

I would like to note that the book is extremely demanding: it mixes texts from Greek authors with modern cultural and political theories, as well as theoretical language with examples taken from modern everyday life. There were moments when I could not see the relevance of the comparisons made (e.g. civic nudity, striptease and unwrapping gifts). On the other hand, there are many thoughtprovoking ideas and observations concerning both ancient and modern culture and one must admire the huge amount of literature referred to. I also enjoyed enormously the colourful and witty language but I also have to admit that as a non-native English speaker I learned a lot of new (to me) words, and that digesting the book took a long time.

Tiina Purola

KATJA LEMBKE: *Ägyptens späte Blüte. Die Römer am Nil*. Zaberns Bildbände zur Archäologie. Unter Mitarbeit von C. FLUCK und G. VITTMANN. Verlag Philipp von Zabern, Mainz am Rhein 2004. ISBN 3-8053-3276-9. 131 S. EUR 38,32.

*Ägyptens späte Blüte* is a contribution to the *Zaberns Bildbände zur Archäologie*, a series in which have been published, *inter alia*, books on the archaeology of both ancient Egypt and many of the Roman provinces. This book continues in both veins, finding its focus in the fusion of the Nilotic traditions with the western innovations after the annexation of Egypt to the Roman Empire, concentrating more on the material testimonies of the cultural contacts than the direct workings of the Roman government on the banks of Nile.

Lembke stresses the unique nature of Egypt as a Roman province, the great prestige of its own ancient civilization and the rare scale of its influence on the culture of the rulers. Hence, after a brief historical account of the reign of Augustus onwards, she proceeds to present the reception of Egyptian culture by the Romans and the resulting interpretations in the Egyptizing art that found its way into both public and private spheres. Then follow accounts of the Roman influence on the Egyptian traditions of town planning, religion and culture of death. The culture of the frontiers, the oases, the eastern desert and the upper course of the Nile, are treated in a separate chapter.

Lembke's work has been augmented by the texts of a Coptologist and an Egyptologist. A philologist greets with joy Vittmann's chapter on writing and administration, a theme complementing the otherwise archaeological focus of the book. The closing chapter by Fluck sketches the life and thought in late-antique Egypt in the context of early Christianity. The appended timeline and glossary are without doubt useful aids for non-specialists and students, while the lists for further reading offer an up-to-date summary of literature on the themes discussed.

The book presents in detail the results of the meeting of two strong traditions and discusses both Egyptian influences in Rome and the Roman ones in Egypt, a well-founded juxtaposition. Although the earlier cultural contacts fall outside the scope of the book, the later developments would have been contextualized by a fuller account of the pre-Augustan ones, such as the arrival of Egyptian cults in Rome.

Lembke's experience as a classical archaeologist and an Egyptologist, in fieldwork, teaching and museums alike, is reflected with enjoyable results in her book. It is a handsomely illustrated guide to the material manifestations of the Roman rule of Egypt likely to appeal

to its intended wide readership. The choice of material and the discussion of themes are well suited to the needs of students of classics or archaeology and offer insights for experts in neighbouring fields as well, while the text is clear and accessible even to laymen interested in the topic.

*Ulla Laitakari*

*Poverty in the Roman World.* Edited by MARGARET ATKINS and ROBIN OSBORNE. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006. ISBN 0-521-86211-6. XIII, 226 pp. GBP 50.

The origins of this collection by Margaret Atkins and Robin Osborne lie in a conference given in honour of Peter Garnsey in 2003, and the authors contributing to the volume are all former pupils of his. The papers published in the volume are reworked versions of the papers given at the conference.

The ten contributions (excluding the introduction) of the book can be roughly divided in two categories: the historico-archaeologically oriented, which feature approaches and questions already familiar to classical scholars; and the theologico-historically oriented, where the sources used are mostly early Church Fathers, and the questions pertain more to Christianity. Both categories have important bearing on the question of poverty.

In his introduction ("Introduction: Roman poverty in context") Robin Osborne reminds us that "poverty" in the Roman sense was a relative concept, not an absolute one. This is in strong contrast to our current concept of poverty as an absolute state. In the ancient world, poverty was more the lack of something than only having very little. As a consequence, the social category of "poor" was not well defined, and it could signify persons who in our view were relatively well-to-do – they were poor only relatively, because they did not have enough of something. This point of Osborne's summarises well a recurrent theme in the articles.

Neville Morley in his paper ("The poor in the city of Rome") tackles especially the contrast between our modern conception of poverty and the meaning of the corresponding Roman concept. His analysis of poverty in the economic writings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries shows how the concept of "poverty" was formulated then, and how the "common sense" meaning of the word we share actually derives from these discussions. Morley uses the triad of "vulnerability", "exclusion" and "shame" to try to find and position the poor in Roman society, and through these, proposes a basic idea of how the history of poverty in Rome might be written.

Walter Scheidel proposes a very different approach to the question in his chapter ("Stratification, deprivation and quality of life"). He looks at poverty with two different concepts: asset and income distribution in the society, and quality of life. Scheidel wants to be able to compare Rome to other historical societies, and he proposes these two measures for that purpose. Based on the evidence of land ownership, he challenges the common binary division of Roman society into haves and have-nots, and suggests that the scale of property and resources might actually be much more nuanced; the problem lies in our uncritical acceptance of the division *honestiores/humiliores* as the basic structuring principle for that society. He convincingly argues that the sizes of the propertied classes could have been much larger than is usually assumed, and that this would lead to the existence of a "solid middle-class". In the "quality of life" approach Scheidel shows how difficult it is to relate GDP to the overall quality