

# Aspects of Ancient Institutions and Geography

*Studies in Honor of Richard J.A. Talbert*

*Edited by*

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**PART 1**

*Introduction*





# Chaps and Maps: Reflections on a Career with Institutional and Cartographic History

*Lee L. Brice and Daniëlle Sloopjes*

Richard John Alexander Talbert's body of work is often thought of as falling within two distinct fields—institutional and cartographic history. That he is one of the foremost world authorities on the Imperial senate and ancient cartography is demonstrated by his publications including *The Imperial Senate*, *The Atlas of the Classical World*, *The Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, *Rome's World: The Peutinger Map Reconsidered*, and *Ancient Perspectives: Maps and Their Place in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome*. Talbert's research interests started with an individual and while its scope grew to include groups, institutions, and the organization of their world, it has never really departed from a concrete interest in people. A review of his career and parts of his work highlights some of the influences and demonstrates that Talbert's interests have followed a discernable pattern of trying to understand, to the extent we can, how people navigated their world, both Greek and Rome—whether through institutions or geography.

A thorough grounding in school in traditional British training in the Classical languages heavily influenced all of Talbert's subsequent work on the ancient past.<sup>1</sup> He received double honors for his undergraduate achievements at Cambridge. During his graduate work at Cambridge University Talbert's initial inclination was to work on Plutarch under F.H. Sandbach but turned to Timoleon at M.I. Finley's suggestion, under whose supervision he finished the dissertation in 1971. Given that Finley was just publishing his work on Ancient Sicily it is hardly surprising he thought Timoleon a topic worth tackling.

The impact of Moses Finley on Talbert's work may not be immediately obvious since their interests diverged so much, but it should not be discounted. There are certainly qualities of Talbert's work that echo some of the themes emphasized by Finley throughout his career. As Talbert and his co-editor Fred Naiden have recently demonstrated, Finley was consistently interested in Ancient History as a field distinct from the traditional British focus on philology and literature. Finley emphasized the need for reliance on sources rather than theories as evidence. He learned by experience to deliver his observations and evidence in a format that was clear and digestible for diverse audiences, whether in a lecture or in his

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<sup>1</sup> Talbert and Naiden (2014) 170. See the comprehensive bibliography in chapter 2 for complete citations of all Talbert's publications and associations as well as book reviews of his works.

publications. Finally, Finley was committed to the idea that study of the past was of value for understanding the present—history was a pragmatic undertaking.<sup>2</sup> Talbert's work consistently demonstrates similar interests in ancient history as a distinct field, in clear presentation of material, and in the usefulness of historical study. Whether all of this was down to Finley we should reasonably doubt, but the advisor undoubtedly had an influence on the pupil.

Thus Richard Talbert's first study focused on the impact of an individual for whom there are some sources. His preface to the Timoleon monograph reveals an outlook that would be consistent in all of his later work. Talbert reports that he did not pursue "a biography of Timoleon, because in my view there is too little evidence for such an approach to be rewarding."<sup>3</sup> The emphasis on the primary sources and the necessity that the final work be rewarding or useful are already present. He does not engage in unwarranted speculation and employs every source available including archaeology, numismatics, and epigraphy. While it is surprising to some that the son of a talented Scot mathematician does not engage in cliometrics *ad nauseam*, the reason is to be found in his approach anchored in the sources, and the topics on which he works.

Having landed employment at Queen's University in Belfast, the second major project came out of his experience teaching ancient history. Even though Mommsen had dealt with the Roman Republican senate, the senate of the principate had long been left aside.<sup>4</sup> Finding there was a neglected institution for which sufficient sources were available, Talbert embarked upon an extensive and systematic investigation, published in 1984. In a real sense his scope had moved from one person for whom there were sources to a whole group of individuals with sources. As with the first project, this work was anchored by numerous sources and turned out to be entirely rewarding for the field, winning the *Charles J. Goodwin Award of Merit* from the American Philological Association in 1987.<sup>5</sup>

Talbert's work with geography and cartography, the field with which many readers now connect him, began serendipitously. A chance meeting with Richard Stoneman in 1981 led to his taking the helm of a project to create an *Atlas of Classical History*, published in 1985. In addition to his new experience with the particulars of cartography, Talbert demonstrated an editorial sensibility and thoroughness for which he has become well regarded and a talent for

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2 Talbert & Naiden, (2014) 171, 175–177.

3 Talbert (1974) ix.

4 Th. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* (Leipzig 1976).

5 See for instance reviews by W. Eck in *Gnomon* 57 (1985) 624–631; S. Martin in *JRS* 75 (1985) 222–228; T.D. Barnes in *Phoenix* 40 (1986) 109–111. See the comprehensive bibliography for the complete citations of reviews for all Talbert's volumes. The American Philological Association has recently changed its name to the Society for Classical Studies (scs).

guiding a diverse set of regional experts toward a positive, timely conclusion. The book was intended to facilitate student use and has become a classroom standard, as would his next project. This was the first time his focus moved beyond ancient individuals to the ways in which they organized space as well as the ways in which modern readers can access the ancient world via maps.

