

representations, e.g., on coins. Hall also provides an English translation that remains very faithful to the Latin text, as well as helpful illustrations of the designs woven into the poems or their shapes (such as pan pipes, an altar, or a water organ). In the notes on each poem, Hall lists a wide range of literary models and parallels. More could certainly have been made of these parallels and their impact on the poems, and some of the literature that Hall quotes for authors other than Optatian is very much outdated (the only reference given for the performance of Horace's *Secular Song*, for instance, dates back to 1921). Overall, however, Hall's work serves as a valuable resource and good starting point for anyone who wants to get to know or delve deeper into this fascinating and puzzling chapter in the history of Latin literature, as well as the relationship of texts and visual culture.

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doi:10.1017/S0017383524000238

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Greek history

I will start this review with a major development for the study of ancient Greek history: the publication of the first volume of the Oxford History of the Archaic Greek World (OHAGW), edited by Paul Cartledge and Paul Christesen. The range of the available evidence can no longer keep pace with the theoretical frameworks and the syntheses of individual scholars. A huge part of the evidence remains known to a few specialists, while wider interpretative frameworks rarely make the effort to incorporate the diversity and complexity of the evidence. Big data digital projects are certainly one way forward; the editors of OHAGW have chosen an alternative path: to offer a collection of syntheses on the archaic history of thirty Greek communities for which the available evidence makes this possible. The adoption of a common format for all local syntheses will make possible the focused comparison between individual cases; alongside the serious effort to systematically combine archaeology and history, which OHAGW editors call 'archaeohistory', this project has the potential to revolutionise Greek history.

The first published volume is Robin Osborne's history of archaic Athens.¹ It is impossible to read this book without feeling envy that no equivalent work exists for classical Athens. Given the format of the series, this work will mostly be read in sections, although there are numerable cross-section references. Osborne's overview of Athenian material culture is, in my view, the most important achievement of the volume: he offers exemplary syntheses on Athenian settlement history, funerary customs and grave monuments, vase-making, religious architecture, and dedicatory

¹ *The Oxford History of the Archaic Greek World. Vol. II: Athens and Attica*. By Robin Osborne. Oxford History of the Archaic Greek world series. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xlviii+405. 49 figures, 21 maps, 2 tables. Hardback £71.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-764442-3.

practices, not as objects in themselves, but as windows to the human communities who created and used them. The discussion of the history written on the basis of archaic literary sources is unsurprisingly less detailed, and I would have expected a more detailed discussion of the Solonian crisis and the decades of the tyranny of the Peisistratids. Nevertheless, Osborne makes a very good effort at incorporating the conclusions of the new approaches of recent decades; particularly interesting, in this respect, is how the history of archaic Attica starts to look once we get rid of the traditional concept of aristocracy as something applicable to Greek history.

Equally important as the OHAGW is another new series by OUP, the *Oxford History of the Ancient Near East*, which covers the history of the area from the fourth millennium BCE to the beginning of the Hellenistic period in five volumes. In the current review, I examine the two most relevant volumes for Greek historians: volume IV is devoted to the age of Assyria,² while volume V focuses on the age of Persia.³ Each volume is organized geographically, with chapters devoted to the history and archaeology of particular areas of the Near East. Greek historians will find particularly valuable the chapters devoted to Phrygia, Anatolia and Syria, Phoenicia and Israel-Judah in volume IV, as well as Lydia, south Levant, and the Arabian peninsula in volume V. In addition, both volumes have several chapters devoted to the Assyrian and Persian empires, as well as the other major states of the first millennium (Neo-Babylonians, Medes, Saite Egypt). The individual chapters offer excellent overviews of the available evidence and the current directions of scholarship. My only serious misgiving concerns the organization of volume V. On the one hand, it is understandable that most chapters in this volume examine the various regions of the Near East as satrapies of the Persian Empire, and focus on the interaction and entanglement between older structures and practices and the new impact of Persian administration and power. On the other hand, the history of the period 600–300 BCE cannot be reduced solely to the interplay between the Persian Empire and local societies; there are so many other wider processes at play, and our understanding of the period will remain circumscribed until we are able to examine them on their own terms. Be that as it may, this is an excellent overview of Near-Eastern history which should be required reading and a constant port of call for anyone interested in the connected history of the Mediterranean in the first millennium BCE.

