

Joint Family Systems in the Ancient World

The editors of a new volume of collected essays focussing on the extended family, multigenerational households and familial obligations beyond the nuclear family in the ancient world invite English language submissions from interested scholars worldwide. Submitted abstracts will be anonymously refereed.

The volume seeks to shift the traditional focus from the nuclear to the extended family and thereby correct a perceived imbalance in the study of the ancient family. Saller and Shaw in their ground-breaking study of tombstones from the Roman West argued that “the linguistic and legal material alone might lead us to downgrade the significance of the nuclear family.” Even though they were careful in drawing conclusions about actual household composition from the relationships mentioned in these funerary texts, they raised the “reasonable hypothesis that the ... nuclear family ... was characteristic of many regions of western Europe as early as the Roman Empire.” (Saller, R. P. and B. D. Shaw (1984), ‘Tombstones and Roman Family Relations in the Principate: Civilians, Soldiers and Slaves’, *JRS* 74: 124-56: see 145-6). Although several scholars have subsequently raised doubts about their conclusions, their theory has served as basis and reference point in virtually all publications on the Western Roman family since the publication of their article 25 years ago.

The themes considered in the proposed volume will centre on the exploration of the complexity and variety of kin structures in the ancient world. How important and significant were extended kin relations? How were they configured or understood? Did the nuclear family household represent the norm in Antiquity or did more complex extended and multi-family households have a greater prevalence? How much did regional, social and temporal variation affect these issues?

The editors encourage a wide range of submissions, chronologically, geographically, and in terms of methodology and subject matter. Any period of antiquity, from 3500 BCE to 641 CE is actively sought; cultures from the Ancient Near East, Egypt, Greece, Rome and the broader Mediterranean region are welcomed. Possible topics may include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Household composition and family structure in the ancient world
- The epistemology and anthropology of extended family
- Multi-family households
- Nuclear vs. extended families
- Family beyond the household
- The archaeology of extended kin
- The idealisation of extended family

Final submissions should be between 4000 to 6000 words in length. Please send expressions of interest, along with abstracts (not exceeding 500 words) to Sabine Huebner: sabine.r.huebner@gmail.com; or to Geoffrey Nathan: g.nathan@unsw.edu.au by 31 January 2011.