

Review

New Book Chronicle

Robert Witcher

(Ur)banisms

JOHN JULIUS NORWICH (ed.). *Cities that shaped the ancient world*. 2014. 240 pages, 151 colour and b&w illustrations. London: Thames & Hudson; 978-0-500-25204-8 hardback £24.95.

HARRIET CRAWFORD. *Ur: the city of the moon god*. 2015. vii+146 pages, 30 b&w illustrations. London: Bloomsbury Academic; 978-1-4725-2419-5 paperback £19.99.



With over half of the world's population living in cities, urbanism is one of the defining characteristics of the contemporary age. In the past, by contrast, most people lived scattered in villages

and rural settlements. Yet pre-industrial cities still exerted a disproportionate influence on society, economy and culture. In *Cities that shaped the ancient world*, JOHN JULIUS NORWICH collects 40 of the most influential. Taking inspiration from this urban super league, this instalment of New Book Chronicle tackles a selection of new volumes, each concerned with one of the cities identified by Norwich, taking us 5000 years and 13 000 km from Ur to Tikal. Each book also presents a different publication format, offering the opportunity to think not only about the individual cities, but also how we write about them.

First, however, a few words about *Cities that shaped the ancient world*. As we have come to expect from Thames & Hudson, this is a smartly produced volume. A list of well-qualified archaeologists and historians provide brief vignettes, sketching out the historical significance of each city, name-checking their most famous residents and whetting our appetites with sumptuous photography. There is a bias to the Mediterranean—not entirely disguised by the grouping of these cities into sections on the

Near East, Africa and Europe, which is supported by some cunning cartography; sections on Asia and the Americas do, however, provide some balance.

List-making is in vogue (40 cities that shaped the ancient world, 10 celebrities you never knew were aliens . . .), but this particular exercise raises questions. How does one identify the most important cities of the ancient world? And what do we learn as a result of the exercise? Norwich suggests that these cities are where “the first painful lessons of large communities living together” were learnt, “an experience that we nowadays take for granted” (p. 6). Most of these cities, he suggests, developed in places with a benign climate and access to water—for crops, consumption and communication. Otherwise, few generalisations emerge, and emphasis is on differences: the book “spins the globe and watches as the earth’s endlessly varied peoples take their first tentative steps in that most challenging art of living together” (p. 13).

With these brief pointers in mind, we can begin our tour. And where more obvious to begin than *Ur: the city of the moon god* by HARRIET CRAWFORD? This is the fourth in the Bloomsbury (formerly Duckworth) ‘Archaeological histories’ series that chart the histories of individual sites, but also views them in the broader context of scholarly research and the popular imagination.

The volume starts with the rediscovery of Ur. This is a common device, and one shared by some of the other works under review, but those unfamiliar with Ur—its physical fabric and historical significance—may be left adrift. Crawford recounts the work of Sir Leonard Woolley *et al.*, but the uninitiated might not fully grasp what drove archaeologists to this particular site. The concise overview provided in the penultimate paragraph of the book’s final chapter (p. 134) might have been better placed at the start of Chapter 1.

The history of archaeological investigations described, Crawford turns to the results of that work, narrating the history of the site in nine chapters, from the ‘Earliest levels of Ur’, through its heyday in the third millennium BC, to ‘Death and afterlife’. The chapters

offer concise overviews of the city's main phases. Inevitably, however, the evidence for some periods is richer than others, and Crawford draws on material from other cities such as Uruk to fill some of the gaps (e.g. fifth/fourth millennia BC).

Woolley's discovery and restrained investigation of the Royal Cemetery loom large in any account of Ur. His vivid reconstruction of human (self-)sacrifice has dominated attention, but Crawford emphasises that such rites were only observed for a short period by the earliest rulers. Moreover, recent re-examination of the skeletal remains undermines the image of courtiers willingly drinking poison in order to accompany the deceased ruler to the afterlife, with evidence for blunt force trauma and for corpses dressed following death (e.g. a soldier with his helmet back-to-front). Were these, Crawford wonders, prisoners of war, equivalent to animals, and hence appropriate for sacrifice?

Ur has, for obvious reasons, not been accessible for fieldwork in recent decades, and there is relatively little in the way of new projects and results to report here. But there are plenty of outstanding questions: who, for example, were the occupants of the 'Royal' Cemetery: monarchs or priests? One thing that Crawford is clear about, however, is that while the finds from Ur are unparalleled, the city was not exceptional; rather, it "was one of a number of small, independent city states that from time to time were brought together under the rule of a single exceptional ruler, only to fall apart into their old rivalries on his death" (p. 60).

Crawford conveys a good sense of the complexity of investigating long-lived sites such as Ur: the constant restructuring of houses as families changed size and form; the limited urban planning and lack of drainage; the losing battle between domestic thresholds and rapidly rising road surfaces; and the cycles of monumental construction (e.g. Ur-nammu's great ziggurat), destruction (such as by the Elamites c. 2000 BC) and rebuilding (e.g. the Neo-Babylonian ziggurat of Nabonidus). No wonder archaeological phasing is so difficult at sites such as this.

The book focuses squarely on the city. Its destiny, however, was often shaped by events elsewhere. Whether the rise of competitor cities, the retreat of the Persian Gulf, shifts in trade routes and—perhaps most decisively—the migration of the Euphrates away from the site. It was the latter, beginning during the mid-first millennium BC, that led to the city's depopulation and, eventual, abandonment. Here, the chronological narrative skips briskly forward: "the

empty city stranded in a sandy waste, unvisited except by the Bedu for more than 1,500 years. It was only in the nineteenth century that foreigners began to explore the area again" (p. 130). Some consideration of what is known about Ur during this 'missing' millennium-and-a-half—or some insight based on neighbouring sites—would have been welcome. What, for example were the stories and memories that drew archaeologists to this location?

