

Joseph G. Manning. *The Open Sea. The Economic Life of the Ancient Mediterranean World from the Iron Age to the Rise of Rome*. pp. 414, b/w photos. 2018. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. ISBN 978-0-691-15174-8 \$35.00 / £27.00.

In M.I. Finley's *The Ancient Economy*,¹ the Hellenistic period is studiously and deliberately avoided. Finley's avowed reason for doing so was that this period saw the coexistence of two distinct economic sectors, an 'ancient' (viz. Graeco-Roman) and an 'Oriental' sector (Finley 1999 [orig. 1973]: 183). The former could be understood (so Finley argued) as a unified whole stretching from the time of Homer to that of Justinian; what bound it together was an elite mentality that remained, in his view, remarkably stable over time. Forty-five years on, the picture looks strikingly different. Manning's thesis, which synthesises much recent work on ancient economic history, entails both blowing apart Finley's unified ancient economy into many regional economies, and joining them together into a broader, interconnected Eurasian world focused on the Mediterranean Sea and encompassing far more than just Greece and Rome (however broadly defined), by plotting a dense web of connections that sped ideas, people, and objects across this expanse.

Manning's purpose is partly evangelical: to persuade his readers that the ancient Mediterranean was open; but also that an 'open' methodology – that is, a hybrid not just of the history and archaeology of different regions but also one inclusive of the social and hard sciences (from economic sociology to palaeoclimatology) – is crucial to progress over the coming decades. This, he argues, will be achieved more easily if economic historians adopt the team-based approach standard in publications in the social sciences. The suggestion is apt and timely, and the scope of the volume provides a much broader historical canvas against which studies of Graeco-Roman economic history can be considered; it also adds chronological depth, showing how the unified Mediterranean economy under Rome was built on foundations laid incrementally during the preceding centuries. The focus on the Mediterranean puts Manning's work in the tradition of scholars such as Braudel, Horden, Purcell, and, more recently, Broodbank.² His aim is not comprehensive coverage: the Eastern

Mediterranean world (broadly defined to include Greece, Anatolia, Egypt – Manning's own special interest – and Mesopotamia) gains the lion's share of attention; less is said on the west, (e.g., Iberia, Carthage, Italy, and the Adriatic; Israel and Cyprus, though in the east, can be added to this list). But as he points out (p. xiii), 'comprehensive coverage would be sheer folly', and his foci are more than sufficient for breaking out of the rut of intellectual path dependence that has long led scholars to treat Greek and Roman history as distinct subjects that can be treated without much reference to the wider world.

Manning has two main aims. The first is to explore recent developments and trends in the study of Mediterranean economies in the first Millennium BC, providing a kind of snapshot of the state of the debate. The second is to provide a broad account of human experiences in the Mediterranean within this timeframe, as well as a framework for understanding economic change over the long term. The book is divided into two parts: Part I ('History and theory') and part II ('Environment and institutions.').

In chapter 1 Finley's book is reckoned an end to the substantivist-formalist debate rather than a stimulus to new work (one could push this criticism further: Finley's work in several respects blocked progress in ancient economic history for a generation). Manning then proceeds to unpack a dizzying variety of new methodologies that might be used in driving the subject forward. These include the economics of Thomas Piketty, behavioural economics, neural economics, game theory, complexity theory, cultural evolutionary theory, multilevel selection theory, and Granovetter's economic sociology (to name a few). There is some good discussion (pp. 27–31) of Deirdre McCloskey's criticisms of New Institutional Economics (NIE) as producing the sort of exsanguinated economic history in which real human beings scarcely feature yet models and figures abound.³ In his wide-ranging discussion of these various theories, Manning shows his mastery of a vast bibliography. However, the newcomer to the topic might have found a bit more discussion on the origins of the debate over the ancient economy useful by way of orientation; for Manning picks up the debate with Finley (pp. 10–16), and although he refers to Bücher, Meyer, Weber, Hasebroek, and Polanyi, a couple of pages on their contributions would have helped set the scene for neophytes,

¹ Finley 1973.

² Braudel 1949; Horden and Purcell 2000; Broodbank 2013.

³ Some NIE-inspired work on antiquity has taken this approach, though that does not necessarily make it bad history, e.g. Pirngruber's (2017) work on Babylonian prices, a very valuable contribution.

who, after all, are part of the demographic to which the book has been marketed (it is more than likely that one will find a copy given a browse in e.g. any Waterstones or Blackwell's of reasonable size).⁴ To those familiar with the basic terms of the debate, however, chapter 1 will prove of great value, a rich fund of ideas by a scholar whose breadth of knowledge of the specialist literature can be matched by very few others. Indeed, here and in the subsequent chapters Manning more than achieves his first goal of exploring recent trends in the subject. I learned a great deal; and for any graduate student embarking on a research project on the ancient economy, the volume serves as an excellent entry-point into the subject's ever-mushrooming bibliography.

