

evidence. His answer is threefold: property could be held as valuable items, as coinage or in bank accounts, and the selection between these different methods seems to have been a function of personal preference as well as for practical reasons of safety and security.

That the monetary practices were indeed very complex, and often functioned on an abstract level, is also very evident from Peter van Minnen's contribution on Late Antique Egypt, where we find numerous transactions on paper, and a fascinating interplay among inflation, grain prices and the changing value of money. In contrast to the Egyptian situation, where the monetization seems to affect all levels of society, Constantina Katsari concludes in her contribution that, in the North-Eastern parts of the Empire, it was mainly the civic administration and urbanization and to a lesser extent the military, that brought along the monetization of the local economy.

The book concludes with Walter Scheidel's comparison of the development of coinage within the Mediterranean region and China. Scheidel's intentions seem quite universalizing, as he tries through this comparison to develop an understanding of the birth of coinage in general. One can always criticize this kind of approach, but it cannot be denied that this makes an interesting read, and analogies do have the effect of widening the reader's mental horizons by introducing factors that one perhaps had not thought about before.

What is very evident in this book are two things: the thorough monetization of the Roman society, and the existence of abstract monetary institutions. This should not be taken to mean that the economy of the Roman world was anything like the current day world economy, but to remind us that it is not the institutions that make the modern Economy. Most of the Romans calculated prices in money, handled cash, bought and sold using money. If they had any extra, they could save it with a banker, and if they needed a loan, it might be available from the same source. The high level of sophistication of their financial institutions can hardly be doubted by someone who has read this book, and economic historians will have to look elsewhere when trying to explain the success of the modern Economy as compared to the Classical one. Moreover, the classical scholar reading this book might start to realize that money is more than just coins.

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ROSS BURNS: *Damascus: a History*. Routledge, Abingdon 2007. ISBN 978-0-415-41317-6. XX, 386 pp. EUR 27.

In his *Monuments of Syria: An Historical Guide* (I. B. Tauris, London 1993) Ross Burns gave a definitive and useful listing of the great variety of historical and archaeological sites in Syria, providing something of a cross between a travel guide and a reference work. Now the author revisits the land of his expertise, this time presenting a narrative of the millennia-spanning history of Damascus. The book in question has several aspects to recommend it even to a classical scholar in Finland – especially as the Finnish Institute in Damascus has opened in its renovated building in the south-eastern quarter of timeless Old Damascus.

The writing of urban history on a chronological scale demanded by a subject like this is a laborious undertaking, especially when there exists as convoluted a physical record of the past urban phases such as in Damascus, and it would be unreasonable to expect a historian to be a specialist on every era. These points considered, Burns has succeeded outstandingly in

providing a coherent and fascinating survey of Damascene history, interesting for the art historian, archaeologist and historian alike. In addition to being eminently useful and well-informed, the book is also highly readable; the style of the author is vivid and clear, though occasionally prone to colloquialisms. A few factual errors evident to a classical scholar remain, but all in all, *Damascus: a History* is an authoritative and reliable account of its subject. The book contains 83 in-text figures in the form of photographs, plans and maps that clarify both geographical, topographical and architectural features, as well as some aspects of historical development – the overall quality of these illustrations is very good.

Burns chooses to shed light on the less known urban phases of Damascus, a city so famously high-unexcavated, not "[...] by the careful shifting of ancient texts or inscriptions", but by scrutinising the city itself as the basic document of its own history. This examination of the building record and surviving structural remains as evidence for the historical development of the cityscape functions very well in the context of the later periods (ca. 12th century onwards), but in dealing with the earlier history of Damascus, the results may seem meagre at times. On the whole, the significance of the book lies much less in descriptions of any particular period than in being a concerted and informed general account of the whole wide sweep of Damascene urban history.

