

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.

The contributors raise new and interesting and in some cases freshly provocative questions, such as misogynist features in the history of western culture, the female ability – but also the restriction – to wield public and political power through male relatives. The lack of written sources by women leaves us to form our view of the women of antiquity based on records by men, which can often idealise women according to the moral values of their age. This can also obscure what women really did, and what their world, and behaviour, was like in reality. This volume also notes the problem in modern scholarship that some scholars still do not accept women's influence in antiquity, inflicting present-day cultural gender views onto their interpretations.

In this volume some strongly male-dominated areas in cultural history are investigated. Gráinne McLaughlin discusses in her article ancient female philosophers and scientists. She notes the unfortunate misogynist features of these fields, but in spite of those, through the support of male relatives, women could make achievements in the fields of mathematics, physics and philosophy. I found Nancy S. Rabinowitz's article "Politics of inclusion/exclusion in Attic tragedy" to be very interesting, where she examines the public/private and culture/nature dichotomies in Classical Athens. She considers how the male anxiety towards (politically) powerful women is portrayed in Greek tragedies, such as in the figures of Aeschylus' *Klytaimestra* and Euripides' *Medeia*. Rabinowitz also brings into the discussion how re-readings of these plays can benefit modern feminist thinking. Judith P. Hallet discusses how women could use power through their male relatives, and in the case of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, through her son. A mother is in a special position to instruct her son, but as Hallet argues, for a Roman mother to intervene in the political world of men even through advising her own son, shows a radical political stance (p. 37–8). Whether the son listened to his mother's advice, is a different matter, for Hallet notes that Cornelia failed to influence her son (p. 32).

This volume is an interesting book to anyone interested in the life of women in antiquity. It provides an unconventional and wider perspective on the roles of women in the societies of the Greek and Roman world. Also, the extensive bibliography and careful index prove to be useful for further reading.

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*Religions orientales – culti misterici. Neue Perspektiven – nouvelles perspectives – prospettive nuove.* Edited by CORINNE BONNET – JÖRG RÜPKE – PAOLO SCARPI. Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 16. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2006. ISBN 3-515-08871-7. 269 S. EUR 56.

The book "Religions orientales – culti misterici" is published as a result of the joint inter-European research project "Les religions orientales dans le monde gréco-romain" (2005–2006). One crucial aim of the project was to re-evaluate and update the concept of "oriental religions" that has both inspired and haunted historians of ancient religions since the publication of Franz Cumont's classic *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* in 1906. Some of the book's eighteen articles deal with historiography and previous uses of the concept of "oriental religions" and related terminology. Some articles focus on a considerably narrower area, moving towards new interpretations of specific aspects of "oriental religions".