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Whatever one concludes about the validity of his fascinating theory, the preponderance of Mithraic initiates that were in the military with their regular redeployments, the imperial administrative officials with their reassignments, and merchants (concentrated in Ostia) with their mobile trade links, all support M.'s final conclusion, at least generally, that 'Mithras was a fit god for protecting and increasing the Roman Empire and supporting the imperial ideology' (p. 97), a conclusion that echoes Reinhold Merkelbach's earlier conclusion that Mithraism was a Religion der Loyalität zum römischen Kaiserreich (1984, 153–88).

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John A. North (ed.), *The Religious History of the Roman Empire: The Republican Centuries*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. 416 pp. ISBN 978-0-199-64406-3.

This volume in honour of Simon Price assembles the evergreens of Roman religious history, bringing together papers that have provoked the minds of scholars for years, and even decades. As a student and scholar of Roman religious history, this reviewer is certainly no exception in this regard. All the assembled papers paved the way towards my dissertation; they piqued my curiosity, challenged my existing perspectives and inspired my research to this day. Due to this personal background, I fully agree with John North who, in his introduction to this volume, states that 'for some scholars [this volume] will still present a basis for future study; for some others it will mark the end of one era and the launching of a very different one' (p. 2). The fields of study covered in this collection therefore involve key aspects of debate, including: (a) gods and goddesses (J. North, A. Bendlin, F. Coarelli); (b) war rituals (J. Rüpke, O. De Cazanove); (c) priests (J. Scheid, M. Beard, R. Flemming, D. Gargola); (d) communication (A. Bendlin, J. Rüpke, D. Feeney); and (e) innovations (C. Smith, J. Scheid, M. Beard, D. Gargola, A. Schmid, F. Coarelli). This broad thematic outline is complemented by a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches that

range from ritual theory (C. Smith, D. Feeney) and performative acts (J. North), to textuality (D. Feeney) and approaches towards gender (R. Flemming).

The aim of assembling the most influential papers within this field of study also has another merit worth mentioning, namely that it translates the various contributions, some of which were originally published in French, German or Italian, into English. Whether or not one is sympathetic to the loss of linguistic diversity in classics and the widely discussed problems pertaining to this topic, one must admit that such an endeavour is certainly of value for students who simply wish to be enchanted and challenged by what experts in the field have to say about key aspects of ancient Roman religion.

Given the nature of this edited volume, this review will not summarise each chapter. Rather, it seeks to bring together and draw a picture of the merits and impacts these chapters have had and might still have. The latter is already somewhat provided by the authors themselves, for almost every chapter ends with an ‘afterword’ that locates each text within a recent scholarly debate. Against this detailed contextualisation, the following review aims at a bird’s eye view. It assembles the chapters alongside the shifts in research paradigms that these papers either evoked, or were an important part of. The review thus does not follow the chapter outline, which organises the volume chronologically and topographically into the sections ‘Early Rome’, ‘Republican Practices and Ideas’, ‘Sacrifice’, ‘Rome and Italy’ and ‘Late Republican Transformations’.

The first paradigm shift involves those papers that consistently remind their readers of the limitations of an all too legalistic approach to Roman religion, as well as the limitations of the scholarly tendency towards “grand schemes” and overarching explanatory models of Roman religion. While John Scheid’s chapter, ‘The Priest and the Magistrate’, questions the idea of a continuous and strict separation of the two spheres of *ius publicum* and *ius sacrum*, Mary Beard’s contribution, ‘Acca Larentia Gains a Son’, positions itself in opposition to the (at times still prevalent) view of religion as a political phenomenon—its surrogate, even. In his ‘Not the One nor the Many’, Andreas Bendlin goes one step further, advocating a ‘pragmatic approach’ to Roman religion. By doing so, he points to the very moments of human-divine interaction that draw on the individual perceptions that are grounded in local knowledge, rather than grand systems or theology, as is often suggested. Christopher Smith, in his chapter ‘Dead Dogs and Rattles’, provides an instructive example of how to take another route; instead of first looking into a system, he orientates his approach to the ritual practices from which social development and functional stratification emerged.

Some contributions point to the seductive power of the narratives of our sources, and herein lies another important shift in paradigm—the issue of historicising from literary texts. Too often, scholars fall prey to the stories and descriptions in our sources, in the process ignoring the fact that each description exists within a complex narrative structure. In his ‘How Horatius Held the Door-Post’, John North exemplifies this with Livy, while in ‘Interpreting Sacrificial Ritual in Roman Poetry’, Denis Feeney goes one step further. While not denying relationship between the text and the cultural and social environment it is derived from, his comparative work with Virgil and Ovid nonetheless makes a strong point that this relationship is almost irrecoverable for us. In another piece, ‘Cicero and Divination’, Mary Beard advocates for investigating the wider cultural and intellectual contexts in which treatises are written.

Source critical issues of genre and authorship thus seem even more relevant when dealing with ancient religions and how they are represented within the sources. This certainly holds true for the issue of gender, which is yet another shift in paradigms. In her ‘Festus and the Role of Women in Roman Religion’, for instance, Rebecca Flemming makes a strong case against the (also at times

still prevalent) notion of women being marginal in religion, being restricted to their ‘women’s religion’ and even that they lacked ‘sacrificial capacity’. Meanwhile, the involvement of *matronae* and their goods in ritual activity is investigated by an archaeological contribution on ‘The Lucus PISAURENSIS and the Romanisation of the Ager Gallicus’ by Filippo Coarelli.