In his next project Talbert returned to topics that had interested him as an undergraduate and new graduate student—Sparta and Plutarch. Finding the source translations his students employed to be antiquated, he sought to update the translation and so improve his pupils' own reliance on the available sources. In doing so he also provided extremely useful notes and references to augment the new translation. This project continued during his 1985 move to McMaster University, finally reaching publication in 1988. Following as it did a thoroughly historical monograph set in imperial Rome, *Plutarch on Sparta* may have seemed unusual to some in both its focus on Greece and as a translation, but its topic was consistent with Talbert's training, his continuing interest in the entire Greco-Roman world, and his refusal to be pigeon-holed into a small portion of it.

The translation was obviously not institutional history, but that theme was still present. The most extensive notes in the translation tend to be about Spartan institutions. Also, it led to Talbert developing what were then unorthodox ideas regarding the Spartan institution of Helotism. He published his views in a thoroughly researched and clear 1989 article demonstrating that the dominant views regarding Spartan Helots, then widely published by Paul Cartledge, were flawed because they were unsupported by the sources.<sup>6</sup> As these had been topics that interested him since his undergraduate days and since it is not easy to work on Sparta without encountering the Helots, we need not see in this topic the influence of Finley's views on slavery. With Sparta, Talbert expanded his approach to an even larger group of people (some of whom lorded it over the rest) and their sources.

Talbert's involvement with the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* began in 1988 when he was appointed as director.<sup>7</sup> Although his involvement may seem sudden and unexpected, the prior review of Talbert's work shows that he had already taken an interest in cartography and geography and felt strongly about the necessity of scholars and students to have access to good tools, including maps. His 1987 review of Dilke's work on ancient maps demonstrated a continuing interest in the ways historians were thinking about these topics and an awareness of the new work on cartographic history then becoming available. As his reports to the NEH make clear, the Atlas was going to be a valuable and a rewarding project. It was a project that required a great

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6 Talbert (1989); Cartledge *Historia* 40.3 (1991) 379–81.

7 Talbert (1990, 1991, and 2000).

deal of time with individuals and their maps. The project consumed more than a decade and has born fruit in a variety of ways beyond the *Atlas*.

*The Barrington Atlas* is certainly consistent with Talbert's prior pattern of producing useful and rewarding scholarship, but its impact was not limited to the publication. In addition to the large format book, the associated directories have been important resources. The project resulted in the creation of the Ancient World Mapping Center at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and contributed to the launch of the Pleiades Project, an on-line resource for ancient studies (<http://pleiades.stoa.org>). Published in 2000, *Atlas* updates continue electronically and the project recently launched a handheld smart phone app., demonstrating that the results of this project will not be stuck in the past. The evolution of the *Barrington Atlas* project has shown that while Talbert continues to emphasize the importance of relying on the extant sources, he is a historian who makes full use of the abilities and technologies of his own time.

A large part of Richard Talbert's work since 1988 (see the bibliography), has been connected with his research on geography and cartographic history. Various publications in these areas of map-related studies were the result of his consideration of how scholars have dealt with the ways ancient people organized and communicated about space. The historiography behind cartographic history and modern cartography have also attracted his attention and led to additional insights. The breadth and variety of such individual and collaborative projects have resulted in Talbert's emerging as one of the foremost authorities on geographic and cartographic history, ancient and modern. Most recently for example, his examination of the "Peutinger map" in *Rome's World: the Peutinger Map Reconsidered* provides a new and broader approach to 'reading' and understanding this important document and the ways in which it offers us information about geographic mentality and the historiography of maps. His publications in this field, spread over more than two decades, reveal how his thoughts on topics including the Peutinger map and ancient map-mindedness have remained flexible and open to new ideas, thus evolving over time.<sup>8</sup> He continues to impact the way we think about how ancient people organized space.

The recent focus on maps has not displaced Talbert's interest in institutional history. During the same period he has been producing much of his work on geographic and cartographic history he continued to work on topics related to ancient institutions. These works include research and publications

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8 Compare, for example, the views on the Peutinger map in Talbert and Brodersen (2004) to those in Talbert (2010).

on the senate, Roman roads, the Roman emperor, and broader investigation of imperial courts.<sup>9</sup> Within these works evidence for the influence of A.H.M. Jones, Fergus Millar, and David Potter remains strong. Through articles, special volumes, and studies Talbert has continued to make an impact on the way we conceive institutions and life in the ancient world.

