

REVIEWS

W. Graham Claytor and Arthur Verhoogt, with the assistance of Paul Heilporn and Samantha Lash, and contributions by Traianos Gagos (†), Adam P. Hyatt, Allison Kemmerle, Martina Landolfi, Louise Loehndorff, Tyler Mayo, Jonathan J. McLaughlin, Amy Pistone, Drew C. Stimson, and Jacqueline Stimson, *Papyri from Karanis: The Granary C123 (P.Mich. XXI)*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018. xx + 196 pages. ISBN 978-0-472-13087-0.

The granary that forms the focus of this volume of Michigan Papyri (building C123) is not the granary you saw if you have visited Karanis, as it was demolished in 1933 after excavation. This volume seeks to reconstruct the histories of its life, abandonment, and excavation. It also brings us an installment of the texts found in it; others have been published before, both papyri and ostraka, and still others remain to be published. These last are conveniently listed in tables where appropriate. The entire team has put tremendous effort into understanding, as best as the records allow, the relationship of the texts to the spaces and contexts in which they were found, in the hope of offering, as the editors say, “a model for how to approach legacy excavation data” (p. 28). Anyone who has followed work on Karanis in the last quarter-century knows how much of both hope and disillusion there has been along the path of linking texts and contexts.¹

The tone in this volume is somewhat more one of disillusion than of hope; I would describe it in substance as realism about the relationship between texts and sites. Virtually all of the published papyri, and of the unpublished as well, come from contexts that seem to have consisted of dumped material, not occupation debris in an original setting. The excavators had, it is clear, little idea of stratigraphy in the sense that term is used today, and most of the time there is no direct evidence for the character of the contexts in which the texts and other objects were found. The records do not distinguish between occupation material and dumps. But the clues gathered by the editors are in general persuasive hints at the heterogeneous nature of the contents of the various rooms and bins in the granary. One

¹ I discuss some of this history in “Materializing Ancient Documents,” *Daedalus* 145 (2016) 79–87 at 82–84; doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00378.

might in a nutshell say that we learn a fair amount from the texts about the otherwise irrecoverable history of the building, but not a lot from the building about the texts. But given the underlying situation and the state of the documentation, this remains no small achievement. I cannot imagine that anyone familiar with the complexities of finding documentary materials in archaeological contexts from Roman Egypt would be anything but sympathetic, admiring, and thankful for the patient work of reconstruction that we are presented with here, preliminary though the editors say that it is.

The first part of the introduction briefly traces the history and archaeology of the site, including the University of Michigan excavations of 1924–1933. The second part focuses on the granary itself, reconstructing its excavation history, its setting within the site at the time of building, its development over time, and (most tentatively) the character of the original second floor, labeled B202 by the excavators but very sketchily recorded, and to which they attributed no objects in their finds register. There then follow the texts, first the “Karaniš Prayer Papyrus” and the account on its *recto* (827–828), then the other texts, arranged by room, in each case with a detailed discussion of the room (and generally its bins) preceding the texts.

C123 was originally built on the east side of Karaniš, apparently on the edge of the village, with wide streets on three sides, thus making it highly accessible for loading grain into it and then moving it out to be transported to harbors. But adjacent houses were soon built, and one of the side streets closed off, reducing its attractions. The capacity of its (originally) 134 bins is estimated at roughly 6,500 to 10,000 artabas, depending on how deep the bins were, something not securely established throughout. This would not have sufficed for all of the local grain taxes in the second century, but it would have taken care of a large share of them. Karaniš had at various times at least eleven good-sized granaries as well as some smaller ones, plus any now completely lost to our knowledge in the area in the center of the site destroyed by the *sebbakhin*, so C123 had plenty of company. But it may have been the principal public granary for a time. The texts found in it do not refer to this activity and thus provide no help in the interpretation of the building’s function during its lifetime. Over time, it underwent various changes, and apparently a sanding up of the main floor, but this history is hard to reconstruct with any confidence.

The papyrological star of the volume is the papyrus on which texts 827 and 828 stand, found in a street that was later closed off and is designated as courtyard K. This has been edited here by Traianos Gagos and Paul

Heilporn with appropriately detailed introduction and commentaries, completed by Heilporn after Gagos's death. This is a distinguished piece of scholarship that will be of interest to a wide range of readers far beyond papyrology, and a reminder of how much we have lost with Traianos Gagos's premature disappearance from our midst. The *recto* (828) preserves three columns of a register of payments of taxes in wheat, organized alphabetically. In column 1 only the ends of some names and the amounts survive, while in column 2 we have names beginning in the letters from κ to ο and a few of the amounts; in column 3 there are names from ο to π, and a few amounts. At least one column at the start and one at the end have been lost, perhaps more. Too few of the amounts survive to allow any meaningful analysis, but the editors point out that the amounts that we do have are not large, making it hard to know just what the purpose of the account is. No date is preserved, but the likely dating of the text on the *verso* to ca. 120–124 suggests a late first or early second century date.

Following up that insight, the introduction explores the possible connections of individuals listed to people appearing in the Karanis tax registers from later in the second century. Possible ancestors are conscientiously adduced, but the gap in time is too great for us to expect to find the same individuals, and pervasive homonymy is also an obstacle. Nonetheless, we reach the conclusion that probability favors a date only shortly before the reuse of the papyrus for 827; it is thus likely to be a list kept locally, rather than one submitted to nome-level authorities.

The *verso* text, the “Karanis Prayer Papyrus,” is a wholly remarkable document. It is impossible to summarize the rich commentary in a review, but the two columns (helpfully outlined on p. 36) begin, after a likely propitiatory formula and invitation to pray, with a long series of invocations, mostly in the form of ἑστία, translated as “hearth” but perhaps to be understood as altar, followed by first the ruling emperor, Hadrian, then the deified members of the imperial house (omitting those who had suffered *damnatio memoriae* and the short reigns between Nero and Vespasian), Zeus and the rest of the Greek pantheon, the people according to status (Romans, Alexandrians, Ptolemaieis in the Arsinoite nome, and, after a gap, “friends and allies”). After a series of wishes for good things, we continue into what seems to be an additional prayer, for the local gods (Petesouchos and Pnepheros, Soxis and Pnepheros the oracle-giving gods), the Tyche of the city (Alexandria, the editors think) and the Tyche of Karanis, and all the *katoikoi* and *geouchoi*. In the editors' view, we are dealing with a litany of acclamations probably of Alexandrian composition, but then distributed throughout the *chora* and customized first for

each nome, and then for at least major villages. Its use is most likely to have been in processions on festive occasions, when the images of the gods would have been marched through the streets to a central ritual location, perhaps in the now-destroyed center of Karanis.

Even this bald summary will give some hint of the range of questions and subjects this extraordinary text evokes, and the range of readers who will find it of compelling interest. The commentary takes up each in turn, and because the preservation of the text is far from good, the condition of the remaining ink is described with great scrupulousness. Certainly anyone with an interest in the imperial cult in the Roman world will find this essential reading, but so will anyone concerned with the cultural and religious relationship between provincial capitals, smaller cities, and villages.

The volume proceeds through other spaces, and with more everyday (but still valuable) texts. Room CE (the central passageway of the south wing) yielded **829**, a wax tablet from the outside of a notebook, on the outside of which stands CAISAROS in Roman characters, and **830**, summary extracts recording tax payments in 308. Some of the individuals mentioned are otherwise known, mainly from the Aurelius Isidoros archive, others not.² Room CF (the first of the vaulted rooms with bins) produced **831**, a very fragmentary astrological treatise with a mention of Jews that is difficult to contextualize.

In Room CG, a fair number of fragments were found, of which **832–835** are published here. These are an account, lists, and a fragmentary letter. In **834.7**, the speculation in the note that “the first letter is a poorly formed nu” and the place-name thus Narmouthis, seems impossible to me. I would prefer Περμουθέως, known from four texts as a personal name, although the second letter could be α. The second floor of the same space is designated BG, and it was the source of many papyri from two important private archives, those of Sabinus/Apollinarios (TM 116) and Satabous (TM 407). The dispersion of pieces in this building suggests that the material here comes from dumping activity. Apart from the archives, **836** is a receipt dated 129 for perhaps a month’s receipts (114 dr.) of the 1% and 2% tax at the Karanis customs house, issued by the nomarchs to the assistant and the *arabotoxotes*, who will have transported the funds to Arsinoe. The document is closely related to *P.Phil.* 25–29 and in the same hand as the last of those. Found in the same room is **837**, a register probably

² In l. 1, in place of Σεμπρωνιανός I would read Σεμπρωνίας. Sempronia daughter of Melas is well known as landowner and taxpayer in the Isidoros archive (*P.Cair.Isid.* 6, 9, 12, 14, 17, 22). The Melas son of Sokrates in l. 2 may be her father, and Kyrillos is presumably her brother, reappearing in l. 6.

coming from the customs station. Also from BG is **838**, a scrappy petition about assault and theft.

Room CCH is another vaulted room with bins. In **839** we have an interesting receipt for 106 1/2 artabas of wheat issued by a *sitologos* of Phylakitike to two men from Arsinoe, for rent (*ekphorion*) on 40 1/3 arouras of land they have farmed for the account of a *horiodeiktēs* who has fled, for the fourth indiction. The editors assign this indiction to 300/301, with some hesitation. They exclude 315/316 on the grounds (p. 113, n. 30) that at that time “the numbered indiction does not stand alone without an equation with the regnal year.” This is simply untrue. There are many contrary examples; *P.Col.* 10.286 will suffice as a random instance. I would agree that the handwriting favors an earlier rather than a later date, but that is hardly dispositive as between 300/301 and 315/316. There is no discussion of the name of one of the men paying the taxes, Souchidas. We know from Michigan ostraka a Souchidas who was *dekaprotos* in 295–296, and another from papyri and ostraka who was a *sitometres* in the 330s and 340s (see *P.Col.* 7, p. 67). The size of the amount at stake here (about which the editors do not comment) does not suggest some ordinary farmer, and it seems worth exploring possible identifications. The name of the *sitologos* is only partly preserved in l. 1 as [Αὐρήλιος . . .] εἰτών, on which the editors comment only “kappa, beta, or mu are possibilities for the dotted letter.” But of these none yields a known name, as far as I can see. Possibly the name was the *hapax* Ἀμίτων known from *P.Col.* 7.167.1 (where it is an undeclined patronymic), with iotacism, thus Ἀ]μείτων.

The finds from CCH continue with a fragment of an official letter in a chancery hand (**840**), a register of names with a strongly Upper Egyptian flavor (**841**; surely restore the common Κα]τοίτου in l. 10),³ on the back of which C. Iulius Apollinarius wrote a letter (not yet published), a declaration of uninundated land from the reign of Antoninus (**842**), and the Latin letter (**843**) previously edited as *C.Ep.Lat.* 1.163, where Heilporn has joined what was frag. 2 to the second column of frag. 1, producing a continuous text – although still not a particularly intelligible one, as Heilporn ruefully notes.

³ Although it has to be observed (relying here on the distributions of provenance shown in Trismegistos) that Pachnoubis is fairly common at Philadelphieia, Menches is far commoner in the Arsinoite and Herakleopolite nomes than in Upper Egypt, Haronnophris is by no means rare in the Faiyum, and Panouris is proportionately more common in the Arsinoite nome than anywhere else except the Western Desert. Katoites is as common in the Arsinoite as in the Panopolite nome, particularly in the Roman period. The distinctive character of the names in the papyrus is thus perhaps illusory.

A complex stratigraphic situation again presents itself in the pair CCI and CCJ, with their second-floor counterparts BBI and BBJ. There are joins of fragments between the two levels, and it seems likely that it was not possible to sort out the collapse of the vaults and walls from above, along with later fill, from debris already present in the lower level. Many papyri, most very fragmentary, were found in this complex, including quite a few from the Sabinus/Apollinarios archive. A letter by Apollinarios stood on the back of **851**, a list of names perhaps connected to **841**. The lower left part of a letter with a date to 122 (**853**) may have been written by Sempronius Valens. In **854**, strikingly, we have an account and a letter written on a single sheet in two columns. Whether they originally were intended to be separated is hard to say. Both concern estate management, and the letter speaks of extremely grave problems with the dikes: a *perichoma* “is not holding” (οὐκ ἔχει).

CCJ, a vaulted room where many mud sealings were found, has yielded a lease of an orchard (**849**) with the rare word κορμολογία,⁴ a receipt for garden taxes (**855**), and the scanty remains of BJ upstairs bring us a fragment of a letter of Sempronius to Sabinus (**856**), whether from the archive of the latter there is too little to say. From the vaulted room CL, with a later oven, the finds were scanty, but they include a fragment of a petition or official correspondence (**857**; I would think correspondence)⁵ and a list of places and individuals (**858**).

A possible petition in an early hand, dated by the editors to the first century BCE (**859**) was found in bin CT; it may be the earliest text found in the building. A petition from an Antinoite that mentions the prefect T. Pactumeius Magnus (**860**) may come from the Memphite nome, as is perhaps also the case for **862**, found in the four-binned vaulted room CO.⁶ The small fragment **861** is presented because it contains imperial titulature of 258–260 and helps support an argument that however weakened it was in the mid-third century, Karanis was not abandoned. The other representative of CO is a small fragment from which little can be gained (**863**).

