

This last section is strongly marked by the concept of urban religion, for years the subject of study by the DFG-funded research group ‘Religion and Urbanity’, led by Rüpke and based in Erfurt. Rüpke defines the fundamental terms and the object of study of this line of research in the chapter ‘Gods in the City’. Urbanity (i.e. the perception of urban space as a social product) and religion, understood as communication with entities ‘beyond the immediate situation’, are studied as two mutually influencing phenomena. Rüpke focuses the investigation on the material offered by Roman civilisation, but explicitly recognises the need for constant comparison with case studies from different civilisations. An example of such comparison is offered by R. Da Riva, in ‘Urban Religion in First Millennium BCE Babylonia’, who applies a similar perspective to evidence from the Neo-Babylonian period. The reciprocal influence described by Rüpke appears here with perfect clarity: religion is an impetus for the expansion of the urban perimeter and the construction of new buildings and communication routes, and at the same time the new urban spaces that arise condition and transform the development of religious cults and the organisation of religious festivals.

In this last section we can appreciate one of the greatest merits of the work, namely that of gathering different theoretical and methodological approaches around the lines of study developed by Bonnet’s and Rüpke’s projects. This is the case with: L. Valletta’s ‘Un réseau de rapports symboliques. Santuari, territorio e pratiche collettive nella Sparta arcaica’, inspired by the French Historical Anthropology of the Ancient World (sometimes called the ‘Paris School’) and, especially, by J.-P. Vernant’s concept of ‘puissance divine’; S. Neumann’s ‘Spatializing “Divine Newcomers” in Athens’, which applies to the study of religious space in the city, and in particular to the sanctuaries of the new deities, the concept of ‘social imagery’ elaborated by C. Castoradis; and Lätzer-Lasar’s ‘Religious Ancient Placemaking’, which presents a theoretical model developed in order to study phenomena of a local, but not microscopic, dimension from an archaeological point of view.

The theoretical richness and solidity of the studies presented make this two-volume collection an invaluable point of reference for all those interested in the study of ancient Mediterranean religions.

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APPROACHING ANCIENT DIPLOMATIC CULTURE

MARI (F.), WENDT (C.) (edd.) *Shaping Good Faith. Modes of Communication in Ancient Diplomacy*. (Oriens et Occidens 37.) Pp. 216, fig. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2022. Cased, €50. ISBN: 978-3-515-12468-3.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X23001026

What is diplomacy? As the editors of this volume clearly set out, in the field of International Relations diplomacy traditionally was treated ‘as a mere technique’ for States to achieve political power (p. 14). Nevertheless, the importance of diplomacy as a process of communication, coupled with increased multilateralism in international relations, has more recently expanded the meanings of diplomacy. For the editors, this

volume is a plea for a more considered treatment of what diplomacy and diplomatic encounters in the ancient Mediterranean world and the Near East encompass; it is a plea well worth listening to.

While the volume's focus is on communication, ritual and performance, it nevertheless also demonstrates how the analysis of ancient diplomacy as a social institution can contribute to recent studies on modern diplomatic culture and space (see e.g. J. Dittmer and F. McConnell [edd.], *Diplomatic Cultures and International Politics* [2016]). The eight contributions variously demonstrate the importance of approaching ancient diplomacy as performative as much as part of a wider set of legal and social norms for its actors, whether the 'discursive script' (p. 19) was between Greek communities, Greece and Persia, or the Hellenistic world and Rome; whether good faith – the thematic keystone of this volume – is the foundation for agreement or the basis for misunderstandings. Another success of the volume is to demonstrate how the narratives of diplomatic encounters are part of a cultural engagement and manipulation of communication and diplomatic relations.

Oath-swearing, with its ritual elements, provides an appropriate space to examine the shaping of good faith between individual communities: S. Scharff demonstrates not only the importance of ritual performance for creating common ground between parties but also the centrality of punitive measures, particularly in the invoking of deities as threats against oath-breaking, tracing the changes over time from Homer to the Hellenistic period prior to Roman intervention. In a world containing 'over one thousand separate *poleis*' (p. 38), where pre-existing agreements with one community might conflict with requirements demanded by another, clauses providing flexibility to agreements became key. Such flexibility enabled good faith, yet it also allowed for the recognition of distrust, with anti-deceit clauses. Scharff aptly demonstrates the creative ways in which Greek communities adapted the shape of interstate agreements and why considering the context of the parties involved is important for understanding the particular shaping of the oaths.