Crawford provides detailed descriptions of the spatial layout of buildings and urban quarters, and of the colours and textures of artefacts. We are treated, however, to only a sparse collection of line drawings, a number of which are poorly reproduced (e.g. fig. 7.11). Notwithstanding the wonderful archival photograph of the towering sections of Woolley's deep sounding pit X (fig. 2.i), the book as a whole is under-illustrated.

Crawford brings the 'afterlife' of Ur up to the present with the recent history of Iraq, a tragic tale of war and destruction, but also of international collaboration and hope for the city's recognition as a World Heritage Site. Yet, since those words were penned, IS has wreaked destruction at sites in northern Iraq such as Nineveh and Nimrud, re-emphasising both the iconic value and the vulnerability of Mesopotamia's urban heritage.

Athens and Carthage

MARGARET M. MILES (ed.). *Autopsy in Athens: recent archaeological research on Athens and Attica*. 2015. xii+186 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Oxford & Philadelphia (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-782978-56-5 hardback £60.

ROALD DOCTER, RIDHA BOUSSOFFARA & PIETER TER KEUR (ed.). *Carthage: fact and myth*. 2015. 144 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Leiden: Sidestone; 978-90-8890-311-3 hardback €29.95.



Standing on the Acropolis, Freud famously experienced a 'disturbance of memory', unable to reconcile the Athens of his imagination with the physical city before him. Reading about a city is one thing,

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experiencing it is another. The contributors to the next volume under review—*Autopsy in Athens: recent archaeological research on Athens and Attica*, edited by MARGARET MILES—all commence from personal observation, or the ancient Greek tradition of ‘autopsy’. The volume’s 15 papers derive from a session at the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in 2014 and represent another way of writing and publishing about a city that shaped the ancient world.

The collection is introduced by Miles, who outlines why it is still worth focusing attention on a well-known site such as Athens. One reason offered is the results of rescue excavations relating to the development of the modern city: the metro system, the Olympic Games and the ongoing restoration of the Parthenon. In practice, however, these recent discoveries are not as prominent in the papers as might have been hoped. Miles also provides an overview of research on Athens through to the present, including the observation that “Perhaps the most vigorous area within Classical Archaeology is the study of ceramics” (p. x); if so, it is perhaps strange that none of the papers in this volume focuses specifically on this topic. In fact, they range widely in terms of methods and materials, but a loose (if unflagged) crosscutting theme groups together religious practice, architecture and landscape.

Several of the papers use ancient texts to read monuments and sculptures in a new light; others integrate archival material and unpublished finds to tweak existing interpretations. For example, Tsakirgis re-examines finds and notebooks from earlier excavations in the Agora and identifies the house/workshop of sculptors by the names of Mikion and Menon.

One of the more fascinating papers concerns ‘The experience of Greek sacrifice: investigating fat-wrapped thighbones’, in which Morton presents experiments on the significance of sacrificial offerings as described in ancient texts and depicted on ceramics. This involved the burning of lamb thighbones to investigate the meaning of the phrase ‘twice-wrapped fat’; was a specific piece of fat required? And what was the aim? Twenty-two sacrifices-cum-barbecues later, he concludes that what was important was not the specific type of fat (amounts of which varied according to the age and size of the victim), but the effect when burnt—especially the spectacle of jumping flames. Divine protection of the city was not left to chance—sacrifice had to be “reliable and predictable” (p. 73).

The paper by Best also considers religious experience, specifically how different roadside religious spaces shaped the city’s sacred topography and citizens’ day-to-day worship. Still on roads, Fachard and Pirisino explore the ‘Routes out of Attica’. They offer a combination of GIS modelling to evaluate differences between known and predicted routes across Attica and beyond, and a re-evaluation of the motives for investment in the construction of engineered roads, shifting discussion from military and political functions to economic and religious ones. Other papers address the mutilation of herms, the burial of statues and a reinterpretation of the localities at which—and the practicalities of how—defeated Phoenician warships were dedicated at sanctuaries around Attica following the Battle of Salamis.

A common issue with edited volumes is that however interesting and valuable individual contributions may be, the overall collection lacks cohesion. This is the case here; the device of ‘autopsy’ does not provide the connective tissue to hold together the diversity of themes and approaches. Indeed, the only real pitch for this unifying theme is the statement that the papers derive from “first-hand examination of the archaeological and epigraphical evidence” (p. xi). Athenian philosophers may have perfected autopsy, but its practice is hardly unique to Athens. In fact, what holds the volume together is Athens.

Our next city comes via *Carthage: fact and myth*, edited by ROALD DOCTER, RIDHA BOUSSOFFARA and PIETER TER KEUR. This stems from an exhibition at the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden (November 2014–May 2015), with the book’s 17 concise chapters by Dutch and Tunisian scholars presumably following the organisation of the original displays. The volume shares the same basic remit as Crawford’s *Ur*—a long-term history of the city—but goes about it in a rather different way. The overall structure is broadly chronological, starting with the westward migration of the Phoenicians and their late ninth-century BC colonial foundation of Qrt-hdšt (‘New city’) on the North African coast. The growth of Carthage into a city of perhaps 300 000 at the centre of an empire led to inevitable conflict with, and destruction by, Rome. But so well-chosen was the location that Carthage rose again, at the behest of Caesar, and we follow Roman Carthage through to the (late antique) Christian city. The book then jumps forwards in time—there is barely mention of the Vandal and later periods—with chapters on the

rediscovery of Carthage and its depiction in art and literature.

Inevitably, the book must deal with the question of child sacrifice at the *Tophet*, a debate that has played out in the pages of *Antiquity* (Smith *et al.* 2011, 2013; Schwartz *et al.* 2012; Xella *et al.* 2013). In this volume, the issue is carefully presented but attention is sensibly redirected towards the broader context. Other chapters put Carthage into its North African landscape, including its relations with the Libyan-Numidian population and with the Egyptians.

