

I, 214–17), available since 1964, which argues convincingly that this division of ethics ascribed by Stobaeus to Philo (and, of course, found by him in a lost book of Philo) is essentially an older Stoic division, to which Philo added no contribution of his own. *Antiochus* p. 100, note 11, would have given him at least a most probable date for Philo's death, based on new epigraphic evidence. He dithers on this issue on pp. 24–26. Again, these are only a few examples.

If I have gone into some detail, this is because — unfortunately — Wiśniewski's is the only edition available, as a separate book, of the testimonia on Philo, and I have already seen some scholars mention it in print with no word of warning. It may be no accident that his *Carneades* was issued by the Polish Academy, while this volume is issued by his own local 'Societas Scientiarum;' but the Academy did give it its supervision, and I am distressed to see a decent scholar like Marian Plezia as one of the two signatories to the *nihil obstat*. W.'s German is clear, fluent and readable, but I wish he did not keep calling the late Kurt von Fritz plain 'Fritz.'

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G. Alföldy *Die römische Gesellschaft. Ausgewählte Beiträge*. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 1986, 516 pp.

Is the writing of Roman social history possible? G. Alföldy's answer is affirmative, witness his *Römische Sozialgeschichte* which appeared in three successive editions in German (1975, 1978 and 1984) and was then translated and published in English under the title *The Social History of Rome* (1985, to be cited hereafter *SHR*). Not Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire, as in the famous work of M. Rostovtzeff, not *Verfassung-und Sozialgeschichte des römischen Kaiserreichs* (1978, J. Bleicken), not even *Roman Social Relations* (1974, R. MacMullen), but Roman social history pure and simple. According to A., the essence of social history is to be found in "the social structure of society...in those enduring features which determine its particular nature. These figure in the bases and criteria for the division of society in particular parts, in its very system of organization with particular strata, orders or classes, and, finally, in the interrelations between particular parts of society, embodied in social bonds, tensions and conflicts, and in mobility within the stratification as well as in a common political framework and system of reference" (*SHR* X). While Roman social history is conditioned by the political confines of the Roman state, it does not deal with local social structures but rather with the "general or at least super-regional features of

social life, wherein the dividing-lines between regional features are often difficult to draw" (*ibid.*). Finally the question of time is introduced. The historical process is presented in seven stages from the period of the early Republic through the late Roman Empire. But, as A. candidly admitted in the Preface to the first German edition, he mainly aimed at presenting and discussing the most important problems of Roman social history, and when he came to the Empire his narrative could be based on his own contributions to the study of the social history of Rome. The present volume conveniently presents a selection of these contributions.

*Die römische Gesellschaft* (hereafter cited as *RG*) consists of 14 articles, a dozen of which appeared in the years 1972–1984 and two of which are new contributions published here for the first time. The published articles are usually supplemented by a bibliography which aims at briefly presenting the main additions or reactions to A.'s studies. In two cases these *Nachträge* amount to valuable short discussions of critical objections to the author's views. In fact in the two new contributions ("Die römische Gesellschaft: Eine Nachbetrachtung über Struktur und Eigenart" and "Die Laufbahn der Konsuln und die Erbllichkeit des Konsulates unter den Antoninen: Ein Diskussionsbeitrag") A. takes issue with his critics on two important subjects of the social history of Rome, reformulating and amending, but not basically changing his view. And it must be said that this dialogue between the author and the views of other scholars is one of the attractive assets of this collection. The usefulness of the volume is compounded by the addition of three detailed indexes: modern authors, ancient sources and a general index.