The need for regional syntheses exemplified by OHAGW is also evident in some recent works, which focus on social history, illustrate the significance of the archaeological evidence, and extend the chronological reach to later periods of Greek history. Elina Salminen has published a book on age, gender, and status in archaic and classical Macedonia.⁴ The book is based on an open-access database of 1,146

² *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East. Volume IV: The Age of Assyria*. Edited by Karen Radner, Nadine Moeller, and D. T. Potts. Oxford History of the Ancient Near East series. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xxiv+1264. Hardback £97.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-068763-2.

³ *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East. Volume V: The Age of Persia*. Edited by Karen Radner, Nadine Moeller, and D. T. Potts. Oxford History of the Ancient Near East series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xxvi+1058. 123 maps and illustrations. Hardback £97.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-068766-3.

⁴ *Age, Gender and Status in Macedonian Society, 550–300 BCE: Intersectional Approaches to Mortuary Archaeology*. By Elina M. Salminen. Intersectionality in Classical Antiquity series.

published Macedonian burials, which makes it possible for other scholars to re-examine and further explore the available evidence.⁵ This is a truly great service; Greek archaeologists have recovered a huge amount of evidence in the last few decades, but the lack of syntheses means that little of this has attracted the attention of the wider scholarly community. The importance of this work is that it directs attention from the royal families and high elites that have been at the centre of attention in studies of Macedonia focused on literary texts to a much wider section of Macedonian society. Equally significant is the attention paid to regional divergences within Macedonia, which often challenge common-sense assumptions. The main part of the book explores the social personae of children, women, and men as documented and represented in funerary rituals. Salminen offers a very good illustration of what OHAGW's archaeohistory should look like.

One of the most significant developments of the last few years is the emergence of synthetic works on the social history of the Hellenistic and early imperial periods of Greek history. Selen Kılıç Aslan has published an excellent study of Lycian family history in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁶ Based on the peculiar epigraphic habit of the area – which includes both inscriptions according tomb rights to individuals in collective tombs and commemorative inscriptions set up by one individual for another – she is able to examine in detail Lycian practices concerning kinship and family, marriage and adoption, and the transmission of property through inheritance. One important contribution of this book concerns the study of the relevant kinship and family vocabulary, which can be of much help for specialists in other areas, given the general lack of idiosyncratic local terms in Lycia; equally significant is her study of metronyms and the relationship between foster parents and foster children, a particularly visible phenomenon in Asia Minor. Among the peculiar features of Lycian family structures, Kılıç Aslan explores women as adopters, the wide occurrence of close-kin marriage, and the property rights of women. Lycian inscriptions offer very valuable evidence for the study of slaves and freedpersons; the book makes some contributions in this respect, but a future detailed examination would pay off handsomely.

This review includes another important addition to the growing field of 'history from below' approaches to ancient history. The volume edited by Sam Gartland and David Tandy focuses on the experience of the various subaltern groups in Greek history.⁷ The ten chapters range widely, but four important axes can be identified. The first axis concerns the understanding of the concept of *demos* in archaic Greece; Zurbach's use of the moral economy approach in this respect is particularly promising. The second axis concerns the Athenian *thetes*, with two detailed studies that will re-orient

Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2023. Pp. xvi+306. 71 figures, 15 tables. Hardback £95.00, ISBN: 978-1-399-52444-5.

⁵ <https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-age-gender-and-status-in-macedonian-society-550-300-bce.html> (last visited 12th October 2024).

⁶ *Lycian Families in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. A Regional Study of Inscriptions: Towards a Social and Legal Framework*. By Selen Kılıç Aslan. Brill Studies in Greek and Roman Epigraphy series, vol. 19. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2023. Pp. xii +401. 18 figures, 13 tables, 2 maps. Hardback €142.04, ISBN: 978-90-04-54841-1.

⁷ *Voiceless & Countless in Ancient Greece: The Experience of Subordinates, 700-300 BCE*. Edited by Samuel D. Gartland and David W. Tandy. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xiv+293. 12 figures. Hardback £90.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-888960-1.

our understanding of this crucial group for Athenian history; van Wees's argument in favour of taking the term literally and envisaging a very large group of Athenian wage labourers will have profound implications for Greek history, if widely accepted. Equally fascinating is Murray's excellent overview of our evidence for urban craftspeople, which has strong interconnections with Wijma's study of the funerary monuments of metics in Athens. The third axis concerns slaves and slavery; Lewis offers a path-breaking overview of the less well-known local slave systems of ancient Greece, while Forsdyke shows how starting from slave agency can seriously reconfigure how we understand Greek slavery. Forsdyke's exploration of how slaves manipulated processes for change of ownership leads us to the fourth axis, which concerns issues of legal status and their employment in the Athenian legal system.