A stand-out piece from the exhibition, featured in the chapter on 'Carthage as a maritime power', is a bronze battering ram from a Carthaginian ship recovered off the coast of Sicily in 2010. This object is huge (the book's photographs, although good, do not convey its real scale; if you missed it in Leiden, it is now at the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam as part of the 'Sicily and the sea' exhibition running until April 2016). Apart from its sheer size, the ram is also notable for a Punic inscription invoking the wrath of Baal against the enemy, and for a series of V-shaped notches marking where the ram collided with a (Roman?) ship.

The authors integrate recent discoveries into the narrative. Text boxes feature specific developments (mainly by Dutch projects). For example, metallurgical analysis suggests that Carthaginian ironworkers were—uniquely in the ancient Mediterranean—processing iron ore with calcium, possibly in the form of crushed *Murex* shells, in order to remove sulphur, and hence achieve a less brittle product.

Three chapters consider how the city of Carthage—especially through the stories of Dido and Hannibal—has served as a source of inspiration for artists, writers (e.g. Dante, Marlowe, Flaubert) and filmmakers. There is also a fascinating chapter on the changing representations of Carthage in comics and games, including the *Alix* series, and a chapter on the rediscovery of Carthage (here located at the end, rather than the beginning, of the volume). A brief final chapter considers 'Ancient Carthage in the 21st century: a timeless message', in which it is suggested that post-revolutionary Tunisia may be able to find new meaning in the ancient city.

Carthage: fact and myth provides a valuable overview of the city of Carthage. The chapters are short and intended to be widely accessible. The text has been carefully translated and the book is beautifully illustrated. Indeed, the photographs of monuments, artefacts and landscapes offer a visual feast, although

the maps are rather impressionistic (perhaps designed for the exhibition, instead of the book). The overall format might suggest that the book is intended for a rather different audience to say Crawford's *Ur*, but *Carthage: fact and myth* provides pretty much the same service and leaves the reader—or at least this one—with a stronger sense of the city.

Alexandria and Pergamon

MOHAMED KENAWI. *Alexandria's hinterland: archaeology of the Western Nile Delta, Egypt*. 2014. xii+241 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, 5 tables. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78491-014-3 paperback £48.

FELIX PIRSON & ANDREAS SCHOLL (ed.). *Pergamon: a Hellenistic capital in Anatolia* (Anatolian Civilisations Series 4). 2014. 551 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları; 978-975-08-3098-3 hardback 95 TL.



Another city, another way of thinking about urbanism, another way of writing about it. With *Alexandria's hinterland: archaeology of the Western Nile Delta, Egypt* by MOHAMED KENAWI,

we move from Carthage to the other great metropolis of the North African coast—Alexandria—viewing the city from the perspective of the territory that sustained it. The volume presents the results of a survey of the province of Beheira, undertaken between 2008 and 2010 as part of the author's doctoral research. This low-lying land, criss-crossed by canals, hosted three urban centres, including the Greek entrepôt of Naucratis, but Kenawi focuses on the villages and smaller settlements that populated the landscape.

To set the scene, Kenawi collates the standard Graeco-Roman written sources; more fascinating, however, is his presentation of the Arabic sources. The historian and geographer Al-Masudi (AD 896–956) captures the Delta landscape thus:

Some wise people described Egypt, saying [for] three months it is a white pearl, [for] three months it is a black land, [for] three months it is a green emerald, and [for] three months

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it is a red goldish colour. The white pearl is when Egypt, during the months of Epip, Mesori and Thout, becomes covered with water so that the world is white, and its villages on Rawabu and Tells are like the planets surrounded by water from all sides, and there is no way from one village to another except by boat (pp. 19–20).

Detailed analysis of these texts allows Kenawi both to reconstruct the topography of the Delta and to see the Alexandrian agricultural landscape from the Arab perspective. But regardless of whether this territory was controlled by Egyptians, Greeks, Romans or Arabs, “The rise and fall of civilization in the Western Delta was primarily shaped by water” (p. 11). Canals drained land and facilitated transport, flood waters deposited fertile silts and the freshwater supply had to be carefully protected. Sometime between the ninth and twelfth centuries AD, however, the Canopic branch of the Nile was buried by flood deposits; the territory became swampy and the area was abandoned until the reclamation initiative by Ali Pasha in the early nineteenth century.

Kenawi’s survey revisited known sites and identified new ones, the latter by tracing the courses of ancient canals. Extant structures were surveyed and sherds scattered were mapped and sampled. A total of 63 sites were visited, the details of which are presented in Chapter 3 and comprise the bulk of the volume. This chapter, as with the volume as a whole, is abundantly illustrated with line drawings and photographs (many in colour) of artefacts, structures and landscapes. The maps are informative, but not as user-friendly as they might have been. A striking feature of the survey is the remains of wine-producing facilities. Many of these take the form of ‘mushrooms’ of brick, mortar and stone layers teetering on eroded mudbrick pedestals. The vintage produced at these sites was probably marketed as the esteemed ‘Mareotic’ wine (named after the nearby Lake Mareotis).

Kenawi’s main interest is economic production: wine, olive oil and the amphorae in which these agricultural products were transported, but he also briefly raises questions about the cultural character of the landscape: was this an essentially Egyptian landscape, with a few (urban) pockets of Graeco-Roman culture? Or was the latter more widespread and deep-rooted (p. 27)? Or put another way, what was the extent—and limit—of Alexandria’s ability to shape the communities of its hinterland?

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Having raised these questions, and collated a wealth of evidence, the discussion and conclusions are brief. Despite the claim that “Alexandria is re-positioned in its regional context with the villages and towns of the Beheira” (p. 226), Alexandria remains a shadowy presence. Its influence is tangible via the production of wine and the adoption of cultural practices such as bathing. But the mechanics of the relationship are unexplored. Nonetheless, this volume provides the data with which to develop such an understanding and we can certainly agree with Kenawi’s final comment, that “These small villages and towns, inhabited by poor farmers working for rich governors, once produced the sustenance of the capitals; but their history is generally ignored. Today, it is important to focus on these villages due to their fundamental contributions” (p. 226).

