

referring to a later copy, but the word *carbassus* — the usual meaning of which is ‘garment’, ‘sail’ or ‘curtain’ — suggests that his mental picture of a ‘linen book’ is far from clear. Of greater interest in this context, but not cited by Meyer, is the claim in the opening chapter of the *Historia Augusta*’s biography of Aurelian that its author has consulted ‘linen books’ containing the diary of this late third century emperor. Like many of the purported ‘source references’ in the *HA*, the linen diaries of Aurelian may well be fictitious. Yet the author-forger of the *HA* presumably wanted to be believed and would hardly have claimed to consult linen documents from the reign of Aurelian if linen had been out of use as a writing material for centuries.

Despite such minor quibbles, there is no doubt that this erudite and original study has taken us a long step towards a better understanding of *tabulae* as artefacts and symbols, and also shown how the ‘hands-on’ approach to Roman law provides not only new insights, but exciting new questions.

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Roger S. Bagnall, *Later Roman Egypt: Society, Religion, Economy and Administration* (Variorum Collected Studies Series: CS758), Hampshire, UK: Ashgate 2003. pp. xii + 318; 3 b&w illustrations. ISBN 0-86078-899-7.

Most readers will be familiar with the format of the Variorum series. Eminent scholars select sets of their articles on related themes. They explain their choices in a preface, add an index, and perhaps some pages of updating. The articles are reprinted as published; they are not repaginated, but are assigned Roman numerals that then serve as running headers. The collections are always useful, especially when they include articles from publications difficult of access, but the format makes them also slightly difficult to use and cite. This type of production is economical, but given the special nature of the volumes, prices still tend to be high.

In this volume, Bagnall (henceforth B.) selects twenty-four pieces organized into four sections as identified in the sub-title (slightly more fulsomely in the table of contents). They range in length from several pages to the low 20’s. The oldest date to 1977, the latest to 1997. Most of the articles (there is one extended review) ‘were written during the long gestation period of *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton 1993) and treat in more depth topics discussed in that book’ (author’s preface). In many ways this volume serves as a companion to *ELA*, as it has come to be known. I have read most of the pieces before, some several times; it is a pleasure to turn to them again.

Society: In **I** B. holds that it cannot be proven that slavery in Egypt was less important in the fourth century CE and beyond than it had been before. The seeming drop in numbers is a figment of imagination caused by a massive shift in the character of the papyrological documentation. **II**, a review article, is a detailed summary and critique of Joëlle Beaucamp’s massive, 2-volume *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e-7e siècle)*. **III**, opening as a meditation on *P.Kellis I 8 (362)*, asks why males are overrepresented in the census returns while women are overrepresented in documents about slaves. Part of the answer seems to lie in the differential exposure of female children, which had a significant demographic impact. B. sees here a commerce in babies, with villagers taking up exposed city babies, raising them, and then selling them back to city dwellers as domestic slaves. It is a grim scenario trenchantly at odds with the advancing legal amelioration of women’s condition. **IV** is probably the most erudite of all the pieces, and one with the most current relevance. B., paying special attention to the laws and practicalities of late antique divorce, in a discussion bookended by *P.Oxy. L 3581*, argues against sweeping assertions based on assumptions of Christian influence on late imperial legislation. **V** is an exploratory discussion on violence in Roman Egypt against a background of anthropological literature, holding to the notion that appeal to government intervention by victims was a last resort; informal interventions were

preferred; the goal was not punishment but redress. Papyrus evidence about status dissonance between perpetrators and victims is inconclusive (a question set up by Gaius' classification of 'atrox iniuria' in his *Institutes*), and evidence about judicial sentencing, non-existent (see, however, the problematic *BGU* IV 1024). The evidence is mostly derived from petitions, but any broad conclusion drawn from them is subject to the fallacy of reversible reference: we cannot really tell whether Roman Egypt, by our standards, was exceptionally violent or comparatively peaceful. VI takes and organizes into stemmata the interconnected families of third-early fourth century CE Theadelphia as revealed in *P.Sakaon*. What B. shows — this is the surprise — is that the supposed demographic disaster suggested by well-known laments dating to 332 was a fleeting interruption; Theadelphia's population was not much different in 336 from what it had been in 312. The argument would be helped just slightly by noting that Thraso is now held to have been first a physical part of, then an alternative name for, Theadelphia itself. VII assembles several documents and literary texts from Oxyrhynchus into a small dossier, that of Aurelia Ptolemais, late third-century heiress, literate landowner, and owner of books (fragments of the *Iliad* and an anonymous history of Sikyon).