Richard Talbert's vision of institutional history as an approach to studying Roman history and culture has also influenced many students who have focused attention on various institutions with the result that we have new studies on aspects of Roman culture as diverse as the empire's administration, the military, courts, *collegia*, and baths. In other words, his influence on the institutional historiography has reached far beyond his own works. Even though scholarly work on the Roman Empire in recent decades has been directed more towards economic, social, and cultural history, Talbert's work reminds us of how an understanding of the institutional foundations should continue to play a pivotal role in our analyses of the Roman world.

His pedagogical influence continues in *The Romans, from Village to Empire*. Far from being a diversion from his other interests, the pragmatic connection between his teaching and publications is a theme that has continued throughout Talbert's career and which finds its influences in his home and at Cambridge. His father had written several successful mathematics textbooks and his advisor, Moses Finley, took teaching seriously and wrote several clear books that could or should be employed as textbooks.<sup>10</sup> Like his other education-related projects, *Atlas of Classical History* and *Plutarch on Sparta*, the textbook was the logical extension of his interest in teaching and bringing better, useful textbooks to students and teachers to facilitate understanding of the Roman world. The *Senate of Imperial Rome* too had grown out of his teaching. *The Romans, from Village to Empire* was a collaborative project in 2004 with Mary Boatwright and Daniel Gargola. Quality maps were an integral part of the textbook, a feature further augmented by his set of wall maps for Routledge. Later editions of the book extended the coverage by adding Noel Lenski's work on the Late Empire, increasing its usefulness. In addition to his books Talbert developed an engaging presentation style that holds his audiences' attention without sacrificing the material. Producing work that was accessible and useful for anyone trying to understand the world was a quality Talbert internalized, made his own, and communicated to his students and colleagues.

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9 See the comprehensive bibliography entries after 2000 for the diversity of work focused on institutions.

10 Naiden and Talbert (2014) 176–77.

This volume presents a collection of essays by former students and colleagues of Richard John Alexander Talbert. They honor him through these essays for his contributions to and impact on the fields of ancient history, political and social science, as well as cartography and geography. Similar to the great variety of subjects that Talbert has dealt with in his publications, the articles in this volume show a broad range of topics as well. This diversity echoes the number of topics and themes still in need of exploration, refinement and reconsideration even after centuries of scholarly study. However, the essays have one important feature in common: they all focus on and are connected to the ways in which Talbert has influenced the discipline of History.

The various sections of our volume are set up around the two core themes of Talbert's work: institutions and geography. As the Roman senate was the subject of Talbert's pivotal study and a core institution of the Roman state both during the Republic and the early Principate, the volume includes several essays on the senate and senators that will show how new perspectives on the senate in the Late Republic, under Augustus, and afterwards continue to further refine our knowledge.

An analysis by Philip Stadter of Plutarch's familiarity with the formal stages of a Roman senatorial career—especially since the *cursus honorum* had no parallel in Greek political practice—shows us both how the Romans were able to present their institutions to foreigners, and how senators were viewed by an outsider who thereby, one could argue, “Romanized” several of his biographies. The historiography of the imperial senate and Augustus' attempts at reform are the topics of Scott Perry's chapter. Perry is particularly interested in Ronald Syme's treatment of the *lex Julia de senatu habendo* of 9 BC, in which Augustus tried to curb senatorial absenteeism, and subsequently Talbert's different ideas on the law.

Although the imperial senate took its role as a political court seriously, our knowledge of individual trials comes primarily from Tacitus' *Annals*. Leanne Bablitz, while observing that Tacitus' reports of the trials are idiosyncratic varying in length and detail, demonstrates how we should be careful in reading Tacitus' accounts of the senate's trials, as he—this will come as no surprise—employs the descriptions of these trials for his own objectives as an author. Sarah Bond, in her examination of the history of the various Roman senate houses, shows how especially the restoration projects on these buildings functioned as an opportunity for the legitimization of power and influence for those who initiated such projects.

The political and social institutions of Rome are part of a larger group of institutions that together defined the functioning of the Roman Empire and

through which the Romans viewed and organized their world. Many of these institutions still need more clarification, as becomes clear in two of the essays focused on socio-political institutions. One such institution critical to perceptions and descriptions of the Roman world was the military. We now recognize that the military of the later Republic and early Principate was more inclined to mutiny and indiscipline than was formerly accepted, but Lee L. Brice shows how reinstitution of social control after incidents of military unrest kept this restive military from becoming a threat to stability and how this pattern contributes to explaining why the army became such a problem later. Another Roman institution that spread throughout the Roman world as Rome set up permanent colonies and then forts was gladiatorial combat. Despite the fascination these games still inspire, the administration and the nature of life in gladiatorial training schools represents one of these topics that needs further examination. As Garrett Fagan argues, it remains a great paradox to us how men in these schools lived together and simultaneously trained together to learn how to kill each other.