The area around Alexandria was also known for the production of papyrus, a vital resource for the books that filled the city’s famous library. But other cities, in competition with Alexandria, also wanted papyrus for their own libraries. One of these rivals was Pergamon—the subject of our next book, which takes the form of a bilingual (Turkish/English) volume entitled *Pergamon: a Hellenistic capital in Anatolia*, edited by FELIX PIRSON and ANDREAS SCHOLL. Pergamon—the monumental urban showpiece of the Attalid dynasty—is probably the smallest of the cities considered here. This book, however, is by far the biggest: large format pages, printed on heavy, satin-finish paper. The result is unwieldy to handle but a pleasure to behold, not least because of the sumptuous photographs, plans and reconstructions. Yet this is no coffee table volume. Its origins lie in the 2011/2012 Pergamon exhibition in Berlin; the German-language companion volume to that exhibition has become a reference work, and the idea emerged to prepare a Turkish-language volume, with some additional papers. The decision to publish in the dual-language ‘Anatolian Civilisations’ series—of which this is the fourth volume and the first dedicated to a single city—means that this material is now also available in English.

The book presents 30 chapters, predominantly by German scholars, divided into five main sections: ‘Exploration and preservation’, ‘History and landscape’, ‘City development, planning and architecture’, ‘The human domain’ and ‘The sacred domain’. The first section presents the history of investigations, conservation and a discussion of the Berlin exhibition. Perhaps the defining feature of

the latter was a 25m-high, 104m-long panorama of the reconstructed city; a huge foldout reproduces that panorama—an arresting photo-realistic image. The ‘History and landscape’ section sets the city in context. Horejs explores the prehistoric landscape out of which Pergamon emerged. Gehrke then outlines the historical events surrounding the rise of the Hellenistic city—and of the Attalid dynasty—and its absorption by the Roman Empire. Pirson and Zimmermann then put the city into its regional context with an examination of the surrounding rural hinterland, including Pergamon’s port or “maritime satellite” (p. 153) at Elaia; Otten considers Byzantine-period developments.

Papers in the section on ‘City development, planning and architecture’ examine the organisation of urban space, construction technology and—crucially for a city located on a 300m-high rock—water supply. Papers on ‘The human domain’ are largely concerned with individual structures and building types, including the cemeteries; by and large, however, we do not get much direct sense of the city’s inhabitants. The final section, ‘The sacred domain’, turns to the city’s many religious structures, including ‘natural sanctuaries’—such as caves and niches cut into the outcropping rock—for the worship of Meter, the Anatolian manifestation of the Greek mother goddess, Kybele. Many of the city’s sacred structures were linked closely to ruler cults, whether those of the Attalids or, later, the Roman emperors, including the so-called Trajaneum in the heart of the old Hellenistic city and the massive, brick-built ‘Red Hall’, linked with Hadrian, in the lower, Roman town. Pergamon’s most famous monument—the Great Altar—inevitably features in this section (and throughout the volume), with chapters dedicated to the Altar Terrace and to the discoveries made during recent conservation work on the sculptural friezes. But this monument is not allowed to dominate; this is very much a collection of papers about Pergamon the city.

The contributors to the volume provide a valuable and up-to-date overview of work at Pergamon. Recent results—in the archives, geophysical survey, excavation and conservation—are worked into the text throughout, and although Pirson notes that there is now limited scope for further “sensational discoveries” (p. 51), this perhaps makes it easier to focus attention on more important archaeological questions about how the city functioned. Each chapter is formatted with parallel Turkish (black)

and English (green) text. I cannot vouch for the Turkish translation, but the English is excellent. There is inevitably some repetition between the stand-alone chapters but they cohere into a comprehensive picture. Each chapter is fully referenced and richly illustrated—the only improvement might have been some standardisation of the various city plans. In sum, this volume provides a new reference point, both for those already familiar with the city and for those coming to it for the first time. Even in antiquity, Pergamon was already famous for that Altar; this volume makes clear that there are other reasons for looking at this city too.

Teotihuacan and Tikal

GEORGE L. COWGILL. *Ancient Teotihuacan: early urbanism in Central Mexico*. 2015. xvi+296 pages, 119 b&w illustrations, 3 tables. New York: Cambridge University Press; 978-0-521-87033-7 hardback £60.

DAVID L. LENTZ, NICHOLAS P. DUNNING & VERNON L. SCARBOROUGH (ed.). *Tikal: paleoecology of an ancient Maya city*. 2015. xxiv+347 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, 24 tables. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-107-02793-0 hardback \$99.



Finally, we turn to two of the best-known ancient cities of the New World, and two more approaches to writing about them. We start with the latest addition to the Cambridge University

Press ‘Case studies in early societies’ series: *Ancient Teotihuacan: early urbanism in Central Mexico* by GEORGE COWGILL. This series aims to provide introductions that are ‘clear, well organized, authoritative, and succinct’; Cowgill succeeds on all counts.

The basic structure is chronological; in addition, two introductory chapters—‘Preliminaries’ and ‘Situating Teotihuacan’—set the scene, one chapter is dedicated to ‘Ideation and religion’, and a concluding chapter puts ‘Teotihuacan in wider perspective’. Cowgill is the only author here who explicitly ponders how best to structure an urban narrative: topical or chronological? Neither is ideal, but he opts for the latter, as “The Teotihuacanos, whatever their memory of the past or

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anticipation of the future, necessarily lived in what was for them the present, and experienced all topics at once” (p. 25).

This candour is characteristic; Cowgill deploys clear and concise prose to present the evidence, outline the problems and cut through to the solutions. Indeed, it is striking that we get a stronger sense of debate in this single-author book than in most of the multi-author volumes under review. Nor is Cowgill afraid to expose the limits of our understanding; he notes that he uses ‘probably’, ‘perhaps’, ‘possibly’ and ‘conceivably’ a lot—but also with precision: “This is not timidity. It’s intended as a nuanced scale for the state of the evidence, and a challenge to improve that state by further research” (p. 6).