The bulk of the documents in the volume are thus not individually exciting, but they probably give us a more honest view of the overall assemblage from the material dumped in C123 and B202 than a selection of

⁴ Of which another attestation now appears in the DDbDP, *P.Köln* 14.579a.14. At the start of l. 9, the editor suggests εἰς τὴν but finds the ν difficult. The ν seems all right to me.

⁵ The editor's suggestion (l. 1n.) of π[α]ρὰ δι[οῦ]ς seems impossible, being several letters too long for the space.

⁶ In l. 9, one might simply restore [δρόμου τοῦ ἱεροῦ] Ἀφροδίτης θεᾶς μεγίστης; *BGU* 4.1130.10–11 offers a parallel (with Chnoubis being the god).

well-preserved, easy-to-read pieces from the drawers would yield. In aggregate, too, they are hardly without their interest, particularly because so many show connections with areas outside the Faiyum or with other *merides* inside the nome. One gets some sense of the connectedness of Karanis from all of this.

The standard of editing is very high, and the volume has been carefully produced and proofread (though note ἀργυριίου for ἀργυρίου in 847.6, and that the method of abbreviation is sometimes represented in the *apparatus*, sometimes not). Altogether the volume is full of interest in diverse ways, and the editors and contributors are to be congratulated for a superb fulfillment of their goals.

*Institute for the Study of the Ancient World,
New York University*

Roger S. Bagnall

Rodney Ast and Roger S. Bagnall (eds.), with contributions by Clementina Caputo and Raffaella Cribiore, *Amheida III: Ostraka from Trimithis, Volume 2: Greek Texts from the 2008–2013 Seasons (O.Trim. II)*. New York, New York University Press and Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, 2016. xiii + 294 pages + 19 figures. ISBN 978-1-4798-5374-8.

O.Trim. 2 is the second volume of Greek ostraka from the ISAW-led excavations in the Dakhla Oasis site of Amheida (ancient Trimithis). As was the case in *O.Trim. 1*, the majority of the 391 texts published here (455–846) are exceedingly brief, many bearing only a name, location, and regnal date. Still others offer only one or two legible letters or illegible traces. Yet while few are compelling in isolation, the corpus as a whole offers occasionally revealing glimpses of the culture, society, and economy of the oasis in the Roman period. Readers are therefore encouraged to consult *O.Trim. 2* and its predecessor in tandem with 2015's *An Oasis City*, an accessible, multi-author synthesis of the Dakhla project that has already synthesized a substantial amount of the available evidence, the ostraka included.¹

Perhaps the greatest strength of *O.Trim. 2* is its exhaustive introduction, the first 61 pages of which are given over to an extensive discussion of the archaeological context of the ostraka. Although the majority were recovered from dumps, the editors identify four broad contextual categories: (1) windblown sand, generally containing material from the occupation periods, (2) identifiable occupation levels, which may also include chinking sherds that became detached from walls or vaults, (3) material dumped in preparation for construction, and (4) material dumped as waste. The context of every piece published in *O.Trim. 1* and *2* is then listed in a table occupying pages 9–61. In the next section, Clementina Caputo presents the results of a ceramic analysis, an attention to the materiality of texts that remains rare in papyrology. In brief, ostraka tend to measure between 0.5 and 1 cm in thickness, suggesting that smaller vessels such as bowls, jars, and cooking pots were preferred to larger, more robust vessels. Local fabrics also seem to have been used exclusively since no ostraka written on imported ceramics have been discovered. Of these local fabrics, Caputo identifies two main types – Types A and B – which she further divides into a number of subtypes. Over 96% of the surviving ostraka, however, are

¹ Roger S. Bagnall, Nicola Aravecchia, Raffaella Cribiore, Paola Davoli, Olaf E. Kaper, and Susanna McFadden, *An Oasis City* (New York 2015). Reviewed below, pp. 340–341.

written on Caputo's Group A fabrics, local clays rich in iron oxides that were used for the overwhelming majority of the containers found on site. On-site experiments with a flint tool also revealed that only these fabrics shatter into useable fragments when struck. The choice of fabric for ostraka was therefore dictated not solely by the simple availability of local clay vessels but also by the physical properties of the clay itself.

The remainder of the introduction is dominated by a number of lists. The first lists the names of all wells attested in *O.Trim.* 1 and 2. Beginning with Πμουv ("the water of"), these names usually appear on so-called "well-tags" and probably designate not a well itself but the land it irrigated. Two subsequent lists present the names of all tenants attested on the "well-tags" and the names of the seventeen individuals most frequently attested with one Serenos, the fourth-century CE town councilor and landowner whose house at Amheida has been well excavated. The following section then discusses Serenos' own hand, particularly his stylish and distinctive signature. After briefly revisiting the government of the oasis (see also *O.Trim.* 1 at pp. 42–48), the editors next provide a list of all shortened personal names, a "distinctively oasisite predilection" also attested also at Kellis (e.g. Μωνι < Ἀμμώνιος and Λάμμων, Λαμων, Φιλᾶς < Φιλάμμων, etc.). The penultimate section then turns to the personal names Gena (Γενα), the phonetically identical Iena (Ιενα), and Loui(a) (Λουι(α)), all probably truncated forms of Ploutogenes, an uncommon name that was nonetheless popular in the oasis. These truncated forms, however, were extremely local. Moreover, they were frequently prefixed with the Coptic masculine article Π as Pagena or Plouia ("the one of Gena/Louia"), thereby becoming theonyms. The editors tentatively suggest that this hyperlocal onomastic practice may reveal the divinization of a Ploutogenes/Gena-figure in the oasis. The introduction then concludes with a brief comment on the term ἀδτουργ(ός), which occurs seven times between *O.Trim.* 1 and 2 and seems to refer to the self-cultivation of particular parcels.

The ostraka themselves occupy the remainder of the volume. The longest are short accounts and lists of names (e.g. 465, 473) while the majority are short tags originally embedded in the mud stoppers of vessels (see the images of intact specimens on p. 67). However brief they may be, the well-tags remind the reader that the landscape of the oasis was hydrologically distinct from the Nile Valley. The occasional appearance of the term *hydreuma* (ὑδρευμα) in the *O.Trim.* corpus (including a well-cleaner, ὑδροκαθάρτης in *O.Trim.* 1.53) indicates the widespread presence of basins or cisterns, which collected and stored groundwater for later distribution

to cultivators.² While only one text in the present volume, **466**, appears to refer to the administration of irrigation, a similar piece was published as *O.Trim.* 1.39 (both are dated to 350–370 CE). Both are brief lists of toponyms, each of which is paired with a specific number of days (ἡμέρα) or, in one case, a half-day. While *O.Trim.* 1.39 was published simply as an “Account of days,” **466** is described as an “Account of days of irrigation,” and the editors suggest that the text refers to days on which water was provided to the attested places. This is surely correct. Fifth-century BCE demotic ostraka from ʿAin Manāwir in the Kharga Oasis already attest the existence of “days of water,” rights to a specific water source allotted in time-units, i.e. days or fractions thereof. In the case of the Kharga documentation, these “days of water” were bound to the plot of land they irrigated; when the land was ceded the water rights also passed to the new owner.³ Only in an environment like the oases where water could be collected and stored was such a precise system of water rights feasible. The Trimithis day-accounts thus surely offer a glimpse, however brief, of the perpetuation in the late Roman period of a distinctly oasisite form of water management.

Several other unique pieces are also published. Written on both the convex and concave side, **747** (ca. 275–350 CE) preserves an alphabet and *chalinós*, pseudo-epic verses that contain every letter of the alphabet. The same *chalinós* appears on *O.Claud.* 1.182 (2nd cent. CE). A list of ingredients (**826**, 350–370 CE) also offers the first attestation of the compound ὀπιομήκ(ωνος), the opium poppy.

In short, the same care and precision is devoted to every text published in *O.Trim.* 2, however brief it may be. A thorough array of indices makes the volume extremely easy to navigate, no mean feat considering the nature of the material it publishes. Although printed on the same paper stock as the rest of the volume, the numerous color plates are also crisp and clear. The editors are therefore to be commended for producing an exhaustive and exacting volume whose contents await further scholarly exploitation.

University of Michigan

Brendan Haug

² Danielle Bonneau, *Le Régime administratif de l'eau du Nil dans l'Égypte grecque, romaine et byzantine* (Leiden 1993) 61. Cited in *O.Trim.* 1 at p. 32, n. 13.

³ Michel Chauveau, “Les qanāts dans les ostraca de Manāwir,” in Pierre Briant (ed.), *Irrigation et drainage dans l'antiquité: qanāts et canalizations souterraines in Iran, en Égypte et en Grèce* (Paris 2001) 137–142.

Anna Lucille Boozer, *Amheida II: A Late Romano-Egyptian House in the Dakhla Oasis. Amheida House B2*. New York: New York University Press, 2015. 460 pages. ISBN 978-1-4798-8034-8.

This volume presents the archaeological data, analysis, and interpretation of a late Roman (3rd–4th century CE) house at the site of Trimithis, modern Amheida, in Egypt’s Dakhla Oasis. The excavation of the house in question, B2, was directed by the author, Anna Boozer (henceforth “B.”), as part of the Columbia (now NYU) excavations at Amheida between 2005 and 2007. The volume is divided into five sections: an introduction focusing on method and theory (chapters 1–3); the excavation and stratigraphy of the house (chapter 4); a discussion of the house’s architecture (chapters 5–6); detailed discussions of different classes of material culture and texts found in the house, including contributions from other specialists (chapters 7–19); and a concluding section (chapter 20). Photos (often not clear), plans, and line drawings are provided throughout. B. states in her introduction that this work “presents and discusses the architecture, artifacts, and ecofacts” of a Romano-Egyptian house “in a holistic manner, which has never before been attempted” (p. 17). As such, this work is a welcome addition to the study of domestic archaeology in Egypt: no single house from Roman Egypt has been published in such detail. B.’s presentation overall is excellent, though I have reservations about some of her specific interpretations.

In part I, B. describes her approach to domestic archaeology and situates house B2 in relation to the excavation of other Roman-period domestic structures in Egypt (Chapter 1); introduces Amheida and the Dakhla Oasis more broadly (Chapter 2); and lays out the excavation methodology (Chapter 3). Chapter 1 clearly outlines B.’s theoretical approach to the house. Citing Allison,¹ B. advocates for a “contextual archaeology” that considers objects and architecture in tandem, allowing “us to formulate logical conclusions about the types of objects or objects and architecture that tend to co-occur” (p. 27). This is in reaction in part to what has been done at other sites such as Karanis in the Faiyum, where despite the fact that all objects were recorded according to the room in which they were found (not typical practice in the early 20th century), scholars published and analyzed objects according to their material class divorced from their architectural and archaeological context. The contextual approach also specifically avoids labeling rooms (e.g. “kitchen”), which over-determines the

¹ P.M. Allison (ed.), *The Archaeology of Household Activities* (London 1999).

interpretation of the artifacts, and instead considers space and the people who inhabited it in a “mutually constituting” relationship (p. 27). B.’s overall goals are to “1. Establish the chronology of house B2; 2. Fit B2 within the Romano-Egyptian domestic spectrum; 3. Determine socio-spatial contexts, activities, and practices; 4. Determine the people who occupied B2; 5. Determine relationships to the Roman Empire” (p. 31). B. achieves these goals with varying degrees of success.

Part II consists solely of chapter 4, a detailed discussion of the excavation and stratigraphy of each room in the house. The rooms are discussed in detail, with descriptions of their individual “deposition stratigraphic units” (DSUs) and features, as well as an interpretation of each room. Every discussion includes a Harris Matrix, a helpful addition and not at all usual for published excavation reports in Egyptian archaeology. The matrices can be difficult to parse, however, since horizontal lines are sometimes used to indicate stratigraphic relationships; as a result, stratigraphic relationships can be ambiguous (see e.g. Fig. 4.16 on p. 82), or lines can overlap with one another, making stratigraphic relationships unclear (see e.g. Fig. 4.9 on p. 67).

Part III focuses on architecture, first considering the construction techniques used (Chapter 5) and then analyzing and reconstructing the house (Chapter 6). Most discussions of houses in Roman Egypt center on the Faiyum, since that is the location of most excavated Roman Egyptian houses. While B2 shares construction techniques with the mudbrick houses of Karanis, the layout of the house (and of other houses at Amheida) is quite different. As illustrated by the tremendously useful access analysis diagrams, house B2 has a clustered plan of access, with rooms radiating off of a central space, in contrast to the more common linear arrangement found in the Faiyum, where one could only proceed from one room to the next. B2 and other Dakhlan houses appear to “fit within a regional norm” that appears in the oases, “but are closer to the horizontal house type found more commonly in other areas of the Roman Empire” (p. 179). B2 is not a “classical” peristyle house that might be found on the Mediterranean coast, but it has greater affinities with other Roman houses than more traditional Egyptian-style linear access houses found in the Faiyum.

Part IV constitutes the bulk of the volume, focused on the objects found in the course of the excavation. This is also where the volume is the most traditional, with individual chapters focused on classes of objects contributed by B. and other authors. The types of material included is comprehensive with chapters on ceramics (Chapter 8, Dixneuf), unfired clay objects (Chapter 9, Davoli), figurines (Chapter 10, Boozer), adornment

(Chapter 11, Cervi), glass vessels (Chapter 12, Cervi), faience vessels (Chapter 13, Cervi), coins (Chapter 14, Ratzan), textual material (Chapter 15, Ruffini), faunal remains (Chapter 16, Crabtree and Campana), plant remains (Chapter 17, Thanheiser and Walter), wood objects (Chapter 18, Cervi), and woven material (Chapter 19, Boozer). These more traditional chapters are framed and introduced by Chapter 7, “Artifact and Activity,” where B. discusses the objects according to function or theme rather than material, discussing personal appearance, household activities, interior appearance, religion, diet, entertainment, cultural affinities, gender, and age. The inclusion of a chapter on textual material is especially notable here: texts, such as papyri and ostraca, are rarely discussed in relation to their archaeological context, and it is refreshing to see them included in an archaeological publication.

