A Festschrift honouring Jean Andreau

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CATHERINE APICELLA, MARIE-LAURENCE HAACK et FRANÇOIS LEROUXEL (textes réunis par), *LES AFFAIRES DE MONSIEUR ANDREAU. ÉCONOMIE ET SOCIÉTÉ DU MONDE ROMAIN* (Ausonius Éditions, Scripta Antiqua 61, Bordeaux 2014; diffusion De Boccard). Pp. 315, figs. ISSN 1298-1990; ISBN 978-2-35613-108-9. EUR 25.

Ever since *Les affaires de M. Iucundus* was published in 1974, J. Andreau has been internationally recognised as *the* historian of Roman banking and business practices, and their implications for our understanding of the Roman economy more generally. His work offers a perspective that is more complex and nuanced than either the 'primitivism' of the 1970s or the tendency to assimilate the ancient world to modern capitalism. It follows the direction that he has developed in more theoretical and abstract terms in two essential articles on the state of ancient economic historiography[1] and numerous other conference presentations and publications. Besides his academic research, always grounded in detailed knowledge and perceptive analysis of evidence that might have baffled other historians, he has been a towering figure in European ancient history as a facilitator and inspiration, as seen not only in the seminars on Roman economic and social history he orchestrated for 30 years in the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, bringing together specialists from many disciplines and many national research traditions, but also in his generosity in devoting time and attention to young researchers from all backgrounds.

If ever an ancient historian deserved a tributary volume, it is M. Andreau. The present collection represents his international reputation and outlook, with papers in 4 different languages, each typically citing works from 3 or 4 languages (no quarter is given here to the increasing international dominance of English, even in scholarship on classical antiquity, and this serves as an important reminder of how much important and interesting research is being missed by those who confine their attention to Anglophone publications). The collection also represents the breadth of his interests, with papers on all the different fields he has at one time or another studied, from commerce and money to the agrarian economy, social status and literacy. This does come, however, at the expense of coherence, either in subject matter or in theoretical and methodological aspects, making it hard for the reviewer to do anything other than briefly summarise the main points of each essay in the order in which they appear. This is a book that few are likely to read all the way through, but many will wish to consult at least a couple of the chapters.

Historiography and structures of the Roman economy

Surveying the past few decades of ancient economic historiography, H. Bruhns takes his cue from Andreau's synthetic articles, and the observation that the questions today remain Finleyan, but the answers tend to move away from his views. His main aim is to recover Weber as a key thinker for ancient historians, arguing that A. Bresson's recent work[2] misrepresents him as a straw man in establishing a contrast between *homo politicus* and *homo economicus*, and hence mistakenly eliminates him from the ongoing discussion.

P. Garnsey offers a broad overview of the economy of the later Roman empire, arguing that the key interpretative themes are no longer decline and over-taxation but rather increases in demand — most obviously, the need to supply Constantinople as well as Rome — and hence changes in the taxes levied on the empire, now including Italy.

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1 J. Andreau and R. Étienne, "Vingt ans de recherches sur l'archaïsme et la modernité des sociétés antiques," *REA* 86 (1984) 55-83; J. Andreau, "Vingt ans après *L'Économie antique* de Moses I. Finley," *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 50 (1995) 947-60.

2 A. Bresson, *L'économie de la Grèce des cités (fin VIe-Ier siècle a.C.).* I. *Les structures et la production* (Paris 2007), and *L'économie de la Grèce des cités (fin VIe-Ier siècle a.C.).* II. *Les espaces de l'échange* (Paris 2008); see now id., *The making of the ancient Greek economy: institutions, markets and growth in the city-states* (Princeton, NJ 2016).

J.-Y. Grenier considers different ideas of the 'market economy', adding modern Europe and China under Qing to Rome. One central issue is how prices functioned — and what light may be shed on this question by the fact that the Roman state (unlike its comparators) did not trouble to record them accurately. For Andreau, the explanation was that the economy was a private matter; Grenier adds the suggestion that the authorities had fewer concerns in this area because the poor had access to the *annona*, with the result that price fluctuations were a less pressing political issue.

Agrarian economy

L. Capogrossi looks at different aspects of the agrarian society of Republican Italy, emphasising the accumulation of botanical and geographical knowledge and the development of practices suited to particular conditions — and hence the absence of any uniform 'Catonian villa', as opposed to a set of agronomical principles that could be applied in different ways.

C. G. Mac Gaw echoes some of these ideas in reviving debates about the idea of the slave mode of production, arguing that it was in no way as significant as traditionally thought, and always operated alongside peasants and free labour; hence it cannot be seen as determining or characterising a particular form of economy.

J. France considers a set of inscriptions from Tunisia related to the occupation of unused land, setting them in the context of general concern in the 2nd c. A.D. about land-use.

Ph. Leveau, like Mac Gaw, returns to earlier debates about the villa, this time focusing on material evidence from Caesarea Mauretania and Gaul to emphasise heterogeneity within the general picture of a close relation between 'Romanisation' and changes in the rural economy.

