

BOOK REVIEW

A Companion to the Archaeology of Religion in the Ancient World. Edited by RUBINA RAJA and JÖRG RÜPKE. Chichester, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015. Pp. xiii + 502 pages. Hardcover, \$195.95, eBook, \$156.99. ISBN 978-1-4443-5000-5.

In recent decades, there has been a publishing boom for handbooks and companions on various aspects of the ancient world. In 2015, Wiley-Blackwell published a total of twelve companions to the ancient world, covering topics as diverse as Julius Caesar to food to education. Making an important contribution to the study of ancient religion, Wiley-Blackwell also added *A Companion to the Archaeology of Religion in the Ancient World* (CARAW) in 2015.

Like other companions and handbooks, CARAW is lengthy at over five hundred pages long and it is organized thematically into nine parts: 1) archaeology of ritual; 2) embodiment; 3) experiences; 4) creating spaces of experiences; 5) designing and appropriating sacred space; 6) sharing public space; 7) expressiveness; 8) agents; and 9) transformations. There are thirty-six total chapters, each one written by a leading expert in the archaeology or the history of ancient religion. Because of its eclectic contributors, a variety of approaches, methodologies, and theories are presented within this diverse companion.

The thirty-six chapters exclusively explore the archaeology of religion of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds, spanning a large chronological time span and a wide geographical area. Object-based, CARAW investigates what archaeology reveals about the practices of ancient religions in Greece and the Roman Empire. In other words, CARAW's aim is to discover the "lived religion," examining discovering more about religious experience in ancient Greece and Rome through an investigation of the archaeological evidence. A variety of types of archaeological remains are investigated in order to learn more about "lived religion," from dress and ornaments (Laura Gawlinski, Chapter 7) to archaeological evidence for ritual sacrifices in Gaul (Patrice Méniel, Chapter 12), and everything in between.

Companions typically appeal to many people, and CARAW is no exception. Scholars of antiquity, especially those specializing in the archaeology or history of ancient religion, will find this text to be a beneficial complement to their bookshelf. But unlike the more general *A Companion to Roman Art* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), CARAW probably would not be the most appropriate supplementary text for a course on classical archaeology, since it has a much more narrow focus. Instead,

CARAW would be most useful as a primary or supplementary book for an upper-level or graduate course in ancient religion.

CARAW is current in research trends, as the chapters are object-based with an interdisciplinary and contextual approach. Furthermore, *CARAW* is cutting edge in what it is trying to do: reveal the “lived religion.” Since the twentieth century, scholars have been reluctant to explore “the difficulties of reconstructing emotional experiences from archaeological evidence” (1). But *CARAW* delves right into these issues of religious experience through the study of archaeological remains. Because of *CARAW*, this kind of research is now taken seriously.

In recent years, there have been other handbooks and companions published on the subject of ancient religion, including the similar-sounding *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2011). Therefore the question must be asked: what makes *A Companion to the Archaeology of Religion in the Ancient World* different from the rest? Both are edited volumes, with a veritable group of international scholars contributing chapters and consequently a variety of methodologies and theories are represented. In addition, *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion*, like *CARAW*, is object-based with the goal of discovering what the archaeology can tell us about the practice of religion. But *The Oxford Handbook of Archaeology of Ritual and Religion* has a much broader scope. Unlike *CARAW*, which focuses solely on the Greek and Roman worlds, *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion* covers religions from prehistory through the modern era.

CARAW only has a couple of superficial drawbacks, and are the same as other books in the Wiley-Blackwell series on the ancient world. All of the images are in black and white. At the \$195.95 price tag, one would like at least a few color photographs. The high price is another drawback, though Wiley-Blackwell is not doing anything differently from the other publishers of handbooks like these, with most at the two hundred dollar price point. Usually, though, the eBook for Wiley-Blackwell companions are significantly cheaper, but *CARAW*'s is still \$156.99.

The many benefits of *CARAW* far outweigh the couple of negatives. I, for one, am happy to have this in my library. With its progressive approach and interdisciplinary nature, I will find this book useful for many years to come. Students and scholars of the ancient world will probably feel the same way.

JULIA C. FISCHER

Lamar University, julia.fischer@lamar.edu