Roman institutions reached the local level of the provinces in many different ways. Studying these aspects of ancient Rome requires more obvious blending of institutional and geographic focus. Throughout the many centuries of Roman rule the inhabitants of the empire grew accustomed to the presence of many different officials representing the Roman government. Werner Eck's contribution focuses on the relationship between Roman officials and provincial subjects. His close examination of statues and busts with accompanying inscriptions—there are many thousands of them—honoring Roman officials in the provinces such as governors, tribunes, centurions or imperial freedmen demonstrates that these inscriptions should not be taken as honorary though 'empty' messages and argues that these were often preceded by an actual deed of the person being honored. Dio Chrysostom's local activities in Prusa are the target of the subject of Christopher Fuhrmann's study as he tries to reveal what we can learn about provincial elites' attempts to negotiate the fine line between local and imperial politics. His critical portrait of Dio and his troubled community of Prusa makes us question whether their issues are exceptional or whether many other cities in the empire struggled in similar fashion. Modern scholarship has so far not yet paid much attention to the meaning of the boundaries of the provinces, dioceses and prefectures. With a particular focus on the role and borders of dioceses, Daniëlle Sloopjes focuses both on the functioning of Late Antique administrative structures as well as notions and awareness of geography.

The second part of the book is oriented around that more obvious method for thinking of the physical world—geography and cartography. The chapters

in this section offer a much greater breadth of topics, a reflection of Talbert's own wide impact on the field.

The worldview of the Romans stood in longer traditions of peoples located around the Mediterranean who tried to get a grip on the geographic dimensions of their world. Cheryl Golden takes us back to the world of Thucydides. Even though his use of geography has seldom been analyzed, Golden's close reading of several passages including the Archaeology and the Sicilian expedition demonstrates Thucydides' in-depth knowledge of the locations under discussion in his work, even though geography and cartography were not his prime field of interest. Two centuries later, when Alexander the Great decided to campaign into Asia, he moved—as Fred Naiden argues—into territories he was unfamiliar with and without maps of, for instance, Anatolia. While taking some 'peculiar' routes as we might think in hindsight, Alexander gained knowledge of the geography while being on the road with his troops.

The sheer size of the empire, its division into provincial territories that were ruled by Roman governors and the ways in which people traveled through the many regions of the empire created various geographic mentalities and ways in which the Romans perceived their world (both within and outside the Empire's territory). As the contributions will demonstrate, the visualization of the empire occurred on different levels, ranging from geographical precision to a more symbolic reference to the empire's power. Mary Boatwright's analysis of the Porticus Vipsania, its marble public world map commissioned by Agrippa and seven geographical monuments that were built nearby, draws attention to our difficulties in understanding how Romans 'read' both the map and the monuments. Boatwright's contribution offers a reconstruction of the visitors' and inhabitants' acculturative experience while moving through Rome from the north to the area of at the northern foot of the Capitoline's Arx.

Although no map accompanied his text, Velleius Paterculus illustrates a similar concern with perceptions of the power and extent of the Roman Empire. Brian Turner, in testing one of Richard Talbert's models of how the Romans viewed their world, shows that a fresh look at what Velleius knew about the world and at his reconstruction of that world, presents us with insights into the Roman worldview and the politics of a nascent empire. And even though Velleius was imprecise about the size and shape of provinces, as he saw them as spatial entities that contained peoples and cities, he nevertheless was able to offer his audience a sense of the political and geographic space of the empire.

Jerzy Linderski's detailed and strongly philological analysis of locations as presented by Cicero in his letters to and from his friends and family

demonstrates how more precise knowledge of such locations, in particular in the Italian peninsula, might even help us in our understanding of the chronology of some of the key historical events in the Late Republic.

John Donahue takes his reader on a journey along the 17 securely attested healing springs or spas in Latium and Etruria. These less well studied locations were places where people, including emperors, went for relief from a variety of physical ailments, but we should also consider them in the wider context of conceptions of ancient religion and travel, and as part of Roman culture.

Although it might not occur to a modern observer, sundials were another kind of map, but of the sun's movements across the sky. In his contribution, George Houston examines what extant sundials reveal about Roman understanding of time and geography and finds that like public maps they convey a message in which their accuracy is less important than their presence and their patron.

An examination by Michael Maas of Late Antique authors such as Procopius of Caesarea, pseudo-Caesarius, John of Ephesos, Maurice, and Isidore of Sevilla presents us with cultural notions of geography in the sense that their discussions on the effects of the environment on health, human communities and human character illustrate how knowledge of geography played a role in the development of an environmental determinism that we do not know from earlier periods.