Money, prices and fiscality

The key contribution in this section is J.-J. Aubert's paper on the Roman law of barter, here finally appearing in print after being presented at a number of conferences. It maintains a resolute focus on the legal aspects, rather than considering the social, cultural or practical dimensions (no engagement here with recent work in anthropology), emphasising the problematic nature of barter for Roman legal thinking; for example, both parties are both buyer and seller, creating uncertainty about their respective liabilities, an issue which 6th-c. jurists sought to resolve by defining barter as the delivery of goods resulting in unjust enrichment of one party that must be compensated by counter-delivery or restitution. Little wonder that the early Germanic kingdoms returned to the original view, propounded by Gaius, that sale and barter are basically the same sort of thing. There is much material here for those interested in the gaps and tensions between legal frameworks and the reality of economic behaviour.

G. Bransbourg engages with a classic Andreau topic, the business activities of the Sulpicii, highlighting evidence (the only example known from antiquity) of changing interest rates according to perceived financial risk.

J.-M. Carrié offers an extensive account of the *chrysargyre*, the tax on commercial profits instituted by Constantine, arguing that the attacks on it by Libanius and Zosimus were no more than conventional responses to fiscal measures; by taking them at face value, historians have misunderstood the policy.

C. Viglietti returns to the beginning of Roman history, exploring the question of whether textual evidence like Valerius Maximus' account of Cincinnatus can allow us to reconstruct features of the archaic economy, including the level of monetary development and the price of land.

Commerce and markets

In this section offering 4 studies of specific aspects of ancient trade, M.-L. Bonsangue reconstructs from texts and shipwrecks the rôle of Narbonne as a "port de stockage", a major distribution centre at the heart of a number of networks.

R. Descat considers Aristotle's discussion of the measurement of grain and wine in relation to the Athenian grain law of 374/3 B.C., and the puzzling suggestion that this was done differently according to whether one was buying or selling.

M. García Morcillo looks at Cicero's account of auctions and the wider implications of this form of sale; the practice was ubiquitous in private sales as well as in public contracts because it was effective, but the scope for fraud (as seen in the case of Verres) meant that it needed to be advertised and open.

Finally, N. Tran evokes Andreau's Thèse d'État in examining the nature of the activities of a slave tasked with dealing in olive oil at Arles (*Dig*. 14.3.13) and bringing together detailed analysis and the wider context.

Social statuses, status of labour

M. C. d'Ercole gathers together the literary and epigraphic evidence on leather-workers in Greece and Rome, emphasising the close association of these important professionals with military activity.

N. Laubry analyses the epigraphic evidence relating to a funerary complex in Teate Marrucinorum near Italy's Adriatic coast, revealing the idea of 'funeral associations' to be more complex than usually thought.

N. Monteix examines electoral inscriptions relating to some Pompeian élite families as a means of exploring their wealth and funding of political activity.

J. Zurbach considers the relation between free and slave labour in Athens, contrasting the idea of a 'slave society' and that of a 'society with slaves'.

Practical culture of writing and demography

W. V. Harris engages with some critics of his *Ancient literacy* (1989), reiterating his view that claims about a "widespread diffusion of the ability to write" need to be defined far more precisely, and that evidence relating to the incidence of schools, Pompeian graffiti, and some inscriptions from N Italy all suggest a low level of literacy: writing is deeply embedded in Roman society but very limited.

Without directly referencing these arguments, A. Marcone insists on the growing importance of 'everyday writing' in economic life and the uniformity of ancient epigraphic culture.

Meanwhile, W. Scheidel updates his "Germs for Rome" chapter from 10 years ago,[3] above all by drawing on the results of bio-archaeological research. He emphasises in particular the seasonal patterns of mortality, especially for adult migrants, and suggests malaria combined with gastro-intestinal disorders and tuberculosis as the major pathogens.

Concluding thoughts

In recent years, the trend in the publication of Festschriften, at least within the United Kingdom, has been towards greater thematic coherence. This is doubtless bound up with the need to persuade a reputable publisher to take on the project, which is in turn bound up with the imperative for UK-based academics to concentrate on publishing work that will be taken seriously in the regular national assessments of research quality. This trend might be regretted, as such volumes are more and more driven by the needs of the contributors rather than the honouring of the esteemed colleague and teacher, but it has in fact resulted in a series of volumes[4] that are worth reading in their entirety, where the chapters speak to one another and make a serious contribution to scholarly debates, and where all the contributors have clearly made an effort not only to honour the dedicatee but also to write something of quality and significance.

A volume marking the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Les affaires de M. Iucundus* initially holds out the promise of a similar focused engagement with its contribution and context, as a basis for moving the debate forward. Instead, I fear, this book feels like the publication of the annual conference of a national classical association, where there is no idea that

3 First published in C. Edwards and G. Woolf (edd.), *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge 2003) 158-76.

4 See, e.g., Edwards and Woolf (ibid.) or M. Atkins and R. Osborne (edd.), *Poverty in the Roman world* (Cambridge 2006).

coherence might be a virtue. Broad as J. Andreau's interests are, some of these papers appear to have no connection at all to those interests; some read as if they were pulled out of the back of a drawer in order to contribute to the occasion without incurring a great deal of extra work, rather than being written specially for the occasion. Surely nowadays we have blogs for that sort of occasional publication? We can imagine that the occasion itself was full of fascinating discussion, but as readers we are treated to none of that. Of course, the publication is part of the honouring, but it is otherwise difficult to see that those who were not involved should very much care. My main wish, on finishing my reading, was for Andreau to offer his own overview, in the hope that he might detect and expand upon unifying themes and questions that I have failed to discover.

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