

BOOKS

Yannis M. Ioannides

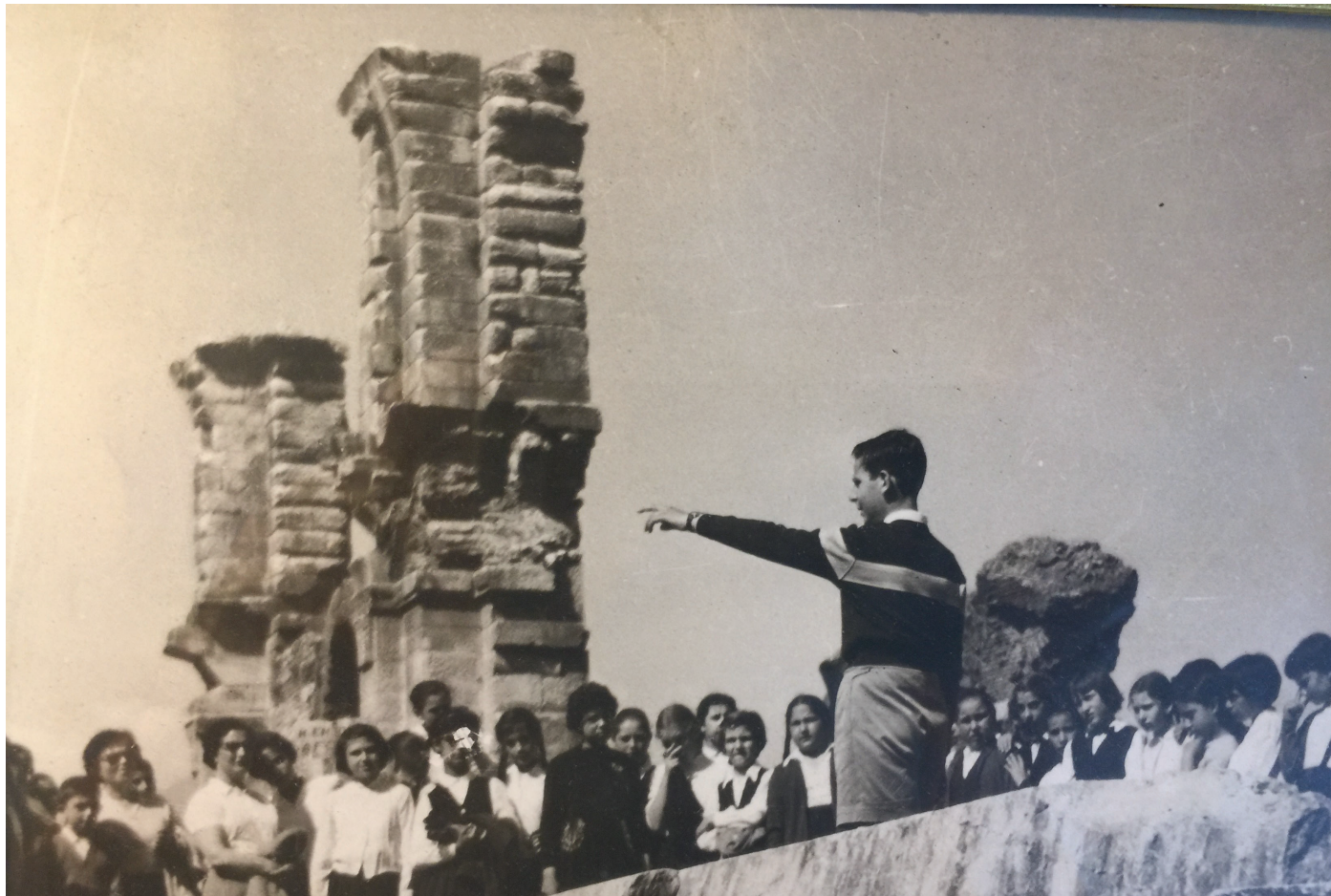
February 23, 2022

Tufts Economics Society: *Surprising Things Economists
Study*

Life-long interest in classical and medieval history

Here, age 12, sharing what I had just learned from my archaeologist uncle, guided 6th grade classmates & teachers in ancient Philippi, Greece, where Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius, 42 BCE:

Philippi, 1957



Walled Cities of Late Imperial China

A few years ago, a friend, Junfu Zhang, Professor at Clark, got me interested in using medieval and modern data to study China's urban structure, using sizes of walls and other information.