As an introduction, the book makes no assumptions of prior knowledge about Teotihuacan, or even Mesoamerica. Cowgill holds the hands of the uninitiated and reassures them about such issues as pronunciation (although it is debatable whether the US market really requires an info box on the metric system). He defines his position on issues such as cross-cultural comparison and dual-processual theory clearly and briskly. He outlines the ceramic phases used for dating, noting “I cannot emphasize too strongly that these are only my current guesses, and are open to significant changes” (p. 11). We are then advised to acquaint ourselves thoroughly with the layout of the city, and thus we are off.

Much attention has focused on Teotihuacan during its final years, before its destruction *c.* AD 600, but Cowgill devotes plenty of space to earlier phases, emphasising, for example, that it was during the neglected Patlachique phase (*c.* 100–1 BC) that “Teotihuacan grew from almost nothing to become a large city” (p. 53). Its population perhaps quadrupled in the following Tzacualli phase (*c.* AD 1–100). In fact, each of the chapters starts with a population estimate. We do not, however, get any insight into how these figures have been calculated until Chapter 7, ‘Teotihuacan at its height: 250–550 CE’. Here, Cowgill explains his methodology (a simple equation of ‘pots to people’). With the Xolalpan phase, however, we have the first solid evidence—residential architecture—from which to make a realistic estimate. Cowgill crunches the numbers, reaching minimum and maximum figures of 30 000 to 140 000—“For what it’s worth, the mid-point of this range is 85,000” (p. 143)—all of these figures being rather lower than the estimates of other scholars.

The organisation of each chapter is tailored to the evidence, but each considers the evolution of the urban landscape, including its defining monuments (the Sun and Moon Pyramids, the Feathered Serpent Pyramid and so on), infrastructure, neighbourhoods and domestic architecture. Sections then deal with ceramic vessels and figurines, and lithic and obsidian artefacts. Cowgill focuses relatively tightly on Teotihuacan but is alert to the need to put the city into context: “To even begin to understand what was happening [...] in the Teotihuacan Valley, one has to look at developments [...] throughout Mesoamerica” (p. 47). Consequently, each chapter concludes with sections on developments in the Basin of Mexico and ‘more distant interactions’.

Art—or ‘imagery’ as Cowgill prefers—is afforded its own chapter. We are encouraged to get beyond a Eurocentric perspective that finds these images “squat, stiff, and expressionless” (p. 204). Nonetheless, such impressions are perhaps not entirely misplaced; a striking observation is that most processional scenes come from the vertically restricted lower registers of *talud* walls; where upper registers survive, figures are taller.

Other themes include calendars, astronomy, ball courts (or lack thereof), Teotihuacan concrete and, of course, human sacrifice. There are plenty of well-illustrated artefacts and monuments. Some of the maps are small, but, as Cowgill notes, the originals produced by the Teotihuacan Mapping Project took up 147 large sheets at a scale of 1:2000. More importantly, the maps are consistent, facilitating easy appreciation of the city’s evolution.

Cowgill provides frequent (if passing) comparisons to other urban cultures such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, China and Rome. In the final chapter, he briefly elaborates, observing that the city is not easily categorised as either a territorial state or a city-state. Nor are there obvious specific comparators: it was unlike Old Kingdom Egypt, the Greek city state or the Aztec Empire. For those eager to undertake such comparisons, this volume provides a nuanced and up-to-date point of entry.

Cowgill concludes by reflecting on the value of studying a city such as Teotihuacan: “To neglect information about ancient cities is to needlessly diminish the database for considering today’s cities” (p. 248). He recognises that archaeological evidence does not “furnish us with any clear and simple guidelines for how to cope with practical problems

we face today [...] but it can [...] give us some warnings about things to avoid, and hopefully induce an attitude that is suspicious of ‘quick fixes’ and easy solutions to complex problems” (pp. 248–49). His challenge is taken up by our final city/book, *Tikal: paleoecology of an ancient Maya city* edited by DAVID L. LENTZ, NICHOLAS P. DUNNING and VERNON L. SCARBOROUGH. This volume reports on the results of a major research programme (University of Cincinnati Archaeological Project at Tikal, UCAPT) on the ecological sustainability of Tikal.

The city of Tikal started life during the Late Preclassic (400 BC–AD 200), came to regional dominance in the Late Classic (AD 550–800) and took on much of its familiar monumental form during the eighth century AD; despite longevity and success, it was largely abandoned by c. 900. The volume explores how the city was able to live sustainably within its regional environment for so long before apparently over-reaching itself and collapsing. Research questions concern agroforestry and water management, including the role of seasonal wetlands and reservoirs in both production and ceremonial activity. All but two of the chapters are by members of the project; the remaining pair offer a perspective from the neighbouring site of El Zotz, and a synthetic paper by Webster and Murtha who have worked on similar material at Copán but have come to slightly different conclusions.

The project undertook fieldwork in and around Tikal, and the chapters present the different methodological components (mapping, coring, excavation, GIS modelling, ethnobotany) and themes (agroforestry, agriculture, use of fire, exploitation of the *bajos* landscape). Key discoveries include a spring that may have been what originally attracted people to this otherwise unpromising location, a huge dam, canals and switching stations to manage seasonal flows of water. Interpretive themes include resilience and niche construction. The results permit new insight into the development of the city. For example, the water supply for the early city came from natural springs. With monumentalisation, paving prevented the recharging of these water sources but simultaneously provided large run-off surfaces that channelled rainwater into the quarries from which the building stone had been cut; to prevent contamination, these reservoirs were fitted with filtration systems. Given the significant seasonal variation in rainfall, such water storage was critical. The editors estimate that the massive reservoirs on the summit-ridge could provide water

for 50 000 people during the four-month dry season; even allowing for “deranging factors” (p. 21, e.g. leakage and the like), this is still well in excess of Tikal’s estimated population. Generally, however, the question of population size and growth is sidestepped, although the editors make clear that they believe that the maximum population figure achieved, shortly before the collapse, was smaller than usually argued.

