the actors, modalities, limits and realities of exercising power in the ancient world. Such analyses approach political agency beyond the scope of formal and institutional procedures; hence its protagonists are not only royal courts, nobles and state elites but also selected groups of people who often operate in close contact with them and beyond them. Among them, traders, wealthy peasants or guilds of artisans figure prominently. They could produce autonomous values and create institutions that expressed their ideals, world views and interests, so rulers would consider them, at least to some degree. For these reasons, the editors emphasise in the introduction that citizenship is a concept that has often been rephrased across the millennia as a metonymy for ‘civic engagement’ or ‘participation’, and it necessarily implies a civic (egalitarian, inclusive) form of government or, as the bare minimum, a civic space within a more hierarchical regime. Following this basic thread, the chapters of the book describe the different degrees of construction of civic identities and political participation, under different political regimes, that can be found across the Mediterranean in antiquity.

As the book aptly shows, the concept of civic community emerged together with institutional mechanisms to promote or, at least, influence political decision-making.

However, communities were far from being all-encompassing social bodies due to the exclusion of different categories of people – women, slaves, strangers and, to some degree, young people and the poor. Other social links modulated the construction of communal links and, in turn, imposed internal hierarchies and limited the possibility of political deliberation and intervention. Kinship, age and wealth remained the most prominent, such as Syro-Mesopotamian ‘elders’ or Egyptian ‘great men’. At the same time, village and city bodies frequently maintained conflictual relations with other forms of social organisation exterior to them, such as pastoral peoples organised in ‘houses’ and clans under the authority of more or less ephemeral chiefs. Furthermore, civic communities and politically organised citizen bodies coexisted with other forms of political influence, sometimes concurrent, sometimes running parallel to them, from patronage and euergetism to corruption. Finally, such civic communities can be found not only in the Mediterranean regions analysed in the volume, where collective action and political deliberation crystallised in rights and diverse degrees of formal political deliberation and participation. They are also present in other regions and periods where collective action rivalled royal agency or modulated the latter’s authority.

However, documenting their social composition, procedures, scope and modalities of action, not to mention their relationship with other procedures and rival channels of political decision-making, is an arduous task. Sometimes, the archaeological record offers some clues, as discussed in G.M. Feinman, R.E. Blanton, S.A. Kowalewski and L.F. Fargher (edd.), *Origins, Foundations, Sustainability and Trip Lines of Good Governance: Archaeological and Historical Considerations* (2022). In other cases, history from below has left traces that help balance narratives primarily focused on kings and elites, as shown in T.L. Thurston and M. Fernández-Götz (edd.), *Power from below in Premodern Societies: The Dynamics of Political Complexity in the Archaeological Record* (2021) or C. Courrier and J.C. Magalhães de Oliveira (edd.), *Ancient History from Below: Subaltern Experiences and Actions in Context* (2022). Such studies question the scope of action of ancient states and reveal instead the limits of infrastructural power. The resulting picture may differ from the claims about royal power and the extent of royal authority celebrated in many ancient monuments, as discussed in C. Ando and S. Richardson (edd.), *Ancient States and Infrastructural Power. Europe, Asia, and America* (2017). In this light, civic assemblies, civic identity, community building and political agency represent a flourishing research topic, as demonstrated by the book under review and in comparable works, such as C. Brélaz and E. Rose (edd.), *Civic Identity and Civic Participation in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (2021). A final point concerns rival expressions of architectural and space use determined by the power relations prevalent in different societies, depending on the weight of civic communities. Monumentality and euergetism lie at the core of such discussions, as explored in N.N. May and U. Steinert (edd.), *The Fabric of Cities. Aspects of Urbanism, Urban Topography and Society in Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome* (2014) or F. Buccellati, S. Hagenauer, S. van der Heyden and F. Levenson (edd.), *Size Matters – Understanding Monumentality Across Ancient Civilizations* (2019).

Recent research reveals that civic communities and restricted bodies of ‘citizens’ gathered at assemblies and collaborated with rulers in political decisions, at least in some areas of the Mediterranean and the Near East, well before the emergence of the Greek *polis*. The chapters by E. von Dassow on Hammurabi’s Babylonia, N.İ. Gerçek on Hittite Anatolia and S. Gordin on Neo-Babylonian southern Mesopotamia analyse some of these Near Eastern precedents, when free individuals, holders of rights, deliberated in town assemblies and played an active role in the management of everyday affairs, from conflict resolution to the administration of taxes or the organisation of public works.

Scholars such as S. Richardson ('Old Babylonian Letters and Class Formation: Tropes of Sympathy and Social Proximity', *Journal of Ancient History* 10 [2022], 1–34) and G. Barjamovic ('Interlocking Commercial Networks and the Infrastructure of Trade in Western Asia during the Bronze Age', in: K. Kristiansen, T. Lindkvist and J. Myrdal [edd.], *Trade and Civilisation: Economic Networks and Cultural Ties, from Prehistory to the Early Modern Era* [2018], pp. 113–142, esp. 128–9) have also contributed by illuminating these experiences in Mesopotamia during the early centuries of the second millennium BCE. For instance, traders developed a shared consciousness about the importance of their social role, integrated urban councils and collaborated with kings in political matters. Barjamovic calls this system 'proto-parliamentary'. M. Woolmer's chapter on citizen councils and assemblies in ancient Phoenicia constitutes an excellent example of discussing small trading polities organised according to these principles, which suggests that the transition to *polis*-style communities after Alexander's conquest of this region was soft. Unfortunately, the book includes no chapter about pharaonic Egypt. However, the turn of the third millennium BCE offers some parallels with Mesopotamia. This was a period of increased riverine exchanges along the Nile; individuals boasted about their private wealth accumulation (fields, cattle, people, ships, precious metals) and celebrated their economic autonomy and personal initiative in their inscriptions – under the label of *nedjes*, 'modest, humble one'. Scarce but relevant evidence shows that town councils called *qnb*t assumed the same duties as the Mesopotamian councils and that only affluent men were admitted.