I continue with two important contributions to Greek geopolitics. I start with John Nash's study of sea power in ancient Greece.⁸ There have been many books devoted to ships and navies, naval infrastructure, and naval campaigns, but Nash rightly emphasizes the need of a wider study that examines the maritime strategies of Greek states. The book is effectively divided into three parts. The first part focuses on long-term structures: the impact of geography, environment, and navigation techniques on Greek maritime strategy; the nature of Greek ships and Greek naval organization; and finally, and interestingly, what he describes as naval consciousness, explored through various genres of Greek literature. The second, and largest part of the book, starts from the emergence of state navies in archaic Greece, before examining the development of the maritime strategies of Greek states as exemplified in the wars and campaigns of the classical period. The smaller third part tries to avoid the usual Athenocentrism by showing the significance of maritime strategy for non-hegemonic Greek states. Readers might find various things to disagree with, in particular the interpretation of particular campaigns, but this book is a very important step in the right direction and offers a foundation on which hopefully many future studies will build.

Leah Lazar has published an important contribution to the study of Athenian power and Greek interstate politics in the fifth century BCE.⁹ This book deepens the attempt over the last few decades to rethink the nature of the Athenian Empire. Lazar's main contribution is to employ the insights from the study of other Mediterranean empires (Venetian, Seleucid, Roman) in order to argue for a bottom-up approach, which stresses the constitutive role of negotiation between Athens and its various allies and subjects in formulating the institutions and decisions of the Athenian power structure. Equally important is the stress on the elite networks which played a crucial role in the processes of negotiation between Athenians and allies, and the consequences of these networks. This overall interpretative framework is supported and expanded by three excellent case studies which apply it to particular regional frameworks: the north Aegean, and relations between Athens and Greek colonies, native communities and the kingdoms of the Macedonians and Thracians; the southern Aegean, and relations between Athens, Rhodes, and the wider nexus of relations involving the eastern

⁸ *Rulers of the Sea: Maritime Strategy and Sea Power in Ancient Greece, 550–321 BCE*. By John Nash. De Gruyter Studies in Military History series, vol. 8. Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter, 2023. Pp. xii+270. 3 illustrations. Hardback £88.00, ISBN: 978-3-11-134285-6.

⁹ *Athenian Power in the Fifth Century BCE*. By Leah Lazar. Oxford Classical Monographs series. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xxvi+297. 20 figures, 8 maps. Hardback £90.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-889626-5.

Mediterranean; and the Hellespont, and relations between Athens, Cyzicus, and the Persian satraps at Dascyleion. These three chapters are major contributions to classical Greek regional history that should also be read on their own; they offer an excellent counterpart to Osborne's volume in the OHAGW series.

If Lazar's book focuses on power in Greek geopolitics, Alberto Esu's book examines the distribution of power within Greek communities.¹⁰ Many recent discussions of Athenian politics have focused on finding the locus of sovereignty in the Athenian *polis*; Esu rightly argues that we need to shift our attention to the peculiar fact that Greek communities established multiple and concurrent processes of decision-making and of controlling the decisions taken. Equally convincing is his plea that the study of institutions must be a major part of the study of political systems like those of Greek *poleis*. Esu focuses on two main issues of divided power: on the one hand, the delegation of power between various decision-making bodies; and, on the other, the institutions of legal control that checked the outcomes of decision-making bodies. Given the nature of the evidence, Esu relies to a significant extent on classical Athens; however, the value of the book is that it uses the evidence not in order to write an Athenocentric account, but to extend the approach to other classical and Hellenistic Greek communities which offer relevant evidence: I found particularly illuminating the detailed discussions of Mytilene, Megalopolis, and Sparta.

