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### **Review of *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures: An Investigation Conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre*, edited by Mogens Herman Hansen**

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chaeologist who has ever had to deal with material which has not been derived from an archaeological excavation—that is to say, every archaeologist.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THIRTY CITY-STATE CULTURES: AN INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY THE COPENHAGEN POLIS CENTRE, edited by *Mogens Herman Hansen*. (Historisk-filosofiske Skrifter 21.) Pp. 636, figs. 98. C.A. Reitzels, Copenhagen 2000. Dkr 600. ISSN 0023-3307; ISBN 87-7876-177-8.

This book should disabuse either advocate or critic of any notion that the city-state is defined by the *polis* or *civitas* of Classical antiquity. This idea began with Fustel de Coulanges' classic *Le Cité antique* (1864) and continued through Max Weber's fundamental study of the city and state (1921) in which he viewed the city as a peculiarly Western phenomenon. But by and large it ended with Weber, because, as Hansen points out in this volume, archaeological research subsequently forced a global focus on the origins of urbanism and the state and thereby challenged scholars to come to terms with the "city-state" as a real and widespread phenomenon in human history. In this study Hansen brings together a diverse group of experts to consider both the city-state and the city-state culture in 30 different case studies. The result is a rich and dense study, carefully edited and thoughtfully presented, that largely succeeds in its task. It is an indispensable source for any scholar archaeologist, historian, sociologist, anthropologist, or political scientist who is interested in cities and their relations to states and empires.

Under Hansen's direction the Copenhagen Polis Centre has been researching over the last decade two related issues: the ancient Greek polis and the notion of the city-state. The project has been aimed at disentangling them and providing each with a solid grounding. In the process Hansen has differentiated the concept of city-state from one he terms "city-state culture," and it is this distinction that will fundamentally change the debate, in large part because of the truly comparative basis on which it is grounded. The 30 case studies are drawn from around the globe and range chronologically from the earliest urban city-states of Mesopotamia to those of the 18th-century Dutch Republic. Naturally the Old World is thoroughly represented, but also, among others, the "Celtic" *oppida*, Mecca and Medina, Viking Dublin, and Italian and Swiss city-states. In North Africa we read about city-states in the Wadi Mzâb, the Hausa and Yoruba states from sub-Saharan to southwestern coastal Nigeria, and those of the eastern Niger delta. The 17th- to 18th-century Fante federations of the Gold Coast are considered and on the East African coast the Swahili states. Three

urban cultures of Asia during the first millennium B.C.E. are included, those of Spring–Autumn China, the Tarim Basin, and Mahajanapada India. There are chapters on the archipelago polities in southeast Asia prior to and including the 15th- to 16th-century Malay city-states and also the earlier *Tai-müang* peninsular ones. Finally the archaeologically known Maya, Mixtec, and Aztec city-state cultures of the New World are discussed.

Each participant was asked to evaluate the social, political, and economic form of his subject area according to Hansen's analysis of the "concepts of city, state, city-state and city-state culture." Hansen charged his colleagues to consider their cases according to the variables of size, territory, population, ethnic and political identity, name, settlement pattern, urban form, economy, defense, government, self-government, and self-sufficiency. These are the core criteria decided upon by Hansen on the basis of his extensive winnowing of the evidence. They form his definition of the city-state (19):

A highly institutionalised and highly centralised micro-state consisting of one town (often walled) with its immediate hinterland and settled with a stratified population, of whom some are citizens, some foreigners and, sometimes, slaves. Its territory is mostly so small that the urban centre can be reached in a day's walk or less, and the politically privileged part of its population is so small that it does in fact constitute a face-to-face society. The population is ethnically affiliated with the population of neighbouring city-states, but political identity is focused on the city-state itself and based on differentiation from other city-states. A significantly large fraction of the population is settled in the town, while the others are settled in the hinterland, either dispersed in farmsteads or nucleated in villages or both. The urban economy implies specialisation of function and division of labour to such an extent that the population has to satisfy a significant part of their daily needs by purchase in the city's market. The city-state is a self-governing but not necessarily an independent political unit.

Hansen's introductory and concluding chapters are indispensable to this volume. He provides a brief consideration of the history and meaning of the terms urbanization, city, state, and city-state. He defines the difference between the concepts of city-state culture and city-state: "that a city-state is a micro-state composed of one town with its immediate hinterland, and a city-state culture is a civilisation which, politically, is organized as a system of city-states" (17). The distinction is important since it links the two metonymically, and permits an assessment of the city-state as a dynamic system operating in different settings around the world at different times in the past. By spelling out the concept of city-state culture and providing dozens of case studies for inspection in this volume, Hansen directly confronts the criticisms that have been leveled against the use of the term city-state. Because of this bipartite distinction and by use of the many criteria that define his model, Hansen avoids both the essentialist and inclusivist failings of previous studies of the city-state. In his concluding chapter he returns to this distinction, first by considering studies by such authors as Toynbee, Griffeth and Thomas, Burke, Renfrew and Cherry, Maisels, Trigger, and Nichols and Charlton. These he points out encompass three approach-

es: (1) the study of individual examples for themselves, (2) the study of an individual example in order to develop a model to be applied elsewhere, and (3) the task he sets himself of studying many city-state cultures so as to build a general model.