Religion and Society: VIII is the famous study of name change and the rate of Christian conversion in fourth-century Egypt. In his presentation, B. establishes that 50% of Egyptians had Christian names by around 350, indicating 50% Christianity at about 320-25. In other words, Egypt was half-Christian significantly earlier than had previously been allowed. The take-off in the second and third decades of the fourth century had to have been extraordinary. In this piece B. uses as a model Richard Bulliet's study of conversion to Islam in medieval Persia (*Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* [Cambridge, MA, 1979]), based on Persian-to-Arabic name changes. An interesting corollary from Bulliet: schismatic tendencies in the new religion emerged once the 50% level of conversion had been reached (adherents to minority religions must stick together). That schismatic tendencies emerged in Egypt ca. 325 strikes B. accordingly as conjunctural rather than coincidental. Objections to VIII, its bases and methods, by Ewa Wipszycka in *ZPE* 62 (1986), 173-81 are addressed in IX, a model of scholarly argumentation, a defense of B.'s method leading to a sharpening of its results. X establishes that institutional support for Egyptian religion (temples, priests) had evaporated by the mid-third century, leaving the field wide open for the spread of Christianity in the fourth. (For a different take on this, emphasizing continuities and resistance: David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* [Princeton, 1998].) XI argues for the Christianity of the well-known fourth-century Hermopolite landowner Aurelia Charite, as well as for that of her husband, Adelpheios.

Economy: XII advances from an important article by Alan K. Bowman on the Hermopolis land registers (*JRS* 75 [1985], 137-63). It aims to construct 'a model of an idealized Hermopolite Nome as a whole' (137), this itself a step toward a quantitative model for the entire Roman Empire. Like Bowman, B. uses statistical measures (in addition to Gini indexes: Lorenz curves and decile distributions). The focus is on wealth distribution based on land ownership. An intermediate conclusion (136): landholdings of Egyptian villagers evidence only 'a moderate degree of inequality'. The spread is much greater when it comes to ownership of village land by city residents, but, as B. notes, there are complications here that need to be taken into account. XIII extracts from the Archive of Aurelius Isidoros the dossier of the family of Serenilla, owners of land in the village of Karanis, but living in the nome capital. Among other interesting details are the reinterpretation of the contractual relationships in *P.Cair.Isid.* 101 and the long-term stability of the lessor-lessee arrangements between Serenilla's family and Isidoros. XIV engages the work of R. Rémondon and J.-M. Carrié, reaching (against both) a negative conclusion about the prevalence of land ownership by military officers (e.g., Flavius Vitalianus and Flavius Abinnaeus) in fourth-century Egypt. XV discusses the much-debated contracts called (sometimes) 'sales on delivery'. B.'s use of quotation marks in his title hints at a different view: though these could sometimes have been commercial transactions whereby the buyer/creditor had an eye toward

profit in the market, they were essentially loans (in form and substance) by which the rural debtor gained immediate cash at exorbitant, hidden rates of interest. They remonetized rural economies and kept villagers afloat in the short term, but with ultimately disastrous results, as for example at Karanis in the late fourth century. The addendum on this piece (4) treats this conclusion as 'too pessimistic', citing *ELA* 73-77; cf. perhaps my thoughts on Karanis's survival, *BASP* 40 (2003), 125-29. **XVI** is an extended note on Richard Bulliott's *The Camel and the Wheel* (Columbia University Press, 1990). B. shows that the wagon disappears from the Egyptian evidence later than Bulliott believed (eighth century rather than fourth to sixth). He also touts, as would anyone who has visited rural Egypt, the importance of donkeys.

Agriculture and Taxation: XVII argues against the view that taxes (based as usual on land) had dramatically increased in late antiquity; rather, tax rates were fairly flat from the fourth century through the Arab conquest. Villages like Karanis and Theadelphia, whose land suffered a collapse in productivity from disrepair of the irrigation works, were special cases whose ramifications may not have extended to the Fayyum as a whole, much less to Egypt or the empire. Note that recent works (Jairus Banaji, *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity* [Oxford, 2002]; Constantin Zuckerman, *Du village à l'empire* [Paris, 2004]) have argued for a general and substantial sixth-century rise in taxes based on interpretations of evidence from Aphroditô. **XVIII** aims to secure the indictional date of *P.Oxy.* XVI 1905, in relation to that of *SB V* 7756, based on accounting conversions, finding both 356/7 and 371/2 possible. It also concludes that the much-debated term *kephalê* (*SB* 7756) represents a 'property-based share' of taxes (193), 'an abstract measure — though not unit — of landed wealth' (194). **XIX**, following close analysis of a series of related documents, offers the conclusion (336) 'that in Karanis in the first decade of the fourth century property holders were required to provide gold and silver bullion in amounts of equal value, according to the official rate of 12:1 for purchase by the government; and that the rate at which this was exacted from them was based on the amount of taxes in wheat paid by them'. **XX** revises Herbert Youtie's interpretation of *P.Mich.inv.* 439 (*SB* XVI 12324; see *BASP* 16 [1979], 145-47 = Youtie, *Scriptiunculae Posteriores* I [Bonn, 1981] 53-55). This turns out to be a letter in form, not a petition, on a matter of public rather than private interest. The text is microscopically re-examined both for syntax and for diction. Unnoticed, however, is Youtie's misconstruction of the phrase *tôn mizonôn tôn ktêtôn* in line 12 as '[of] the more important of the landowners' ('[of] the larger landowners', B.). Here the second definite article is an embarrassment. The true sense is 'the agents (*mizonēs* = *meizonēs*) of the landowners'; cf. 'the *mizonēs* of the village', lines 10-11 in the exact same construction. Thus, when B. writes (42-43), 'The writer is the agent of a *geouchos* [landowner] at a local level, whether a *phrontistes* or similar appointee in charge of an estate ...', all one has to do is substitute *meizôn* for *phrontistes* to get this exactly right. **XXI** explores the papyrological evidence for the tax on commercial activities known as the *chrysargyron*, concluding that it neither supports the four-year collection -cycle hypothesized by Delmaire nor a five-year cycle based on Libanius. In Egypt the tax appears to have been collected annually, though there is nothing to rule out, just as there is nothing to prove, the existence of a periodic cycle of assessment. **XXII** is an extended prosopographical note that begins by demolishing the article on 'Ausonius Nemesianus 3' in *PLRE* I 622 (based on *SPP* XX 111). It proceeds to identify (Count) Ausonius of the papyri with Flavius Iulius Ausonius, the one-time governor (*praeses*) of the Egyptian province of Augustamnica, and with the father of the renowned Gallic poet. **XXIII** considers 'Property-holdings of village liturgists in fourth-century Karanis' relying on statistics derived from *P.Cair.Isid.* and *P.Col.* VII. The results show: 1. Liturgists' landholdings ranged widely in extent (Aurelius Isidoros' 54 arouras put him in the very top tier). 2. There was between 309-310 and 312-323 a swift turnover in '[t]he pool of liturgists' with many sons replacing their aging fathers as taxpayers. **XXIV** examines 'the number and term of the dekaprotoi'. Based on close examination of four documents from Theadelphia (where editorial 'emendations' have skewed the texts) and seven from Karanis, B. adds support to an early view (Fr. Oertel's, in

