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Cover illustration from Mattia D'Acri & Fredrik Tobin-Dodd in this volume, pp. 105 and 108, figs 10–11 and 17. Photographs by Jonas Tobin.

Part 3 deals with horse-racing, including the unusual apobates race in which the charioteer jumps off and runs the last part to the finish-line: 'What constitutes an ancient chariot and how was it used?', 'Who were the Athenian victors in competitive horse racing?', 'Some unusual hippic events at the Panathenaia', 'What was the apobates race?', 'After the race: An historic chariot' and 'A victorious horse'.

Both parts 4 ('War horse') and 5 ('Religion') have ten subsections each (including introductions). Part 4 deals particularly with military matters and especially the Athenian cavalry as we know it from archaeological and historiographical sources. (By the way, the modern Greek word for horse—*άλογος*—arose from the military usage distinguishing human soldiers from irrational beasts in the armed forces.) I especially appreciated the treatment of the cavalry inspection (*dokimasia*) and squires—the latter not least for the reproductions of a splendid lekythos from a grave in Eretria. Topics covered are: 'Horses and Athenian archaeology', 'What do Attic cavalry inscriptions tell us?', 'What do we know about Athenian archers on horseback?', 'Why do you Athenian horsemen wear Thracian dress?', 'What was the role of the squire?', 'The cavalry inspection', 'Cavalry battles beyond Dexileos', 'A cavalryman as hero' and 'Bronze equestrian statues and the Medici–Riccardi horse head'.

Part 5 offers short discussions of Athena Hippias and Poseidon Hippios, the Dioscuri and Hippothoon, but also of narrower questions such as the possible appearance of horses in Athenian theater, horseheads featured on hero reliefs and the multitude of horses decorating the Parthenon. The headings are: 'Who was Athena Hippias?', 'Who was Poseidon Hippios?', 'Who was Hippothoon?', 'What was the role of the Dioscuri in Athens?', 'Did horses perform in Athenian theater?' (yes, apparently), 'Why are horse heads featured on hero reliefs?', 'Were horses sacrificed in ancient Greece?' (answer: rarely), 'Why do so many horses decorate the Parthenon?' and 'Monkey business.' This last deals with a very particular object: a 6th-century BC black-figure lekanis showing an ape riding a horse.

On the whole this is a very satisfying volume, with beautiful reproductions of the objects shown at the exhibition. Perhaps, the introduction could have provided a better summary and overview of the contents, pointing out the major differences between ancient horsemanship and that which developed from the Middle Ages on (i.e., there were no stirrups, saddles, horseshoes or even proper agricultural yokes in antiquity making for a great difference in the usefulness of horses in combat and daily life). There is no index, but a one-page glossary and a general bibliography are included at the end. The focus, of course, is entirely on Athens, so the reader knows from the start that there will be no general discussions of (for example) the cavalry throughout Greece. I was somewhat surprised that there is no reference (unless I missed it) to perhaps

the most famous statue of a horse and rider at the National Museum of Archaeology in Athens: the Jockey of Artemision. This may be due to the Athenian focus, although there is a section on the Medici–Riccardi horse head of unknown provenience but preserved in Florence. (Its photograph adorns the cover of the exhibition book *A cavallo del tempo. L'arte di cavalcare dall'antichità al medioevo*, Florence 2018).

But these are merely the kind of quibbles a reviewer is expected to make. After all, who would not love a book about horses in ancient Greece? As Xenophon writes in *On horsemanship* (*Περὶ ἵππικῆς* 11.9): "a prancing horse is a thing so graceful, terrible and astonishing that it rivets the gaze of all beholders, young and old alike." This is a splendid combination of lovely reproductions of ancient works depicting these captivating creatures with clearly written scholarly explanations of a wide variety of ancient hippic matters. What is there not to like? The editors, particularly Jenifer Neils, are to be commended for a fine volume, useful both to the general public and to teachers and researchers in the field.

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R. Rönnlund, *The cities of the plain. Urbanism in ancient western Thessaly*, Oxford: Oxbow Books 2023, 180 pp.
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Identifying conditions for the development of urbanism in ancient Greece continues to captivate historians and archaeologists alike. Strides have been made over the years in historical and archaeological scholarship: while Thomas D. Boyd and Michael H. Jameson (*Hesperia* 50:4, 1981, 327–342) identified the "restless energy of Greek civilization" as one of the forces behind the "constant founding of new communities and the reorganization of old ones", later perspectives have emphasized factors such as significant locations, population expansion, environmental circumstances, food availability, geographies, colonization and resource control to explain the evolution of communities, and the corresponding architectural landscapes as manifestations of authority and cultural identity. Many of these discussions focused on establishing a linear narrative, seeking to recognize the emergence of Greek communities in the early 1st millennium BC and charting their development into urbanized Greek regions. However, interpreting the evolution of *poleis* as directly reflecting the emergence of urbanism in the form of centralized built en-