Ancient diplomacy was primarily carried out either through face-to-face communication or through written communications. While F. Gazzano acknowledges the relevance of both, her contribution focuses on the peculiarities of inter-*poleis* Greek diplomacy, where orality was key. Gazzano uses recent renewed emphasis on rhetoric in current approaches to 'Public Diplomacy' (in the twenty-first century) to underline the significance of persuasion in diplomatic dynamics between Greek envoys and their sovereign assembly/council audiences. While drawing on literary narratives for envoys' rhetoric, Gazzano is, nevertheless, able to demonstrate that rhetorical reference to the past to shape good faith between Greek communities is evident in other evidence, such as inscriptions, oratory and epic. Although we cannot escape the rhetoric of the historians, their narratives nevertheless underline the significance of rhetorical use and manipulation of the past to recall and substantiate bonds in diplomatic encounters. Moreover, past grievances could be used to refuse a diplomatic request, such as when Gelon mentions to the Spartan envoy, seeking help against Persia in 481/0 BCE, Sparta's past failings to aid him against Carthage (Hdt. 7.157–8).

From inter-*poleis* diplomacy the subsequent four chapters move to examine diplomatic relations between Greece and Persia. D. Lenfant's examination of *xenia* between Greek *poleis* and the Persian Empire further underlines the importance of the volume's aims in broadening and nuancing the scope of ancient diplomacy. Although working from Greek historical sources, Lenfant is able to demonstrate the existence, for Greek authors, of mutual obligation and personal relations between Greeks and non-Greeks, and how aspects of diplomatic good faith could be dependent on these, rather than simply on political manoeuvres. However, Lenfant questions the applicability of such a framework in relation to the King, arguing that gifts received from the Persian monarch are not

necessarily indicative of *xenia*, but nevertheless suggest the value of privileged, personal relations. Lenfant sensibly does not overemphasise the effect of *xenia* in shaping good faith between Greek *poleis* and Persia, but does find a relevant space for it within the personal relationships favoured and promoted by the Persian King.

Where other contributions help to expand the scope of what ancient diplomacy encompasses, C. Tuplin provocatively suggests that, for Xenophon, perhaps ‘diplomacy did not really exist’ (p. 121), being instead just another example of persuasive rhetoric necessary for leadership, albeit outward-facing as opposed to inward. Tuplin’s contribution provides a detailed catalogue and analysis of 70 identified ‘diplomatic episodes’ in the *Anabasis* (set out in Table 1), demonstrating the diversity of diplomatic representatives extending beyond traditional polities and states, in that Xenophon’s work involves mercenaries as a collective. The variety of episodes within Xenophon’s ‘highly artificial literary representation’ (p. 95) allows for considerations of the flexibility of the discursive script of diplomacy. If diplomacy is the means through which self-identity ‘is constituted and articulated through external relations with other states’ (J. Der Derian, ‘Diplomacy’, in: J. Kreiger [ed.], *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World* [1993], pp. 244–66, at 244), Tuplin’s exploration of the patterns, types of diplomatic situation, successes and failures, and diplomatic conduct illustrates how the collective identity of the mercenaries can be examined through the diplomatic events of the *Anabasis*.

Despite the use of (predominantly) literary evidence, the chapters discussed so far focus on face-to-face negotiation. E. Foster’s concise contribution examines the diplomatic language of the Persian King Artaxerxes’ letter to the Spartans in 424 BCE as a means for creating operational good faith, albeit through the lens of Thucydides’ account (4.50). Foster sets out the relevance of understanding the historical context of the letter in terms of the relations of the various polities, as well as Sparta’s weak position during the Archidamian War, as necessary for an analysis of the letter and its purpose. While the content of the letter is reported in indirect speech, Foster argues that Thucydides employs this for ‘offering precisely shaped statements that illuminate a speaker’s aims’ (p. 130). From this reading, Foster convincingly demonstrates how we can read Artaxerxes’ letter as a diplomatic strategy to wipe the slate clean of any previous negotiations. This created space for renewed good faith, effectively and simply telling the Spartans to communicate a single policy, while enabling Artaxerxes to defer support.

