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Both empires were broadly comparable in terms of size and population, and even largely coextensive in chronological terms (221 BCE to 220 CE for the Qin/Han empire, c. 200 BCE to 395 CE for the unified Roman empire). At the most basic level of resolution, the circumstances of their creation are not very different.

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In his book Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires, Walter Scheidel seeks to present the "global prominence" of both empires "by promoting cross-cultural, comparative, and transdisciplinary perspectives on imperial state formation prior to the European colonial expansion." 1 Scheidel thoroughly and effectively explores the comparative military, social, political, and economic histories of the Roman and Chinese empires using a collection of fascinating ...

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ROME AND CHINA - The Eye
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Transcending ethnic, linguistic, and religious boundaries, early empires shaped thousands of years of world history. Yet despite the global prominence of empire, individual cases are often studied in isolation. This series seeks to change the terms of the debate by promoting cross-cultural, comparative, and transdisciplinary perspectives on imperial state formation prior to the European colonial expansion. Two thousand years ago, up to one-half of the human species was contained within two political systems, the Roman empire in western Eurasia (centered on the Mediterranean Sea) and the Han empire in eastern Eurasia (centered on the great North China Plain). Both empires were broadly comparable in terms of size and population, and even largely coextensive in chronological terms (221 BCE to 220 CE for the Qin/Han empire, c. 200 BCE to 395 CE for the unified Roman empire). At the most basic level of resolution, the circumstances of their creation are not very different. In the East, the Shang and Western Zhou periods created a shared cultural framework for the Warring States, with the gradual consolidation of numerous small polities into a handful of large kingdoms which were finally united by the westernmost marcher state of Qin. In the Mediterranean, we can observe comparable political fragmentation and gradual expansion of a unifying civilization, Greek in this case, followed by the gradual formation of a handful of major warring states (the Hellenistic kingdoms in the east, Rome-Italy, Syracuse and Carthage in the west), and likewise eventual unification by the westernmost marcher state, the Roman-led Italian confederation. Subsequent destabilization occurred again in strikingly similar ways: both empires came to be divided into two halves, one that contained the original core but was more exposed to the main barbarian periphery (the west in the Roman case, the north in China), and a traditionalist half in the east (Rome) and south (China). These processes of initial convergence and subsequent divergence in Eurasian state formation have never been the object of systematic comparative analysis. This volume, which brings together experts in the history of the ancient Mediterranean and early China, makes a first step in this direction, by presenting a series of comparative case studies on clearly defined aspects of state formation in early eastern and western Eurasia, focusing on the process of initial developmental convergence. It includes a general introduction that makes the case for a comparative approach, a broad sketch of the character of state formation in western and eastern Eurasia during the final millennium of antiquity, and six thematically connected case studies of particularly salient aspects of this process.

Through a series of original essays by leading international scholars, The Roman Empire in Context: Historical and Comparative Perspectives offers a comparative historical analysis of the Roman empire's role and achievement and, more broadly, establishes Rome's significance within comparative studies. Fills a gap in comparative historical analysis of the Roman empire's role and achievement Features contributions from more than a dozen distinguished scholars from around the world Explores the relevance of important comparativist themes of state, empire, and civilization to ancient Rome

This thesis examines the lives, writings, and literary legacies of Sulpicia and Ban Zhao, two roughly contemporaneous women writers from the Roman Empire and the Han dynasty. Through the incorporation of women's history and world history, this comparative study seeks to explain how the literary legacies of these two female authors in the ancient world became so distorted over the centuries. While some scholars, such as Merry Wiesner-Hanks and Anne Cova, have begun to advocate for the cooperation between women's and world historians, few scholars have put this theoretical idea into practice. While comparative histories of the ancient world are becoming increasingly popular (e.g. Walter Scheidel's Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires (2009) and Hans Armin Gärtner and Ye Min's Conceiving the Empire: Rome and China Compared (2008)), women are still discussed as an unincorporated theme or left out of the subject matter altogether. After laying the groundwork for connectivity and trade relations between Rome and China, this work provides and overview of and compares the expected social roles for upper class women in Rome and China, Sulpicia and Ban Zhao's life and familial connections in particular, their literary works, and the effect of larger socio-political events on the literary legacies -- more specifically, how the decline, fall, and reemergence of central authority influenced the interpretation of their works. This thesis argues that as new governing bodies attempted to recreate the grandeur of the Roman and Han empires, moralist writers argued that it was the loss of traditional, more conservative values that caused the decline of these once great societies, and the writings of Sulpicia and Ban Zhao were the epitome of the effeminy and decadence at the heart of the declining empires. Furthermore, these two women, who had openly criticized these core values, provide key examples to show how women can be incorporated into larger world history themes, i.e. political, economic, and intellectual history.