Esu's work can profitably be read alongside Naomi Campa's book on freedom and power in classical Athens.¹¹ Campa argues that we need to move beyond Isaiah Berlin's famous distinction between positive freedom, or the collective freedom to participate in decision-making, and negative freedom, or the private freedom from interference by others. She posits instead that Athenian democracy created a distinct idea of freedom as will-fulfilment, or the ability to do what one wishes. In this respect, she links the Athenian democratic conception of freedom with the vocabulary of *kyrieia*, which could be applied both to heads of households as well as to the citizens in assembly or the abstraction of the people. Campa argues that the Athenians did not see the sharp distinction between individual and state that moderns do when it came to power and sovereignty, but a less polarized complementarity. I think that there is a lot of mileage in this approach and the significance of the household as a key concept in the social ontology of Greek communities, in line with Greg Anderson's important recent book.¹² It also opens new vistas in terms of how to conceptualize the relationship between freedom and slavery in the ancient Greek world; Campa's concept of freedom as will-fulfilment raises a few interesting points in this respect, but future studies can achieve much more.

If Lazar's book fits in well with Esu's, Nash's book is nicely complemented by Marcello Vallente's excellent study of Greek maritime trade.¹³ One of the major

¹⁰ *Divided Power in Ancient Greece: Decision-Making and Institutions in the Classical and Hellenistic Polis*. By Alberto Esu. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xii+283. Hardback £90.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-888395-1.

¹¹ *Freedom and Power in Classical Athens*. By Naomi T. Campa. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. xiv+197. Hardback £85.00, ISBN: 978-1-009-22143-6.

¹² G. Anderson, *The Realness of Things Past: Ancient Greece and Ontological History*, New York, 2018.

¹³ *Emporia: elementi di razionalità economica nel commercio greco*. By Marcello Valente. Studi e testi di storia antica series, vol. 32. Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2023. Pp. 172. Paperback €20.00, ISBN: 978-8846766588.

advantages of this book is that it takes seriously the archaeological evidence of shipwrecks and builds it into its model. Vallente examines the various categories of actors involved in Greek maritime trade, and argues persuasively that ship-owning merchants (*naukleroi*) possessed whole fleets of vessels, an argument with significant implications. Equally important is his exploration of the ‘ecology’ of Greek maritime trade: Greek traders operated in the interstices of political power, but also within a radial geography of changing maritime centres, supported by both local transshipment and long-distance trade based on complementarity, and fuelled by a mixture of risk-dispersal and profit-maximization strategies. Based on this framework, Vallente offers a very sensible way through the old extreme of primitivism and the current orthodoxy of economic modernism in terms of how maritime trade and markets operated in the Greek world. One of his main arguments is that Greeks understood the predictable rules that would continuously emerge out of the character of their markets, without the need for a wider economic theory: equal arguments could be supported for Greek geopolitics and other partly anarchic contexts of Greek activity.

If Esu’s book stresses the significance of institutions for the study of Greek history, a new collection of essays on Athenian history, edited by Nicolas Siron, shows the equal value of alternative approaches.¹⁴ The sixteen chapters attempt to trace an alternative history of classical Athens that emanates from its *agora*. This focus on the *agora* is employed in a variety of productive ways. A series of essays explore how the *agora* intermingled political, economic, social, cultural, and religious activities, and the implications of these entanglements. A common feature in many chapters is how the ‘free space’ of the *agora* posed challenges for the theoretically clear division between citizens, metics and slaves, created forms of sociality that reached beyond status distinctions, or undermined the conception of the public space as a male arena from which women were by definition excluded. Other chapters start from spaces and monuments in the *agora* as a means of exploring the significance of the activities with which these monuments were connected: the stoas and the activities of philosophers, the monument of the Tyrannicides and the multiple meanings of Greek statues, the lists of drafted soldiers and the distribution of Athenian armed forces. The essays in the volume are written with minimum scholarly documentation and with the clear intention to address a wider audience; in this respect, the volume is clearly successful, but it also deserves to be read widely, because it offers an intriguing way of how to write social history starting from a spatial perspective.

The link between institutions and spatial approaches is the focus of a new book by Julie Bernini.¹⁵ She attempts to connect the recent discussion on political developments in the Hellenistic period and the existence of Hellenistic democracies with the study of urban architecture and the cityscape, focusing in particular on the regions of Hellenistic Ionia and Caria. Given the significance of probouleutic councils and assemblies for democracies, Bernini examines the spread of specialized buildings for hosting these institutions, as well as for hosting the archives connected to the deliberations of

¹⁴ *Nouvelle histoire d'Athènes: la cité vue de l'Agora, Ve–Ive siècle av. J.-C.* Edited by Nicolas Siron. Paris, Perrin, 2024. Pp. 398. Paperback €24.00, ISBN: 978-2-262-10343-9.