Hansen effectively counters attacks on the term city-state by those anthropologists whose antipathy to it originates from their hegemonic definition of the state (e.g., Gary Feinman and Joyce Marcus, "Introduction," in their edited volume, *Archaic States* [Santa Fe 1998] 3–13, esp. 8–10; and Joyce Marcus, "The Peaks and Valleys of Ancient States," in the same volume, 59–94, esp. 91–4). As Hansen carefully argues, the use of the term has a long, complex, and varied history that demonstrates not a narrow attempt to extend Western (and Classical antiquity's) intellectual hegemony over the phenomenon but rather an interest in its essentially comparative utility, thanks largely to the work of archaeology. He carries the argument further in a critical discussion of the "alleged imprecision of the concept of city-state" (600), where he makes the fundamental distinction between the "purely heuristic concept" of the city-state as opposed to the effective jural concept of state where, as he points out, things are really at stake: "The question about the statehood of Taiwan and the Palestinians has become a major political issue which may result in wars and will undoubtedly affect the course of history" (601).

Three issues are treated here as essential for understanding the model: (1) territory and population, (2) size and nature of the urban center, and (3) degree of self-government. In discussing the first Hansen demonstrates the importance of the distinction between city-state and city-state culture by pointing out that city-states could evolve into city-state cultures constructed of city-states or into macro-states, which then ceased to be city-states. Second, he stresses that the growing recognition by archaeologists of the importance of urban nucleated centers has extended the model of urbanism from the Old to the New World and then to Asia. Hansen points out, as a global phenomenon, that Weber's distinction between occidental and oriental (viz. Islamic) cities is both historically and geographically too restrictive, since many Islamic cities outside the historical core area of Islam are self-governing. Furthermore, urbanism is also a much more flexible phenomenon, such that even in terms of the important criterion of density of population there is no absolute, since density needs to be understood in terms of relative magnitude, a calculation that requires factoring in surface calculations of changing population densities as one moves from hinterland to urban periphery to urban core, as in the case of the Maya. Last, Hansen, in a thorough review of research, demonstrates how inattention to the criterion of self-governance has sowed confusion and blurred the definition of the city-state. The critical importance of understanding the ability of city-states to exist as semi-autonomous political entities is underscored by a listing of 21 examples here studied that would have to be excluded if an uncritical and monolithic definition of the terms sovereignty and autonomy were employed. He concludes by examining the probable reasons why city-states emerged in some settings and macro-states in others. Here he draws on the case studies presented in this volume and pulls together the many threads spun by the contributors.

Despite this careful analysis of the issues and the abundance of information provided by the many authors in their case studies, there remain challenges to the study of city-states. The evidence pulled together in these case studies is highly varied: some instances are only known archaeologically, others through a combination of archaeology and contemporary texts as well as later historical documents. Some are known primarily through religious texts or from early historical sources, others are richly documented historically. In consequence not all cases are equal, and in fact it is clear that in many of the primarily archaeological or merely textually supported instances the evaluation can scarcely be made. In contrast, some of the historical examples are so richly documented (the Medieval Italian city-states, the Imperial and free towns of the Holy Roman empire, the city-state culture of the Dutch Republic) that they permit very complex, variable, and dynamic analyses that demonstrate how difficult it is even for the most robust model to encompass all candidates. These suggest that models of political economy may be of most utility for focusing research on identifying diagnostic and comparative features of instances known only from limited sources, whether historical or archaeological—in other words, those cases where a general and initial classification is required. In richly documented, and generally more recent, historical settings the model is of less value, although very useful for stimulating comparative debate. In the end, the careful reader will recognize a divide between the archaeological and historical, where for the former structural and functional descriptions, the question of comparability, and the desire to assess different forms of human sociopolitical integration are all paramount, while for the latter these matters are of less utility than a richly reasoned historical explanation of the distinct characteristics of the instance under consideration.

Despite these continuing difficulties the case studies presented here demonstrate that city-states and city-state cultures are real entities. Each essay in this volume bears careful reading, and because all were written with Hansen's model in mind, the similarities stand out even when different circumstances present extraordinarily different forms. Future work on this problem will necessarily take these studies and Hansen's important analysis as fundamental for continuing debate.

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*GENDER AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF DEATH*, edited by Bettina Arnold and Nancy L. Wicker. Pp. xxi + 203, figs. 22, tables 21, maps 3. AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, Calif. 2001. \$26.95. ISBN 0-7591-0137-X (paper).

The excellent introduction to this volume, the second in Sarah Milledge Nelson's "Gender in Archaeology Series," brilliantly summarizes the strengths of each of