Part V consists of chapter 20, which revisits the five research objectives outlined in part I and proposes future directions. Tying all of the evidence together, B. argues for a house that was occupied from ca. 250 until it was abandoned ca. 315–350. She recreates a “walk” through the house, taking into account the architecture and objects found in each room, in order to present her interpretation of each room’s use. B.’s tour of the house is evocative, and is a comprehensible way of presenting difficult archaeological data from a house context. B. then goes on to “recreate the B2 household,” discussing the socio-economic status, gender, age, and ethnicity of the inhabitants by drawing on archaeological and textual evidence discovered in the course of the excavation, as well as current understandings of demographics and household structure in Roman Egypt. She concludes that the inhabitants were of moderate economic means, with men, women, and children all present in the house, and with occupants engaging in “ambivalent heritage displays” (p. 421), and no significant public expressions of status and ethnicity. B. then situates the house in broader discussions of ethnicity and cultural change in the Roman Empire, advocating for an investigation of “household identity” to examine the local effects of imperial rule.

While the presentation is comprehensive, I do have issues with some of B.’s specific interpretations. Though the house was only occupied for a relatively short period according to B.’s proposed chronology, associating artifacts or even structures with a specific household is a difficult business. In her concluding discussion of B2, B. does not readily distinguish between habitation and abandonment phases of the house, and seems to treat most material as if it belonged to secure contexts that can reliably be related to the inhabitants during the use-phase of the structure. B. admits

that “it is likely that the house was reused post-abandonment for ephemeral activities that resulted in moving objects in or out of the house” (p. 416), but this does not seem to figure heavily in her interpretation. The narrow date range for the house’s occupation and probable swift abandonment mitigates this to some extent, but a clearer discussion of how abandonment and post-abandonment processes affected the artifact assemblage and her interpretation would have been appreciated. I am also an admitted skeptic of relying on textual data to understand household residents, even when found in secure archaeological contexts: it is impossible to be certain that individuals identified in texts can be related to specific objects or even structures, as B. states with the case of linen weavers identified on two ostraca (p. 412). Several texts predate the abandonment of the structure by some decades (e.g. text 15.9 = *O.Trim.* 1.51), so the relationship of the texts to the final occupants of the structure is not readily apparent. A clearer theoretical discussion of the relationship between the texts, what they describe and other archaeological material would have been relevant.

Lastly, though B. tries to move away from certain normative assumptions about material culture, especially regarding room use, this is not always the case when discussing identity. Her terminology is fluid, moving from discussing cultural affinity, traditions, ethnicity, and heritage, though these carry distinct connotations. The terms Egyptian, Greek, and Roman are interrogated to some extent and the difficulty of these terms is acknowledged, especially in chapter 20. But despite her caveats, B. seems to treat Greek, Roman, and Egyptian as three distinguishable categories that can be readily applied to material culture, though by the time B2 was constructed Egypt had been under Roman rule for nearly 300 years. For instance, B. discusses the “cultural affinities” of artifacts (pp. 196–197), dividing up types of artifacts into Greek, Roman, and Egyptian cultural categories. But it is a question whether something that seems Egyptian (or Greek, or Roman) to us would have been understood to specifically and especially carry that connotation in antiquity.

This being said, the volume is a useful addition to the growing literature on the household archaeology of Roman Egypt. Household archaeology is critical for understanding the ways in which imperial rule affected daily life, and it is admirable to see a small, non-elite house being treated in such detail. The weaknesses of the volume are a result of its ambition, to comprehensively reconstruct a Roman-period Egyptian household in all its aspects. This is a lot to do in the course of a single volume, the primary function of which is to serve as a site report. Some areas of the

text stand out, such as discussion of the excavation, the architecture, and the reconstructed “walk” through the house; others seem a bit thin or undertheorized, as with B.’s reconstruction of B2’s household, the use of ostraca, and the discussion of ethnic identity. B.’s work, however, does represent an intriguing approach to domestic contexts, and offers much for scholars of household archaeology in Egypt to discuss and debate.

Reed College

Thomas Landvatter

Roger S. Bagnall, Nicola Aravecchia, Raffaella Cribiore, Paola Davoli, Olaf E. Kaper, and Susanna McFadden. *An Oasis City*. New York: New York University Press, 2015. xvi + 240 pages. ISBN 978-1-4798-8922-8.

This volume introduces the reader to the ancient city of Trimithis (modern Amheida) in the Great Oasis (modern Dakhla Oasis) of Western Egypt. Although excavations are ongoing at this site as well as others nearby, the essays here provide a broad view of what is known of the village to date.

The first chapter of the book reviews the natural features and limitations of the oasis as a backdrop to the history of its human inhabitants. There is a subsection describing the cult activity in the broader area around Trimithis. Chapter Two reviews some of the evidence for periods before the Roman occupation. This includes remains from a bakery from the 13th Dynasty – Second Intermediate Period, written evidence that suggests a school from the 19th Dynasty, and deconstructed stones from temples of the Late Period. Archaeologists have also discovered an animal cemetery from the Late Period.

Most of the book focuses on the city of Trimithis in the Roman period, as the material remains of the later period are more accessible than that of earlier periods. During that time, the city, built around a main north-south road, was comprised of buildings constructed heavily from mud brick. Houses, many of which show rich decoration, were connected by alleys, some of which were closed and likely covered. The most interesting house is that of Serenos, built in the mid 4th century CE. The house was renovated a number of times during the 4th century and features some beautifully painted rooms (for a further discussion of these, see Ch. 7.2). This and other houses display adaptation to the environment, and often feature roofs to keep out the blowing sand. Near the house of Serenos (although in an early period) was a Roman-style bath complex.

The remains of pagan Trimithis from the Roman period are featured in Chapter 4. In addition to the remains of a temple to Egyptian gods, there are private funerary pyramids in both of the city's *necropoleis*. This type of private pyramid is nearly unique to the Dakhla Oasis. Christianity is witnessed in Trimithis by a church that sat atop a mound with a view over the city. The ceiling of the main room of the church featured plaster painted to look like a coffered ceiling. Ample documentary evidence of Christianity has been recovered as well.

The final chapters of the volume contextualize the material and documentary remains to the extent possible. Bagnall concludes that Trimithis produced enough crops to feed itself but depended for its economy on exporting tree crops such as olive oil, dates, figs, and jujubes, and also alum and cotton, probably using camels to transport the commodities to the Nile valley. The Roman army had a presence in the Dakhla oasis beginning in the 4th century, which may indicate that the trade routes were under threat and may ultimately explain the decline of Trimithis later in the century.

Although Trimithis was far from the Nile and had its own peculiarities, it should not be seen as a backwater. This is most evident in one of the most interesting finds in Amheida. A building, close to the house of Serenos, was used as a school until it was incorporated into one of the renovations of the house. Its schoolboys left behind writing exercises not only on ostraca but also on an ancient version of a whiteboard. It is not surprising then to see evidence of literary culture on the walls of nearby houses.

Although the volume is comprehensive, and therefore should be accessible to a more general audience such as classicists without a thorough background in the history of Egypt, there are some features that prevent the book from working as such. First, as a non-Egyptologist I would have preferred to have dating noted by centuries rather than periods and/or dynasties (there is a chart of Egyptian chronology but looking at it disrupted my reading). Second, although the book has perhaps the most colorful and plentiful illustrations I have ever seen in a work of serious scholarship (the number of illustrations rivals most textbooks), the plans of the entire site and specific areas are inconsistent – clearly produced by different illustrators – and the plan of the entire site is very small and not labeled, so that it is difficult to view the specific areas or buildings. Finally, there was no attempt to synthesize the many sections by different authors, with the effect that I found myself flipping back to previous sections on occasion. Still, I encourage those who work at sites such as Amheida to continue to provide us with well-illustrated and complete volumes such as this periodically so that we can observe a full understanding of the city emerge.

Ryan E. McConnell, *Getting Rich in Late Antique Egypt*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017. ix + 142 pages. ISBN 978-0-472-13038-2.

This book is a revised version of a doctoral thesis submitted by McConnell (henceforth M.) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2013. It focuses on the well-known Apiones who rose from local prominence at Oxyrhynchus to the highest ranks of the Byzantine court in Constantinople between the fifth and seventh century CE. M. holds that such an upward move was “a product of the reciprocally reinforcing effects of increasing wealth and status” (p. 2), and his concern is therefore to investigate the main source for the Apiones’ wealth, which has been thoroughly discussed by scholars in important studies published recently. While P. Sarris connects the Apiones’ wealth with the exploitation of their directly managed land (*autourgia*) and the sale of its marketable surplus,¹ M., relying especially on T.M. Hickey’s research on the real extent of the Apionic properties which Hickey claims were much smaller than has been argued by previous scholars,² searches it in the family’s role as tax collectors on behalf of the state. Resuming J. Gascou’s famous “fiscal shares model,” M. argues that the Apiones were involved in tax collection not only from their own properties (*autopragia*) but also from land located near the estate. This would not only be a *munus* imposed by the government on the aristocratic landholders, but the result of a specific agreement between the Apiones and the state, from which both parties would profit: the state, by being able to rely on funds even before taxes had been collected; the estate by keeping any grain and money (converted into gold) which exceeded the quantities required by the state. Such a model would represent a third interpretation, contrasting with the old-fashioned proto-feudal interpretation of an antagonism between the state and private landholders and a more gentle vision of collaboration between the two parties.

In order to demonstrate his point, M. begins his book with an introductory chapter (“The Apions and Their Wealth”) that includes a useful survey on large estates in Byzantine Egypt, a summary of the book’s thesis (the “level of market engagement on the Apion estate”), as well as a short discussion of sources and methods, and of the genealogy of the family. A reader without previous knowledge of the Apiones might wish

¹ P. Sarris, *Economy and the Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge 2006) 31–36.

² T.M. Hickey, *Wine, Wealth, and the State in Late Antique Egypt* (Ann Arbor 2012) 150–155, who criticizes Sarris’ book and concludes by stating that the source of the Apionic wealth “remains to be discovered” (p. 155).

for more discussion of the history of the family, its members and its sources instead of being referred to R. Mazza's 2001 monograph,³ which does not take into account the numerous new texts from the archive that have been published since 2001 and therefore cannot reflect the *status quaestionis*.

In chapter 2 ("Reconsidering the *Autourgia*") M. analyzes the main point of Sarris' argumentation, the role of the *autourgia* in the Apiones' increase in wealth between the early fifth and the early seventh century.⁴ According to Sarris, the Apiones' estate had a bipartite structure, in which one part (the *ktemata*) was leased out and provided a more modest yield, while the other part was directly managed (*autourgia*) by the estate and provided the marketable surplus. Claiming that the *autourgia* only occurs in the expenditure section of the accounts, Sarris argued that this kind of land was supported by the *ktematic* portion of the estate and exploited by its tenants as a compulsory service included in their lease contract. M. lists the evidence against Sarris' claims with special reference to the work of Hickey. The main reason for Sarris' incorrect view is a misunderstanding concerning the extent of the *autourgia*, which did not include *all* the land pertaining to the Apionic villa called ἔξω τῆς πόλης (according to Sarris), but was only a part of it. Moreover, *autourgic* land was mainly devoted to fodder production, a crop which was also bought on the market to supply the needs of the household. Hence it was not possible that the *autourgia* produced a marketable surplus for the estate. Against Sarris' view concerning tenants being required to work on the *autourgic* land, M. mentions the lack of such an arrangement in the (few) contracts of lease in the archive and reports instead the evidence supplied by the papyri, according to which *georgoi* could also be of a high status, owning their own land and holding prominent positions in the community, as already argued by scholars in recent times.⁵

According to M., Sarris' statement about an increase in the size of Byzantine households is not sufficiently supported by the papyrological evidence. However, it is not possible to deny that the Apionic lands expanded over the centuries. On the one hand, there is the famous case of Diogenes' land, which came to be owned by the Apiones in lieu of an unpaid loan.⁶

³ R. Mazza, *L'archivio degli Apioni: terra, lavoro e proprietà senatoria nell'Egitto tardoantico* (Bari 2001).

⁴ "Late 7th" on p. 14 is a slip of the pen, as the Apionic family seems to disappear during the Persian occupation.

⁵ See also *P.Oxy.* 77.5123, intro.

⁶ *P.Oxy.* 63.4397 (17 March 545) and Hickey's remarks on the issue ("An Inconvenient Truth? *P.Oxy.* 18.2196 *verso*, the Apion Estate, and *fiscalité* in the Late Antique Oxyrhynchite,"

Moreover, the Apiones undoubtedly administrated and possibly owned hamlets formerly belonging to the *domus divina*. In this respect, M.'s interpretation of some papyri is far from certain and even contradictory. He discusses Sarris' interpretation of two texts regarding the *epoikion* Kineas, a hamlet which was property of the imperial house during the sixth century, and maybe also in the fifth century,⁷ but eventually owned by the Apiones by the seventh century (see below). Kineas is mentioned in *P.Oxy.* 16.1915, an account dating back to about 560 CE concerning Pempo, an *epoikion* owned by the *domus divina*, but partially under the fiscal responsibility of peasants belonging to the *domus gloriosa*. In another papyrus, *P.Oxy.* 27.2479 (assigned to the sixth century), a peasant from Kineas writes to his δεσπότης. On the basis of the two texts, Sarris argues that Kineas was by the time of the account still property of the imperial house and then came to be owned by the Apiones, as he identifies the δεσπότης of 2479 with Apion II.

