

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Papyrus in Classical Antiquity by Naphtali Lewis

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Benveniste, "Symbolisme social dans les cultes gréco-italiques," *RHR* 129 (1945): 9–15.²

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2. I owe this reference to my colleague Professor C. W. Watkins. It is some excuse perhaps that Benveniste's article is not listed in *L'année philologique* 17 (1945) under "Cato Maior" and that the note on p. 385 does not mention Cato or the *De agri cultura*.

Papyrus in Classical Antiquity. By NAPHTALI LEWIS. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1974. Pp. viii + 152 + 8 pls. \$17.75.

In this book Naphtali Lewis returns to the subject of his 1934 Paris dissertation, *L'Industrie du papyrus dans l'Égypte gréco-romaine*. Aside from the obvious changes imposed by forty years and a complete rewriting in a different language, the preface promises two major alterations: a scope wider than Egypt and a style less like that of a dissertation.¹ The first of these is a matter more of title than of content, for the survey of non-Egyptian habitats of papyrus in chapter 1 and the discussion of the use of papyrus outside Egypt in chapter 5 parallel chapters 1 and 3 (pt. D) of the earlier work and are on much the same scale.

The second change is the more substantial and shows this book for the mature work that it is. The text is a straightforward and not very argumentative account which speaks with authority. The notes cite much the same ancient material as was available forty years ago, but they are much richer in citations of modern discussions, especially of aspects of the history of the use of papyrus (the notes on pp. 7–10 are particularly interesting). There is also evident a gain of perspective from Lewis' studies of many aspects of papyrology in the four decades between the two books. The result is a useful book which is, moreover, highly readable.

Chapter 1 enumerates the various places in which papyrus has grown or is said to have grown. Some of these prove chimerical (Greece, Etruria, Asia Minor); outside Egypt, only in Babylonia is there any real probability of the production of "paper" from papyrus. Chapter 2 treats the various uses besides paper to which the papyrus plant may be put; although the stalk is the most important part, the root and crown both have some uses. Lewis repeatedly points out that many other plants of the same family (*Cyperaceae*) serve similar needs in various parts of the world.

Part 2 opens with a long chapter (3) on the manufacture of the writing material. The chapter is organized around the text of Pliny (*NH* 13. 74–82), which is quoted, translated, and commented on at considerable length. This section is the greatest novelty of this book: its predecessor had devoted much less space to the commentary. Here Lewis has benefited from modern experiments in repeating the ancient manufacturing process, particularly the experiments conducted by the British Museum. Especially notable is the revelation that strips of raw material

1. From the point of view of the progress of scholarship, one may regret that the author has not made it clear in most instances where the present work differs from the earlier one (whether owing to new evidence or to a change in his views) nor even cited the dissertation very often. In some ways this does an injustice to the earlier work by not giving the reader a sense of the major contribution it made to the development of the subject.

need not overlap during pressing for the finished product to be without gaps (pp. 50–51).²

There follows a chapter (4) discussing the terminology of papyrus. Lewis maintains the correct distinction which he established in *L'Industrie* between *κόλλημα* (sheet of papyrus in a roll) and *σέλις* (column of writing); he admits, however, that in Roman Egypt *κόλλημα* often came to indicate a column of writing, as Herbert Youtie had argued in his review of the earlier book.³ Lewis offers the plausible explanation for this usage that composite rolls (*τόμοι συγκολλησιμοί*) were generally made of documents occupying one column each, for which sheet and column would be identical.

The use of papyrus outside Egypt is treated in chapter 5, along with general questions of supply. Some interesting newer evidence is added to the discussion: Lewis cites (p. 91, n. 8) the Wadi Fawakhir ostraka, which he regards as “eloquent testimony of the lack of papyrus in this desert outpost.” The increasing numbers of letters on ostraka known from the valley and the thousands of tax receipts on ostraka suggest that cost, not availability, may have been the determining factor in many cases. Chapter 6 covers briefly the use of papyrus for wrapping paper, for material to be burnt for its aroma, and for medical purposes.

The third part (chapters 7–9) treats the organization of the manufacturing and marketing of papyrus. Lewis emphasizes (p. 101) the scarcity of evidence, which is remarkable in the face of his conclusion that “the papyrus industry must have been one of the biggest employers of manpower in Egypt, perhaps second only to food production” (p. 102). Perhaps the pre-eminent role in the industry of the Nile Delta, from which we have few papyri, is part of the explanation; once again we are reminded of the distortion of our picture at the hands of the vast but uneven documentation of the economy of Roman Egypt.