The exploitation of agricultural land and forests involved continual innovation, such as irrigation, to squeeze more out of the landscape. But ultimately it was a growing population combined with sustained drought that meant that “Their systems of water, land, and forest management were unable to meet the needs of a large populace. This was the root cause of collapse of the Late Classic occupation at Tikal” (p. 294).

The chapter on ‘Fractious farmers at Tikal’ by Webster and Murtha explores “how kings, lords, and common farmers asserted rights to basic agrarian resources” (p. 212). Their approach focuses on niche construction and inheritance. They conclude that Preclassic and Early Classic farmers were relatively free to practise coping strategies such as mobility, diversity, storage and exchange. By the Late Classic, however, these mechanisms were constrained, partly by external factors (the rise of neighbouring polities) and partly by internal ones, such as degraded soils and landowning structures. Consequently, Webster and Murtha question the idea that Tikal was a resilient system. The city endured for over a millennium, but during this time its population was low and its capacity to cope was unconstrained by niche inheritance. When population spiralled upwards after AD 550–600, Tikal was unable to respond. In other words, when it counted, Tikal was *not* resilient.

Summing up, the editors observe: “One cannot think about the collapse of the great city of Tikal without considering the fate of our own culture and how this may represent a harbinger of our future prospects” (p. 294). Webster and Murtha’s conclusions are therefore depressing indeed and when, in his Foreword, Payson Sheets suggests that this book should be required reading for politicians considering how to make decisions where sustainability and growth are in confrontation, he is understandably pessimistic. Can we really generalise the lessons from a single Mayan city to the world as a whole? Certainly not in any detail. The overall message, however, seems to be that resilience and sustainability are not enough. If we are to avoid (eventually) going the same way as Tikal, we need to think much more ambitiously; as Taleb

(2012: 3) has argued, “The resilient resists shocks and stays the same: the antifragile gets better.”

Invisible cities

Kublai Khan does not necessarily believe everything Marco Polo says when he describes the cities visited on his expeditions, but the emperor of the Tartars does continue listening to the young Venetian with greater attention and curiosity than he shows any other messenger.

So begins Italo Calvino’s (1974: 5) *Invisible cities*, in which he explores the limits of conventional models of urbanism and their imaginative possibilities. What have we learnt from our own sample of ancient cities and the different ways of describing them?

It is easy to find points of difference: some cities were consciously founded, others evolved organically. Some achieved impressively large populations, others were significantly smaller but were more dominant in their regional contexts. Some were linked via a shared cultural milieu, but each asserted—and sometimes fought for—its own unique identity. Similarities can also be discerned. All of them established the economic infrastructure for a basic level of supply. All of them used monuments to express political, cultural and religious power, and most of them experienced at least one—sometimes several—phases of destruction and renewal. This suggests that for much of their histories, these cities were building sites, but it also emphasises the power of place and the accumulations of meaning that influenced the actions of later peoples, whether those of Ur, enclosing (within new structures) old buildings too sacred to demolish, or the Romans, compelled to refound their great rival Carthage. In the past, people were as conscious of the historicity of these cities as we are today, whether the Persians at Ur or the Aztecs at Teotihuacan.

Writing was a technology for organising urban life—but also for shaping urban perceptions: who, for example, could have arrived in Pergamon, past or present, without expectations about its architectural magnificence? The existence of ancient writing is also central to the way in which we write about these cities today. It not only provides colourful details to flesh out broken architectural remains, but also shapes the

whole narrative, often towards the lives of rulers and their relations with other cities. Indeed, the absence of “full-blown writing” at Teotihuacan presents “a daunting challenge” (Cowgill, p. 2). Ancient writing or not, most of these narratives implicitly or explicitly treat their subjects as biological entities with an inevitable life course: birth, growth, maturity and death.

Finally, several of these volumes look for contemporary relevance in ancient cities, whether as a symbolic national focus (Ur/Iraq, Carthage/Tunisia), or in relation to wider concerns about how we can live together more peaceably and sustainably. Indeed, even though some of the authors warn of the continued threat of destruction, each of these cities is either on the World Heritage Site list (in whole or part), or has been proposed as a candidate for such preservation. By definition, therefore, these cities are of ‘outstanding universal value’, part of our shared human heritage. The recent deliberate and ideological destruction at Palmyra, Hatra and Nineveh—and the global condemnation that followed—suggests that such places still resonate today. In many ways, these cities shape the modern world as much as they did the ancient.

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Books received

This list includes all books received between 1 September 2015 and 31 October 2015. Those featuring at the beginning of New Book Chronicle have, however, not been duplicated in this list. The listing of a book in this chronicle does not preclude its subsequent review in *Antiquity*.

General

MARTA DÍAZ-GUARDAMINO, LEONARDO GARCÍA SANJUÁN & DAVID WHEATLEY (ed.). 2015. *The lives of prehistoric monuments in Iron Age, Roman, and Medieval Europe*. xviii+356 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, 6 tables. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-872460-5 hardback £85.

ROBERT D. DRENNAN, C. ADAM BERRY & CHRISTIAN E. PETERSON. 2015. *Regional settlement demography in archaeology*. ix+180 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, tables. Clinton Corners (NY): Eliot Werner; 978-0-9898249-1 paperback \$32.95.

ERIC R. FORCE. 2015. *Impact of tectonic activity on ancient civilizations: recurrent shakeups, tenacity, resilience, and change*. xii+199 pages, several b&w illustrations, 4 tables. London: Lexington; 978-1-4985-1427-9 hardback £52.95.

CAROLINE TRÉMEAUD (ed.). 2015. *Les Nouvelles de l'archéologie. Genre et archéologie* (Les Nouvelles de l'archéologie 140). 64 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Paris: Éditions MSH; 978-2-7351-2052-9 paperback €12.

