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recording, artifact processing, and photography will be taught, and lectures will be given in a wide variety of pertinent fields: geology, zoology, botany, art, anthropology, and archaeology. Field trips are to be made to ruins at Uaxactun, Nakum, Tayasal, Seibal, Tikal, and Topoxte Island.

To learn more about this Maya site--it includes more than 500 structures dating from the first to the tenth centuries after Christ--interested persons may wish to read the article by Director Hellmuth in Archaeology magazine, XXV, 1972, pp. 148-149. For further information on the summer school program, write Experimental Educational Programs in Archaeology and the Natural Sciences, Apartado Postal 1838, Guatemala City, Guatemala, Central America.

Book Reviews

Ernst Posner, Archives in the Ancient World, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1972. 283 p. incl. 43 b. & w. ill. and bibliography (pp. 234-268). \$10.00.

Bureaucrats and their work were never a popular subject with the Greek and Roman historians, who usually ignored them or even suspected them. Modern scholars have done much in detail to rectify this neglect, but our society remains profoundly suspicious of those who collect and use records for the purposes of government. It is therefore a pleasure to find a book by a distinguished archivist who approaches the subject of record-keeping in antiquity from the standpoint of his own profession, evaluating the practices of the ancients in light of their success in preserving records in a useful form and the effects of their methods on the subsequent course of archival history.

The book begins with a general introduction to the subject, followed by detailed chapters on seven areas of archives: clay tablets, mostly from the Near East; Pharaonic Egypt; classical Greece; the East from the Achaemenids through the Seleucids; Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt; the Roman Republic; and the Roman Empire. A "postlude" traces the effects of ancient practices on the Parthian and Sassanian monarchies of Persia. When to the large amount of geographical, archaeological, and chronological data covered is added the difficulty of dealing with a dozen or so ancient languages, it can hardly be a surprise that Posner has relied almost exclusively (as he says in his preface) on the statements of modern scholars rather than delving extensively into the original sources. The approach through secondary material has a fundamen-

tal weakness: without a command of the sources, one cannot control the sense or accuracy of scholarly work. (Posner at times quotes opposing views without being able to offer any means of decision between them.) Some unevenness of quality in secondary work therefore reproduces itself here in occasional errors or shallowness.

But in all fairness, these problems are not Posner's fault. No one could be in control of the original sources for the vast range of material covered here. And a book of this scope, written by a specialist in one of the geographical or chronological divisions in question would be a different animal altogether, highly uneven in quality. A better criterion by which to judge this book is the contribution it makes to our way of thinking about the subject. Posner brings to his task a wide knowledge of the history of archives, which enables him to put his remarks about ancient practices into a perspective that the classicist could not otherwise hope to have. It is this quality of juxtaposing material that is of the greatest value: one sees how the same or similar problems were solved by various civilizations and what the contribution of each was; one sees how archival practices reflect the needs and conditions of society without losing a community of scribal practice. One cannot but be grateful to Posner for having undertaken such a perspective-widening task and for having done it well.

For it is well done. The author has a keener eye than any non-specialist I can think of for good scholarly work on which to draw, and he has used it intelligently and, within limits, critically, in the vast majority of cases. The variety of evidence brought up is astonishingly great. Posner discusses the documents themselves--whether on clay, papyrus, leather, wax, wood, linen or stone--both for their contents and as objects, and he brings in a wealth of archaeological information about the physical arrangements made by the ancients for storage and retrieval of archival material. There are many illustrations, both drawings and photography, of scribes at work, storage facilities, document forms, and the like. These illustrations are of the finest quality and always pertain to the text accompanying them, with which they are well-integrated to a degree rare in works of ancient history. The physical realities with which the scribes had to deal are in this way always kept in mind and made clear.

The deficiencies of the work, if they can be called that, are few and certainly inevitable in a book of this breadth; its virtues are far more remarkable and are largely the contribution of the author, who has added to them a very readable prose style which helps to make the reading of this book both instructive and pleasurable.

Roger S. Bagnall
Florida State University