

BOOK REVIEW

Greek and Roman Technology: A Sourcebook of Translated Greek and Roman Texts. Edited by ANDREW N. SHERWOOD, MILORAD NIKOLIC, JOHN W. HUMPHREY, AND JOHN P. OLESON. Second Edition. Routledge Sourcebooks for the Ancient World. London, UK: Routledge, 2020. Pp. xviii + 754. Paperback, \$62.95. ISBN 978-1-138-92789-6.

The past twenty years have seen a burgeoning of scholarly interest, both literary and archaeological, dedicated to the technology of the Greco-Roman world.¹ And the sourcebook under review fits well into the current trends in technology studies. This updated second edition of the 1998 original is a welcome addition to the scholarly community interested in this subject.

This sourcebook explores Greek and Roman attitudes and conceptions related to a plethora of issues related to ancient technology. The volume is organized into 14 thematic chapters: “Rise of Humans and Human Technology”; “Sources of Energy and Basic Mechanical Devices”; “Agriculture”; “Food Processing”; “Mining and Quarrying”; “Metallurgy”; “Sculpture”; “Construction Engineering”; “Hydraulic Engineering”; “Household Crafts, Health and Well-being, and Workshop Production”; “Transport and Trade”; “Record-keeping”; “Military Technology”; “Attitudes towards Labor, Innovation, and Technology”. Nearly every aspect of ancient technology is explored throughout the book and many topics are covered in different respects in various chapters, providing intellectual nuggets along the way.² Each chapter includes a bibliography for further reading,

¹ In addition to numerous studies and articles, there has been a boon in handbooks, companions and books related to ancient technology. For example, see J. P. Oleson’s *The Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World* (2009, Oxford), chapters in W. Scheidel’s *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy* (2012, Cambridge), chapters in E. M. Harris’ et al. *The Ancient Greek Economy: Markets, Households, and City-States* (2016, Cambridge), G. L. Irby’s *A Companion to Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Greece and Rome* (2016, Chichester) and L. Taub’s *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek and Roman Science* (2020, Cambridge).

² On the whole, the organization of most of the chapters is coherent and well-thought out. Chapter 10 (“Household Crafts, Health and Well-being, Workshop Production”) has so much diverse information that it potentially could have been divided into two chapters. For example, large-scale,

particularly on archaeological discoveries of the ancient technologies discussed in the text. On the whole, the bibliographies were also updated, but there were some chapters that were missing crucial bibliographies since 1998.³

In this wide array of topics, nearly 200 authors or sources are presented in nearly 1300 passages (an increase from the original edition's 148 authors and 750 passages). The sources covered range from the traditional literary texts to inscriptions, Linear B tablets and Egyptian papyri, which illustrates how issues related to technology permeated nearly all written texts in the ancient world. In addition to a subject index, there is also a translated passage index that includes information on the author and their dates, a helpful resource for readers. In this new edition, a chapter was added on sculpture, providing insight into one of the many artistic practices of the Greeks and Romans.⁴ Further, one substantial addition to the sourcebook was the exponential increase in line drawings, from 19 to 98. This is a crucial supplement to the volume, since many of the ancient authors' descriptions are sometimes difficult to follow. For example, a reconstruction of an A-frame hoist with capstan and the relief from the Tomb of the Haterii (Figs. 8.8 and 8.9) are presented alongside Vitruvius' description of lifting devices used in construction projects (*On Architecture* 10.2.10).

This new edition helps to illustrate new trends that have developed in ancient technology studies in the last two decades. There are a number of themes that organically appear throughout the book that elevate this sourcebook. For example, the authors successfully stress the cultural impact of technology throughout ancient society around the Mediterranean. The selection of certain passages highlights how the exploitation of some natural resources not only benefitted parts of ancient society, but also had the potential to make lives of others, especially sub-

organized production comes directly after processes of mummification—which can be jarring for the reader.

³ For example, in the construction engineering chapter, important bibliographic references were missing, such as J. C. McEnroe's *The Architecture of Minoan Crete: Constructing Identity in the Aegean Bronze Age* (2010, Austin) amongst the growing studies on Bronze Age construction. The Roman construction did not cite the ground-breaking studies of L. Lancaster, including *Concrete Vaulted Construction in Imperial Rome: Innovations in Context* (2005, Cambridge) and *Innovative Vaulting in Architecture of the Roman Empire, 1st to 4th Centuries CE* (2015, Cambridge). The bibliography section on traffic in the transportation chapter would have benefitted from E.E. Poehler's *The Traffic Systems of Pompeii* (2017, Oxford); the navigation section should also have works such as D. Blackman's and B. Rankov's *Ships of the Ancient Mediterranean* (2013, Cambridge).

⁴ In this new edition, it might have also been helpful to have a chapter dedicated to artistic practices writ large, including not only sculpture, but also subjects such as painting.

elites, slaves and soldiers demonstrably worse—such as those working in mines and quarries. In the same vein, these sources can also be paired with other studies that challenge our notions of how life in ancient Greece and Rome was difficult on a variety of levels, despite the technological advances of these societies.⁵ Further, ancient technology's impact on the environment is well illustrated throughout the volume, which has resonances for even life today.⁶

This sourcebook will be a welcome addition to undergraduate courses related to ancient technology. And scholars, from those with a passing interest to specialists, will also find this a useful resource to have on their shelves. Even just glancing through this book, it is immediately evident that technology in the Greek and Roman world was complex and nuanced—and there is much to learn about not only the technologies themselves, but how those technologies impacted the daily lives of ancient Greeks and Romans, for better and for worse.

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⁵ For example, see A. O. Koloski Ostrow's *The Archaeology of Sanitation in Roman Italy: Toilets, Sewers, and Water Systems* (2015, Chapel Hill) for an exploration of the living conditions of ancient Italy tied to sanitation. While fire prevention and fighting are covered in this sourcebook, for a full investigation of life in ancient Rome, especially in terms of the impact of the dangers of fire, see J. J. Walsh's *The Great Fire of Rome: Life and Death in the Ancient City* (2019, Baltimore).

⁶ For more on this topic, see, for example, R. F. Kennedy and M. Jones-Lewis, *The Routledge Handbook of Identity and the Environment in the Classical and Medieval Worlds* (2016, London).