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978-0-521-00903-4 - Technology and Culture in Greek and Roman Antiquity

S. Cuomo

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TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE IN GREEK AND ROMAN ANTIQUITY

The technological achievements of the Greeks and Romans continue to fascinate and excite admiration. But what was the place of technology in their cultures? Through five case-studies, this book sets ancient technical knowledge in its political, social and intellectual context. It explores the definition of the *techné* of medicine in classical Athens, the development of new military technology in Hellenistic times, the self-image of technicians through funerary art in the early Roman Empire, the resolution of boundary disputes in the early second century AD, and the status of architecture and architects in late antiquity. It deploys a wide range of sources, from technical treatises to philosophical texts, the works of historians and playwrights, as well as epigraphical and archaeological evidence, to reconstruct a dialectic picture of ancient technology, where several ancient points of view are described and analysed, and their interaction examined. Dr Cuomo argues for the centrality of technology to the ancient world-picture, and for its extraordinarily rich political, social, economic and religious significance.

S. CUOMO is Reader in the History of Science and Technology at Imperial College London.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.orgInformation on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521009034

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First published 2007

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library**Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Cuomo, S. (Serafina)

Technology and culture in Greek and Roman antiquity / Serafina Cuomo.

p. cm. – (Key themes in ancient history)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-521-81073-9 (hc.) – ISBN 978-0-521-00903-4 (pbk.)

1. Technology – Greece – History – To 1500.
2. Technology – Rome – History.
3. Technology and civilization – History – To 1500. I. Title. II. Series.

T16.C78 2007

609.37 – dc22 2007008985

ISBN 978 0 521 81073 9 hardback

ISBN 978 0 521 00903 4 paperback

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S. Cuomo is supported by

Arts & Humanities
Research Council

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Acknowledgements

This book took such a long time to write that I used to joke it would come out posthumously. I hope it hasn't. Over five years of gestation, I have incurred many, many debts of gratitude, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge those I can still remember, and apologize for those that inevitably I do not. First of all, my thanks go to Paul Cartledge and Peter Garnsey, the editors of the series, and Michael Sharp, editor of Cambridge University Press Classics and Ancient History; they have been constantly supportive and flexible with deadlines. Professor Garnsey practically came up with the idea of the book in the first place.

Next, all the people who have been forced to listen to or read various versions of various chapters, and who offered comments and encouragement: Richard Ashcroft, Nico Bertoloni Meli, Bob Bjork, Mary Bjork, Glen Bowersock, Graham Burton, Giuseppe Cambiano, Brian Campbell, John Clarke, Eve D'Ambra, Glenys Davies, Paolo Desideri, David Edgerton, Jaś Elsner, Paula Findlen, Mats Fridlund, Maud Gleason, Kevin Greene, Christian Habicht, Valerie Hope, Rob Iliffe, Nick Jardine, Dennis Kehoe, Jason Koenig, Elizabeth Langridge-Noti, Tom Lacqueur, Irving Lavin, Daryn Lehoux, Geoffrey Lloyd, Alan Marcus, Stamatina Mastorakou, Judith McKenzie, Andrew Mendelsohn, Susan Morrissey, John Murdoch, Gina Muskett, Mika Natif, Reviel Netz, Carole Newlands, Bill Newman, Guy Ortolano, Yannis Papadoyannakis, Danielle Parks, Dominic Rathbone, Tracey Rihll, Agnes Rouveret, Eric Schatzberg, Mark Schiefsky, Francesca Schironi, Gideon Shelach, Pamela Smith, Denise Sumpter, Liba Taub, Karin Tybjerg, Hans van Wees, Heinrich von Staden, Alice Weeks, Victoria Wohl, Waqar Zaidi, plus seminar audiences at Ames, Bloomington, Cambridge (MA), Denver, Edinburgh, Gargnano, London, Minneapolis, Palo Alto, Princeton, St Andrews, and York.

Marina Frasca Spada and Emily Mayhew get their own paragraph of thanks because – heroically – they read the whole manuscript and took their kid gloves off when asked what they thought about it.

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Acknowledgements

Financial support came from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which provided a Research Leave Grant in 2005, during which period I completed chapters 1 and 5 and greatly improved the rest. That year, I enormously enjoyed spending a term at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton. I would also like to mention the staff and fellow library users of the Institute of Classical Studies in London – the friendliest classicists I have ever met. Last but not least, thanks to my colleagues and the students at Imperial College London; it can be fun to be the most ‘ancient’ person around.

The book was completed a couple of weeks before my son Kes was born, and is dedicated to him. I hope that one day he will know enough Neapolitan to understand what the verses at the beginning are all about.

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‘A morte ‘o ssaje ched’ è? È una livella.
 ‘Nu rre, ‘nu magistrato, ‘nu grand’ommo,
 trasenno stu cancello ha fatt’ ‘o punto
 c’ha perzo tutto, ‘a vita e pure ‘o nomme:
 tu nu t’hè fatto ancora chistu cunto?
 Perciò, stamme a ssentì . . . nun fa’ ‘o restivo,
 suppuorteme vicino – che te ‘mporta?
 Sti ppagliacciate ‘e ffanno sulo ‘e vive:
 nuje simmo serie . . . appartenimmo à morte!
 (*A livella*, Antonio De Curtis)

*Do you know what death is? It's a leveller.
 Kings, magistrates, great men,
 On entering this gate realize
 That they've lost everything: their lives and their name too.
 So, listen; don't be stubborn
 Let the living stage their comedy
 Not us, we're serious: we belong to death.*

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