This volume is not a random collection of studies related to Roman social history. The conceptual approach of A. to the study of Roman social history is provided by the grouping of the 14 studies under 7 headings: Ziele und Wege der althistorischen Forschung; Soziale Strukturen im Imperium Romanum; Führungsschichten; Städtewesen und städtische Eliten; Sklaverei; Gesellschaft und Mentalität; Antike Ansichten über die römische Sozialordnung. The first article (delivered as a public lecture in Düsseldorf in 1982 and then published in Spanish in *Gerion* 1 [1983] 39–61) deals with fundamental questions involved in writing ancient history. Finley once wrote "It is generally agreed that ancient historians rarely discuss questions of method... Admittedly many historians think the subject is better off without such discussion. Historians, one hears all the time, should get on with their business, the investigation of the concrete experiences of the past, and leave the 'philosophy of history' (which is a barren, abstract and pretty useless activity anyhow) to the philosophers" (M.I. Finley, "Generalizations in Ancient History," in *The Use and Abuse of History* [1986] 61; originally published in L. Gottschalk [ed.], *Generalization in the Writing of History* [1963] ch. 3). Finley perhaps exaggerated somewhat; A., for one, is conscious of the philosophical or methodological presuppositions inherent and involved in his profession, as this article amply demonstrates (see also his "Der Sinn der Alten Geschichte,"

in G. Alföldy, F. Seibt and A. Timm [eds.], *Probleme der Geschichtswissenschaft* [1973] 28 ff.)

The three main problems discussed in this article are that of the nature of the sources, that of the methods and most important of all, that of the historical contemplation of the researcher himself. While A. is aware of the existence of various and even contradictory attitudes and approaches to sources, methods and aims of historical research, e.g. the conflicting views of F. Millar (*The Emperor in the Roman World* [1977] 11) and K. Hopkins (*JRS* 68 [1978] 179) as to the nature of the task confronted by the ancient historian, he seems to subscribe to Syme's view: "one uses what one has, and there is work to be done" (*JRS* 58 [1968] 145 = *Roman Papers II* [1979] 711). In other words, A. takes a qualified, yet optimistic, view of the feasibility of writing ancient history despite the manifold shortcomings of and gaps in the sources and deficiencies in the methods — which are not peculiar to ancient history: "Totale Objektivität oder absolute Erkenntnis existiert in unserer Wissenschaft nicht — ebensowenig wie in anderen Wissenschaften; aber die objektive Erkenntnis des Historischen ist zumindest in einem fragmentarischen Rahmen und in einer approximativen Form möglich, und diese objektive Erkenntnis ist durch einen ständigen Fortschritt gekennzeichnet" (*RG* 34). This optimism is brought into the fore in A.'s reaction, in the Nachträge to this article, to Finley's verdict: "I cannot think of an ancient city, region or 'country', or of an institution..., of which it is possible to write a systematic history over a substantial period of time. That is the unhappy consequence of our shortage of primary *historical* sources. Unless something is captured in a more or less contemporary historical account, its history is lost for all time regardless of how many inscriptions or papyri may be discovered" ('The Ancient Historian and his Sources,' in *Ancient History, Evidence and Models* [1985] 11, originally published in *Tria Corda: Scritti in onore di A. Momigliano* [1983] 212). A. contests the validity of this distinction between primary and secondary sources as a criterion for deciding what history can be researched and reconstructed and what cannot. It may be applicable to political history, but "Was demgegenüber als 'Strukturgeschichte' zu bezeichnen ist, lässt sich m.E. auch über längere Zeiten hinweg verhältnismässig genau rekonstruieren, selbst wenn keine lückenlose Kette jeweils 'zeitgenössischer' Quellen vorhanden ist. Das gilt z.B für die Geschichte der sozialen Gliederung, sozialer Abhängigkeiten und Gegensätze, sozial wie politisch bedeutsamer Verhaltensformen u. ähnl. Solche Phänomene sind langfristig wirksam... So erhalten wir z.B. über die Mentalität der senatorischen Aristokratie unter den julisch-claudischen Kaisern von Tacitus ein recht genaues Bild, obwohl die Annales mehr als vier Jahrzehnte nach Neros Sturz niedergeschrieben wurden" (*RG* 38). Hence, contrary to Finley's assertion, the accumulated epigraphic and archaeological material, which expands "von Tag zu Tag," does provide a basis for writing the history of the provinces of the Imperium Romanum — despite all the gaps.