GERDA VON BÜLOW. 2015. *Kontaktzone Balkan. Beiträge des Internationalen Kolloquiums Die Donau-Balkan-Region als Kontaktzone zwischen Ost-West und Nord-Süd* (Kolloquien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 20). ix+259 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, 4 tables. Bonn: Rudolf Habelt GmbH; 978-3-7749-3983-7 hardback €42.

European pre- and protohistory

KRISTIAN BRINK, SUSAN HYDÉN, KRISTINA JENNBERT, LARS LARSSON & DEBORAH OLAUSSON (ed.). 2015. *Neolithic diversities: perspectives from a conference in Lund, Sweden* (Acta Archaeologica Lundensia 65). 253 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Lund: Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Lund University; 978-91-89578-60-9 hardback.

LEE CLARE, KRISTIN HELLER, MAHA ISMAIL-WEBER & CARSTEN MISCHKA. 2015. *Die Bandkeramik im Altdorfer Tälchen bei Inden* (Rheinische Ausgrabungen Band 69). x+478 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, 46 tables and CD. Darmstadt: Philipp von Zabern in Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft; 978-3805348799 hardback €69.90.

BARRY CUNLIFFE. 2015. *By steppe, desert, and ocean: the birth of Eurasia*. ix+530 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-968917-0 hardback £30.

T. DOUGLAS PRICE. 2015. *Ancient Scandinavia: an archaeological history from the first humans to the Vikings*. xx+494 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. New York: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-023197-2 hardback £41.99.

GABRIEL RODRIGUEZ & HENRY MARCHESI (ed.). 2015. *Statues-menhirs et pierres levées du Néolithique à aujourd'hui: actes du 3e Colloque international sur la statuaire mégalithique, Saint-Pons-de-Thomières, du 12 au 16 septembre 2012*. 503 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Montpellier & Saint-Pons-de-Thomières: Direction régionale des affaires culturelles Languedoc-Roussillon & Groupe archéologique du Saint-Ponais; 978-2-914825-08-5 paperback.

JOANNA SOFAER. 2015. *Clay in the age of bronze: essays in the archaeology of prehistoric creativity*. xii+214 pages, 32 b&w illustrations, 2 tables. New York: Cambridge University Press; 978-0-521-15536-6 paperback £69.99.

Mediterranean archaeology

FRANCK GODDIO & DAMIAN ROBINSON (ed.). 2014. *Thonis-Heracleion in context*. xiii+319 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, 6 tables. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology Monographs; 978-1905905331 hardback £45.

CATHERINE JACQUEMARD, PHILIPPE FLEURY & SOPHIE MADELEINE (ed.). 2015. *La technologie gréco-romaine: transmission, restitution et médiation*. 284 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen; 978-2-84133-517-6 paperback €28.

TOD A. MARDER & MARK WILSON JONES (ed.). 2015. *The Pantheon: from Antiquity to the present*. xix+471 pages, 18 colour and 174 b&w illustrations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-0-521-80932-0 hardback £65.

CLAUDIA SAGONA. 2015. *The archaeology of Malta: from the Neolithic through the Roman period*. xix+449 pages, 66 b&w illustrations, 5 tables. New York: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-107-00669-0 hardback £84.99.

DAVIDE TANASI & NICHOLAS C. VELLA. 2015. *The late prehistory of Malta: essays on Borg in-Nadur and other sites*. vii+199 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, and tables. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78491-127-0 paperback £35.

MIA GAIA TRENTIN & IOSIF HADJIKYRIAKO (ed.). 2015. *Cypriot cultural details*. vii+222 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78570-066-8 paperback £38.

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The Roman world

MARY BEARD. 2015. *SPQR: a history of ancient Rome*. 606 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, 5 maps. London: Profile; 978-1846683800 hardback £25.

F. D'ANDRIA, K. MANNINO, R. D'ANDRIA, G. MASTRONUZZI, F. GHIO & M.M. MANCO. 2014. *L'imperatore torna sulla scena. La statua loricata riscoperta nel teatro romano di Lecce*. 64 pages, numerous colour illustrations. Monteroni di Lecce: Edizioni Esperidi; 978-88-97895-45-9 paperback €13.

IAIN FERRIS. 2015. *An illustrated introduction to ancient Rome*. 96 pages, 60 colour and b&w illustrations. Stroud: Amberley; 978-1-4456-4565-0 paperback £9.99.

SYLVIA FÜNFSCHILLING. 2015. *Die römischen Gläser aus Augst und Kaiseraugst Kommentierter Formenkatalog und ausgewählte Neufunde 1981–2010 aus Augusta Raurica* (Forschungen in Augst 51; 2 volumes). 708 pages, 644 colour and b&w illustrations, 98 tables. Augst: Augusta Raurica; 978-3-7151-0051-7 hardback €172.

CHARLENE ALEXANDRIA MURPHY. 2015. *Romans, rubbish, and refuse: the archaeobotanical assemblage of Regione VI, insula I, Pompeii* (Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 8). xii+137 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78491-115-7 paperback £29.

Anatolia, Levant, Middle East

ROMANA HARFOUCHE & PIERRE POUPET (ed.). 2015. *Du Mont Liban aux Sierras d'Espagne. Sols, eau et sociétés en montagne: autour du projet franco-libanais CEDRE 'Nahr Ibrahim'*. ii+284 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1784911355 paperback £44.

EDGAR PELTENBURG. 2015. *Tell Jerablus Tahtani, Syria, I: mortuary practices at an Early Bronze Age fort on the Euphrates River* (Levant Supplementary series 17). xv+374 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, and tables. Oxford & Havertown (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78570-143-6 hardback £48.

AXELLE ROUGEULLE (ed.). 2015. *Sharma. Un entrepôt de commerce médiéval sur la côte du Hadramawt (Yémen, ca 98–1180)* (British Foundation for the Study of Arabia Monographs 17). xxii+559 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Oxford: Archaeopress; 978-1-78491-194-2 paperback £88.

