

good job in clarifying how some articles of this volume relate to FM's *opera magna*, e.g., *Emperor in the Roman World* (1977/1992).

I feel that it would be quite unnecessary (and also uninformative) to repeat the kinds of remarks on FM's thoroughness, keenness for minuscule details and his vast command of ancient source material, languages, and societal structures noted on many occasions before. Instead, I would like to emphasise FM's less often mentioned but maybe more far-reaching contributions to the generations of researchers who read his studies on ancient history. These contributions are especially highlighted through article collections like this one which cover the span of a lifetime of academic work.

What draws the reader's immediate attention in FM's articles is their refreshing timelessness. This is not a statement about FM's method – he, if anyone, knows how to date or, even better, how to decline to date historical sources – but about his style. It is unfortunately frequent that a reader takes up an academic publication from the 1960's or 1970's only to realise s/he is reading some out-dated, though at the time, fashionable theoretical jargon. There is no danger of this when reading FM. His research questions are delightfully concrete, e.g., on page 102: 'Here too, as regards the distribution of coin, we have to try to envisage the physical processes involved.' These 'physical processes' prove to be 'physical' indeed, referring to thousands of oxen drawing hundreds of heavy-loaded wagons from mines to mints and from mints to towns or military camps. There is nothing nonsensical in FM's approach; the reader feels safely guided, with her/his feet solidly on the (Roman!) ground.

Another aspect of FM's way of doing research is also worth noting: its transparency. Unlike many researchers, FM makes it explicit again and again what he knows (or what can be known) and what he does not know (or what cannot be known), and on what grounds (cf. p. xi). It follows that the readers can also deliberate the usefulness of the information gathered from FM's work for their own research without gnawing uncertainties about the writer's epistemology. FM's method makes the evolvment of his argumentation both well-documented and (thus) well-grounded. It is also surely efficient and absolutely commonsensical.

It would be impossible not to recommend this book for historians: in addition to its subject-specific value, it is also an excellent guidebook on (to quote Hannah M. Cotton's words, p. xi) 'how did it work and what did it feel like' in ancient times.

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CHRISTOPHER S. MACKAY: *Ancient Rome. A Military and Political History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005. ISBN 0-521-80918-5. XVI, 395 pp. GBP 25.

Yet another history of Ancient Rome. As such works virtually flood the book market in every major language, it would be helpful if each new contributor to this vast and ever increasing literature would clarify in more explicit terms how his or her particular enterprise is intended to add to the body of previous efforts. The pronounced intention of Mackay is to provide a general introduction to "the public affairs of the Roman People" for a readership possessing no prior knowledge of the subject (p. 1). Recognizing the

importance of scholarship that has turned, as he puts it, to "new perspectives" on the past (citing as examples social, cultural and economic history) he appreciates that his work, which focuses exclusively on military and political history, could be considered to reflect a "traditional" view of history. He also concedes that an inclusion of topics typically addressed by these *new disciplines* (sic) undoubtedly would have deepened his own analysis, but only "at the cost of inordinately expanding the length of the work and of obscuring the purpose that it is intended to serve". Stating that "the new historical disciplines complement rather than supplant traditional history", which seems a rather odd truism in this context, he stresses that his aim is "to provide a readable and up-to-date general history on the basis of the numerous refinements in our understanding of traditional political history that have been made in recent years" (ibid.). Writing for the general readership, which may not always be fully aware of the extent to which historians have abandoned their once so dominant preoccupation with "kings and wars", the author could well have endeavoured to convey a more up-to-date image of current historical scholarship and its concerns.

Following a chronological progression, the book consists of 24 chapters organized into five larger sections. Part one (*Obscure Beginnings, to 264 BC*, pp. 3–55), dealing with the earliest periods down to the outbreak of the First Punic War, provides accounts of the legendary beginnings of Rome, the regal period as well as of the domestic and military history of the first centuries of the Republic. Part two (*Conquest of the Mediterranean, 264 BC–146 BC*, pp. 57–99) is largely concerned with the great military conflicts – with Carthage, Macedonia and the Celtiberians of Spain (chs. 4–6) – which made Rome the supreme power of the Mediterranean World, but includes an analysis (ch. 7) of the profound changes that Roman society underwent in the wake of the rapid territorial expansion. In part three (*Collapse of the Republic, 133 BC–27 BC*, pp. 101–176), the author treats the final phase of the Republic, more precisely, the period from Tiberius Gracchus' assault on the oligarchy to the establishment of Augustus' autocracy. Analyzing the strifes between *populares* and *optimates* (chs. 8–9), the ascendancy of Caesar (ch. 10), and the ensuing power struggle between the last warlords of the Republic (ch. 11), the author examines the downfall of the republican government. This section of the book concludes with a discussion of politics in the Late Republic (ch. 12).

