

peasant communities. Books like this one remind us that it is better to hobble along main roads than to wander through back streets.

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R. BRUCE HITCHNER (ED.), *A COMPANION TO NORTH AFRICA IN ANTIQUITY* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World). Hoboken, Wiley Blackwell: 2022. Pp. xxviii + 464, illus. ISBN: 9781444350012. €189.00.

This *Companion* is a book of outstanding scientific quality and an important contribution to research on North Africa. It provides an overview of two millennia across a culturally diverse zone spanning ‘from the ancient Syrtes in modern West Libya to the Atlantic in Morocco, as well as the Sahara Desert’. It will be indispensable to English-speaking students and scholars for future research on ancient North Africa. The companion’s diachronic structure is reflected by the chronological order of the contributions, offering deep insights into *longue durée* developments in this unique geographical region.

The book is presented in twenty-four chapters divided into four parts. Part I (‘Setting the Stage’) provides overviews of the historiography of ancient North Africa (Bruce Hitchner), the archaeology of the region (David Stone) and the complex relationships between climate, land-use and human interaction (Philippe Leveau).

Part II (‘Africa in the First Millennium BCE’) covers ‘Libyan culture and society’ (Joan Sanmartí), the Garamentes (David Mattingly), ‘Punic Carthage’ (Iván Fumandó Ortega) and ‘Africa under the Roman Republic’ (Matthew Hobson). This is one of the highlights of the book, easily combining detailed case studies with large-scale overviews of cultural phenomena, history and society.

The third and largest part of the book is dedicated to ‘The Roman Period’, spanning a wide chronological range from 164 B.C.E. to the Vandal capture of Carthage in 439 C.E. As is traditional in the field, urbanism and architecture figure prominently (in studies by Andrew Dufton and Elisabeth Fentress and Niccolò Mugnai), based on the rich archaeological evidence and quantity of cities in the modern countries of Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and Algeria. Economic history is also especially visible here, with chapters on the ceramic evidence (Michelle Bonifay) and rural settlement and land use (Marianne De Vos); Jesper Carlsen also shows how the Roman provincial administration encouraged landowners to increase revenues (142–51). Patrice Faure’s chapter on the Roman Army usefully advises ‘not to overestimate the economic impact of the troops’ (165–6). Two chapters covering the important metropolis of Carthage (Iván Fumandó Ortega for the Punic and Ralf Bockmann for the Roman period) provide a very useful pairing to understand urban development in the ‘muse of Africa’ (Apuleius, *Flor.* 20, 4). Other important insights are provided on social relations (Julio Cesar Magalhães de Oliveira and Andy Merrills) and literature (Stéphanie Guédon on prose and Helen Kauffmann on Late Latin poetry). Religion is another recurring theme, reflecting the rich archaeological evidence (temples, inscriptions, steles, etc.) from all over North Africa. Even a relatively small town like Thugga in modern Tunisia had ‘10 temple complexes and two small shrines’ (191). Excellent chapters on ‘Transforming Religion under the Roman Empire’ (Matthew McCarthy) and ‘Christian North Africa in Antiquity’ (Anna Leone) provide guidance in understanding religion as a dynamic factor in Pre-Roman and Imperial North Africa, as well as in Late Antiquity.

Part IV covers the period between 439 and 711 C.E., with chapters on the Vandals (Jonathan P. Conant), the Byzantine period (Andy Merills) and the Arab Conquests (Corisande Fenwick), as well as a study of coinage (Cécile Morrison). All four contributions explore the important question of continuity and change in these dynamic eras. They also highlight the great prosperity and continuity of cities, economy, and culture until the seventh century C.E., arguing against the old view of ‘colonial-era scholars’ (10) of decline and decay following the Vandal conquest.

‘Cultural identity’ is the most obvious through-thread, figuring in nearly all contributions. There is prominent discussion of acculturation models like ‘Romanization’ (mentioned eleven times in the

useful index). The authors reflect on these problematic terms and discuss potential new approaches. The meaning of ‘Roman’, ‘Punic’ or ‘Vandal’ are repeatedly interrogated, serving to underline the need for care in using these problematic concepts.

The volume might leave one with the impression that the archaeology of North Africa is quite ‘iconoclastic’. Nearly all of the contributions focus on texts or inscriptions or the results of excavation. Even the chapter on ‘Architecture and Art’ is organised around specific building types and not categories of art. Given the tremendous quantity and quality of North African mosaics (see, most recently, Aïcha Ben Abed Ben Khader, *Tunisian Mosaics. Treasures from Roman Africa* (2006) or the series *Recherches franco-tunisiennes sur la mosaïque de l’Afrique antique*), it might have been worth devoting a chapter to the subject. This can be also said for ancient sculpture. Works by Christa Landwehr (*JDAI* 127.8 (2012/2013), 227–60) and François Baratte on North African sculptures (*CRAI* 160.2 (2016), 821–35) have demonstrated that North Africa has a lot to offer in this field. The lack of contributions on iconography is reflected by the quality of the images in the printed volume. In the photo of a votive stele to Saturn (fig. 16.1) the god is barely recognisable, as is the inscription discussed in the text. The images of the coins published in the contribution by Cécile Morrison (fig. 23.1 and 23.2) are presented in ‘reduced size’, which makes it hard to understand their iconography. The locations of all Donatist Bishoprics in the reprint of the Map of Salama (fig. 20.1) are difficult to read. Strangely, the eight maps at the beginning are of good quality, but not mentioned in any of the contributions. But this weakness of the volume is entirely in line with the state of research on North Africa, where iconography plays a decidedly secondary role. New and promising iconographic approaches that have already been proven fruitful in other Blackwell companions, like Lucinda Dirven’s contribution on statues, reliefs, and paintings in Ted Kaiser (ed.), *Companion to the Hellenistic and Roman Near East* (2022). They could have provided new insights on many of the themes covered by the volume, e.g. religion or local identities.

A *Companion* is always intended to present the state of the art on the field. And this is exactly what this volume does. The contributors include many of the leading researchers who work on North African soil, drawn widely from Brazil, the US and Europe. But, as Stefan Ardeleanu has already pointed out in his review (*Plekos* 24, 2022, 561–71), the volume lacks a single contribution by a scholar from the modern Maghreb. The absence of a modern North African perspective on their own history, archaeology and heritage is to be regretted. The high price is also likely to limit the volume’s impact in the Maghreb: it is scarcely affordable even for students in Europe. It would be unfortunate if this outstanding volume, largely written by scholars from an Anglo-American research background, was only read by scholars, students and general readers of the same academic environment.

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ANNA LUCILLE BOOZER, *AT HOME IN ROMAN EGYPT: A SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. x + 361. ISBN 9781108830928. \$99.99.

This book is a major new contribution to the study of households and everyday life in antiquity. Because the arid Egyptian environment affords extraordinary preservation, Egypt is in many ways an ideal place to study this subject. Making full use of this rich evidence, Boozer’s work helps to humanise our perception of the ancient world, foregrounding the emotions, sensations, and experiences of people’s daily lives. Rich in vivid, descriptive detail, this volume also makes an important argument: the home was a locus of historical change and agency, a site where ordinary people shaped history rather than merely getting swept up in its current. Domestic life was profoundly entangled with other spheres, contrary to ‘the artificial distinctions that scholars have drawn between the domestic, religious, craft, and mortuary spheres, to name only a few’ (232).

The book is largely organised around the human life cycle, with chapters devoted to different periods from conception to death (and beyond: a chapter on death and the afterlife rightly affirms