

lessons to all about the nature and applicability of our evidence. The temptation to gloat about copious documentation from Egypt is roundly put down by S.'s estimate, for census returns, that they have survived at a ratio of 1 to 80,000 (p. 142). His subject is a very difficult one, but S. offers an excellent and convincing series of arguments, and always with due regard for the problems thrown up by our evidence and the limitations of models for its interpretation.

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EGYPTIAN CITIES

R. ALSTON: *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*. Pp. xvi + 479, maps. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. Cased, £75. ISBN: 0-415-23701-7.

Alston's book is an ambitious one. The nature of cities, their administration and culture, lies at the very centre of our understanding of Roman Egypt. Tacitus (*Histories* 1.11) claims that Egypt was ignorant of civil government (or civic life), and this is important to the traditional view that Egypt as a province was 'different'. As Bowman and Rathbone have pointed out (*JRS* 82 [1992], 108), the absence of town councils or of movement towards municipalization in the Roman sense would have made Egypt peculiar. But in this, and in notable contributions by Naphtali Lewis, the Romanity of Roman Egypt has been championed.

A. considers his subject in five large chapters, covering the period from the annexation of Egypt in 30 B.C. to c. A.D. 640. This is a huge undertaking, encompassing several massive changes in cultural, social and religious life, administrative organization, and documentary practice. A. chooses to approach his subject thematically, rather than chronologically, moving from a general discussion of cities and space (Chapter 2), through chapters based on spatial criteria: houses (Chapter 3), streets, districts, and neighbourhoods (Chapter 4), the 'city' (Chapter 5), and the city, region, and world (Chapter 6). All of this is supported by a large number of figures and tables, and a very full bibliography.

Chapter 2 is mostly concerned with theory, and therefore its value depends on one's opinion on the rôle of theory in historical research. It is to some extent a paradox that, with considerable amounts of documentary evidence at his disposal, A. leans to this more theoretical approach, which might not endear his book to papyrologists. Most will find this chapter heavy going, and it may have been better to fit theoretical arguments into the body of the book in pursuance of particular points rather than isolate it as an excursus. One comparison is missing: A. builds his vision of the city into this theoretical background, through cosmology, autobiographical accounts of industrial cities in Northern England, and the like, but he fails to set the Roman city in Egypt into its Egyptian context, which is arguably more important. The reasons why there was a great difference in the urban space of Pharaonic cities, such as Amarna, and cities of later periods might tell us much about differences or continuity in culture.

In Chapter 3, A. begins with a brief discussion of papyrological evidence. This is not soundly done; there is no thorough discussion of survival patterns of papyri, their chronological distribution, or problems of interpretation. It is important that readers appreciate the limitation of A.'s evidence. Oxyrhynchus and Karanis certainly form the core of our evidence for cities and towns in Egypt, but they are not necessarily typical. Once removed from the general into the specific, A. seems more comfortable, and

presents a detailed analysis of the evidence for housing in the papyri, and here successfully includes comparative material. He discusses major issues—inheritance patterns, gender and housing, and ethnic identity, and takes the reader through chronological changes, but again, a comparison with housing patterns from Amarna would have been interesting.

Chapter 4 concerns streets, districts, and neighbourhoods. A. presents an impressive roster of evidence for his subject, especially for the districts (*amphodai*) in the best attested cities, Oxyrhynchus and Ptolemias Eurgetis (Arsinoe). After dealing briefly with their rôle in city administration, he considers the social make-up of the *amphodai*, and discusses the example of Alexandria in the light of excavations at Kom el-Dikka. The important point to emerge from his discussion is the diversity of culture and environment in the Romano-Egyptian city.

Chapter 5 approaches the city as a larger unit. It begins with a discussion of the Augustan reforms of municipal structures and considers magistracies, city administration, and finances. But nine pages is not enough. These issues surely lie at the centre of not just city administration, but also that of the province, and there is much to be made of relations between city magistrates and the state. He continues with a discussion of ‘temple cities’, and this is wide-ranging: Augustan temple construction, temples and the economy, and temple rituals. A’s account covers much that is interesting, and he provides a very full survey of evidence for economic life centered on these temples. In turning to questions of ethnicity, A. discusses civil unrest in Alexandria during the first century, between the Greek and Jewish communities. Perhaps a more balanced explanation of the prefect Flaccus’ action could have been offered, and almost no reference is made to Philo’s *Legatio ad Gaium*. A. moves on to consider the romanization of urban space in the second century, taking as examples the cities of Athribis, Hermopolis Magna, and Antinoopolis. In these cities, extensive building took place in this period, but it is here that the lack of archaeological evidence is crucial. The third-century city is then considered, but with too little discussion of one central issue, which had a profound impact on city life and relations between city and state, namely the introduction of town councils by Septimius Severus.

