

ARSINOË II

CARNEY (E. D.) *Arsinoë of Egypt and Macedon. A Royal Life*. Pp. xx + 215, ills, map. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Paper, £17.99, US\$27.95 (Cased, £60, US\$99). ISBN: 978-0-19-536551-1 (978-0-19-536552-8 hbk).

doi:10.1017/S0009840X14000791

C.'s new biography of the formidable Arsinoë II in Oxford's *Women in Antiquity* series adds to new, focused studies on Hellenistic queens, along with D. Roller's portrait of Cleopatra VII and D. Clayman's newly-published *Berenice II*. The aim of these monographs is to offer 'compact and accessible' introductions to notable women from antiquity. C., author of *Women and Monarchy in Ancient Macedonia* (2000) and numerous other studies on Hellenistic royal women and courts, is well suited to take on this figure whose career spanned the formative years of the early-Hellenistic Macedonian and Ptolemaic courts. The result is a very useful compilation of the sources and bibliography on Arsinoë and a clear and judicious overview of this important figure.

After a brief introduction, a chapter on Arsinoë's background and youth is followed by two chapters on her ill-fated marriages in Thrace and Macedonia, first to Lysimachus and then to her half-brother Ptolemy Keraunos. Chapters 4 and 5 treat Arsinoë's marriage to her brother Ptolemy Philadelphus. A final chapter is dedicated to Arsinoë's 'afterlife'. An appendix appraises the extant literary sources and provides an overview of secondary scholarship.

The source material for Arsinoë's life is difficult and very fragmentary, and some of the methodological observations of the thorough appendix would have been better placed at the front of the book. The main historical source, Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus, is very late and internally inconsistent, and the rest of the scattered literary sources only allow us to sketch her life in the broadest outline. As C. rightly notes, this problem has led to vastly different interpretations of her character and role in the politics of the Macedonian and Ptolemaic courts. These range from Bevan's memorable 'tigress', followed in large part by early authorities like Tarn and Macurdy, to S. Burstein's important reassessment ('Arsinoë II Philadelphos: a Revisionist View' in *Philip II, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Heritage* [1982]) that challenged this portrait and the notion that Ptolemy II was an ineffectual puppet, and subsequent studies further reducing her role in politics. As such, understanding the limitations of the sources is essential for mounting a convincing reconstruction of Arsinoë. The reason this material is relegated to the book's sole appendix, I imagine, is to increase the text's accessibility as an introductory biography. This raises the crucial question of the intended audience of the book and the feasibility of writing a 'biography' in the modern sense of a figure so poorly known. The book is admirably approachable, but still assumes enough background that it is not exactly for a 'general audience'. In particular undergraduates would certainly benefit from greater insight into the methodology of ancient history.

A particular strength of C.'s treatment is a focus on Arsinoë's circle of *philoï* and partisans. C. helps the reader vividly imagine the world of the Macedonian court, riven by factionalism between rival wives and potential heirs, and their supporters. C. emphasises this background and employs it to address some of the lacunae of the sources. However, periodic, but too frequent, speculations such as '[Arsinoë] could have been a controlled, even repressed young woman thanks to the tense situation in which she had grown up' (p. 32) detract from what is otherwise a main point of the book – that our cultural categories are not those of the ancients and we should not impose them on our

interpretation of royal women. Similarly hypothetical suggestions, such as the notion that Arsinoë II may have actually ‘brought up’ (p. 68) Arsinoë I after the death of the latter’s mother, not only lack any evidentiary basis, but can give the reader a false impression – in this case that the royal Macedonian family was in some way similar to the modern nuclear family.

One chapter of Arsinoë’s life in Macedonia that is more fully treated by the ancient sources is her role in the execution of Lysimachus’ son Agathocles and her marriage to Ptolemy Keraunos. Here the sources are unsatisfactory, and C. ably shows how they play on *topoi* of female behaviour. Regarding the murder of Agathocles, C. does plausibly emphasise the importance of the arrival of Ptolemy Keraunos and the acquisition of Macedonia as destabilising factors but ultimately resorts to a psychologising interpretation of the sequence of events, stressing Arsinoë’s fear for her own sons (pp. 42–3). The question of agency remains obscure in C.’s account, and it does not explain Lysimachus’ decision to eliminate his son, a risky move that ultimately undermined his house. Dmitriev’s suggestion that the elevation of Ptolemy II and the sudden rise in prestige of Arsinoë and her line were the motivating factors perhaps deserves fuller consideration (‘The Last Marriage and the Death of Lysimachus’ *GRBS* 47 [2007]).

