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are excellent, its reference to a different one is problematic. On pages 209–12, he mentions that the owner of a gladiator helmet found in Pompeii was Jewish, since a seven-fronds palm tree with two clusters of dates appear on the helmet, and this discussion is similar to the article published by him in 2006.⁴ In both, he disregards the fact that many nations, like the Phoenicians, used the palm tree as a symbol. More problematic is the lack of awareness that the palm frond was given to the victor in gladiatorial games. And so, palms became a symbol of victory in the arena, and thus appear on many gladiators' graves.⁵⁹

The last chapter is very different and more general in nature, as it explores the Roman response to the First Jewish revolt, and the place of the revolt in Flavian imperial ideology. It surveys Josephus' writings and the way he portrays certain parts of the revolt through mainly focusing on the victory procession in Rome. The author also devotes a significant discussion to the procession in general, its artistic and literary representations and the Flavian buildings, erected to commemorate the war or funded by the spoils from this war. Lastly, Rocca considers the Flavian depiction of the war on coins and beyond. His main conclusion is that the Jews are not represented as barbarians, but rather as civilized people and that Jewish men are represented as masculine. This portrayal was also meant to glorify the Flavians as the victors that subdued a major nation.

To conclude, the book attempts to tackle a worthy topic, sometimes successfully, and at other times ineffectually. It does offer interesting discussions and information, although the book would benefit if the author updates and amends his discussions in a new edition. It also highlights how much new material on the topic has been uncovered or published, and that the book in its current form is far from being the last word on the topic.

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Louise Blanke and Jennifer Cromwell (eds.), *Monastic Economies in Late Antique Egypt and Palestine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, pp. 396. ISBN 978-1-107-27897-3.

The book opens with a lengthy chapter (L. Blanke, J. Cromwell, 'The Monastic Economies in Late Antique Egypt and Palestine. Past, Present, and Future,' pp. 1–38) summarising the state of research on monasticism in late antiquity with particular reference to the economic aspects of monastic communities. The authors describe the emergence of the old myth, based on hagiographical sources, of 'holy men', monks dedicated to asceticism and meditation, living in seclusion and economic dependence on the rest of society—followed by a description of the decline of this myth through archaeological and papyrological research of at least the last twenty years. They summarise the main theses of the other twelve chapters—on the various forms of economic activity of monks and their active participation in the economic life of Egypt and Palestine. In doing so, they point to research

⁴ S. Rocca (2006). 'A Jewish Gladiator in Pompeii', *Materia giudaica* 11, no. 1–2, 287–301.

⁵ M. Carter (2006). 'Palms for the Gladiators: Martial, Spect. 31 (27 [29])', *Latomus* 65, no. 3, 650–58; M. Carter (2009). 'Accepi ramum: Gladiatorial Palms and the Chavagnes Gladiator Cup', *Latomus* 68, no. 2, 438–41; H. Olshanetsky (2023). 'Were There Jewish Gladiators? A Re-Evaluation of the Available Archaeological and Textual Evidence', *Atiqot* 111, 124–26; H. Olshanetsky (2021). 'Do We Really Have Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Gladiators?', *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology* 8, no. 3, 62–63.

perspectives (the economy of the anachoretēs, the role of geographical conditions in the development of monasticism, and monasticism in Nubia), making their study an extremely useful overview of research for both the historian of Christianity and the researcher of the economic history of the Roman and Byzantine empires.

On the development of monasticism in Arabia and Palestine (the first communities were established to look after the chapels located east of the Jordan, e.g. on Mount Nebo and Mount Hor near Petra), and the strong links between monastic communities and settlements and churches (small groups of monks managing church estates and the production of various goods present in almost every Byzantine settlement in Jordan), writes B. Hamaraneh ('Monastic Estates in Byzantine Arabia and Palaestina,' pp. 41–75). She highlights the little-known fact that Arab sources see monastic communities primarily as landed estates or farms (rather than congregations of Christians), hospitably hosting caliphs or their governors. She points to the irrigation infrastructure (dams, terraces, etc.) used here and there (Jebel Harun near Petra), remembering Nabataean times. She discusses agricultural production (dominated by barley, lentils, peas, also vines), and claims that there were no olive presses in the monastic complexes—although such a dictum should be confronted with the book by T. Waliszewski,¹ which is conspicuously missing from the bibliography. She gives examples of material comfort (liturgical furniture, mosaics, etc.), which demonstrates strong patronage in the form of donations from the laity and the Church. It proves that monastic communities were able to rent or sell buildings belonging to them, so they participated, but it is difficult to say on what scale, in the regional property market. It is important to note the not very accurate use of the term Palaestina, or the name of the province of Palaestina Tertia, to designate all the lands lying east of the Jordan. Palaestina Tertia included southern Idumea, Nabatea and Arabia, almost the entire Negev desert and the Wadi al-Arab Valley.² However, east of the Jordan, there was also the province of Palestina Secunda, occupying part of the Jordan valley, southeast of the Lake Tiberias (between the cities of Gadara, Pella, Abila and Capitolias).³ Besides, Sozomen, a fifth-century church historian, appears in a paragraph on the role of hagiography in creating the image of monks, which may mislead as to which historiographical genre Sozomen actually represented.