For the fourth century, our evidence is very much restricted to Hermopolis and Oxyrhynchus, and there is certainly less of it than for previous centuries. What we have is interesting though, and A. is able to show the value of papyrological evidence (in the almost complete dearth of archaeology in Oxyrhynchus), with an engaging attempt to reconstruct the topography of the city (p. 267). A detailed account is offered of the changes in city administration made by Diocletian, and later in the fourth century, but this unfortunately does not place them in the wider context of the province as a whole. It would be interesting to know more about the relation between cities and state officials, and how this was different from earlier periods. Finally, there is a substantial section devoted to the effects of Christianity to the life of cities.

The final chapter places the city within a wider context, and A. attempts a systemic treatment. There is much of value, but many readers will want more detail and discussion of many of the themes he covers: for example trade and taxation. The result is occasional omissions—in his treatment of communication, A. ignores the important work of Braunert, and some shakiness on points of detail—there may have been no *monartabia* tax as A. understands it (see *P. Diogenes* 17, pp. 131–2). The chapter is replete with tables of figures and references, but, as A. himself admits, some of his statistics are unreliable (p. 334). With this in mind, the tabulated information throughout the book should be used with some caution; statistics based on the small

sample sizes provided even by the fuller papyrological evidence are notoriously inaccurate.

On points of presentation, it must be said that the book is not an easy read. The Harvard system of referencing does not suit the heavy citation demanded by papyrological evidence. Sentences are seriously split up with parentheses, making it difficult on occasion to follow lines of argument, and there is no systematic approach to the inclusion of evidence either in the notes or the text (compare 191 with 294). Footnotes seem the most appropriate form of citation. Finally, the maps are inadequate and have no scale, and images are sparse (Karais is the obvious omission here).

A.'s book is certainly ambitious, and there is much of merit in it. The points above serve to illustrate the huge amount of material available, and perhaps to show that with such a vast topic, it is impossible to cover everything. However, there is a feeling that A. cannot resist the temptation to become entangled in theoretical approaches, but at the expense of describing how cities actually worked. But it is, of course, very easy for reviewers to be critical. The criticisms above are not meant to detract from what is a useful and important book, founded on a huge synthesis of ancient evidence and modern literature, for which A. is to be commended.

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THE SPANISH ÉLITE

S. PANZRAM: *Stadtbild und Elite: Tarraco, Corduba und Augusta Emerita zwischen Republik und Spätantike. (Historia Einzelschriften 161.)* Pp. 388, maps. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002. Cased, €76. ISBN: 3-515-08039-2.

Thanks to a substantial body of epigraphic material from the Iberian peninsula and the well-documented tendency of Spaniards to engage in public careers at Rome from a comparatively early date, the urban élite of the Spanish provinces have been attracting academic attention for some time. However, there is still much under-explored territory in this field and this work stakes a claim to an interesting corner of it. It seeks to understand the entwined evolution shared by each of the three provincial capitals of Spain with their leading inhabitants. Panzram focuses on the physical environment of the three diverse communities from the time of their foundation to the very end of the Roman period, concerning herself both with how material context affected the behaviour of the élite and how they in turn moulded that urban landscape to suit themselves.

An introduction lays down the theoretical basis of the study and a concluding chapter draws prominent threads and themes together. P. cites the influence of anthropology on her work and lays an emphasis on the importance of geographical context, something often highlighted in anthropological studies. Each of the three cities has a section devoted to it, subdivided into chapters which carry the reader through the evolution of the city and its élite inhabitants in chronological stages. There is a certain amount of narrative recounting the general physical, social, economic, and political development of the communities, but much space is also devoted to detailed discussion of specific buildings and institutions. In fact, the predominant emphasis is on archaeological remains and approaches to interpretation of them. In her