The remainder of the book deals with Arsinoë’s career in Egypt. As C. herself states, her emphasis lies more on the Macedonian background than the Egyptian dimension of Ptolemaic kingship. Due to the difficulty of the material, a more comprehensive guide to the complex literature on the Egyptian ‘face’ of the Ptolemaic monarchy would be helpful. Arsinoë of course stands at the centre of the intractable issue of brother-sister marriage in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. C.’s treatment of this issue belongs to the school that minimises the scale of Greek discomfort with this practice (p. 74). She also downplays the role of Egyptian precedent and suggests the preference for extreme endogamy was a response to the problems of polygamy, an inwardness already signalled by Ptolemy I (pp. 76–7) and prefigured by her marriage to her half-brother Ptolemy Keraunos (pp. 58–64). Neither proposition is fully convincing. Sibling marriage has been a topic of perennial interest, but it has recently been the subject of renewed scholarly attention and extremely divergent opinion. C. takes full account of the new literature in her bibliography, but does not offer the reader a systematic appraisal of the evidence and various scholarly arguments, thereby giving little indication of why she favours her interpretation. There is also a tendency towards somewhat circular argumentation that crops up elsewhere in the text – sibling marriage would become a hallmark of the Ptolemaic dynasty so this explains Ptolemy’s gamble. This itself is overstated. The next sibling marriage was two generations later in 221 and thereafter it was still only sporadic.

C. provides a sensitive overview of the difficult question of Arsinoë’s political influence as queen. However, as the only contemporary literary sources, the discussion of the works of the Alexandrian poets as reflection of Ptolemaic imperial discourse is surprisingly brief. On the subject of Arsinoë’s death and cult, the new publication of *P. Sorb.* 71 (Cadell et al., *Papyrus de la Sorbonne (P.Sorb. III n^{os} 70–144)* [2011]) adds detail, demonstrating that Arsinoë died between 27 June and 26 July 270 and not in 268, that the appointment of a *kanephoros* for Arsinoë’s cult began already in 269 and finally that Ptolemy ‘the Son’ became co-regent with Ptolemy II earlier than is usually assumed, i.e. in 268/7 rather than 267/6.

Most of the discussion of the material culture relating to Arsinoë (coinage, portraiture, cult) is relegated to the final chapter on her ‘afterlife’. Despite the fact that much of this was or may have been posthumous, it still represents the largest contemporary or near-contemporary body of primary evidence on Arsinoë and her role in the formative period of Ptolemaic self-representation and might have been more effectively incorporated into

the previous chapters. The question of the image of Arsinoë and its long-lived importance to the Ptolemaic monarchy is complex, and again non-specialist readers would benefit from a fuller discussion of the issues and more complete footnotes. Fulińska's recent treatment of the iconography of the Ptolemaic queens on coinage can be added to C.'s bibliography (*Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization* 14 [2010]) along with Albersmeier's study of the portrait statues of the Ptolemaic queens (*Untersuchungen zu den Frauenstatuen des ptolemäischen Ägypten* [2002]). Finally, a more substantial conclusion would have been a valuable asset.

Despite these concerns, this is a valuable book. Arsinoë has long merited an accessible monographic treatment in English, and this balanced study is a good starting point for anyone interested in the Hellenistic royal families, the Macedonian and Ptolemaic courts, or women in antiquity in general. It is an important addition to a much-needed series.

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ISIS

BRICAULT (L.) (trans.) *Les Cultes isiaques dans le monde gréco-romain*. (La Roue à Livres 66.) Pp. 575, ills, maps. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013. Paper, €35. ISBN: 978-2-251-33969-6.
 doi:10.1017/S0009840X14000365

B. continues his contribution to the study of Egyptian religion in this new work. Differing from previous studies, the book examines the main topics concerning the cult of Isis, accessible by those without an extensive background in Isis studies. Similar in some respects to B.'s previously published *Bibliotheca Isiaca I* (2008), much of the work is devoted to the study of material culture, relying extensively on examples from his *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques* (RICIS), published in 2005.

The title does not indicate the study's true range, which is not only devoted to the worship of Isis but incorporates other deities included within her pantheon, such as Osiris. The book proceeds along broad thematic lines: Part 1 offers a cursory overview of Isis' divine pantheon; Part 2 the cult's diffusion; Part 3 issues of the cult's reception and integration; Part 4 cult places; Part 5 cultic participants; Part 6 rites and practices of the cult; and Part 7 the many terms and iconography associated with the cult. Each section consists of multiple subsections including a page-long introduction into the topic followed by select examples drawn from literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources and concluding bibliographical suggestions.

In the introduction, B. outlines a selective historiography of previous Isis research, which is especially helpful in illustrating how such studies have guided past interpretations of the cult and provides the foundation for the topics addressed in his book. Part 1 begins with a brief examination of the main components of Isis' divine pantheon. B. evaluates the literary and iconographic image of Isis as well as the origins of Serapis (pp. 31–41). The primary deities associated with Isis including Harpocrate, Anubis, Apis, Boubastis and Osiris are examined in combination with limited literary, epigraphic and archaeological examples. While not overly extensive, the examples given provide a general account of the cult and a starting point for any future study.

The long second part examines the cult's diffusion, a topic with a considerable amount of surviving material evidence. Proceeding beyond the diffusion of Isis, B. also considers