Gu, Zuyu 顧祖禹
Du Shi Fang Yu Ji
Yao. Zhonghua
Shuju Press,
Beijing. Data in
Dataverse.

*Basic
Geography
for the
Reading of
History.
1631-1692.*



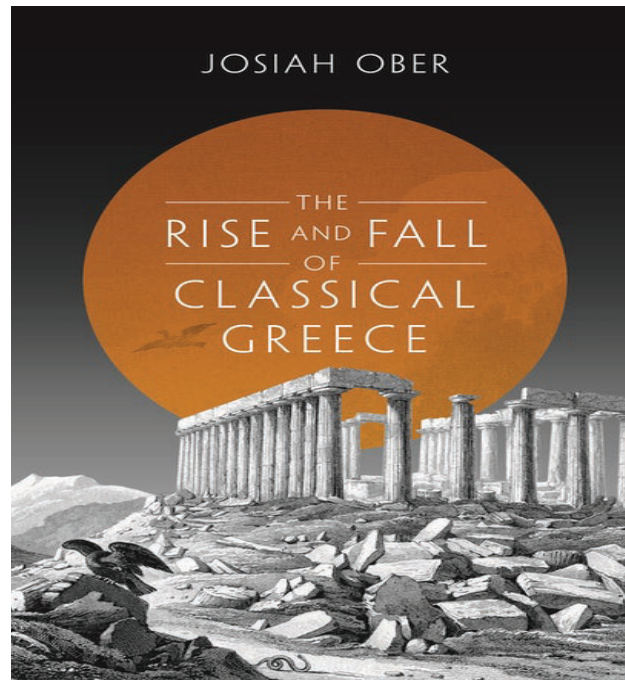
“Walled Cities of Late Imperial China.” *J. Urban Econ.*
2017