M. does not question Sarris' interpretation of the account, but doubts the identification of the δεσπότης with a member of the Apionic family, proposing that he might rather be an administrator of the imperial house: if so, Kineas would be the property of the *domus divina* in both texts. However, in the account *P.Oxy.* 16.1915, Kineas is mentioned as one of the *epoikia* where the peasants of the glorious house who take care of Pempo come from, cf. l. 18 τοῖς ἐξῆς γεωρ(γοῖς) τοῦ ἐνδόξου οἴκου followed in l. 19 by τοῖς ἀπὸ Μεσκανούνεως and then τοῖς ἀπὸ Κινέας. As I argued in my book on the *domus divina*,⁸ it is most probable that the hamlet belonged to the Apiones by the time the account was written. After all, the seventh century contract *SB* 22.15362 (614/615, see *P.Oxy.* 72.4901, 4 comm.), addressed to a member of the Apionic family (cf. ll. 1–2), mentions that Kineas belonged to the glorious house at that time (ll. 4–5: τοῦ ἐποικ(ίου) Κινέας τοῦ Ὀξ(υρυγχίτου) νομοῦ | διαφέροντος τῆ ὑμετέρᾳ ὑπερφ(υείᾳ)).⁹ As for *P.Oxy.* 27.2479, M. himself even argues for an identification between the δεσπότης and Apion II later in the book (p. 58 with n. 72).

BASP 45 [2008] 99 with nn. 55 and 58). Even M. comments on the possibility that unpaid loans might lead to an expansion of the Apionic possessions (p. 105).

⁷ *PSI* 3.196 and 197, and *P.Oxy.* 72.4901, respectively.

⁸ G. Azzarello, *Il dossier della "domus divina" in Egitto* (Berlin 2012) 46, 53–54, and 97–101, which M. quotes on p. 28, n. 75.

⁹ If we argue that the hamlet was only administered by the Apiones (as M. suggests, p. 58, n. 72) and do not give credit to the very meaning of the verb διαφέρω, then we should even doubt that the Apiones really did own any hamlet.

Following Hickey's research on the issue, M. reiterates that the production of the *autourgia* mainly consisted of fodder produced for estate-owned animals. These animals were employed to operate irrigation machines, and were mostly provided by the estate itself, except in some cases when the *georgoi* owned and used their own animals for this purpose. In the chapter conclusion M. remarks on the fact that the social status of the *georgoi* was not homogenous and "the types of arrangements possible with the estate were similarly varied" (p. 40). After demonstrating the weakness of Sarris' model, M. argues that the increasing wealth of the Apiones stemmed from the collection of taxes on behalf of the government.

Intrinsic benefits relating to "lower-level collection" are analyzed in chapter 3 ("Benefits from Lower-Level Collections"). Taxes in grain and money were collected by the *pronoetai*, each of whom was responsible for a small administrative unit called a *prostasia*. *Pronoetai* released annual accounts of grain and money taxes, organized by expenditures and receipts. While grain was paid to the *embolator*, money was transferred to the *trapezites* in installments. Discussing Hickey's observations on the still unpublished *P.Oxy.* 18.2196 verso (586/587), M. highlights that unlike *pronoetai*, higher level administrators seem to deal only with money, not grain. A complicating factor for understanding the administrative accounts is the use of two different units for grain, the *kankellos* and the *metron artaba*, the former being about 15% larger than the latter: the possibility that this difference corresponds to the *embole*, stated by the editor of *P.Oxy.* 55.3804, is not confirmed by other *pronoetai* accounts, although it could still apply at higher levels of the administration operating with aggregate numbers. Comparison between accounts is also made difficult by the practice of *adaeratio*, which is the conversion of grain taxes into money. As for the addition of 15%, contracts with the estate show that the *pronoetai* were bound to collect this surcharge on the grain besides paying 12 *solidi* to the estate as *paramythia*. As a *pronoetes'* wage would not be sufficient to cover such expenses, M. assumes that his position gave him the means to make enough money to cover the expenses and probably earn additional funds beyond that. Petitions from *georgoi* show that *pronoetai* were able to obtain perquisites from the tenants, in some cases even bringing them to ruin.

As contemporary evidence is lacking, M. compares the fourth century papyri concerning two brothers engaged in collecting taxes on behalf of private landholders and public officials. The texts reveal a system based on the purchase of the right to collect, the advance payment of the full amount of the taxes due by means of a loan, then the collection itself, the

conversion of the collected billon into gold and the repayment of the loan. The process of collecting and engaging in the gold market was potentially rewarding. M. argues that such a system could apply also at the lower levels of the Apionic administration, with the difference being that the *pronoetai*, acting on behalf of aristocratic landholders, would have possessed “the social capital” that the two brothers could not enjoy, which ultimately put them in a weak position not only compared to their superiors but also to their inferiors (p. 61).

By comparing two accounts from the higher levels of the Apionic administration, *P.Oxy.* 16.1918 (ca. 542) and 18.2196 *verso* (ca. 586/587) and the amounts registered in the *pronoetai* accounts, M. argues that the number of *prostasiai* increased by at least 30% within 45 years: that would imply a significant increase of money for the estate (12 *solidi* of *paramythia* received by each *pronoetes*) and grain (the additional 15% percent contributed by the *pronoetai*). M. attributes such an expansion to the increasing role of the Apiones as tax collectors rather than to the acquisition of more land, for which he does not find any evidence (p. 67): however, the case of Diogenes and the possessions acquired from the imperial house mentioned above invites us to reconsider this conclusion.

In chapter 4 (“Tax Collection on Two Tiers”) M. analyzes the possible extrinsic benefits coming to the Apiones from their activity as tax collectors. As no evidence of this remains, he warns the reader that he has had to work with “a theoretical framework” (p. 69) stemming from economics and sociology (an approach he defends against skeptical scholars like Sarris): the method consists of evaluating the different possible systems of collecting taxes on the estate and the specific economic and social circumstances which each system implies, in order to choose the one best suited for the Apiones. The three models M. focuses on are share, rent, and wage: after a brief description of their structure, M. proposes that the Apiones’ tax collection was based on a rent system. He enumerates the circumstances that make this model preferable according to economic theories such as the difficulty of counting the taxes due to contamination of the products and the variability of both measurement standards and of the tax base. Such a system should be recognized, according to M., both at the level of the *pronoetai* and on the higher level of the administration, dealing with the imperial government. As for the former, although the evidence points to a wage system, M. argues that this was secondary and the *pronoetai* rented the right to collect: however, they would not pay the sums in advance, but in installments after partial collection. As for the higher level, evidence (e.g., *P.Oxy.* 1.144 [Nov. 22, 580; 554/555, *BL* 13.146],

which attests that the Apiones paid a round weight of gold) might point to a system based on the payment of a lump sum negotiated with the government by the estate. Anything above this sum would be left to the estate. In this respect *apaitesima* (rent-rolls) and *pronoetes* accounts would not be kept in order to control the reliability of the collectors, but would rather be attempts to estimate the tax base, information that was used to establish the sum that should be negotiated with the state. Such a system could be used to clarify some issues which are hotly debated in the historiography of Byzantine Egypt, such as the limitation of mobility imposed by the government and the estate on the *georgoi* (the more *georgoi* working on the land, the more taxes would be collected), the lack of distinction between rent and tax in the Apionic accounts (there was no need to distinguish between them, as any surplus on the lump sum would be left to the estate), and the terms of the relationship between the state and the aristocrats (“mutually beneficial arrangement” [p. 94] rather than antagonism or cooperation).

M.’s hypothesis about the role played by tax collection in the increasing wealth of the Apiones is realistic and well developed. However, I wonder if it is really necessary to assume a specific tax farming-based agreement between the Apiones and the state, especially considering the lack of evidence. *Munera civica* and *autopragia* already justify the engagement of the Apiones in tax collection. Collection from Oxyrhynchite villages, which were said to be fiscally administered (*παγαρχοῦμεναι*) by the family,¹⁰ was not performed exclusively by the Apiones but also by other landholders (like Flavia Anastasia):¹¹ therefore tax collection shows similarities to public services such as the *defensio civitatis* and police duty, which were carried out by each landholder in turn.¹²

On the level of the *prostasiai*, the Apiones’ involvement in collecting not only the taxes from their own properties (*autopragia*) but also from land belonging to others, might be confined to the cases concerning the Apiones’ own *georgoi* (as the law itself prescribes, see below) and not generally, as M. states, “their neighbors” (e.g., p. 67). The main evidence

¹⁰ Hickey (n. 6) 89 with n. 11.

¹¹ E.g., *P.Oxy.* 44.3204, 12 (Jan. 2, 588, with *BL* 13.161). The service was not carried out by the *pronoetai*, as it did not fall under the terms of their contract, which only refer to *prostasiai*, e.g. *P.Oxy.* 1.136, 15 (May 24, 583).

¹² *P.Oxy.* 16.2039 and G. Azzarello, “Vecchi e nuovi personaggi della famiglia degli Apioni nei documenti papiracei,” in T. Gagos (ed.), *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology, Ann Arbor 2007* (Ann Arbor 2010) 33–46. The former is quoted at the end of M.’s book (pp. 122–123 with n. 5) as evidence for the fact that the Apiones operated “under a fiscal shares system as early as 463–64.”

comes from the case of Pempo, an *epoikion* belonging to the *domus divina*, which, according to *P.Oxy.* 16.1915 (see above), was partially exploited by *georgoi* of the glorious house; in addition there are a handful of references in the *pronoetai* accounts to payments made by some peasants for ἰδία γῆ, “own land” (p. 44, n. 9: “2032” is actually “2037”). One has the impression that in both situations the Apiones were not just collectors for their neighbors. As for the former, the Apiones’ collection of Pempo’s taxes might be justified by the fact that Apionic *georgoi* worked on the land. As for payments concerning ἰδία γῆ, some of them refer to peasants who in other parts of the accounts pay their contributions to the Apiones for plots of land located within an *epoikion* and therefore very probably owned by the Apiones:¹³ if we assume that ἰδία γῆ belonged to the peasants who paid for it, then the rest of the entries should refer to Apionic plots of land, otherwise we would expect their ownership to be specified.¹⁴ The *epoikia* reported in the accounts as well as the peasants should then belong to the glorious house: they would give payments to the *pronoetes* both for the Apionic land which they were responsible for in the first place, as well as for other land they came to exploit.¹⁵ Indeed, such a situation is recorded in the legislative texts, as M. himself points out at the end of chapter 4 (p. 91 with nn. 85–86): a landholder could be (but was not required to be) fiscally responsible for land owned by his *georgoi*. All in all, such entries might be exceptions that would confirm the general rule according to which *prostasiai* consisted of Apionic possessions, from which *pronoetai* collected the taxes as part of the *autopragia*. A special arrangement with the peasants, according to what was established by the law, allowed them to collect also from others’ lands: these, however, were not just neighbors, but peasants working for the Apiones. Even if tax collection both on the village and on the *prostasiai* level was compulsory like other public service,¹⁶ it certainly was a remunerative one, not only for

¹³ E.g. in *P.Oxy.* 16.1912 (before 566, *BL* 9, 191) the account section regarding the *epoikion* Samakion and consisting of 6 entries (ll. 82–88), all concerning two men called Paues and Ioannes. In the first two entries they pay, as *georgoi*, grain and money (ll. 83–84); then, as *georgoi* and vinedressers, money and grain once (l. 85), then only money (l. 86); the final two entries in this section (ll. 87–88) concern payments by the same two *georgoi* in grain for “their own land” (l. 87: ὑπὲρ ἰδίας γῆς) and in money (l. 88).

¹⁴ Specification about ownership occurs only for one place out of the many mentioned in the account, and Hickey makes the plausible observation that “in a text in which non-ownership was the norm, it is far less likely that such status would have been indicated” (Hickey [n. 2] 50).

¹⁵ Cf. already Hickey (n. 2) 49, n. 61 referring to the *georgoi* of Samakion, paying also ὑπὲρ ἰδίας γῆς, in *P.Oxy.* 16.1912: “Individuals with such property surely had other ties with their collectors.”

¹⁶ E.g., Justinian’s *Nov.* 15 (535) concerning the *defensio civitatis*.

financial reasons (like the possibility of speculation in gold, as M. has pointed out), but also because it could increase the collector's influence and power and give them the chance to access potentially remunerative situations (such as lending money to landholders in need).