Chapter 2 begins by sketching out the political tectonics of the second and first millennium BC, showing the changing configuration of empires and states in Eurasia before delving into the webs of 'connectivity' that linked them together. Manning provides a time-lapse picture of economic and political development from the late Bronze Age onwards: empires fall, but cities grow and compete intensively for resources. The growing importance of iron – whose sources were far more widespread and commonly available than copper and tin – meant that the metal supply was less susceptible to monopsonic capture by great empires, feeding into a more general expansion, where trade networks (especially those of the Phoenicians and Greeks) darted outwards across the whole length of the Mediterranean Sea. The spread of colonies and settlements reconfigured trade routes and politics. Egypt, too easily treated as an immutable monolith, underwent intense internal change, especially the re-orientation towards the delta region under the Saïte dynasty which saw too the establishment of Naucratis and intensified contacts with the Greek world. Manning self-consciously evokes (p. 54) Polybius' idea of the *symploke*, the weaving-together, of the Mediterranean world through political changes. This is followed (pp. 58–9) by a useful discussion of the uneven and generically diverse character of the evidence for these various economies.

Chapter 3 analyses conceptual, spatial, and temporal boundaries, looking at several different periodisations and gauging their utility. Manning argues (pp. 82–4) that technology can alter timescales: if we think of change in the Neolithic as

being catalysed by cross-cultural interactions, then we are looking at a long, slow process; introduce shipbuilding technology that speeds these interactions up, however, and one can see why in the Iron Age a lot of change is compressed into a much shorter time interval. The rest of chapter 3 discusses geography and regions, engaging with the debate over whether we should define the Mediterranean as a distinctive region; Manning opts for a wider, Eurasian canvas, but with the Mediterranean as its focal point. One can see in the discussion here the real changes that have occurred in the study of ancient economic history in the last twenty years,⁵ and Manning synthesises well these recent trends: gone is the reticence in talking about trade and the profit motive that characterises Horden and Purcell's⁶ book; in many instances the term 'connectivity' is synonymous with trading activity, rather than acting as a euphemism to obscure it. There emerges a picture of regional fragmentation where local climatic and geographical features are emphasised (as per Horden-Purcell); but this is supplemented by trade-driven interconnectedness and market exchange, terms largely avoided by Horden and Purcell. One idea not explored in detail, though, is Bresson's emphasis on gains in productivity achieved by regional specialisation, which is a powerful tool for explaining growth.

Chapter 4 treats land and labour. Manning begins by breaking down the old-fashioned contrast between land tenure in the Greek world as based on private holdings and in the 'Oriental' world as based on institutional holdings, that is, those of palaces and temples. Private, alienable land was common across the Near East in the Iron Age, growing in importance over time. Land held by institutions in Egypt and the East was often comprised of individual family farms leased out on a sharecropping basis, and there was scope for trading in plots of land. Manning queries the euphemistic term 'redistribution' associated with institutional holdings and provides a more granular picture of how these operated, including market transactions alongside the demands of the 'command' branch of the economy. He focuses in particular on Egypt, with whose land tenure system he is particularly familiar; he turns next to Mesopotamia, and rightly underscores the diversity of agricultural systems there. In northern Mesopotamia, whose agricultural systems were based largely on dry farming, owner-occupier farms were more common and institutional landholdings less dominant than in Babylonia to the south, where

⁴ The clearest road map to the early stages of the debate is pp. 21–129 of Paul Christesen's unpublished PhD thesis; Bresson 2016: 1–27 is very accessible too.

⁵ On the Greek side, stimulated especially by Bresson 2000.

⁶ Horden and Purcell 2000.

⁷ Bresson 2016: 339–51.

the maintenance of canal systems saw greater institutional involvement. He also draws attention to the market-garden belt that surrounded Babylon and other Mesopotamian cities and supplied urban markets. This section provides an admirable digest of the work of Michael Jursa and his team in Vienna⁸ as well as the work of other Near Eastern specialists.⁹