In turn, I. Marthot-Santinello ('Monastic Estates in Transitions from Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Evidence from Aphrodito,' pp. 76–98) challenges the previous number of monastic communities in Aphrodito, clearly inflated due to interpretative errors (general and allusive words, e.g. Gr. *oros*, *topos*, were considered monastic communities).⁴ The overestimation of this number has led to another erroneous thesis, about the significant contribution of the 'monasteries' to the economy of Aphrodito—in fact, only one of the communities (Apa Souros) played a major role. An interesting observation for the historian of Byzantine administration is that some monastic communities may have been responsible for state tax collection (they were considered as a special fiscal units—chorion—subordinate to the nearest city).

¹ Waliszewski (2013).

² On the borders between provinces, see the official list of cities dating to the sixth century AD – Synekdemōs, 42; See also modern maps: Talbert (2000), maps 70–71, 76, 102 and Ababsa (2013), 163; More on historical geography of the Palaestina Tertia, cf. Gutwein (1981), 87–160.

³ Synekdemōs, 41–42; Talbert (2000), maps 69, 102; Ababsa (2013), 163.

⁴ Timm (1985), 1443–55; Papaconstantinou (2001), 296–98.

T. Derda, J. Wegner ('The Naqlun Fathers and Their Business Affairs: Private Assets and Activities of the Monks in a Semi-Anachoritic Community in the Late Antique Faym,' pp. 99–126) claim, on the other hand, that the monks of Deir El-Naqlun (Fayum) had their own private estates, which allowed them to engage in various commercial transactions (the purchase of clothing). It is difficult to say whether they had communal property and whether they also carried out transactions on behalf of the entire community. What is certain, however, is that they provided loans in cash to the people of the Arsinoe area and financed the production of wine, which they could later purchase at reduced prices and redistribute in the region. Business sometimes went beyond the borders of the nom based on individual contacts, sometimes on affinity. Since the erection of some buildings required external services of skilled craftsmen and labourers, it can be assumed that the monks were relatively wealthy.

D. Dzierzbicka ('Monastic Vintages. The Economic Role of Wine in Egyptian Monasteries in the Sixth to Eighth Centuries,' pp. 129–51) notes that few sources attest to monastic ownership of vineyards before the sixth century (it developed later as a result of various donations), although they were recipients of not inconsiderable quantities of wine (we know the exact statistics) for various purposes: liturgical, less often food, and as a means of payment for services such as craftsmanship. Monks most often leased vineyards to the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, in return for a share of the harvest (up to 50 per cent of the amount), rather than, as in the case of secular tenants, for a fixed monetary instalment. Wine production and trade in the small monasteries of the Thebes area, due to the barren lands on both sides of the Nile, did not play a major role, in contrast to central Egypt, where there were large communities with sizable cultivated fields, including vineyards.

D.L. Brooks Hedstrom ('Cooking, Baking, and Serving: A Window into the Kitchen of Egyptian Monastic Housholds and the Archaeology of Cooking,' pp. 152–80) makes an interesting comparison—of the ways of preparing meals as depicted in sources from late antiquity and in photographs by Th. Whitemore (1930s). She demonstrates the use of the same methods and similar tools (such as the u-shaped hearth seen in the sixth-century *Vienna Genesis* manuscript and in photographs) that were in use in Egyptian monasteries. On the other hand, archaeological research shows great diversity in terms of the layout of outbuildings, including kitchens, sometimes forming part of the monks' private rooms, other times leading out into courtyards. Refectories were rare, with a predominance of multi-purpose rooms used for prayer, dining or receiving visitors at the same time.

M.-A. El Dorry ('It's a Dung Job: Exploring Fuel Disc Production in Egyptian Monasteries,' pp. 212–32) argues that in some Egyptian monasteries (Kom el-Nana, Wadi el-Natrun) dung was the main fuel. Dung burns at a high temperature and for a long time (we have specific values given) with low smoke emissions. Dung as a fuel was used from the Old Kingdom up to Roman times, although there is little information about it in Coptic sources. An analysis of a few words suggests that in the monastery of Apa Jeremias there was a function of a person loading dung into the cooker. The dung trade was regional in nature. The author also refers to ethnographic observations documenting the use of dung in 19th- and 20th-century Egypt.