The introduction provides some geographical orientation and legendary material pertaining to the prerequisites of urban culture at the site of Damascus. From this, Burns moves on to examine the early stages of Damascene history (9000–1100 BC) from the first village communities to the disruptive upheavals of the Late Bronze Age. Chapter 2 deals with the rise of Damascus to a position of cultural, economic and political importance under the Aramaeans, as well as the uneasy relationship of the Aramaean states with the aggressive power of Assyria, while chapter 3 covers the period to the advent of Hellenism, with Damascus successively as an important local centre of Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian Empires. It is in the latter chapter that one of the few factual errors of the book obvious to a classical scholar is encountered, namely on page 23 under the rubric *Neo-Babylonian rule* (572–532 BC), where the author writes as follows: "The Babylonians allied themselves with the Medes (sometimes known as "Neo-Babylonians"), another population wave from the north-east [...] In 612 BC, Nineveh fell to the Medes and the Babylonians [...] Under Nabopolassar (r. 625–609 BC), the Medes took over the full extent of the Assyrian Empire." This is unfortunately somewhat erroneous, for though the Babylonians indeed allied themselves with the Medes in toppling the Assyrian rump-state, the Medes are certainly not the same people as the Neo-Babylonians, the first king of whom (not of the Medes) was Nabopolassar. The contemporaneous king of the Medes was Cyaxares, and while there was a marriage alliance between the two monarchs, they most definitely ruled two distinct states.

Chapters 4 to 7 cover the time period most relevant to a classical scholar or historian of the Byzantine Empire, whereas chapter 8 narrates the transition of Syria from Roman to Muslim sovereignty. Though the visible remains in the city from this period are still far from substantial, the author manages to give a plausible and attractively written account of both the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Burns' prime source for the city's ancient topography seems to be the respectable, if slightly dated, survey of C. Watzinger and K. Wulzinger from 1921, but he manages to do much more than just reiterate their points. Of particular worth is the discussion concerning the successive building phases of the great temple of Damascene

Jupiter, preceded by a sanctuary of the storm-god Hadad and followed first by the Cathedral of Saint John and finally by the resplendent Umayyad Mosque. All phases are amply provided with illustrations and plans. Chapter 9, closing part 1, forms an epilogue of sorts to the history of ancient Damascus, much in the same way that the Umayyads formed the last stage of "Classical" tradition in Syria.

In part 2, Burns sets out to describe the more recent history of Damascus – the history that can even nowadays be read from the myriad Islamic monuments of the city. This he does with passion and an excellent eye for detail, not to mention a certain sly wit in describing the intricate policies of the Crusader Period or the machinations around the Ottoman-era *Hajj*. First, as a preface – or rather an interlude – the author examines the question of defining an end to "ancient" Damascus. Chapters 10 and 11 first narrate the confusing period of the early 'Abbasid dynasty, combined with the first inroads of Turkish elements into the power-structure of the city, and then the steady increase of Damascus' strategic and economic importance as it emerged as a focal point of resistance against the Crusaders. The great architectural florescence under Nur al-Din is treated at length and in depth. Chapter 12 discusses Damascus under Saladin and the later Ayyubids, as well as documenting the steady diminishing of architectural remains as the city again found itself on the periphery of political and cultural development.

Chapter 13 narrates the effect on Damascus of Mongol-Ayyubid campaigning in the 1200's and proceeds to give a generalized account of Mamluk rule. The focus is – as is suitable – mainly on the development of the cityscape, and the attitude of the Damascenes towards a Shi'a rule. During this period a new class of evidence appears in greater amount, namely, the westerners' descriptions of Damascus – these are used by the author skilfully to give flavour and substance to the text. Finally, chapters 14 and 15 recount the fortunes of Damascus under the Ottomans up to the creation of the French Mandate in Syria following the First World War. These centuries have, of course, left many structural remains in the city, and Burns uses this material to furnish a fluent and interesting account of the urban history right up to the brink of modern Syria.

The end of the book contains the endnotes, bibliography, a much needed glossary and a most illustrative appendix of maps – including a very detailed one of Old Damascus, which, for a travelling classicist, proved to be a far better guide to the architectural and historical gems of al-Sham than any commercially available fold-outs.

*Antti Lampinen*

*Women's Influence on Classical Civilization.* Edited by FIONA MCHARDY – EIREANN MARSHALL. Routledge, London – New York, 2004. ISBN 0-415-30957-3 (hb), ISBN 0-415-30958-1 (pb). XII, 196 pp. GBP 70 (hb), GBP 19.90 (pb).

During the past few decades scholars have begun discussing the lives and activities of women in antiquity. However, these studies have usually examined aspects outside public and political life, in contrast to "male historiography". This volume offers interesting insight into the world of women in Greek and Roman antiquity. It examines how and to what extent women influenced different traditionally male-dominated aspects of culture, such as economics, politics, science, law and art.