One might thus sound a cautionary note about both the authorship and the implied readership of ancient texts, all of which were largely male and upper-class. The importance of a text being modelled after the implied needs of a readership also holds true for religious rituals, which were themselves performances that were aimed at an audience. This type of “performative turn” is exemplified by Jörg Rüpke, whose piece ‘Religion and War’ outlines the political function of religion in times of war—a function that relies on audiences. Similarly, Alfred Schmid’s ‘The Peace of Augustus’ contextualises Roman emperors’ attempts to gain public acceptance by placing themselves at the centre of the cosmos, as well as their representations in calendars and astrology.

A further shift in paradigm is that of ‘places of remembrance’ (Erinnerungsorte). John Scheid, in his second contribution, ‘Rome and the Great Places of Worship in Italy’, covers this aspect by providing a case study on how Octavian (Augustus) appropriated such places, thus providing new context and meaning to them. Though not explicitly labelled, another rather current shift in paradigm might be that of “appropriation”. Daniel Gargola, with his ‘The Ritual of Centuriation’, Olivier de Cazanove with his ‘Rites and Practices of Warfare’, as well as the aforementioned second contribution by John Scheid, all outline practices of adaptation by which the meaning and purpose of these adapted rituals might change, or even produce entirely new forms of ritual practice and meaning.

In sum, I can only repeat what has been written above, namely that it was truly a personal treat to read those papers once again, about a decade after I first came across most of them. However, this review is not meant to be one-sided, and there is reason for criticism. To begin with a minor issue, the updating ‘afterwords’ could have benefitted from some more attention to detail. When such updates at times only refer to one’s own academic output, it is rather difficult to gain a nuanced picture of how the contribution is perceived by broader academic discourse. Another critical note might be marginal to some, but essential to others; I thus leave it to them as to how they position themselves within the ongoing discourses concerning ancient religions and ancient history in general. To wit:

I was rather surprised to see no chapter on the so-called deviant and foreign religions and their practices, whether they concern magic and / or supposedly oriental and mystic cults. True, these practices played a minor role in the source material compared to their coverage in the early empire, but they nonetheless existed—by way of example, we need only think of Mater Magna or Bona Dea. Studies on these two (and further) cults challenged our notions of normative Roman religion and the gender roles involved therein. The same holds true for the supposedly marginal people who we know were an essential part of major events, as can be seen in the public *supplicationes*. To take a random example, a translation of Bernhard Linke’s article on the public *supplicationes* (‘Zur gesellschaftlichen Funktion von *supplicationes* und *lectisternia* in der römischen Republik’), irrespective of the many points on which I would disagree with him, could have widened the scope and offered more challenging perspectives that involve—despite the aforementioned marginal groups – issues of sensory experiences in religion and the emotions they might have elicited. Since such perspectives remain somewhat marginal in the outline of this volume, its structure risks reproducing certain narratives of an elite, male-centred state religion that was somehow obsessed with war, politics and technicalities, despite the contributions within that seek to challenge these

prevalent notions. Since one should also be grateful for an edited volume under 400 pages, this criticism has, of course, its limits in terms of what we can expect from just one book.

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Samuele Rocca, *In the Shadow of the Caesars: Jewish Life in Roman Italy*. Leiden: Brill, 2022. XIII+345 pp., ISBN: 9789004517042.

The Jewish community of the city of Rome is one of the best attested Jewish diaspora communities. It is referenced by many ancient writers, including Cicero, Suetonius, Tacitus and, of course, Josephus, and the amazing Jewish catacombs discovered in the city provide abundant archaeological evidence for this society. Such a community, usually referred to as one of the greatest communities of antiquity, deserves a thorough examination of all the available data. The book at the heart of this review tries to do this while also examining the evidence for Jewish presence in the rest of Roman Italy. The book consists of seven articles and book chapters published in the past that have been adapted, updated and revised to fit within the book, as well as information that the author has not previously addressed.

The book starts, as is tradition, with an interesting introduction that presents the layout of the book and its logic while exploring the historiography of the subject, including whether ancient antisemitism existed. It is followed by the first chapter, which warrants special attention and nicely presents the early evidence for the Jewish community in the city of Rome. However, clear problems with Rocca's methodology, along with his unawareness of recent publications on several topics that he mentioned, are clear in his examination of the archaeological evidence. For example, on page 34 he is unaware that already in 1996, Speidel showed that the correct reading of Flavia Optata's funerary inscription does not indicate that her husband served in a Jewish unit.¹ This corrected reading was mentioned and recently embraced in several publications.² Furthermore, Rocca conducts a debate regarding the size of the Jewish community in the city, where he dismisses the figure of 4,000 Jews of military age being recruited in the city in 19 CE, appearing in both Josephus and Tacitus. He then suggests that the 8,000, who were mentioned as a welcoming party to receive the delegation to Augustus in *Jewish Antiquities*, are almost all of the Jewish population in the city. This is illogical, as most Jews had to work, and so could not have been part of the welcoming party. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that infants and small children would be taken for fear they would be crushed in the crowd. In addition, were most of the Jews even aware that the delegation arrived? And did they even care?

¹ M.P. Speidel (1996). 'Raising New Units for the Late Roman Army: "Auxilia Palatina",' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 50, 164.

² Raúl González-Salinero (2022). *Military Service and the Integration of Jews into the Roman Empire*. Leiden: Brill, 153–60; W. Eck (2021). 'Die – fast – unsichtbare jüdische Diaspora im Westen des Imperium Romanum vor der Spätantike,' in M. White, J. Schröter, and V.M. Lepper (eds.), *Torah, Temple, Land*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 248–49; H. Olshanetsky (2018). 'The Jewish Soldiers of Titus and His Successors, the Roman Emperors,' *Hayo Haya* 12, 19–20; H. Olshanetsky (2021). 'In the Service of the Empire: Continuity of Jewish Military Service in the Armies of Rome,' *Sapiens Ubique Civis* 2, 148–49.