

# AFTER DARK

THE NOCTURNAL URBAN LANDSCAPE  
AND LIGHTSCAPE OF ANCIENT CITIES

EDITED BY

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## *Preface*

NANCY GONLIN

Many cities of the past are characterized by some of the same features as modern cities: large, dense, heterogeneous populations; centralized, complex social, economic, and political functions; religious centers; hubs of novel ideology; and numerous other features. But ancient cities had a major difference with the present: they were not routinely lit at night. It was not until the 1800s that electrical lighting illuminated urban areas across the world, and from then onward, there has been no retreat. Modern urban nights are profusely illuminated, so much so that archaeologists may not incorporate the facet of darkness in their reconstructions of the past.

This volume is the third book that explores a novel dimension to studying the past: the “archaeology of the night” (Gonlin and Nowell 2018; Gonlin and Reed 2021). Another perspective that is logically aligned with this orientation is lychnology, or the study of “pre-modern lighting devices” and light (International Lychnological Association 2021). While focusing on nocturnal dimensions of the urban experience, a consideration of how urbanites lit up the night is essential. Darkness comes with night as well as with natural (e.g., caves) and culturally constructed venues that are sacred and profane, such as the interiors of temples and taverns. The subjects of the night, darkness, and lighting taken together form a comprehensive framework when analyzing city life and has much to offer archaeologists in deepening our examination of complexity and

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inequality as manifested in the built environment, artifactual remains, iconography, and ancient writing.

Authors of this volume explore these themes to varying degrees and deliver innovative insights on urbanism that boost our appreciation of how ancient humans navigated the night through material and conceptual adaptations to city life. These chapters were first presented in 2019 as papers at the 84th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The archaeological community was extremely saddened to learn of the demise of one of the participants, Dr. John W. Janusek, a renowned Andeanist. Dr. Anna Guengerich, remarked that the night was John's favorite time. Anna ensured that John's work on this topic was completed; so, we are quite fortunate to have a chapter on Tiwanaku and the night authored by John and Anna. Our volume is in memory of John and his fondness for the night.

Other ancient cities and cultures are featured (Cahokia, Chaco Canyon, the Classic Maya, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Samothrace, Tenochtitlan, and the Wari), though no claim is made that this volume offers a comprehensive treatment of the subject. Numerous scholars were invited to contribute, but only a few brave souls answered the call. Much work remains to be done; this volume is only a beginning.

We are grateful to Andrew Bednarski for composing the index, a detailed, demanding task that he cheerfully undertook. Many thanks are due to the University Press of Colorado, whose staff I have been privileged to work with on many projects, and our excellent anonymous reviewers who provided critical insights and constructive feedback. Our authors are to be commended for their timely response for revisions and for their patience with the publishing process.

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