Naturally, most of the volume deals with the Graeco-Roman experience about citizenship at several levels: the emergence of civic communities organised in deliberation bodies that assumed the political direction of the *polis*; the impact provoked by the extension of kingship around the Mediterranean in Hellenistic times and during the Roman Empire; the differentiated experiences of citizenship visible across this vast space; the coexistence of hybrid identities in communities integrated by indigenous peoples and Graeco-Roman settlers; and the socio-cultural mechanisms that stimulated the formation of civic identities. The book reveals that cities constituted the main fundament of citizenship as repositories of rights and scenarios for political participation in the management of common affairs. The chapters by L. Cecchet and M. Świerk on Roman Asia Minor and Africa show that citizenship remained mainly urban in character. Beyond cities, social bonds based on deference, kinship, traditional authority and religion limited the formation of civic communities based on the autonomy and political agency of individuals. That is the reason for the relevance of communal spaces and architectural expressions that favoured the formation of civic identities and political deliberation. Theatres, agoras or amphitheatres, and particular cultural and scholarly forms (discourses, poetry, treaties, history, oratory) were crucial. Their impact was especially noticeable in the Hellenistic East, where concurrent institutions promoted different identities and community senses. Egyptian or Mesopotamian temples, for instance, were controlled by traditional urban elites and became the last repositories of vanishing cultures and values, including millennia-long writing systems (cuneiform, hieroglyphs). On the contrary, other social sectors, such as traders, 'entrepreneurs' or craft guilds, were more receptive to the possibilities opened by the new rulers. The studies by C. Horst on the continuity between assembly areas and agoras or on the importance of theatres in the Near East illuminate such complex issues ('The Greek Agora in the Context of Sites of Political Assembly in the Ancient Near East', in: C. Graml, A. Doronzio and V. Capozzoli [edd.], *Rethinking Athens before the Persian Wars* [2019], pp. 239–50; 'Politics and Hybrid Identities. The Greek Theatre in Hellenistic Babylon', in: R. Mattila, S. Fink and S. Ito [edd.], *Evidence Combined. Western and Eastern Sources in Dialogue* [2022], pp. 11–26).

Finally, the construction of citizenship meant opposition to other social categories that, in contrast, helped define what citizenship was and who was excluded from this political category. Several chapters deal with this fundamental issue. The first opposition confronted citizens and ‘others’, such as foreigners, slaves and women. However, political deliberation also meant the coexistence of rival political projects, so that conflicts erupted, sometimes solved by the temporal or definitive exclusion of rivals, forced into exile, or their suppression of civic rights. In other instances, creating a civic community implied reducing the formal relevance of kinship relations, replaced by fictive kinship ties that claimed common ancestry, such as tribes, *demes* and *genos* subdivisions. In other cases, geographic entities played a similar role (*meros, kōmē*). Enrolment in the requisite subdivisions was essential for citizenship to be complete and effective, for example, on the occasion of manumission or honorific citizenship grants. Festivals, religious practices, civic associations and urban ceremonies were indispensable to cement the bonds that united the diverse social sectors that constituted the community. They also helped transcend the barriers created by wealth and social status within the civic body.

These brief notes, inspired by this rich and excellent volume, hardly do justice to the plethora of information and stimulating ideas spread across its pages. The book not only brings to readers’ attention the existence of early forms of civic communities and citizenship in regions distant from the Aegean, later subsumed into the *polis* and *civitas* experiences after the Macedonian and Roman conquests. It also highlights the complex and diverse expressions of citizenship, including the conflicts inherent in the gradual imposition of monarchical forms of power over communities that still considered themselves free, subject to law and rights-holders. Furthermore, the volume analyses the cultural, ritual and monumental manifestations that kept civic identities alive and how they were reconceptualised with the advent of Christianity until their final demise.

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ANCIENT SEXUAL PRACTICES

SERAFIM (A.), KAZANTZIDIS (G.), DEMETRIOU (K.) (edd.)
Sex and the Ancient City. Sex and Sexual Practices in Greco-Roman Antiquity. (Trends in Classics Supplementary Volume 126.) Pp. xiv + 538, b/w & colour ills. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Cased, £134.50, €149.95, US\$170.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-069577-9.

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This volume seeks to elucidate sexual practices in antiquity, rather than the more familiar ground of eroticism or gender, as well as the cultural context that informs them. Using a range of modern theories, its contributions explore both textual and non-textual material from the archaic to the early Christian eras. The introduction outlines these goals, defines the book’s terms, situates its approaches within current scholarship and summarises the chapters. These studies join the outpouring of scholarship on sexuality in antiquity, but aim to focus on actual sexual practices, as well as other understudied topics, in order to