¹⁵ “*Plaise au peuple*”: *Pratique et lieux de la décision démocratique en Ionie et en Carie hellénistiques*. By Julie Bernini. Scripta antiqua series, vol. 173. Bordeaux, Ausonius éditions, 2023. Pp. 438. Paperback €25.00, ISBN: 978-2-356-13583-4.

these institutions and the wider communal activities of the citizen bodies of these political systems. The value of this work is in making readers think seriously about the material and spatial implications of the places and the buildings within which institutions exercise their functions; it also documents the spread of particular institutions and their material accoutrements, a particularly important issue in a decentralized system like that of the Greek world. There is no doubt that this book will make an important contribution both to the debate about Hellenistic democracies, as well as to the other debate about the existence of a major disjuncture in the history of Greek cities between the early and the late Hellenistic period.

Alongside the multiple works on Athens, this review includes two books devoted to Sparta. The first is Matthew Sears' new book on Sparta and the commemoration of war.¹⁶ Sears offers a history of archaic and classical Sparta through the changing history of how Spartans commemorated war and warriors, from the time of Tyrtæus to their defeat at Leuctra. At the centre of the book is a simple but very convincing idea: Spartans maintained for a long period a Homeric approach to war as a source of honour, glory, and fame; as a result, despite modern depictions of Sparta as a militaristic society, they fought wars relatively rarely. Other Greeks gradually added more reasons for fighting wars and commemorating them, such as freedom and Panhellenism, and as a consequence they ended up fighting wars far more often. It is only in the latter half of the fifth century that Spartans started to adopt a similar perspective and to commemorate war from a similar point of view, thus leading to more recurrent participation in warfare and the ultimate collapse of Spartan power. The book is clearly inspired by modern debates about the commemoration of war and its values, and follows the modern commemoration of Sparta as a defender of Western values till the present age. This is a highly fascinating book, which raises important issues that deserve to be discussed widely among the scholarly community and beyond.

The second work is Martine Diepenbroek's book on the Spartan *scytale* as a means of military communication.¹⁷ The author makes a very good job of introducing a very fascinating but obscure topic to a wide audience in a very clear way. She helpfully distinguishes between cryptography (enciphered messages) and steganography (hidden messages) and discusses their role in ancient military communication. The Spartans were famous for their use of secrecy, a phenomenon that the author examines in detail. She then moves on to the variety of ways in which a *scytale* was used for messaging, and shows that no classical source attributes to the Spartans the use of the *scytale* as a cryptographic device; it is only in the early imperial sources that sources such as Plutarch and Gellius make such an attribution, offering elaborate descriptions of how it functioned. This attribution is not implausible, and the silence of earlier sources, such as Aeneas Tacticus, could be the result of the fact that more weight was given

¹⁶ *Sparta and the Commemoration of War*. By Matthew A. Sears. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. xx+274. 27 figures, 2 maps. Hardback £30.00, ISBN: 978-1-316-51945-5.

¹⁷ *The Spartan Scytale and Developments in Ancient and Modern Cryptography*. By Martine Diepenbroek. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. Pp. xiv+243. 23 figures, 7 tables. Hardback £85.00, ISBN: 978-1-350-28132-5, paperback, £28.99, ISBN: 978-1-350-28131-8.

to forms of secret, rather than enciphered, communication. The book concludes with an examination of secret and enciphered communication in the Roman Empire and up to the early modern period. This is a very stimulating book, that documents the need to take seriously ancient technologies, while avoiding the danger of anachronism.

The above books on Athens, Sparta, and power will be profitably read alongside a recent work on Greek historiography, the *Cambridge Companion to Thucydides*, edited by Polly Low.¹⁸ This volume appears as part of a series of literature companions, and this clearly shapes the organization of the volume. The book is divided into three large parts. The first part explores the intellectual context within which Thucydides designed his work, his authorial persona and quest for the truth, the use of sources and the employment of rhetoric, and close readings of particular sections of the text. In general, this part of the volume fulfils well the aims readers would seek in a companion. The second part is necessarily selective: it explores Thucydides' positions on particular issues, from war and imperialism through leadership and political systems to justice and morality. These chapters will be read on their own by readers interested in the particular topic; there is a lot that is valuable, but also a huge lot that is missing. Finally, the third part is devoted to the reception of Thucydides, already in antiquity, but also in Byzantium, early modern Europe and nineteenth-century Europe, as well as in terms of the problems his text creates for modern translators. Given the significance of Thucydidean reception over the last twenty years, these chapters are an excellent window to this fascinating scholarship.