What can be done with what one has, what the shortcomings and limitations of the available sources are and what the pitfalls of the methods employed to extrapolate reasonable reconstructions of social phenomena from the known data — all these and much else can be followed up in most of the articles included in this volume. A good example is A.'s treatment of the question of the social composition of the 'leading senatorial élite,' namely consuls and consulars or the "circle of future consuls and consulars." While rejecting the various attacks on the practitioners of the prosopographical methods (e.g. A.J. Graham, "The Limitations of Prosopography in Roman Imperial History [with special reference to the Severan Period]," *ANRW* II, 1 [1974] 136–57; W. den Boer, 'Die prosopographische Methode in der modernen Historiographie der Hohen Kaiserzeit,' *Mnemosyne* 22 [1969] 268–90), A. does not regard prosopography as the key to the understanding of all facets of the social and political history of Rome; yet it is a legitimate and useful method that "can and should throw light on how the *ordo senatorius* and the other leading social classes were composed, to what degree they shared in the emperor's power and by what mechanisms they were selected to take part in the power exercised by the emperor" ('Consuls and consulars under the Antonines: Prosopography and History,' *Ancient Society* 7 [1976] 265 = *RG* 102). If one asks the right questions and carefully uses the appropriate data and methods, one can come up with some clear results, perhaps not as precise and as comprehensive as one would like, but still informative and instructive enough to give a reasonable idea of the development that took place in the composition of the senatorial élite and its functions under the imperial administration, and in its relations with the imperial ruler under the Antonines, as well as of the changes that made this period the culmination of the long process that had, perhaps, started under Augustus. The main questions discussed are the origins of the leading senatorial élite (Italian or provincial; and if provincial, from what provinces, etc.), the relative number of *novi homines* versus *nobiles* within the senatorial élite, the criteria and methods decisive for promotion, and the change that came about in these criteria during and after the Antonine period.

The system A. depicts is reasonable and quite convincing, yet one may have some difficulty concurring with the statement that under Antoninus Pius the aristocratic system "worked without disturbance, like a rather complicated but nearly automatic machine in which each item, however small, had its tasks to fulfill as it was expected to" (*RG* 135). Unless explained or qualified, this statement might convey the impression that all were satisfied, happy and content with what they obtained, that there were no frictions, envy, or unfulfilled aspirations and frustrations. But this would be an *argumentum e silentio*; it is precisely here that the lack of intimate letters, diaries and records of conversations or gossip cautions against drawing such a conclusion.

A. could and did take advantage of previous studies of the composition of the élite of the senatorial order, including his own, earlier researches. He criticizes and corrects

current views, and his own views (presented in a more detailed form in his *Konsulat und Senatorenstand unter den Antoninen. Prosopographische Untersuchungen zur senatorischen Führungsschichte*, 1977) have been disputed, explicitly or implicitly, by other scholars, mainly G.P. Burton (*JRS* 70 [1980] 204–6), K. Hopkins (*Death and Renewal. Sociological Studies in Roman History* [1983] 126–7, 149–71) and R.P. Saller (*Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* [1982] ch. 3). A. has taken this opportunity to answer the main points raised against his lines of reasoning and conclusions, and in a rather convincing manner; for instance: the data are not particularly ample but they are enough “die Grundstruktur des Beförderungssystems zumindest in groben Zügen erkennen [zu] lassen;” the factor represented by the career of senators who did not become consuls is shown to have been taken into account in A.’s calculations, that is to say he has considered the biased and complex nature of the data; granting the working of the system of patronage is no substitute for seniority and merit; and in particular A. clarifies and restates more precisely what is meant by the notion of “Die Erblichkeit des Konsulates” (*RG* 131–61).