The not inconsiderable economic position of the monks is indicated by the 'production' of manuscripts in the Fayum region, as reported by A. Myers Achi ('Illuminating the Scriptoria: Monastic Book Production at the Medieval Monastery at the Medieval Monastery of St Michael,' pp. 233–67). The so-called St Michael Collection (8th/9th c.) has been thoroughly analysed. Judging by this collection, we see that the creation of manuscripts must have been very expensive (we have the given value of St Michael Collection in solids) because, in addition to the costly materials (parchment, ink, etc.), it required the employment of masters to draw, colour etc., for which the

monks were paid with wine, grain or other goods. The copying of books itself was also considered a penance, which to some extent helped to reduce the cost of 'production'.

An analysis of the papyri (P. Ness., III, 79) found in the wall of the so-called Northern Church in the monastery of Sergius and Bacchus, proves the acceptance by the monks of gifts (*prophorai*), which would presumably have been intended for the construction of specific rooms in the church, in exchange for mention during the liturgy. The same papyri also mention gifts (*eulogiai*), which did not impose any obligation on the monks (of mass intention, as the publisher of these papyri, C. Kraemer, thought), but which should also not be considered as a kind of church tax (as F. Trombley thought).⁵ This is demonstrated by D.F. Caner ('Distinguishing Offerings from Blessing in Early Byzantine Monasticism: The Significance of P. Ness. III 79 (ca. 600 AD),' pp. 271–97).

L.S. Crastel, S. Olschok, T.S. Richter ('Staple for Body and Soul: Working at and Visiting the Upper Egyptian Monastery Deir Anba Hadra,' pp. 298–33) have analysed Coptic inscriptions at Deir Anba Hadra (10th–15th centuries) suggesting an organised activity of the monastic administration (e.g. the provision of coloured ink) to facilitate the making of inscriptions by pilgrims to certify their stay at the site, perhaps in exchange for some remuneration. Other inscriptions evidence the presence of a monk-painter from the monastery of Sohag, which may prove the flow of craftsmen between some monastic communities in Egypt. The household buildings indicate self-sufficiency in food and necessities. Identified installation for the production of castor oil (not sesame), garum and wine (not salt)—in both cases the authors dispute the findings of U. Monneret de Villard).⁶ The number and size of the ovens, mills, pools and other household installations suggest food production for around 80 monks.

The monastic complex (Ras Siyagha) dedicated to Moses, on Mount Nebo had cultivated fields within a 4–5 km radius, although due to the difficulty of reconstructing the boundaries between uses, it is difficult to say which plots belonged to the monks. Medium-sized facilities for making wine or baking bread suggest production for the community's needs only, perhaps also for the local market. The maintenance of the entire, rather large (c. 6640 sq. m.) monastic complex required considerable resources, indicating secular and religious patronage (donations came, among others, from the bishops of Madaba), as described by D. Bianchi ('The Monastic Landscape of Mount Nebo: An Economic Pattern in the Province of Arabia,' pp. 334–58).

A chapter by P. Tutty ('Travel in the Texts: Monastic Journeys in Late Antique Egypt,' pp. 359–86) discusses monks travelling all over Egypt, sometimes for religious, sometimes for business purposes. The monks used land transport and boats, paying for very expensive means of transport (clearly attested in the case of the Nag Hammadi communities), which underlines their good material status. They must have had some surplus material goods if they could also afford to own manuscripts of historical literature (e.g. Livy's *Annales*). The free movement of large groups of monks, supporting one side or the other of the theological disputes, provoked unrest in the cities, but the scale of this phenomenon is not well understood.

This is the first scholarly monograph to explicitly link the functioning of monastic communities in Egypt, Palestine and Arabia (partly also in Syria) with the economic system (agriculture, tax collection, etc.) of these lands. The links between the activities of the monks in their immediate region, or beyond, are very well shown—both cross-sectionally (for the whole region, in the long term) and in studies of specific cases (one locality or even one community). It is a clearly written and structured book (three different parts: estates, production and consumption, travel and

⁵ Trombley (2014), 186.

⁶ Monneret de Villard (1927), 95.

pilgrimage) and will appeal not only to advanced researchers but also to students of history, archaeology or related subjects. A final note: the book is an important contribution not only to the study of Christianity and the Roman economy but also to the study of daily life in the Near East in late antiquity.

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