In chapter 5 ("Analogues to Apion Tax Farming"), M. describes tax collection structures in other times and societies which could supply a parallel for the model proposed, by providing evidence for its very existence and helping to fill the gaps. Tax farming systems may be observed in Athens, in Ptolemaic Egypt, and republican Rome, where the coexistence of many tiers in the collection of taxes can be observed and "merciless collection practices" (p. 105) on the lower tier occurred. Finally, M. describes the French tax-farming system from the late Middle Ages to the 18th century, which, he claims, could provide a good parallel for the transition from the fourth century to the model reconstructed for the Apiones. In the French system, leases of tax farms were determined by competitive auction but coexisted with a system based on state collection. The system evolved to longer term leases, which were negotiated in back-rooms between the aristocrats and finance ministers. M. applies this scenario also to the Apiones, who, thanks to their special relationship with the imperial house, would obtain the exclusive right to collect. This way, the state would be granted credit, while the Apiones would obtain a way to earn money and influence. A summary of the whole book is offered in the conclusion, which resumes the main aspects of the argumentation. In a final section, M. notes the lack of evidence for his reconstruction, especially concerning a specific agreement between the government and the estate.

The volume ends with an appendix containing the list of the papyri referred to in the text, where reference to the pages would have been useful; there is also a glossary and a bibliography followed by a general index, also containing a Greek index. Editions of still unpublished texts will probably shed light on many issues and raise new questions. In any case, McConnell's book contains very well documented research and it is an important contribution to the debate that will stimulate further discussion and new hypotheses.

David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018. xxii and 314 pages. ISBN 978-0-691-17697-0.

By one reading the title of David Frankfurter's new book is meant ironically, for two of his aims are, one, to counter narratives of a monolithic Christianity exerting an irresistible gravitational force on a non-Christian people and terrain, and, two, to challenge conceptions of Egypt as a unitary landscape, one region with one historical trajectory. Instead, Frankfurter (henceforth F.) argues that Christianization was an open-ended process that occurred through encounters, exchanges, and their creative expressions in material production between Christians and non-Christians (principally pagan, but also Jewish, Manichaean, and Gnostic). The emphasis is on persons and communities rather than on offices and institutional hierarchies, and on the palpable spiritual powers unleashed through ritual rather than on more abstruse theological controversies or more intractable conversions of the heart.

The term F. has chosen to describe this dynamic interconnectedness between religious traditions and the eventual tilting of the religious sails towards Christianity – syncretism – is also the crux of his argument. Negatively, for F., syncretism is “not the weaving together of two theological systems or institutions” (p. 16). Which is to say it does not signify a directed, programmatic consolidation of one religious system's hegemony over another that is, if not its contrary, at the least its obstructionist rival, to be either absorbed or suppressed. Rather, the compelling usefulness of the term for F. resides in its redirecting the focus onto the often unnamed “agents” of Christianization: wives and mothers; holy men, their shrines, and their suppliants; craftsmen; and monks who leave their scribal traces in the *opuscula* of fragmentary apocrypha, charms and incantations, and what might be described in a later age as blank verse drawing upon mixed metaphors. Syncretism becomes, therefore, the ever-uncoiling skein of yarn of sometimes contrasting, sometimes complementing threads of co-existing cultic practices whose cross-fertilization yields a landscape charged with spiritual meaning specific to particular households, village communities, and their immediate settings. The local takes precedence over the regional and ecumenical; popular religious expression over doctrine; and the ordinary believer over the theological adept and the episcopal miter.

F. establishes up front his historical frame: Egypt under Christian Roman imperial rule, from the fourth century to the Arab conquest in the seventh century. The book's chapters, however, proceed topically, not chronologically, each directed to a particular “social site” (p. xiv) of “syncretistic

agency” (p. 21): the home and its chiefly female caretakers, both the persons and the votive objects set out to guard thresholds and the lives within; the holy man, simultaneously the living person and the reified object of veneration; sacred shrines made efficacious through memorialized saints and by ritual processions extending the tendrils of their curative, oracular, and apotropaic possibilities; the craftsman and his workshop; the monastic scribe in liberal engagement with the book, both the Book and the codex more generally as holder of incantatory formulae and letters whose magical powers are released with their being lifted from lexicographical convention; and finally the land itself, becoming landscape, which implies the working of its imaginative recreation, here with sacral results.

The social sites F. has chosen to address lay outside institutionalized and organized religion, in so far as they gained their cogency from individuals aligning their spiritual (and material) needs with the available symbols and rituals whose religious affiliation is left malleable, until brought under the exacting gaze of those whose business it was to define “Christian” over and against the questionably orthodox or the obviously unorthodox. The historical actors F. centers his study around are all craftsmen, if seen as sculptors working the soft clay of different religious traditions into forms most meaningful to themselves. Christianization, according to F., is then a decentered process whereby the peripheries of imperial and ecclesiastical authority are the compelling meeting-points of religious crosscurrents for which Christianity was the catchment basin.

For the domestic sphere, F. uses the evidence of “anti-syncretist” (his term) decrivals of practices deemed un-Christian, of hagiographies and miracle stories, and of the material remains of domestic cultic practices, notably amulets and female figurines associated with fertility. There is the risk of giving voice to persons, in this case village women, vicariously. We in fact do not hear from these women. An irascible monk complains of parents using polluted water or water brought from the theater to cleanse their children (p. 37). A miracle story tells of a woman being instructed to sleep in a shrine in order to obtain her wish of a successful pregnancy (p. 40). But even if F. has to read back to his subjects from this evidence, he is still able to highlight the vitality, even the renewed vitality, of rituals coming from pre-Christian traditions within a broadly Christian frame.

More problematic is F.’s working from the evidence to the intentions of women in their domestic roles. Whether *they* were conceiving of an easy convergence of “domestic charms” for inducing sleep, bread stamps with heathen images, and amulets with magical properties, on the one hand,

and Christian practices, on the other, cannot be certainly concluded. As likely, they held in the balance multifarious prophylactics against demons and niches for beneficent spiritual powers, whose efficacy did not depend on their amalgamation into a syncretic “bricolage” (F.’s term). They did not put themselves forward as agents of syncretism, where agency entails to some degree conscious direction by the actor. F. takes another leap, or long step, into the motivations of women whose own testimonies we do not possess, when he identifies preoccupations regarding child-birth with “the repressive social structure of the virilocal household” (p. 40). Where the incidence of infant mortality was high, the safety of mother and child in child-birth would have been the obvious concern of women, and presumably their husbands as well. It still is in our society. Nevertheless, what is essential to F.’s argument retains persuasive appeal: that Christianity developed through and among the living traditions of ritual practices embedded in the social worlds of local communities.

Successive chapters detail the ways in which people and places combined long-standing rituals with Christian symbols and observances and in so doing, F. argues, were the architects of what Christianity meant for people in their daily lives. Sainthood and saintliness, as they inhered in holy men and their shrines, were achieved as much if not more by what people expected in wielders of social, spiritual, and thaumatological influence as by any ecclesiastical affirmation of exemplary rectitude, if that formal seal of approval came to bear at all. For this reason, F. prefers the term “regional prophet” to saint, since the miraculous powers displayed were equally accessible to Christian and non-Christian, to villager and pastoral nomad up from Nubia. Precisely in order to compete with temple deities and their cults, the regional prophet needed to be equally adept at exorcisms, oracular pronouncements, possession by dream, and miracle cures. But the regional prophet’s magnetism could not obtain without the active engagement of suppliants and petitioners, in animal sacrifices, ritual dances, and processions. The devotees of saints and their shrines too were the agents of Christianization, understood as “shifting bricolages” (p. 16) of local customs panoptically inclusive of Christian idioms. Craftsmen – including stonemasons, potters, painters, weavers, and those skilled in the funerary arts – worked across iconographical traditions. “[T]he cross was an invitation to craftsmen to improvise ...” (p. 157). Such improvisation yielded a material and visual vocabulary of meaning that could be imprinted directly on the viewer’s imagination, bypassing the lengthy (or missed) sermon and conciliar attempts to unravel theological meaning with non-scriptural language. F. does not dismiss the importance of the written word, granting it

popular salience, however, in the hands of monastic scribes who provided texts or combinations of words with magical powers, “with ‘magical’ a shorthand for the concrete use of writing or manuals for the synthesis of ritually transformative materials” (p. 184). These identified agents of religious syncretism operated together, without becoming cohesively homogeneous, to transform the landscape, now spiritually charged in the name of Christianity but with the imprints of ancestral traditions hardly effaced, like a codex’s colophon registering all the hands which have possessed and passed over its pages.

One of F.’s principal aims is to divest Christianity of the commanding position of victor in the field of religious transition and to offer a model for religious transformation that is generated centrifugally. What is traded for attesting the initiatives of persons and sites outside institutionalized hierarchies of authority and power is a sustained analysis of Christianization as a process, which F. italicizes that it was (p. 2) if “an ongoing syncretic” one (p. 260). F. contends that there is no obvious end-point to Christianization. Valid enough. But processual movement is not thereby to be dispensed with, at least for the historian of Egypt during three and a half centuries of demographic, monastic, ecclesial, and theological developments which cannot be rendered inconsequential to the lives of the very common people F. commendably foregrounds. What stands for Christianization is “not ... a theological statement or creed, but ... a cluster of authoritative *strategies* ... and of *sensational forms*” (p. 260, F.’s italics). That cluster is posited to be equally varied and compelling in its diversity for the seventh as for the fourth century.

F. makes his argument in part from his starting premise that conversion, which “carries the sense of a radical psychological shift at the level of the individual ...” (pp. 6–7), does not apply to Late Antique Egypt, with its rooted and stubbornly abiding ancestral and local religious rituals and traditions. F. does not cite studies which *do* argue for the sudden and complete transference from one set of religious loyalties and practices to another. Regardless, I agree that definitive break-points in the implantation of Christianity in Egypt both at individual and communal levels are historically unpersuasive and unfounded. F. though folds into his refusal of the term “conversion” a suspicion of, or at least an unconcern for, the interior aspect not just of faith but of the persons he grants historical salience to. The instance in which “interiority” is mentioned is with regard to the domestic sphere, the privacy of the home (p. 45). Yet even there interiority acquires a public cast since the home falls into line with F.’s centering of “gesture” and “performative frameworks” (pp. 22–25) as the most

compelling motive forces to Christianization. In the home “secretive performance” was at issue, but performance nonetheless (p. 46). The domestic altar was a “stage” (p. 53). Saints became such by virtue of “gestural codes” and “performances which had to captivate Egyptian audiences” (pp. 72–73, 78). The shrine was “a theater in miniature” (p. 93). Landscape was “performed” (p. 241) and where monks were the instigators of recasting monuments in Christian guise this “monumentalizing of Christian spaces” was “exclusive to the inner culture of asceticism” (p. 241), the one other instance in which an interior domain is referenced, only to be neatly compartmentalized and quickly sidelined.

The externalization of faith at the expense of the interior self risks a skepticism regarding the inner conviction of the agents for Christianization F. argues for. He notes the paradox of monks being syncretic actors “since Christian monks are often imagined as embodiments of a pure Christian spirituality and doctrine, given their (supposed) devotion to scripture . . .” (p. 73). For the fourth and fifth centuries especially, pure doctrine was up for acrimonious debate, monks at loggerheads with each other and with their bishops. As for being embodiments of a pure Christian spirituality, the sayings of the desert fathers, the Lives, Precepts and Institutes of Pachomius, and the corpus of Shenoute’s writings are evidence enough that conversion was assumed to be a life-long journey, one moreover of continual relapse and renewed striving, in turn punctuated by periods of distraction, unsubdued passion, self-doubt, and loss of motivation, none of which necessarily detracted from a monk’s devotion to his goal. “Accept not the outward appearance of the Christian man, but rather the attitude of a soul,” wrote Evagrius of Pontus.¹ Dramatic performance which leaves out the attitude of the soul veers over into pantomime, with living holy men and their worshippers becoming ideographs of cultural gestures.

To an extent the question is one of emphasis: on the external manifestations of actions or the spirit (not therefore religious) inciting and sustaining them. Once “agency,” however, is at issue, a balance needs to be struck if the agency is not to be imposed from without but revealed through an internalization of gesture so that the performance becomes perfectly natural – thereby ceasing to be performance and instead giving the direct imprint of a will, a character, and a soul on what otherwise is a reproducible formula independent of the performer. A notable contribution of F.’s study is its insistence on the innovative creativity of craftsmen, regional

¹ Evagrius Ponticus, *Maxims* 1.22, trans. R.E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford 2003) 230.

prophets, monastic scribes, and the common believer in bridging religious practices. He avoids the facile argument for nonlinear progressive development. But until a consideration is given to the individual developments of the distinct components of his analysis, and their relation to each other, however far from being a synthesis, one is left with a loose conjunction of opposites, a syncretic amalgam. Processual development here is elusive.

Liturgy is one telling demonstration of the performative nature of Christianization for F: “[W]ith ‘liturgy’ I mean not just the specific chants performed in churches at various times of the day or year but the very principles of liturgy as the official performance (incantatory, hymnic) context in which monastic choirs uttered sacred names and invoked divine beings” (p. 202). This conflation of liturgy with official performance and monastic choirs reads back into Late Antique Egypt tenth- and eleventh-century Cluniac offices and nineteenth-century romantic fixations on the high Gothic, and conflates cathedral office with monastic observances. The anchorite of the fourth-century Egyptian desert and the thousands who entered monastic communities in the fourth and fifth centuries were not organized into monastic choirs chanting psalms for the Church or to captivate Egyptian audiences. They were certainly not “invok[ing] ... divine beings” given that a fundamental principle of Christian liturgy was and is celebration of a Triune God in salvation history. As the liturgical historian Robert Taft has observed, the monk vowed himself to a life of prayer which did not separate liturgy from work, eating, and even sleeping, on which topics the Pachomian rules and the canons of Shenoute dwell at greater length than on the monks in office. To chant the psalms was to meditate on them, to internalize them.² Thus, Abba Pambo spent eighteen years learning one verse of a psalm. Only when that verse – “I said, ‘I will watch my ways so as to be unable to sin with my tongue.’” [Ps. 38:2 (LXX)] – was no longer recited but had entered into his heart and when the tongue had been brought into perfect concordance with the heart did he return to his mentor and elder for the next verse.³

The heart and soul of a monk, as of an individual regardless of religious persuasion, are not easily modeled, and F. is explicit about providing a model. The benefit of so doing is to enable F. to situate Christianization in comparison with other places and periods where Christianity has encountered pre-existing cultic, ancestral, or animistic traditions. Yet the desired

² R.F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville, MN 1993) 361–365.