Part four (*The Principate, 27 BC–AD 235*, pp. 177–260) provides an overview of the history of the Principate. Themes covered are the establishment of this peculiar political system (ch. 13), the reigns of the Julio-Claudian successors of Augustus (ch. 14), the civil war of AD 69 and the Flavian Dynasty (ch. 15), the "pinnacle" of the Principate (the period 96–192) (ch. 16), the civil war following the assassination of Commodus and the reigns of the Severan emperors (ch. 17). The section concludes with a discussion of the political and administrative institutions of the Principate (ch. 18). The fifth and final part of the book (*The Late Empire, AD 235–AD 476*, pp. 261–353) deals with the crisis of the third century (ch. 19), the recovery under Diocletian (ch. 21) and the development under Christian emperors down to the fall of the Western Empire (chs. 22–24). This section also contains a separate chapter on the rise of Christianity (ch. 20). A short epilogue (pp. 354–356) discusses the survival and transformation of the Empire in the East after AD 476. This is followed by a chronological list of important events,

regnal years etc. (pp. 357–364) and by an appendix explaining Roman personal names (pp. 365 f.). After a bibliography presenting the most important classical sources and providing a selection of scholarly literature, titles in languages other than English being conspicuously absent (pp. 367–384), the book ends with a general index (pp. 385–395).

Written for a general audience, the narrative contains no references to primary sources and modern scholarship. It does provide a good selection of illustrations. At the beginning of the book, there are seven maps, and there is an insert of plates in the middle of the book containing altogether 49 black and white photos along with substantial and informative captions. This section of the book constitutes an entirety of its own, a "slide-show" illustrating various aspects of Roman civilization since nowhere in the body of the text are any references to these illustrations.

Any one-volume effort by a single author covering more than a millennium's worth of history, in this particular case a history marked by very complex and dynamic processes, inevitably raises at least some initial doubts as to its prospects to be a successful one. The pertinent primary sources, together with the multitude of relevant works of modern scholarship – even within the limited scope of this particular enterprise – constitute an immensely vast material. However, the present reviewer can only note that the author has taken great pains to do a careful job; even if his book cannot be considered particularly significant or innovative, it does constitute an adequate attempt at representing the evolution of Roman history, within the specified frames, in a highly readable form.

*Kaj Sandberg*

*Aurea Roma. Dalla città pagana alla città cristiana.* A cura di SERENA ENSOLI ed EUGENIO LA ROCCA. Catalogo della mostra (Roma, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 22 dicembre 2000 – 20 aprile 2001). "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, Roma 2000. ISBN 88-8265-126-6. 711 pp., ill., piante. EUR 209.

Chi all'epoca visitò la splendida mostra romana del Palazzo delle Esposizioni potrà testimoniare che essa fu accompagnata da un altrettanto splendido volume che non solo ne costituì un valido catalogo ma tuttora fornisce al lettore una ricca raccolta di discussioni e studi approfonditi sulla Roma tardoantica e sui tanti fenomeni culturali, storici e sociali che ne sono caratteristici. Oltre al catalogo proprio (pp. 425–663) con 378 schede, presentate da quasi 90 autori e corredate da immagini di ottima qualità, il contenuto del volume si compone di cinque sezioni dedicate ciascuna a una tematica autonoma: (I) Spazio pubblico e spazio privato; (II) Le forme di autorappresentazione; (III) La vita nell'Urbe; (IV) Vecchie immagini e nuovi significati. L'alternativa in bilico; (V) L'invenzione nella tradizione: dalle immagini pagane alla visione di Dio. Tali sezioni sono composte da brevi saggi scritti da una cinquantina di autori, in cui si discutono una grande varietà di aspetti della vita urbana. Attraverso la lettura dei testi, e visionando le immagini della mostra, al lettore è consentito ripercorrere le tracce di una trasformazione affascinante, quella della *aurea Roma*, del vero *caput mundi*, in una città imbevuta di nuove mentalità che cominciarono a esprimersi in nuove e diversissime maniere, anche declinanti e, purtroppo, tendenti all'abbandono del proprio passato. Tuttavia, come è possibile ricavare dalle immagini di vari oggetti della mostra, scritti, dipinti o scolpiti, il