Manning's discussion of labour provides a good anatomy of the various legal arrangements and labour forms in existence across ancient Eurasia. Less is said about how these were organised within the social structures of ancient societies – for example, class relations and the various forms of labour exploited by elites to maintain their position of dominance. On Greek slavery, Manning supplies an able digest of much recent work, but in my view some of these widely-held positions require modification or rejection. On p. 127 Manning writes that 'Ancient categories with the exception of Roman law were fluid between the various kinds of dependent labour and slavery.' This position has a distinguished pedigree going back to Westermann and Finley,¹⁰ but is contradicted by the evidence of legal documents, which show that the co-existence of legal slavery and slave metaphors did not lead to 'blurring' of status boundaries, and that the Babylonians and Athenians were just as able as the Romans to make razor-sharp legal status distinctions.¹¹ The notion (p. 132) that slaves on Crete had special rights does not rest on firm evidence;¹² and Descat's fantastically overblown figures for the slave population of Athens in the late fourth century, endorsed by Manning on p. 132, are vitiated by demographic and linguistic considerations.¹³

Chapter 5 introduces readers to the cutting edge of research on scientific research on past climates. Whereas older approaches veered towards environmental determinism and the idea of unchanging climatic constraints, new work looks at human adaptations to environmental factors as well as environmental change and its impact. Manning sets out how work in this field has been transformed in the last forty years, discussing the various forms of proxy data that allow us to track climate change

over time; and its effect on historical change is discussed in relation to the Bronze Age collapse and the effect of volcanic activity on the level of inundation of the Nile. In turn, he suggests, failure of the inundation may explain in part the foreign policy of the Ptolemies in attempting to keep within their aegis rain-fed territories (Cyrenaica, Anatolia, Syria), and links environmental changes to the development of Hellenistic inter-state politics.

Chapter 6 treats 'the birth of economic man.' Following recent trends, Manning rightly underscores that aiming at just satisfying wants, viz. bare subsistence, would have been suicide since harvests were unpredictable. Even subsistence farmers had to aim at overshooting their bare needs, and when it worked out they were left with a surplus. Starting out with the household unit and its various forms, Manning remarks (p. 181) that 'the image of autarkic households, independent and self-sufficient, producing little surplus, and not exchanging in the market, is an image derived primarily from literary texts like Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Homer, and Aristotle.' Manning is perfectly correct in writing this, but it is worth noting that it is an image derived from a *misreading* of all of them, especially by Finley and his school: van Wees¹⁴ has shown that the Homeric *oikos* is heavily geared towards surplus production in order to generate the resources needed for engaging in a highly competitive elite culture where gift-giving and material display were crucial; moreover, a holistic reading of the *Works and Days* shows a medium-sized mixed farm geared towards surplus production and integrated with market exchange and overseas trade. And Harris has shown that in Aristotle's discussion of *oikonomike* and *chrematistike* in the *Politics*, the philosopher himself admits that his own view of *oikonomike* as distinct from *chrematistike* and concerned with satisfying basic needs (i.e. self-sufficiency) is out of step with popular beliefs: as Aristotle notes, many people thought that household management and making as much money as possible were the same thing.¹⁵ Manning discusses (p. 183ff) the Hekanakhte letters from the Middle Bronze Age as a case study for getting past the stereotype of the pre-modern self-sufficient subsistence household; these documents show strategic economic decisions being made, including both considerations of risk and the desire for (and achievement of) profit through selling surplus production, viz. market exchange. The discussion considers not just economic actors qua individuals, but states too.

⁸ Jursa 2010.

⁹ Such as Cornelia Wunsch's studies of the Egibi archive; summary in Wunsch 2007.

¹⁰ Westermann (1955): 42–3; Finley (1964): 238.

¹¹ Dandamaev 1984: 67–80; Lewis 2018: 25–92.

¹² Lewis 2013; idem 2018: 147–65.

¹³ Bresson 2016: 459–60; Lewis 2018: 295–305. Later, on p. 176, Manning cites Scheidel's estimate of Athens' slave population at 50,000, which is unrealistically low; double that figure is needed even for the less populous 4th c.

¹⁴ Van Wees 1992: 25–58; 2009.

¹⁵ Arist. *Politics* 1257a3–4; Harris and Lewis 2015: 26–7.

Chapter 7 deals with the evolution of economic thought in antiquity. Manning points out that we do not have the same sort of reflective analysis of 'economic' phenomena in Babylonian writings that we do in Xenophon or Aristotle, and that economic thought in such societies has to be reverse-engineered from practices: what do empirically-observable practices imply about the level of abstract understanding of economic life? Indeed, the whole chapter deals with economic thought from the vantage point of practices rather than discourses, keeping the issue of what was going on in the minds of ancient individuals at arm's length. Pp. 195–202 provides a useful survey of the monetisation of the Iron Age Mediterranean, charting the use of *Hacksilber* (already in use in New Kingdom Egypt) and its gradual replacement by coinage; Manning does a good job here of underscoring the uncertainty surrounding the invention of early electrum coinages in Lydia.¹⁶ Pp. 202–15 deal with the legal framework that enabled economic growth. Law is important because merchants will not be likely to take risks and engage in trade if private property rights are not clear and enforceable, and if contracts are not fairly enforced by an impartial third party.¹⁷ Incremental growth in literacy rates improved access to the law.¹⁸ Legal realities as they unfolded on the ground are best captured in trial records: Manning provides an illuminating case study from Ptolemaic Egypt on pp. 212–15.