Long neglected in comparison to archaic/classical athletics or Greek athletics in the Roman Empire, the study of Hellenistic athletics has started to experience a surge of attention more recently; a valuable addition to this trend is Sebastian Scharff's recent book on Hellenistic athletes.¹⁹ The volume does not focus on the organization of athletic competitions, although one of the chapters offers a detailed overview of the main changes that occurred during the Hellenistic period. Instead, the book prioritizes the self-representation of Hellenistic athletic victors through the medium of the agonistic epigrams that substituted epinician odes as the main means of recording success. Scharff examines how self-representation is related to the various communities and identities of the victorious athletes; this leads to an exploration of the relationship between athletes and the three major forms of political actors of the Hellenistic period: *poleis*, *ethne*, and kingdoms. Scharff argues that athletic victories offered a form of compensation for *poleis* which could no longer dominate the political field; equally interesting is his exploration of the athletic personae of the new royal competitors. Finally, an important theme of the volume is the role of athletics for the incorporation of non-Greek communities into the Panhellenic world; this is a very fascinating topic, though Scharff's discussion is circumscribed by limited attention to recent scholarship on ethnicity and identity in the Greek world.

¹⁸ *The Cambridge Companion to Thucydides*. Edited by Polly Low. Cambridge Companions to Literature series. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xviii+382. Paperback £29.99, ISBN: 978-1-107-51460-7.

¹⁹ *Hellenistic Athletes: Agonistic Cultures and Self-Presentation*. By Sebastian Scharff. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. xiv+369. 7 figures. Hardback £100.00, ISBN: 978-1-009-19995-7.

I conclude this review with an important collection of essays on private correspondence in the ancient Mediterranean, edited by Madalina Dana.²⁰ The study of Greek letters has received great attention over the last ten years, with two major works by Paola Ceccarelli and Madalina Dana, among others.²¹ The importance of this collection lies first in its temporal and spatial extent: apart from chapters on classical Greece, it includes chapters on ancient Mesopotamia, Iberia, Asia Minor, Egypt and even Russia, while chronologically ranging from the second millennium BCE to the end of the first millennium CE. This expanded temporal and spatial coverage will be of great value to Greek historians; the volume is also important for bringing to the attention of the non-specialist audience recent fascinating corpora, such as that of the ostraca letters from late-antique Ephesus. The eighteen chapters are divided into four main parts. The first examines the conceptual terminology we apply to the definition and study of ancient letters; the second examines the materiality of ancient letters (with a very interesting comparison between letters and curse tablets); the third explores the formal aspects of ancient letters, and will be of great value to non-specialists who tend to misinterpret letters because they ignore these formal aspects; and, finally, the fourth contains case studies of how letters can be used to study social, economic, and cultural history (with very fascinating contributions on letters as a source of economic history and letters as a gendered practice).

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doi:10.1017/S001738352400024X

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Art and archaeology

The first two books of this review are part of the Bloomsbury 'Cultural History' series, which has now been around for several years. In this series, a cultural theme is explored over the course of a six-volume set that moves progressively through time from antiquity to the modern age. Each volume works as a stand-alone book exploring that particular era but, to facilitate cross-referencing, each volume is organized in the same way, with a standard sequence of chapters. It is a clever idea, but the two books here, on the theme of furniture and colour, show some of the problems of having to squeeze antiquity into categories designed for the study of later periods.

Those issues surface in the volume on furniture, edited by Dimitra Andrianou, who is faced with the difficulty of fitting ancient furniture and its users' attitudes into

²⁰ *La correspondance privée dans la Méditerranée antique: sociétés en miroir*. Edited by Madalina Dana. Scripta antiqua series, vol. 168. Bordeaux, Ausonius éditions, 2023. Pp. 348. Paperback €25.00, ISBN: 978-2-35613-563-6.

²¹ P. Ceccarelli, *Ancient Greek Letter Writing: A Cultural History (600 BC–150 BC)*, Oxford, 2013; M. Dana, *La correspondance grecque privée sur plomb et sur tesson: corpus épigraphique et commentaire historique*, Munich, 2021.