³ *Life of Pambo*, trans. T. Vivian, *Four Desert Fathers: Pambo, Evagrius, Macarius of Egypt, and Macarius of Alexandria* (Crestwood, NY 2004) 58–59.

generalizability of the model – “Indeed, it is out of a sense of larger social and cultural phenomena, of patterns, that we develop the models that allow us to study history and to understand religion in the first place.” (p. 33) – while it aims to give the historian greater access to the experiential and the local, can create a distancing effect. F. maintains that for Egypt between the fourth and the seventh centuries “the category ‘Christian’ means little beyond some larger religious framework or strategy through which people imagined their ritual practices to be meaningful and effective” (p. 37). Christianity may be only secondarily of theological import for its lay adherents (though that can be refuted by the communal discord resulting from theological controversy and rival followings of monks and bishops) and more a “strategy,” but F. still qualifies it as a “system” (p. 24). More debatable, F. designates “the worlds of craftsmanship and scribal culture” and popular processions as “institutions” (pp. xiv, 251), a term which in fact is in opposition to what F. wants to argue for the individual and unregulated impress on Christian practice by craftsmen, scribes, villagers and townspeople. The model curiously breaks off where F. ends the framing of his study, “the time of Islamization” (p. xiv). It is left for the reader to surmise whether the syncretism of the preceding four centuries is at an end or now adds to its assemblages Islam. That of course partially depends on what Christianization signifies in the seventh century that it did not in the fourth century, a development in time that F.’s synchronic approach does not address. The “time of Islamization,” moreover, did not neatly coincide with the Arab conquest of 641–642. For nearly two centuries it was in the interests of an Arab administration not to encourage conversion. Conversions of a Coptic population gained momentum after the Bashmuric Coptic revolts of 832. Where Muslim Arabs moved out from the military enclave of Fustat in the first century of Arab rule it was to gain land, not souls. By one assessment, Christianization in Egypt was more concertedly able to take a stand in the name of the faith it signified in the latter half of the seventh century, when the Church of Egypt was no longer divided between Melkite appointees and Alexandrine representatives (themselves resisting consensus), even if a dyophysite presence, shorn though of its imperial teeth, continued.

The criticisms presented here are both editorial and substantive, but they do not disagree with F.’s essential project. The scaffolding of terminology – model, habitus, gesture, theater, performance – can be roadblocks to the more transparent correlation between the evidence F. works with and the persons and communities he seeks to hear from and to be heard by his readers. The alternative is by no means a positivist exposition of the

evidence, devoid of analytical framing. Part of that framing is available within his subject itself, rather than having to be retrieved by a model of syncretism. It can be found in the paradoxical, at times touching upon the comic, venture of monks, though not only of monks: a quest for the absolute without being seduced by the demon of pride, which insinuates itself so easily into the urge to attain the transcendent in this life. A brother of unimpeachable rigor in his asceticism is seen rising up to heaven. Another runs to tell an *abba*. The *abba* reponds, “Grab him by the heels and bring him down to earth.” Christianization could only have a history and a meaning when and where it communicated itself through the medium of lived experience and communication. If it remained at the level of theological abstraction, the end would be stagnation. And if it occurred solely through administrative hegemony, the end would be sterility. F.’s actors are very much needed in the story of Christianization.

F. writes, “... a Christianizing culture depends on traditional forms of religious expression in order to make sense” (p. 14). Yes, with the one caveat that “religious” need not be the sole expressive context. “Religion” is obviously at the pivotal center of F.’s scholarship. It need not therefore be a totalizing center in order to retain its historical cogency or in order for F. to demonstrate the textured history of a faith when passed over domestic lintels, threaded through looms, inscribed on papyrus or ostraca, or brought to the banks of the Nile. Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), a keen observer of culture and religion’s role in a civilization, with his own connection to Egypt under the Mamluks, wrote that “The crafts ... are the result of man’s ability to think ...”⁴ Since the mind seeks to discover, the crafts are continually transforming potentiality into actuality and coming nearer to perfection. The idea of perfection has both an external and an internal reality. External in what is produced with ever greater finesse over the generations and within the lifetime of any one craftsman. Internal in so far as a craft is a habit of the soul. Thus, craftsmanship and craft workshops are, for Ibn Khaldun, sites of ongoing creativity due to man’s ability to think where that ability is equally a quality of the soul.⁵ The idea of perfection within a craft, and its reworking of symbols and materials with the grain of tradition, is not stopped and restarted with a change in dynasty or in the religious cast of royal authority, because knowledge imbibed in the soul and physical memory cannot be extirpated by external circumstance,

⁴ Trans. F. Rosenthal, abridged and edited by N.J. Dawood, *Ibn Khaldûn, The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (Princeton 2005) 314.

⁵ Trans. Rosenthal (n. 4) 314–315, 318.

just as it cannot be made one's own by legal obligation or doctrinal instruction. While religious syncretism may play its part in the innovative uses to which the cross is put, there is also to be considered the independent, ongoing history of a craft and its masters which runs alongside a religious history but is not therefore identical to it.

'Amr ibn al'As, who led the Arab conquest of Egypt, wrote to the caliph Umar in Damascus that Egypt was truly blessed with the river Nile. He determined, however, to disassociate that benediction from the sacrifice of the "Nile Bride," a pre-Christian annual ritual carried forward by Christian Copts. Instead of having a young virgin thrown into the water, he tossed into the river a note sent by the caliph commanding the river to reach plenitude if God so willed it. But the Copts were not so easily dissuaded from their custom and would later restore, without interference, the symbolic sacrifice on one of their annual feast days.⁶ Religious syncretism or rejection of a ritual that appeared to set a virgin ahead of divine pleasure and also of the caliph? Or the evidentiary proof that across faiths, dynasties, and the lines distinguishing common people from rulers, the Nile was recognized as the preeminent source of life, never to be taken for granted and never to be summarily controlled? F.'s assertion that Christianity in Egypt owed no small part of its existence to the Nile (pp. 248–252) identifies a relationship that is fundamental to any cultural and social history either of Late Antique Egypt or of Christianity in one of its apostolic heartlands. So essential was the Nile to the existence of the faith, since that faith had to go forward by people gaining their survival in the river's flood plain and by its currents and ports, that to turn it into a theater and a ritual performance was superfluous. Christian processions in a riverine landscape and Christian symbols affixed to the Nilometer were the faith's heels being brought down to the reality of a hydraulic system, which the Copts made their own also by being the most knowledgeable experts on predicting and measuring its rise. The Umayyad caliphs and their Abbasid successors recognized that Copts should to be kept on in the post of guardian of the Nilometer. The native Copts had the habit of knowledge of the river's flood regime. That took precedence over faith. Not until 861 was an Arab appointed to the position which thereafter was hereditary.

Christianizing Egypt merits a careful reading in order that its full contribution to studies of Egypt's religious and social history be given its deserved due. It is an invitation to the ongoing innovative work of

⁶ J.H. Kramers, "al-Nil," in P. Bearman et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 8 (Leiden 1954) 42.

historians practicing their craft of reading sources, or regarding and handling them in the case of non-textual evidence, in order to elicit from them the diversity of expressive forms within a society that cohered through and in that diversity, even when one faith was declared officially triumphant.

University of Michigan

Ellen Poteet

Renate Dekker, *Episcopal Networks and Authority in Late Antique Egypt: Bishops of the Theban Region at Work*. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 264. Leuven: Peeters, 2018. xv + 350 pages, 1 CD. ISBN 978-90-429-3560-0.

The two central figures in this book are the Upper Egyptian bishops Abraham and Pesynthios, whom Renate Dekker argues (p. 3) “were in office during a formative period in the history of the Coptic Orthodox Church... [and] represented a new hierarchy,” which she calls Theodosian, after the Alexandrian patriarch Theodosius (in office 535–566). Her geographic focus is on western Thebes, and the Coptic and Greek texts from Hermonthis and Koptos. As she puts it, “[t]hese communities were connected through a close-knit network that included eleven Theodosian bishops and may therefore be called a Theodosian network” (p. 10).

Dekker’s goal is to analyze the social networks of the two bishops Abraham and Pesynthios and the nature of their authority. In part, she wants to analyze “how the Theban network developed in the course of time” (p. 12). As importantly, she wants to test a recent claim by Ewa Wipszycka that Abraham at least was incapable of exercising the full weight of his episcopal office due to the political circumstances of the time. The book is what Dekker describes as “an ethnographic study on bishops in late antique Egypt,” one employing “traditional papyrology, social network analysis, and a social model of episcopal authority” (p. 15).

Social network analysis is the newest methodology of the three to work its way into the study of the ancient world, and still needs an introduction for most readers. Dekker provides a brief historiographical survey (pp. 16–19). She also includes an admirably thorough step by step survey (pp. 30–43) of each stage of her data collection and analysis, including explanations of her choice of software (UCINET and NetDraw) and how to import and manipulate the data. Dekker’s other methodological innovation, her social model, helps us appreciate the contingencies at the heart of Monophysite success in Egypt. Simply being made a bishop does not vest someone with the full array of episcopal powers. That authority is “the result of a bishop’s agency” (p. 19) and new Church hierarchies succeed only through that agency.

The book is clearly organized. After an introductory chapter, Dekker includes a survey of the Theban region (Chapter 2), a survey of the bishops and other major players of that region’s Theodosian network (Chapter 3), and an extended discussion of the data sets at the heart of her network analysis of the region (Chapter 4). These chapters make several important

contributions apart from their logical place in the book as a whole. For example, Dekker's survey of the region shows that, contrary to previous scholarship, "the network of bishoprics did not coincide with the administrative divisions of the Theban region," but rather with its military units (p. 83).

Chapter 4, the discussion of Dekker's network data sets, makes several methodological advances. Particularly promising is her technique (p. 129) for proposing dates via direct and indirect network ties, and testing whether they are "reconcilable with other such hypothetical dates." Her decision to create three different data sets – the full Theban network, a network limited to Theodosian leaders, and an extended version of that network including their close associates – allows some nimble hypothesis testing. For example, the fact that the diameter of the network varies little from case to case leads Dekker to argue that "the Theban network is well-connected, and that the Theodosian network is a fairly representative cross-section of that network" (pp. 130–131). We can then proceed with confidence that Dekker's results are at least internally consistent. (But see below for more on these conclusions.) This chapter also includes an analysis of the Theban topographical network as it appears in these texts, through which Dekker can show (p. 147) that Abraham's ties were primarily to places in his own diocese, while Pesynthios's network "extended far beyond the boundaries of his diocese."

The remaining chapters, indeed the rhetorical heart of the book, are in two pairs, one each for Abraham of Hermonthis and Pesynthios of Koptos, exploring their social networks and then the nature of their episcopal authority. The result is a deliberate match between the book's organizational logic and its dual focus on network models and social models. Abraham first. He is crucial to his network: he has the highest centrality scores, and when "he is removed from the complete network, it falls apart into eighty-three components" (p. 157). The real strength of Dekker's analysis here is the use of directed ties, which allow her to show that Abraham was "in direct contact with most actors in his directed network (73.7%), and that most of his ties were reciprocal (66.8%)." This high level of direct reciprocal connectivity leads Dekker to argue that in one respect, at least, Wipszycka was right: "Abraham was well connected with the faithful in his diocese" (p. 177).

But the next chapter challenges Wipszycka's more significant claim that Abraham "did not experience the full weight of his office" (p. 179). This is the role of Dekker's social model. Abraham was "engaged in all aspects associated with the episcopal office" (p. 201). Organizationally,

this chapter, and the corresponding chapter for Pesynthios, read almost like lists, as Dekker goes through each of the categories she considers essential to the exercise of the episcopal office. Most crucial to the formation of a new Theodosian Church are assertions of authority. When the villagers of Timamen assaulted his clergy and yelled at him, Abraham “exercised enough authority to warn his correspondent, a civil official, that he would arrange an interdict, if the villagers were not brought to justice” (p. 187). He excommunicated everyone in the church of Apa George, and threatened excommunication on various other clergy and laity. He arbitrated legal disputes and interceded with state authorities on behalf of the poor.

Pesynthios looks very similar when viewed through Dekker’s social model. Unlike Abraham, Pesynthios “was already regarded as a holy man during life,” and his documents “present a more dynamic picture of the Theban society than Abraham’s” (p. 240). But his social role is essentially the same. He intercedes with state authorities on behalf of the poor. He excommunicates a warring village, and threatens excommunication on priests who are in communion with excommunicated bakers. He not only “strongly condemned sexual offenses, but [also] cared for the well-being of innocent women” (p. 263). In short, he was a “man of immense charisma” (p. 273) with a reputation for accessibility.

