an empire, but, like Elsner's piece, the article says less about Rome than it does about the subject under direct discussion. These, however, are only minor points of criticism.

More serious are some crucial omissions. Surely, a paper on the topography of Rome was called for. With *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* and Hasselberger's *Mapping Augustan Rome* (*JRA* Supplement 50) complete, the importance of Rome's layout has been made abundantly clear. Such a paper would furthermore have been able to tie together several other contributions in which Rome's topography is an important background factor. Linked to this is the surprising absence of a paper on actual politics in the city of Rome. Though the rôle of popular politics in Rome, both in Republic and Empire, has been prominent in recent debates, it is all but ignored in this volume (illustrated, for instance, by the absence of references to Fergus Millar in the bibliography). Finally, emphasis on topography would have unveiled perhaps the most serious weakness of this volume as a full discussion of Rome the Cosmopolis: a lack of attention to the periphery. Only La Regina's *Suburbium* volumes will place Steinby's *LTUR* in proper context. Likewise, Rome the Cosmopolis was defined by her surroundings, wider indeed than the area directly beyond her walls. With so much attention on the city itself, at least one piece on her hinterland would have provided crucial context.

These criticisms, as said, follow from looking at the book as a full discussion of Rome the Cosmopolis. This, however, would be unfair on the editors. The volume is, after all, essentially a Festschrift, and the fact that one can even have suggestions on how *Rome the Cosmopolis* would have provided more insights into the subject, shows how coherent E. & W. have managed to keep potentially widely divergent contributions. A general index and collective bibliography make the book easy to use. As a contribution to our conceptions of Rome, and even the centrality of Rome in her empire, *Rome the Cosmopolis* promises more than it delivers. But that should not detract from the immense value of many of the contributions, or the simple pleasure of reading it. It is a seductive book.

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ROMAN COMMUNICATIONS

A. KOLB: *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich*. Pp. 380. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000. Cased. ISBN: 3-05-003584-6.

Efficient transport and communication are vital not only to trade and commerce, but to imperial government. The larger and more complex the empire, the more important these factors become. Communication was a principal factor in the increasing centralization of Roman imperial government. We know from Suetonius (*Aug.* 49.3) that Augustus instituted the imperial postal service, which came to be known as the *cursus publicus* in the late third century A.D., modeling it on its Persian predecessor (Hdt. 8.98) and on the Ptolemaic postal service (details of which are preserved on a papyrus from Hibeh, P. Hib. I 110; 259–253 B.C.). There is much evidence for the postal service preserved on inscriptions and papyri, and in literary texts and the legal codes. It has attracted attention, especially from German scholars, approaching the topic from both an epigraphic and legal angle. Despite this, the *cursus publicus* is a muddle in modern works, not least because of the many changes

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to the system which took place over time, but probably also because a mastery of literary, epigraphic and papyrological evidence is necessary to understand it. It is to Kolb's great credit that finally, after a close inspection of a huge amount of primary source evidence and synthesis of a great deal of modern literature, the true nature and importance of the postal service in its various forms has been made clear.

The volume is divided into four main sections: an introduction, which considers antecedents to the postal service and offers a brief survey of previous scholarship, before considering communication in the Roman Republic; a survey of the institution, its foundation, purpose, and organization, which forms the most substantial part of the volume; a short survey of other forms of state transport (principally the organization of the *annona*); and finally a discussion of the importance of transport and communication to the Roman state. The volume is completed with a series of tables illustrating main issues, concluding remarks, bibliography, and full indices.

A number of things are striking. First, there is the difficulty in finding a technical name which is accurate in its description of the institution. *Vehiculatio* is the imperial system established by Augustus, which was not actually called the *cursus publicus* until the reign of Diocletian, and had no doubt gone through organizational changes during this period. Rather than being a postal service *per se*, the '*cursus publicus*' was the infrastructure of stations, and other facilities on the roads of the empire, which were outfitted with animals, carts, materials needed for their maintenance, and accommodation. Secondly, it is clear that the provision of transport fell on local communities—the inscriptions from Pisidia certainly show this, and provide an interesting parallel to the Egyptian evidence, which again shows how exploitative the system was. As time progressed, and the empire and its bureaucracy became more complex, the system can only have become more complicated and burdensome.

K.'s attention to detail is impressive, and I know of no significant item of primary evidence that is absent from her discussion. However, some matters could have received more attention. The recently published *mansio* accounts from Oxyrhynchos (P. Oxy. LX 4087–88; early fourth century) are substantial documents, and provide evidence for the size of traveling parties, and give some indication of the frequency and scale of travel, and for the organization of *mansiones*. Itineraries and the itinerary tradition are central questions, which perhaps deserve more space; not only the Antonine itinerary, Peutinger tafel, and Bordeaux itinerary, but also the archive of Theophanes (P. Ryl. IV 628; early fourth century). The issue of transport itself, removed from the *cursus publicus* and imperial communication, is a vast topic. Also, while K.'s treatment in Section III is admirable, and covers much, it is arguably too ambitious, for K. has no space, for example, to develop the crucial arguments about the rôle of transport in the economy of the Roman world. Other thorny questions remain, such as the cost of transport, especially perhaps the problems raised by Diocletian's edict of maximum prices.

I hope that these comments, which are in no way meant as criticisms of the book, serve to illustrate the complexity of K.'s subject and its importance to our understanding of many facets of the Roman world, and help illustrate its value. It takes on a central theme of the Roman empire, and one which is usually avoided or simply ignored ('transport was expensive, therefore did not happen to any significant extent'). There is still scope for a huge amount of work on transport in the ancient world, but K.'s book makes an impressive and most welcome contribution.

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