The most striking new document for the subject is perhaps F. Preisigke–F. Bilabel–E. Kiessling (eds.), *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten* (1913–), 6. 9629, quoted and translated in full (pp. 124–25): a letter of the Ptolemaic period from contractors “for the retail sale of papyrus rolls in the Arsinoite Nome” about the appointment of a subordinate. Chapter 9 considers some unresolved problems of the terms connected with taxation of papyrus. There are eight well-chosen plates illustrating the plant, the manufacture, and the use of papyrus.

The book is good reading, but most users will turn to it as a work of reference. They will find that the evidence and scholarly discussions have been collected with care and analyzed with much thought, and that the conclusions drawn from them have been set forth clearly and judiciously. There is one significant hindrance to the full use of the book for reference: the rather skimpy subject index of two pages contrasts unfavorably with the index in the 1934 monograph. The modest dimen-

2. L. rejects (with T. C. Skeat), p. 61, n. 36, the notion that the unsuitability of papyrus for codices contributed to its replacement by parchment. H. C. Youtie, *Scriptiunculae*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam, 1973), p. 722, in an addendum to the review cited in n. 3, maintains that parchment was superior for codices, despite the real virtues of papyrus. Lewis' explanation of the replacement of papyrus (p. 61) is unfortunately rather vague: “other materials were better able, with the passage of time, to meet the needs and conditions of different times and places for carrying the written and eventually the printed word.” Youtie criticized similar vagueness in *L'Industrie* (p. 219 of his review).

3. *AJP* 57 (1936): 218 (now *Scriptiunculae*, 2: 718).

sions of the book and its logical organization will in part mitigate the effects of this index.

Youtie remarked of *L'Industrie du papyrus* that it "will be indispensable to all who concern themselves at all deeply with the enormous contribution of the papyrus plant to western civilization."⁴ The same may be said of its excellent successor, but one hopes that its users will extend beyond the circle of those "deeply" concerned in matters papyrological to all who care to understand the ancient world's principal resource for transmission of the written word.

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4. Youtie, review, p. 220.

Il flaminato nelle province romane dell'Africa. By MARIA SILVIA BASSIGNANO. Università degli Studi di Padova, Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di Storia Antica, vol. 11. Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1974. Pp. 431. L. 14,000.

Roman Africa has yielded an abundant harvest of inscriptions attesting the priesthood of the imperial cult. The problems this office presents to the modern interpreter are complex and varied, and their answers depend upon careful sifting and analysis of the surviving epigraphical evidence. Bassignano's contribution to the field is to take the reader the first step along the way, by compiling what is essentially an inventory of the ancient sources with a companion digest of current opinion.

The tone of the book is set immediately by the introduction, which simply catalogs the theories that have been advanced over the last century or so on the principal points at issue: titulature, method of election, length of office, precise function, etc. No one would dispute the value of B.'s "Panoramica" with its basic bibliography, but it is disappointing that she makes no attempt to pursue any one line of argument herself, still less to settle for particular solutions. Much the same plan is followed through the body of the text. Evidence from the various centers of each of the seven African provinces is carefully assembled: first the inscriptions themselves given *in extenso*; then a thumbnail sketch of the history of each community to the extent that it is known; finally a commentary on the various aspects of each epigraphical text. Where problems of interpretation arise, B. is for the most part content to list the varying views, leaving the reader to make up his own mind.

Since the strength of the book lies in its usefulness as a work of reference—students of Roman Africa in general could profitably dip into its contents—it is worth calling attention to occasional slips and errors. B. regularly expands the Carthaginian *sacerdotium* of the Cereres in the singular, *sacerd(os) Cer(eris)* (pp. 109 ff.; cf. p. 211: Uchi Maius), translating "sacerdote di Cerere"; the one exception is in the cursus of M. Vettius Latro, *sacerd(os) Cer(erum)* (p. 168), whose priesthood is nevertheless translated "di Cerere" (p. 171). Standard practice is to expand *Cer(erum)*, though the singular could be justified in translation, the two Cereres being possibly two aspects of the same divinity. (See now D. Fishwick and B. D. Shaw, "The Era of the Cereres," *Historia* [forthcoming].) At Simitthus (p. 142) the priesthood of C. Otidius Iovinus is omitted; he was *sacerdos provinc(iae) Afric(ae) anni XXXVIII* (*CIL*, 8. 14611), and his title in office may well have