

Multiple problems arise when scholars of ancient Greece and Rome attempt to tackle the problem of researching and teaching world history. The first is one of historical periodization. Many scholars have conceived of world history as the study of roughly contemporary developments in parallel civilizations—the “Classical World” with its concept of unified statehood and unifying “axial” religious traditions, for instance as typified by fifth-century Athens, Rome under Augustus, Achaemenid Persia, India under Aśoka, and China during the Han Dynasty. Textbooks at the collegiate and secondary level mostly reflect that organization. State (e.g., California, Massachusetts, and Virginia) content standards for teaching world history similarly reflect this mode of periodization. A second problem is methodological: ancient historians resist giving up specificity or “vital” content when researching and teaching world history in this prevailing model. In order to overcome the barriers posed by traditional periodization and methodology, historians of Greece and Rome might adopt a world-historical approach that conceptualizes Greco-Roman antiquity as a development taking place at the western extremity of the larger Indomediterranean landmass and the network of cultural, economic, and intellectual exchange taking place thereon. Conceptualizing Greco-Roman antiquity within world history ought not have us drawing *convenient* parallels between Greece, Rome and other “classical” civilizations, but rather seeing *actual* connections among these civilizations. Thinking on these lines opens up a broad range of topics for research and teaching, employing the specificity and care for detail and philological rigor that we treasure in our study of Greece and Rome.

This presentation uses two examples to demonstrate the usefulness of Indomediterranea as a model for serious, detailed research that adds to the world-historical picture. First, one can rethink Pliny's *Natural History* as the product of first century CE Rome coming to terms with its relationship to this broader network of exchange. The impulse to categorize and claim foreign peoples, places, animals, trees, herbs and medicines is typical of a culture making sense of its place in a wider world. Second, magic (as differentiated from religio-medical knowledge) and proto-orthodoxy (as differentiated from heretical versions of Christianity) are also issues best seen in the context of Rome's interactions with the wider Indomediterranea. Helpful in exploring this issue with magic are Pliny's *Natural History* 28-30 and Apuleius, whose witch Meroe shared her name with the capital of Cush (a region that controlled Rome's access to upper Nile and Red Sea trading routes). When we come to proto-orthodox Christianity, Nestorian Christianity and Manichaeism (both of which were blendings of Christianity with eastern influences such as Buddhism and Zoroastrianism), show the influence of Roman interaction with the rest of Indomediterranea. Indeed, magic and heresy demonstrate ways that religious ideas and rituals could spread along the Indomediterranean networks of exchange to areas outside the cultures that anchored them and, once detached from their original cultural cosmology, become labeled as “other.”