Chapter 8 analyses the problem of growth and the performance of ancient economies. One of the key achievements of this chapter is to situate recent work on growth in Greek and Roman economies against a wider backdrop, taking into its purview Egypt and Babylonia. In explaining Graeco-Roman growth, some scholars have pointed to comparatively egalitarian forms of government; these are not to be dismissed as contributory factors, but evidently the reasons for growth were more complex, as we find comparable growth in the Iron Age Near East, where different kinds of political regime flourished. Manning also provides a useful intervention on the debate over technological change, the alleged absence of which Finley used to argue against economic rationality in antiquity. More recent work has shown that there was a great deal of technological change and transfer of technical ideas in antiquity,

but mainly of incremental minor improvements rather than the sort of spectacular leaps of the Industrial Revolution. Later in the chapter (p. 227ff), Manning turns to market exchange, and argues (against Polanyi) that early examples of trade (e.g. the Kanesh merchants in Anatolia) are genuine examples of market exchange rather than state-directed trade. He goes on to argue, rightly in my view, and following recent trends in Greek, Roman and Babylonian economic history, that the evidence for prices responding to fluctuations in demand and supply is incontestable. A wide exploration of market exchange, long-distance trade, market integration, and the formation of prices in the Hellenistic period follows, with discussion of the role of associations and the evidence of amphoras.

The volume ends with a short conclusion drawing together the various arguments set out in the preceding chapters; 'In a very real way', Manning writes, 'the civilisations that grew up around the Mediterranean basin were like the gears of the Antikythera mechanism: some were small, others larger, each turning at different rates, but part of an interconnected whole.' (p. 263.) As a whole, the book must be judged a success, especially in its first objective of providing the reader with an idea of what the debate looks like at present, and a sense of where it might be going in the near future. Manning has digested a colossal amount of scholarship, and whilst specialists in this or that region or topic might quibble about minutiae, this in no way detracts from the sheer amount of erudition and labour that has gone into viewing the economies of Iron Age Eurasia as an interactive whole. This book deserves to be on the shelf of anyone looking to see past the disciplinary boundaries of Graeco-Roman history and to understand how these civilisations fitted into a wider world

Although the book lacks the thematic tidiness of Broodbank's volume (the connection of themes is often not quite clear and the overall structure of topics a little random), the book is generally well produced. I spotted only a few typos: p. 206: 'axones' not 'axiones'; p. 210: 'central tenet', not 'tenant'; p. 236, 'cloth' not 'clothe'; p. 264 'sheer richness' not 'shear richness'; p. 266 'unnaturally' not 'unnatrually.'

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¹⁶ See further de Callatay 2013.

¹⁷ See further Harris 2006: 141–280; idem 2015.

¹⁸ Manning focuses on scribes in Egyptian temples who could be paid to draw up contracts; it is worth adding that for Athens, the pessimistic view of W.V. Harris 1989 has been overturned by Pébarthe 2006 and Missiou 2011; more recently still, Langdon 2015 has published evidence for literate herdsmen in Attica in the 6th c. BC.

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Matthew P. Maher. *The fortifications of Arkadian city states in the Classical and Hellenistic periods*. pp. xiii, 426, 155 b/w illustrations. 2017. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978–0–19–878659–7 hardback £90/\$125.00. 978–0–19–109021–9 e-publication £85.50 /\$124.99.

Matthew Maher's monograph on the fortifications of Arkadian city states is (although not mentioned in the book) based on a PhD dissertation at the University of British Columbia (Vancouver) in 2012. It is a very welcome volume, because it supplies the growing interest in both the history and archaeology of Arkadia as a central Greek region and in ancient fortifications in a regional scope. As Maher writes in his introduction, he sees his study in the light of the 'move away from traditional stereotypical interpretations of a poor and isolated Arkadia towards a view of a moderately prosperous region whose inhabitants generally followed the same patterns of social, political, and cultural development seen elsewhere in ancient Greece' (p. 1) – a move that only can be appreciated.

The book starts with an introduction (pp. 1–16), including subchapters on aims, sources and evidence, previous research on Greek fortifications, Arkadian regional focus, the chronological range, limitations of the study, methodology and the organisation of the book. As for the aims (p. 3), the book's overall objective is 'a comprehensive and detailed survey