

P. THONEMANN, *THE MAEANDER VALLEY: A HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY FROM ANTIQUITY TO BYZANTIUM*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xxiii + 386, illus, maps. ISBN 9781107006881. £65.00/US\$110.00.

This study of the historical geography of the valley of the Maeander, the largest river in western Asia Minor, aims to uncover the relationship between the geographical location of human communities and their economic, social, political, cultural and religious development. Thonemann offers a complex geographical and chronological background: throughout the book, he slowly moves from the source of the Maeander to its lower floodplain, detailing the dynamic interaction between local inhabitants and their natural and social environment from Classical to Byzantine times. The eight chapters, flanked by a Preface and an Epilogue (each of a four-page length), deal, respectively, with the creation of spatial units; the region's geomorphology in hydrographic myths and cults; the Phrygian *koinon* as an ethno-cultural association that reflects the geography of appropriation; the strategy of territorial domination; production specialization of communities in the middle Maeander; the influence of geography on political and marital strategies of local Romanized élites; a spatial logic of productive relations and patterns of settlement; and the seconding of nature with reference to deforestation, irrigation, and similar forms of ecological variability. Sources include coin legends, Byzantine and Arabic texts, hagiography and Christian documents, Hellenistic epigrams, classical and late antique authors, medieval European chronicles, Greek and Roman inscriptions, and observations by European travellers. Evidence from archaeology, onomastics, prosopography, and genealogy is closely integrated with numerous maps, landscape overviews, images of coins and archaeological objects, and photographs. T. has thus cooked a feast for anthropologists, social, cultural, and comparative historians, geographers, and many people in other fields. 'Traditional historians' will likely have their reservations, keeping in mind the work of William M. Ramsay and, especially, Louis Robert, who not only illuminated the historical geography of western Asia Minor, bringing together innumerable bits of evidence of diverse nature, but also gave this evidence new interpretations by placing it within a much broader geographical context and, thus, established the extent to which it could be held to be representative.

But the Maeander valley serves as both the source of and the only context for any evidence in T.'s book. Figuring how these data relate to other Greek communities is left to the reader — with a few exceptions: the evolution of local élites in the provincial period (235–41) is acknowledged to have generally corresponded to that elsewhere in Roman Asia Minor, whereas any comparison of the development of land-tenure and rural economy in the Maeander delta region (242–78) with other regions in western Asia Minor, or the eastern Mediterranean (except Egypt), turns out to be impossible because of the lack of corresponding evidence. Nor is the approach to the evidence chronologically consistent: the text freely moves from Classical times to Late Antiquity to the Late Byzantine period, and back again, often on the same page. The result is that while each chapter deals with a specific problem, the order of chapters — and, even, of their parts — is irrelevant to the overall presentation: in fact, each chapter can be offered as an individual narrative. The absence of a broader context and of a historical approach precludes any genuine analysis of the Maeander valley's material: bits of diverse evidence are only being used as pieces of a bigger puzzle. The author craftily weaves them together to create a series of beautiful kaleidoscopic images, but he does not give them a critical treatment, even when acknowledging their problematic and contradictory nature.

Nor is the thesis — which makes the book's first chapter — that the Maeander valley constituted a single entity compelling. The naming habit (such as using the same name throughout the river's course) is not surprising for people speaking the same language (cf. the Danube and Ister name-play in Procopius, *Wars* 3.1.10 and Lydus, *De magistratibus* 3.32; cf. Herodotus 2.33–4), whereas self-identification by the same geographical name does not yet imply a similar political identity, as demonstrated by the 'Achaean', 'Boeotian', or 'Peloponnesians'. Similar iconographic representations (such as the image of maeanders on coins) belonged to different chronological periods, suggesting borrowings, which was typical for money that circulated beyond political borders. Holding the Maeander valley as a single entity is also questionable because it belonged to two culturally and socially distinct regions — Phrygia and Caria: the former is mentioned only with reference to the *koinon* of Phrygia in the imperial period (103–17) and the coming of the Goths (50–3), whereas Caria receives no significant treatment of its own. Was the establishment of the Maeander valley as the borderline by the Peace of Apamea all that surprising, as a 'work of a lazy Roman looking at a map' (45–6)? And which map, for that matter? Should we hold

