

graffiti: now the uncertainties of the assumed text leave too much room for doubt.

Rachel Mairs' chapter on the graffiti found at a pharaonic temple site on the route from the Eastern Desert to the Nile Valley maps the history of writing at the site from the 13th century BC all the way to 19th century AD. The official Egyptian dedicatory inscriptions mark the beginning of writing, but graffiti in Demotic seem to be absent from the period anterior to the Hellenistic Greek texts. Most of them seem to record gratitude or prayers to Pan for the successful crossing of the desert route. The tradition seems to continue until the most recent texts. The landscape and location explain the birth and importance of the textual tradition in this case.

In all, the concrete geographical and archaeological contexts are not prominent in this book and there are remarkably few distribution maps – often only one general site map as, for example, in the cases of Dura-Europos and Aphrodisias. The locations mentioned in the three chapters on Pompeii are all marked on the same map (Fig. 1.2) which is a fairly strange solution considering the importance of the locations in Keegan's chapter. One wonders what a more detailed analysis of the locations where the texts have been found could have brought into the discussion of their significance.

Graffiti are a difficult combination of language, visuality and context, and a gaze that focuses exclusively on the text or the image is bound to leave important questions unanswered. This is why contextual analyses are especially important. Chaniotis concludes the volume by writing that the study of graffiti is "never, ever boring" (p. 206); the reviewers can only agree.

Kalle Korhonen – Eeva-Maria Viitanen

MALCOLM CHOAT: *Belief and Cult in Fourth-Century Papyri*. *Studia Antiqua Australiensia* 1. Brepols, Turnhout 2006. ISBN 2-503-51327-1. XIV, 217 pp. EUR 40.

This book is an excellent example of how cultural processes can be explored via linguistic processes. It focuses on how semantic shift in certain terms and the use of certain types of formularies in fourth-century Egyptian papyri are due to the rise of Christianity. The material used consists of Greek and Coptic documentary papyri, most commonly letters, where the everyday and personal language use allows us to also discern the religious views of the writers or of a community. As a term, however, "religion" is replaced by the twin term "belief and cult", which may give us a more exact picture of what is in fact talked about in the papyri.

The rise and spread of the Coptic script temporally coincides with the rise and spread of Christianity in Egypt. Therefore, it is important to find out when and how these two interrelate and when and how they do not. Unfortunately, with Coptic material several questions remain open as the size of the published corpus is relatively small, although the situation is improving all the time. Therefore, problems still exist in, e.g., dating the texts both on palaeographic and linguistic grounds, and naturally this is reflected in the uncertainty of the conclusions drawn from the texts. This is, of course, explicitly recognized in the book which obviously does not ignore other problems one meets when using papyrological material as a source. Choat guides us through those problems towards a better understanding of the varied manifestations of the co-existence of traditional Graeco-Roman and Egyptian beliefs with Christian ones.

Marja Vierros