

self-conceptualization and whether this is a product of involvement with the EU? If so, it would be interesting to consider how EU metanational conceptualizations of “rights” and “personhood” are reshaping state policies and individual and collective experiences in Europe and Turkey.

The Ancient City: New Perspectives on Urbanism in the Old and New World. Joyce Marcus and Jeremy Sabloff, eds. Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2008. 405 pp.

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This collection originated in a prestigious Sackler Colloquium of the National Academy of Sciences in 2005. It exemplifies the state of the art in the archaeology of ancient cities, and the news is both good and bad. The most positive message sent by the book is that a long drought in comparative research on ancient urbanism has finally come to an end. The diversity of regional coverage and the high quality of the chapters invites comparison with the influential urban conferences of a half century ago (e.g., the “City Invincible” conference of 1958 and “Courses toward Urban Life” in 1960). That was a fertile time in urban studies, and archaeological research resonated with comparative work by Lewis Mumford, Kevin Lynch, Gideon Sjoberg, and a number of urban anthropologists. But as the period of big conferences and interdisciplinary interests came to a close at the end of the 1960s, many archaeologists drew back from comparative urban research and abandoned their concern with theory beyond the narrow confines of cultural evolution. Indeed, the discussion of urban models in the editors’ introduction (ch. 1) could have been written in the 1960s; the theoretical works cited in that section all date between 1938 and 1963. Archaeologists today have considerably more urban data in hand, but it will take more than presentation of the results of fieldwork to advance the study of ancient urbanism.

Apart from the outdated theory section, chapter 1 is a broad and interesting introduction to the book. The four chapters in the next section (part 2, “Overviews and Commentary”) is by itself worth the price the book. Four senior experts on ancient urbanism each explain their thoughts on early cities and stimulate thinking about—and beyond—the book’s case studies. In contrast to many edited volumes, in which symposium discussants provide boring, superfluous comments on the chapters, in this book each of the four commentaries is fresh, dynamic, and thought provoking. Colin Renfrew reviews some of his early work and extends it by an explicit focus on urban transformations through time and space. Bruce Trigger provides a critical review of three archaeological approaches to ancient cities (processual, symbolic, and emic). Classicist Mogens Hansen takes a new look at Gordon Childe’s model of the “urban revolution” and urges archaeologists to broaden their perspectives

by taking a functional approach that acknowledges the social and regional contexts of cities. This theme is taken up by geographer Karl Butzer, who insists on the importance of space, history, and transdisciplinary thinking to understanding ancient cities. In my view, these four chapters are the best in the book.

The authors of the case studies in part 3 are experienced excavators of urban sites. To the editors’ credit, they went beyond the usual suspects in anthropological archaeology to include archaeologists from other disciplines. Roman cities in the Mediterranean and northern Empire are described respectively by Janet DeLaine and Michael Jones. These chapters make non-Romanists like me envious of the quantity and quality of excavations at Roman urban sites. Elizabeth Stone contributes a discussion of two Near Eastern cities—Mashkan-shapir and Ayanis—with interesting data but simplistic interpretations. Kathryn Bard reviews the diversity of Egyptian urban sites, putting to rest any lingering suspicion that, as the long-standing interpretation goes, Egypt was a “civilization without cities” (Wilson 1960). Jonathan Mark Kenoyer describes his work at Harappa and summarizes information from other Indus cities.

Lothar von Falkenhausen’s review of early Chinese cities ends with the odd suggestion that these were not “real cities” because they do not match Weber’s conception of Medieval European towns. Chapurukha Kusimba reviews some poorly known African cities. Anne Pyburn contributes a somewhat confusing discussion of Classic Maya urbanism and consumption. Kenneth Hirth applies a model of the Aztec *altepetl* (city-state) from postconquest documents to archaeological data from Xochicalco and complains that unspecified Mesoamericanists adhere to inappropriate Weberian ideas. Craig Morris completes the case studies with two Inka sites: Huanuco Pampa and La Centinela. Editors Joyce Marcus and Jeremy Sabloff close the book with a valuable discussion of ten “productive avenues for future research”: topics such as city walls, urban plans, city services, and regional context.

Once finished reading the book, though, I could not help but wonder if an opportunity was missed here. If the organizers had chosen just one of their ten avenues as a focus for the conference, participants could have explored it from empirical, theoretical, and comparative perspectives. Such an approach could have moved forward significantly research on at least one aspect of ancient urbanism. As it stands, we have a collection of high-quality case studies, some very good conceptual chapters, and an outstanding bibliography, but unfortunately the whole is no larger than the sum of its parts.

REFERENCE CITED

- Wilson, John A.
1960 Egypt through the New Kingdom: Civilization without Cities. In *City Invincible*. Carl H. Kraeling and Robert McC. Adams, eds. Pp. 124–136. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.