But Pesynthios looks slightly different from Abraham in network analytical terms. His correspondence, the vast majority of which comes to him, not from him, is “less well balanced than that of Bishop Abraham” (p. 209). Abraham “was more involved with clergymen in ecclesiastical matters,” while Pesynthios was closer to women and other lay groups (p. 213). Pesynthios had undirected and directed networks with a wider diameter than Abraham, a logical outcome, since “Abraham remained in his diocese and was mostly concerned with matters in his own diocese” (p. 214). Pesynthios was in direct contact with less than half the number of people in his complete network than Abraham was (p. 231). But this means that his network was “significantly stronger, since it is less centralized” (p. 237) and would fall into fewer, larger components upon his removal or death.

By the end, I find myself wondering whether Dekker’s network analysis and her social model of episcopal authority are not two different books. (Indeed, the stories presented in the chapters on the bishops’ social functions are presented too often as bare lists, when they would probably support much deeper analysis at the level of a full monograph.) The cause is Dekker’s aim to advance a dual thesis, supported by a dual methodology. The network analysis confirms that the two bishops are close to their

flocks (p. 286) and the social model shows how “episcopal authority was not just imposed, but constructed” (p. 282). More importantly, the bishops were successful: they did indeed experience the full weight of their office.

This dual thesis is only half convincing. Take the general claim that these bishops are close to their flock in network terms, or the more specific claim that Abraham is closer to his flock than Pesynthios (pp. 280–281). These are conclusions drawn from networks of texts Dekker herself has chosen. But methodologically, Dekker’s approach to data collection troubles me. I have elsewhere proposed what I offer as a set of methodological best practices for social network analysis in the ancient world.¹ As my suggestions are not yet available in print, I offer an abridged version here to weigh her approach against mine.

I argue that it is necessary to include all of the available data, or none of it. This is the only way to safeguard against cherry-picking, and introducing one’s own biases into the data. The corpus of texts from the Late Antique Theban region is enormous. But it, and not some selected subset of it, is the proper unit of analysis. Inclusion of anything less than the whole is deliberate avoidance of data. Consider only one example. When Dekker excludes seven Theban bishops from network analysis because they “cannot be convincingly linked to the Theodosian network” (p. 83; compare p. 103), I wonder whether she is assuming the very thing that network analysis ought to test. Inclusion of apparently unrelated texts may in fact reveal indirect connections. This is one of the strengths of network analysis.

Throughout, I find myself asking how she has selected texts for inclusion, and on what grounds. The initial description of the datasets (p. 14) varies in clarity. Datasets 1 and 2 are relatively clear: Dekker has selected texts that have “two or more members of the Theodosian network” and “link members of the Theodosian network to localities.” Datasets 3 and 4 are less clear: Dekker says only that they provide “an updated overview” of the networks of Abraham and Pesynthios respectively, a reference to inclusion of unpublished material. But unpublished material selected how? Use for Abraham of Martin Krause’s unpublished dissertation is one case in which Dekker’s otherwise excellent record of transparency does not hold. The introduction to Chapter 4 does an excellent job of outlining who is included in which data set and why. But hiding behind these explanations

¹ G. Ruffini, “Social Network Analysis and Greco-Roman Politics,” in W. Broekaert et al. (eds.), *Network Analysis and Ancient Politics* (forthcoming).

is the unsettling thought of all the people left out. When Dekker writes that “relevant texts in *P./O.Mon.Epiph.* are generally overlooked” (p. 204) in the assembly of the Pesynthios data set, it is not at all clear why.

In fact, she has assembled a modern dossier out of ancient archives, something she acknowledges from the very beginning (p. 13). Dataset 1, the Theban network in 600–630, is assembled specifically by taking all of the people appearing in 67 papyri and ostraca naming multiple members of the Theodosian network. The Theodosian network is a subset of that more complete set of people. When “the eight core members of the Theodosian network form a stable group that reappears in the cores of the other networks,” this is not, *contra* Dekker, evidence that “the Theodosian network is a fairly representative cross-section of the Theban network” (p. 132). It is the natural tautological consequence of extracting X from a set of items preselected for their association with X. Likewise the conclusion that these two bishops were close to their flock. This may be the case. But the network measures demonstrating this are also a natural tautological consequence, in this case of building a network from texts chosen because they involve the bishops.

Nodes and edges are the building blocks of network analysis. Edges are the connections, and nodes are the things being connected. Dekker’s nodes are of mixed types. They are predominantly individuals, but she also assigns ID numbers to social groups and families (p. 31). I do not know best practices on this issue in current network theory, but it does trouble me. A bishop does not connect to a person in the same way he connects to a group of people. Put another way, every person belongs to a social group, or more than one, so coding social groups in some cases but not others seems to leave matters incomplete, or imbalanced in favor of social groups specifically named in their texts. Dekker’s edges are likewise mixed. They include both “recorded ties, whether written or personal,” and “probable ties, which are implicit or reconstructed ties that are inferred from the contents” (p. 31). This is ambiguous, but at least it is controlled by explicit explanations of each entry in the network included in the book’s accompanying data sets.

We must always ask whether we have any generalizable conclusions. Throughout this book, I am struck by the similarity between stories Dekker encounters in the Theban region in the 600s and others we might find anywhere in late antique Egypt. Dekker begins her book with an account of the plight of Pesente’s widow. Her husband died, her son left, she took a loan to pay her taxes, she defaulted, and the lender seized her goods. This is almost indistinguishable from several stories we know from Aphrodito,

not too far away and not too far in the past. These stories are crucial for Dekker's social model, a method which seems to fit its data well, and produces more generalizable conclusions. Bishops construct authority when they have effective responses to lay petitions and pleas for help. But they also construct authority through fear. At points in Dekker's book, one has the impression that these bishops were on the verge of excommunicating almost everyone.

But with Dekker's network analysis, I wonder whether we have a good fit between the purpose, the method, and the data. Network analysis may well be an excellent way to determine the reach of a bishop's authority and the degree that bishop was integrated into his local society. Purpose and method appear to mesh well. But limiting the data to a group of pre-selected texts, rather than including all available texts, seems to me to limit the degree to which we can answer the questions at hand. If we want to judge integration into a society, should we not measure all data that we have from that society?

My own work with Elisabeth O'Connell on network analysis of the Theban region was not available to Dekker when she was writing.² It is instructive to compare approaches. O'Connell and I used Till's prosopography of Theban texts as a comprehensive data-set, in preference to selecting texts by hand. Our approach had the inherent flaw of excluding Greek material and all material published since 1962. It had the advantage of removing selection bias from the equation. The result was a network with a central component of 2598 people. The largest block of that component was a network centered around a scribe named Aristophanes. Our network is clearly a different creature than Dekker's, in part methodologically and in part because so much of the material included in Till's prosopography is a century or more later than Dekker's material.

And yet Pesynthios and Abraham are crucial figures in our network as well, appearing as the fourth and fifth most central figures measured by betweenness. This is a remarkable position to hold in a social network extending a century after your own life. I tend to think this supports Dekker's basic claims about her bishops' place in an emerging Theodosian network and the nature of their episcopal authority. With sufficiently robust diachronic data, a social network is indistinguishable from a family tree: it graphs social connections over time, across generations. Here,

² E. O'Connell and G. Ruffini, "The Social Networks of Late Antique Western Thebes," in H.F. Teigen and E. Heldaas Seland (eds.), *Sinews of Empire: Networks in the Roman Near East and Beyond* (Oxford 2017) 167–184.

their high betweenness scores mark Pesynthios and Abraham as some of the early patriarchs in their Monophysite network's metaphorical family tree.

Data transparency is a significant issue with network analysis, as with all forms of quantitative research. Ten years ago, when publishing *Social Networks in Byzantine Egypt*, I handled this problem by posting my data on my own personal website, now a casualty of internet attrition and corporate changes at Yahoo. Dekker handles this problem by publishing her book with an accompanying CD with complete copies of her datasets, Excel files, tables and graphs. This approach has its own challenges. Physical storage is increasingly obsolete. While I can open Dekker's CD at home, I am unable to find any computer at work on which I can do so. I suspect in the future projects such as this will have to post data online, but on institutional websites with a better guarantee of permanency than my own personal website. The "networks" section of *Trismegistos* would be perfect for this task, were it to become more open-access.

Dekker's CD itself is excellent. Its organization is clear, and cross-references in the book make finding the relevant files easy. The files themselves are a model of clarity. Files are well-named and all of the data in the files is clearly labeled. Accompanying MS Word and PDF documents annotate the decisions behind the selection of data. The data itself imports into UCINET and NetDraw without any apparent difficulty. In short, Dekker models best practices for this kind of scholarship. The next step is for others to use the tools she has created to test her results and run further analyses. This is the only way to advance her work and to check whether my methodological criticisms have any merit. It is unfortunate that academic careers in the humanities provide precious little incentive for this process of scientific review, but I hope nonetheless that someone will rise to the challenge.

Fairfield University

Giovanni Ruffini

Jennifer A. Cromwell, *Recording Village Life: A Coptic Scribe in Early Islamic Egypt*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017. xxiv + 287 pages. ISBN 978-0-472-13048-1.¹

This monograph – a revised version of the author’s 2008 PhD thesis – presents a close study of one of the best-documented scribes of Coptic documents, Aristophanes, son of Ioannes, who was active between AD 724 and 756. His texts survive from the village of Djeme, the importance of which for the study of 7th-8th century Egypt does not need to be explained or stressed for the readers of this journal. In studying Aristophanes’ texts and activities, the author not only provides an in-depth study of the scribe, but situates her subject in the larger context of Egyptian history of the first part of the 8th century.

The first chapter (“A Scribe in his Time and Place,” pp. 1–21) serves as an introduction: After a brief survey of Djeme and its surroundings, the author continues with an outline of the main developments of the first hundred years of Arab rule with a special focus on the use of Coptic and concludes with a scrutiny of Theban scribes, especially their designations: γραμματεύς, λογογράφος, νομικός, νοτάριος, **caz**, and **caxo**.

The second chapter (“Building Aristophanes’ Dossier,” pp. 22–66) is devoted to identifying all the available (published and unpublished) documents written by Aristophanes. In total, 142 papyri and ostraca can be attributed to his dossier: 120 are signed by him, and another 22 can be assigned to him based on various criteria, such as paleography, linguistic features, and context. The author prudently emphasizes that none of these criteria is sufficient on their own. She stresses that this is especially true for paleography, since several factors (genre, writing surface, the age of the scribe, etc.) can influence the final outlook of the script. This is an important *caveat* and underlines well the limits of identifying hands, which is one of the ever-vexing problems of papyrologists. Apart from the texts written by Aristophanes, he figures in a further six documents as a witness or amanuensis.

Most of the documents written by Aristophanes (114) concern administrative matters: we find 106 tax receipts, two tax demand notes (*entagia*), 5 safe-conducts, and a request for travel permit. The private documents comprise 28 papyri: 10 sales, 7 settlements, 3 donations, a receipt, two

¹ The author of this review is acknowledged on pp. X and XVII. Even though I discussed several pertinent topics with the author on occasion, I had not seen any part or chapter prior to publication.

lists, and some other various texts. Although the number of private documents is dwarfed by the sheer amount of administrative texts, it is important to note that they nevertheless contain a more diverse range of genres and constitute a much larger body of actual texts than the succinct and very formulaic tax receipts that constitute the majority of Aristophanes' documentation. In establishing Aristophanes' dossier, the author deals with a number of problematic texts of which I would only like to highlight one. The author discusses the well-known application for a travel permit to an Arab official, *P.CLT* 6, and she demonstrates that contrary to Schiller's opinion, this important document cannot be attributed to Aristophanes: he only acted as an amanuensis in it.

This chapter also introduces one of the most original topics being discussed in the book: the effects of aging on Aristophanes' handwriting ("Aristophanes and Gerontology," pp. 45–46, cf. also pp. 70–75). The chronology of his activities is also examined based on the dates of the documents and other contextual information (mainly prosopography): the preserved documents attest his professional activities from 724 to 756. Aristophanes' surviving documents constitute a dossier deriving from several archives. Apart from administrative archives which his official documents must have been part of, 12 of his papyri belong to private archives and 4 to monastic archives.

The third chapter ("Putting Pen on Papyrus: Scribal Practices and Processes," pp. 67–88) shows what we can learn from a close look at Aristophanes' manuscripts. The discussion of "Aristophanes' writing style" (pp. 68–70) strikes me as somewhat short in a monograph devoted to a single scribe. The description of his handwriting raises many interesting questions and displays the author's close familiarity with the topic, but fails to give a systematic overview. There are only a few examples cited and alluded to: a more in-depth description including more tables and illustrations would certainly have been welcome. We learn that his style was dependent on the genre, writing material, the pen being used, and other physical characteristics – but all these criteria apply to any scribe of any historical period. The clear distinction between the Greek and Coptic parts of his texts is also emphasized, but it should have been stressed more in my view that this far from a unique characteristic of Aristophanes (or the Theban region).