GLENN M. SCHWARTZ (ed.). 2015. *Rural archaeology in early urban northern Mesopotamia: excavations at Tell al-Raqa'i* (Monumenta Archaeologica 36). xxvii+663 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Los Angeles (CA): Cotsen Institute of Archaeology; 978-1-938770-04-3 hardback \$89.

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Asia

GINA L. BARNES. 2015. *Archaeology of East Asia: the rise of civilisation in China, Korea and Japan*. xix+492 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, 25 tables.

Oxford & Havertown (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78570-070-5 hardback £39.95.

KISHOR K. BASA, RABINDRA K. MOHANTY & SIMADRI B. OTA (ed.). 2015. *Megalithic traditions in India: archaeology and ethnography. Volume 1: archaeological studies. Volume 2: application of scientific techniques and ethnographic studies*. lx+816 pages, 446 b&w illustrations, 3 maps. Bhopal & New Delhi: Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya & Aryan Books International. 978-81-7305-544-7 hardcover \$361.

ASKO PARPOLA. 2015. *The roots of Hinduism: the Early Aryans and the Indus civilization*. xiii+363 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. New York: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-022692-3 paperback \$35.

ANDREW ROBINSON. 2015. *The Indus: lost civilizations*. 208 pages, 78 b&w illustrations. London: Reaktion; 978-178023-502-8 hardback £15.

Africa and Egypt

TIMOTHY INSOLL. 2015. *Material explorations in African archaeology*. xiii+473 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, 17 tables. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-955006-7 hardback £90.

Americas

ADAM HERRING. 2015. *Art and vision in the Inca Empire. Andeans and Europeans at Cajamarca*. ix+249 pages, 61 colour and 10 b&w illustrations. New York: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-107-09436-9 hardback £64.99.

Britain and Ireland

STEPHEN H. HARRISON & RAGHNALL Ó FLOINN. 2015. *Viking graves and grave-goods in Ireland* (Medieval Dublin Excavations 1962–81, series B, volume 11 (2014)). xxiii+783 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, tables. Dublin: National Museum of Ireland; 978-0-901777-99-7 hardback £50.

SHEELAGH HUGHES. 2015. *Illustrating the past: archaeological discoveries on Irish road schemes* (THI Heritage 1). vi+122 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Dublin: Transport Infrastructure Ireland; 978-0-9932315-1-3 hardback €25.

FRASER HUNTER & IAN RALSTON (ed.). 2015. *Scotland in later prehistoric Europe*. xiv+301 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Edinburgh: Society of

Antiquaries of Scotland; 978-1-90833-206-6 hardback £60.

KRIS LOCKYEAR (ed.). 2015. *Archaeology in Hertfordshire: recent research. A festschrift for Tony Rook*. xvii+356 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, 13 tables. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press; 978-1-909291-42-3 paperback £20.

TADHG O'KEEFFE. 2015. *Medieval Irish buildings, 1100–1600*. 320 pages, 14 colour and 148 b&w illustrations. Dublin: Four Courts; 978-1-84682-248-3 paperback £22.50.

STEPHEN RIPPON, CHRIS SMART & BEN PEARS. 2015. *The fields of Britannia*. xix+445 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, 34 tables. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-964582-4 hardback £90.

PATRICK TAYLOR. 2015. *Timber circles in the east*. iii+116 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Ipswich: Polystar; 978-1-9071546-0-7 paperback £8.95.

MARTIN WALL. 2015. *The Anglo-Saxon Age: the birth of England*. 256 pages, 30 colour illustrations. Stroud: Amberley; 978-1-4456-4772-2 hardback £20.

Byzantine, early medieval and medieval

IRENE BAUG, JANICKE LARSEN & SIGRID SAMSET MYGLAND (ed.). 2015. *Nordic Middle Ages—artefacts, landscapes and society. Essays in honour of Ingvild Øye on her 70th birthday* (University of Bergen Archaeological Series 8). 341 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Bergen: University of Bergen; 978-82-90273-89-2 hardback.

ANTON ENGLERT. 2015. *Large cargo ships in Danish Waters 1000–1250* (Ships and Boats of the North 7). 378 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Roskilde: Viking Ship Museum; 978-87-85180-53-7 hardback £50.

HOWARD WILLIAMS, JOANNE KIRTON & MEGGON GONDEK (ed.). 2015. *Early medieval stone monuments:*

materiality, biography, landscape. xiii+279 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, 4 tables. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer; 978-1-78327-074-3 hardback £60.

Heritage, conservation & museums

LAURIE RUSH & LUISA BENEDETTINI MILLINGTON. 2015. *The Carabinieri command for the protection of cultural property: saving the world's heritage* (Heritage Matters Series 17). xix+210 pages, 54 b&w illustrations. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer; 978-1-78327-056-9 hardback £60.

HELEN WALASEK with contributions by RICHARD CARLTON, AMRA HADŽIMUHAMEDOVIĆ, VALERY PERRY & TINA WIK. 2015. *Bosnia and the destruction of cultural heritage*. xxix+399 pages, 127 b&w illustrations. Farnham: Ashgate; 978-1-4094-3704-8 hardback £80.

Paperback editions and other books

EDOARDO ALBERT & KATIE TUCKER. 2015 (first published in hardback 2014). *In search of Alfred the Great: the king, the grave, the legend*. 256 pages, 30 colour and b&w illustrations. Stroud: Amberley; 978-1445649641 paperback £9.99.

ELSPETH R.M. DUSINBERRE. 2013 (first published in hardback 2013). *Empire, authority, and autonomy in Achaemenid Anatolia*. xxvi+374 pages, 131 b&w illustrations, 3 tables. New York: Cambridge University Press; 978-1-107-57715-2 paperback £65.

VALERIE HANSEN. 2015 (first published in hardback 2012). *The Silk Road: a new history*. xv+304 pages, 19 colour and 61 b&w illustrations. New York: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-021842-3 paperback £12.99.

GIUSEPPE PEZZINI. 2015. *Terence and the verb 'to be' in Latin*. xvii+355 pages, numerous tables. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-873624-0 hardback £75.