

# **SCRIPTA CLASSICA ISRAELICA**

YEARBOOK OF THE ISRAEL SOCIETY  
FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

**VOLUME XLI**

**2022**

The appearance of this volume has been made possible by the support of

Bar-Ilan University  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
The Open University  
Tel Aviv University  
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PUBLISHED BY  
THE ISRAEL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES  
<http://www.israel-classics.org>

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Price \$50

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Camera-ready copy produced by the editorial staff of *Scripta Classica Israelica*  
Printed in Israel by Magnes Press, Jerusalem

# SCRIPTA CLASSICA ISRAELICA

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
MARGALIT FINKELBERG, Fifty Years of the Israel Society for the Promotion of Classical Studies .....	1
RACHEL ZELMICK-ABRAMOVITZ, An Epic Formula in Herodotus .....	5
CARSTEN HJORT LANGE, Augustus as Commander in Chief: Approaching Strategy and Leadership in (Civil) War .....	31
WERNER ECK, Ein Grabbau für einen Legionssoldaten in Jerusalem, erbaut von seinem Bruder. Zur Aussagekraft einer Inschrift, publiziert in IEJ 70, 2020 .....	57
JONATHAN PRICE AND MORDECHAI AVIAM, A Greek Inscription and Architectural Fragments, Possibly of a Synagogue, from Sejara (Ilaniya) .....	63
JOSEPH PATRICH, ERAN MEIR AND AHARONI AMITAI, A Provincial (Praetorium) in Tiberias? The Archaeological Finds and the Evidence of the Literary Sources .....	77
<b>REVIEW ARTICLE</b>	
Ellen Birnbaum and John M. Dillon, <i>Philo of Alexandria: On the Life of Abraham. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary</i> (by Cana Werman) .....	109
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b>	
Robin Lane Fox, <i>The Invention of Medicine: A History from Homer to Hippocrates</i> (by Ido Israelowich) .....	119
Tosca Lynch and Eleonora Rocconi (eds.), <i>A Companion to Ancient Greek and Roman Music</i> (by Amir Yerucham) .....	120
Tazuko Angela Van Berkel, <i>The Economics of Friendship: Conceptions of Reciprocity in Classical Greece</i> (by Gabriel Danzig) .....	122
Daniela Dueck, <i>Illiterate Geography in Classical Athens and Rome</i> (by Jerry Toner) ....	125
Erich S. Gruen, <i>Ethnicity in the Ancient World—Did It Matter?</i> (by Craige Champion)	128
John Glucker, <i>Classics and Classicists. Selected Essays, 1964-2000</i> (by Voula Tsouna)	131
María-Paz de Hoz, Juan Luis García Alonso and Luis Arturo Guichard Romero (eds.), <i>Greek Paideia and Local Tradition in the Graeco–Roman East</i> (by Balbina Bäßler)	134
Jonathan J. Price, Margalit Finkelberg and Yuval Shahar (eds.), <i>Rome: An Empire of Many Nations: New Perspectives on Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Identity</i> (by David Potter) .....	136
Katell Berthelot and Jonathan Price (eds.), <i>In the Crucible of Empire: The Impact of Roman Citizenship upon Greeks, Jews and Christians. Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion</i> (by Lucia Cecchet) .....	140
Oswaldo Cavallar and Julius Kirshner, <i>Jurists and Jurisprudence in Medieval Italy: Texts and Contexts</i> (by Ido Israelowich) .....	142
<b>OBITUARIES: KLAUS BRINGMANN</b> (by YITZHAK DANA) .....	145
<b>DISSERTATIONS IN PROGRESS</b> .....	147
<b>PROCEEDINGS: THE ISRAEL SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL STUDIES</b> .....	153

## BOOK REVIEWS

Robin Lane Fox, *The Invention of Medicine: A History from Homer to Hippocrates*. New York: Basic Books, 2020. 432 pp. ISBN 9780465093441.

In his new monograph Robin Lane Fox offers students and, perhaps a broader readership an innovative exposition of the rise of Hippocratic medicine. It is innovative both in some of its arguments, as well as in its formation and perspective. ‘The Invention of Medicine’ does not fall under the rubrics of history of science, intellectual history, Greek history, or social history. Rather, it combines them all both in form and in content. The object of this study, as its title clearly suggests, is the invention of medicine. More specifically, the rise of the so-called Hippocratic medicine’ in the Greek world of the fifth century BCE.

The author approaches his subject matter as a historian, which he distinguishes from a historian of medicine (p. xxi). In fact, the book’s premise is that “the two branches of scholarship, historical and medical, have moved in parallel, not always making contact. I hope to show how both can gain, even now, when they are closely interrelated” (p. xxi).