Die Liturgie [Leipzig, 1917]) by showing that four dekaprotoi served linked pairs of Arsinoite toparchies; but (against Oertel and others) B. inclines toward five-year terms consonant with the five-year tax cycle known as the *epigraphê*.

The collection's interests and concerns should be clear from the foregoing summary. Most of the volume's pieces are problem-solvers; many directly challenge and subvert comfortably-held scholarly opinions, sometimes through revised or newly-generated quantifications. The pieces are often of interest for their methods as much as for their conclusions.

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Hans Julius Wolff, *Das Recht der griechischen Papyri Ägyptens in der Zeit der Ptolemäer und des Prinzipats, Erster Band, Bedingungen und Triebkräfte der Rechtsentwicklung*, Published by H.-A. Rupprecht. (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft. 10. Abteilung, 5. Teil, 1. Band.) Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002, 8°, xix + 276 pp. ISBN 3-406-48164-7.

H.J. Wolff was one of the most prolific and important scholars of Greek law. Among other fields, Wolff's studies on law in the Greek papyri, mostly from Egypt, have freed the field from anachronistic dogmas. Not only do these studies shed light on particular legal institutions, but they are also full of insights on the evolution of law in Egypt from social and cultural perspectives. Before his death Wolff managed to publish the second volume of the monograph under review here, a book that became a basic text for anyone studying document formulae of contracts, notaries, and archives, or the law of property in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt.¹ We now have the first volume as well, whose manuscript Wolff left near completion at the time of his death in 1983.

Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt had no civil code that covered every aspect of private law and was binding on all its inhabitants. The law derived from a variety of legal traditions — Egyptian, Greek and Roman in particular — and was created by different means: royal, imperial and prefectural decrees, city legislation, different manuals of legal contents, etc. Throughout most of the period no effective system of regulations directed judges to the precise legal source that should be employed in a given case. Still, in general the system worked. Wolff shows us how.

The book consists of two sections, the first on the Ptolemaic period (23-98) and the second on the Roman (99-200). The Ptolemaic state consisted of different social groups whose members were loosely connected to the state through their loyalty to the king. The Ptolemies did not aspire to merge these groups into one nation or to impose a unified legal system. They recognized the land's multi-ethnicity, a recognition manifested in a *diagramma* promulgated by Ptolemy II Philadelphos sometime before 270 BCE. This created a court system in which the two main ethnic groups, Greeks and Egyptians, could be judged in accordance with their ancestral legal practices.

The Greeks of the *poleis* lived by their codes, some of which — as in the case of Alexandria — were granted them by the kings themselves (43ff.). Outside the *poleis*, the king was the only person who promulgated laws. In Wolff's view, the most significant product of this legislation was the aforementioned '*Justizdiagramma*' of Ptolemy Philadelphos, which regulated not only the court system, the judicial procedure, and the forms of execution, but also treated important aspects of the material law itself. In Wolff's view later laws, especially from the second century, do not match Philadelphos' accomplishment (49-54).

Royal legislation did not treat most areas of private law. Where it did not, judges in the Greek *dikastêria* were to resort to the *politikoi nomoi*, according to Wolff, the law codes by which the litigants had lived in their place of origin, if they happened to share one (57). Otherwise, basic legal notions common to all Greeks were deployed and served as the foundation for a customary

¹ H.J. Wolff, *Das Recht der griechischen Papyri II — Organisation und Kontrolle des Privaten Rechtsverkehrs* (Munich, 1978).