vironments indicative of collective decision-making has long been seen as problematic (J. Whitley, *The archaeology of ancient Greece*, 2001). In addition, the study of ancient Greek urban environments often has favoured centres with long-term habitation, such as Athens and Corinth, and principles of city planning in colonial contexts. It is only in recent years that there has been a growing acknowledgement that built environments that can be characterized as “urban” vary widely over time and space. As a result, we are beginning to better understand the social, economic and political underpinnings of ancient human agglomeration processes in regions less well covered, such as the inland of central Greece. Currently, one of the primary challenges is that urban studies mostly tend to emphasize city development, but allocate less attention to investigating the causes behind decline and abandonment.

Robin Rönklund's *Cities of the plains. Urbanism in ancient western Thessaly* takes good notice of these issues. The author seeks to address a significant gap in the understanding of urban development within a region often overlooked in archaeological discussions: ancient Thessaly. He certainly succeeds in this. His book, which developed out of his Ph.D. research on ancient *acropoleis* in Thessaly (*A city on a hill cannot be hidden*, University of Gothenburg, 2018), also arises from his involvement in archaeological fieldwork at Vlochos. His focus on western Thessaly is understandable, as systematic archaeological research in this area has, until recently, been limited while eastern Thessaly is reasonably well-covered. The current volume thus offers a comprehensive overview and analysis of urban manifestations in Thessaly's western part, however, without providing much historical justification of what constitutes “western Thessaly”. While the focus is clearly on the landlocked western plains of Thessaliotis, Phthiotis and Hestiaeotis, the author includes parts of the surrounding hills which in Antiquity represent the so-called *perioikoi*, extending fairly far eastwards, without taking notice of natural transition zones, such as rivers and elevated terrains. As a result, some of the historical sites in Achaia Phthiotis, for instance, are treated as part of “western Thessaly”. Such is the case, for instance, with a hillfort near Nanthaki, which has been included, while a major city, “Kallithea”, at just 3 km distance has been excluded. Both look out over the Pagasitic Gulf and both play a role in what we have elsewhere categorized as a “corridor landscape to stress this region's role in enabling movement between the coastal areas and inland plains.” I would argue that we should probably treat Thessaly in terms of landscape zones and avoid artificially dividing Thessaly into “east” and “west” other than for reasons of archaeological coverage or lack thereof.

The book opens with a comprehensive exploration of the landscape in the western Thessalian plains, which has undergone significant transformations since ancient times. The author demonstrates profound familiarity with the terrain in which he and his team have conducted research, providing a

compelling and at times sobering depiction of the impact of land reclamation and modern agricultural practices on both the historical landscape and the archaeological evidence. This is followed by an overview of archaeological work in western Thessaly and an assessment of what constitutes a “city” in the context of the scholarly literature. The author makes a deliberate and wise choice to not address this question historically, but archaeologically, treating the term “city” as an archaeological category, to be assessed from a long-term perspective. He thus circumvents the often-problematic identification of “*poleis*”, and their projection on archaeological sites identified as “cities”. Yet, any form of research on urbanism cannot escape the establishment of some qualifiers and criteria, usually based on the presence/absence of recognizable archaeological remains. This has its own epistemological challenges. Following a Weberian–Childean approach, which takes into account settlement size and social criteria (burials, sanctuaries, civic architecture, etc.), the author recognizes eight sites that fulfill all criteria and can be arguably identified as “cities”, but recognizes at least 22 sites during the heyday of ancient Thessalian urbanism—the Classical–Hellenistic periods—if the criteria are applied more loosely. Using a combination of archaeological, literary, numismatic and epigraphic evidence, the author assesses their habitation duration throughout the Roman and early Byzantine periods to set the stage for an analysis of settlement and abandonment processes over the medium and long term.

The following chapter includes important new evidence especially on the Early Iron Age and Archaic periods, which Rönklund labels “pre-Urban”, such as the settlement (Kalthia) near the Athena Sanctuary at Filia. This site is contextualized with other evidence for an Archaic and Early Classical “village culture” that characterizes the region in this period. The term “pre-Urban” has of course its problems, as it implicitly evokes a teleological expectation that these sites herald future “urban” development, a problem the author readily acknowledges. I agree with his conclusion that this “village culture”, referred to as *poleis kata komas*, where land-holding élites were controlling resources and were able to claim local ancestry by burying and venerating their dead in conspicuous tombs, sometimes in or near older ones, is likely indicative of the social and political character of communities during this period. Despite the new discoveries, however, the evidence for settlements in the Early Iron Age–Early Classical periods is still scant, and more systematic diachronic studies, in the form of archaeological surface surveys of individual sites and landscapes, are needed. The latter archaeological strategy, one which avoids the “dots on the map problem” (T. de Haas, in *Comparative issues in the archaeology of the Roman rural landscape*, 2012, 55–79), is not mentioned or suggested by Rönklund, and with reason. For although archaeological surface survey in this region would potentially reveal sites, roads