The Chinese and the Romans created the largest empires of the ancient world. Separated by thousands of miles of steppe, mountains and sea, these powerful states developed independently and with very limited awareness of each other's existence. This parallel process of state formation served as a massive natural experiment in social evolution that provides unique insight into the complexities of historical causation. Comparisons between the two empires shed new light on the factors that led to particular outcomes and help us understand similarities and differences in ancient state formation. The explicitly comparative perspective adopted in this volume opens up a dialogue between scholars from different areas of specialization, encouraging them to address big questions about the nature of imperial rule. In a series of interlocking case studies, leading experts of early China and the ancient Mediterranean explore the relationship between rulers and elite groups, the organization and funding of government, and the ways in which urban development reflected the interplay between state power and communal civic institutions. Bureaucratization, famously associated with Qin and Han China but long less prominent in the Roman world, receives special attention as an index of the ambitions and capabilities of kings and emperors. The volume concludes with a look at the preconditions for the emergence of divine rulership. Taken together, these pioneering contributions lay the foundations for a systematic comparative history of early empires.

Through comparative case studies from ancient China, ancient Greece, Mesoamerican Maya art, and across Eurasia via Pompeii, this book emphasises the significance of models of landscape in ancient art. Notably, it explores questions of space, both actual and conceptual, including how space is configured through form and representation.

This book addresses a largely untouched historical problem: the fourth to fifth centuries AD witnessed remarkably similar patterns of foreign invasion, conquest, and political fragmentation in Rome and China. Yet while the Western Roman Empire was never reestablished, China was reunified at the end of the sixth century. Following a comparative discussion of earlier historiographical and ethnographic traditions in the classical Greco-Roman and Chinese worlds, the book turns to the late antique/early medieval period, when the Western Roman Empire 'fell' and China was reconstituted as a united empire after centuries of foreign conquest and political division. Analyzing the discourse of ethnic identity in the historical texts of this later period, with original translations by the author, the book explores the extent to which notions of Self and Other, of 'barbarian' and 'civilized', help us understand both the transformation of the Roman world as well as the restoration of a unified imperial China.

Situated on opposite flanks of Eurasia, ancient Mediterranean and Han-Chinese societies had a hazy understanding of each other's existence. But they had no grounded knowledge about one another, nor was there any form of direct interaction. In other words, their historical trajectories were independent. In recent years, however, many similarities between both cultures have been detected, which has energized the field of comparative history. The present volume adds to the debate a creative method of juxtaposing historical societies. Each contribution covers both ancient China and the Mediterranean in an accessible manner. Embarking from the observation that Greek, Roman, and Han-Chinese societies were governed by comparable features, the contributors to this volume explain the dynamic interplay between political rulers and the ruled masses in their culture specific manifestation as demos (Greece), populus (Rome) and min (China).

The great empires of the vast Eurasian continent have captured the imagination of many. Awe-inspiring names such as ancient Rome, Han and Tang China, Persia, Assyria, the Huns, the Kushans and the Franks have been the subject of countless scholarly books and works of literature. However, very rarely, if at all, have these vast pre-industrial empires been studied holistically from a comparative, interdisciplinary and above all Eurasian perspective. This collection of studies examines the history, literature and archaeology of these empires and others thus far treated separately as a single inter-connected subject of inquiry. It highlights in particular the critical role of Inner Asian empires and peoples in facilitating contacts and exchange across the Eurasian continent in antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

In the Roman social hierarchy, the equestrian order stood second only to the senatorial aristocracy in status and prestige. Throughout more than a thousand years of Roman history, equestrians played prominent roles in the Roman government, army, and society as cavalrymen, officers, businessmen, tax collectors, jurors, administrators, and writers. This book offers the first comprehensive history of the equestrian order, covering the period from the eighth century BC to the fifth century AD. It examines how Rome's cavalry became the equestrian order during the Republican period, before analysing how imperial rule transformed the role of equestrians in government. Using literary and documentary evidence, the book demonstrates the vital social function which the equestrian order filled in the Roman world, and how this was shaped by the transformation of the Roman state itself.

Rome and China provides an updated history and analysis of contacts and mutual influence between two of ancient Eurasia's most prominent imperial powers, Rome and China. It highlights the extraordinary interconnectivity of ancient Eurasia which allowed for actual contacts between Rome and China (however fleeting) and examines in detail the influences from both ends of Eurasia which had cultural and political consequences for both Rome and China. This volume will be of interest to anyone working on the Roman Empire, Inner Asia, the Silk Routes and China in the Classical and Late Antique periods.

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