A. is not averse to the use of sociological methods and questions in historical research; indeed he regards their application as the most important change that occurred in the study of history in recent times. It is with this background in mind that he starts to delineate what in his view the Roman social system was. He envisages it as having been a stratified pyramid out of which grew all the social links, relationships of dependence and conflicts. The basic concept is of strata (Schichten), and though the stratification of the Roman society was heavily dependent on the economic structure, the economic factor is neither the sole nor the most decisive one for an analysis of the structure of Roman society. It is for this reason that A. avoids the use of the term Klasse and (need it be said?) would not accept Marxist interpretations, orthodox or, modern, of the nature of the Roman social structure. The important element in the social structure was neither the contrast between slaves and free persons nor that between land owners and agrarian producers, but rather that between the Schichten, Stände und Schichten, between the Oberschicht (i.e. *honestiores*) and the Unterschicht (i.e. *humiliores*), with some overlap, which resulted from various economic and social factors and was supported by juridical differentiation. The essence of the structure is succinctly expressed: “Die Formen der sozialen Abhängigkeit beruhten auf der unterschiedlichen Position der einzelnen Gesellschaftsschichten nach *Besitz, Macht, Rang, Ansehen, Privilegien*” (*RG* 56; my italics). This basic social structure, in which the absence of a “middle class” is conspicuous, remained relatively unchanged throughout Roman history. But it was not a caste system, and it allowed some social advance and mobility, even to the subject population in the various parts of the Roman empire; this and the personal relationships and links among people from the upper and lower strata precluded the emergence of revolutionary situations. The lower social stratum did not develop into a united revolutionary class. The Roman Revolu-

tion stemmed from conflicts within the upper strata and hence was political in the first place, as was its outcome, namely a change in the political regime and not in the social structure. It was an aristocratic social structure and, not surprisingly, A. cites with approval Syme's famous words that Roman history, Republican or Imperial, was the history of the governing class because an oligarchy always lurked behind the façade.

There is much that can be said for the view that the nature of the social structure at Rome remained constant, but to some extent this is a too simple or generalized view. There is a marked difference between a society consisting of free small farmers economically independent and comprising, say, more than 90% of the Roman citizen-body in the third century BCE, *i.e.* before overseas expansion, and the Roman society of the first century BCE with its considerable rural and urban proletariat of free persons, declining number of small farmers and vast, though indeterminate, number of slaves. And there is a marked difference between this society of the first century BCE and the Roman society of the late second century CE, when juridical differentiation between different types of free persons was already apparent and slavery was manifestly in decline and the colonate system patently expanding. But perhaps this is a matter of emphasis and taste.

A. is sensitive to other scholars' views (e.g. F. Vittinghoff, 'Soziale Struktur und politisches System der Hohen Römischen Kaiserzeit,' *HZ* 230 [1980] 31–56; K. Christ, 'Grundfragen der römischen Sozialstruktur,' in *Studien zur antiken Sozialgeschichte*, Festschrift F. Vittinghoff [1980] 213–18), and has answered them with a discussion of points raised against his concepts and interpretations (*RG* 69–81). He corrects, redefines and explains his views, but does not change his perception of what Roman society was and how it was structured. For instance, he concedes that the antithesis *humiliores-honestiores* might be misleading and is better dropped. But it is a fact that there were those who could aspire to *honor* and others who could not. They may be termed *honestes* and *humiles* respectively, for this terminology was used by ancient writers. The dichotomy between "Oberschicht" and "Unterschicht," essential to the social structure at Rome, can thus be maintained.

The remaining articles cover a large range of important topics and issues. In all these — whether he examines municipal life, the phenomenon of manumission and its effects on the structure of Roman slavery, or the kind of society that is reflected in the *Historia Augusta* — A. has done much to establish points of details, to define and refine concepts and ideas, to expose fundamental phenomena and to trace historical developments and changes in the Roman society. This well-selected and organized collection of papers puts a comprehensive, valuable and stimulating volume at the disposal of the students of the Roman empire, a welcome and promising start for the new series *HABES* (Heidelberg Althistorische Beiträge und Epigraphische Studien).