Medieval Cities of China



Then, in a lecture on campus, one evening

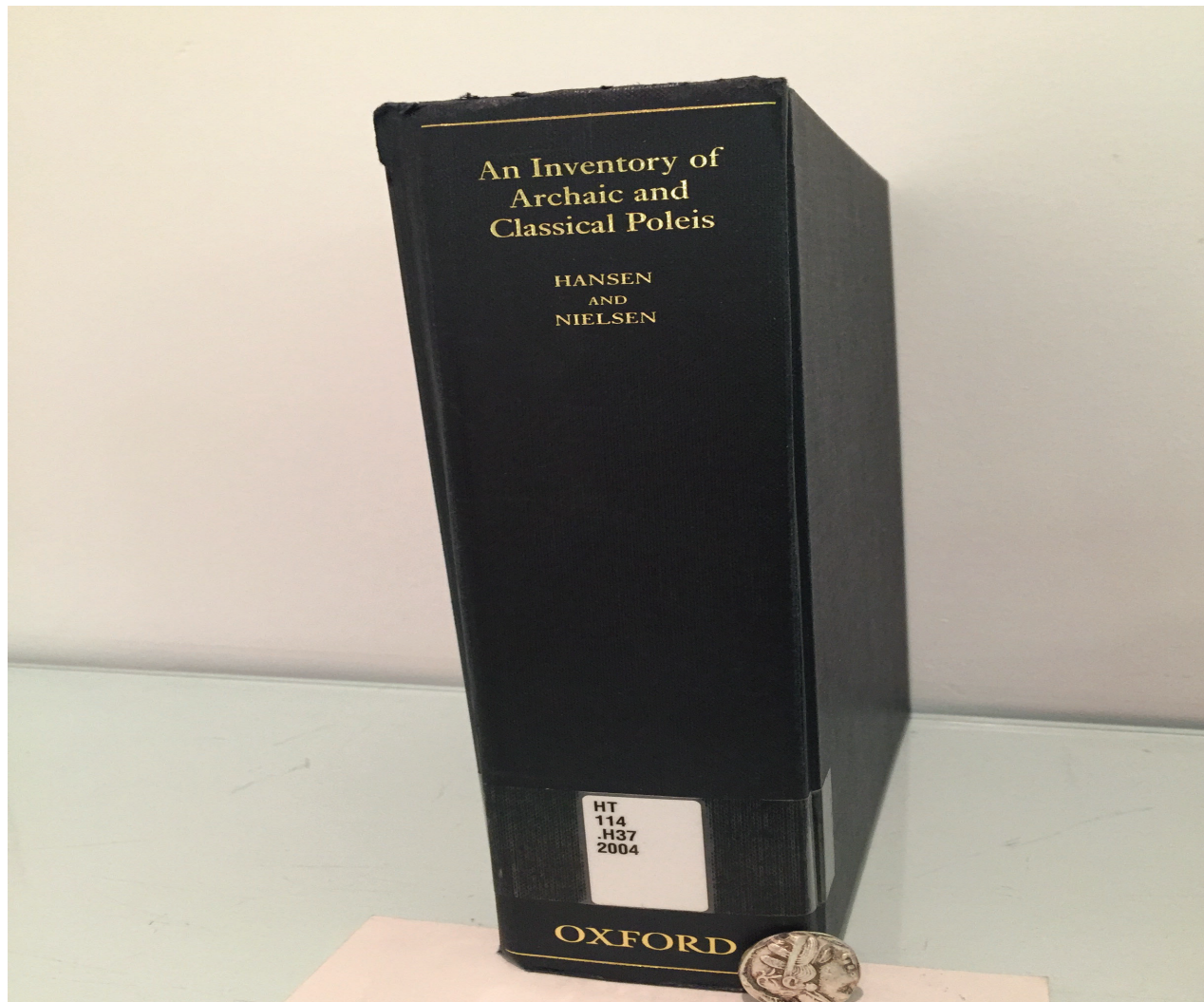
By Professor Josiah Ober, then of Princeton, now of Stanford, a distinguished classicist and political scientist, alerted me to his book:



I devoured it as soon as it appeared! I noticed ancient Greek cities, *poleis*, referred via code, e.g. Athens, $i = 25$. Made suspected **DATA**, Contacting him led me to *Stanford Polis Project* and other digitized data.

An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis, Copenhagen Poleis Centre (2005)

Compilation, digitization of key historical and archaeological records, a big book, also e-book:



From Books to Data

With help from Tufts Data Lab, students and coauthors, we augmented and used the data to study:

- Invention of Greek Alphabet (from Phoenician Script), origin of **ALL** alphabets, Diffusion across the ancient Greek poleis. Started digitizing key data from Jeffery's *Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*. An RA discovered *Anne Jeffery Archive* had been digitized!
- Issue of coinage: we digitized data from *The Inventory*, got additional data from distinguished numismatics experts.
- Travel times across all coastal segments of the Mediterranean, and hypothetical overland routes connecting ancient poleis.
- Two major studies, more planned, using **economic theory**, **econometrics**, and tools from **computer science**:
 1. "Asymmetric Trading Costs and Ancient Greek Poleis," with Yuxian Chen (Tufts Econ MS 2020, Brown) and Professor Ferdinand Rauch (Oxford)
 2. "The Diffusion of Epichoric Scripts and Coinage in the Ancient Hellenic World," with Yuxian Chen.
 3. Exciting seminar and conference presentations!

Two extraordinary Innovations

a.k.a. Technological improvements, a.k.a. Total Factor Productivity (TFP) Shocks!

1. Where would we have been without the flexibility of alphabetical writing? Propagation of a TFP shock!
2. Where would we have been without the facilitation of trade via money? Propagation of trust and of a TFP shock!
3. The invention of the city, polis, politics, sovereignty, rule of law, further innovations associated with urban agglomerations, etc.

From Books to Data to Economics Research

To Studying Profound Phenomena that don't look like economics at first sight!

All this whetted my appetite for a bigger ongoing study:
“The Global Leapfrogging of Urban Growth: 3700 BCE–2000 CE.”

Thanks!

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