

## BOOK REVIEW

*Ptolemy I and the Transformation of Egypt, 404-282 BCE*. PAUL MCKECHNIE and JENNIFER A. CROMWELL, eds. *Mnemosyne Supplements*, Volume 415. Leiden, NL and Boston, MA: Brill, 2018. Pp xii + 247. Hardback, \$121.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-36696-1.

The admirable volume under review, the fourth in the informal series, *Mnemosyne Supplements*, consists of a short introduction and seven papers presented at a conference held at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia during September of 2011. The purpose of the conference was to document the transformation of Egypt from the beginning of Amyrtaeus' reign in 404 to the end of Ptolemy I's reign in 282. The first essay by Dorothy J. Thompson demonstrates that, following Alexander's example, Ptolemy I ruled Egypt as a Greek successor to the pharaohs. The result of this policy was the creation of a stable and long-lasting dynasty. A second by Paul McKechnie presents an overview of events from 401, the beginning of Artaxerxes II's reign, to 305, the date Ptolemy I became Egypt's uncontested ruler. The remaining five essays demonstrate how the Egyptian calendar, coinage, temple building, stelai and burial practices in Alexandria were changed when Egypt came under Greek rule.

The five essays are replete with graphs, photographs and maps, which are listed at the beginning under figures with a further grouping for tables. Each chapter has ample notes and a bibliography. In Chapter 3, "Soter and the Calendars," Chris Bennett argues that initially during Ptolemy I's reign, the Macedonian and the native calendar of Egypt hardly interacted. But beginning with the co-regency, a new dating system began to emerge as a result of Ptolemy II's decision to base the taxation system on his regnal years. Eventually, the Macedonian calendar was abandoned in favor of the Egyptian. The chapter is well researched and thoughtfully written.

In Chapter 4, "The Role of Coinage in the Political Economy of Fourth Century Egypt," Henry P. Colburn discusses the structure of Egypt's economy and the role of its first coins, imitation Athenian tetradrachms minted by the temples. Egypt produced two types of wealth: staples, such as food supplies, usually grain,

and precious objects. Rather than functioning as a true currency, Egypt's tetradrachms (like other wealth objects) were part of a barter system. Ptolemy I, however, introduced a true monetary system similar to that found in other Hellenistic kingdoms. Colburn states that although Egypt mined large amounts of gold and copper, it produced very little silver. He overlooks the fact that Egyptian gold contained from 10% to 30% silver. Moreover, Nubia, a part of Egypt, was an important gold producer whose ore had high amounts of silver.<sup>1</sup>

In her chapter, "Pharaoh and Temple Building in the Fourth Century BCE," Martina Minas-Nerpel shows that during this period, in addition to the construction of new temples such as one to Onuris at Sebennytos, earlier temples were being repaired and expanded. New buildings often consisted of the expansion of sacred avenues, such as the sphinx-lined one at Thebes linking Karnak to Luxor, and enclosure walls like the one at the temple to the sun god in Heliopolis. Buildings reflecting new beliefs included birth houses like the one at Elkab and funeral chapels. As a result of earthquakes, most of the temples are ruins. The essay would be improved if, besides Herodotus, it included descriptions by such classical writers as Strabo, Diodorus Siculus and Plutarch.<sup>2</sup>

Although much has been written about the Satrap stele of 311, Boyo G. Ockinga offers a new interpretation in her chapter entitled "The Satrap Stele of Ptolemy: A Reassessment." The monument is the most important native source dated to the satrapy; its text reaffirms Ptolemy's return of lands belonging to the Temple of Buto. According to Ockinga, because only the pharaoh, in fulfillment of his traditional duty of caring for the gods, could grant land to the temples, Ptolemy is described in royal terminology which originated in New Kingdom texts. The stele's inscription also shows the influence of Middle Kingdom literary texts. The author should have included a concise overview of previous scholarship. A photograph of the stele and its inscription would also be welcome.

In the final essay, "Identity and Cross-cultural Interaction in Early Ptolemaic Alexandria: Cremation in Context," Thomas Landvatter argues that the practice of cremation in the early cemetery at Shatby was motivated by the inhabitants' desire to demonstrate that they were non-Egyptian. Since slightly fewer than 10% of the burials were cremations, a percentage found in Macedonian cemeteries, the

<sup>1</sup> Klemm, Rosemarie and Dietrich. 2013. *Gold and Gold Mining in Ancient Egypt and Nubia*. Berlin & Heidelberg: Springer, 43.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkinson, Richard H. 2000. *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 30.

statistic suggests that the earliest immigrants simply retained their native burial customs.

The present collection of essays will remain a valuable resource for the study of the satrapy and reign of Ptolemy I, a period of transition less well documented than that of later Ptolemaic rulers. The titles of the essays, all well grounded in the primary evidence and scholarship of the time period, draw attention to the range of sources. Temple architecture and funerary practices reflect the social customs of the indigenous population and first immigrants. Inscriptions on coins, papyri, ostraca and stone in Greek, Egyptian Hieroglyphs, Demotic and Aramaic indicate the range of sources available to scholars embarking on a study of this transitional period. Those coming to the topics for the first time as well as specialists in the field will be stimulated and challenged to further study and thought.

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