

## DE NOVIS LIBRIS IUDICIA

*Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, eds. Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994. ix, 249 p. ISBN 0-521-43369-X. GBP 77.50.

The present book is the second from the Cambridge University Press on a similar topic within a short time, since "Literacy and Orality" by R. Thomas was published only in 1992. Like the study of Ms. Thomas, "Literacy and Power" is also a very useful book on the basic questions concerning the nature of literary sources of ancient cultures. The book consists of 12 articles by various authors on different aspects of the main theme, namely the relationship between writing, literacy and power. The editors have also provided the volume with an introduction, which briefly describes the main problems discussed and their cultural context. The introduction also reveals that the present articles were originally papers delivered at a congress in Oxford in 1992. As the editors state, the theme "literacy" is quite fashionable nowadays, which might partly be due to the "graphocentrism of our own society", which, however, does not mean that the subject would not be important.

What makes this collection interesting is that one single and all-sufficient concept of power has not been adopted. Thus, with "power" the use of religion as a source of authority can be meant as well as general cultural "superiority". In many cultures the importance of written text did not lie in the message of the text, but in its physical appearance. All the authors are well-established and reliable experts in their own fields and the reader can be sure that they know what they are writing about. The articles cover geographically most of the Mediterranean world and besides that parts of Northern Europe, from the 7th century BC to the 9th century AD, so the book probably has something to offer for everyone.

This book makes it clear, once more, that although our picture of antiquity has been changed in many respects by the publication of *e.g.* papyri, we must also bear in mind how much the value of new literary sources depends on the archaeological context. As D. Thompson points out, the Hellenistic papyrus material, for example, comes from a restricted area in Egypt and so our picture of Greco-Egyptian relationships must be related to this fact. In several articles attention is drawn to bureaucracy, which is often considered as a parallel phenomenon to literacy. Another more than once discussed theme in this collection is the problem of bi- and multilingualism. Especially interesting chapters in this book are those, written by J. Ray, concerning the relationship between the Demotic, Greek and Coptic script and languages in Egypt during the late and Persian

periods. Mr. Ray suggests that Demotic was reacting to the increasing use of Greek with a conservativeness which Coptic, for example, later does not show. There are also chapters on Roman Britain and Judaea as well as on Europe in the migration period. In such a wide cultural and chronological frame it is somewhat surprising that a paper on the early Imperial period in Rome is missing.

To conclude, generally speaking, this is a most interesting and handsomely produced volume, which everyone interested in the problematics of literacy should make acquaintance with.

*Tiina Purola*

*Antonio Agustin between Renaissance and Counter-reform.* Edited by M.H. Crawford. Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts XXIV. London 1993.

Antonio Agustin, 1517-1586, Spanish high ecclesiastic, is also known for his contributions to the study of Roman Law and institutions. He was modern enough to understand the relevance of Roman inscriptions to these studies. There were already collections or *syloges* of inscriptions, for the most part in manuscript form, but their unsystematic arrangements made their use unduly laborious. Agustin, in collaboration with Jean Matal, composed a rich collection of epigraphs, provided with meticulous references, but he also drew upon inscriptions to explain the genesis of the Roman Law, both from historical and from linguistic points of view. Although the collection has remained unprinted, Agustin's system of classification influenced M. Smetius's well-known collection, 1588, and consequently later epigraphy as well.

The collective volume contains contributions by 13 scholars in five languages, including Latin. The papers more immediately concerned with epigraphical studies are J.J. Wilkes's on Cyriac of Ancona's copying of Dalmatian inscriptions, R. Cooper's on epigraphical research in Rome in Agustin's times, which is certainly of considerable interest to a historian of epigraphy, M.H. Crawford's on the development of Greek epigraphy, and A.M. Prestianni Giallombardo's on Sicily's Greek and Latin epigraphy. The other papers discuss Agustin's biography, his legal scholarship etc. All the papers are scholarly and sufficiently well documented.

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