This chapter also expands on the writing of an older Aristophanes studying *P.KRU* 15 from 756, discussing the corrections made to document, probably at least partially by another scribe – perhaps his apprentice – who also penned *P.KRU* 15. Furthermore, the investigation of subscriptions

allows interesting glimpses into the life and literacy of the village elite. As previously, the author discusses *en passant* some very intriguing aspects of document production, such as the degree of pre-drafting of legal documents (p. 74), the mostly inconsequent usage of supralinear strokes (pp. 76–78), or the question of notarial offices (p. 88), even if – as often in the book – speculation is not always clearly separated from more solidly arguable conclusions. I also missed in this chapter that the author did not situate Aristophanes in the Byzantine notarial tradition. Despite the author’s repeated emphasis on him being a Coptic scribe, he is certainly to be understood as heir of the Byzantine Greek legal tradition.²

The fourth chapter (“Recording Taxes,” pp. 89–124) focuses on Aristophanes’ involvement in local administration as attested by the numerous tax receipts, some letters of protection, and other documents written by him overwhelmingly on ostraca in the years 724–730. After an overview of the collective and individual taxes of the village and the villagers, the author scrutinizes Aristophanes’ highly formulaic tax receipts written in the years 727–730 and contextualizes them in the contemporary tax system. An interesting point being addressed is the question of the practical usage and archiving of ostraca: it seems that Aristophanes “kept a ready supply of them,” but “had no preference for size and shape” (p. 100). A close look at the development of tax receipt formularies suggests that they were probably imposed from outside the village. The signatories of the tax receipts provide an impression on how the “team” of the local officials and scribes worked together. An interesting – but at present not provable – suggestion is that the officials styled as *ἀπε/στρατηγός*, who are omnipresent in the tax receipts, were in charge of certain districts of the village (p. 108). Two hypothetical scenarios are proposed for the process of tax collection (p. 116): either Aristophanes visited different areas of the village on the same day or the receipts were written at once and only later signed by the responsible officials. This would imply that – even though the receipt would have been written in front of the taxpayer – the officials would have kept the documents and discarded them later in groups when they would not have been needed anymore. After a brief discussion of Aristophanes’

² In discussing Aristophanes’ notarial signature I missed references or at least a mention of Diethart and Worp’s important study on Greek notarial subscriptions in the Byzantine period: J.M. Diethart and K.A. Worp, *Notarsunterschriften im byzantinischen Ägypten* (Wien 1986). It would also have been worth mentioning that there survive 5th-6th century Greek legal documents from the nearby nome capital, Hermonthis, see most recently A. Benaissa, “More Papyri from Late Antique Memnonia in the British Library,” *APF* 61 (2015) 352–370.

involvement in issuing documents related to traveling, the author underlines the importance of the scribes in the bureaucratic machinery.³

The next chapter (“Recording Private Lives,” pp. 125–155) discusses Aristophanes’ private documents concerning mainly “property and money,” and show Aristophanes’ connections and role in village life. After a helpful survey about domestic structures in Djeme, which are often the object of these texts, the author explores Aristophanes’ connection to certain families and monasteries. The discussion of the scribe-client relationships in Djeme is especially interesting: he was mostly approached by members of the wealthy village elite many of whom were repeat clients. Some of them had more personal connections with him, such as Abessa who owned land neighboring to that of Aristophanes. All this reinforces the image of a well-interconnected village elite emerging from other sources too. This chapter includes a very useful table compiling property prices from Aristophanes’ dossier (p. 147).

The final chapter (“Aristophanes’ Personal and Professional Lives,” pp. 156–191) collects the meager information available on Aristophanes’ life and career in the context of his time. As a member of the village elite he owned a house and land. His father was named Ioannes and he probably had a brother named Ioannake, who wrote in the same style as Aristophanes, and a son called Leontios about whom there is not much information. Aristophanes activities are attested in the years 724–756 and by August 14, 758 he was certainly dead. The author does not see Aristophanes as part of the Egyptian elite “clinging to Byzantium” (p. 162), but understands “Aristophanes’ use of Greek and the trappings of Greek elite status” as “indicative of the nature of his work.” Although the author is right that onomastics do not necessarily reveal identity, it is difficult to assess how Aristophanes and his peers would have related to the Caliphate and Byzantium. Egypt in the late 7th-early 8th century was rapidly changing: the local landholding elite was constantly losing ground as Muslim officials and landowners appeared in the countryside. I believe that it is unlikely that Aristophanes’ social stratum would have welcomed these changes. To cite an example from Aristophanes’ texts: in oaths which were taken on the “health” of the rulers – which routinely named the emperor in the Byzantine period – Aristophanes avoids naming the Arabs with the phrase “the well-being of those who rule over us at present” (see e.g. *P. KRU* 11.17–

³ This is no doubt true, but the “dual meaning” of the term εὐροπος as “resourceful in terms of finances and capability” proposed on p. 124 strikes me as unlikely in light of the fiscal connotation of the term which – in my view – stresses the fiscal responsibility of the officials.

18) – as almost all contemporary scribes. A related question is whether Aristophanes was able to draw up more complicated documents/texts in Greek: although the author states several times that he was not a bilingual scribe and that his use of Greek was purely formulaic, as it has been pointed out by another reviewer: “we simply do not know.”⁴

In contextualizing Aristophanes’ administrative career the author engages with the development of the country’s administration in the early 8th century. She argues that Aristophanes introduced a new writing style in Thebes for which the best examples are to be found in the Hermopolite nome. It is shown that the documents of Theodore, a scribe of Coptic legal documents from the Basilios archive in early 8th century Aphrodito display a very similar handwriting to that of Aristophanes. All this would point to “state control of scribal training” (p. 176), which would have been responsible for the appearance of this “new” writing style. On a more general level the author argues that “Coptic was used throughout Egypt for a forty-year period from the late seventh century, to allow the central administration to take firm control of the fiscal situation of the country among the indigenous population” (p. 182). Thereafter – the argument continues – Coptic was replaced Arabic, but Greek was still used “in the Arsinoite nome” which the author explains by the long tradition of the language. I find this argumentation difficult. The Greek minuscule used by Aristophanes has many precursors in the 7th century. The reason why it is not found in Djeme before is in my view much simpler: we do not possess (published) tax documents from the 7th century from the region. It is very likely – and indeed unpublished papyri from the late 7th century demonstrate it⁵ – that the scribes in the office of the pagarch of the nearby city Hermonthis used the same kind of minuscule as Aristophanes. Also, even though more research is certainly needed in this field, it seems that the minuscule of the 8th century had variants in local offices.⁶

⁴ See Alain Delattre’s BMCR review (Nov. 21, 2018): <http://www.bmcreview.org/2018/11/20181121.html>.

⁵ E.g., P.Mich. inv. 1841 from around 690.

⁶ Similarly, although new administrative vocabulary appears with Aristophanes (most notably the term *στρατηγός*) the discussion of the “reintroduction of the title Flavius” (pp. 189–190) is misleading. There is no point in comparing the “postconquest attestations” with “the one earlier use of the title, in reference to the emperor.” Flavius was a status marker in the Byzantine (and also early-Islamic) period reserved mostly to soldiers and high-ranking bureaucrats. We expect to find it connected to certain persons who figure in document types we do not possess from the 7th century Theban area. The title’s application to Muslim officials is certainly an intriguing phenomenon, but is not necessarily connected to reforms.

I agree with the author's argument about a central administration attempting to take strict control on taxes, but I believe that this did not extend to the scribal sphere, where much of the scribal training seems to have been local. Apart from the agenda of Islamizing and Arabizing the administration, pragmatism seems to have been the most important factor. This explains local differences in language usage as well: as long as taxes were paid, local particularities would not have mattered to the central government. This changes, of course, in the 8th century with more Arab officials appearing in the countryside, but it is important to discern local differences. Contrary to what is stated on p. 182, there is an example for a Coptic (albeit Arabic-Coptic) tax-demand note issued in the name of a high-ranking Muslim official from later than the 730s: *P.Clackson* 45 from 753. It is also worth mentioning that administrative documents in Fayyumic Coptic still appear in the second part of the 8th century.⁷ Even though there was a push for Arabic, Greek and Coptic could not (yet) be eliminated locally for practical reasons. This was only possible sometime around the turn of the 8th/9th century, after which Coptic administrative documents are attested only at the bottom level and even there only rarely. I would imagine that most scribes would have received their training in church institutions, but that is purely conjectural. It follows also that the reason why Aristophanes worked after the 730s in the private sphere is not that "he was no longer required" in the administration – there are plenty of Greek and Coptic administrative texts from other regions after that date –, but that it is simply unknown. We should also note again that no tax documents survive from the region after this period at all, so we do not know how the Theban administration continued.

The monograph is rounded up by appendices, indices, and plates. The appendices contain a very useful catalogue of all the texts which can be attributed to Aristophanes; (re)editions of 10 ostraca written by Aristophanes: 8 tax receipts, a safe-conduct pass, and a name list;⁸ and a useful

⁷ E.g., the unpublished Fayyumic Coptic document dating to 761 on the back of *SPP* 10.172.

⁸ For corrections on these texts see n. 3 of A. Delattre's *BMCR* review (see above n. 4). I add here some further minor corrections: No. 1: l. 3: βασιλειας → βασιλειος; l. 5: Ὀννόφριο(ς) → Ὀννόφρι or perhaps Ὀννοφρί(ο)υ? No. 2: l. 7: γί(νεται) νο(μίσηματος) ἔκτον → γί(νεται) γο(μίσηματος) ζ' ἔκτον; No. 3: l. 1: ΝΖΟΛΟΚ(ΟΤΤΙΝΟΣ) → ΝΖΟΛΟΚ(ΤΤΙΝΟΣ); l. 7: [ΠΕ]ΤΡΟΣΤΗΧΕ → [ΠΕ]ΤΡΟΣ <C>ΤΗΧΗ. No. 4: l. 2: ΝΤΟΚ → Ν̄ΤΟΚ. No. 5: l. 6: Κυρι(α)κ(ός) → perhaps Κυρι(ακ)οῦ (?). No. 6: l. 6: Κυρι(α)κ(ός) → Κυρι(ακ)οῦ (?); l. 9: Ἀριστοφ(άνου) → Ἀριστοφ(άνου)ς (obviously a typo); dating: 23 July 727 → 22 December 727; No. 7: l. 5: νο(μίσηματα) → νο(μίσηματος). No. 9: l. 1: the title μειζ() is ambiguous here and should be left unresolved (as stated

table containing the essential data of Aristophanes's tax receipts supplemented by corrections on the corpus. Finally, a papyrological and general index close the book.

The book contains several typos and infelicities that should have been picked up by the publisher.⁹ The presentation of Greek is especially problematic, the accentuation, spelling, and resolution of abbreviations are often erroneous and can hamper the understanding of non-specialists:¹⁰ more attention from the publisher would have been welcome.

Despite my criticism, this book provides us with an interesting study on an important Coptic scribe living in a crucial period of Egyptian history: the author presents several original and thought-provoking ideas that will certainly stimulate further research. Furthermore, the monograph not only sparks interest for Aristophanes, but is also a treasure trove of data on Egyptian scribal practices, administration, and society in the first half of the 8th century. Last but not least, I would like to emphasize that a great strength of the study is its very accessible style, which can, and hopefully will attract the attention of non-specialists to Aristophanes' documents and more generally to the papyrological evidence of the early Islamic period.

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Lajos Berkes

in the commentary). My views on this have evolved since my dissertation (cited in the commentary): see L. Berkes, *Dorfverwaltung und Dorfgemeinschaft in Ägypten von Diokletian zu den Abbasiden* (Wiesbaden 2017) 182–185. A. Delattre communicated two further corrections: No. 1: l. 7: $\alpha\lambda\alpha\rho\epsilon\lambda\ \tau\eta\chi\iota$ => $\alpha\lambda\alpha\rho\epsilon\lambda\langle c\ c\rangle\tau\eta\chi\iota$ or $\alpha\lambda\alpha\rho\epsilon\langle\lambda\rangle\langle c\rangle\tau\eta\chi\iota$. No. 3: l. 8: $\alpha\lambda\alpha\rho\epsilon\lambda\sigma\tau\eta\chi\epsilon$ => $\alpha\lambda\alpha\rho\epsilon\lambda\sigma\langle c\rangle\tau\eta\chi\iota$.

⁹ E.g., p. 16, n. 70: “the use of *γράμματα* to refer to illiterate parties;” p. 110: “haplography” is meant instead of “dittography;” p. 190, n. 131: there is no emperor called “Heraclius Neos;” this is a misunderstanding of his titlature: Heraclius, the new Constantine. Fig. 8 in the plates is upside down.

¹⁰ E.g., p. 18: $\delta\iota'$ $\acute{\epsilon}\mu\omicron\upsilon$ $\text{Π}\acute{\epsilon}\tau\rho\upsilon$ $\upsilon(\iota)\delta(\zeta)$ Ἀντωνίου $\lambda\omega\gamma\omicron\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\phi\omicron(\nu\upsilon\upsilon)$; p. 48, n. 51: $\acute{\epsilon}\omega(\zeta)$ Λάτω ($\nu\pi\acute{o}\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma$); p. 102: ($\acute{\upsilon}\pi\grave{\epsilon}\rho$) $\delta(\alpha)\pi(\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\upsilon)$ instead of $\delta(\alpha)\pi(\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\varsigma)$; p. 126, n. 6: $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\mu\pi\omicron\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$; $\omicron\acute{\iota}\kappa(\omicron\varsigma)$ $\text{Γερμα}[\nu\iota\kappa\omicron\upsilon]$ on p. 145 instead of the edition's $\omicron\acute{\iota}\kappa(\omicron\varsigma)$ $\text{Γερμα}[\nu\omicron\upsilon]$ is surprising and certainly incorrect.