An early declared objective of this study is to offer a new date for some of the Hippocratic treatises, which should “give them a new social, cultural, and intellectual context as a result” (p. xxii with reference to the second and third chapter of the book). Lane Fox successfully pursues this objective by focusing on the Hippocratic treatise Epidemics and the region of Thasos. The introduction sets the scene: the Greek world of the fifth century. It also poses the overarching theme of this study, namely the provenance and the dating of the individual Hippocratic treatises. It is also here that the author exposes his intended contribution. Lane Fox focuses on the two Hippocratic works on Epidemics. He wishes to argue that, contrary to the *communis opinio*, these works have not been composed in the age of Socrates, but much earlier in the fifth century BCE (p. 6). The *modus operandi* is thus: discussing these works and demonstrating how innovative they were. The second stage is sketching the invention of medicine, to which the works on Epidemics belong. The final stage is to set these works in the time and place in which they have been composed.

The book itself is divided into twenty-two chapters, in three schools: Heroes to Hippocratic (chapters 1–8); The Doctor’s Island (chapters 9–15); and The Doctor’s Mind (chapters 16–22). The first school concerns Homeric healing, poetic sickness, therapeutic practice before the fifth century BCE (both in the Greek world, as well as in the Egyptian and Babylonian worlds), various aspects of healing cults, and all medically-related evidence found in Herodotus. Lane Fox then progresses to the rise of Cos and Cnidus as medical centres, and the association of the medical practitioners there with Asclepius. It is then that Lane Fox discusses the elusive image of Hippocrates, his Coan origin and the methodological problems of discerning the myth from the history of the ‘father of medicine’ (chap. 6), and the formation of the Hippocratic Corpus in Hellenistic Alexandria (chap. 7). The last chapter of the first school discusses the innovative nature of the Hippocratic works, and the ‘invention of medicine’. This innovation, Lane Fox emphasizes, is the explicit assumption that healing relies on a prior acquaintance of the nature of the human constitution. The successive chapter, entitled ‘sex and street life’, further attempts to set the case studies of the Epidemics in their Thasian context. It is here that the prowess of the author comes forth most vividly, namely as a classical historian who puts a rich piece of evidence into context, and the application of techniques rarely used by historians of Greek and Roman medicine: prosopography. Lane Fox offers a detailed study of the patients of the author of the Epidemics, in the Thasian settings. In fact, Lane Fox ponders why the author labours to document names and

addresses of patients, acknowledging that this information is medically irrelevant. He assumes that it assisted the author in later composing his own work (p. 205).

The third and final school is entitled 'the Doctor's Mind'. The first chapter discusses bedside manners and the doctor's *modus operandi*. Lane Fox rightfully emphasizes the paucity of therapeutic measures prescribed by the author of the Epidemics in his bedside practice (p. 214) and the importance of prognosis for establishing professional authority. The next chapters examine the use of symptoms by the author of the Epidemics and the division between relevant and irrelevant ones and diagnosis. Successive chapters contextualize the Epidemics in the wider sphere of ancient cultures: Babylonian, Etruscan, and fifth-century Greek philosophy. The book concludes with two chapters on the aftermath of Hippocratic medicine. The first (Hippocratic impact) concerns the impact of Hippocratic medicine in antiquity, which the second (from Thasos to Teheran) goes further, and outside the boundaries of the Graeco-Roman world.

To conclude, Lane Fox has produced a remarkable achievement: a monograph on fifth century BCE Greek medicine which appeals to a wide readership and offers a fresh perspective on the invention of medicine for professional historians, focusing on particular aspects of classical Greek history and culture. The book itself is beautifully produced, and is a pleasure to read. I expect to find it on a wide range of reading lists, from Greek history, social history, to Greek science.

Ido Israelowich

Tel Aviv University  
[ido0572@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:ido0572@tauex.tau.ac.il)

Tosca Lynch and Eleonora Rocconi (eds.), *A Companion to Ancient Greek and Roman Music*, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2020. 544 pp. ISBN: 978-1-119-27547-3.

Music of the ancient world has been a source of discussion and scholarly interest for many years but never before has that field of study been brought together as a comprehensive guidebook to create an in-depth and multi-layered overview of the topic. The articles collected here are the culmination of more than two decades of constructive research invigorated mainly through the activity of MOISA ("The International Society for the Study of Greek and Roman Music and Its Cultural Heritage"), presenting a wide range of methodological, theoretical, and practical outlooks by the leading experts that helped in formalizing this rapidly evolving field.

This volume is intended as an introduction to the subject, providing a general survey of many of the central issues in the study of ancient Greek and Roman music. Most of the articles are presented in a modern, readable and informative fashion and fill a significant gap in providing a well-needed resource to accompany scholars, students, and enthusiasts through the complex terrain of ancient musical culture. The assortment of subjects and approaches is wide enough to provide something of interest for practically everyone, but the reader must be warned, several articles, mainly those concerning matters of acoustics, harmonics, rhythms, and notation, are much more technically challenging and will require at least a basic musicological background in order to appreciate them fully.

In covering a topic such as ancient *mousikē* (the ancient Greek term differs from modern 'music' and refers to the whole art of poetry, music, dance, and drama) there are countless different aspects to consider: performance, ritual, mythology, organology, dance, transmission, aesthetics, historical contexts, education, and reception are just a few. Following a thematic