The role of letters as a diplomatic medium continues in Mari’s chapter examining communications between the Persian King Darius III and Alexander the Great. Mari sets out to untangle the various historiographical traditions of the exchange, arguing that Arrian’s account drew on versions of the two letters recorded by Ptolemy, while Curtius Rufus and Diodorus followed a separate tradition in relation to Darius’ letter. Mari accepts Arrian’s version of the King’s letter as genuine. This offers insight into how Darius’ use of diplomatic etiquette (notably in his recognition of Alexander as king and therefore his equal) reveals changes to Archemenid ideology. On the other hand, Alexander’s letter to Darius is to be read as a piece of Macedonian propaganda, intended for a Greek audience. Mari demonstrates how Alexander breached diplomatic protocol in this letter by demanding the Persian address him in future as king of Asia and acknowledge him as his master (*kyrios*) and so manipulated the space of diplomatic communication to redefine the relationship between Macedonian and Persia.

The means of understanding and achieving good faith were disrupted by the arrival of Rome, not least because of misalignments between Greek *pistis* and Latin *fides* (p. 13) (on these issues, see also S.H. Davies, *Rome, Global Dreams and an International Origin of Empire* [2019], pp. 80–6). Working from the apparent contradictory narratives of Polybius and Livy concerning the outbreak of the Third Macedonian War, F. Maier

examines the failure to shape good faith between Rome and Perseus in order to understand why tensions escalated so quickly. Drawing on behavioural theories concerning decision-making, Maier's contribution offers a way to resolve the contradictions of literary sources, wherein both parties appear reluctant to engage in war despite the fact that it rapidly ensues. Maier capably demonstrates how this might help us understand these narratives: the main actors respond to perceived threats and risks (often presented by third parties, for their own reasons) and act out of a desire to avert the risk of loss of status. Intriguingly, Maier posits a generational divide among Rome's senators, with the younger generation rejecting the open dialogue between parties favoured by the older generation, further escalating the conflict and also demonstrating the flexibility of diplomatic culture.

From misperceptions to deliberate manipulation, the final contribution by Wendt examines how the ritual script of diplomacy could be altered in order to redefine diplomatic relationships. Using three case studies of Romano-Parthian diplomatic encounters between 96 and 1 BCE, Wendt demonstrates how 'diplomacy is and was influenced and shaped by the communicative expectations of those involved' (p. 187). These expectations were exploited often to the advantage and self-promotion of the individual Romans involved: Sulla, Pompey and Augustus in Wendt's case studies. Wendt's contribution also reflects on how diplomatic encounters and etiquette were clearly relevant aspects for how ancient authors presented individual political development and behaviour. While there existed an expectation of diplomatic etiquette, the flexibility of diplomacy meant it could be used to 'create or underscore hierarchies' (p. 196).

A great achievement of the volume is that it succinctly demonstrates the value and relevance of examining the forms and language of ancient diplomatic processes. By focusing on a key element of ancient diplomacy – good faith – the contributions offer ways into understanding how diplomatic actors variously interpreted and manipulated shared codes of communication. As I. Neumann stressed, it is not that the tasks of diplomacy change; change occurs rather 'in the general political and social fields that surround diplomacy' (I. Neumann, *Diplomatic Sites. A Critical Enquiry* [2013], p. 3). The volume illustrates, across various historical contexts, how ancient diplomacy was flexible and needs to be understood within the political and social fields of each instance. The editors and contributors have unquestionably expanded the scope of ancient diplomacy, emphasising the need to understand it as far more complex and nuanced than traditionally conceived.

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GENERALS OR TOO MUCH GENERAL?

EVANS (R.), TOUGHER (S.) (edd.) *Generalship in Ancient Greece, Rome and Byzantium*. Pp. xiv + 362. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. Cased, £90. ISBN: 978-1-4744-5994-5.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X23000112

Conceiving a collective book is one of the most complex operations for a scholar – and even more is actually 'creating' it. Especially if the book is the result of a conference,