Aristides' reference to the springs of the Maeander as the edge of the province of Asia to have been his 'instinctive, almost casual, choice' (130–1), or a reflection of the fact that the original province of Asia did not include Caria and, hence, the Maeander again served as the borderline (Dmitriev in *Athenaeum* n.s. 93.1 (2005), 71–133)? The already marked above unique status of the Maeander delta region similarly raises the question about whether this valley constituted a single entity.

Such observations are irrelevant when T.'s book is judged on the basis of its declared purpose: it admirably reveals a multi-faceted dynamic of interaction between geography and historical development. Written in a lively fashion and richly-illustrated, it will remain the best work on the historical geography of this important region for decades, serving as a pointed reminder of the need for a complex approach for anyone working in any specific subfield of history or geography.

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G. G. FAGAN, *THE LURE OF THE ARENA: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CROWD AT THE ROMAN GAMES*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xi + 362, illus. ISBN 9780521196161 (bound); 9780521185967 (paper). £60.00/US\$99.00 (bound); £22.99/US\$35.99 (paper).

In this book, Garrett Fagan uses comparative historical data and the research and methodologies of social psychology in order to attempt to answer the question 'Why did the Romans enjoy watching public spectacles of death?' He critiques as incomplete or unsatisfactory traditional interpretations that explain these rituals as serving cultural functions within Roman society, such as being a symbolic expression of Roman domination over the other, or a reminder of Rome's military heritage. F. argues instead for a more holistic interpretation that takes into account the culturally specific context, but additionally situates the Roman predilection for staging and watching violent entertainments within a broader framework as part of a basic human attraction to and fascination with violence.

One of the strengths of the book is on display in ch. 1, in which F. surveys previous studies of the function of these spectacles, as well as various psychological, sociological and anthropological theories of violence. F. has a knack for clearly, accurately and concisely summarizing an enormous number of debates about (and theoretical approaches to) the study of spectacle and violence without getting bogged down in unwieldy or unnecessary jargon or neologisms. This quality makes the book a potentially useful one for undergraduates, as a wide-ranging and informative introduction to a great many issues relevant to Roman history. Ch. 2, aptly named 'A Catalog of Cruelty', presents an eye-opening and rather depressing survey of the impressively varied methods that human beings have devised for publicly mutilating, torturing, and executing one another, from ancient Mesopotamia to the present, complete with vivid descriptions of such ingenious cruelties as the medieval practice of breaking malefactors on the wheel. Chs 3 and 4 marshal an assortment of ancient sources and modern theories to explore the composition, attitudes, and actions of the crowds who filled amphitheatres and other similar ancient venues. There is much of value here, although, occasionally, the analysis could have taken into account subtleties that might complicate the interpretation. For example, when discussing the mental dynamics of crowd responses, there could be more acknowledgement of the fact that there was frequent and deliberate manipulation of audience reaction in ancient Rome through varied means, such as clients and hired claquers. Similarly, recent comparative work on urban rioters suggests that the motives of those participating in violent collective actions are typically not monolithic, but are surprisingly varied and even contradictory. Chs 5 and 6 investigate the rôle that prejudice and emotion played in shaping spectators' reactions, again suggestively weaving together primary texts and social psychology. Employing numerous contemporary examples, the final chapter squarely addresses the apparently irresistible lure that watching violent acts being performed consistently holds for a sizeable percentage of human beings, regardless of culture or historical era. However, considering the amount of time F. spends on various comparative examples of viewing violence drawn from the modern world, including horror and war films and football and hockey games, it is a bit disappointing that there is scant discussion of what is surely the most apt contemporary analogue to Roman spectacles — the bullfight. Unlike almost all of the other examples cited by F., only at bullfights do spectators know with complete certainty that they will witness repeated instances of