and other features which have escaped archaeological attention, extensive channelling, flooding and sedimentation in the western Thessalian plains have since altered the landscapes to such an extent that a systematic landscape study in this region is only possible from a broad interdisciplinary perspective (e.g., A. Krahtopoulou *et al.* in *Current approaches to tells in the prehistoric old world*, 2020, 25–40).

The most significant urban development in western Thessaly can be seen during the Classical/Hellenistic periods. Using the above-mentioned wide array of evidence, the author concludes that most settlements that can be characterized as “urban” appear relatively late, and—most importantly—had a limited time span. He identifies Macedonian presence and interference as a major catalyst in urban formation processes in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC in western Thessaly, an observation which is partially valid for eastern Thessaly too (M.J. Haagsma *et al.* in *Ethnos and Koinon*, 2019, 285–321). That the number of settlements sharply declines in the course of the 2nd century BC makes the occurrence of urban environments in this region a temporary phenomenon on a broader timescale.

Poleis normally have territories, but the author suggests that using the term “territory” in relation to the “*polis*” in western Thessaly is problematic due to the lack of evidence for territoriality and because of the modern connotations attached to the term. Yet, I would like to point out that territorial awareness is acute in Achaia Phthiotis—part of which the author has included in this study—as we can see in the numerous territorial conflicts brought to arbitration in Delphi during the Hellenistic period. This evidence shows that access to terrestrial resources became highly competitive and the texts indeed mention the presence of boundary markers. The discussion on financing the construction and maintenance of new urban infrastructure uses the well-known inscription charting the attempted *synoikismos* of Lebedos and Teos by Antigonos Monophthalmos in 303 BC to point out how the financial burden lay with the population at large. That Macedonian kings attempted to profit from centralized, well-controlled, tax-paying populations, living behind expensive city walls, can now be attested at various sites in eastern Thessaly (M.J. Haagsma, *Domestic economy and social organization in New Halos*, 2010; L. Surtees *et al.* in *Meditations on the diversity of the built environment in the Aegean Basin and beyond*, 2014, 431–453; R. Boehm, *City and empire in the Age of the Successors*, 2018), and the author argues convincingly that this form of urban development is also applicable to western Thessaly. But, there is the problem of maintaining such an expensive, and often not economically efficient environment in an unstable political context, which the author discusses in a section on deurbanization, which, in my view, is the most valuable in his book. Here he argues that an urban form may not have been the most effective way for a population to inhabit

the landscapes of western Thessaly up until the early Byzantine period. In addition, I would argue that the many wars left costly, damaged urban infrastructure without the resources to repair them, and a perhaps a population unwilling to stay put. It is the lack of resilience, the author states, that led to the abandonment of the urban environments, and he suggests that more detailed evidence is needed to better chart these processes. But resilience is an abstract term. Who is resilient, or not, and why? What are the grounds for a household’s decision-making processes to stay or to move elsewhere? I would argue that especially the excavation and documentation of well-preserved domestic quarters can shed much light on the social and economic status and well-being of populations living in these urban conditions, and I hope that the author, and others who read this, will take it as a hint.

Robin Rönnlund has produced an insightful archaeological and historical overview of urbanism in a region that deserves more archaeological attention, and certainly more attempts to integrate its idiosyncrasies in more general studies on urbanism in the ancient Greek world. The book is handsomely illustrated with numerous excellent maps and photographs. There are two useful appendices consisting of catalogues of sites, with maps in the back. Every library specializing in classical studies of the Mediterranean should acquire this study. One final suggestion: a modern Greek translation would no doubt be welcomed and greatly valued by the contemporary Thessalians residing amidst the ruins that we, as modern, foreign archaeologists, investigate.

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M. Moltesen & A. Rathje, eds, *Approaches to Ancient Etruria* (Danish Studies in Classical Archaeology. Acta Hyperborea 16), Charlottenlund: Museum Tusculanum Press 2022. 427 pp. ISBN 978-87-635-4697-3.
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The present volume is an anthology made up of a series of articles concerning to the field of Etruscology. Rather than focusing on a specific theme, the book has an interdisciplinary approach, aiming to gather new research within the field. With two exceptions, all the contributors are Nordic scholars, albeit some of them are based outside the Nordic countries. The predominant Nordic element is no surprise since the book’s basis is the talks